

*JJ Johnson was captured by the Japanese and imprisoned on mainland Japan. After the Japanese surrendered, JJ was forced to leave his Japanese lover and return to America and reunite with his American lover.*

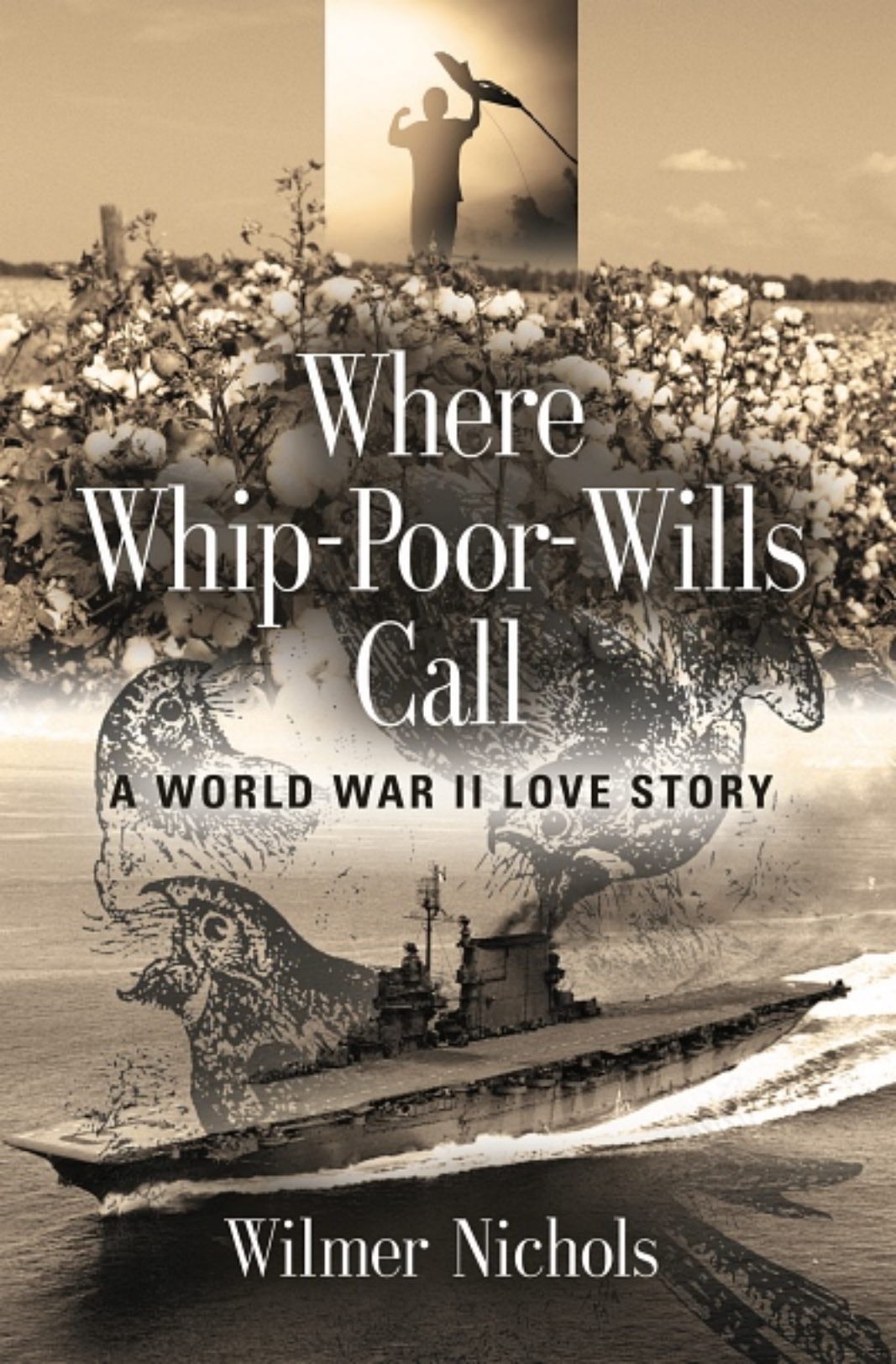
## **Where Whip-Poor-Wills Call: A World War II Love Story**

By Wilmer Nichols

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# Where Whip-Poor-Wills Call

**A WORLD WAR II LOVE STORY**

Wilmer Nichols

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# Chapter 5

## The United States Navy and Flight

### Training in Pensacola

**A**fter I finished my PhD in July 1941 at the age of 17, I decided to join the United States Navy and fulfill my dream of becoming a fighter pilot. When I volunteered for the Navy August 12, 1941, I was 18 years old. I was extremely happy to have my PhD finished, and now, I felt it was time to go fight for my country. That year the Navy pilot training program started to ramp up, so I thought it was a good time for me to volunteer. I really, really wanted to be a Navy tailhook fighter pilot and now I was about to get my chance. Only the brightest young men were selected for flight training, and I was one of the lucky ones to be accepted to the program.

The recruiter told me I would be inducted into the Navy August 18, 1941, there in Princeton and then I would be sent to Pensacola, Florida, for flight training. There was not enough time to visit Mama and Daddy so I would have to write them a letter from Pensacola. However, I did intend to see Autumn before I left. Over the next couple of days, I tried and tried to phone her but no answer. Finally, on the third day Spring answered the phone and told me Autumn had gone home to New York to visit her parents for a few days, then they were going to Europe. I was really confused because I didn't know what to do. Spring told me they were leaving in two days so if I wanted to see her, I would have to leave Princeton soon. I told Spring to phone her and tell her I would be there the next day. I didn't have enough money to buy a train ticket, but I figured if I left the next morning, I could surely hitchhike the 50 miles to New York City and arrive that afternoon.

I mapped out my trip to Manhattan that night before I went to bed. The next morning, I got up real early and after breakfast, I started hitching on Highway 27 which would take me to Elizabeth, New Jersey and then I would take Highway 9 into Manhattan. The total distance of the trip was about 54 miles and I hoped to make it by early afternoon. The ride I caught from Elizabeth took me all the way downtown Manhattan not far from Central Park and Autumn's house on East 65<sup>th</sup> Street. When I arrived at the house, I rang the doorbell, and the butler opened the door. I asked for Autumn, but he said she was not there. Her daddy then came to the door and invited me into the library. He was a stocky built middle-aged man with a slight graying of hair at the temples. A stern, businesslike expression was spread across his face. He did not appear friendly at all, and his demeanor made me a bit nervous and uncomfortable. He told me Autumn had gone downtown with her mother to do some last-minute shopping before their trip to Europe. In the meantime, he wanted to ask me an important question. What he said next really shocked the hell out of me. He asked me what it would take for me to stop seeing Autumn. This really stunned me, and I said what do you mean. Then he said, "to be blunt.... how much money will it take for you to leave here and never see my daughter again...perhaps 25,000 dollars?" This really, really pissed me off and without hesitation, I said, "old man you don't have enough money to make that happen." Then he said, "I will not have a daughter of mine marrying a goddamn poor "red neck" farm boy". I fired back; "you lowdown sorry son-of-bitch what kind of father are you?" He said, "I'm one that has given his daughter a great life. Unlike yours that is too dumb to own his own farm". I said, "my father may not have much education or money but he's a better man than you" and this really pissed him off. He then said, "get out of my house before I call the police and have you arrested for trespassing". On my way out the front door I said, "KISS MY ASS you low life bastard" and left the house.

The butler followed me out and closed the door behind us. He walked along with me and said, "Miss Autumn will be here in a few minutes, and I will send her out here. Just wait over there" and pointed to a bench behind some bushes that shielded it from the house. In about ten minutes Autumn came walking up on the opposite side of the bench. I got the feeling she must have been in the house all along. She greeted me with a big hug and kiss. I told her I was leaving the next day for flight training in Pensacola, Florida and it would probably be a long time before I would see her again. She said, "maybe we can meet somewhere after flight training before you are sent overseas." "I am not sure, but I will check and let you know." I didn't say anything about my encounter with her father. "Autumn, I love you with all my heart and I will think of you every day." She replied, "I feel the same about you JJ...I love you so very much." "I know it's a lot to ask, but if I make it through the war will you be here waiting?" She said, "yes, my darling no matter how long it is." Then I took Mama's necklace off and said, "I want you to have this." She said, "oh my, JJ, I can't take your Mama's necklace because you love it so much." "Mama told me when she gave it to me, that if I ever met a girl, I loved more than her for me to give it to her. Well, that time has come, can I put it on your neck?" She bent her head forward and started to cry. I placed the necklace on her neck, and I started to cry. We embraced each other with tears streaming down our cheeks. After a while, I said, "darling I have to go." She asked how I got there from Princeton, and I said I hitchhiked. She offered me money to buy a train ticket back, but I wouldn't take it. She asked when I had eaten last, and I said this morning at the Princeton cafeteria before I left. "You don't have any money, do you?" "No," I said. She then insisted that she would have the maid make me a couple of sandwiches to take with me. She left and reappeared in about fifteen minutes with a small paper bag with three sandwiches. She asked me to spend the night, but I said I had to be back in Princeton the next



morning to pack and leave for Pensacola. I kissed her one last time and promised to write her at least once a week while I was away. When I was walking down the walkway to exit the yard, I looked back, and Autumn was holding her face in her hands weeping, and this touched my heart deeply. I thought about turning around and going back and telling her what had just transpired between me and her sorry-ass daddy, but I decided it was not such a good idea. I thought if the love between us was strong enough to withstand the war and her father, then it would last until doomsday.

I didn't have money to ride the subway, so I had to walk all the way to West 39<sup>th</sup> Street, which runs through the Lincoln Tunnel, and start hitchhiking. At the front of Autumn's house, I turned right on East 65<sup>th</sup> Street and walked toward Park Ave. I turned around and saw a big black car which looked as though it was following me. So, I turned left on Park Ave and then took an immediate right turn back to East 65<sup>th</sup> Street and walked real fast to Central Park. The last time I saw the car it had also turned left onto Park Ave. I was a bit surprised because I thought Autumn's dad was having me followed; the sorry son-of-a-bitch. If it was true, I was being followed, there's no telling what would happen if I was caught. I would probably end up in the East River. I took my time in the park and then exited on 7<sup>th</sup> Ave and walked through Hell's Kitchen and on to West 39<sup>th</sup> Street. It took me about an hour to catch a ride and it took me to Highway 9. I kept a sharp eye out for the big black car, but I didn't see it again. It was almost mid-night when I got back to Princeton, so I went straight to bed. I was lucky because I didn't have very much to pack for my trip the next day to Pensacola.

The next morning, I was sworn into the United States Navy in Princeton and given 20 dollars for food to make the trip plus transportation tickets to Pensacola. The train from Princeton to Atlanta took the rest of that day and all that night. I slept most of the night, and when I arrived in Atlanta the next morning, I was picked up and ferried

to the Greyhound bus station along with two other future US Naval aviator cadets who were also going to Pensacola. One of the guys was from Birmingham. His name was Colt McDaniel and he graduated from the University of Alabama. The other one was from Atlanta; his name was Blade Houston and he graduated from the University of Georgia. When I told them I was from Mississippi, Colt wanted to know if I went to Ole Miss and I said no, I went to Vanderbilt and Princeton. Then Blade asked which one I graduated from, and I said “both” and that really confused them. I said “my BS degree is from Vanderbilt and my PhD is from Princeton” which was difficult for them to believe. Colt said, “you don’t look old enough to have a BS degree much less a PhD....how old are you anyway?” he asked, and I said 18. “Oh my gosh” Blade replied, “me and Colt are 22.”

The distance from Atlanta to Pensacola is about 325 miles and it took us about eight hours to make the trip by bus. The journey took us through Tuskegee, Alabama, where the Black Airmen of the 99<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron trained and through Montgomery where the famous singers Nat King Cole and Hank Williams were born. The countryside was very similar to that of northeast Mississippi where I grew up and worked in the fields. There was lots of cotton and corn; I was sure happy I was on that bus going to Pensacola and not out there picking cotton. We arrived at the Naval Air Station about five o’clock in the afternoon. A driver picked us up at the bus station and escorted us to the housing quarters where we would be living for the duration of our training. That night at 10:00 one of the sailor’s played “Taps” on a bugle and goose bumps spread all over me and tears trickled down my cheeks. I was where I wanted to be, and I would be doing what I wanted to do in a few days. I awoke the next morning at 5:00 AM (0500 in Navy time) to the sound of “Reveille” blasting from a nearby bugle. I showered and dressed in my civvies and walked to the mess hall with Colt and Blade. After breakfast the entire class of 28 fell in and

marched in formation to a big building where we were given our service number and issued our Navy clothing, including our uniforms. This was so exciting.... As soon as I got back to our housing facility, I tried everything on to make sure it fit, beginning with my pilot's uniform followed by my dress uniforms (winter and summer) and then my everyday uniform. The next day things really changed; we were in class from 6:00 AM (0600) to 5:00 PM (1700). In our first class we learned that Navy time was based on a 24-hour system and all orders were delivered in Zulu time which is "Greenwich Mean Time" or GMT.

The Navy flight school had the same stages as the Army aviation program, except basic flight training added a carrier landing stage for fighter and torpedo- and dive-bomber pilots. Since me, Colt, and Blade were college graduates, we went directly into pre-flight training which shortened our training program by about four months. Pre-flight School was divided into Flight Preparatory School, pre-Midshipman School, and Midshipman School. Flight Preparatory School was a four-week "boot camp" that taught discipline and drill, etiquette and protocol, and ethics. Midshipman School was three months of seamanship, navigation, ordnance, engineering, leadership, and naval military history; graduates became commissioned as Ensigns in the US Naval Reserve.

One of our instructors told us that in 1939, a Navy Ensign named Edward Henry "Butch" O'Hare was ordered to NAS Pensacola, Florida, for primary flight training. He completed flight training May 2, 1940, and was the best pilot to every graduate from the program at that time. On June 3, 1940, he was promoted from Ensign to the rank of Lieutenant (Junior Grade). Lieutenant O'Hare was next assigned to Fighting Squadron three (VF-3) based in San Diego, California, and at that time was assigned as part of the air group of the Lexington-class aircraft carrier, USS Saratoga (CV-3). VF-3 boasted the Felix the Cat emblem and was one of the most successful FitRons (fighter

*Where Whip-Poor-Wills Call*

squadrons) of the early war period. Under Lieutenant Commander Jimmy Thach, the squadron enjoyed a reputation for gunnery and innovative tactics.

When I arrived in Pensacola, I was still a bit scrawny; I was 6 feet tall and weighed 148 pounds. In addition to our daily exercise routine, I would also workout on a regular basis in the gym with the hope of bulking up a bit, and besides I thought a fighter pilot should be physically fit. I wrote Autumn at least once a week if possible while I was in flight training school:

September 15, 1941

Naval Air Station (Flight School)

Pensacola, Florida

*My darling Autumn,*

*It seems like an eternity since I saw you last. The image of you sobbing as I left is still fresh in my memory. You are my beautiful world; you are my life and soul. You are my first thought when I awake in the morning and the last when I go to bed at night. You are my first love and my last. I need you so very much in my life. The future is going to be extremely difficult for both of us since we will not be seeing each other for a long time. It's not going to be easy, but I believe with all my heart we can make it through this difficult time and thereafter the future will be ours.*

*I hope you had a great time in Europe with your family this past summer. The flight school is fantastic, and I am really enjoying every minute of it.*

*Darling, would you please send me a small photograph of yourself so I can attach it to the instrument panel of my airplane? Please write soon.*

*My darling Autumn, I will love you for ever and ever,  
JJ*

About three weeks after I mailed the letter to Autumn, I received a reply telling me how much she missed me and how much she loved me. She also sent me a recent photo of herself. It only showed her head and shoulders, but that was enough to project her awesome beauty. I had the photo framed with a small magnet attached to the backside so I could mount it on the instrument panel of my airplane.

Primary Flight School taught basic aircraft flying and landing. At that time the school used the NAF N3N or Stearman N2S aircraft as primary trainers; both were biplanes with open cockpits and tandem seats. These planes were used primarily to introduce the cadet to flying. The cadet sat in the rear cockpit and was not allowed to fly the plane. He was, however, allowed to hold the joystick to get a feel of its movement to control the elevators and ailerons. It would be a while before we would be introduced to operation of the rudder. The elevator is a primary flight control surface of the aircraft's tail that controls movement about the lateral axis of an aircraft. This movement is referred to as "pitch". When a manual control input is made, the elevators move up or down as appropriate. Back pressure on the stick causes the nose of the aircraft to pitch upward and forward pressure causes a downward motion. Ailerons are used primarily to bank the aircraft for turning. Rightward movement of the stick cause the right wing to drop while leftward movement causes the opposite. The rudder controls movement of the aircraft about its vertical axis. This motion is called yaw. Like the other primary control surfaces, the rudder is a

movable surface hinged to a fixed surface of the tail in this case, to the vertical stabilizer or fin. A coordinated turn requires both rudder and aileron movement simultaneously. Like most other cadets, I had never been off the ground in an airplane before and it was a real thrill. It was unlike anything I had experienced before and I was blown away, especially when I grabbed the stick.

Basic Flight School was broken into two parts: Part one was ground school which was classroom instructions including all about the aircraft and how to fly without entering the vessel and navigation. With a map, compass, and watch we were taught how to plot a course on the ground and how to follow it in the air. Part two taught basic flying skills, night flying, formation flying, and gunnery; an additional part three stage was for single-engine aircraft pilots taught carrier landings and this is what I was really looking forward to. This phase of training used the single-engine closed cockpit North American SNJ airplane with tandem seating and actual flying started after one week of ground school; the instructor sat in the rear seat and the student in the front seat.

During the first day of ground school, we reviewed the instrument panel of the airplane which included the airspeed indicator, the altimeter, the vertical speed indicator, the artificial horizon, the gyrocompass, the turn and bank indicator, and the RPM indicator. These instruments and their function must be memorized before the cadet could enter the cockpit and fly the plane. We were also shown pictures of the cockpits of all Japanese aircraft along with the armament they carried, and we had to memorize these also. Basic flight training included flying the pattern, takeoffs and landings, steep turns to the right and left, emergency landings, the forward slip, and stalls and recovery. All airports have the same basic flight pattern; takeoffs and landings are made with the aircraft headed into the wind. At uncontrolled airports (those without a control tower) during takeoff on

the upwind leg the pilot climbs out to about 1000 feet above ground level then leaves the pattern on a 45-degree angle to the left. If the pilot remains in the pattern, he turns left 90-degrees onto the crosswind leg and flies a few hundred feet then makes a left 90-degree turn onto the downwind leg. He continues flying straight ahead a few hundred feet after passing the end of the runway and then turns left 90-degrees onto the base leg; finally, he makes a 90-degree turn onto the final leg and aligns the aircraft straight with the runway and then he either lands or does a touch and go. These airplane maneuvers are considered a left-hand flight pattern.

The forward slip can be a useful skill to master since it allows for fine adjustment of the airplane's height above the runway (or flight deck) on final approach, allowing you to stay on glide path while maintaining your target approach airspeed. Slips are useful when you're too high and need to lose extra altitude in a hurry to make your touchdown spot. The aircraft is actually traveling forward in a straight line except it is moving sideways with the nose pointing either right or left and this reduces airspeed. In these cases, it makes little sense to just lower the nose to get down to the runway since that will cause a corresponding increase in airspeed. The skill you need to hone is the ability to dissipate the extra altitude without increasing airspeed above that required to land. But it's important to understand that not all slips are created equal. In a forward slip, the amount of slip, and therefore the sink rate, is determined by the bank angle. In other words, the steeper the bank, the steeper the descent. In most lightweight airplanes, of course, the steepness of the slip is limited by the amount of rudder travel available. This is the practical slip limit, and any additional bank will cause the airplane to turn even with full opposite rudder applied. You can, of course, lower the nose in this scenario, which will increase your airspeed and make the rudder more effective. To perform a forward slip to landing, bring the power to idle and slow to normal

approach speed. Pick a point far in front of you and make it your target. To set up the slip, bank into the wind. As soon as you see your target start moving in the windscreen, apply opposite rudder to keep you moving toward your target. For example, apply right aileron and left rudder, or vice versa, depending on the direction of the wind. Make sure the nose of your airplane during the slip is at the proper attitude to maintain your approach airspeed. To recover from the slip, simultaneously release the rudder pedal and level the airplane's wings with the ailerons. And remember, like most things in flying, practice makes perfect.

Inadvertent stalls are an example of loss of control of the aircraft in-flight and are a leading cause of fatal general aviation accidents. Many accidents involving stalls are caused by simple distractions. These accidents wouldn't occur if the distractions are avoided. The number of accidents could be further reduced by using proper technique to recover from a stall when one occurs. Inadvertent stalls are stressful situations, so the procedure must be drilled until it is mastered. There are two basic operations pilots use to practice stall recovery:

Power-off stalls replicate and help us avoid a stall during an approach to landing. Power-on stalls, also known as departure stalls, replicate and help us avoid a stall immediately after taking off. Practicing these stalls builds awareness of the factors that can lead to or compound the severity of a stall. The earlier a potential stall is recognized, the easier it is to correct. Loss of control incidents are commonly caused by uncoordinated flight, equipment malfunctions, pilot complacency, distractions, turbulence, and poor risk management.

The signs of an imminent stall include decreased control effectiveness and the presence of a stall warning indicator. When you realize you have entered a stall, the first, most important step to begin recovering is to reduce your angle of attack. Most training airplanes require at least four steps to fully recover from a stall. Pitch nose-down



to decrease the angle of attack, reduce the bank by leveling the wings, add power as needed and finally, return to the desired flight path.

When entering a stall in practice, you should increase the pitch slowly and smoothly up to a landing pitch attitude, approximately 10° nose up, and hold it there until the stall occurs. The recovery should not be aggressive. If the airplane is loaded properly, the nose should naturally lower when a stall occurs. Instead of shoving the stick forward, lower the angle of attack by simply releasing the back pressure and adding a little forward pressure if needed. This will result in a quicker recovery, and less altitude will be lost because this technique prevents the airspeed from greatly increasing, as it would in a dive. You should then return to the entry altitude by climbing at the best rate. If you pitch up too aggressively, you may inadvertently enter a secondary stall. To enter a power-on stall, you should smoothly and quickly increase the pitch to between 20° and 25°. You should “transition smoothly from the takeoff or departure attitude to the pitch attitude that will induce a stall.” Once the pitch has been increased sufficiently, do not let the nose drop until the stall occurs. When the stall occurs, push the stick forward smoothly to lower the nose keeping the wings level and the aircraft will recovery from the stall. Well trained pilots should feel confident in their ability to recognize the signs of imminent stalls to safely recover from one before it becomes fully developed. The pilot should always concentrate on flying the aircraft and never become complacent.

Advanced Flight Training qualified the pilot on either a single-engine fighter, dive-bomber or torpedo bomber or a multiple-engine transport, patrol plane, or bomber. One of the most important advanced flight training skills for tailhook pilots and one unique to Navy (and some Marine) pilots was the ability to land on an aircraft carrier. Landing on a carrier is one of the toughest feats in all of aviation. In fact, studies have shown that pilots are more anxious about a night-time

carrier landing than they are about combat. It is a complex act of coordination. Before entering the flight pattern, the tail hook had to be deployed as the plane flew low toward the ship which was headed into the wind. Upon entering the downwind leg of the pattern, landing gear and flaps were lowered and the landing checklist was completed. After turning onto the base leg about 100 yards from the end of the ship the pilot establishes an airspeed 7-10 knots above the stalling speed. After turning onto final, cut power at 15-10 ft above the flight deck and pray that the tail hook catches one of the four arresting wires, sturdy cables woven from high tensile steel wire. The arresting wires are stretched across the deck and are attached on both ends to hydraulic cylinders below deck. If the tail hook snags an arresting wire, it pulls the wire out, and the hydraulic cylinder system absorbs the energy to bring the plane to a stop within about 300 feet. There are four parallel arresting wires spaced about 50 feet apart, to expand the target area for the pilot. Pilots are aiming for the third wire as it's the safest and most effective target. They never shoot for the first wire because it's dangerously close to the edge of the deck. If they come in too low on the first wire, they could easily crash into the stern of the ship. It's acceptable to snag the second or fourth wire, but for a pilot to move up through the ranks, he must be able to catch the third wire consistently. To pull off this incredible trick, the pilot needs to approach the flightdeck at exactly the right angle and maintain total concentration.

The airplane had to be lined-up perfectly for the landing or the landing signals officer (LSO) on the deck would wave off the landing and the pilot would have to go around and make another pass. The LSO stood in a very exposed position and used a pair of paddles to send the pilot signals and guide them into a safe landing. If the tail hook doesn't catch any of the arresting wires the plane must be moving fast enough to take off again and come around for another pass. We spent many,

many hours of flight time practicing on small stretches of a runway, mastering the skill before we went anywhere near a real aircraft carrier.

All future pilots were expected to solo after 10 hours of training in the airplane. Flying an airplane solo for the first time was a bit stressful. The solo included taking off, flying the runway pattern, and landing. This procedure is completed three times and if everything goes well and the pilot wishes, he can do a touch and go and leave the pattern and fly around a bit before landing and coming to a complete stop. So that's what I did. I climbed up to about 10,000 ft and it was spectacular. I had never experienced such an exhilarating thrill; I had total control of the aircraft I was flying.

*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings.  
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds - and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung  
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there  
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air.  
Up, up the long delirious, burning blue,  
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace  
Where never lark, or even eagle flew -  
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod  
The high untresspassed sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.*

*High Flight by John Gillespie Jr*

Each student pilot's first solo was graded on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best all around. If a student made less than 5, he had to

perform 4 more successful solos before he could advance further. I loved learning aerodynamics and flying the airplane, and me and a few other cadets including both Colt and Blade in my class scored 10s on our first solo flights. We were then qualified to check out airplanes and practice on our own. For me, every spare hour was devoted to developing my flying skills. After logging about 20 solo hours, I would fly out over the Gulf of Mexico and practice, practice, and practice maneuvers such as steep dives, 90 degree turns (left and right), chandelles and the three Ss (stalls, slips and spins). I also tried aerobatic maneuvers including rolls, loops, and hammerheads but the SNJ lacked the power to complete these. These maneuvers would have to wait until I was flying the Grumman F4F-3 Wildcat. My objective was to become the Navy's youngest flying ACE (an aviator who shoots down five enemy airplanes).

The first week of December was especially difficult and stressful so we were given the weekend off. I usually practiced carrier landings on Saturday, but I decided to rest that particular weekend. Me, Colt, and Blade went on liberty that Saturday afternoon of December 6 and hung out on Pensacola Beach. That night the three of us went to a few bars in Pensacola that had music and dancing. Even though I was only 18 years old, I was allowed to enter the bars. The girls at the bar were really hot looking and both Colt and Blade were dancing and having a great time. I was approached a couple of times by one of the girls, but I told her I didn't know how to dance. She then sat down at our table and asked me if I would like to go with her and have some fun and I said no thanks. I didn't know for sure what she was talking about, but I had a pretty good idea. I said good-bye to Colt and Blade and took a taxi back to the base. Some of the girls at the bars were ladies of the night, but most of them were just fun-loving girls out to have a good time and they really liked flyboys. It was extremely difficult to be faithful to Autumn with all the pretty girls around. I hit the sack about

0200 after an entrance into in my diary and writing a letter to Autumn. I told her all about how proud the people of Pensacola were to have us there. They treated us like heroes even though we had not gone to war yet.

At the end of 1939, the battleship Arizona went into dry dock at Bremerton again; Bremerton is home to Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and the Bremerton Annex of Naval Base Kitsap near Seattle, Washington. In July 1940, the Arizona joined other ships in the Pacific Fleet on a tour of some of the Navy's outlying bases in the south seas, a not-so-subtle show of force and readiness. War was spreading across Europe at the time and Japan had moved on China. Most American troops talked about when they would fight, not if. The Arizona returned to Long Beach in September for another fleet exercise. By the end of the year, the ship would steam up the coast to Bremerton for maintenance and re-provisioning. Some on board wondered if the Arizona would be readied for battle. The ship's atmosphere was not like it was even six months earlier. There were rumors that the ship would leave Bremerton outfitted for battle. No one doubted now: War was coming.

Christmas 1940 seemed gloomier all around for the crew of the Arizona. They had celebrated Christmas the previous year at their home port near Los Angeles, amid sun and palm trees. There was news of the war in Europe, but it still felt distant. This year, the ship was moored in Bremerton, about to go into dry dock. Crews were preparing to update some of Arizona's armaments. The ship would be fitted with four 0.50 caliber machine guns mounted high enough on the mast to allow gunners to fire without hitting anything on the superstructure. More accurate range finders were for a flatlander being installed on the 5-inch anti-aircraft guns.

Donald Stratton arrived in Bremerton earlier in the month, reporting for duty. He found the Arizona moored at the dock, a stunning

sight from Red Cloud, Nebraska. Stratton had recently graduated from high school, the senior class's best all-around athlete, excelling in football, track and field, and basketball. Times were tough at that time, especially in rural America. Stratton wasn't sure what he would do after high school; several colleges were interested in recruiting him to play football, but he declined their offer and followed some of his friends into the military. He chose the Navy because he didn't want to be a foot soldier. His first assignment after joining the ship's company was cleaning the side of the ship. He would hang from the side using a rope and scrape barnacles from the hull, then scrub and often paint the surface. Sometimes he was on fire watch while the welders worked. One day the chaplain came by and watched the men work and then offered them his only comfort: "It'll be a lot different when we're out at sea." But the trip back down the coast reinforced the dread in the air. Crew members stood watch with orders to watch for the enemy. The ship sailed without lights at night. Sailors patrolled the corridors and secured doors and hatchways. During the day, the Arizona continued to run maneuvers and conduct target practice. Paul Johnson, the son of sharecroppers, from the cotton fields of northeast Mississippi, followed his two older brothers into the Navy. He manned one of the 50-foot boats used to tow targets for the big guns to shoot at. Paul and the other crew members would motor out about 20 miles, the maximum range for the guns, then wait. The projectiles screamed through the air, headed for the huge fabric target on a floating platform. Each projectile was coated with a different color paint, leaving the target marked when the shot was accurate. Johnson's boat was close enough to feel the wind from the shell as it passed. And some of the shells were close enough to the boat to rattle the crewmen badly.

The Arizona stopped in San Pedro, California before steaming on to Pearl Harbor in late January 1941. At the port, Clarendon Hetrick was among a new batch of fresh recruits ready to board the ship.

Hetrick was in the Navy on his parents' signature, still about five months from his 18th birthday. He grew bored of school and decided he knew all he needed to know, so he dropped out and enlisted leaving his home in Lemon Grove, California, for basic training in San Diego. A new recruit could declare whether he wanted to enter the Navy as a black shoe or brown shoe sailor. Sailors who were associated with the aviation branch of the Navy were considered brown shoe sailors and everyone else was a black shoe sailor. On the ship, Hetrick found out how little he really knew. A shipboard sailor's belongings, including his hammock were stored and carried in a seabag. "Grab your seabags and let's go," someone shouted. "Go find yourself a place to hang your hammock. That'll be your home while onboard the ship." Two days earlier, Rear Admiral Isaac C. Kidd boarded the Arizona and assumed command of Battleship Division One. Two days later, the ship set sail for Hawaii.

At Pearl Harbor, the Arizona's crew tried to settle back into its routine of naval exercises and maneuvers, but each time the ship left the port, it seemed weighted down by the uneasy feelings that one day they would man the guns to shoot something other than cloth targets. Although the ship was already packed with more than 1,500 sailors, men kept arriving. In the spring, Joe Langdell finished midshipman's school at Northwestern in Chicago and shipped out to Pearl Harbor an Ensign, one of the fast-tracked officers, the "90-day wonders," as enlisted men came to call them. Langdell found officers' quarters full, so he set up a cot in a corridor. The Arizona carried 12, 45-caliber 14-inch guns in triple gun turrets. The turrets were numbered from I to IV from front to rear. The guns could not elevate independently and were limited to a maximum elevation of 15 degrees which gave them a maximum range of 21,000 yards. The ship carried 100 shells for each gun. Defense against torpedo boats was provided by 22, 51-caliber 5-inch guns mounted in individual casemates in the sides of the ship's

hull. Positioned as they were they proved vulnerable to sea spray and could not be worked in heavy seas. At an elevation of 15 degrees, they had a maximum range of 14,050 yards. Each gun was provided with 230 rounds of ammunition. The ship mounted four 50-caliber 3-inch guns for anti-aircraft defense, although only two were fitted when completed. The other pair was added shortly afterward on top of turret number III. The Arizona also contained two 21-inch torpedo tubes and carried 24 torpedoes for them. Ensign Langdell was assigned to turret number II and given orders to learn how to operate the guns and the turret. After a few weeks, Langdell drew another assignment, joining a new group that would use photography to help improve the accuracy of the guns. His crew would obtain still and moving pictures during gunnery practice and then analyze the images and deliver the results to the gunners. In the fall, Langdell was assigned to a training group. He studied during the day on Ford Island, where the Navy maintained a base in Pearl Harbor, and slept in the officers' quarters at night.

When the ships were in port, there wasn't much to do, so the Navy encouraged competition among the vessel's crew. There were teams for rowing, baseball, and football. A battle of the ship's bands was a popular event and one where the Arizona's band scored well. Crewmen also were allowed liberty in Honolulu, where there were bars and pretty girls and not much else for a young sailor. The Navy tried to police its own as much as possible, assigning seasoned crew members to shore duty.

On December 5 at 0810 the aircraft carrier USS Lexington (CV-2) eased out of Hawaii, the last of the three aircraft carriers based there to leave port. For all the carnage and destruction, the Japanese would wreak on Pearl Harbor in two more days, it is the aircraft carriers the Japs were mostly after. The attack on Pearl Harbor is not so much an attempt to defeat the United States as it was to cripple the Americans



long enough for Japan to seize and hold the Western Pacific and Indochina. It is unusual that no carriers were left in Pearl Harbor.

In April 1941, four of the seven U.S. aircraft carriers were in the Atlantic to protect the merchant ships on the fragile Atlantic supply lanes to Britain. President Roosevelt had ordered Pearl Harbor's carrier USS Yorktown (CV-5), three battleships, and 21 other ships to change oceans, reducing the Pacific fleet by one-fourth. Then the Saratoga went to Puget Sound for repairs. The USS Enterprise (CV-6) and its escorts of cruisers and destroyers left November 28 to reinforce Wake Island, since Admiral Husband E. Kimmel rightly expected a Japanese attack there. Similarly, the Lexington left with five cruisers to reinforce Midway Island. All those ships were safe when the first bombs fell at Pearl Harbor.

The Japanese soon knew the carriers had left Pearl Harbor because Takeo Yoshikawa, a 29-year-old diplomatic clerk in the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu, provided the information. To his co-workers, this long-haired young man was the office black sheep; he goofed off at work, drank a lot and chased women. To the Japanese fleet, he was a top intelligence agent. He would take long, wandering strolls and frequent taxi rides around Oahu to produce a regular report on the ships at Pearl Harbor, mapped out carefully in code on a grid. For months, he had observed the daily routine of the US fleet. Most of the ships would leave port on Mondays and return for the weekend.

On December 5, the long-haired snitch accurately reported the departure of the Lexington. The information was quickly relayed to the Japanese task force steaming in the North Pacific toward the Hawaiian Islands. Aboard his flagship, Vice Admiral Nagumo was very disappointed. But it was too late to stop the approaching convoy. Remaining at Pearl Harbor were 96 other ships, including eight mighty battleships -- prey enough for the bombers on the decks of his aircraft carriers. At 1130, the tankers sailing with Nagumo's convoy fed fuel to

the bigger ships and then veered off to await rendezvous on their return from Pearl Harbor. The crew of the support ships lined the decks and saluted the task force in ceremonial farewell.

In the underwater channels and crevices of the warm Hawaiian waters, 27 Japanese submarines slid into position to await the start of the attack. They formed a rough circle about the islands. Some were submerged in the canyons between the islands and others were on guard dozens of miles offshore. About 1500, the destroyer USS Ralph Talbot (DD-390) picked up a sonar contact five miles off Pearl Harbor. There should be no friendly submarine under the water here. The skipper asks for permission to fire depth charges. But the squadron commander refused. It must be a big fish, he said.

The Arizona returned to Pearl Harbor on Friday, December 5, after a week of training exercises. The ship docked with its starboard side toward Ford Island and its bow pointed toward the entrance of the harbor. Behind her in "Battleship Row" sat the battleships Oklahoma, the USS California (BB-44), and the USS Maryland (BB-46). Alongside the Arizona was the USS Nevada (BB-36), and alongside the Oklahoma was the USS Tennessee (BB-43). In front of these battleships was the USS Pennsylvania (BB-38), and directly across from it was the USS West Virginia (BB-48). In all, eight of the Pacific Fleet's nine battleships were moored in the harbor. The USS Colorado (BB-45) was in Bremerton, Washington, being overhauled. A repair ship, the USS Vestal (AR-4), was tied up next to the Arizona. Its crew members would complete minor maintenance and repair work in preparation for the Arizona's next trip to the shipyard in Bremerton. The ship was scheduled to leave for San Pedro, California, the following Saturday, December 13, and then steam north to the Puget Sound for the overhaul. Clare Hetrick took time Saturday to go into Honolulu and pick up a few items at the stores. He returned with a new pair of white shoes, a real luxury, but one he decided he deserved. He

would wear them in the morning. Ken Potts checked his schedule and found that first thing in the morning he would take one of the small transports to the pier on Oahu to pick up fresh fruits and vegetables for the ship. John Anderson would also rise early to set up chairs for the deck-side church services. He noted that the man he had hauled in from the bar was still in the brig. Paul Johnson wandered the ship and found buddies who had organized a craps game under turret number IV. He joined and when the game ended late that night, he pocketed \$60 in winnings, stuffing the bills into his wallet. As the day ended, the ships doused their lights, and the harbor grew quietened. A late motor launch brought men back from liberty in Honolulu. Water washed against the hulls. Night watch crews patrolled the decks. Lights glowed on shore at the Ford Island base and farther away on Waikiki Beach. December 6 edged into December 7 aboard a ship, in a harbor, in a Nation at peace.

To catch the Americans by surprise, the Japanese ships maintained strict radio silence throughout their 3,500-mile trek from Hitokappu Bay, Japan, to a predetermined launch sector 230 miles north of the Hawaiian island of Oahu. All six of Vice Admiral Nagumo's first-line aircraft carriers, Akagi, Kaga, Soryu, Hiryu, Shokaku, and Zuikaku, were assigned to the mission. With over 420 embarked planes, these ships constituted by far the most powerful carrier task force ever assembled. At 0600 on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a first wave of the Japanese planes lifted off from the carriers, followed by a second wave an hour later. Led by Captain Mitsuo Fuchida, the pilots spotted land and assumed their attack positions around 0730. Twenty-three minutes later, with his bomber perched above the unsuspecting American ships moored in pairs along Pearl Harbor's "Battleship Row," Fuchida broke radio silence to shout, "Tora! Tora! Tora!" (Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!)—the coded message informing the Japanese fleet that they had caught the Americans by surprise.

At 0748, 183 Japanese fighters, dive bombers, and torpedo bombers descended on the US Navy's Pacific Fleet base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. They swarmed airfields and warships with bombs and torpedoes, causing a massive amount of damage. A little more than an hour later, a second wave of 167 aircraft arrived, wreaking more havoc before returning to six Japanese aircraft carriers some 240 miles off the coast of Hawaii. By the time the smoke cleared, the crippling damage was apparent. At the cost of 29 planes and five mini submarines, the Japanese had sunk or heavily damaged eight of the US Pacific Fleet's nine battleships. Three cruisers, three destroyers, and a number of other ships were seriously damaged. There were 188 US aircraft destroyed and 157 damaged. The attack killed 2,335 US servicemen and wounded 1,143 more, in addition to 68 civilians killed and 34 wounded. The Japanese lost 129 servicemen and had one submarine crewman captured. It was a massive blow to the US Navy. But not all was lost. By chance, all three of the Pacific Fleet's carriers were on missions and survived the attack. The Navy had seven carriers in service at the time. Four — the USS *Ranger* (CV-4), the *Yorktown*, the USS *Hornet* (CV-12), and the USS *Wasp* (CV-7) — were stationed on the East Coast, poised to deal with Germany's U-boats, which had caused a number of incidents already. The three carriers of the Pacific Fleet — the *Enterprise*, the *Lexington*, and the *Saratoga* — were being used to support reinforcement efforts in the Pacific.

Joe George, a boatswain's mate on a repair ship about 70 feet away, was cutting the lines that tethered the vessel to the *Arizona* when he saw Stratton and five other men stranded on the battleship. In direct defiance of orders from his superior, George shoved a lead-weighted rope to the *Arizona*'s sailors, who grabbed hold. "The six of us went hand over hand across the line and above the inflamed water," Stratton wrote. "My body was burned, my hands were raw, and I was focused on survival. I never thought about not making it."

At lunch the next day I was told about the surprise military strike by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service upon the United States Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii. The attack led to the United States' formal entry into World War II the next day which was December 8, 1941. The Japanese military leadership, including Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, referred to the attack as the Hawaii Operation. Japan intended the attack as a preventive action to keep the United States Pacific Fleet from interfering with its planned military actions in Southeast Asia against overseas territories of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States. Over the course of seven hours there were coordinated Japanese attacks on the US-held Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island and on the British Empire in Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Within days, the Japanese were masters of the Pacific. At the time I didn't know that Paul's ship the Arizona was docked in Pearl Harbor during the attack.

When I heard the news about the Arizona being sunk, I thought it must be a mistake. It was hard for me to believe that my brother, Paul was probably dead. I was in total shock, and I started to cry. I didn't speak to anyone for a while because I couldn't talk. I made a promise to myself right then, that I would kill every goddamn slant eyed Jap that I possibly could, and I couldn't wait to have the chance which was coming up in only a few months.

Advanced Flight Training qualified the pilot on either a single-engine fighter, dive-bomber or torpedo bomber or a multiple-engine transport, patrol plane or bomber; graduates were classed as Naval Aviators (or Flyboys) and received gold Naval Aviator wings. Each graduate had around 600 total flight hours, with approximately 200 flight hours in front-line Navy aircraft. Pilots who washed out were assigned as regular Ensigns.

The last thing we were taught in flight school was how to exit the aircraft and deploy our parachute. The method of properly ejecting

from a fighter plane varied depending on the plane. First the pilot must open the canopy (if it's closed) and then use his hands on the side of the cockpit and roll over the "wall." Then, the pilot waits to clear the plane (usually with a ten count) before pulling the ripcord, deploying the parachute.

Enlisted Naval Aviation cadets were paid \$50/month for the first month of training and \$75/month for the second through eighth months. Commissioned Naval Aviation students (NavCad Ensigns or commissioned officers attending Flight School) were paid \$245/month (the same pay as an Ensign attending training).

With our college degrees and advanced education, me, Colt and Blade were placed in an accelerated phase of the flight training program. We graduated and received our Navy wings December 10, 1941; I was 18 years old. At last, the graduates were assigned to their duty stations. We had completed our training, but still lacked practical experience.

Me and another pilot from my class were assigned to fighter squadron VF-3 which was based at the time in San Diego, California. It was one of the most successful Navy fighter squadrons in the early part of the war. I was thrilled because I would be flying under the leadership of Lieutenant Commander John S. "Jimmy" Thach and with the great pilot Edward Henry "Butch" O'Hare. O'Hare graduated from the same flight School in Pensacola that we had just graduated from. Everyone kept bragging about what a great pilot he was.

The other pilot assigned to VF-3 with me, was Skipper Sinclair and he was from Adamsville, Tennessee. Everybody called him Skip. He was four years older than me, and I really liked him; he was a helluva good pilot. I had known him during flight school, but we had not hung out very much together. I palled around with my buddies Colt and Blade most of the time and I was hoping they would be joining me in

VF-3, but they were assigned to VF-6 which was stationed aboard the Enterprise.

## Chapter 12

### My Capture and Imprisonment

(February 17-September 2, 1945)

Iwo Jima (or Sulfur Island), known in Japan as Io To, is one of the Japanese Volcano Islands and lies south of the Bonin Islands. Together with other islands, they form the Ogasawara Archipelago. The highest point on Iwo Jima is Mount Suribachi at 528 feet high. Iwo Jima was strategically important to the Japanese because it provided an air base for Japanese fighter planes to intercept long-range B-29 Superfortress bombers, and it provided a haven for Japanese naval units in need of any support available. In addition, it was used by the Japanese to stage air attacks on the Mariana Islands from November 1944 through January 1945. The capture of Iwo Jima would eliminate these problems and provide a staging area for Operation Downfall -- the eventual invasion of the Japanese Home Islands. The distance of B-29 raids could (hypothetically) be cut in half, and a base would be available for P-51 Mustang and P-38 Lightning fighters to escort and protect the bombers.

In the late afternoon of February 17, me and Jeff and the rest of VF-20, took off from the deck of the Lexington in marginal weather conditions and headed toward our target. About 30 minutes into the flight, the weather turned really, really bad with a very low ceiling, and I got separated from the group somewhere north of Iwo Jima and south of Chichi Jima. The distance between these two islands is only about 168 miles. I thought it would be best if I returned to the ship since my visibility was so very poor. As I was returning to the Lexington, I developed a serious oil leak that caused the oil pressure to decrease dramatically, and I knew I was destined to ditch at sea. I sent out



distress SOS signals and broadcast May Day, May Day several times with my location, then the engine totally stopped. I attempted to restart it, but it was completely frozen up and would not turn over. I was now gliding without power. I could have bailed out, but I thought my chance of survival would be greater if I remained in the aircraft. If I survived the crash, I would at least have a life raft and supplies for 10-15 days. For safety precautions, I jettisoned all my fuel as I was descending and in addition, I kept the canopy closed until impact with the hope I would float for a while. The landing was pretty rough, but the plane remained intact and eventually came to a stop. I remained in the cockpit until the next morning and as the plane was sinking, I inflated the life raft, threw it into the water with all my supplies, and then as I was exiting the cockpit, I grabbed the picture of Autumn and jumped into the raft. The weather had cleared and as I was floating away, I turned and saw the plane completely submerge. I searched through my belongings and found my compass and it indicated I was headed in a northerly direction and from my map, I knew that both Chichi Jima and Tokyo were somewhere north of me. The North Equatorial Current combined with the Coriolis Effect and the Kuroshio System would likely carry the raft in a northwestern direction. I had heard some gruesome stories about some pilots who had been captured by the Japanese soldiers on the island of Chichi Jima the fall before (1944). The captured flyboys had been beaten and tortured before being executed by beheading on the orders of Lieutenant General Yoshio Tachibana, the commander of the troops there. It was rumored that he and his cronies would have these wild drunken parties and commit all sorts of weird stuff, even cannibalism. So, I really didn't want to drift ashore at Chichi Jima, but I knew if I missed the Island, there were other uninhabited islands in the Bonin archipelago between Chichi Jima and mainland Japan which was about 600 miles away and I knew I would never survive a journey that long. I thought if I drifted ashore on one of the uninhabited islands

I could live like Robinson Crusoe. My only hope for survival would be a rescue at sea and it would likely be by the Japanese.

The first few days adrift at sea were the worst. The weather was overcast and cool, but I had on warm dry cloths, and I rationed my supplies, especially the water. Also, I still had my Smith and Wesson pistol and my knife if I needed them. I thought if I became desperate for food, I might be able to kill a bird and skin it with my knife or maybe I could even shoot a fish. I tried not to sleep during the daylight hours so I could sleep at night. The first night at sea was awful, I had never been that bored and lonely in my entire life. That was the longest night I had ever spent, and I was afraid for the first time in my life. It was so dark I could not even see my hand six inches away from my eyes. I was afraid of what I couldn't see not what I could see. The sounds of the sea at night were really strange; I heard singing type sounds comprised of moaning, howling, and crying noises which I thought were probably coming from whales. On occasion when a person is stuck in a situation that seems hopeless, they revert back to their childhood. I cried myself to sleep that first night adrift thinking about Mama and Daddy and Autumn. I longed to hear the sound of the whip-poor-wills call. The last thing I remember before I feel asleep that night was, I said goodnight, Mama.

When daybreak came the next day and I woke up, I thought I have to get myself together and stop feeling sorry for myself and think of survival. My position seemed to be precisely the same as it was the day before. There was no sensation of movement whatsoever because nothing had changed. I wondered just how long this would go on. I could understand how easy it would be just to give up all hope of survival. The main things that kept me going were my desire to be with Autumn again and to see Mama and Daddy. I would look at Autumn's photo numerous times every day and remember the wonderful times we had spent together. At least I had stored a pencil and tablet in my

survival kit, so I could keep track of the number of days adrift and write in my diary while I was at sea. Even if I didn't survive, there possibly would be a record of some of my daily activities, and this may be useful to someone in the future. It was amazing, that in a situation like this, one's only rational objective is survival. The days seemed endless with nothing to do. I sang a lot and talked to Autumn's picture. A person cannot believe how much a single photo can add to one's daily existence. All I would see most days was an occasional seabird, an albatross, a shearwater, or a gannet. Also, sometimes I would see a shark in the water; they would swim really close to the raft and sometimes even bump into it. The weather was pretty nice, mid-60s in the daytime and mid-50s at night. I had absolutely no control over the raft; its direction was totally controlled by the forces of nature. After a few days the sky cleared and there was not a cloud in the sky. That night the sky was full of stars and planets, and they were so bright it seemed as though you could reach out and touch them. After a while, the moon began to rise in the distant east, and it was so bright and beautiful with its reflection in the water. I watched it that night until I fell asleep.

Even though I had rationed my food, I ran out of everything except water on the 15th day. The next couple of days without food were extremely difficult and I was becoming super hungry. I tried not to think about food, but it was impossible. After a few days without food intake a person's appetite decreases to the point where food is unimportant, but I knew to survive I would have to eat. During the afternoon of day 17, an albatross landed on the end of the raft opposite to where I was sitting. So, I took out the Smith and Wesson, and aimed very carefully, because I didn't want to hit the raft, and fired. I struck the bird in the chest, and it fell into the water. I lunged to the end of the raft and leaned over to pick it up and just before I grabbed the dead albatross, a huge shark beat me to it. I let out a scream of cuss words

that I didn't even know were in my vocabulary. I thought at that moment, I was probably going to starve to death, but a more urgent problem was water. I had rationed my water intake to a sip in the morning and one in the afternoon and I only had a few drops left. I was beginning to become dehydrated and started suffering from intermittent bouts of disorientation and confusion. Sometimes I would start to hallucinate; I saw Autumn walking across the water trying to catch me and I kept yelling stop, stop before you start to sink. The sun was sinking into the water behind her, and I thought it was going to pull her down with it. But there was a Whip-Poor-Will circling her head to keep her from sinking. I was hollering as loud as I could and then I must have passed out because I don't remember anything else until the next morning when I awoke.

I had given up all hope of survival and started thinking about life and dying. I was convinced that nobody in the universe knew where I was, except maybe God. I was just a tiny speck of life in the vastness of the Pacific Ocean. Without water I was doomed, and I was beginning to accept the fact that all life would soon trickle from my body and all that would be left was a lifeless figure of a human being. In a few more days that body would begin to decompose and start to stink. After a few weeks, the tissues of the body turn into a soapy fatty acid known as "grave wax" that halts bacterial growth. The skin, however, will still blister and turn greenish black. Finally, putrefaction begins and scavenging birds such as skuas and frigatebirds will begin to feed on the soft parts of the face like the eyeballs and lips. If the raft ever drifts ashore or is discovered at sea, nothing would be left except bones and maybe my diary and the picture of Autumn. I thought seriously about shooting myself in the head with the Smith and Wesson, but decided to wait at least one more day. And besides if the bullet didn't kill me, I would still be alive but suffering from a painful head injury.

The tarp I slept under was waterproof and I had arranged it at one end of the raft so that if it rained, water would collect in it. The afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup> day at sea was very cloudy, and I could see rain showers in the distance, and I started praying that one of those showers would drift in my direction. After about an hour nothing changed so, I then thought, what the heck I would do an Indian rain dance, it couldn't hurt. When I finished my dance, I sat down and after about 15 minutes it started to pour down rain and that's when I really broken into a dance yelling and hollering! I put every container out to catch water, in addition to that caught in the tarp. I drank and drank and still had plenty left. I was happy the rain stopped before it filled the raft. I wondered which caused the rain, the prayer or the dance or maybe it was both.

When daylight came on the 19th day adrift, I could see a speck of land in the distance and I thought it must be Haha Jima or Chichi Jima. As I drifted closer, I could see that I was probably going to pass the island on my starboard side and then I would be headed toward mainland Japan. The next day I saw land again and when I looked at my map, I was certain the Island I passed earlier was Haha Jima and the one I was approaching was Chichi Jima. The two islands were only 30 miles apart.

Chichi Jima was the primary site of long-range Japanese radio stations, as well as being the central base of supply and communication between Japan and the Ogasawara Islands. Therefore, it had the heaviest garrison in the Nanpō Shotō, the island chain south of Japan including Okinawa. At the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor a Japanese Army force of about 3,700 men garrisoned Chichi Jima. In addition, about 1,200 naval personnel manned the Chichi Jima Naval Base, a small seaplane base, the radio and weather station, and various gunboat, subchaser, and minesweeping units. The garrison also included a heavy artillery fortress regiment that was a frequent target of US attacks. The island also served as a major point for Japanese radio

relay communication and surveillance operations in the Pacific, with two radio stations atop its two mountains. At least two US citizens of Japanese descent served in the Japanese military on Chichi Jima.

On March 9, the 20th day adrift at sea, I finally floated ashore on Ohmura Beach, Chichi Jima near the Japanese seaplane base. As I was drifting ashore, I saw two seaplanes docked at the base. One was a Kawanishi H6k Type 97 “Mavis” and the other one was a Kawanishi N1K “George”. The George was a single-engine fighter plane with a top speed of 355 mph and a range of 670 miles. Its armament was four 20-mm Type 99 Mark two machine guns in the wings, and it carried two 550-pound bombs. The Mavis was a four-engine bomber with a cruising speed of 138 mph, and it had five machine guns and carried two 2,205 bombs. As I was drifting toward the beach, I put Autumn’s picture in my pocket.

When my life raft came to rest on the beach, there were four heavily armed Japanese soldiers waiting for me. Although I had my Smith and Wesson, I was not stupid enough to try and use it. I held my hands high in the air and jumped out of the raft onto the sand. I was struck in the head by the butt of a rifle and then restrained immediately by a rope (or Nawa) using a technique called Hojojutsu, and dragged up a hill to their headquarters. After arriving, I was searched and my knife and Smith and Wesson were taken, but the piano wire in my underwear band was not discovered. I thought for sure they had overlooked Autumn’s picture, but I was wrong. It was discovered on the second search, but they had a helluva of time taking it from me. I held it in hand, and I knew there was no way a scrawny Jap could open my hand. But he threatened to break my hand with the butt of his rifle, so I let go. After being searched, my feet were bound, and I was tied to a small tree behind headquarters with my hands behind my back with a Nawa, and then I was questioned. One of the soldiers could speak English really well and I assumed he was one of the Japanese-Americans

on the island. He wanted to know where I had come from, and I replied: My name is JJ Johnson, and my service number is 426-45-00, and that is all I said. He asked once more and I gave him the same answer, then he and two of the other soldiers beat the daylights out of me, but I remained conscious. I thought they probably broke my left arm, but I was wrong. I was not given any food, but I was given a drink of water. One soldier checked on me from time-to-time that night to see if I was still there and alive. If a prisoner plans to escape from this place, he needs to have a means of getting off the island, otherwise since the island is so small (5.3 miles long and 3.8 miles wide), he will soon be discovered or starve to death. My escape plan was to hijack one of the seaplanes I observed at the seaplane base, when I was approaching the beach. I was not checked-out in a multi-engine airplane, so I was hoping the single-engine plane would still be there, and I could take it. I thought seriously about untying myself and trying to escape that first night, but I was so sore I couldn't move. The next morning, I was given some more water and a small portion of sticky rice to eat. Later that morning the English-speaking soldier approached me and said "Mr. Johnson we know that you are a Navy pilot from the USS Lexington. My commanding officer has been in touch with Tokyo, and you may be transferred to the prison in Yokosuka in a few days."

All that day, I tried to move around as much as I could, because I had planned to escape that night if I wasn't too sore. The commander and soldiers started drinking booze about mid- afternoon and by early evening I could hear loud music and men shouting. Suddenly, I saw the soldiers drag an American prisoner out the door of headquarters not very far from me, but they were not interested in me, they were interested in the prisoner. His hands were bound behind his back, and he was made to kneel. When he dropped to his knees, one of the soldier's took his sword and with a mighty swing the prisoner's head fell off and rolled a few feet away. Bright red blood shot about six feet

into the air a couple of times and then receded. Oh my God, I thought, how can this horrible thing be happening. Then another soldier took a dagger and slit the prisoner's abdomen open and then cut out his liver and took it back into headquarters. I was becoming nauseated, and thought I was going to vomit. The remains of the prisoner were only about 10 feet from where I was tied. I was almost sure I was going to be next, so if I wanted to live, I must escape. I was lucky, because the sky that second night was clear, and the moon was full. After the lights were turned out, in the headquarters, I released my hands, which was pretty easy, but it took a while for me to free myself from the Hojojutsu. I sat there for a few minutes to make sure nobody was coming to check on me, then I headed back toward the beach where I came ashore. It was difficult to move because I was still sore from the beating I took the previous night and also, I had several lacerations that looked as though they may become infected. As I was moving along by the side of the road, I saw one of the soldiers walking towards headquarters, so I ducked into the bushes until he passed. I thought he may have been standing guard down at the seaplane base. A few yards further on, I was now crawling because I was unable to walk, and as I passed a small house along the way, I was spotted by a young lady who was out for a walk. I thought she was Japanese and that she would surely turn me in, but she wasn't, she was Korean, and she lived with five other ladies in the small house. She told me they were "comfort women" and she helped me into the house and tended to my wounds. She said I was in no condition to continue my journey and she and the other "comfort women" insisted that I stay there until I was better. I really didn't know what a "comfort woman" was so I asked one of them and she replied they were "sex slaves". She told me that almost every Japanese military base or camp had "comfort women"; they were from China, Korea, and the Philippines and they usually ranged in age from 14 to 20 years of age. The young ladies there on Chichi Jima were all from a small



village in South Korea and they all grew up together. I was so blessed I met them, and they promised to care for me until I was able to move about. They tended to my wounds and gave me food and water. I wish I could have done something for them. I asked them what I was supposed to do if the soldiers came looking for me or if they had a visitor. I was told they had a good place to hide a person. The ladies had their own living quarters in the small house, and the soldiers were not allowed to enter. There were also two larger bedrooms with two beds in each that were used for extracurricular activities. I spent the remainder of that night, all the next day and until midnight the following night with the ladies. The soldiers came by the house early in the evening looking for me and the ladies convinced them I was headed north. When I left that night, the moon was still almost full and the sky was clear and I was ready to travel, so I made my way through the underbrush down to the beach and, low and behold, my life raft was still where I left it with all my gear in it, even my diary. I took my diary and the survival pack and crawled back into the bushes to plan my attack. Apparently, there was only one soldier guarding both planes, so I crawled very slowly over towards him. When I was a few yards away, I dropped all my gear and very quietly crept up behind him and took out my piano wire and waited. He stood there for a few minutes and then took out a cigarette and struck a match and like a flash I had the piano wire wrapped around his neck. Then I tighten down on the wire with every ounce of energy in my body, and he fell to the ground and didn't take another breath. I put my knee on his neck and continued to pull on the wire for what seemed to be about five more minutes to make damn sure he was dead. Then I checked his pulse which was nonexistent. After seeing what they did to the America prisoner, I felt great about killing the son-of-a bitch.

I retrieved my gear and made my way to the single engine-seaplane. I opened the cockpit and threw in my gear, then I released the

plane and crawled in. I was lucky because it was headed in the direction of the harbor exit. I took the flashlight and examined the instrument panel, and it was very similar to the F4F, so I started looking for the starter. When I engaged it, I heard a few coughs and then it fired up. I figured when I got airborne, I would put on my harness, so I advanced the throttle and was in the air in just a few seconds. After I reached about 500 ft, I put on my harness and seat belt and made a U-turn and switched on the landing lights. I knew approximately where the “Mavis” bomber was, but I needed to know its exact position. With my landing lights on, I could see it clearly, and as I was descending and picking up speed, I let both 550 lb. bombs go at the same time and then pulled back on the stick with all my might because there was a 1070 ft mountain in front of me. When the bombs hit that big son-of-a bitch they exploded, and if I hadn’t pulled back on the stick the blast would have gotten me. I kept pulling back on the stick and initiated an inside loop so I could see the explosion upside down and it was beautiful. When I got out to sea, I set a course southeast toward Iwo Jima, because I knew there were several US aircraft carriers there, including my ship the Lexington.

After about 30 minutes or so, I had climbed up to about 10,000 feet and I could see the sun coming up in the distance and it was beautiful. My next plan would have to be a clever one because I was flying a Japanese airplane and if I approached one of our ships, I would probably be shot down. Suddenly, I saw an F4U-4 Corsair approaching from my port side and I knew he was coming in for the kill. I had seen a Corsair before, and I knew it was a hell of a lot faster than the “George” I was flying. My only chance was to dive for the water, so I advanced the stick forward and went into a dive. About that time, he let go with a flurry of bullets and the George was hit several times, but I still had enough power to keep the plane in the air. I didn’t know the plane would stay intact during the dive, but it did. I leveled off about 20 feet

above the water and continued flying on a northwest heading. Since I was so close to the water the F4U wouldn't attempt to attack me, so he gave up. I kept flying and in about 20 minutes the engine began to sputter and eventually died, and I was forced to land. I assumed the F4U had hit one of the non-self-sealing fuel tanks and I was out of fuel. I was pretty close to Iwo Jima because I could see what I thought was Mount Suribachi. When I drifted a little closer to the island, I could see what looked like a flag flying from the top of the mountain. I would learn later that indeed it was an American Flag that was placed there after the Americans captured the mountain February 23, 1945.

Later that afternoon I was spotted and picked up by a Japanese Cruiser. I knew there was no chance of escape, so I climbed out onto the pontoon of the airplane and raised my hands in the air. I was thrown a rope and as I was being hoisted in, I was sure as soon as I reached the deck, I was going to get another beating but to my surprise, I was taken directly to the commander's office. The officer in charge of the ship could speak fluent English and he knew who I was. Apparently, all Japanese ships in the area were notified that I had stolen the "George" and was headed in the direction of Iwo Jima. I was hoping the US codebreakers had also picked up the communication. However, I would never know. At least they would know I was still alive. That night I was given a decent supper of chicken fried rice along with a small bottle of sake. I had eaten fried rice before in Honolulu, but I had never tasted sake; actually, it was pretty good. After eating, I was taken to a nice, comfortable room for the night.....I was being treated like royalty and this really surprised me. Early the next morning, I was taken back to the commander's office and given a cup of hot green tea. The commander asked me if my name was Julian John Johnson and I said, hai (which is yes in Japanese), and this really surprised him. He said oh, do you speak Nihon (Japanese) and I said sukoshi (a little). The stateroom was typical Japanese with a small, short legged table and

large cushions for seating. Over the next several hours I was quizzed about my involvement in making of the atomic bomb. I was surprised they knew so much about me. They knew I had a PhD in Nuclear Physics and that Dr Einstein had directed my research at Princeton, and also that I had worked on the Manhattan Project. Oh, I thought, that's why I'm being treated like a prince. I knew I was being buttered up for what was coming next and that was information related to building the bomb. I knew if I played it cool, I would continue receiving this kind of treatment, but I had to be really careful. There was no way in hell I was going to help those sneaky bastards build a bomb, but I could make them think I was. If I volunteered this false information too easily, then I may not be believed. The ship's commander commented that the special treatment would continue if I would work with their experts in building an atomic bomb. I told him I would think about it and let him know the next day. That night the ship docked in Yokohama and before I was escorted off the ship, I told the commander I would not cooperate with the Japanese experts in building of the bomb, and he was furious. He spoke to the guards in Japanese when they came for me. I was bound with a small thin rope called Hayanawa using the Hojojutsu technique. The rope was so tightly bound, I could hardly breath during the trip to the prison camp.

The Ōfuna Prison Camp was an Imperial Japanese Navy installation located about 45 miles south of Tokyo in Kamakura, just outside Yokosuka where high-value enlisted men and officers, particularly pilots and submariner prisoners of war, were incarcerated and interrogated by Japanese naval intelligence. Ofuna was under the command of Oxford educated Commander Yokura Sashico. The Camp consisted of three interconnected one-story buildings surrounding a large field, which was in-turn surrounded by an eight-foot-high wooden fence. The buildings were of unpainted wood roofed with tar paper and had a long central corridor with 30 rooms to a side, each about six by

nine feet, with a single electric light, bunk, bamboo mat, and a door with a small window. One of the cells was a dispensary. The camp contained two latrines with “squatty-potties” and one shower room, along with a barracks for the guards, kitchen, and rooms for the Japanese commandant, non-commissioned officers, and orderlies.

Prisoners were housed in individual cells, and were allowed to talk to no one, not even to themselves in their sleep. In good weather, they were allowed to sit outside their cells, looking straight forward, and the rule of silence was strictly enforced. Meals consisted of a little rice and soup. The prisoners were given no blankets, and the only clothing was the clothing they had been captured in. The normal stay at Ōfuna was limited to eight days, although some prisoners were held much longer. Some were held at Ōfuna for several months. Louis Zamperini, the US Olympic distance runner, was in Ofuna for over a year. He was there when I arrived, and I saw him a few times before he was transferred to Tokyo's Ōmori POW camp. Three crew members of the submarine USS Perch (SS-176) remained at Ōfuna for the duration of the war and were used to intercept Allied radio traffic.

Ōfuna had a reputation for intimidation and for torturing their inmates in an attempt to get military information and was nicknamed the "Torture Farm" by its inmates. As the prisoners sent to Ōfuna were primarily officers, who might have inside knowledge of Allied strategy, or others working in critical areas such as communications and submarines, it was the goal of the Japanese to extract as much information as possible in a short time. The names of the prisoners held at Ōfuna were not divulged to the Red Cross, and the camp was so secret that even local inhabitants were not aware of its existence. As relayed to a submarine prisoner: "You have survived the sinking of a submarine. No one survives the sinking of a submarine. No one knows you're alive. We're going to ask you questions. This man and this man are going to shoot you if you don't answer the questions truthfully, and

no one will know you were ever alive." In some cases, the inmates were told by their captors that they were regarded as war criminals, since 90 percent of the crews of the merchant vessels sunk by American submarines were civilians, and that as war criminals, they would be given only half the rations of normal prisoners of war.

The interrogations were repeated every two weeks, and the interrogators compared notes to see if there were any discrepancies. Refusing to answer questions, lying, disrespect to the interrogators, and a number of other infractions were punished by a beating with bamboo clubs. Guards often beat prisoners or slapped them in the face for the slightest infraction or at times at random. For some reason, officers typically faced harsher treatment than enlisted ranks. Inmates also claimed that Ōfuna guards were often sadistic, enjoying the beating and clubbing of inmates. Inmates claimed that their scarce food rations were due to their Japanese and Red Cross rations being sold on the black market outside of camp. The inmates were forced to exercise every day even though we were starving to death, on about 500 calories a day, and I was losing weight. I had already lost an estimated 20 pounds. When I was beaten, the guards did not hit or injure my head. I was in so much pain it was difficult to move about. I would go for days without taking a shower, but I did use the "squatty-potty" from time to time and that was very painful. During the beatings, the guards were careful not to produce lacerations deep enough to initiate bleeding, however, I had lots of bruises. One of the guards could speak a little English and each time I was beaten, he would ask if I was ready to talk. In the beginning, I said no, and one day I told him to come back sometime by himself and I would kick his scrawny ass all over my cell, and he just laughed; I don't know if he understood me or not.

Usually if a sailor is missing in action for more than two months, the Navy sends someone to his parents' house to tell them in person that their son or daughter is missing. During the latter part of April 1945

two Navy officers delivered the bad news to Mama and Daddy and told them I was missing and presumed dead. Daddy accepted the bad news, but Mama broke down and began to sob uncontrollably. Daddy wanted to know more but Mama left the room and went to the kitchen. One of the officers told Daddy my airplane went down at sea in bad weather and there was no trace of me nor my airplane, so they assumed I didn't survive the crash. Daddy then remarked to the officer that if I was assumed dead there was the possibility that I could still be alive. He said, "yes that is true, but don't dependent upon it because only a very few pilots survive airplane crashes at sea." Even if they do survive the crash and are not rescued by us, the Japanese are likely to capture them and survival in a Japanese POW prison is close to zero.

The battle of Iwo Jima continued throughout the month of February and most of March. On March 26, 1945, the Americans finally captured the remainder of the island and started building runways long enough for the Boeing B-29 Fortress bombers to take off and land.

After about four weeks at Ofuna, the days dragged on, and the beatings continued. I was beginning to think they would eventually kill me, so I agreed to help them with the bomb. I thought I had stalled long enough so that the guys at Los Alamos would have time to construct the atomic bomb and use it before they realized I was feeding them a bunch of bullshit. At that time there was only me and the three submarine guys left in the prison. I told the guards I was tired of the beatings, and I was ready to talk. The next day I was escorted to Commander Yokura Sashico's office and I broke the news to him. I promised to tell them everything I knew about building an atomic bomb if they would stop the beatings of me and the submarine guys and he accepted my offer.

My life was much better after I started cooperating with their so-called nuclear physics experts. The first day of interrogation, I decided

to test their intelligence by asking them if they knew where they could obtain uranium and they said hai, hai. I then asked them where plutonium came from, and they said the same place as uranium. We spent the next few days talking about these elements and where they supposedly came from, before I mentioned fission and double fission.

The day after I agreed to cooperate with the Japs, I was moved into a really nice apartment- like room with a bed and an in-suite bathroom with a squatty-potty. I assumed it was used for the purpose of bribery to extract information from American POWs or for visiting foreign dignitaries. The food was also pretty good, fried rice, fish and sushi along with chopsticks and a small bottle of hot sake.

Commander Sashico came to my living quarters one evening and said he really appreciated my willingness to help them with building a bomb and he would like to reward me, so I said OK without knowing what he meant. After he left, I started writing in my new diary and I heard a faint knock at my door. When I opened the door there was a beautiful young Japanese girl standing there and I was shocked, I didn't know what to do or what to say, so I said konnichiwa (good evening in Japanese) and just stood there stunned. She entered the room and closed the door behind her and started to undress. I waved my hands in front of her and said no, no. I took her hand and seated her on one of the big cushions on the floor and I sat on the other one. I knew she was not a geisha girl because of her dress. Actually, she was dressed to kill and was probably an oiran girl. Oiran girls are trained to entertain as well as satisfy their partner (or customer); i.e., they are highly trained "pleasure girls". I said you are a utsukushii (beautiful) josei (young lady); Onamae wa nan desu ka (what is your name)? She replied, Asami (which means "morning beauty"), Asami Watanabe. Then she said, "I can speak sukoshi (a little) English." "She continued, my father went to college at UCLA, and he taught wataski (me) how to speak English." She said, "I was sent here to sleep with you." I then asked her if she



wanted to sleep with me and she replied, “that’s my job.” I was having a real difficult time deciding what to do. Autumn was the only girl I had ever slept with and that was ages ago. I wanted to be faithful to her, but Asami really aroused my sexual desires; she was a real knock-out and only 19 years old; I was just 21 myself. During the next several minutes we discussed the situation. She was sent there to spend the night with me and to satisfy my desires as long as I wanted her. That first night, I had her sleep in the bed and I slept on the floor, and this seemed to really impress her. The next morning, after we had tea, she left.

Being treated like this was much better than having an ass beating twice a week. I was beginning to recover from the beatings and actually felt pretty good. At least I wasn’t losing any more weight on the diet they were feeding me. I was working 8-10 hours a day, six days a week with the physics experts blowing smoke up their ass, telling them what they wanted to know. I was given Sundays off, however, I was not allowed to visit or talk to the other POWs. In the beginning, Asami would visit me on Sundays, and I would write in my diary during weeknights and plan my daily meetings with information that was believable. I really, really enjoyed Asami’s Sunday visits; she was so sweet and kind. She was available anytime I wanted her. I didn’t know how long I could keep this up. I had gotten to the point where I didn’t ever expect to be free again. I also knew if the Japs ever found out I was feeding them garbage, my life wouldn’t be worth a plug nickel. My life could end at any time and my chances of making it back to America and my darling Autumn were almost nil. So, after a few weeks, I started sleeping with Asami and she was an amazing bed partner; she smelled like fresh young roses and her major objective was to satisfy me. She was absolutely astonishing and there was no doubt she was a professional at what she did. At the beginning of our intimate relationship, she didn’t know how to kiss very well. She told me that

she did not usually kiss her customers, so I told her I would teach her how to kiss, and that really excited her. She was eager to learn, and I taught her what I had learned from Autumn about French kissing. It might have been wrong, but at times I would envision her to be Autumn when we were making love.

The only information I received about the war was that the Japanese were winning. Sometimes when I was meeting with the experts they would be listening to Tokyo Rose and every time she said the Japs had sunk one of our ships they would cheer.

The escort carrier USS Manila Bay (CVE-61) trained in Hawaiian waters until sailing for the western Pacific on May 24, 1945. She operated near the coast of Okinawa on June 13 and during the next week launched rocket and strafing strikes in the Ryukyu Islands. She departed for the Marianas on June 20 and was torpedoed and sunk before arriving in Guam and there were no survivors. When Tokyo Rose reported this falsehood everyone in the room jumped up-and-down cheering. This really didn't bother me very much because I knew it was all probably propaganda.

My relationship with Asami continued throughout the summer and I was really enjoying my time with her; she was so sweet and beautiful. When we kissed, I could tell from looking into her eyes she was falling in love with me. Our relationship was no longer a job to her, and she told me so. She said she had never been in love before, even though she had slept with lots of men she did not attach herself to any of them. I told her I had nothing to give her except myself and my love.

Over that relatively short period of time Asami's demeanor totally changed. Her outward beauty changed very little, but her inner beauty changed dramatically. When we first met, she was beautiful and pleasant to be around but in a more professional manner. But now, she radiated beauty that was hard to explain. When she was in my presence, she projected a kind of glow with a sparkle in her beautiful eyes. It was

such a joy to be with her. I think this was the first time she ever enjoyed herself when she was with a man.

I was not very optimistic about ever having a life anywhere else. I knew that one day soon the Americans would have an atomic bomb ready to be dropped on Japan. I was also sure it would be dropped on Tokyo and even if the Japanese surrendered, me and Asami and the submarine guys would likely perish along with everybody else in the area. Even though I had strong emotional feelings for Asami, I still loved Autumn with all my heart and soul and my relationship with Asami did not, in any way, affect that. However, when I was with Asami, I really didn't think about Autumn.

Sometimes on Sunday we were allowed to have lunch together and then take a walk outside in the compound. But we were never allowed outside the compound. Whenever Asami was not with me, she was at home with her mama-san and sister; her papa-san and brother were both in the Japanese Army. We didn't talk very much about the war. The future looked very bleak for both of us so, we decided to enjoy our lives together as long as we were alive.

On Monday morning June 4, Commander Sashico had me escorted by one of the guards to his office. I knew it was something urgent because he didn't like to interrupt the atomic bomb meetings. When I arrived at his office, he told me there was a dignitary from Germany coming to visit Prime Minister Tojo in a few days and he had asked for the company of Asami while he was there. He told me the German was there the year before and Asami spent a week with him, and he really liked her. Oh my God, I couldn't believe it...I could not visualize my little Asami sleeping with a fat-ass German. I suppose Sashico got the idea from my expression, I wasn't happy with the situation, so right away he said I have another girl for you. She is very beautiful, and her name is Kimiko. When Asami has fulfilled her duties with the German she can come back to you. I paused for several minutes and didn't say

anything until I knew precisely what my reaction was going to be. I said, "Commander Sashico, I don't want to appear disrespectful, but there is no way in hell I am going to agree to this!" He replied, "I think you have forgotten you are a prisoner, and you don't have any say-so in the matter." This really pissed me off and I said, "I think you have forgotten; I am the only one in this goddamn country who knows how to build an atomic bomb and without me your country and you Emperor will never have one!" Sashico was getting really irritated and said, "we have ways of forcing you." Then I said, "you can kill me before I will agree to Asami staying with that fat-ass German." We sat there for what seemed to be half an hour without either of us saying a word, he then said, "let's have a cup of tea" and I said, "that's fine with me." After about ten minutes, he said, "you go back to work, and I will make a decision and let you know tomorrow." I said, "no, I am not going back to work until a decision is made in my favor." This really, really pissed him off and I could tell he was about to explode. He yelled out to his assistant to bring us another pot of tea and he sat down and brooded for several minutes. Afterwards he said, "you win; now will you go back to work?" I said, "yes sir, I will, and I will even work harder."

At the end of June, we started hearing rumors that the Americans had an atomic bomb ready for testing. I have no idea how the Japanese knew this but apparently there were spies in the States who would relay messages to Japan from time to time.

Until the atomic bomb could be tested, doubt would remain about its effectiveness. The world had never seen a nuclear explosion before, and estimates varied widely on how much energy would be released. Some scientists at Los Alamos who had worked on the bomb continued privately to have doubts that it would work at all. However, I was 100% sure the bomb would work, and I was sure the energy released would be much greater than anyone expected. Each bomb consisted of several parts made at different locals of the country. There was only enough

enriched uranium available to make one bomb, so on July 14, 1945, the uranium bomb began its trip westward to the Pacific Ocean without its design having ever been fully tested. A test of the plutonium bomb seemed vital, however, both to confirm its novel implosion design and to gather data on nuclear explosions in general. Several plutonium bombs were now "in the pipeline" and would be available over the next few weeks and months. It was therefore decided to test one of the plutonium bombs. Oppenheimer chose to name this the "Trinity" test. The site chosen was a remote corner on the Alamogordo Bombing Range known as the "Journey of Death," 210 miles south of Los Alamos. The elaborate instrumentation surrounding the site was tested with an explosion of a large amount of TNT on May 7, 1945. Preparations continued throughout May and June and were completed in the early part of July. Three observation bunkers were positioned 10,000 yards north, west, and south of the firing tower. From here the members of the team would try to determine the symmetry of the implosion and the amount of energy released. The biggest concern was the amount of the radioactivity released by the bomb. On July 12, the plutonium core was taken to the test area followed by the non-nuclear components the next day. By 1700 on the 15th, the device had been assembled and hoisted atop a 100-foot firing tower. The next day, members of the team armed the device shortly after 0500 and retreated to the south bunker. Groves left Oppenheimer and joined Bush and Conant at base camp. During the final seconds, most observers laid down on the ground with their feet facing the Trinity site and simply waited. At precisely 0530 on Monday, July 16, 1945 (0630, Tuesday, July 17, Tokyo time), the nuclear age began. While the Manhattan Project team watched anxiously, the device exploded over the New Mexico desert, vaporizing the tower and turning the asphalt around the base of the tower to green sand. Seconds after the explosion came a huge blast wave and heat spreading out across the desert. No one could

see the radiation generated by the explosion, but they all knew it was there. The steel container "Jumbo," weighing over 200 tons and transported to the desert only to be eliminated from the test, was knocked open even though it stood half a mile from ground zero. As the orange and yellow fireball stretched up and spread, a second column, narrower than the first, rose and flattened into a mushroom shape, thus providing the atomic age with a visual image that has become imprinted on the human consciousness as a symbol of power and awesome destruction. Everything went from darkness to brilliant sunshine in an instant. One of the team members reported that "the atom bomb did not fit into any preconceptions possessed by anybody." The blast wave knocked one team member (who was over five miles away) to the ground. When they met, Groves said to Oppenheimer, "I am proud of you." Groves' assistant, Thomas Farrell, remarked to his boss that "the war is over," to which Groves replied, "Yes, after we drop two bombs on Japan." The actual result of the test as it was finally calculated was equivalent to 21 kilotons of TNT which was more than twice what had been previously estimated probably due to double fission.

The success of the Trinity test meant that both types of bombs -- the uranium design, "Little Boy", untested but thought to be reliable, and the plutonium design "Fat Man", which had just been tested successfully -- were now available for use in the war against Japan and could be transported by the Boeing B-29 Superfortress. Three possible sites in mainland Japan were selected: Hiroshima-primary, Kokura-secondary, and Nagasaki-backup. These cities were selected because they were smaller cities and there would be fewer casualties than if the bombs were dropped on the larger cities of Tokyo and Osaka.

After the successful Trinity Test, the Japanese wanted to build a similar bomb and I told them I would help them. I spent many, many hours teaching the experts how to build a plutonium bomb but I told

them that the gun-type design method had been used to build the device used in the Trinity Test and that was the best one to use.

The two US bombs “Little Boy” and “Fat Man” traveled by train from Los Alamos to San Francisco, California, and were loaded onto the cruiser USS Indianapolis (CA-35) for the journey to Tinian Island which is about 1,500 miles from mainland Japan arriving July 26, 1945. To prevent a catastrophic accident, the target pieces for the bombs were delivered separately.

Boeing Aircraft Company produced several B-29 Flying Fortresses especially for carrying the atomic bomb. The aircraft was stripped of all its armament except for two 0.50-inch caliber Browning machine guns in the tail. This was done to increase the range of the aircraft because the round-trip travel distance to mainland Japan from Tinian Island was about 3,000 miles.

Tinian Island is one of the Northern Mariana Islands just south of Saipan and about 100 miles north of Guam. It was seized from the Japanese by the Allies in 1944 during the Battle of Tinian. Of the 8,500-man Japanese garrison, only 313 survived the battle. At the time, there were an estimated 15,700 Japanese civilians on the island. Many hundreds were killed in the crossfire and others took their own lives or were executed by the Japanese military to avoid capture by the Americans.

In the days preceding the dropping of the atomic bomb, leaflets were dropped on Hiroshima with the following message “We advise you to evaluate your town because we are coming here Sunday afternoon at 1400 to burn it to the ground.” In general, this message was totally ignored by the residents of Hiroshima and by the rest of the country. Some of them thought it was propaganda and amusing.

My daily life remained about the same after we heard about the Trinity test. I would spend 8-10 hours a day feeding the experts bullshit about making the bomb and I would spend the nights and Sundays with

Asami. I think she and the other sensible Japanese people had already accepted the fact that their military was not going to win the war. Asami, and her mother and sister wanted the military to surrender and the Emperor Hirohito sympathizers to follow suite. Even though I was in prison Asami made my time spent there very enjoyable. She would tell me she loved me, and I believed her. She told me she was not spending time with anyone else. I thought if we were not killed in the atomic blast and the Japanese surrendered, me and the submarine guys would probably be killed by the guards. I know some of them enjoyed killing Americans, but they treated me really nice because of direct orders from Commander Sashico.

In the early morning hours of August 6, 1945, the B-29 bomber named Enola Gay took off from the island of Tinian and headed north by northwest toward Japan. The bomber's primary target was the city of Hiroshima, located on the deltas of southwestern Honshu Island facing the Inland Sea. Hiroshima had a civilian population of almost 300,000 and was an important military center, containing about 43,000 soldiers. The bomber, piloted by the commander of the 509th Composite Group, Colonel Paul Tibbets, and named after his mother, flew at low altitude on automatic pilot before climbing to 31,000 feet as it neared the target area.

At approximately 0815 Hiroshima time the Enola Gay released "Little Boy," its 9,700-pound uranium gun-type bomb, over the city. Tibbets immediately dove away to avoid the anticipated shock wave. Forty-three seconds later, a huge explosion lit the morning sky as "Little Boy" detonated 1,900 feet above the city, directly over a parade field where soldiers of the Japanese Second Army were doing calisthenics. Though already 11½ miles away, the Enola Gay was rocked by the blast. At first, Tibbets thought he was taking flak. After a second shock wave (reflected from the ground) hit the plane, the crew looked back at Hiroshima. "The city was hidden by that awful cloud . .



. boiling up, mushrooming, terrible and incredibly tall," Tibbets recalled.

The yield of the explosion was later estimated at 15 kilotons. On the ground moments before the blast, it was a calm and sunny Monday morning. An air raid alert from earlier that morning had been called off after only a solitary aircraft was seen (the weather plane), and by 0815 the city was alive with activity -- soldiers doing their morning calisthenics, commuters on foot or on bicycles, groups of women and children working outside to clear firebreaks. Those closest to the explosion died instantly, their bodies turned to black char. Nearby birds burst into flames in mid-air, and dry, combustible materials such as paper instantly ignited as far away as 6,400 feet from ground zero. The white light acted as a giant flashbulb, burning the dark patterns of clothing onto skin and the shadows of bodies onto walls. Survivors outdoors close to the blast generally describe a literally blinding light combined with a sudden and overwhelming wave of heat. The blast wave followed almost instantly for those close-in, often knocking them from their feet. Those that were indoors were usually spared the flash burns, but flying glass from broken windows filled most rooms, and all but the very strongest structures collapsed. One boy was blown through the window of his house and across the street as the house collapsed behind him. Within minutes 9 out of 10 people half a mile or less from ground zero were dead. People farther from the point of detonation experienced first the flash and heat, followed seconds later by a deafening boom and the blast wave. Nearly every structure within one mile of ground zero was destroyed, and almost every building within three miles was damaged. Less than 10 percent of the buildings in the city survived without any damage, and the blast wave shattered glass in suburbs 12 miles away. The most common first reaction of those who were indoors even miles from ground zero was that their building had just suffered a direct hit by a bomb. Small rescue parties soon began

to operate, but roughly half of the city's population was dead or injured. In those areas most seriously affected virtually no one escaped serious injury. An estimated 70,000 men, women, and children perished that day.

Even after the flames had subsided, relief from the outside was slow in coming. For hours after the attack the Japanese government did not even know for sure what had happened. Radio and telegraph communications with Hiroshima had suddenly ended at 0816, and vague reports of some sort of large explosion had begun to filter in, but the Japanese high command knew that no large-scale air raid had taken place over the city and that there were no large stores of explosives there. Eventually a Japanese staff officer was dispatched by plane to survey the city from overhead, and while he was still nearly 100 miles away from the city, he began to report on a huge cloud of smoke that hung over it. The first confirmation of exactly what had happened came only 16 hours later with the announcement of the bombing by the United States. Relief workers from outside the city eventually began to arrive and the situation stabilized somewhat. Power in undamaged areas of the city was even restored on August 7th, with limited rail service resuming the following day. Several days after the blast, however, medical staff began to recognize the first symptoms of radiation sickness among the survivors. Soon the death rate actually began to climb again as patients who had appeared to be recovering began suffering from this strange new illness. Deaths from radiation sickness did not peak until three to four weeks after the attack and did not taper off until seven to eight weeks after the attack. Long-range health dangers associated with radiation exposure, such as an increased danger of cancer, would linger for the rest of the victims' lives, as would the psychological effects of the attack.

No one will ever know for certain how many died as a result of the attack on Hiroshima. Some 70,000 people probably died as a result of

the initial blast, heat, and radiation effects. This included about 20 American airmen being held as prisoners in the city. At 1100, August 6 (Washington D.C. time), radio stations began playing a prepared statement from President Truman informing the American public that the United States had dropped an entirely new type of bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima -- an "atomic bomb." Truman warned that if Japan still refused to surrender unconditionally, as demanded by the Potsdam Declaration of July 26, the United States would attack additional targets with equally devastating results. By August 9th, American aircraft were showering leaflets all over Japan informing its people that "We are in possession of the most destructive explosive ever devised by man. A single one of our newly developed atomic bombs is actually the equivalent in explosive power to what 2,000 of our giant B-29s can carry on a single mission. This awful fact is one for you to ponder and we solemnly assure you it is grimly accurate. We have just begun to use this weapon against your homeland. If you still have any doubt, make inquiry as to what happened to Hiroshima when just one atomic bomb fell on that city."

Enola Gay and the other two B-29s returned safely to their base on Tinian to great fanfare, touching down at 1458 hours, after 12 hours and 13 minutes. Several hundred people, including journalists and photographers, had gathered to watch the planes return. Tibbets was the first to disembark, and was presented with the Distinguished Service Cross on the spot. Meanwhile, Tibbets's bomber group was simply waiting for the weather to clear in order to drop its next bomb, the plutonium implosion weapon nicknamed "Fat Man" that was destined for the city of Kokura.

News spread fast across Japan, and we were notified at the prison that the mighty atomic bomb had been dropped, but little damage was done. I was really surprised when I heard the bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and not on Tokyo.

After the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, workers on Tinian Island labored intensely to put the finishing touches on the “Fat Man” bomb and prepare it for use. This was a plutonium implosion device of far greater complexity than the “Little Boy” bomb used at Hiroshima, which used uranium-235 in a conventional gun-type explosive mechanism. The scientists and ordnance experts at Los Alamos had agonized for years over how to use plutonium in an atomic weapon, and “Fat Man” was the result.

The decision to use “Fat Man” just days after the explosion of “Little Boy” at Hiroshima was based on two calculations: the always-changeable Japanese weather—the appearance of a typhoon or other major weather event could force deployment to be postponed for weeks—and the belief that two bombings following in quick succession would convince the Japanese that the Americans had plenty of atomic devices and were ready to keep using them until Japan finally surrendered. Reports of approaching bad weather convinced the Americans to drop the next bomb on August 9.

After the Hiroshima bombing and all the destruction, President Truman warned Japan: "If you do not now accept our terms, you may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth. Behind this air attack will follow sea and land forces in such numbers and power as you have not yet seen and with the fighting skill of which you are already well aware. This was a widely broadcast speech picked up by Japanese news agencies.

Leaflet AB12, with information on the Hiroshima bomb and a warning to civilians to petition the emperor to surrender was dropped over Japan beginning on August 9. The 50,000-watt standard wave station on Saipan and the OWI radio station, broadcast a similar message to Japan every 15 minutes about Hiroshima, stating that more Japanese cities would face a similar fate in the absence of immediate acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration which defined the

terms for Japanese surrender, and urging civilians to evacuate major cities, which some did. Radio Japan, which continued to glorify victory for Japan by never surrendering, had informed the Japanese of the destruction of Hiroshima by a single bomb. Prime Minister Suzuki felt compelled to meet the Japanese press, to whom he reiterated his government's commitment to ignore the Allies' demands and fight on.

The next time I saw Asami, she told me she was afraid and asked me if I thought her mother and sister would be safe in Yokohama. I told her if the Americans dropped a plutonium type atomic bomb on Tokyo, which was likely, they would probably not be safe there. I suggested they move in with her there in Kamakura which was about 45 miles from Tokyo, and they would be safer there.

The Target Committee appointed by President Harry Truman to decide which Japanese cities would receive the “Little Boy” and “Fat Man” atomic bombings did not place Nagasaki among their top two choices. Instead, they identified Kokura as the second target after Hiroshima. In Kokura, a city of 130,000 people on the island of Kyushu, the Japanese operated one of their biggest ordnance factories, manufacturing, among other things, chemical weapons. The Americans knew all this, but strangely had not targeted the city yet in their conventional bombing campaign. That was one of the reasons the Target Committee thought it would be a good option after Hiroshima.

The third choice, Nagasaki was a port city located about 100 miles from Kokura. It was larger, with an approximate population of 263,000 people, and some major military facilities, including two Mitsubishi military factories. Nagasaki also was an important port city. Like Kokura and Hiroshima, it had not suffered much thus far from American conventional bombing.

A B-29 named BocksCar (after Captain Bock) took off from Tinian at 0347 the morning of August 9, 1945. In its belly was “Fat Man”, and the plutonium type atomic bomb was already armed. Major Charles W.

Sweeney flew the plane, accompanied by the usual pilot, Captain Frederick C. Bock. The Enola Gay piloted by Colonel Paul Tibbets, also, took part in the mission, flying weather reconnaissance.

Over Kokura, clouds and smoke from nearby bombing raids obscured visibility. The Americans could see parts of the city, but they could not site directly on the city arsenal that was their target. Sweeney flew overhead until Japanese anti-aircraft fire and fighters made things “a little hairy,” and it was obvious that sighting would be impossible. He then headed for his secondary target: Nagasaki. In Kokura, meanwhile, civilians who had taken shelter after the air raid signal heard the all-clear, emerged, and breathed sighs of relief. None of them knew then, of course, how close they had come to dying.

Clouds also obscured visibility over Nagasaki, and Major Sweeney, running out of fuel, prepared to turn back toward Okinawa. At the last second a hole opened in the clouds, however, and Bombardier Captain Kermit K. Beahan announced that he could see his target. And so “Fat Man” began its journey, detonating over Nagasaki at 1102 local time, August 9.

“Fat Man” detonated at an altitude of 1,650 feet over Nagasaki with a yield of 21 kilotons, about 40 percent more powerful than “Little Boy” had been. It exploded almost directly above the Mitsubishi factories that were the city’s primary targets, rather than over the residential and business districts further south. Tens of thousands of civilians, especially children, had already been evacuated from the city. The series of hills bracing Nagasaki also somewhat confined the initial blast and restricted the damage. Still, the impact was devastating, particularly because people had heard the all-clear after an earlier aircraft raid warning and had left their shelters. Everything within a mile of ground zero was annihilated. Fourteen thousand homes burst into flames. People close to the blast were vaporized; those unlucky enough to be just outside that radius received horrific burns and, there

and further out, radiation poisoning that would eventually kill them. Although estimates vary, perhaps 40,000 people were killed by the initial detonation.

It appeared as though America and her Allies were going to win the war and I had no idea what was going to happen to me, even if I survived. I was deeply in love with two beautiful young women, Asami, whom I was with there in Japan and Autumn, back in the States, whom I had not been in contact with for over a year and I didn't even know if she was still waiting for me; I didn't even know if she was still single. I was really stuck between a rock and a hard place, and I didn't know what to do. At times I wanted life to continue just like it was there in Japan because I knew I had my precious Asami.

On Sunday, August 12<sup>th</sup> of that year (1945), I was 22 years old and Asami had planned a special surprise for me. She told me there was no custom of celebrating birthdays in Japan. There was only one day on which to celebrate birthdays (everyone's birthday) and that day was New Year's Day. This was because ancient people thought everyone got one year older on New Year's Day, not the day they were born. She told me the day before, she would come to my room the next evening and we would celebrate my birthday. I had no idea what she had in mind, but I couldn't wait to find out what it was. I spent most of the next day writing in my diary. It was really a fake diary...I only wrote good things in it about the Japanese and how I was helping them build an atomic bomb.

When Asami arrived that evening, she was wearing a geisha style red kimono and oh my gosh, she was absolutely stunning. It was difficult for me to keep my hands off her, but she said not yet. She had brought with her a bottle of Dassai 23 sake and two small drinking cups. When the cups were filled, Asami said in her broken English "Happy Birthday my dear JJ, may you enjoy the evening, it will be exotic." I was getting really anxious. After drinking several cups of sake, she

*Where Whip-Poor-Wills Call*

started performing a Japanese dance and disrobing that really, really turned me on. She took off only one garment at a time in sequence and rhythm with her dance movements and when she was totally nude, she started undressing me; I attempted to help, but she said, no, no. The next hour or so was a mind-blowing experience. I was being seductively pampered by someone who knew how to satisfy a man. She had me totally under her spell. I had never in my entire life had a sexual experience like that. I told her that was by far the best birthday I had ever had and one I would never forget.



## Chapter 13

### End of the War and My Journey Home

Japan officially surrendered to the United States of America and her Allies on Sunday September 2, 1945, after the second atomic bomb was dropped on their homeland. The signing of the instrument of surrender took place in Tokyo Bay on the deck of the battleship USS Missouri (BB-63) under the command of Captain Albert L. Kaiss.

Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz boarded the ship shortly after 0800, and General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allies, came on board at 0843. The Japanese representatives, headed by Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, arrived at 0856. At 0902, General MacArthur stepped before a battery of microphones and opened the 23-minute surrender ceremony to the waiting world by stating, "It is my earnest hope—indeed the hope of all mankind—that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past, a world founded upon faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance, and justice."

Following the signing of the instrument of surrender in Tokyo Bay, many further surrender ceremonies took place across Japan's remaining holdings in the Pacific.

Later that day, me and the three crew members of the submarine Perch were released from Prison Camp Ofuna, located in Kamarura a few miles west of Yokosuka on Sagami Bay which joins Tokyo Bay. Asami was waiting for me outside my room and walked with me to the dock where me and the other prisoners were due to be picked up by a

ferry boat. The other prisoners had a bewildered expression on their faces when they saw me walking hand-in-hand with a beautiful Japanese girl. I'm sure they must have thought I had been supplying classified information to the Japs. Asami held my hand and cried all the way to the dock. I felt so sorry for her, and I didn't know what to do. Then I hugged and kissed her and as I was holding her small trembling body, I couldn't help but cry. My heart was broken. I said, "I love you so much, Asami, and you will be in my memory always, but I have to go." She said, "take me with you JJ," and I told her that was impossible. I seriously thought about staying with her, but I knew the Navy would come looking for me as soon as they found out I was alive. I gave her Mama and Daddy's home address and told her to contact me through them if she ever needed anything. She clung to me sobbing until I boarded the boat. I then said, "sayonara my precious Asami." The last time I saw her she was standing on the dock waving as the ferry boat motored away. I closed my tear-filled eyes for a few moments and thought, I will never see her again. The ferry boat escorted us to the Missouri where we were welcomed aboard. On the boat ride to the ship, I introduced myself to the submarine guys and explained what had been going on between me and the Japanese and I think they accepted my story. They then thanked me for negotiating a deal with Commander Yokura Sashico that stopped the scheduled beatings. Their names were Jimmy Murphy from Iowa, Ted Dupree from Chicago, and Johnny Casper from Madison, Wisconsin. It was such a wonderful feeling being among Americans again after more than six months with the Japanese, but I had mixed feelings about everything that was happening. I saw the submarine prisoners occasionally at Ofuna, but I was forbidden to have any type of relation with them, not even talking. The first things we wanted after we boarded the ship were food, a shave, a haircut, and a bath. That night I went up on deck and looked out over the bombed remains of the once beautiful and lively city of

Tokyo. Total darkness griped the city, however, there were a few flickers of light that could be seen and the only sound to be heard was the sound of silence. I stood there totally lost in my surroundings thinking of my precious Asami and what would happen to her.

Early the next morning the ship departed Tokyo Bay in-route to the United States. As part of the ongoing Operation “Magic Carpet” she received homeward bound passengers at Guam, then sailed unescorted for Hawaii and picked up some more passengers. I was super surprised when I found out the ship was headed to New York City, just the place I wanted to go. During the next few days all POWs were examined by the ship’s doctors and then issued new uniforms. We were all treated like heroes and all of us were spot promoted to the next higher rank. I really liked the submarine guys, and we spent many hours playing cribbage and pinochle; on occasion we would also play penny-ante poker.

I was hoping I would gain back the weight I had lost before we got to New York City and before I saw Autumn. We arrived at Pearl Harbor on Thursday September 20 and flew Admiral Nimitz's flag on the afternoon of Friday September 28 for a reception. I sent Mama and Daddy an airmail letter telling them I was alive and would be home in about a month. The next day, the Missouri departed Pearl Harbor bound for the eastern seaboard of the United States. They even gave us our mail from the beginning of the year. I had a couple of letters from Mama and one letter from Autumn; it was post marked December 28, 1944. She said in the letter her daddy thought she had broken up with me and when he found out we were still communicating, he was furious. When she came home for Christmas that year, he told her all about our brief meeting the last day we saw each other back in 1941. He told her he offered me \$25,000 not to see her anymore and I took the money. “At first, I didn’t believe him, she said, but he finally convinced me, before I left to go back to school, that he was telling the

truth.” I am so disappointed and heartbroken JJ. Please don’t bother trying to contact me anymore.... Autumn. This really, really upset me and broke my heart, the love of my life was gone, so I went back to my room and wept. I didn’t eat for two days. I really didn’t care whether I gained weight or not. I would like to have gone back to Asami, but I knew that was impossible.

The passage through the Panama Canal was awesome and very interesting. It took about 10 hours to travel the length of the canal, which was about 50 miles long. The ship had to be lifted 85 feet above sea level, traverse an artificial lake, and then be dropped 85 feet. After we exited the canal, it took about four days to travel the 2000 plus miles to New York City. The ship reached the city on Tuesday October 23 and hoisted the flag of Atlantic Fleet commander Admiral Jonas Ingram. As the ship sailed up the Upper Bay, I could see the Statue of Liberty dead ahead and goose bumps spread over my entire body. In a few minutes the entire port side of the ship was filled with sailors and as we passed by “My Lady” we all stood at attention and saluted her as the ship turned to starboard and entered the East River. “American the Beautiful” was playing on the ship’s PA system and it was a very emotional few minutes, and tears ran down both my cheeks. It was such an awesome feeling because when I was in the POW prison Ofuna, I didn’t think I would live to see American again. After passing under the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges, the ship docked at the Navy Yard, which was located at Wallabout Bay in Brooklyn, across the East River from Manhattan.

Four days later, the Missouri boomed out a 21-gun salute as President Truman boarded the ship for Navy Day ceremonies. Several of the ship’s crew met the president, including me and the other three POWs. After the ceremony, I was allowed to leave the ship on a 30-day leave while my reassignment was being determined. I had gained

back most of the weight I had lost while I was in the prison camp; I now weighed 180 pounds and I was 6 feet two inches tall.

New York City and the world welcomed the American armada home from World War II. We already knew that America was the mightiest power on Earth, ever. But here was the cold gray physical evidence of US Navy invincibility, sailing up the Hudson River. It was Saturday the 27th of October 1945. Just eight weeks before, the Japanese Empire had formally surrendered in Tokyo Bay aboard the Missouri. Here was Mighty Mo, the great battleship itself, mid-Hudson before awed onlookers lining both Manhattan and Jersey shores. Here was the fabled Big E, the carrier Enterprise, veteran of nearly every Pacific action from the Doolittle Raid to Okinawa. Here was the newly commissioned Midway, at 45,000 tons the most potent aircraft carrier ever launched, the warship of the future.

Navy Day, 1945. It was the greatest show that ever played the Great Blue Way. Fleet fever had swept the city for weeks as Fast Carrier Force 62 sailed through the Panama Canal and turned northward into the last leg of Operation Broadway. On October 16, 101 Navy fighters and torpedo planes flew from the decks of the incoming Enterprise and zoomed over the Financial District as thousands cheered below. Early the next morning, the great Enterprise made its stately appearance in the harbor. Ship whistles sent up a cry; foghorns blared; a tug boat blinkered: WELL DONE.....WELCOME HOME.

The heavy cruiser Augusta had carried Franklin Roosevelt to the Atlantic Conference off Newfoundland and Harry Truman to Europe for Potsdam. The light cruiser Boise was renowned as the "one-ship task force" of the Pacific. The venerable battleship New York was making its final appearance before retirement, after fighting in both world wars. Plus, the cruisers Helena and Macon, 15 destroyers and six destroyer escorts, two attack transports, one submarine chaser and two submarine tenders and 15 submarines. 47 US fighting ships, ---

stretched nearly 7 miles up the river. Commander-in-Chief Truman, overcoated against the raw chill, formally reviewed the fleet from the deck of a destroyer moving slowly along the lethal gray line as each, in turn, boomed a 21-gun salute. Five million citizens, cramming every waterfront pierhead, Palisades clifftop, and river-view roof, stared in wonder at the American armada.

The next day, 7,000 visitors boarded *Enterprise* at Pier 26, streaming across its huge flight and hangar decks. Other fleet units also accommodated home-fronters eager to sniff around these war-winning hunks of steel. By the weekend, 18,000 New Yorkers were moving up the Big E's gangplank every hour.

A chauffeured limousine picked me up at the Missouri that afternoon and drove me to Manhattan, and I checked into the Roosevelt Hotel near Central Park not far from where Spring and Autumn lived. Even though the weather was cool, it was still warm enough to wear my white dress uniform. The next day was Saturday, and it was a beautiful dry crisp sunny day, so I decided to walk to the girls' house which was on East 65<sup>th</sup> street. I took a detour through Central Park because I didn't want to arrive at their house too early. The park that time of day was relatively quiet, but I did see some children playing. As I walked along the path, my thoughts turned to Autumn. My stomach was full of butterflies, and I would almost cry at times. I really didn't know what to think or what to do. When people met me on the path in my dress white uniform, they would say thank you for your service and I would thank them. As I was walking along East 65<sup>th</sup> Street, I decided to go directly to Spring's house instead of stopping at Autumn's because of my run-in with her daddy and the letter I received from Autumn when I was on the Missouri.

The butler greeted me at Spring's house and escorted me to the library. I asked his name and he responded, Benson and I shook his hand and said my name is JJ. He said, glad to make your acquaintance

Captain JJ and I replied it's Commander. After a few minutes Spring's mother entered and I introduced myself. "Oh, my dear boy, we all thought you had been killed in action." She then continued to fill me in on what had happened to the girls since we were last in touch. She said, they had both graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in May of 1943 and Spring had been accepted to Law School at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. I couldn't wait any longer, so I interrupted her and asked what happened to Autumn. First, she told me that her daddy died of a heart attack during the summer of 1945, and she was here for the funeral. She had been notified when he first had the attack, and she arrived a few days before he died. She then told me Spring was arriving later that afternoon and I could come back that evening and see her. She was taking the train from New Haven and would arrive at Grand Central Station at 5:10 PM. I asked her if it would be OK if I met Spring at the station and she said, absolutely. I arrived at the station at 4:45 and was told the train would arrive at platform 4. I really don't know why I was nervous, but I was. I found the platform at about 5:00 and stood there waiting. I saw Spring exit the train with a small handbag and she was walking directly toward me without recognizing me. As she started to walk by me, I said, "hello, Spring" and she just stood there for a while stunned. She said, "Oh My God, it is you JJ." She sat her bag down and we embraced, both of us crying for several minutes. "I thought, I would never see you again. Me and Autumn both thought for sure you were dead. She hadn't heard from you since you left Los Alamos. But she didn't give up hope for a long time; she cried and cried for at least a month but finally she told me she was sure you were dead because she hadn't heard from you in over eight months." I then told Spring I was captured by the Japanese in the early part of 1945 and remained in one of their prison camps until the war ended. Then I asked her about Autumn and Spring told me she was living in Baltimore going to Medical School at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. After the two

of them graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, they took the summer off and traveled all over Europe and loved it. She didn't tell me very much about Autumn, but I knew enough now to find her.

I asked Spring if she would like to have dinner that night at the Tavern on the Green and she said yes, yes. "We can walk from my house," she said. I agreed to come by for her at 8:00 that evening. I asked her not to tell Autumn anything about me. That evening, I arrived at Spring's house about 7:30 and was welcomed by the butler and escorted to the sitting room. When Spring entered, she looked so beautiful; even more beautiful than I remembered. The restaurant was almost directly across the park from where she lived; it was only about a 20-minute stroll. When we arrived at the restaurant, the maître d' greeted us and said good evening, Miss Spring your table is waiting. The table was in an excellent location, and we had two waitresses to serve us. I thought it must be nice to be wealthy. A male waiter came to the table and asked if we would like a glass of wine and I said yes, so he gave me a menu with only wine. I asked Spring which she liked best red or white and she said white. I reviewed the menu and ordered a white Chardonnay from the Berringer Vineyard in Napa Valley, California; we learned all about wine and wine tasting in our officer training program. After the Sommelier poured the wine, I raised my glass and said here's to Autumn. I asked Spring to update me on Autumn's whereabouts and etc. "Not long after you left for the Navy, she changed her major to premed. In her senior year at Penn, she applied to several medical schools, and she was accepted by several highly rated ones including Harvard, Stanford and Johns Hopkins and she chose Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland." "Yes, I know, she told me when I talked to her from Los Alamos." "I think she is now in her third year and on clinical rotations. Spring said she was home a couple of weeks that summer but left in August to return to Baltimore. After Autumn gave up all hope of ever seeing you again, she started



dating a guy from Philadelphia,” Spring said. “She met him when we were in school at Penn. He was in premed at the time and eventually entered medical school at Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He applied to Johns Hopkins but was not accepted.” Spring sighed and paused momentarily, then asked about my life, especially the last year when Autumn didn’t hear from you. I really didn’t know where to start. “After I was transferred back to the fleet from Los Alamos, I was assigned to fighter squadron VF-20, which was stationed aboard the aircraft carrier, Lexington. On February 17 when I was on a mission in my F6F Hellcat just north of Iwo Jima I developed engine trouble and had to ditch at sea. After 20 days at sea my life raft drifted ashore on Chichi Jima, an island just north of Iwo Jima and I was captured by the Japanese. After a few days on the island, I stole an airplane and escaped; I was shot down and recaptured. This time I was taken to mainland Japan and imprisoned in Kamakura which is near Tokyo, and I remained there until the war ended. Of course, I had no way of contacting anyone, so I was probably listed as missing in action. In the beginning me and the other prisoners were severely beaten on a regular basis. I really didn’t think I would survive.” As I was telling Spring the details of my time in prison, I could see tears come to her eyes. She took my hands in hers and said, “you poor boy.” She then said, “I have some bad news for you about Autumn. She got engaged about a month ago to the fellow she met in Philadelphia, I am so sorry.”

I didn’t speak for several minutes because I didn’t know what to say. I felt as though I had been hit by an atomic blast. My future looked very bleak without her. My thoughts turned to Los Alamos and what I could have done to visit her. I tried to justify my neglect by the fact that we were working 12 hours a day seven days a week to finish the bomb. Also, our work was top secret and journey outside the compound was forbidden except in emergency situations. I then told Spring about my

run-in with Autumn's dad and the \$25,000 he offered me to stop seeing Autumn. I continued and told her about the letter I received from Autumn on my trip home where she told me her daddy told her I took the money. Spring said, "yes, I know all about that." Then I said, "I didn't take the money" and she said, "I know."

After a few minutes, I paid the check and we left. We were both silent on our walk back to Spring's house. Before I left, I gave her a big hug and kissed her on the forehead. I told her again not to mention anything about me to Autumn. I hadn't made up my mind as to what I was going to do about the situation with her. I could just leave everything like it was or I could go to Baltimore and try to find her. That night before I went to bed, I decided to go by the next day and see Autumn's mother. When I arose the next morning which was Sunday, I had breakfast at the hotel and then walked directly to Autumn's house. I arrived about 10:00 and when the butler came to the door, I asked for Mrs. Gamble. I waited in the sitting room for about 15 minutes and then she walked in. I stood and said, "good morning, Mrs. Gamble, remember me, I'm JJ an old friend of Autumn." Yes, "I know who you are; we heard you were killed in the war." "I came pretty close, but as you can see, I survived. I just wanted to tell you, I am going down to Baltimore this afternoon to find Autumn and I plan to ask her to marry me; I just wanted you to know." Well, she said, "that's well and good, but Autumn's already engaged." "Yes, Mrs. Gamble, I already know that, but if I can convince her to change her mind, do we have your blessings?" She thought for a bit, and then she said, "yes, indeed, I just want what's best for my daughter." I then said, "I would appreciate it if you would not mention any of this to Autumn" and she said "alright."

I took the train to Baltimore early that afternoon and checked into the Lord Baltimore Hotel on West Baltimore Street in downtown. After checking in, I was warned by the front desk clerk not to be out walking around at night. It was still daylight for a while, so I went for a walk

down Charles Street toward the inner harbor and passed several nightclubs and honky tonks. Some were advertising burlesque acts and dancing. I learned later that this area of downtown was known as “The Block”. A Burlesque act starring Baltimore's Queen of Burlesque and previous owner of the 2 O'clock Club, Blaze Starr, would become famous (or infamous). Jackie Gleason and Red Skelton were extremely familiar faces at a number of the clubs on The Block. I did make it to the harbor for a brief look and then as the sun was setting, I headed back to the hotel. I couldn't get Autumn out of my mind all weekend, but I had no way of tracking her down until Monday. I was a bit nervous about our encounter the next day. Johns Hopkins Hospital is in a really bad area of Baltimore and the weather during that time of year is pretty dreary with intermittent rain showers.

That Monday morning, I dressed in my blue uniform and wore my cap with the scrambled eggs and took a taxicab to Johns Hopkins Hospital. I then made my way to the Billings Administration Building and inquired about Autumn Gamble. I was told that her group was rotating through surgery, and they would be meeting later that morning in Dr Alfred Blalock's office. In 1944, taking an idea proposed to him by pediatric cardiologist Helen Taussig, surgery director Dr. Alfred Blalock and surgical technician Vivien Thomas devised a technique to correct the deadly heart defect called Tetralogy of Fallot. Their "blue baby" operation, with Denton Cooley assisting, not only saves thousands of lives, but it also proved that surgery involving the heart was possible. I was given a temporary badge and directions to the department chairman's office. It took a while, but I finally found his office. Dr Blalock's secretary's name was Sarah and when I arrived, she asked me if she could help me, and I told her I was there to see Autumn Gamble, a third-year student, “The class was supposed to meet at 11:00 and Dr Blalock was the teacher,” she said. He welcomed me into his office, introduced himself and told me to go on down to the

meeting room and he would be there in a little while. I stood by the door of the room waiting, but not knowing what would happen next. I saw Autumn and another female student walking down the hallway toward the room. When she saw me, she froze in her tracks for a few minutes and then started running toward me. I opened my arms to welcome her, and she wrapped her arms around me and shouted, “thank God, you’re alive”. Several students gathered around to see what was going on. I looked directly at her and could see she was still wearing the necklace I gave her when I left for the Navy. I took off my cap and we hugged each other again and I kissed her on the cheek. Dr Blalock walked by going into the classroom and said, “captain take your time.” He also said, “why don’t you two go have lunch and I will see that Miss Gamble gets a copy of the class notes.”

We walked hand-in-hand to the cafeteria and sat at a corner table away from the others. I couldn’t stop staring at her; she was so beautiful. We both spoke at the same time, and I said you go ahead. She was having difficulty selecting her words so I said maybe I should go first, and she agreed. I told her a little about how horrible the war was and that I almost gave up when I was captured and saw how the other American sailors were treated, but your memory kept me alive. She started to cry, and I stopped talking, but she said please don’t stop. I told her about all the American lives that were lost including several of my close friends and also my brother Paul. Then I said your turn, and she was hesitant about telling me what happened in her life after I left. So, I said never mind we’ll talk later, and she agreed. Then I asked her if she could have dinner with me that night and she said yes. She agreed to meet me at seven o’clock that evening at the hotel.

I asked the desk clerk if he could recommend a nice restaurant and without hesitation, he said Haussner’s on Eastern Ave. Is it close enough to walk, I asked, and he said you probably should take a taxi. I rested for a while in my room before dressing for dinner; I might have

even dozed off for bit. When the taxi arrived with Autumn about 6:45, I opened the door and asked the driver to take us to Haussner's restaurant and he replied, "yes sir." Autumn said, "you looked so handsome standing there in your Navy uniform." When we exited the taxi, I asked the driver if he would pick us up later and he replied yes and gave me his contact information. Haussner's was awesome with a fantastic art collection covering the walls. Autumn said, she had heard the restaurant was famous for its crab cakes, so that's what we had along with a great bottle of their Mosel Riesling wine. We talked about old times when we were in school at Princeton and Penn and how happy we were. Those happy times seemed so long ago when were so young. From time to time as we were talking I would see tears come to Autumn's eyes. I had a feeling there was something she wanted to tell me but apparently, she just couldn't bring herself to utter the words. I said we'll talk later, let's just enjoy our meal now. I asked her how she liked medical school, and she said she loved it. She said everyone in her class was super nice and she had already made some friends including the other four girls in the class. "One of the surgical residents", she said, "was from Oxford, Mississippi and his name is Arthur Falkner".

I asked her about Spring, and she told me all about their summer trip to Europe. They had a blast, she said, they went to seven different countries and Italy was their favorite. They especially liked Paris, Rome, Barcelona and Athens. After we finished dinner and paid the check, I phoned for the taxi to pick us up. On the way to the hotel, I asked her if she would like to come up to the room and she said yes, of course. When we passed the clerk's desk, he gave us a funny look and I said it's okay she's my wife and I saw Autumn grin. Inside the room we embraced, and I gave her a big kiss and told her I loved her. She said, "are you telling me that to get into my pants?" and I said yes, and we both burst out laughing. She excused herself and entered the

bathroom. When she reappeared, she was totally nude like before and when I looked at her my heart skipped a few beats and I almost passed out. It took me about a millisecond to take off my clothes and we made passionate love. She then told me she was engaged to be married and I said yes, "I already know, Spring told me. I went by her house last week because I didn't want to go by your house because of your father. She also told me your father passed away not long ago. I'm sorry." Autumn then said, "you know my father never liked you." I said, "I know that, but how could he make that decision without knowing me? He didn't know me as an individual, he only knew where I came from." She interrupted and said, "if I didn't forget all about you, he said, he would cut me out of his will." I said, "Autumn, he thought he was looking out for your best interests, but he was totally wrong. Money does not bring happiness" and she said, "I know that, but I don't think he did. He also told me before he died, he was lying about you taking that money." Then she continued telling me about the guy she was engaged to and started to tell me his name, but I put my finger to her lips and said I don't want to know his name. She also told me she had slept with him and asked me how I felt about that. Some things need to go unanswered, I said. Then I told her all about Asami and how much she helped me through the hard time when I was in prison.

Then I told her, I loved her with all my heart and someday I wanted to marry her. "You will never find anyone on the face of the earth who will love you more than me. I may not be very romantic but my love for you is real and genuine." I went on to say, "if I don't marry you, I probably will never get married" and we left it at that. It was getting late, and I asked if she wanted to spend the night and she said she had classes all day the next day and should go back to her place, which was in the residence hall across the street from the hospital. Before she left, she gave me all her contact information, her phone number and address. She also gave me a phone number where I could reach her at any time

in case of an emergency. When she got dressed, we went downstairs, and the desk clerk phoned her a taxi. I waited until the taxi showed up, then I kissed her goodbye and said I will be in touch.

That night I needed to decide what I was going to do during the remainder of my furlough. I really wanted to go home and spend some time with Mama and Daddy and the rest of the family. Also, I was anxious to find out where I was going to be stationed for the remainder of my enlistment....I could remain in the Navy or resign after six months.

The next morning, I took a taxi to the Baltimore Municipal Airport (or Army Airfield) and purchased a ticket on Eastern Airlines to Nashville. I would have hitchhiked but I really didn't feel like engaging in any friendly conversation with a stranger. I had a lot of thinking to do about my future and especially the situation with Autumn. I really didn't know if there was a chance, she would accept my marriage proposal. When I was in the war and at Los Alamos, I saved almost my entire paycheck every month except the \$100.00 a month allotment to Mama and Daddy. So, I had enough money to travel by air anywhere I needed (or wanted) to go and to make a down payment on a house if (and when) I ever got married.

I actually enjoyed the flight from Baltimore on the Douglas DC-3 to Berry Field Airport in Nashville. The flight took about six hours with a brief stop in Louisville, Kentucky. The flight brought back memories (good and bad) of my flying time in those fighters during the war years. At times, I would also have flash backs of my time as a prisoner of war and how bad I was treated in the early days of my incarceration. I thought about precious Asami and how much she added to my everyday existence while I was at Ofuna.

I arrived in Nashville that afternoon about 2:30 and took a taxi from the airport to the Grey Hound bus station to catch a bus to Booneville. I was really lucky because there was a bus leaving in about

15 minutes. The bus ride was an enjoyable 4.5 hours. The days were still long enough so I could see the cotton fields in northeast Mississippi, and they were so beautiful. The petals of the flowers had already shed and there were small bolls appearing on the stalks. The opened cotton bolls would not be ready to pick until the middle to late October. Looking out the window of the bus sure brought back lots of memories. I thought about Pig and what ever happened to him. I wondered if he was going to remain in the Navy or even if he was still alive.

The last time I saw Mama and Daddy was before I left for the Navy, and I was really looking forward to seeing them. It was late afternoon when I arrived in Booneville and since there were no taxis available, I was going to hitch a ride home but the fellow working at the bus station offered to drive me. He had known Mama and Daddy since he was just a kid. His name was Lester Eaton and his family used to live across the road from us. He even knew my name and said everybody around there thought I had been killed in the war. He also said that Mama and Daddy didn't know I was alive; and I said how do know? "If your Daddy had known, he would have told everybody in Booneville and Jumpertown," he said. Lester was driving an old Dodge pickup. I was not really in the mood for a long conversation, and I think he realized that. When we arrived at our house, it was almost dark, and Mama and Daddy were sitting on the front porch. When Lester stopped the truck, they just sat there looking; they didn't recognize me in the passenger's seat. I thanked Lester and when I opened the door and stepped out Mama saw me first and started running toward me. By the time I rounded the truck she was there with her arms open. We embraced and walked to the front porch where Daddy was, and he got up and hugged me. I asked Mama if they received my letter and she said no, but they never gave up hope that one day they would see me



again. Mama said, “your Daddy knew for sure you would survive the war and come home.”

Mama kept telling me how handsome I looked in my dress blue uniform. They wanted to know how long I had been on the road, and I told them I left Baltimore that morning and they couldn’t believe it. They wanted to know how in the world I was able to come all that distance in one day and I told them I flew to Nashville and then took the bus. They didn’t know a person could buy a ticket and fly on an airplane. Not much had changed in their life since I left four years ago. However, Daddy had saved enough money to buy a used pickup. It was a black 1938 half ton 6-cylinder Chevrolet pickup truck. So, at least I would have transportation while I was home.

I stayed around Jumpertown and Booneville for the next week with Mama and Daddy. While I was there, they took me to see all the kinfolks and my two brothers. They were both sharecroppers and lived not far from Mama and Daddy; Josh and his wife had four children and lived in Blackland, and Adam and his wife had three children and they lived in Pisgah. We planned to visit them that coming weekend. So, I had a few days to rest, eat a lot of good country food, and go visit Skip’s mom and dad in Adamsville, Tennessee, which was only about 50 miles from Jumpertown. The following morning, we went to the cemetery and saw the graves of baby Julia and Grandma; Mama had picked some flowers before we left the house to put on their graves. The next day, which was Friday, Daddy let me drive his pickup truck to Adamsville to visit Skip’s parents. I really didn’t know where they lived, so as soon as I arrived in the town, I stopped at a filling station that was open and asked them if they knew where the Sinclair family lived. The filling station was owned and operated by a family who lived on the premises, and they knew the whole Sinclair family including Skip. I was told to turn right onto Old Shiloh Road and drive about three miles and they lived in a brick house on the right-hand side of the

road. I arrived at their house about 1:00 in the afternoon and when I knocked on the front door Mrs. Sinclair answered and said come in. I introduced myself as JJ. Mrs. Sinclair called her husband who was just finishing dinner in the kitchen. She said this is Skip's friend JJ from the war. I told them what a great guy their son was, and I told them we went through flight school together and then we were in the same squadron together and he was a super pilot and my wingman. They offered me dinner, but I declined and asked for a cup of coffee. During the next couple of hours, I told them all about some of the missions me and Skip flew and that their son was a Naval ACE, a select group of Navy Aviators. After our long meeting, I excused myself and drove back to Jumpertown.

The weather was still warm enough to set outside at night and listen to the whip-poor-wills call and the bull bats diving for insects. The nights in northeast Mississippi were still like magic and the atmosphere brought back precious memories of my early life with Paul and Pig. It seemed like eons ago, but they were still there in a special place, and I hoped they would never fade away.

We spent all-day Saturday with Josh and his family and all-day Sunday with Adam and his family. They all were healthy and looked great and they would be starting to pick cotton beginning the next week. We had tons of fresh country vegetables to eat for dinner along with Mama's cornbread. The women spent most of the time in the kitchen while me and Daddy and the boys spent our time outside talking and playing various games. I really, really enjoyed the visit, but come Wednesday morning I had to start my journey back to the Navy and a totally different lifestyle.

Autumn had two more years before she graduated from medical school, then she would enter a residency program which would be another three years and then probably three more in a specialty program. So that would be a total of eight years. If I remained in the

Navy, I would have to spend at least 16 more years before I could retire. I thought about running this by Autumn, but then I thought we are not even engaged yet and that may never happen. Therefore, I realized I would have to plan my own future without any input from anybody. One thing I knew, I would have to support myself in a lifestyle I was happy with, and I would like to be close enough to Autumn to see her often. I knew I had until the first week of November to make up my mind about the Navy, but I had no idea where I was supposed to go. I decided to go to Washington DC because the main Naval Headquarters was there. Since cotton picking time had started, Daddy had to go the field every day, so I hung around the house with Mama for the next couple of days planning my future. I told her all about Autumn and that I would like to marry her, but I didn't know if she would accept my marriage proposal. I told Mama I thought she would really like her, and she said I would like to meet her. Then I told her maybe we could come to visit them during Thanksgiving week, and she thought that would be great.

Wednesday morning Daddy took off from work and drove me to the bus station in Booneville. I checked to see how long it would take to get to Washington DC by bus, and Lester told me it would take about 16 hours and there was a bus leaving soon. There was one bus leaving at 4:00 in the afternoon that would arrive in DC at 8:00 the next morning, which was Thursday, so that's the one I took. When I arrived in DC, I took a taxi to the Harrington Hotel and checked in. The hotel is within walking distance of the Smithsonian Museum, and I wanted to go visit it after I went to the Pentagon. When I arrived at the hotel, I was able to go ahead and check in. I got to the room about 10:00 AM and took a well needed bath and then tried to phone Autumn. Of course, she was not available, so I left a message for her to phone me that night at the Harrington. I told the lady who took the message that it was very,

very important. I then phoned and made an appointment at the Naval Headquarters at the Pentagon for the next morning.

After resting for a couple of hours, I headed out on my journey. As I was leaving the hotel, I stopped by the concierge's desk and asked where a good restaurant was nearby for a late lunch and she said one of the best was the Old Ebbitt Grill, which was on 15<sup>th</sup> Street Northwest and it's near the hotel. She said go west on East Street Northwest until you get to 15<sup>th</sup> Street Northwest, then take a right and it is within 1.5 blocks. When I turned right on 15<sup>th</sup>, I could see the White House which I thought was magnificent. The Old Ebbitt Grill was awesome; I had a lobster lunch with all the trimmings, and it was great. I thought it looked just like a big crawfish. When I left the restaurant, I turned left (south) and walked to the National Mall and turned west. This took me past the Washington Monument, the Reflecting Pool and to the Lincoln Memorial. I sat on the steps and looked across the Potomac River toward the Arlington National Cemetery, where the dead of the Nation's military conflicts are buried. This brought back recent memories of all my friends and my brother Paul who died in the war that just ended. The Pentagon, which I would visit the next day, lies just south of Arlington.

I arrived back at the hotel early that evening about 7:00 and waited for Autumn to call. The phone rang about eight and when I answered the hotel operator said, "Commander there is a young lady by the name of Autumn Gamble on the line, would you like to speak with her," and I said, "you beat I would." Autumn said, "hello darling what are you doing in DC?" "I came here to find out my Naval assignment; I have an appointment at the Pentagon tomorrow. Would you like to get together while I'm here" and she said, "absolutely, I can come down Sunday if you will still be there." "OK," I said, "that will be great." We talked about 30 more minutes and then she said, "goodbye my darling, I have work to do" and hung up.

When I left the hotel the next morning the weather was beautiful but a bit chilly. I walked from the hotel to the Pentagon and arrived about 10:45 for my 11:00 appointment. I entered the building and ask directions to the Chief of Naval Operations office, and it seemed to be about a mile away, so I had to walk briskly, but I made it. Fleet Admiral Ernest King welcomed me into his office, and we discussed my situation. Admiral King said he had met on two occasions with the Superintendent of the Naval Academy and “he would be very interested in having you come to the Academy as a professor. Do you think you may be interested in something like that?” “I may very well be,” I said, “but do I have any options?” The Admiral replied that there may be an opening for a flight instructor in Pensacola. “You know Commander that we have the power to place you in either one of those positions, but I wanted you to make the choice.” He continued, “if you take the position at the Academy, you will be teaching mathematics and physics in the School of Mathematics and Science.” Sir, I can also resign from the Navy if I wish, right?” “Yes, you can but the Navy always hates to lose an officer with your credentials. Especially one with your training and experiences. You have until next week to make a decision. I am not pressuring you, but I would like a decision by next Monday.” I said OK, then saluted the Admiral and left his office. I had two whole days to make up my mind. One of them I would visit the Smithsonian and the other one I would spend with Autumn.

My meeting with Admiral King weighed heavily on my mind all that night and I really didn't get a lot of sleep. After a leisure breakfast the next morning, I went to the Smithsonian, and it was absolutely fantastic. The Smithsonian is a group of museums and education and research centers, the largest such complex in the world, created by the US government "for the increase and diffusion of knowledge". Founded on August 10, 1846, it operates as a trust instrumentality and is not formally a part of any of the three branches of the federal

government. I especially enjoyed the Arts and Industries Building with all the airplanes; the first airplane to ever fly was there along with the Spirit of St Louis and several other airplanes.

That afternoon, I visited Charles Schwartz and Son's jewelry store which was near the hotel and bought an engagement ring for Autumn. I probably paid too much for it, but I had been saving up for a long time.

Autumn arrived the next morning about 10:00 and I met her in the hotel lobby and took her up to my room. While we were sitting on the bed, I told her all about my relationship with Asami. At first, she didn't want to hear about it, but I told her it was very important to me, so she listened. I chose my words carefully because I wanted her to know the significance for both of us. I told her to listen to the entire story before she responded, and she said OK. I told her the entire story in depth without leaving out anything. I wanted her to know that I didn't sleep with her in the beginning, but finally I couldn't resist anymore. I told her how much I loved Asami and how hard it was for me to leave her. I would have to stop at times and whip away the tears before I could continue. When I told her about the scene on the dock when I was leaving, she started to cry, and she said "oh, JJ I love you so much. I just hope you love me as much as you loved Asami".....She said, "I realize that was a different place and a different time and the circumstances you were living under were totally different and I cannot imagine what it was like." I told her I loved her with all my heart, and I never stopped loving her even when I loved Asami, which really surprised me. I guess some people have enough love in their heart to love more than one person. I then held her in my arms and kissed her and said, "I am dying to make love to you, but I don't think it's a good time" and she agreed.

We left the hotel about 12:30 and walked to the Old Ebbitt Grill. She said she had heard of the place before, but she had never eaten

there. I ordered lobster for both of us and even though it was a bit messy, it was excellent. After the meal, we both went to the rest room and cleaned up before we started our journey to the Lincoln Memorial. From the restaurant, we headed to the Washington Monument walking hand-in-hand in the cool sunshine. From time-to-time, along our path, we would stop and sit on a park bench and cuddle. The sun glittered in the Reflecting Pool as we walked past. When we arrived at the Lincoln Memorial, we took a seat on the steps directly in front of the statue of Lincoln. The view was awesome over the Reflecting Pool with the Washington Monument in the background reflecting in the pool. I positioned Autumn so we would be sitting side-by-side then I stepped down to the next step kneeled and took her hand and said Autumn I love you with all my heart, will you marry me? By that time a small crowd had gathered around us. The proposal was totally unexpected and really stunned her; she didn't speak for several minutes, then she yelled YES, YES, YES so everyone could hear her answer and the whole crowd applauded. I then withdrew the ring from my pocket and placed it on her finger. Some people even came over and congratulated us and told me they appreciated my service, and some wanted to take our picture.

On our walk back to the hotel, I told her all about my meeting with Admiral King and the two possibilities and she said, "you know if you take the position at the Naval Academy, you will be near me, and we can see each other more often." "That's true" I said, "but I have never taught before." She then reassured me that I would be an excellent teacher. I then said, "I will make the decision tonight and let Admiral King know tomorrow then I will let you know." We stopped and sat on one of the benches alongside the Reflecting Pool and I asked her if she would like to go meet my parents during Thanksgiving break. "Before you answer, I must tell you their house does not have indoor plumbing, so the bathroom is outside; it's called an outhouse." She answered with,

“I have been camping before and I would love to go meet your Mama and Daddy, but it will have to be a short trip because I can’t take off very long from school.”

That Sunday night was very stressful trying to decide what I thought was the best for both me and Autumn. It was very difficult, and I tried to consider the pros and cons of both positions. Now that I was engaged, I also had to take Autumn’s opinion into consideration. At about 2:00 AM, I finally decided that I would take the position at the Naval Academy. I still loved flying, but I thought if I took the position in Pensacola my future would be limited to aviation whereas the academy position would have other possibilities. For example, sometime in the future I would like to work at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, England and teaching at the academy might enhance those possibilities. Monday morning, I went to Admiral King’s office and gave him my decision and he thought I had made the correct one. Then I asked, “where do I go from here? I only have one request and that is, I would like to have the week of Thanksgiving off so I can visit my family.” He said, “that’s no problem, I will make arrangements for you to move into Navy housing at the academy beginning Wednesday, that will give you a day to travel.”

Before leaving the Admiral’s office, I told him I was looking for a Navy friend of mine and I wondered if he could help me find him. He told me when I exited his office turn right and the third office on the left was the Office of Naval Personnel and they may be able to help me. I thanked him and left. When I entered the Office of Naval Personnel, the receptionist greeted me and asked, can I help you Commander and I replied, “yes, I am trying to locate a sailor named Malcolm White. When I last heard, he was stationed on the carrier USS Hornet (CV-8) which was sunk October 27, 1942, and I don’t know if he survived.” She looked and looked but didn’t find him. She did tell me; he was not one of the 140 sailors who died when the ship sank which was



reassuring. She told me to go and have lunch and come back in about an hour and a half.

There was a cafeteria in the Pentagon so that's where I had lunch followed by a cup of coffee. When I returned to the office, the lady said, "I have some good news about your friend that will make you very happy, I think. He is a student at the Naval Academy in Annapolis." I couldn't believe what I just heard, and I gave out with some kind of yell; I don't even know what I said or how loud I said it, but everybody in the office heard me. Tears came to my eyes, and I then said, "I just accepted a position there to start teaching next term. I didn't know the Naval Academy accepted black students" and she said he was accepted November 2, 1945, three days after Wesley Brown, the first black student to be accepted. They are in the same graduating class of 1949. This was incredible and unbelievable.

The bus ride from DC on Wednesday November 14, 1945, to Annapolis took about two hours even though the distance is only 32 miles. The bus must have stopped at least a dozen times. Never-the-less I arrived at the academy around noon. By mid-afternoon I was introduced to my two-bedroom apartment on the academy grounds, which would be my home for the next year or so. When I was settled in, I wrote Mama and Daddy to tell them the news of my engagement to Autumn and my new job. I also, told them I would be bringing her home to Jumpertown to meet them during Thanksgiving.

That Saturday I phoned Autumn on my own telephone and told her the whole story. I also, asked her if we could go visit Mama and Daddy November 20-24 and she said yes, she would be off the entire week. I told her to take her own toilet paper because Mama and Daddy didn't use toilet paper. She wanted to know what they used, and I said the Sears and Roebuck catalog and she was amazed. I also said they use a bucket to pee in at night and don't worry, you will have your own.

That following Monday morning, I tracked down Malcolm. He was living in Bancroft Hall along with all the other midshipmen. When he opened his dorm room and saw me, he started jumping up and down and then hugged me. He invited me in and introduced me to Wesley Brown, his roommate. I was in my uniform, and he said, “hey man you made Commander?” I said, “yes that’s right, and I am going to be teaching you guys.” He said, “you’re joking.” “No, I accepted the position last week and I will be here for at least two years. They both wanted to know what I would be teaching, and I said my appointment is in the School of Mathematics and Science, so I will more than likely be teaching math and physics. Malcolm then said, “thank the lord, we are going to need a lot of help in both those subjects.” “Does Wesley know anything about me,” I asked, and he said, “no, I haven’t told him yet. I thought for sure you were dead JJ. I heard that your plane crashed at sea, and you were not rescued and of course, we all thought the worst.” “It’s a long story and maybe someday I’ll tell it to you. Oh, by the way, I got engaged.”

I found a direct flight from Baltimore to Memphis on Eastern Airlines, and me and Autumn arrived there about one o’clock in the afternoon. We left Memphis driving on Highway 72 in a Hertz rental car and headed toward Corinth, Mississippi. At Walnut, Mississippi we turned right onto Highway 15, the longest highway in the state and drove to Ripley and then turned left onto Highway 4. When we were a few miles west of Jumpertown, I showed Autumn where I used to pick cotton when I was a kid. She thought only black people picked cotton in the south. I was getting a bit anxious to get home and show Mama and Daddy my beautiful bride to be.

We arrived at their house about 6:00 that afternoon just before dark. I told Autumn on the ride from Memphis that we could not sleep together in their house, and she said that would be fine. When we arrived, Mama hugged both of us, but Daddy just said hello. She

showed us to our rooms that had feather beds and pillows, homemade quilts and that was all. Autumn wanted to know where she could hang her clothes and I showed her a few nails driven into the wall for that purpose. After we moved into our rooms we sat on the porch with Mama and Daddy for a while. I really wanted Autumn to hear a whip-poor-will call, but Mama said they may have all left by now. You know they go somewhere else in the wintertime when it gets cold. Mama went into the kitchen and finished cooking supper. Me and Autumn and Daddy remained on the porch; it was a bit cool but we both brought our jackets. Mama called us to supper and just before we entered the house, I heard a distant call “chip-fell-out-of-the-white-oak,” and I knew it was a whip-poor-will. We stood there about five minutes and the bird repeated it’s call at least 20 times. Autumn thought it was weird, but awesome and she loved it. For supper we had cornbread, fried okra, whip-poor-will peas and fresh tenderloin with iced tea to drink. Mama knew how much I liked banana pudding, so she made one for me. The next morning when we arose, Mama had cooked us one of her special breakfasts. Daddy and some relatives had killed a hog the week before, so we had fresh pork sausage and eggs with red-eye gravy and Mama’s famous buttermilk biscuits. Autumn said she had never had better food anywhere. She commented that it was a lot different than New York food.

The next day was Wednesday so we had all day together before Thanksgiving Day. I drove her down to Dry Creek Bottom hopping to find a cotton field that hadn’t been picked. It took a while, but I finally found one that looked as though the cotton bolls were 100% open and it looked just like snow. Autumn thought it was beautiful and suggested we go skiing. I then took her to Paget’s store, and they were making sorghum molasses out back. We watched the entire process from the mule pulling a pole in a circle, which turns the gears of a roller mill, that squeezes the juice from the cane, to cooking the juice in a large

pan until it thickens and becomes molasses. I bought a gallon bucket of the fresh molasses and took it home to have with Mama's biscuits the next morning. The next day was Thanksgiving and the whole family would be there. They started showing up the next morning about 9:00 and by early afternoon there were people everywhere, mostly children; nine in all. Mama and the women, including Autumn, went to the kitchen and started cooking Thanksgiving dinner. Nobody knew that Autumn's family was super wealthy (Procter and Gamble), and I was not about to tell them. They seemed to be getting along very well in the kitchen. Josh and Adam congratulated me on selecting such a beautiful lady for the next Mrs. Johnson. It was great seeing all of them and I was trying to memorize all their children's names. I really didn't have a close relationship with Josh and Adam like I did with Paul because they had already left the household when I was growing up. The dinner was outstanding, and everybody really enjoyed it. We had fresh ham and dressing, snap beans, baked sweet potatoes, biscuits with muscadine jelly, and one of Mama's moist orange cakes. Autumn agreed that it was one of the best meals she had ever had. I told her, the fact that it was cooked on a wood burning stove gave it a special country taste and she agreed. Autumn and Mama really bonded even though it was such a short time they were together. That Friday morning while Autumn was packing to leave, I told Mama and Daddy over coffee that Autumn's parents were super wealthy and her grandfather, James Gamble and William Procter started their company "Procter and Gamble" in 1837 in Cincinnati, Ohio. They own the company that makes Ivory soap, you know the soap that floats. They were both really surprised, and Mama said, but she is so sweet and down-to-earth, and Daddy said how did she ever hook up with you? We left Jumpertown late that morning and on our drive to Memphis, Autumn told me how much she enjoyed the trip and meeting my family.

Even using the outdoor toilet was not all that bad. She really, really fell in love with Mama when she first met her...I thought she would.

When we arrived in Memphis, we checked into the Peabody Hotel because our flight didn't leave until the next day. That night we walked down to Beale Street and listened to Muddy Waters, Louis Armstrong, and a young B.B. King. They played often on "the street" and subsequently developed the legendary Memphis blues sound. The next morning, we went down to the lobby and watched the ducks march to the fountain to the tune of John Philip Sousa's King Cotton March. That afternoon we took a leisurely stroll along the Mississippi River and the next morning we left going back to Baltimore.

All physics majors at the Naval Academy begin by selecting physics and then specialize by choosing one of three tracks during their second year: physics, applied physics, or astrophysics. Sophomore year is dedicated to foundational material on kinematics, mechanics, electromagnetism, heat, light, and sound. Junior year revisits these topics with increased sophistication and introduces quantum mechanical phenomena and mathematical methods for physicists. During first class year, majors take electives of their choosing. Physics track majors take advanced quantum mechanics, thermal physics, and choose from acoustics, condensed matter, optics, or nuclear physics. Astrophysics track majors take astronomy, astrophysics, and observational astrophysics. Applied track majors generally take electives from engineering or the other sciences. Regardless of track, physics majors develop rational, analytical approaches to defining and solving problems which range from the small scales found in the nucleus of an atom to the large scales found in the galaxies of the universe.

After checking into my apartment and familiarizing myself with the lay of the land around the Academy, I met with Malcolm and Wesley, and we set up a schedule to review physics and mathematics.

They had already finished two terms of general physics, which included mechanics, electricity, and magnetism. The mathematics courses they had already taken were college algebra and trigonometry. They just barely squeezed by in those courses and now they were ready to tackle modern physics and advanced mathematics and they both really needed tutoring in these courses. Our plan was to cover, optics, radiation, photoelectric effect, and nuclear/atomic physics; the math courses were differential and integral calculus. I explained to them that these two semesters were going to probably be the most difficult time of their lives, but if they wanted to graduate bad enough, they would have to put in the study time. We met every weekday at least one hour and, on the weekend, before exams we would spend several hours reviewing the material over which I thought they would be tested. We did, however, take time off from studying to attend some sporting events.

That fall, I was told the Army vs Navy football game was coming up that next Saturday (December 1) and if I wanted to attend, I needed to let the Athletic Department know. Both teams were undefeated and ranked one and two in the latest Associated Press poll. However, Navy had one tie and that was against Notre Dame. The game was labeled the “the game of the century” even before it was played. The game would be played at the Philadelphia Municipal Stadium, in Philadelphia, and start at high noon. Several chartered buses from the academy would take the midshipmen to the stadium in Philadelphia beginning at 0600 on game day. Me, Malcolm and Wesley left on the 0800 bus and arrived at the stadium about 1030 in plenty of time to get settled in our seats before kickoff. On that beautiful crisp sunny day there were 102,000 fans in the stadium, including President Harry Truman. The great Doc Blanchard led the Army’s Black Knights offense, coached by Earl “Red” Blaik, with three touchdowns (one on defense) in the 32-13 victory over rival Navy, coached by Oscar Hagberg. Even though the Navy lost, it was a hell of a game and we

really, really enjoyed it. Army's Doc Blanchard won the Heisman Trophy that year and 9-0 Army won the Associated Press's National Championship Award. The Army vs Navy football game would be an annual event that I would not miss as long as I was an academy professor.

The academy offers several graduate education opportunities to qualified midshipmen. These midshipmen typically have completed enough courses to have the space required in their schedule to begin graduate school their senior year.

Me and one other professor were assigned to teach all the graduate courses in mathematics and physics. Also, the academy policy was to promote and maintain an environment in which research and scholarly activities contribute to the professional growth of faculty and the educational growth of midshipmen. In the recent past, faculty and midshipman research have been funded by a variety of sponsoring agencies, including the Office of Naval Research, the Naval Research Laboratory, the Naval Surface Warfare Center, the Naval Air Warfare Center at Patuxent River, as well as by the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation. I was lucky enough to obtain funds to study the effects of radiation on the cardiovascular system and wasted energy generated by the left ventricle.

Summers at the academy were super fun. First both midshipmen and faculty were given three weeks off and the remainder of the summer midshipmen could fly in Navy aircraft, dive in a nuclear-powered submarine, drive Navy ships, and participate in Marine Corps combat training.

Upon graduation, a Bachelor of Science degree is awarded regardless of major, by law, due to the technical content of the core curriculum. After graduation, midshipmen are commissioned as an Ensign in the US Navy or Second Lieutenant in the US Marine Corps.

After commissioning, you will serve a minimum of five years on active duty.

Before Autumn's daddy died, he set up an endowment fund for her education all the way through medical school. The endowment had enough funds to pay her tuition plus lodging and board and to purchase a car when she needed one. After she graduated from medical school, she would be on salary all the way through her residency and fellowship. So, we were in a pretty good position financially.

Autumn graduated from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in the spring of 1947, and we got married the next week. The wedding took place Sunday afternoon June 1, 1947, in Manhattan, and it was awesome. Malcom "Pig" was my best man and Spring was Autumn's maid of honor; several other midshipmen attended the wedding including Wesley Brown. Mrs. Gamble and Autumn planned the wedding with the help of one of the top wedding planning companies in Manhattan. It was in the Harold Pratt House, a mansion located at 58 East 68<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Ave in Manhattan's coveted upper east side. The house was constructed in 1919-20 for Mr. Harold Pratt. The Pratt family was real close friends with the Gambles, and Mr. Pratt's widow, Harriet Barnes Pratt, insisted that the wedding be held at her house and Autumn and Mrs. Gamble accepted. I was so happy that Mama and Daddy attended the wedding. Josh and Adam bought their clothes and put them on Eastern Airlines flight in Memphis, and I picked them up at the New York Municipal Airport in Queens. Mrs. Gamble invited them to stay at her place, but Daddy wasn't about to accept her invitation. He said they would be more comfortable in a hotel even though he had never stayed in one before. So, I booked them a room in the Plaza Hotel which was within walking distance of the Harold Pratt House. Daddy agreed to attend the wedding on one condition, that they arrive on Saturday and leave Monday. He needed to be back at work on Tuesday.



That was the first and only wedding I had ever attended, and it was fantastic. The bride and her maid of honor were both radiantly beautiful, and Malcolm was handsome in his white dress uniform. The wedding reception was out of this world with awesome food and entertainment. After a fabulous dinner, the attendees went from the dining hall into the entertainment hall and, lo and behold, the music was coming from the Artie Shaw Band. It was a surprise wedding gift for the bride and groom. Somehow Mrs. Gamble was able to convince Artie and his Band to play at the reception. She and Mr. Gamble had met Artie when he was performing at the Imperial Theatre on Broadway in 1935. In the entertainment hall, the bride and groom were seated at a central table with the bride seated to the right of the groom. Malcolm and his date were seated to my left and Spring and Alex were seated to the bride's right. Mama and Daddy were also seated at the table with us along with Mrs. Gamble and Spring's parents. Malcolm was so excited to see Mama and Daddy. He gave Mama a big hug and shook Daddy's hand. I could see tears in his eyes and a joyful expression on this face. I am absolutely sure that was the first time Mama had ever hugged a black man and that was Daddy's first time to shake one's hand.

When everyone was settled, the band stopped playing and the best man and maid of honor gave their customary speeches. Spring went first and talked about how she and Autumn had grown up like sisters all the way through grammar school, high school and then college. The first time they went their separate ways was when she went to law school at Yale and Autumn went to medical school at Johns Hopkins. She then ventured into how Autumn first met me when I was in school at Princeton. Me and Autumn were sitting there holding hands, enjoying every second of her talk which brought back so many precious memories. I must tell you it was very emotional. The audience gave her a well-deserved standing ovation. When she finished, Malcolm came

to the podium. He stood there several seconds before speaking. When he spoke, his voice was very soft and very clear. It was super quite; you could have heard a pin drop. His opening remark was “I really don’t know where to start”. He surely did not speak like a black man who was raised in the south. He would have to stop from time-to-time to wipe the tears from his eyes. He told about our early life growing up as friends in the cotton fields in Mississippi. A white boy and a black boy, which was very uncommon in the south at that time. He told about Mama inviting him, a black boy, to sit at a table and eat with a white family. “When JJ left to go to college at 13 years of age, I really missed him,” he said. “I had lost my only playmate.” He then mentioned the time we meet on the USS Yorktown when we were both stationed aboard the ship, “but JJ was an officer, and I was an enlisted man, and fraternization between an officer and an enlisted man, especially a black one, was not tolerated in the Navy at that time. Therefore, I was transferred to the USS Hornet and then the Yorktown was sunk not long after that in the next battle, which was the battle of Midway, and that probably saved my life. But you are not going to believe the next part of this story. In the summer of 1945, I applied and was accepted to the US Naval Academy. I was the second black person, after Wesley Brown, to be admitted to the academy. Here’s the interesting part.....that fall after the war was over JJ had survived one of the many Japanese prison camps and was transferred to the academy as one of my professors and I was so happy I cried.” He ended by saying, “thank you Commander Johnson for being my friend and my teacher. Now, I would like to toast Commander and Mrs. Johnson, may you have a long and happy life together!” and the audience went crazy, cheering and shouting.

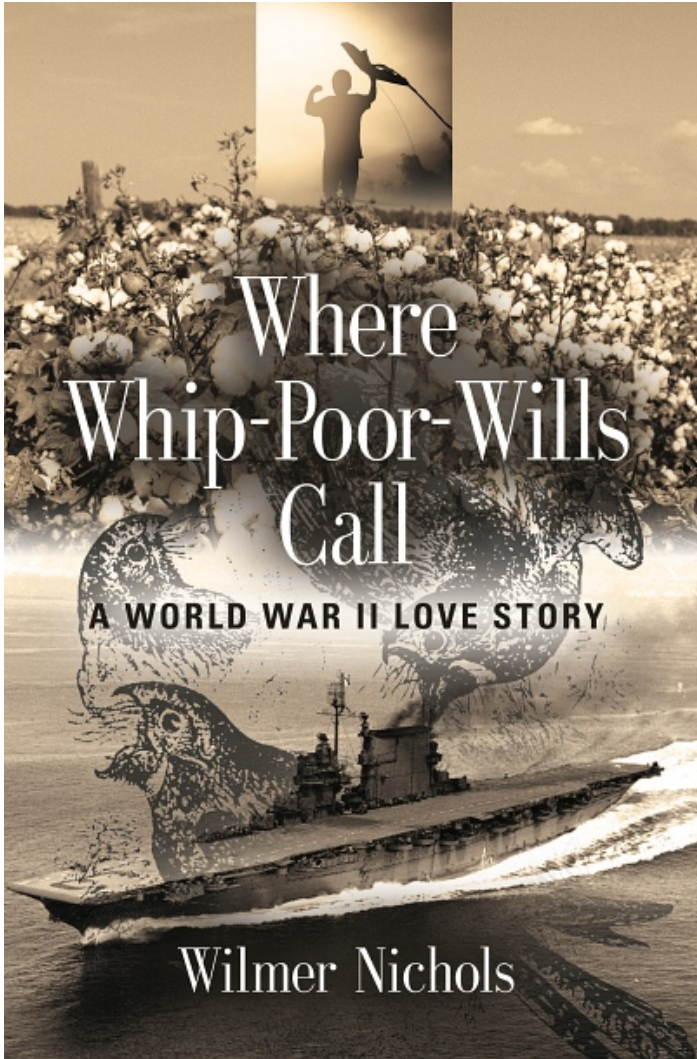
After the band members took their seats, Artie Shaw came to the microphone and said, Oh My God, that’s a tuff act to follow, then he signaled the band to kick it off with their number one hit “Begin the

Beguine” and Artie announced that the bride and groom come to the floor and start the dancing. The evening was filled with joy and toasts and dancing. Even Mama and Daddy enjoyed the wedding and the reception, but I couldn’t get them out on the dance floor. Daddy did have a few free shots of bourbon whiskey and Mama had a Shirley Temple. The band followed with “Moonglow”, “Stardust”, “Interlude in B-Flat” and others. These popular hits were followed by “Dancing in the Dark” and then the band cut loose with “In the Mood” and the celebration really got wild. Everyone was doing the “jitterbug,” the new dance craze that was sweeping the country. Malcolm and Wesley and their dates really put a show. Everybody else stopped dancing just to watch them.

We took two weeks off after the wedding and flew TWA from New York City to Rome for our honeymoon and it was fantastic. We stayed at a boutique hotel near the beautiful Trevi Fountain. The legend of the fountain says you should stand with your back toward the fountain and toss a coin over your left shoulder to guarantee a return trip to Rome. We visited the fountain every day after breakfast and tossed in several Italian 10 lira coins. The exchange rate was 625.00 lira to one US dollar. The Trevi Fountain was in the center of all the places we wanted to visit and were in close walking distance of our hotel. The first day we just relaxed and planed our itinerary for the remainder of the trip. We visited Vatican City, St Peters Basilica, and the Sistine Chapel which were across the Tiber River. They were all spectacular, especially the Sistine Chapel with Michelangelo’s iconic painted ceiling which took four years to paint and began in 1508. We then visited the Spanish Steps and the Pantheon with a leisure lunch at the Piazza Navona. And finally, on our last day in Rome, we visited the iconic Roman Colosseum.

When we returned to the states Autumn entered a residency program in Internal Medicine there at Johns Hopkins Hospital and I

went back to teaching at the Naval Academy. We rented a house on Marley Creek in Glen Burnie, Maryland. The house was halfway between Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore and the Naval Academy in Annapolis. We purchased two used cars for the commutes from Glen Burnie to Baltimore and Annapolis.



*JJ Johnson was captured by the Japanese and imprisoned on mainland Japan. After the Japanese surrendered, JJ was forced to leave his Japanese lover and return to America and reunite with his American lover.*

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