The 2766th Provisional Headquarters Flight WWII: Personal Pilot to Kind Ibn Saud was assigned the duty of furnishing a "Lend Lease Pilot" to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia during WWII. This was a part of President Roosevelt's foreign policy to secure adequate oil supplies for the military. Historians have overlooked the importance of this Headquarters Flight, and the intriguing story of the Flight's youngest pilot who served as King Ibn Saud's personal pilot.

The 2766th Provisional Headquarters Flight WWII

The 2766th Provisional Headquarters Flight WWII

Personal Pilot to King Ibn Saud

"A lend-lease pilot"
to help assure a successful USA foreign oil policy during WWII

Clyde Nathaniel Morgan, Sr., M.D.

ISBN 978-1-60910-454-2

Printed in the United States of America.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2010

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

Three weeks after I separated from the Army Air Corps, I enrolled in the 1946 fall semester of Abilene Christian College. One of the required courses for graduation was a Survey of the New Testament, taught by Professor James F. Cox emeritus President of Abilene Christian College.

Two days after the first test, a senior Bible major, who graded examination papers for Professor Cox, phoned me at home.

“Professor Cox wants to see you in his office at 2 P.M. today.”

“OK,” I said. “I am out of class then. Tell him I’ll be there.”

Professor Cox’s office was actually the lecture room in which he taught all of his classes. It was the first room to the left at the top of the stairs to the second floor of the Hardin Administration building.

It was a cold day. I was wearing my Army Air Corps pink wool officer’s trousers. As soon as all of the students from his 1 o’clock class left the room, I entered through the open door, closing it behind me.

He sat behind his oak desk. His left hand rested on top of a green desktop blotter, holding my test paper. He did not bother to stand and shake my hand, but acknowledged my presence with a glimpse of my face and a prolonged stare at

my pink Army Air Corps trousers. His calm and unruffled manner belied what was coming next.

"I understand you want to see me," I said.

Suddenly his nostrils flared and his face lost its usual kind expression. His anger brought back the never forgotten time my sixth grade teacher lost his temper and hit me as hard as he could on my right forearm with a ruler. I almost quivered, wondering what Professor Cox was going to do next.

Thrusting up my test paper with vigor enough to shove it down my throat, "You cheated," he said.

I was so dumbfounded I could not speak, but stood there shaking my head, "No!"

"You copied Jennifer Smith's answers," recovering his calm manner that drove his accusation like an arrow shooting through my heart.

By now I felt my throat begin to choke and tears about to drop from the corners of my eyes. For the moment, all I could do was shake my head, "No!"

"On question number 4 your answer is word for word the same as Jennifer's," he said.

I made an all out effort to hold back the anger that crept into my voice, and said, "My answer to question number 4 is exactly how you presented it in class and exactly how my class notes read. In fact, I liked the way you expressed it so much I memorized it. And besides," I said, "I sat six rows back of Jennifer during the test. It was impossible for me to copy her answers."

A few days later Jennifer caught me in the hall after class. “Professor Cox called me into his office yesterday, and asked me where you and I sat during the test. I told him, and that seemed to be all he wanted to know. What was that all about?”

Even though the professor learned the truth, I never received an apology. The A grade I made on the test stood, and I ended with an A in the course.

A non-veteran upper classman, who lived in Professor Cox’s garage apartment, had straight-A grade cards. It was known among the student body that he cheated on his tests, and took courses known to have teachers who did not watch for cheating. Professor Cox repeatedly put him up as an example for other students to follow, and never suspected this non-veteran student of cheating.

After graduation he worked for the Chicago mafia, and a few years after graduation he was murdered by the mafia.

The charge of being a cheater was a traumatic experience for me. As far as my conscience was concerned, cheating and being thrown out of school carried with it equal disgrace.

First of all, I had a classmate in high school who evaded the draft. He advanced his education until he became a freshman in Baylor Medical College where he was dismissed permanently from school because he was caught cheating. At that time, I knew all of the medical schools in Texas used the Honor system. Anyone cheating was automatically dismissed with permanent suspension.

Aviation Cadet Training in the Army Air Corps indoctrinated all Cadets in the honor system, beginning at Army Air Forces Pre-Flight School. I had served faithfully in the Air Corps as a

commissioned officer. Professor Cox knew I had been a commissioned officer, but he was unschooled in the absoluteness of the Army Air Corps Aviation Cadet honor system that had been drilled into me. It was obvious to him I was a soldier, and during the Great Depression when he was President of Abilene Christian College, soldiers were thought of by many as dirt and as people who were morally filthy. I sensed he placed me in that category. Somehow his attitude was such that he was unable to take a military uniform off of me, seeing me through those eyes of anti-military bigotry of the Depression years.

In later years, our relationship improved tremendously, and I learned to forgive him and to love him. I became Professor Cox's personal physician, and attended him on his death bed. He was a grand old gentleman and a wonderful teacher, but like all of us back then, he had some bias left in him from the Great Depression years. God is rich in mercy. May God forgive me for writing about this incident, but that is how it was for some American veterans fifteen months after the explosion of the atomic bombs ended the war.

To some extent, perhaps the veteran students were at fault. On cold days, those who had been commissioned officers wore their pink wool trousers to school. Veteran students in general despised the pious and holier than thou attitude the upper classmen ministerial students had. Most of the male students who were seniors and a goodly portion of the junior male students evaded the draft by becoming ministerial students. Returning veterans were mostly freshmen and sophomores, and had not over filled these upper classes. When the ministerial students did graduate, many of them failed to follow the ministry. This added to the resentment between the two groups.

Without exception, these upper classmen who had not served in the military filled the jobs of lab instructors, test graders for the professors, and the other jobs the school had to offer students. Resentment between these students and the veteran students was inherent.

An attitude of distrust toward veterans prevailed among some faculty as well as some of the Administration of the school. This prejudice existed among the faculty who had no immediate family who served during the war years, including some of the male faculty members who had evaded the draft. I was surprised to run into this open resentment toward veteran students. Abilene Christian College met my needs. It was convenient to home and had a good pre-med program, so I stayed.

A medical doctor at Camp Huckstepp, Cairo, Egypt, who was a graduate of Harvard Medical School, inspired me to go to medical school. By the end of the fall semester of 1947, I met the entrance requirements to Baylor College of Medicine, a private medical school in Houston, Texas. I had insufficient semester hours to apply to the state run medical schools in Texas, which required courses in vertebral anatomy and Texas History which I had not been able to work into my schedule.

Except for a copy of my transcript of grades, I completed my application to Baylor Medical College for admission to the freshman class of 1948. Somewhat excited, I climbed the tall steps up the front of the Ad building and turned right to go into the registrar's office. It was the dead of winter, and I was wearing my pink wool Army Air Corps trousers. Luck was with me. Miss Clara Bishop, the registrar was in and so was her assistant, Miss Marshall. I wanted Baylor Medical College to receive my application during the first week they began accepting applications for the new class of medical students.

As I approached the counter, Miss Bishop was staring out the window, looking away. She heard my footsteps and turned to see who was there. Her grey hair was neatly pinned up in a bun. Miss Marshall was seated, bent over a typewriter, pounding away at its keys and appeared not to want to be approached.

"Miss Bishop," I said, "I need a copy of my transcript to send with my application for acceptance to Baylor Medical College."

Looking me over from head to feet, "You'll have to go to the Bursar's office and bring me a receipt showing you do not owe the college before I can release your transcript."

"I don't owe any thing. I have a zero balance," I said.

"I'll have to see a receipt first," she said curtly, but with a tone of disbelief, acting as if under her breath she was saying, "Just bring me a receipt and I will believe you."

I picked up my brown envelope that contained my application papers from on top of her counter, and took them with me. Even though I was put down by Miss Bishop, I was still in an upbeat mood as I marched across the hall and through the door to the Bursar's office.

I said, "Mr. Smith, I need a receipt showing I do not owe the College. Miss Bishop refuses to let me have a copy of my transcript without it. I need it to send with my application for admission to Baylor Medical College."

He was courteous. After looking up my account, he wrote out a receipt showing I had a zero balance. "Thank you," I said and returned to the Registrar's office.

"Miss Bishop," I said, "Here is the receipt showing I have a zero balance with the College. May I have a copy of my transcript?"

"We do not have a copy of your transcript. We have to type it up from your grade cards," she said.

"When will you have it ready?" I asked. "I'll come pick it up."

Like a hen protecting her baby chickens she drew back from me, crossed her arms and said, "Oh! We don't give you a copy. We mail it directly ourselves."

"Here's the address it goes to," I answered, handing her a note containing the address of Baylor Medical College.

I thought this was an odd way for the Registrar's Office to do things, but not wanting to rock her boat, I did not say more, and left. It was obvious she did not trust me. She made certain I could not cheat by making grade changes to my transcript. My grades were excellent. None needed to be changed. She could see that. I thought what a despicable life she must live.

Time passed and I heard nothing from Baylor Medical College. I knew there were several thousand applicants for fifty openings, and they sent letters of rejection as well as letters of admission. I had gotten neither, and it was about time for them to close admissions.

Becoming anxious, I telephoned the Dean's office at Baylor Medical College. "This is Clyde Morgan, a student at Abilene Christian College. I sent in an application for admission as early as you accepted them, and I haven't heard back."

The lady in the Dean's office said, "Hold on. I'll look up your file."

She came back on the phone, "We never received your transcript from Abilene Christian College. The incoming class is already filled. The alternate list is still open, but will close any day. Send us your transcript. You are still eligible to make the alternate list."

I rushed across the vacant lot that separated our house from the main campus, went past the front of Sewell Auditorium, cut across the lawn to the front of the Ad building, and dashed up big steps leading to the Registrar's Office. Bursting through the door, I wanted to ring Miss Bishop's neck, but had promised myself I would not make a scene.

"Miss Bishop, I paid you my transcript fee to mail it to Baylor College of Medicine, and you promised me you would mail it to them. They have not received it. What happened?"

"I could not send your transcript. It took several days to type it. When the typing was finished, I checked back with the Bursar's Office. You owe the College."

In total disbelief, I stomped across the hall to the Bursar's Office. If blood boils, my blood was boiling.

This time Mr. Smith was less courteous. I suppose he recognized the anger on my face. He knew what was coming, and tried to head me off by asking, "Would you like to pay your bill?"

"What bill?" I ask.

"You owe 37 cents. You broke a beaker in the Physical Chemistry lab. Your breakage fee was not enough to pay what you owe."

About a week before requesting my transcript be sent to Baylor Medical College, Professor Frank Dunn did a demonstration experiment in our physical chemistry lab. Because a large beaker was needed for the experiment, and the school had only one beaker that large, his only choice was to do a demonstration experiment. About half way through the experiment, he dropped the beaker onto the black top of the lab table. The beaker shattered.

He said, "Since all of you are participating in this experiment, the cost of this beaker replacement will be split among you." The class was small, seven in number. We were all seniors and financially strained. One student had a wife who was not working because of illness. Everyone's breakage fee had been used, except I had been careful and had $15.00 left on mine.

"How much does the beaker cost?" I asked.

"Fifteen dollars", said Dr. Dunn.

"I have fifteen dollars left on my breakage fee. Put it on my account," I said.

The beaker turned out to cost $15.37. Dr. Dunn placed all of the cost on my breakage account, not bothering to tell me I lacked 37 cents. Neither the bursar's office sent me a bill nor did the registrar's office let me know Abilene Christian College had charged me for the 37 cents that was lacking. I had been left in ignorance of the fact.

Professor Dunn had no knowledge of what the Bursar's Office had done to me and was unaware of the registrar's behavior. After he retired, I gathered enough courage to tell him the story. He had no recollection of the incident, but went on to say once again, "You were my favorite student. I never had another student who was able to go to the black board and work the physical chemistry problems the way you did." Our friendship was never fractured. He was one of the best teachers I ever had, and even though he never served during WWII, he was one who never showed resentment toward the veteran students. Before he retired, he became famous for research he did at one of the Universities in Thailand.

This petty incident is not necessarily a reflection on Abilene Christian College. It is a true expression of the times. The Great Depression years left its mark on all of us, and this was one of those marks. Those years were so harsh their impact on the minds of everyone lingered, even past 1948, and 37 cents owed was certainly a significant amount of debt in Miss Bishop's mind.

I was disappointed in having to lose a year achieving my lifetime career simply because as a veteran student I was distrusted. I never felt this way about the years of my life I gave to the war. Those years were purposeful. I could see no purpose in losing a year because of 37 cents.

After paying the 37 cents, I took the receipt showing a zero balance to Miss Bishop once again. I believe she felt some guilt. This time she did mail my transcript of grades in a timely manner.

Within a week Baylor Medical College sent me a letter that placed me on their alternate list for the freshman class of 1948, in last place. The letter was apologetic, stating they only had one place left on the alternate list when my grade transcript

was received, and I probably was too far down the list to be accepted for this class. Then the last line read, “We would welcome your application for the 1949 freshman class.”

While I was in the heat of the fracas with the Registrar’s Office, the Army Air Corps invited me to rejoin as a commissioned officer. Reacting to my ire toward Miss Bishop, I decided immediately to rejoin. The re-entrance examinations were easy for me. I made high grades on them. The Air Force called for me to go to Ft. Worth to take the re-entrance physical examination.

In March of 1946, I had stretched across my barracks bed, and felt a sudden sharp cutting pain in the right side of my abdomen. It was a mild pain, but never went completely away. It bothered me worse at times, but never enough that I went on sick call. When I was sent home, I reported to Ft. Chafe, Arkansas where I mentioned the discomfort in my right side to the examining physician. He deferred my separation and sent me to Ft. Sam Houston for another separation physical.

The physician there was less impressed by my symptoms, but did take a careful history, and documented it on my records. He said, “If your symptoms continue, go to the Veterans Administration doctor in Abilene. I have documented your findings. You may have a service connected disability. He will take care of it.”

One day that fall, I ran a low grade fever and had loose bowel movements. I saw Dr. Adams, the V. A. doctor. He asked, “Where did you serve? Did you have any episodes of diarrhea?”

"I was hospitalized for a week with diarrhea in Albany, Georgia. Last fall in Teheran, Iran I had nausea and diarrhea that lasted three days."

He sent me to the lab for stool studies and found I had amebic colitis. I failed the physical examination in Ft. Worth.

The next year I had the required courses needed for application to the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, and was one of the first ones accepted.

SCENE ONE
DEATH OF MY FATHER

You can find the location of our former family farm by driving 4 ½ miles south of Uvalde, Texas, on the Pearsall Road. There is a field of black land on the west side of the road with a house standing among a grove of live oak trees midway between the road and the Leona River. Our house, which was up near the road, is gone.

Mother sold the place in 1941. The only field we had then was a five acre field a little way past the house. The remaining pasture was grown up in thorny mesquite trees and here and there was either a hackberry, black persimmon, or a thorny cat claw tree.

The mail box was on our side of the dirt road that ran past the east property line, then known as the Batesville Road. In February and March, 1935, the government allocated funds for the purpose of paving a road from Uvalde to Batesville. A political fight developed over which side of the Leona River the paved road would run.

To build it on the west side of the river would require the government to purchase new right-of-way for more than ten miles of virgin road, primarily to the benefit of an oil man, Tom See of Houston, Texas. He owned a ranch through which ten miles of the road would traverse. The reputation of Tom See was that of a ruthless man. His fence riders had orders to shoot anyone trespassing on his ranch. Two of his employees had

burned to death in an accident that would not have occurred had they not followed Mr. See's ruthless orders.

By building the road on the east side of the river, the expense of buying right-of-way would be saved. No new bridges would need to be built, further reducing the cost. These bridges also shortened the distance compared to the more circuitous route a road on the west side would take. Dad led the fight to pave the road on the east side of the river, and Mr. See led the fight to build an entirely new road on the west side of the river.

A meeting was held in Uvalde on March 26, 1935 for both sides to present their case. Dad had walked to town to attend and got home late, after mother had gone to bed.

At breakfast the next morning, Dad, turning and speaking to Mother, said, "It looks like the road is coming past our place. At the meeting yesterday, I presented estimated costs amounts that showed how much would be saved by keeping the road where it is. We will meet next week, and it looks like everyone will vote with us, except for Mr. See's man."

When we got home from school, Mother said, "Dad is clearing a field in the bottom near the river. He wants you boys to help him until it's time to do your evening chores. Don't waste any time. Change into your work clothes and get on down there."

William, my oldest brother said, "Clyde, hurry up, you are always the last one ready."

"I've got a knot in my shoe lace. Help me get it loose," I snapped back.

At our north property line, the Leona River made a sharp bend to the east and then turned southward into a deep water hole that continued until the river made a sharp bend back to the west, flowing swiftly past our south property line. The flowering laurel trees were the thickest there. Upstream from the north property line was an overgrown area of low land that often contained pools of water left standing from floods. This area of thick brush flooded so badly it was open land and unfenced by the three land owners to which the acreage was deeded. The area was a quarter mile wide and ran for a good mile to the north.

The bank of the river on our place was steep and high, dotted with healthy old live oak trees that spread their overhanging branches to make shade for fishermen, swimmers, and those who came to picnic. Between the oaks and the bottom land Dad was clearing, stood many native pecan trees spaced for the purpose of producing maximum pecan yields. Elm trees were scattered throughout the flat area of black rich bottom land dad was clearing.

Dad could tell the time by looking at the sky. To emphasize his instructions, he pulled out his pocket watch, and said, “It is time for you boys to go now and do your evening chores. The turkeys are up the river.”

William piped up, “I saw panther tracks there yesterday when I brought in the turkeys. The tracks were fresh.”

It was my turn to bring in the turkeys. I was barely 11 years old. The thought of a panther in thick brush frightened me.

I said to Ellmore, my brother two years older, “Ellmore, I’ll chop stove wood for you if you will go get the turkeys for me.”

William and I walked back to the house. William was at the front door, carrying two buckets of milk and I was right behind him with my last armful of stove wood, when we turned and saw Ellmore running as hard as he could, yelling, "Daddy has been shot. Old man Burns killed him. He's coming for us with his shotgun."

Mother grabbed a tea kettle of hot water that was simmering on the back of the stove and white cloths out of a cabinet drawer that had been boiled for emergency use. She was heading out for Dad.

"He's dead Mother," Ellmore said. "Old man Burns shot him with both barrels. Dad fell dead and didn't move. Don't go. He'll shoot you, too. He's coming this way. I let a turkey get in his garden. Nothing had come up yet, but he got mad anyway."

"I'll get the twenty-two, turn the wheel barrow on its side and wait behind it. I can stop him before he gets in range," I said. Dark came. Old man Burns never showed up.

Dad was unarmed. He was shot by our nearest neighbor, a bootlegger, who lived on the farm to the north of us. His house was near the river, nearly a mile away.

Ellmore said, "Dad told me to run. I did and hid behind an oak tree and watched. Dad fell on the grass beneath a persimmon tree in our pasture, on our land. He was shot twice. Then there was silence except I could hear the frogs croaking as if nothing had happened and the crickets kept right on with their incessant evening chirping," Then he broke into tears. "I started to run again. He came after me. I out ran him," he said, sobbing.

Our next closest neighbor, Buddy Peoples, worked in town and had a good running 1929 Chevrolet Coupe. He lived on the east bank of the Leona River, a mile and a half to the south of us. The only automobile we owned during those mid-Great Depression days was Dad's pickled 1923 Model-T Ford truck. Although a telephone line followed the old Batesville Road, the closet telephone in Leona Valley was at Lane Taylor's Pecan Plantation, five miles to the south, farther away than the town of Uvalde.

William ran all the way to Buddy Peoples' ranch house to ask for help. Mr. Peoples drove to town to report the murder to Sheriff Conner. In about an hour an ambulance from Vess Funeral Home on South Getty Street came and picked up Dad's body.

Thunderstorms boiled up all around our house on that dry March evening, and continued throughout the night. They shouted with loud claps of thunder, so strong the house shook. Not a drop of rain fell from these clouds that produced relentless lightening so bright it seemed the sun came up before the night ever got there. It was as if God was angry, and I believe He was.

Many friends from the Church of Christ next door to the Vess Funeral Home in Uvalde came to offer condolences and brought food. After the shock and scurry of the first three days and the funeral were over, the condolences vanished, leaving behind a permanent void.

Mother said to me, "You are too young to attend the trial." I obeyed my mother. My thirteen year old brother had to testify. The defense took advantage of Ellmore's age, and battered and badgered him something awful. One juror was a hold-out, resulting in a hung jury. No one had ever been convicted of

murder in the history of Uvalde County at that time. Mother could not afford a retrial.

Afterward, no one was willing to carry the torch for keeping the road on the east side of the river. Mr. See got his paved ranch road he wanted.

CHAPTER ONE
EARLY LIFE AND SCHOOLING

With five of Mother's six children at home and her youngest son, John, not yet age three, she had no time to show her grief. Due to the Great Depression, times were already dire, and the loss of Dad made living conditions worse. Those were hard times, and the inward gnawing pains of hunger continued intermittently over a period of years. We endured because we believed our hope for a better day was reasonable. Hope gave my mother courage to keep on when she could have succumbed to self pity. She never gave up, and she never gave way to the bleak circumstances. To make use of an Army expression, she "was not just a good parade day soldier; she was a soldier who was able to function with top performance in the heat of battle." Her confidence transmitted to the rest of us. The hope we had kept us marching onward, getting up in the morning, dressing and going about the day one day at a time; just as when the time came, we all endured wartime rationings and shortages. During those days, Americans prayed for victory and had faith in the trustworthiness of God to protect a free Christian America and to grant us the power in our military to bring about victory.

Before Dad's death, he was spoken of as being college educated and a talented carpenter, preacher, speaker, farmer, and story teller. At age 61 he carried a full head of pure black hair, a handsome face and a lean strong body. Dad loved his family. His discipline was stern and my path was straight, the same as that of my two sisters and three brothers. I was fortunate enough to come by his determination.

Dad built our house in 1929 on a farm he bought with his share of his mother's inheritance. He had not finished building it when the Depression hit with suddenness in Uvalde County and all of South Texas. One middle room with a single north-facing window and a floor of yellow pine ship lap one by eight boards was completed. A kitchen-dining area adjoining on the south and a bedroom adjoining on the west were never fully completed. Mother sprinkled water on the dirt floors and swept them every morning, giving them almost an unglazed clay pottery-like surface. The roof was corrugated metal without ceilings. In the summer time the tin roof held the heat of the sun, and in the winter time the metal acted as a heat pump, pumping heat out of the house into the icy air above it. Our house stood alone in the midst of a mesquite pasture that ran for a little over a mile from the west side of the Old Batesville Road down to the tranquil east bank of the Leona River that was shaded with large live oak and native pecan trees.

My father stood alone, too. He stood for what he believed was right, never wavering. He was killed during a social transition period in our country, after Prohibition was repealed but while most rural Texas counties, like Uvalde County, were still dry. I learned endurance, to stand alone and also to stand with my brothers and family when the need presented itself. This helped to prepare me to serve in the military. Having endurance helped throughout the war. Endurance was one of the traits the armed services wanted in a soldier.

*****

When Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, the movie newsreels in America showed a high stepping German Army that marched with proficiency almost beyond belief. Even though I was only 15 years of age at the time, I fully understood war was coming to America. It was a matter of time. To help prepare for it, I took every available mathematics course and every science course

available to me in Uvalde High School. Not only that, I studied hard enough to make an A in all of them, including Woody Robbins' mathematics courses in which he was known to never give an A.

I was in search of a road out of a community hit hard by the Great Depression. As great as I knew he was, Dad, in his lifetime, had difficulty putting clothes on our backs and food on the table. Growing up, I could not visualize how I could do any better than he did.

*****

I first saw the light of day on November 2, 1923 in a tenant farm house in Bell County, Texas, being the third consecutive son and fourth child of a tenant farmer and a preacher of the gospel, Xenophon William Morgan and his spouse Rhoda Ella (Deck) Morgan, the daughter of a tenant farmer, Miles Burke Deck and his spouse Tennie (Secrest) Deck.

Before moving from Bell County to Uvalde County in 1927, I remember six events, two of fear and four of joy. One of fear had later significance. On Sunday after church, we had the noon meal with my maternal grandparents. The children played in grandpa's wood pile while waiting for the meal to be prepared. I jumped on top of the wood pile and fell, coming down on the upper blade of a two bladed axe that was held by its lower blade in grandpa's chopping block. The bottom of my right foot hit squarely on the axe blade. The cut was deep. This was one of two childhood foot injuries that resurfaced in basic training in the Army Air Corps.

Dad owned a 1923 Model-T Ford truck from which he sometimes peddled farm produce. When we moved to Uvalde County, he loaded it with household goods and made it to

Austin the first day. We spent the night in a new motel, part of which was still under construction. The flooring was a single floor of new pine ship-lap boards containing scattered fresh knot holes.

Mother caught me curiously trying to see through these holes and poking my fingers into them. Her reprimand was sudden and stern.

"No! No! Spiders will bite your finger," she said forcefully. The fear of spider bites was so strong it gave me reason to vividly remember this incident. Fear immortalizes memory even more so than joy, and after serving in the military during wartime there are clear memories similar to that of poking my finger in a spider hole. Also there are hidden memories weighted down like the overgrowth on a vacant lot buries itself. Lingering reflection helps to recapture these almost forgotten memories.

The next night we stopped in San Antonio, Texas, and stayed at 333 Wharton Street, the home of retired Master Sergeant, Lee Deck, my mother's uncle. That night I sat on his lap as he told wartime stories of brave soldiers in the Philippines and of the Spanish American War. I was so impressed I remember the occasion but not the details of the battles. This was my first contact with a career military soldier, a favorable one. He was my first hero.

Dad served during World War I, of which he never talked. He proudly possessed some military items brought home from the war he put up for safe keeping. These souvenirs repeatedly caught my curious eyes. When Mother was not watching, I would sneak into the bedroom where they were stored and inspect them with imaginative curiosity. This was before I started to school. I did something one day that caused him to throw them away. All my older siblings were in school and my

baby sister was taking a nap. Bored and curious, I got into Father's World War I military collection, and this time I found his carpenter's hammer, and began hammering an unfired pointed shell into a pine 2x4. When my mother heard the noise, she came to prevent me from waking the baby, and said, "Stop. Stop!" in a tone of voice I knew she meant I was doing a dangerous thing. "It's a wonder that bullet didn't blow up and kill you," she said. She saved me from a possible fatal explosion. This was the greatest lesson I ever had in firearms safety.

The nearest military installation was Fort Clark in Kinney County, one county to the west of Uvalde County. This Cavalry Post was forty miles from our farm. My older sister, Jessie, married soon after my father died. She had two sisters-in-law who were married to cavalrymen at Fort Clark. I visited there frequently between 1935 and 1940, and one of their husbands, Sergeant Blair, generously shared with me his concept of army life.

We were sitting at a picnic table under a large pecan tree that grew alongside the large Fort Clark spring-fed swimming pool, and he said, "Every day in the Army is like Sunday on the farm." That was on a Saturday afternoon, and that day was like Sunday on the farm.

I did not believe him, but I understood he was saying Army life is easier than farming. Because of my witness to his love for the Army Cavalry, military life was no longer a stranger to me. Soldiers were found to be honorable people and not the scum of the earth as I had heard some say. When my time came to serve my country, I was eager.

Death was no stranger to me during those early childhood days. The first time I learned about death was when a neighbor, Mrs. Gilbert, passed away past age 90. Next was the death of Buster Haag's father, from a strangulated inguinal

hernia. He waited to go to the doctor after gangrene had set in. Then there was the death of my maternal grandfather, Miles B. Deck, when I was in the second grade. He died from a sudden massive heart attack at age 72. Next was the death from tularemia of my third grade teacher, Mrs. Craig. She was a widow and had one son in Uvalde High School. During the first week of the second half of the school year, her son killed a cotton tailed rabbit for dinner. She was particular about how she wanted the rabbit cut up for cooking, and skinned the rabbit with bare hands before cutting it up. In the process she scratched her skin on the bend of her right wrist and got some of the rabbit's blood in the scratch. The rabbit had a bacterial infection called Tularemia. In a few days she had high fever, red streaks up her forearm and the lymph nodes in the bend of her elbow and under her arm swelled. This was before the days of antibiotics and she died by the end of the week. I experienced the murder of my father when I was in the fifth grade and in the seventh grade the death of John Chapman when he ran out into the street in front of a speeding automobile.

Finally there was the horrible death of a 200 pound classmate, Sidney Taylor, in an airplane crash, when I was a high school freshman. Sidney crashed with a friend. He usually attended Bible class with us on Wednesday evening, but was absent that evening.

One of the adult church members came into our class at its beginning, and said, "Sidney was killed in a plane crash about thirty minutes ago. A witness saw the airplane spin into the side of the gravel pit north of the highway and east of the river. Go out there and see it for yourselves. Go on, you won't get anything out of your lesson here."

I think he wanted us to see the crash so none of us would be foolish enough to fly, especially a light two-place single engine airplane you pilot yourself.

Sidney died upon impact. My desire to fly died that day, too. Flying had been my dream up until then. As a freshman, he was the starting center on the Uvalde High School Coyotes' football team. His father was a family friend and a famous singer, a song writer and song book publisher, having published dozens upon dozens of songs, some of which are in current song books. I grieved Sidney's death.

*****

When the time came, I thought my childhood preparation for serving in the Armed Forces was as good as anyone else's. I started the first grade in the fall of 1930, and attended Leona Valley School through the seventh grade, except for the first six week session of the seventh grade when I attended public school in Camp Wood, Texas.

Leona Valley School was a rural one-room and one-teacher school with an average enrollment of less than three students for each grade, usually between 16 and 21 total students. It was located on a fenced acre that had been partially cleared off on the south side of Mr. Gilbert's mesquite pasture, and was nearly a quarter mile down a dirt lane that ran from the Old Batesville Road to an abandoned river crossing on the Leona River. The building was a frame building with horizontal planks painted white on the outside walls, and a wood shingled hip roof running north to south. The entry consisted of a small porch with double doors on the south side of the building. Slate blackboards with a four inch wide shelf along the bottom to hold chalk and erasers ran the length of the inside north wall except for a small closet in the northeast corner. In it were janitorial supplies. There were big windows

along the east and west walls. These had no shades because they were the only source of light. In the center of the room was a galvanized sheet metal floor pad on which set a large rectangular cast iron wood heater faced to the east. It had a black round stove pipe going straight up for about three feet where an elbow turned 90 degrees into a red brick chimney that went straight up through the ceiling and out through the top edge of the west half of the roof. A wooden wood-box with mesquite firewood was near the rear of the heater, on the teacher's side. Oil stained yellow pine made up the flooring, and the walls and ceiling were wainscoting. The teacher's desk faced to the south, leaving space for students to work at the blackboard behind her chair, and the student's desks were in rows facing to the north. A wide aisle in the center was used for marching into and out of the room. Smaller desks for the first through fourth grades were on the east half of the building, and the larger desks for the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades were on the west side of the building.

Only one student, Alvin "Buster" Haag was in my class for the seven years I attended. He served as a Marine during the war. In my grade, the teacher's son, John Williams, attended in the 4th and 5th grades. John Chapman attended in the sixth grade. The Chapman family returned to Michigan the next year.

George Sealy, a nephew of John Sealy, founder of John Sealy Hospital in Galveston, attended in intermittent years and longer than anyone else except for Buster and me. His parents sent him there from Galveston to live with his grandparents; Mr. and Mrs. Lane Taylor who owned the Pecan Plantation that adjoined the school property to the south.

The Lindbergh kidnapping was fresh in the minds of everyone.

One day, George said to me, “My parents are afraid I will be kidnapped if I stay in Galveston.”

“Were there threats?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said.

When I was a freshman in high school, Mr. Rex Phillips, manager of the J. C. Penney Company in Uvalde awarded the top male student in the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades, and the top twelve seniors a bus trip to Galveston. While there, I asked our escort, Superintendent Guy Dean, permission to let me visit George Sealy, which he granted.

I phoned to ask permission to visit.

One of the servants, I think she was the cook, answered the phone.

I said, “This is Clyde Morgan from Uvalde. I’m a friend of George from when he stayed with his grandparents on the Pecan Plantation. I’m in town on a school trip and would like to come visit him if I may.”

“Wait a minute,” she answered, “I’ll ask.” In a moment she came back on the phone. “Hello.”

“Yes?”

“George wants to see you. Can you come this afternoon?”

“Yes, when would be the best time?”

“About 3 P. M.”

"Good," I answered.

The Sealy's white mansion stood alone and faced the beach near the west end of the sea wall. The doorkeeper greeted me at the front door, and escorted me to the biggest play room I had ever seen, that was beneath the partially elevated first floor

After showing me his father's African trophies, the first thing George did was apologize.

He said, "I am not allowed to leave this room and play outside. We'll have to stay here and not go out in the yard."

"Are your parents still getting threats?" I asked.

"Yes. I have tutors come and teach me. I'm not allowed to go to school. I liked being with my grandparents better. I was free to go anywhere." By school, he meant private or public.

I am not sure how much George envied the freedom my poverty gave me, but I know he did. My brothers and sisters and the freedom I enjoyed, he did not have. This made me feel rich. I learned freedom is worth more than security. It is worth fighting for and worth going to war for.

*****

The Great Depression began before I was in the first grade and lasted until I graduated from high school eleven years later and longer. When I was in the second grade, school funds were so short that the school district was no longer able to pay the teacher the extra money she received by using her car for bus service to and from the school.

That year my older brothers, William and Ellmore, and I walked the two and a half miles to and from school. In doing so we walked past an old Indian hunting ground where we found many Indian arrowheads in perfect condition. We frequently imagined we were great Indian hunters and sometime warriors. At times we would act as if we were marching soldiers. None of us was ever the enemy because Dad forbade us to use the words kill and dead or even point a toy weapon at another person when we played. Our enemy was always imaginary and sometimes was a bush, a prickly pear, or any inanimate object that we could make believe was an Indian warrior. This was part of our fire arms training. Our fighting talk was mild, even sterile. The action was spirited and went this way: “I’m the king of the jungle. We’re the strongest warriors on earth! You don’t have a chance! I’m the sharpest shooter in this valley. No one can outfight us.” Mixed in were a few war whoops.

In Uvalde, on the north side of East Main Street, was a bicycle shop owned by Mr. Bates who paid cash for arrowheads. One day I took some arrowheads to Mr. Bates, and asked, “Will you give me some twenty two shorts for these?”

He asked, “What do you want them for?”

“For target practice,” I answered. “My brother and I have a contest to see who can strike the most matches in a row.” He gave me twelve shells of twenty two caliber rim fire cartridges, the ones called shorts.

Dad had a single shot Stevens twenty two caliber rifle. Two things made me a marksman. I learned to make use of the opportunity. A single shot gave only one chance to hit a live target such as a squirrel. The other was not being able to afford more than one bullet for a target. When I could afford the

shells, I honed my shooting skills by striking matches at twenty feet with twenty two shorts.

I entered the first grade under a teacher named, Mrs. Kirtschmann. She was a patriot and believed in Christianity. At the first bell every morning, we lined up in front of the school building, boys in a line on the right and girls lined up on the left. On the ringing of the second bell, the girls would march in and then the column of boys would follow.

Every morning she required the entire student body to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag, and then we sang America, after which time she called each class, one at a time, to seats around her desk and taught one class at a time.

We lived on the front end of the bus route, and we were dropped off at the dirt lane that led from the Old Batesville Road to the schoolhouse, while the teacher continued on to the south to pick up the children who lived the other side of the school. During the winter months, I was responsible for unlocking the building, bringing in the heater wood and building the fire in the wood burning heater. Then in the afternoon, when school was out, I swept the floors and cleaned the building while the teacher took the other children home before she came back by to pick up my sister and me. It was my duty to lock the building every afternoon. I learned to carry out duties the other students were exempt from, which later helped me have the right attitude in the military when I was assigned extra duty.

Dad was one of three school trustees and saw to it that students gave school programs for the community at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and at George Washington's and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays. All of these programs promoted morality, honesty, and Biblical core beliefs. We were taught the

strength of this country and our freedom depend upon the morality of its people and their favor with God; furthermore, George Washington is the father and founder of our country and he embodied these traits. On George Washington's birthday, Dad always came and told the story of George Washington.

He said, "My grandfather's grandfather taught George Washington how to survey. I know the story of George Washington cutting down the cherry tree is true." When he finished the talk, I felt as if I had met and knew the real George Washington, a moral man of honor, integrity, and of courage who believed so strongly in God he could not tell a lie.

The site of Leona Valley School where I attended presently has an incorrect historical marker at its past location, calling it the Ditch School. The Ditch School had been located about three and a half miles down the road toward Batesville. It was closed and consolidated with the Leona Valley School before I attended the first grade.

The teacher, Mrs. Kirtschmann, taught my oldest, sister, Jessie, from the fourth through the seventh grades at Leona Valley School. Jessie eventually earned a degree in elementary education and taught school for many years. However she entered Uvalde High School poorly prepared, and by the time she finished her sophomore year, Dad realized Mrs. Kirtschmann had failed to give her the foundation she needed. Because of this, the school trustees replaced Mrs. Kirtschmann at the end of my second school year.

I entered the third grade under a new teacher, Mrs. Craig, and quickly realized I was ill-prepared for third grade level work even though I had all A grades in the second grade. I sought help from my mother every night, and she is due full credit for being the best teacher I ever had. She taught me every school

night from 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM through the seventh grade. Even though she had a limited public education, in general terms, she was one of the most knowledgeable persons I have known.

When Mrs. Craig died, there was no replacement for her. She was a hard and thorough teacher. The foundation she gave me in the short time I studied under her was excellent, but I missed the second half of the third grade.

The next four years were the harshest years of the Depression, 1937 being the most dreadful of all. My school lunch consisted of mashed pinto beans between sliced biscuits and an occasional apple. Sometimes it contained a boiled egg. For a time we ran out of tallow used in making the biscuits. Hunger was no stranger to us.

In the fall of 1933, I was promoted to the fourth grade without being required to take the last half of the third grade. By the time I finished the fourth grade under a new teacher, Mr. Williams, I had learned to do seventh grade arithmetic by listening to him teach the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. Mr. Williams was a journalist, but due to the Depression he lost his newspaper job in California and came to Leona Valley to teach school. He was a diversified person. He built a small house out of native rock that was located up the Cooke Slough about a half mile before it ran into the Leona River. Through him, the outside world began to open to me. I began to develop an interest in grammar and writing, an interest that has lingered a lifetime and has helped me to publish magazine articles, scientific research papers and even to write better letters home when I was in the Service.

Soon after my father's death, Mr. Williams came driving up to our house one Saturday afternoon. He said to Mother, "If you give permission, I'd like to look at the boys' garden, and take

pictures of the boys in it. I want to put an article about it in the paper."

He wrote the article about the Morgan Boys and their spring garden. The weekly Uvalde Leader News published it with pictures of the three oldest of us boys in the midst of the garden. His story about us did much to improve my morale during one of the bleakest times in my life.

Even though it was deep in the midst of the Depression, Mr. Williams was so talented and qualified that he found another journalism job. This was shortly after his article appeared in the Uvalde Leader News, and I believe his article on the Morgan Boys was instrumental in helping him find the job. He resigned after teaching me in the fourth and fifth grades. Without my father's experience in education with which to help the other trustees in hiring, the young new teacher who replaced Mr. Williams turned out to be a disaster.

I learned little under him in the sixth and seventh grades. When I came home from the war, I was not surprised to learn he faked a mental illness to dodge the draft. He obtained a 4-F classification and spent time in a mental hospital in San Antonio, TX.

When he completed his first year of teaching at Leona Valley School, the trustees did not give him a bonus in pay out of the small surplus left over from the school year. My brother, William had succeeded in selling the school trustees a piano for the school in lieu of giving the teacher a bonus. Consequently, the following school year I was the target of the teacher's displeasure. He started out the school year by playing *My Country Tis of Thee on* the piano, each time ordering me to sing the song.

Then in front of the entire student body of seventeen students in this one room school house, he would suddenly stop playing the piano and grab my forearms and hit them several times with a ruler, because I could not harmonize with the piano.

Then he would say, "Sing with the piano."

Each time I answered, "I am trying to."

He ordered me to try again and again and repeated his discipline with each of my attempts to sing. After a period of a few weeks he made his final attempt to get me to harmonize with the piano. This time he struck me on the right forearm with the ruler, hitting me as hard as he could. Each time I tried to sing, I was embarrassed the same as if the number of students was a thousand instead of seventeen.

When I was little more than a toddler, I learned I was tone deaf. I was out in the mesquite brush southeast of the house watching and listening to birds. Trying to whistle like a bird, I went running to the house saying to Mother, "I can whistle." I whistled a series of monotone whistles to her. The disappointed expression on her face was so apparent I knew something was wrong. Between two adjacent musical notes, I find it difficult to be sure which sound is the higher note and which is the lower note.

*****

After struggling with this unpredictable teacher through the sixth grade, I requested Mother to let me live with my sister, Jessie Winans, and her husband, Clifton, where I could attend school in Camp Wood, Texas, forty miles north of Uvalde. They lived up the canyon one draw east of Mulberry Creek, and nine

miles west of the Nueces River on the Lee Winans Ranch in Real County. The seventh grade teacher, B. J. Stewart, was an excellent math teacher. Even though I was there for a short time, he was instrumental in preparing me for high school math. He would challenge us do contests in math to find the student who could work problems the fastest. I learned for the first time I was competitive in math, and never lost a contest to another student.

I felt hungry the entire time I was in Camp Wood. Sometimes I worked for Lee Winans after school. On those days, I would get to eat the evening meal with the family at the main ranch house. Clifton's mother never served enough food to satisfy my hunger. Out behind the ranch barn was a small orchard fenced with a high deer proof fence. The gate to this orchard was in plain view of the curtain-less kitchen window of the main house, but there was a pear tree hidden from view by the barn. On the way up the draw to Jessie's and Clifton's house, I went around the orchard fence behind the barn to swipe ripe pears off the pear tree. To climb the deer proof fence, I had to take my shoes off and use my toes and fingers to scale the tight net wire fence that reached upward three times my height. This experience made the obstacle course in Cadet Basic Training look easy the first time I confronted it.

In Camp Wood, Clifton showed me where Lindbergh landed his airplane into a south wind on the short straight part of the main street. Lindbergh ran out of space to the south where two telephone poles carried lines across the road and framed a narrowing in the street. That was where Lindbergh chose to do an intentional ground loop to keep from crashing into the two poles. He kicked the left rudder to make his tail swing around one hundred and eighty degrees, rather than damage both wings, and poured enough throttle into the engine to halt the southward movement of the airplane. He turned due north across the front part of a vacant lot and crashed nose first

into the south side of Bright's General Store. Mr. Bright had all of his pots and pans hanging on the inside of the south wall of the store. The impact knocked all of the pots and pans to the floor, causing a sudden clanging noise that was loud enough to be heard all over the town of Camp Wood. The wooden propeller was shattered beyond repair.

There was an open lot separating Bright's General Store from the front of the Camp Wood school house. Clifton said he was in the seventh grade, standing in line to march into the school house. The first bell ending the noon recess had rung. The students were lined up to march into the building, waiting for the second bell to ring. When the teacher rang the second bell for the girls to begin their march into the building, the boys broke rank and ran to the crash site as fast as they could. The more restrained girls stayed standing in line, gazing in astonishment, but did not march in on the command of the bell.

Lindbergh remained in Camp Wood for a few days waiting for a new propeller to be bussed in from San Antonio. When Lindbergh was ready to leave, he towed his airplane to a grass field east of Camp Wood and took-off without incident.

There are variations told of this story; one I read in a magazine article and one by Lindberg in his autobiography, both to the advantage of the story teller. In the autobiographical account, the incident was told to Vice President John "Cactus Jack" Nance Garner in his Washington Office. I suppose to improve his chance of getting his request from the Vice President; the location of the accident was moved to the square in Uvalde, the home town of the Vice President. The version told by Clifton is the real one and I have never found it correctly told in written form. Clifton not only saw it with his eyes and watched it happen, he heard it with his ears, and ran over to smell the spilled oil with his nose, and to touch it with his fingers where it spread out on the ground. Even though he is

my late brother-in-law, he was like George Washington and never lied in the fifty years I knew him. Lindbergh was everyone's hero, and to know he was a human being who did make mistakes made me want to be a pilot that much more. I sensed this goal was realistic for me.

My big hero was Lindbergh. He was not my only hero. Dad gave his life for standing up for what is right in the sight of God. The Wright brothers not only showed Lindbergh's courage, but also showed the power of brothers staying together and the supremacy of two brains working together. I never dreamed that one day I would be the roommate of the husband of Wilbur Wright's granddaughter, the brother who died at a young age from typhoid fever. I thought William "Bill", Ellmore and I would work together as did the Wright brothers, and someday the Morgan brothers would accomplish great things, maybe even as great a thing as did the grandfather of Betty Goshorn and his brother, Orville. WWII changed my dream. When Bill was stationed in Ohio, he began to preach for a congregation, liked to preach, and never returned home except for an occasional visit until late in life. After Ellmore spent five years in the Navy, he returned to his previous civil service job at Duncan Field, and seldom found it convenient to visit in Abilene.

While I was going to school in Camp Wood, I missed my brothers, younger sister, and mother terribly. That fall, when the first cold spell hit, I became too homesick to continue living with Jessie and Clifton in Camp Wood. For another thing, I was hungry for a big enough pot of beans to fill my stomach. At the end of the first six weeks, I transferred back to Leona Valley School where I learned little for the rest of the school year. This was not necessarily the teacher's fault, because, being in a one-room school house, I had heard the seventh grade taught by three other teachers. In reality this was my seventh time to hear the seventh grade taught. I had learned the value of repetition in learning.

*****

The most frequent dreams I remember having during my preschool days were ones in which I was flying. They were dreams full of fun and pleasure. Lindbergh was a frequent topic of conversation in those days because he was the first to fly across the Atlantic.

When the trial of the Lindbergh kidnapping was making headlines in the Uvalde Leader News, a Ford Tri-motor airplane came to Uvalde to take up passenger for rides over Uvalde. I was too young to get and hold a job, but nurtured the dream of becoming a pilot. The airport was a dirt field west of town and south of Highway 90 out toward Del Rio. Two of my brothers got the job of washing the oil and dust off of the airplane after each trip over the city in exchange for a free ride. While my brothers worked, one of the pilots took time to talk with me.

"Would you like to be a pilot?" He asked.

"Yes, I would. I dream of flying. How did you become a pilot?"

"I started by working on airplanes and the rest fell in place from there." At the time I failed to realize his answer outlined my future career in the military.

For me, that had to wait until the opportunity came. It did, at age seventeen, when I was a senior at Uvalde High School.

Before my freshman year in Uvalde High School, I spent the summer chopping cedar on the Neal Journigan Ranch northwest of Barksdale, Texas. I was in top physical shape by the time summer was over and maintained my physical

condition until I went into the Armed Services. This was a tremendous help during my first basic training as an enlisted soldier in the Army Air Corps.

My freshman year in high school was a big transition, an experience that helped prepare me for making future major transitions in life. For the first time I had a different teacher for every class. Instead of two or three students in the classroom, each room was full. All of the teachers except Woody Robbins, who previously had taught me in Bible school, showed bias against me because I had transferred from the one room country school. For some of the teachers, I had to do the work of an A to receive a B and that continued until mid-way through the second year. And with one teacher it continued through the third year and another through the first half of the fourth year, my final semester there.

Uvalde High School had excellent teachers, who not only knew their subjects, but also were experienced in how to teach. During the Great Depression, a high school teacher had a prestigious position. Woody Robbins had his master's degree in mathematics from the University of Texas. The Superintendent, Guy Dean, taught one math course, solid geometry, the fall semester of my senior year. I was hungry for every thing Woody Robbins taught. Except for my mother, he was my favorite teacher, the best I had in public school, college, or medical school. Before his death, he told me former Governor Dolph Briscoe and I were the two best students he ever had. The things he taught me, both in math classrooms and in Sunday morning Bible school, helped me with my career in the military, more so than all other teachers added together. He honored me greatly when he requested his wife to have me preach his funeral, which I did at the University Church of Christ, Abilene, Texas, in January 1995.

THE 2766th PROVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS' FLIGHT

My decision to quit high school was made in January, 1941, near the end of the first semester of my senior year. Less than a month before then, my brothers and I read in the Uvalde Leader News that Civil Service was giving a test for beginning aircraft mechanics. The test was held in the Civic Center in San Antonio. We drove our 1929 Model-A Ford, a worn out delivery wagon discarded by Horner's Grocery Store, the ninety miles there to take the test.

I made a grade of 97 ½ on this Civil Service Examination and received a job offer with the mailing of the test results. My brothers at the time did not receive job offers, only their grades. War had not been declared, and there was no way to know if only those with top-scoring grades would be offered jobs.

The only person I had to turn to for advice about the job offer was Woody Robbins. His advice was: "I wish I had had an opportunity like that when I was your age. Let me go with you to Superintendent Dean's office and see if he can work out a way for you to graduate from high school next spring."

SCENE TWO
SABOTAGE OF GENERAL BUTLER'S AIRPLANE

Private Roy Phillips and I came to work that night at the usual time of 11:00 P. M. There were four airplanes in the big maintenance hangar at Elmendorf Army Air Field at Anchorage, Alaska. We were the only ones who worked in the open hangar on the graveyard shift except for the Staff Sergeant who was in charge. For the length of the time I was there, he never set foot out of the crib-like office that was near the front-middle of the hangar where he had supplemental heat.

By 3:00 A. M., we were still in search of something to do. The airplanes there had undergone their routine maintenance and inspections, waiting for the bitter winter storms to lift enough for their pilots to fly them out.

That was when an icy rush of air suddenly swept across the hangar, and I heard the small entrance door slam shut by the fierce north wind. A P-40 fighter obstructed my view, and I could not see who had entered. The footsteps lead to the office crib and were those of a heavy man wearing snow boots.

"Roy," I said, "I'll bet he's a big shot. He went straight to the office."

"I'll slip around the nose of the B-17 and see if I can get a clear view," Roy answered.

"If he sees you, be careful to act like you are working," I said.

"It's the general. It's General Buckner. I think he is about to come back here. He's talking to the Sergeant," Roy said.

When I first went to work at Duncan Field in San Antonio as an Aircraft Mechanic's Learner, my cousin's husband, Mr. King, was a career aircraft mechanic. One of the things I learned from him was to never be caught not looking busy anytime the big boss showed up.

Acting on a quick impulse, I said to Roy, "Let's get under the right wing of this Lockheed Lode Star. That P-40 will hide us until the General is within a few feet. Then we can be taking off the inspection plates. It will take us long enough for him to think we are busy working."

The Lockheed Lode Star airplane was General Butler's airplane. General Buckner was the Alaskan Defense Commander and General Butler's duties were assigned to the Aleutians. I knew the two Generals were at odds with one another on their war missions' priorities. General Buckner had a large following, most of whom wanted to get rid of General Butler.

Inspection on General Butler's airplane had been completed during the day earlier in the week and signed off. Had the weather not been so terrible, he would have already flown back to the Aleutians.

Upon opening the inspection plate, the turnbuckle on the aileron cable was in view. I was shocked to find the turnbuckle for adjusting the correct amount of tension and travel on the aileron cable to be completely disconnected. The connecting

ends of the inboard and outboard cables were fastened together with a single strand of brass turnbuckle wire with sufficient cable tension to pass the controls free check before take-off.

Heavy icing conditions and severe turbulence were always present in the Aleutian Islands. Had the General taken-off without the cable being fixed, it was a matter of flight time and conditions before the brass wire would snap and he would lose vital aileron control. Sometimes a mechanic would tie a wire this way to hold the cable in place because he needed to look up the Technical Order giving the cable tension and aileron travel. He would never screw the inspection cover back in place until the cable was correctly rigged. This was a clear cut attempt at sabotage and an oversight by the daytime aircraft inspector.

Afterward I went to the office crib, and said, “Sergeant, I wanted to look busy when General Buckner was here. I took off the inspection plate on the bottom of the wing on General Butler’s airplane. The aileron cable was disconnected on it; just tied together with one strand of brass turnbuckle wire. I rigged it with the proper tension and travel, and replaced the inspection plate.”

The sergeant sort of shrugged his shoulders as if to say, “So what?” Somehow I felt he was among those who hated General Butler’s hard orders that helped to win the Thousand Mile Aleutian War. There was no way for General Butler to know an attempt had been made on his life. I had enabled him to continue to make great military contributions toward winning the war in the Pacific. This may have been my greatest contribution to the War Effort, on the night shift when there was no work to do.

As for General Buckner, he went on to be killed on Okinawa, the only American General to be lost in the Pacific War.

The 2766th Provisional Headquarters Flight WWII: Personal Pilot to Kind Ibn Saud was assigned the duty of furnishing a "Lend Lease Pilot" to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia during WWII. This was a part of President Roosevelt's foreign policy to secure adequate oil supplies for the military. Historians have overlooked the importance of this Headquarters Flight, and the intriguing story of the Flight's youngest pilot who served as King Ibn Saud's personal pilot.

The 2766th Provisional Headquarters Flight WWII