ROBERT EARL WILDERMUTH

It was a beautiful Spring day, the kind that Southeastern Ohio is noted for, when I , Robert Earl Wildermuth, first saw the light of day as a new member of the Earl Adam and Sadye Irene(Fleming) Wildermuth family. In addition to my mother and father, I had an older sister, Ruth Irene Wildermuth who was born two years prior to my arrival.

I entered this life at 11:00 A.M., born at home, at 123 Franklin Street in the Harmar Section of Marietta, Washington County , Ohio. I had light brown hair and pale blue eyes, a trait I received from my father and maternal grandfather.

We didn't reside on Franklin Street very long for my mother and father had a deep desire to journey to Florida and when I was about a year and a half old, we headed South. Highways in those days were narrow, winding roads sometimes paved, sometimes not and down through West Virginia and Virginia they mostly followed the lowlands of the creek-beds. Automobiles were relatively new and very primitive by today's standards. I remember hearing my father tell of having to back up most mountain roads because the autos had no fuel pumps in those days and the gasoline was gravity fed from the fuel tank in the rear to the engine. Driving in this way must have been quite a feat for as late as the 1950's West Virginia roads were notoriously the worst in the country since they were very narrow and very, very winding. My family traveled with my mother's sister, Lenora and her husband Ogden Eagle and they tent camped all the way. It must have been quite an experience because my mother and father took many, many photographs and they were still talking about "the trip down south" when I was a young boy in my early teens. The hardy travelers never reached Florida and the journey terminated in North Carolina where the men took employment in the cotton mills. We remained in the Highpoint/Thomasville, North Carolina area for approximately a year when my mother and father grew homesick for the rest of their family back in Ohio and they returned. My aunt Lenora and uncle Ogden never returned to Ohio and they resided and raised their family mostly in Roanoke, Virginia.

Upon our return to Marietta, my father started his apprenticeship for his chosen life's work and we lived at a couple of different locations on the West Side of Marietta until about 1929 when my mother and father were successful in purchasing a house that was always their dream house at 413 Harmar Street. This was a three bedroom house with a large dining room and a fair sized living room and kitchen. It sat upon a brick founation approximately four feet high and was located on a steady rise three blocks from the Muskingum River. This location and elevation did not however, keep the annual flood waters of the Ohio and Muskingum Rivers from getting in our house. In 1937, one of Marietta's worst

floods, saw four feet of water on the first floor of our house. The water was just deep enough to float a wooden mantle over our fireplace off its foundation and the large mantle was floating around in the house breaking all of the windows. As the rivers slowly rose, all people living in houses that were threatened with flooding, moved their furniture to the second floor of their houses and then found friends or relatives on higher ground with whom they could live while the high waters were up. This was usually about two weeks. Of course flood time was a big occasion for us young boys and we paddled around in our father's boats and "rescued" stranded people or took them to inspect their flooded homes. All for a fee of course. I had a paper route so I would take our family's boat over to the Marietta City district and get my papers from the local newspaper office that remained in operation on their second floor and my paper selling business was extremely large. I could sell more papers than the news company could provide me. Everybody wanted a paper to see what the predictions were for the rising river waters to start receding. Actually the flood waters were only in our house once while we lived there but almost every year, the flood waters would get up to our street. The old buildings in the Marietta business dristrict, most of them built in the 1800's, have survived many, many floods with water up as high as ten to fifteen feet inside them and at this date many of them are still in use.

Our family lived at 413 Harmar Street for over fourteen years and with the exception of my sister and I all of my brothers and sisters were born and for the most part raised there. We all attended Harmar Elementary School which was located six blocks away on a high point of land at the junction of the Muskingum and Ohio Rivers. It was built on the point of land where old Fort Harmar was built by the first settlers in Marietta in 1787. The school grounds offered a really panoramic view of the two rivers with all of its boat and barge traffic and we could see across the Ohio River, about a mile wide at this point, the State of West Virginia. This elementary school consisted of grades one through six and had approximately two rooms per grade. My sister Ruth had been held out of school the first year that she was old enough to attend so she was only one grade ahead of me. In grades three, four and five, there weren't enough students to fill the classrooms so the grades were combined. One half of the room would be third grade while the other half was fourth grade and the same teacher taught both grades. I believe the morning session was devoted to the fourth grade students and the afternoon to the third grade students. My sister and I shared the same rooms through these grades and I used to listen to her class's instruction during the morning and I could easily do her work and mine and could have easily been moved one grade ahead but my parents wouldn't let me. I liked school and overall was a better than average student.

Junior High school, grades seven and eight, were taught at the Marietta High School building located across town about fourteen city blocks (counting walking across the Muskingum River) from

our home. It was quite a walk on a cold winter day but we walked it four times a day since we went home for lunch. Many, many close friendships were bonded by the long walks to and from school.

When I was in the seventh grade, I went with my father to Baltimore, Maryland where he managed a manufacturing plant for the company he worked for in Marietta. This factory was only operative during the summer months when a sufficient number of the concrete silo staves were made to ship out to purchasers for the rest of the year. I went along with my dad mainly to keep him company and to keep him from getting homesick. During this summer's stay, my dad was successful in getting his company to hire me as a water boy. My job was to keep the concrete staves wet down so that the cement didn't dry too fast which would cause the staves to crack and thus be unfit for use. These staves were stacked out in the sun in a vast storage yard and I walked along the tops of the stacks with a hose and kept the new staves moistened. I always had been blessed with a tough skin, never sun-burned and always turned deeply tan in about two weeks. In this job, out in the open all summer long, I turned black and my hair turned almost white. I received a dollar a day for my labors and by the end of the summer, I had earned and saved enough to buy myself a super deluxe bicycle. I bought it at a large store warehouse in Baltimore and had it shipped home and when it arrived I was the envy of all the boys in the neighborhood. Now getting back and forth to school was a snap and I could make the trip in about 15 minutes. One thing that we boys soon learned was that if one would wait at the top of the hill by the college on Fifth Street until the traffic light at the bottom of the hill on Fourth Street just turned green and if you peddled as fast as you could, you would arrive at each of the succeeding traffic lights as they turned green and you could whiz through town and up the rather steep bridge approach across the Muskingum River without ever stopping. It was quite a sight to see about four or five boys on bicycles peddling with all their might but going straght through the business section of Marietta and up the bridge approach without ever stopping. Of course one had to be always on the alert in case one of the automobiles waiting at an intersection turned right and crossed the path of your oncoming bicycle but I never saw but one or two accidents in all of the time I rode back and forth to school.

Of course with the new bicycle came additional newspaper customers for I could now cover much more territory and in the winter time pushing that bicycle with a load of newspapers through about a six inch snowfall was really a difficult and frosty experience. In my later life and especially in the early days of my military training, I attributed my good physical condition and ability to march on long hikes without tiring to all of that cross-town walking to school and all of my bicycle riding. That kind of activity really built up strong legs and excellent lung capacity. I fear that young boys these days with all of their fancy cars and never walking any place have grown fat and lazy

and would be hard put to meet the rigid physical requirements of long Army marches.

In the ninth grade, I sort of suddenly discovered inter-mural sports. I was about six foot tall but weighed only about a hundred and thirty pounds and after one fall session of trying to play football, I soon decided that I had to find another sport. I hated running so track was out but in the springtime, I discovered basketball. This was for me for I could out jump many boys taller than I and my coordination and timing was such that I could almost control the rebounds from the back-board of both the opponents and our own team. I played basket-ball in physical education class during the day; had practice or a game in the evening after school; played in an industrial men's league at night at the Y.M.C.A. and always had a pick-up game on Saturdays at the Catholic High School Gymnasium. I wore out more gym shoes than my dad could afford to buy.

In the classroom, I was well above average academically. I loved science, mathematics and the languages and enjoyed a great competition in being better prepared for class than any of the others. This was one chance for a relatively poor boy from the "wrong" side of town to show up the "rich" kids from up town. In about the second or third grade, I decided that I wanted to be a medical doctor and all my efforts were directed towards that goal and I elected to take what was known as a college preparatory curriculum. I received great encouragement from my teachers and they taught me well. Everything looked "rosy" as I progressed along in school without too great a strain. In my senior year, I had a long talk with my dad about my future plans and I was really devastated when my father informed me that there was no way that he could financially support me in school past high school and that I should prepare to get myself a working class job and start helping out at home as long as I lived with my family. Of course he was right for he had three others at home beside me and they were much younger than I with a lot of public school life ahead of them. I was even more crushed when I took the annual High School Academic Exams conducted on a state-wide basis. I placed twenty-fifth in the Southeastern Ohio District (about five counties) and got an honorable mention in the State. As a result of this, Marietta College gave me a one semester tuition grant but I figured one semester wouldn't even get me started. Besides a blow to end all blows had occured in the middle of my junior year. World War II started on 7 December 1941 and my Class of 1942 all of a sudden became a wartime class. Patriotism ran very, very high. Young men couldn't wait to enlist and go to fight Hitler and the Japs. The entire Class of 1941 was inducted into the Army enmasse in the winter of 1942 and all of us seniors saw the "handwriting on the wall" and we didn't plan too far in advance.

In my senior year, I got my first permanent employment. I got a job with Montgomery Ward Company one of the biggest department stores in Marietta. Through the week, I went in after school and

emptied all of the day's trash and then vacuumed the carpets throughout the store. On Saturdays, I was a clerk in the hardware department (a job I thoroughly hated for I didn't know a screw from a bolt or a ten penny nail from a six and the male customers really gave me a hard time for being so dumb). Upon graduation, this became my full time job and the pay was terrible as I recall about forty cents an hour. I could see no way that I could ever save enough for college tuition. Marietta had no big national defense factories. Most people made their living in small locally owned businesses; at the college; in agriculture and there also was an infant oil industry. My highschool studies prepared me for none of those so I had a dilemma.

Many young men awaiting induction into the army went to Columbus, Ohio or Parkersburg or Wheeling, West Virginia where they found high paying defense jobs. I had an aunt, Laverna Fleming Raison who lived in Newark, Ohio , a highly industrialized town which was also within commuting distance to Columbus. In previous summers she had taken my sister Ruth to stay with her during the summers but by now my sister had obtained employment at the local telephone company, a good paying and highly sought after job for young girls in Marietta so she didn't want to go to Newark to stay. Fortunately, my aunt asked me and I jumped at the chance. Once in Newark, my cousin Charles Fleming who was also my age and I enrolled in an aircraft riveting class that was sposored by the Curtiss Wright Aircraft Company located in Columbus. Completion of this course meant a sure job with Curtiss Wright and the pay scale was high and one could work all of the overtime he wanted so there was much money to be earned. About half way through the course my cousin quit and joined the Navy. I continued on and eventually completed the course requirements and got a job in the huge aircraft factory at Curtiss Wright in Columbus. I joined a car pool and commuted the thirty miles daily. Curtiss Wright employed over thirty thousand employees around the clock and I thought it was the biggest and best organization in the world. We made Navy observation aircraft and dive bombers. A great many of them were sold to the British Navy and they left our factory with British insignia painted on the wings and fuselage. The pay was all it was reputed to be and the overtime with time and a half pay made some hefty paychecks and I could see my college tuition fund growing by leaps and bounds. I worked there from September 1942 until early March 1943 when all of a sudden I got my draft notice to report to the draft board in Marietta for induction into the armed forces. Since I was working in a defense indusrty I could have probably got a deferment from induction but by then patriotism had caught up with me and one by one all of my friends were enlisting so I decided to go into the armed forces if drafted.

On the twenty fourth of March 1943, I reported to the draft board along with all of those remaining from my high school class and we were given a basic physical examination, some basic innoculations and were loaded aboard a big bus and taken to Fort Hayes the induction center in Columbus, Ohio.

At Fort Hayes, we got a more thorough physical exam, about three boys were sent back home because of physical impairments and the rest of us continued our processing. We passed through a line in only our underwear and were roughly measured for clothing which was passed out to us as we proceeded down a long line. I remember a tough old sergeant yelling out to everyone that we were to be completely dressed by the time we got to the end of the line and this was to include a neatly tied necktie. Many of us had never worn a necktie in our lives leave alone tie one so you can imagine what a motley crew we looked like at the end of the line with clothes that had just come out of months of storage and neckties that looked like shoestrings. A few hours with our "kindly" sergeant showing us the ins and outs of proper military dress, we at least got half way presentable.

In the mornings, we took academic and aptitude tests by the hour and in the afternoons we dug ditches and crushed rock to fill the ditches thus making sidewalks all over the huge fort area. We did this for a week when all of a sudden we were called together and told that we were "shipping out" in a day or so. Where we were going was a deep military secret for troop movements during wartime were kept secret to prevent any possible sabotage of troop trains or railroad facilities. Finally on the 31st of March on one of the coldest days of the year, we formed up in a group by the railroad tracks to await the arrival of our train. I said one of the coldest days and it was truly that. We had on our full winter wool uniforms, a heavy almost canvas-like field jacket, a heavy wool serge overcoat, a wool hat and helmet liner and wool gloves and while waiting for that train it snowed on us and we just about froze. We grouped up at about noon and the train didn't arrive until about 3 P.M. This was an example and our first taste but far from the last, of an old Army maxim "hurry up and wait".

This was my first train ride as it was for most in our group and we made a lark of it. We headed sort of south out of Columbus and about supper time we arrive in a big train station in Cincinnatti, Ohio. We were there about an hour and those in charge let us get off the train and stretch our legs as long as we avoided any civilians and as long as we promptly reboarded the train at the troop commander's call. From Cincinnatti, we again headed south across the Ohio River but that's all we knew - we were just headed south. During the war, troop trains had the lowest priority for movement on the rail system. Troop trains would pull off on a siding and sit and wait for a slow moving freight train to pass so on our journey south we spent a lot of time just sitting and waiting.

About 2 P.M. the next day we pulled into the biggest train station that we could imagine -- Atlanta, Georgia. Here we had a four hour lay-over and we were once again allowed to get off the train and wander through this huge station. As I recall there were thirty-six tracks that dead-ended in this station and all

thirty-six had long trains backed into the station awaiting departure. We wandered around, saw the sights, ate some good non-army type food, bought post cards but couldn't mail them (security) and finally after four hours we again boarded what had become our mobile home. After we had been under way for awhile, we discovered as we wandered back through the train that our long line of cars had been almost cut in half and half of our Marietta High School classmates were no longer with us. The load of troops had been split in about half. We learned later that the other half of our train had headed west eventually to end up in Texas where our buddies were destined for infantry basic training at Fort Hood, Texas. Our portion of the train proceeded on a southerly route to a destination still unknown. By now it had grown dark and we let our seats down into bunks and turned in for the night. Sometime in the middle of the night we found ourselves once again stopped on a siding. Somebody raised their widow curtain and bellowed "Jacksonville !! Where the hell is Jacksonville ?" The only Jacksonville I knew was Jacksonville, Florida and I soon realized it had all of a sudden grown quite warm on that troop train. You should have seen everybody peeling off their heavy wool clothing.

After a short while, we started to move again towards our unknown destination. The next afternoon the command was passed to gather up all of our gear and prepare to disembark from the train. Shortly the train came to a halt in another railroad station -- Miami, Florida. We got off the train and loaded into open trucks and were taken across a causeway to Miami Beach which was to be our basic training center. We were assigned to the Air Corps of the U.S. Army. The government had leased all of the big civilian hotels and turned Miami Beach into a mass of hotel barracks and drill fields. The hotel to which our Marietta contingent was assigned was on Beach Street right across from the famous Miami Beach and it was called the McAlpin Hotel. It was three stories high and all of the rooms were furnished just as they were during peacetime tourist season. We were assigned two men to a room and if it weren't for the meanest drill sergeant in the U.S. Army it would have been a really nice place to undergo basic training. They told us the rooms we occupied normally rented for $100 plus per day and the rules were that at the end of the war the government was to return the hotels to their rightful owners in as good a shape as when they were first leased. You can thus imagine the spit and polish demanded of us by our drill sergeant.

We were awakened at five thirty each morning, marched to a nearby cafeteria that the Army had also taken over, three or four hundred of us were fed and then we fell into a formation and marched about five miles to a former golf course where we received Army indoctrination and steady drill formations for eight hours and then we marched back to our barracks (hotel) for a formal retreat cerimony, dismissal and then evening chow formation. We got Sundays off to attend church, shine our shoes, wash and press our uniforms and if any time was left over we could go across the street and lie on the beach or swim in the

ocean. This routine was known as basic training and it lasted about 10 weeks.

At the completion of basic training, everyone got their first promotion to Private First Class and got their next base of assignment to begin training as aircraft mechanics; aerial gunners; administrative clarks; radio men or whatever category the Air Corps needed. I say everyone when I should have said everyone but me. I got no assignment and no promotion and noone seemed to know what to do with me so I was assigned to go back into basic training. I finished basic training again and again the same thing happened and it was back to basic training for the third time. By this time, I really knew how to march, do right and left flanks and about faces but now I was also introduced to a new tactic -- Kitchen Police (K.P.) or fourteen hour days working in the messhalls. Peeling potatoes, serving food, scrubbing pots and pans, emptying garbage etc. became a way of life for me. With another basic training stint staring me in the face, I finally asked for permanent K.P. and I was assigned to the officer training hotel mess hall. Here I saw that the officer training candidates slept later in the morning, studied more and drilled less, wore finer fitting and nicer uniforms and were treated like gentlemen. This looked like the way to go for me. I started exploring ways to get in the officer training cadre but to my chagrin I found that to be eligible one had to have completed two or more years of college. Once again I learned that education pays. Finally one day I noticed on the bulletin board that the Air Corps was looking for volunteers to enter an Aviation Student Training Program. This program of training would lead to aircrew duties and commissioning as an officer. This looked great to me so I immediately went to my Orderly Room and signed up.

After batteries of tests and meeting boards of psychiatrists and interrogating officers, I was finally accepted. When I signed up for this program, I finally learned why I had never been promoted and why I had never received an assignment. My entire file of records had been lost at the basic training personnel center and noone knew I was there. Had I not signed up for aircrew training, I might have stayed at Miami Beach for an indefinite time; if not for the entire war.

Aviation Student training was much like the officer candidate training. We lived in our own hotel, wore better uniforms with a distinctive patch on the sleeve and ate on china in our own mess hall. I was on my way.

After a couple of weeks of indoctrination and academic training, my name was posted on the bulletin board for a shipment. Again destination unknown so it was back to a troop train and this time headed north. Jacksonville, Columbia, South Carolina; Charlotte, North Carolina; Richmond, Virginia; Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia; New York City and finally Springfield, Massachusetts. I had been assigned to a College Training Detachment at Massachusetts State College in Amherst, Massachusetts.

What a long journey from Marietta, Ohio to get to start college. At Massachusetts State College,the program was set up as an extension of the West Point Military Academy. We had upper classmen with the usual hazing, we studied mathematics, physics,meteorology and officer etiquette (how to dine instead of eat, how to converse instead of talk, how to dress and general deportment). We all thought we were hot stuff and the living was easy. Most civilian male students had gone off to war so there were only coeds. Massachusetts State College had formerly been an agricultural school so they had their own orchards, gardens and dairy farm. The coeds would bring us big baskets of fruit, baked blueberry pies and bottles of cold mostly cream milk. I began to think that this Army life wasn't so bad after all. After about a semester of this as with all good things it had to end and again a shipment order was published. One thing different, this time we knew where we were going -- Nashville, Tennessee to the Army Air Corps Clasification Center for more testing to determine if we were to go into pilot, bombardier or navigator training. Assignment there was usually of no longer than one month.

Here a very fortunate thing happened for me. My mother and father came all the way from Marietta to visit me. Unfortunately Nasville, Tennessee was a very dirty town at that time because most buildings were heated with coal furnaces and in the early Fall the skies hung thick with soot and black coal smoke. To make matters worse, the Third Army of the United States was on maneuvers in that area and there were dirty soldiers everywhere for they had been living in the field for weeks. Hotel accomadations were difficult to get and I'm afraid my folks got a bad impression of the Army and Army towns. My dad never thought much of the Army any way (I think he had had some bad experiences after World War I and many times throughout my life he deplored my having made the military my life career). I really appreciated my mom and dad's visit and all of the hardships they endured on a crowded bus trip to come all the way to Nashville. I appreciated it even more in view of the fact that I had been away from home for about eight months and I was lonely and homesick. A strange thing happened on the troop train journey from Massachusetts to Nashville. The train went through my hometown and stopped in the train station for about forty five minutes. This time, we weren't alllowed to get off the train and I had no way to get a message to my family to come and see me. Since I've digressed a bit here, I might also point out that all through my adolescent life, I was never able to stay away from home even over-night. I would get terribly upset, cry and get homesick and my parents would have to come and get me so being away from home for eight months was really a traumatic experience for me and seeing my mom and dad even under very trying conditions was just wonderful.

At the Nashville Classification Center, it was test after test after test. Written speed tests on academic subjects; batteries of psychomotor tests designed to test ones mental and physical coordination ; meeting boards of flying officers for interviews and for their evaluation of you as a candidate for flying, and

meeting and being interviewed by teams of psychiatrists to try to determine any quirks in one's mental makeup that would make him a poor risk for flying school. Flight training was very valuable training with estimates running as high as $25000 per trainee. That was a tremendous sum in those days and training dollars were not to be wasted on someone who might not have the mental and physical attributes to complete the training. Hundreds of aviation cadet candidates, several of them my new found friends, were eliminated from further consideration here at Nashville. After coming this far, they were broken hearted and very discouraged. Most of them went on to become aerial gunners but most of them I met later on were very humiliated and bitter. Early in my testing, I had decided to myself that I didn't want to be a pilot. After all, I couldn't even drive a car. I wanted to be a bombardier. I therefore purposely tried to do poorly on any of the psychomotor tests that I thought were designed to test one's skills to become a pilot. Of course I did my utmost in the academic testing so that I would not be eliminated and I tried hard enough to just scrape by on the psychomotor testing. Little did I know that many of those tests designed for pilot skills were also designed to test bombardier coordination and motor skills so while doing poorly at pilot skills, I was also doing poorly as a bombardier candidate. Consequently, I was ultimately classified to go on to navigator training. This had no big adverse effect on me for I was still in officer training and as it turned out, I would not have wanted a better crew assignment than that as a navigator. After all these years, I would have done it all the same for being a navigator was the most self satisfying job I have ever had.

After classification, it was back to a troop train and once more headed for an unknown destination somewhere in the South. After a couple of days, I ended up at Monroe,Louisiana at Selman Field one of the Air Corps' Navigation Training Centers. The first 16 weeks of our training was pre-flight training. On the ground, we learned dead reckoning navigation techniques, celestial navigation and map reading. Using these techniques, we then "flew" many, many ground missions until all of the navigation skills became second nature. After this extensive training, we then moved across the Base to the upper classman area to begin our flight training. Now we put all of the skills learned on the ground to use in the air. We flew in C-54 trainer planes, three navigation cadets to a plane. One cadet did dead reckoning and actually directed the plane from one point to another; the second did celestial and dead reckoning but just followed the course of the aircraft from one point to the other and the third did pilotage navigation where he looked out the window of the aircraft and by reading his map he followed the path of the aircraft as the lead navigator directed it. We would fly legs of about 500 miles from Selman Field to various towns all over the Southern United States. When we were about a half hour out from our destination, we each predicted in writing how many miles left or right of our destination we would be and at what time we would arrive. On this prediction, we would then be graded. If one correctly predicted

the position of the aircraft at the conclusion of the flight and if he predicted the absolute correct time of arrival, it was called a "zero-zero" mission and he received a perfect score for the flight. In all of my training flights, I had one "zero-zero" mission. This was very good for many never had any. The very next flight after this perfect flight, I got my only failing flight. At first I received a grade of 80% on this particular flight but I thought I had done better than that and I challenged (argued with) the instructor, a commissioned and experienced navigator. He became angry and crossed through my grade of 80% and gave me a zero. I had to fly the mission over again and this time I passed but I learned never to question an instructor.

Finally in late May 1944, we got orders to report to the tailor shop for complete fittings for new officer type uniforms. This meant that we were pretty sure of graduating and going on to become aircrew members. This was the first time in my life that I was ever carefully measured for clothes that were going to be made to fit me. The materials were the finest gabardine to be had and the old Army officer uniforms were truly handsome and stylish. Graduation day was to be the Fourth of July and our silver wings and commissions as officers were awarded to us by our Base commander, Colonel "Killer" Kane. Colonel Kane was a wartime hero and had been one of the leaders on the famous but deadly air-raid to the Ploesti oil fields in Romania. It was a double honor to have such a famous air leader pin on my silver wings as a navigator. I hadn't reached the age of 21 yet so instead of receiving a commission from Congress as a second lieutenant, I received a warrant and the title of Flight Officer but I had all of the privileges of a commissioned officer. I received my commission almost a year later when I became twenty-one in the jungles of the Phillipine Islands. By then I had flown over twenty combat missions against the Japanese.

After graduation and after we had performed an old Army ritual of giving the first enlisted man who saluted us one dollar, our Navigator Class of 44-9 scattered to all parts of the United States for after some 15 months of training we received our first leave of absence to go home. For ten glorious days, I was at home with my family and it was one party after the other and the time quickly passed. My next duty station was to be Lincoln Air Base, Lincoln, Nebraska where I was to be assigned to an aircrew for combat training. This time I rode to Lincoln first class on a civilian train but it was not to be my last encounter with a troop train. Upon arrival at Lincoln Air Base, we were told that there was a huge backlog so we were given immediate leave and it was back home for another ten days. On this trip, I met the young lady, Miss Dorothy Davis who was eventually to become my lifelong mate as my wife. She was much admired by my best friend, Duane Lankford, who was a member of the airborne Army troops. He was on leave when I returned home for the second time but he only had two days of leave left when I got home. He told me about Dottie and told me to be sure to look her up while I was home. Duane was later killed in the Battle of the Bulge in Europe.

After ten days, I returned to Lincoln Air Base and was assigned to a crew that was already in training at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. I took a train to Boise and before I knew it I was in crew training in a B-24 type bomber. There were ten men on a B-24 crew. My first pilot was Lt. Maxwell Van Valen from Newton, Massachusetts; the co-pilot was Lt. Robert Steckroth from Hazelton,Pennsylvania; the bombardier was Flight Officer John McDonough from St. Louis, Missouri; the engineer and oldest man on the crew at age 23 was Corporal Lyle Pound from Great Bend, Kansas; radio man and my best friend on the crew was Cpl. Frederick Kuszmaul from Logansport, Indiana. Cpl. Kuszmaul was a second year pre-med student at Indiana University and he was one of the hundreds of men eliminated from cadet training at the now infamous Nashville Training Center; our ball turret gunner was Cpl. Milton Emkow, Madison, Wisconsin; the nose turret gunner and the man who climbed into his turret at the nose of the aircraft and then I would close the doors behind him was Cpl. Charles Bojt of Buffalo, New York; Cpl. Orland Young from Akron, Ohio was a waist window gunner; Cpl. Jesse Murdoch from Tyler, Texas was tail end Charlie, the tail gunner. Jesse also became our unofficial photographer in the jungles of the South Pacific.

At Gowan Air Base, we flew long navigation flights over the trackless deserts of Utah and Nevada; gunnery missions to Oregon where the Navy had a fighter aircraft base and these fighter pilots would come up and give us simmulated air attacks while our gunners used camera guns to "shoot" them down. We flew bombing missions to targets laid out on the desert floor in Utah and our bombardier dropped live bombs to test his accuracy. All of this was excellent training and we all learned our jobs well and we were combat ready at the conclusion of this training.

We left Gowan Air Base for Langley Field, Virginia, a beautiful old Army Post from World War I . There were rumors that we were going to be assigned to submarine sea search along the East coast of the United States and this suited us all to a tee for who wanted to go to Europe and be shot at by the Germans ? Upon reporting at Langley, we were informed that for the time being the navigators were not needed so two of my buddies and I took off for a week in Washington, D.C. for sight seeing and party after party. When we reported back to Langley, our entire crew was taken to the Base photography studio where we were dressed in French type civilian clothes, photographed and given French passports in case we were shot down while flying over France we could use these identification papers to escape and evade the Germans. Now we were sure we were going to the European Theater of operations. I wasn't quite convinced that with my light blue eyes and blonde hair that I could pass as a Frenchman even if I did have on a beret.

Here at Langley Air Base, we were informed that we would be assigned a new bombardier and that F.O. McDonough would be put in some new bombing training at Langley. We also learned that this

new bombardier, Flight Officer Merwin Adler from Buffalo, New York, had just completed the training that F.O. McDonough was soon to enter and that he, Adler, was a new breed of bombardier - a radar bombardier. Further that we were to be given a new type B-24 aircraft that had been fitted out with this new radar and wonders of wonders we were now going to be assigned to the Pacific Theater of Operations. Oh well, I didn't look too good in a beret any way.

It was back on a troop train with a long, long journey from the Atlantic Coast in Virginia to the Pacific staging area in Oakland, California. About nine days to be exact (counting time sitting on sidings waiting for slow milk trains to pass us by out in Kansas) but this train did have one new feature - a couple of glass domed cars that we officers were assigned to and it gave us a real scenic trip through the deserts and mountains of the West. At the Oakland Debarkation Base, we were loaded on buses and taken to Hamilton Air Base just north of San Francisco. Hamilton Field was also a beautiful old Army Post and the scenery, weather and accomodations were great. At Hamilton we were given a brand new B-24 just out of the factory and while we were assigned at Hamilton, our primary job was to insure that that aircraft was airworthy; that the compasses and other navigational equipment were properly aligned and operative; that the bomb sight was aligned and accurate; that the fuel transfer system from bomb-bay tanks to the wing tanks operated properly; that the engines operated smoothly and at a proper fuel consumption rate; that the gunnery systems worked and were bore-sighted and that our link to ground stations, our radios worked perfectly. We had a lot to do and it had to be done precisely for we would soon be headed for the vastness of the Pacific Ocean and possible deadly aerial combat. We flew and worked on that airplane most diligently all day for several days but at night it was off to San Francisco, one of America's most beautiful and exciting cities and it was party, party, party for this may be our last in the U.S. for a long long time.

Finally our aircraft and crew were declared airworthy and at mid-night on the 14th of November 1944, we and nine other neophyte crews flew out over the brightly lit Golden Gate Bridge headed for Hickam Air Base, Honolulu, Hawaii some 2100 miles away. This long, overwater flight was my crowning glory and gave my crew a great confidence in me as a navigator for after 2100 hundred miles, we ended up just ten miles off course from Hickam Field and I only missed my estimated time of arrival by three minutes. It was a funny thing for as we flew in practice training over the deserts of Utah and Nevada, I could never get the pilot of the aircraft to fly the exact heading that I gave him nor did he ever hold a constant airspeed. These are two factors that are ex-tremely critical to precision navigation. The pilot had radios and maps of the area and he really didn't care to be precise when he knew pretty much where he was but when we headed out in the blackness of the Pacific he couldn't do enough to fly precisely the heading , airspeed and altitude that I gave him. Throughout

the flight about every 15 minutes to the half hour, he would call me on the interphone and ask how he was doing on holding accurate and precise instrument readings. Flying over long distances of ocean where there were no radio stations or landmarks made a believer in the techniques of navigation out of him. He even used to turn the controls of the aircraft over to the co-pilot and crawl down in the nose of the aircraft where I did my thing and watch me figure and calculate, plot and estimate and he'd marvel when we ended up where we were supposed to be.

From Hickam Field, Hawaii, we island hopped on flights of 600 to 800 miles staying overnight on these newly won islands that were captured from the Japanese at a great loss of American soldiers and marines. We were most grateful at the end of each day's flight to have a conveniently located island along our course where airstrips had been laid out most of the times right on the sandy beaches. Our ultimate destination was Biak Island in the Netherlands East Indies just a small coral island off the northwestern coast of New Guinea and seven miles south of the equator. This was where the 90TH Bomb Group, the famous Jolly Rogers Bomb Group was stationed and this was the unit to which we would be assigned. On the last leg of our flight, a thousand miles along the northern coast of New Guinea, we were in the war zone where we were told that enemy attack was "imminent and to be expected". Our gunners were at their posts and we all were alert but this entire leg of our flight was uneventful. During this flight, we crossed the International Date line and the Equator and even though I alerted the crew as we crossed each, nobody was able to see them as we passed by.

I have written about my tour of combat in some detail in our book "The History of Our Family" so I will not repeat it here, however, there are a couple of items of interest that I may add. Perhaps this is best not told but the truth must prevail. After flying about ten or fifteen missions and after I had become most confident that I could navigate an aircraft to any point on earth, I had an event that put our entire crew in jeopardy - I got totally lost with absolutely no definite route to fly to get to our home base. It happened on an all night mission from Tacloban Air Strip, the Phillipines to a target in the extreme north of Formosa (Taiwan). Since our aircaft were the first in the Pacific Area to be equipped with a newly developed radar bombing and short range navigational radar, we were supposed to be able to fly night or day in all kind of weather and to be able to bomb a target even if there was a complete undercast. Our radar bombardier was more than confident in his equipment and his abilities and he was extremely eager to prove it. He constantly wanted to drop his bombs on the target by radar even if the target could be seen and at night he would point out islands along our way strictly from the returns he got on his radar screen. On this particular mission, we took off in the early evening from Tacloban, flew to the extreme northern tip of Formasa, made several bomb runs on a big Japanese Naval Base and the mission took all night. As we returned to our home base which had a big

metal runway laid out on the beach at Tacloban, Lt. Adler, the radar bombardier, called me up on the interphone from his position up on the flight deck and told me at about 120 miles out that he could pick up our home base "loud and clear". That due to the metal air strip he was getting back a beautiful return and if I wanted he would direct the plane back to home base and I could take a nap if I liked. After reading instruments all night and making 15 minute calculations, a nap sounded like a great idea to me so I agreed and promptly fixed myself up a makeshift bed of flight jackets and went to sleep. I don't know how long I slept but I was suddenly awakened and by now it was daylight. The pilot informed me that we were hopelessly lost and that what Lt. Adler had thought was our home airstrip was really a huge thunderhead and we had flown toward it. No wonder Lt. Adler was getting such a "beautiful" picture on his radar scope, the thundehead was full of electrical energy (lightening) and it was returning a big radar image. I quickly got my maps together and started looking for an island that I could recognize the shape of and thus get a position in the air and chart a course home. In the just rising sun and wisps of low clouds, all islands looked alike to me and I could not position our aircraft. We sent out distress signals and asked any ground radio station to take a radio compass bearing on us and give us a heading to fly home. Altogether, we got three answers to these queries and each gave us a different heading to fly. We were flying allover the sky with still no progress towards getting back to our base. We did not know that it was the Japanese that were picking up our requests for radio bearings and they had us flying in every direction to further use up our fuel supply.

Finally through a break in the heavy clouds below us, I spotted a huge Naval convoy headed in a northwesterly direction. I told the pilot to fly over that convoy and take up the same heading as the convoy. I figured that the convoy was probably enroute to Tacloban with more troops and supplies and even if they weren't and we had to abandon our aircraft and parachute into the seas, the convoy would pass by us and perhaps rescue some of us. As it turned out, the convoy was indeed headed for Tacloban and the heading we took up took us directly to our base. We landed and as we were taxiing in to our parking place on the airstrip, the two outboard engines stopped running -- out of fuel. Mechanics at the airstrip figured we had enough fuel left in our tanks to have flown for about 15 minutes more and then we would have had to abandon ship. Too close for comfort and needless to say I caught hell from the 5TH Air Force Chief Navigator for several weeks thereafter. To make matters worse, two other navigators from our group had gotten lost that night but they had ultimately made it back to our base and were never in the danger that we were but with my being the third one it was just too much for my superiors to accept. Needless to say, I never took another nap while flying and I never ever depended on anyone thereafter to do a job that I was assigned to do. Please learn from my experience, if you want a job done to your satisfaction -- DO IT YOURSELF.

I don't wish to dwell on my wartime experiences much longer for after all it was only a three year span of my life but I would like to relate a couple of more stories mainly to record them and perhaps someone, someday may find them of interest.

Prior to our crew's assignment to fly bombing missions out of Tacloban, we were sent first to the Pelilieu Islands about a hundred miles east of the Phillpines. This chain of islands had only recently been re-captured from the Japanese and in fact fighting was still going on in some of the northern most islands so we were really in a combat zone. From this chain of islands, we could strike targets on Formosa (Taiwan) and we started flying night bombing raids using our new radar bombing systems. One day, we were all going to the mess hall for lunch or I should say everyone except one co-pilot who had flown all night the night before and he decided that he would stay in his tent and get some sleep. About half way through our meal, we heard an awful scream coming from our tent area. We went running back and here was this by now hysterical co-pilot screaming that he had been attacked by a Japanese soldier. As it turned out, the co-pilot was awakened by a Japanese soldier who was ransacking the tent either looking for weapons, food or clothing but not bent on doing bodily harm to the co-pilot. Later we were told by the Intelligence Section that it was not uncommon in a close war battle zone for a few stray enemy soldiers or Japanese civilians to be by-passed and that they may be seen from time to time. Most of them were not aggressive but they were just searching for food. Needless to say from that time on, noone stayed behind when the whole group went to eat and everyone slept with their pistols under their pillows at night. Some twenty five years later when I was stationed in Japan, I had a Japanese secretary who told me that her father was a supervisor on a large Japanese coconut plantation in the Pelilieu Islands and that they evacuated the Islands and returned to Japan just one week before the Americans started their campaign to capture the Islands. It's a small world after all and even enemies can become partners.

From the Phillipines, our Bomb Group moved up to Ie Shima a small coral island just off the coast of Okinawa. From here, we could now strike targets in the Japanese home islands. This is also the island on which Ernie Pyle, the war's most noted newspaper correspondent, was killed by a Japanese sniper. The infantry division with which he was traveling erected a marble memorial to him at the spot where he was killed. By the time our aircrew rejoined our bomb group on Ie Shima, we had finished our required number of bombing raids and had enough combat points to return to the United States. The war was winding down and we were to fly a brand new airplane that had been delivered to our group back to the United States. One morning much to our surprise, our names appeared on the operations list for another bombing mission. We asked the operations officer what was up and he explained that they had a particularly important target and that they wanted only the most experienced crews to fly on this mission . That was all he would tell us and said he would see us at the next day's

briefing. Oh well, what's one more mission ?
At the first break of dawn, we assembled in the briefing tent for our briefing of the bomb mission to be flown for that day. A couple of things were different however. First of all only the oldest crews from all squadrons were there, secondly the Group Chaplain was there and he had never attended a briefing before and thirdly there was no target indicated on the large briefing map. We had a secondary target indicated and it was to be the aerodrome at Shanghai, China if we could not get to the unknown primary target. We were told that the primary target and all materials needed to prepare us for that target were in a sealed envelope which was not to be opened until we were a half hour in flight. The Chaplain wished us "God's speed" and we went to our aircraft.

We sat in the airplane at the end of the runway for about a half an hour and then we received a radio call from base operations telling us that the mission had been cancelled for that day and we were to return our sealed target envelope and report for a briefing at 0400 A.M. the next morning. At the scheduled time, we reported and were briefed on the latest area weather and again went to our airplanes. Again we were cancelled but again we were to report for a briefing the next morning. The following morning, the same kind of briefing and then to our aircraft and this time we got airborne. After flying about twenty minutes, we received a radio message from operations telling us that the primary target mission had been aborted and we were to bomb the secondary target at Shanghai. Our mission there was a great success for we found the Japanese unprepared and we destroyed fifty-four enemy aircraft on the ground.

When we returned to our base the primary target's identification was revealed to us and we were told that we would not be flying to that target. The target was to have been the large remains of the Japanese fleet that had been discovered moored in the Inland Sea of Japan. For weeks, Admiral Halsey, the American Commander of the Pacific Fleet had been searching the high seas for the remains of the Japanese Fleet. His huge armada had been steaming up and down the eastern coast of Japan taunting the Japanese and trying to persuade them to come out and engage him in battle but the Japanese remained silent and the whereabouts of their vessels remained unknown. Finally one of our reconnaissance aircraft had spotted the Japanese Fleet at anchor and heavily camouflaged in the Inland Sea of Japan. This was to have been our target on those two aborted missions. The missions had been cancelled previously because the target area was completely obscured by a dense fog and could not be bombed from high altitude. As it turned out, the Navy sent low-level dive bombers in and thoroughly damaged the naval vessels. Hurray for the Navy !!! for for us to fly up the narrow inlet to the Inland Sea with heavy land based anti-aircraft guns firing at us from both sides of the inlet for some thirty miles and then fly over and bomb a naval fleet which historically had extremely highly accurate and extremely heavy anti-aircraft batteries would have been a one way,

suicide mission. Our losses would have been staggering. Our squadron's particular target was a heavily armed cruiser moored at the farthest end of the Inland Sea. I was too young to die and besides, I had finished my required number of missions.

Finally, the atomic bombs were dropped on first Hiroshima and then Nagasaki and the Japanese began to have second thoughts about continuing the war. Again our name appeared on the squadron mission board. Again we got the same story that they needed a most experienced crew. This time the mission was to be a flight to Nagasaki to take along an MGM movie camera/newsman to make a movie newsreel of the damage done to Nagasaki after it had been A-bombed. In the meantime, the Japanese had agreed to a truce so at least we wouldn't be shot at as we flew over. We flew up to Nagasaki and made several flights over the city from tree top level to 5000 feet while the camera/newsman hung out the waist window taking pictures. He promised us some one of a kind still pictures of his movie but we never did receive them. This was to be our last mission and a new airplane was assigned to us to fly back to the "Land of Milk and Honey" , the U.S.

In the meantime, General McArther gave the Japanese instructions to fly to the Phillipines to meet with him and his staff to learn the terms of surrender. The Japanese negotiating team was to fly to the Phillipines in three Japanese "Betty" type bombers marked with large green crosses painted on the fuselage. They were first to land at Ie Shima (where I was stationed) and then proceed escorted by our fighter aircraft to the Phillipines. We went down to the airstrip and watched the Japanese contingent come in and land. What a nervous group they were but they had followed Gen. McArther's instructions to a tee and when the doors of their aircraft first opened so they could come out while at Ie Shima the first thing we saw was a hand with a bottle of champagne sticking out. I guess they were offering a peace token before they disembarked from the aircraft. A week or so later, the Japanese announced that they would accept the terms of surrender. This was the time that I probably came closer to being injured or killed than during the entire war. Our Army radio stations for hours on end kept the airwaves alive with the progress and rumors of peace negotiations. All of our troops had started to drink and drink excessively and the peace celebration was on whether the peace was a reality or not.They then began to fire their weapons in drunken stupor. A couple of officers were accidentally wounded and one was killed by our own troops. What a way to die after going through a long tour of duty. I took my radio and crawled into a fox-hole and hid. I heard drunken friends during the night saying "Where's old Wildermuth. Let's go find that so and so and shoot his a--". All in jest I hope but never the less intimidating.

The war was over ! Now to return to the U.S. and we were first on the list from our squadron to get to go. We got our departure date but bad weather delayed us. Then the weather really got bad

and then worse. The biggest typhoon in the history of keeping records was headed our way. Everything was grounded and preparations were underway to "batten down the hatches". The typhoon hit Okinawa and Ie Shima with full force and we were living in tents. We watched as tent after tent blew away. By this time, we were old veterans at building tents and we had ours so braced with 2 x 4 timbers that it was impossible to even walk around inside the tent much less for it to blow away. For three days the storm raged. The weather station blew away when the winds were measured at 154 knots. I sat in our tent and watched the mess hall which was a large two unit quonset hut anchored on a concrete slab blow away in one piece and it didn't touch ground until it had flown across a baseball field about 150 feet in distance. What a way to end a tour of duty.

After the storm subsided, we were more eager than ever to depart for home but one more hitch -- our aircraft was damaged in the storm. It took about three days to get repairs and then at long last we flew off into the wild blue yonder and headed for McClellan Field, California We island hopped again enroute back to the U.S. with our last stop at Hickam Air Field from which we had departed so long ago. Our flight from Hawaii to California was uneventful except that the aircraft would not go as fast as we wanted it to go and it seemed like it took for ever. We left the airplane at McClellan Air Field, got railroad tickets to the nearest military installation to our homes; said our goodbyes to each other and to this day none of us has ever met again.

Since Fred Kuszmaul, now Technical Sergeant Kuszmaul, lived in Logansport, Indiana, his nearest military installation was Wright Patterson Field the same as mine. He and I travelled across country together;had a scrumptous last meal together in the swankiest restaurant in Dayton, Ohio; did our final processing for our return to civilian life and said goodbye. The next day, I took a bus to Marietta, Ohio and my family home. On the 30th of November, I was separated from the Army as a first lieutenant with no strings attached for during processing, every paper they laid in front of me asking if I wanted to remain in the reserves, I scrawled across the entire page -- NO !! It was now time for me to get on with my life.

Returning to civilian life with none of the type of activities that I had grown used to over the past three years and none of my buddies to talk with was far from easy. My family and I had little in common and they just didn't seem to understand what all had taken place since I left home in 1943. I had a nervous condition, common to most returning servicemen and known as "combat nerves", without realizing it. I could not sit still and constantly paced from room to room. I even ate my meals while pacing but my family was very understanding and made no comment about it. I finally started painting airplane and old squadron insignias and that helped me calm down a bit. I didn't sleep well and had nightmares for several weeks. It sure takes a while to wind-down.

Marietta College, my hometown college, started an innovative program in which returning servicemen could enroll and start classes at any time of the year. The United States Government had enacted legislation known as the G.I. Bill which gave all kinds of benefits to ex-servicemen. One of these benefits was a full four year college education with tuition and books paid for and a monthly stipend of ninety dollars. Here was my ticket to that college degree that I wanted so badly. Even though I had saved approximately $5000 while overseas, I applied for my G.I. Benefits (G.I. stood for Government Issued). In December 1945, I enrolled at Marietta College in a pre-med program and settled down to civilian life. What could be better than a good family, a full course of studies and my dear girl friend Dorothy. I went to school all year around, winter and summer, and took only a few days off between semesters. By doing this, I could possibly make up for some of the lost time for here I was a freshman in college at the age of almost 22 an age when prior to the war most students were graduating.

After my first year, Dottie and I decided to get married. We planned a big church wedding for the 20th of of April 1946. Gowns were ordered, suits were bought, attendants were arranged for, the First Methodist church was reserved and everything was in order but a hitch developed. Dorothy's father, Homer Davis, got a sudden and severe case of appendicitis and was rushed to the hospital for immediate surgery. Wedding plans had to be grossly curtailed. On our scheduled date,however, my mother and father, Dorothy's mother, Marie, and Dottie and I met at the preacher's home and the wedding vows were exchanged and the wedding knot was tied just as tightly and lasting as if we had had our big church wedding. It was Easter Sunday and Dottie and I left for our honeymoon to Columbus, Ohio.

After Easter school break and our honeymoon, we set up housekeeping with another young couple that we knew and we lived right on the campus. Things got back to normal again and we got back into our routine of studying on my part and Dorothy's working as a book-keeper at a local bank. We had a happy and exciting first year together and by now I had completed two years of pre-med and it was time to start applying to a university that had a medical school. I applied at Ohio State University, Western Reserve and the University of Cincinnatti. I was denied admission to all three. My faculty advisor told me that due to the great influx of returning service men who were applying to medical schools, competition was extremely keen. For years medical school class size had been kept small (about 60 to 65 students each year) and the year that I applied Ohio State had 1600 applicants and the same was true at schools throughout the eastern part of the country. My advisor advised me to apply to some western schools where he had heard the number of applications were much smaller.

I took the advice and made application to the University of California, the University of Southern California, and Leland

Stanford University. My applications to the two California universities were turned down with the explanation that they were state tax supported schools and as such they could admit only three out of state students per year. I was however, conditionally accepted at Stanford University. I really didn't know much about Stanford except that their football team had played in the last Rose Bowl before the war and that wasn't much of a recommendation to head west for. Dottie and I talked it over and decided to give it a try and we started making plans to head west to Palo Alto, California wherever that was. Since no automobiles had been manufactured during the war, new cars were hard to find. One had to make application with the car dealers months in advance and then wait until their name got to the top of the list. As I said, I had saved a nice little bank roll while in the service and right after I got home after the war, I made application for a new car with three of the dealers in Marietta. My name had worked it's way up to number three with one of the dealers so I was getting close about the time Dottie and I were making our plans to get married. Now that we were going to move to California an auto was a must. New cars kept coming in and deliveries were being made but my name never got any closer than number three. I kept checking and checking but no progress. Finally through a friend that I knew who worked for a car dealer, I found that men were paying dealers "under the table" to get delivery on cars. This infuriated me. To think that someone who hadn't been in the Army and who had prospered from working in war industries while staying at home was now beating me out of a car by cheating the system was too much. In desperation, I finally purchased the best used 1939 car that I could find and my little bride and I headed west for a new adventure and entirely on our own.

Stanford University turned out to be a dream. It is one of the most beautiful universities in America. It was built on a large farm owned by Senator Leland Stanford of Southern Pacific Railway fame and it was built in memory of his young son who died on a trip around the world back in the late 1800's. It is situated on the outskirts of Palo Alto, California, a small city of about 30,000 people, thirty miles south of San Francisco. It's architecture is Spanish with two story, sandstone buildings with red tiled roofs. The school has its own golf course, a huge man made lake (some of the wealthier students kept their large pleasure boats there). The most prominent building on the campus is the Hoover Library donated by President Herbert Hoover one of Stanford's most distinguished graduates and the building is dedicated to international studies for maintaining world peace. It was here that Dotty got a job to help in our finances while I went to school. Academically Stanford was rated number three in the United States when I attended and it is known as the "Harvard of the West". Millionaire's sons and daughters go there and movie star's children strived for admission and here I was a young guy from rural Ohio and from the wrong side of town at that. All during my stay there however, I never felt inferior and since white tee shirts and blue jeans were the accepted student attire, I fit right in.

Dottie and I were fortunate in that we found a house to rent right on the golf course and just a short distance from the campus and town. Dottie got her job at the Hoover Library and my grades through the first semester were good enough to have my conditional status removed and we were in Heaven on earth. I finished my junior year in good shape and made application to be admitted to medical school the following year. My application was not approved so I started my senior year and would re-apply after graduation. Oops, bad planning for with graduation my G.I. bill would be terminated. Oops, again bad planning for now Dottie was pregnant and we were expecting our first child. I took my degree and made aplication anyway in case I could find some way to work my way through school but when no admission was forthcoming, I became thoroughly discouraged and set about getting my first full time job.

I interviewed with a couple of companies and we were hoping to stay in California, preferably in the Palo Alto area for we had come to love that part of California. The weather was beautiful the year around. Not too hot in the summer and not too cold in the winter. From this point in California, one could drive within fifty miles in one direction and be in the high Sierra Mountains; fifty miles in the other direction and be at the sea coast; fifty miles north and be in the beautiful city of San Francisco. What a wonderful place to live.

I finally took employment with the Container Corporation of America, one of the Fortune 500 companies in America at that time. The job was as an executive trainee and the prospects sounded good. The west coast offices were located in Oakland, California and we found an affordable apartment in nearby Richmond, California. Richmond was a war-time industrial city built by the government with city block after city block of wooden apartment buildings to house shipyard workers who built Liberty ships for the Henry J. Kaiser shipyards. The city as we found out, was 90% black and since the war had ended there was about 75,000 people in that town unemployeed. Crime was rampant with robberies, shootings and other felonies being committed. What a place to start one's career and Dotty and I were expecting our first child. We perservered however, yearning for the beautiful surroundings of the lower Peninsula of the Bay Area and hoping that everything would turn out for the better.

My "executive" training type job consisted of on-the-job training in all areas of the manufacturing plant of this giant company that made cardboard shipping containers. The starting salary was a staggering $225 per month which was pretty good for those days and a good bit more than my G.I. Bill of ninety dollars but Dotty was very much pregnant and could not work and we sorely missed her salary. After transferring through about four different departments, I was told that an opening existed in the office and it was to be filled by either me or another trainee. The first week of November, the General Manager called me in and told me he

would like to visit Dotty and me the week-end of the Big Game (a football game between arch rivals Stanford and the University of California).
I invited him of course for dinner in our three room apartment. We listened to the Big Game on the radio, chatted and Dotty prepared a delicious dinner. After dinner and the Game, Mr. Steckroth told me that he had decided to promote me and that I was to get the office job position as Manager of the Inside Sales Department. I couldn't help but feel that they must be pretty desparate for a manager because I had never worked in an office before; knew absolutely nothing about office procedures leave alone the supervision of six other people one of whom had worked there some ten or twelve years and who fully expected the job to be given to him. I did however accept for the job paid fifty dollars more per month and it was a step up the corporate ladder. One slight hitch though with the new position I now had to work an extra half day (Saturday morning staff meeting). The job went along pretty well and I received a couple of pats on the back for doing some things that my predecessor hadn't thought of. I learned a lot about human behaviour and personnel leadership particularly in consoling the long time employee who thought he should be the office manager.

Things rocked along and on the thirteenth of January 1949, Dotty and I were blessed by our first child whom we named Terrie Lee. All of a sudden our three room apartment seemed to get smaller. Terrie suffered from what was termed "colic". She cried day and night and never seemed to sleep. Of course our being new parents probably didn't help any. I am sure we made mistakes in child care and there was noone to turn to. Our doctor's wife had had a baby the same week Terrie was born and the baby died and the doctor and his wife went on an extended vacation to recover. We had our crying baby; three rooms and each other. There were drunken brawls every week end on the streets outside our apartment; neighborhood family fights in our apartment building and my car was vandalized and we were becoming more and more disenchanted with our existence. About this time, we received word from back home that Dotty's mother was terminally ill with lung cancer and we yearned to return to Marietta. I finally turned in my resignation and we loaded up our car with what few possessions we had and headed back to Ohio. By this time, Dotty was expecting again and home and family and friends looked good to us.

In Ohio, I took a job with Henry J. Kaiser Aluminum Company in Newark working in a foundry as an unskilled laborer making aluminum wire. The job was truly a back-breaker. The heat was unbearable and I had to load and unload large hundred pound spools of searing hot wire. I was making good wages and getting in excellent physical shape when all of a sudden intense labor troubles developed and management announced that they were closing the foundry. I was fortunate however, for they were going to keep the laboratory open and I was transferred to the lab but on the midnight to seven A.M. shift. After a few months with no resolution to the labor problems the entire operation in Newark

closed and I was out of a job with a new baby on the way. We returned to Marietta and my father and I decided to open up a neighborhood grocery store. This had always been a lifelong ambition of my dad's and I was to manage the store until he reached retirement age. During our stay in Marietta, our second daughter Sandra Sue was born on the thirteenth of August in 1950. The grocery business prospered in a way for we started with only a case of this and a case of that and eventually added fresh meats and produce and we were becoming better and better stocked but all of the profits were going back into the business. I took no salary and we lived with Dot's father and young brother since her mother had passed away. I built our grocery business on the neighborhood's convenience and kept the store open fourteen hours a day ; seven days a week. Normal family life was forgotten and I had truly become in my eyes a slave to the grocery store without even pocket money. The days and weeks became mighty long for a young man who had other ideas. Dotty and I discussed the situation, I talked it over with my father and we decided to get out of the grocery business. Dotty and I decided to return to California.

In California there was a tremendous building boom in progress and I quickly got a job as a carpenter's helper building luxury houses in Palo Alto. The pay was phenominal (with overtime) and we worked from sunrise to sunset. I didn't know however that building crews in California only worked seven months out of the year. California has a severe rainy season the other five so outdoor construction ceases. Even though the building trade paid good wages, with a young family I could not save enough money to tide me over the five month lay-off so I had to look for other work. At this time, the United States had become involved in a war in a far off unheard of country called Korea. Several young men on my building group enlisted in the Army and went off to war. This began to look like a possibility for me so one day I went to the enlistment office and checked on possibilities. The Army Air Corps had just become a new and separate branch of the armed services and they were eager to get former Air Corps members. I enlisted and was given the rank of sergeant. Double the pay I was earning as a construction person plus free house and free medical care. I was assigned to a Fighter-Interceptor Group at Hamilton Air Force Base just north of San Francisco. Dotty and I and our two daughters moved into a brand new three bedroom government built house just off the Base in Novato, California. I bought a new car and things looked good. I had decided to make the Air Force a career and stay for twenty years with a half pay pension and hoped to attain at least the grade of Master Sergeant by that time.

At Hamilton Air Force Base, my assignment became quite a comedy of errors. I was classified as a clerk/typist but I couldn't type. The squadron commander wouldn't assign me to the clerk/typist school because it was at another Base and he wanted to keep me in his squadron. I was finally assigned to the squadron flying operations as a typist but in a job where I only

typed numbers. I had to type in official logbooks the flying time logged by the aircrews. A copy of this went to higher headquarters and the sergeant I worked for allowed no errors; no erasures; no strike-overs. This sergeant, TSgt Kelty, was a tyrant and he really gave everybody assigned to him a hard time. He had come right out of boot camp and been assigned to Hamilton Field and spent his entire enlistment there. He did not know how to manage an office or how to lead and inspire people. I must say however, asside from my poor typing, he never did give me too hard a time. When he did, I would try to reason with him and explain that he could get a lot more work out of his men if he would praise them for their efforts and hard exacting work. He didn't believe in that approach however.

One day while visiting the squadron orderly room, I happened to notice a publication on the bulletin board indicating that the Air Force badly needed ex-flying officers to apply for recall to active duty and they particularly needed navigators and bombardiers. I checked into it further and found that I was eligible so I applied. The application had to go to the Fourth Air Force Reserve Headquarters but fortunately that headquarters was located on Hamilton Air Force Base where I was stationed. A couple of weeks went by and I was notified to report to the Reserve Headquarters. I got permission from Sgt. Kelty and went to the office where I was supposed to report. Things had really moved along and that day I was sworn in as a First Lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve. Now all I had to do was apply for recall and wait to be called back into the service as a commissioned officer. I went back to my squadron and my clerk/typing job and waited.

One time after a particularly bad week with Sgt. Kelty, I told him he'd better ease up because someday soon I would be an officer and I could make it difficult for him. In his wildest imagination he couldn't believe what I told him and made a big joke out of his dumb clerk becoming an officer. Time would tell.

In late May of 1951, I received word from the Reserve Headquarters that I should report to that Headquarters to be sworn in as a First Lieutenant and to be recalled to active duty. I had a hard time getting Sgt. Kelty to give me time off to go down to the Headquarters and I never told him specifically why I had to go there. He reluctantly let me go. At the Headquarters, I was sworn in, given my commission as a First Lieutenant and immediately was given a ten day leave to have all of my papers processed and to buy the proper officer clothing and insignia. Sgt. Kelty had a fit when I told him I was going on leave and I still didn't tell him why. I got everything in order and waited for assignment orders. The policy of the military was that no enlisted man would be assigned to his same unit once he was recalled to officer status and very seldom were they recalled to the same Base. Dotty and I prepared to give up our beautiful new house in the enlisted man's area and waited for a new Base of assignment. I learned for the first time that military policy

does not always prevail for I soon received orders calling me to active duty in the same squadron that I had been in. What an awkward situation. My first day back to duty was a rainy day and I remember as I rounded the corner of the hangar building where our squadron was located there was a large puddle of water that had to be crossed. As I neared it I saw three enlisted men approaching at a fast pace and they got to the puddle just ahead of me and leaped into the air to jump across when they spotted me. They seemed to try to freeze in the air and render me a salute and for the first time I saw that one of them was Sgt. Kelty. I could never describe the look of bewilderment on his face when he saw it was me and here he was half airborne and certainly unprepared to come face to face with his "dumb clerk/typist" who was now an officer. That was the first he knew that what I had told him was going to happen, had happened.

The squadron that I was assigned to flew P-51 propeller driven World War II type fighter aircraft and F-89 fighter interceptors one of the newest jet type aircraft. The P-51s were a single seated aircraft in which only a pilot flew; the F-89s were two seated aircraft with the pilot sitting in the front and the radar/observer/navigator sitting in a seat behind the pilot. That crew position required about a year of training before being assigned to a crew. I was not qualified to fly in either aircraft yet as an aircrew rated person I was required to fly at least four hours per month. To fulfill this requirement, I flew in transport, propeller driven aircraft assigned to the Air Base. As a First Lieutenant, I out-ranked most of the pilots and observers assigned to the squadron and even though I wasn't qualified to fly with them, I had more combat time than they had total flying time. I was an odd ball ion this squadron and the squadron commander puzzled over what to do with me. Finally he gave me the job as his administrative assistant and one of my jobs was to supervise the section in which Sgt. Kelty was in charge. What a spot for revenge but revenge was not my nature and my only goal was to do an outstanding job to make our squadron the best. Sgt. Kelty and I got along fine and I tried to instill in him to lead his men with understanding and compassion. I think he may have mellowed quite a bit during my stay.

This assignment never the less was awkward for even the officers remembered me as an enlisted man and they couldn't get used to my outranking them. After a month or two of this, I received orders transferring me to a radar calibration squadron at the extreme other end of the Base. This squadron flew B-29, World War II bomber type aircraft and I fit right into that type of operation as an aircrew member and I was pleased with this new assignment. One day about a month or two later, our squadron received orders for three navigators to be re-assigned to go to bombardiers' school at Mather Air Force Base in Sacramento, California for a year's training enroute to Korea. At first the assignment was on a volunteer basis but nobody volunteered. There was a war going on in Korea and nobody wanted to volunteer for that. Finally the squadron commander had to select three people and he picked the

three newest people assigned to the squadron and I was one of them. So it was off to Mather and low level bombardier training. After a year, I completed that training and was awarded bombardiers' wings and I was now a bombardier/navigator. I was subsequently transferred to Langley Air Force Base in Virginia where some more low level night time flying training was held and I was assigned to a crew. The crew consisted of a pilot, a bombardier/navigator and a gunner and we flew propeller driven World War II type B-26 twin engine bombers.

After completing training at Langley A.F.B., our crew was assigned to Survival Training at Stead Air Force Base in Reno, Nevada where we were trained to escape and evade and to live off the land in case we were shot down over Korea. This was to be our last stop before going overseas to Korea and it was to be an unaccompanied assignment so like a good military wife Dottie took the two girls and moved to Marietta and set up house-keeping to await my return from Korea.

Upon completion of survival training , we were transferred to Camp Stoneman in California which was the point of de-barkation for over seas. While waiting for transportation, a couple of friends and I went into Oakland, California for a big last dinner in the United States. Upon returning to the Base that evening, we were involved in a horrible automobile accident and two of us sustained serious injuries requiring hospitalization. I suffered a fractured skull with left facial paralysis and spent the next ten months in a hospital at Parks Air Force Base, California. When discharged from the hospital, I was grounded and told that due to my head injury, I could never fly again. I was assigned to a staff communications school at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois for a one year school learning all types of ground communication systems and their operation and maintenance. Dottie and the girls accompanied me. Upon completion of that school, I was re-assigned to Korea and during a thirty day leave prior to departure my family and I toured Florida looking for a place for Dottie and the girls to stay while I was gone for the year. We decided on Holly Hill near Daytona Beach and bought our first house a brand new three bed room concrete block house about ten minutes from the ocean beach.

In Korea, I commanded a communications squadron, was promoted to Captain and got back on flying status. I was kept so busy that the year passed quickly and I returned to the United States and my dear family in Florida. From that time on, I had a series of assignments to advanced flying schools, staff schools and flying and staff jobs. While at Mather Air Force Base in Sacramento, California attending a radar observer school, our third daughter Debra Jean was born. Even though she was born at about nine o'clock in the morning, she happened to be the first baby born on January the first 1958 and won a baby "derby" sponsored by the local merchants and was named Miss Sacramento County of 1958. I completed that school and was now rated as what was known as a

"three headed monster". I was now a Navigator/Bombardier/Radar Observer and wore the Aie Force Observer's silver wings. From this flying school, I was assigned to McDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida where I performed aircrew duties on a B-47 bomber, my first jet aircraft. From flying duties, I went to another staff school, Armament/Electronics Maintenance School at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado. This school was of one year duration and upon graduation, I was re-assigned to McDill Air Force Base in Florida. Eventually, I became the Armament/Electronics Supervisor in the 306th Bomb Wing. In 1963, the 306th Bomb Wing won the Strategic Air Force Command Bomber Competition and the Armament/Electronics Squadron was named the best in the Strategic Air Force. I was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal.

In 1964, the 306th Bomb Wing was deactivated and at that time, the Air Force was badly in need of people with engineering degrees. I applied and was accepted into the Air Force Institute of Technology where I was subsequently assigned to Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas to earn an engineering degree. While stationed in Dallas, our fourth child and first son Robert Jr. was born on 16 February 1965. Two other noteworthy things took place while I was stationed at Southern Methodist. President Kennedy came to Dallas for a visit and he was subsequently assassinated there. I had planned to take the family to the airport to see President Kennedy and I was planning to have my daughter Debbie present him with a bouquet of roses as a friend of mine had done with his daughter and President Eisenhauer. Fortunately or unfortunately, I had a final examination in an engineering course on the day of the President's visit and my plans at the airport had to be cancelled. I might say in passing here that during our breaks in the weeks before President Kennedey's visit, we used to sit in the student snack bar for coffee and just make "small talk". The young civilian students who were native Texans repeatedly said upon learning that the President was going to visit the Fort Worth area " That so and so better hadn't come to Dallas or he'll get his a__ shot off". Dallas was a very conservative Republican city while Fort Worth scarcely fifteen miles away was a very strong Democratic city. Political feelings ran very high in these two cities. I might also add that during my remaining time in Dallas (my family and I lived in the neighboring city of Richardson), Marie Oswald (wife of President Kennedy's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald) and her children moved to our neighborhood and we saw her quite often in the local market. She was readily accepted in our community and to my knowledge there were no threats or harrassment made towards her.

The second and third events during my tour of duty as a student at Southern Methodist were that I received my promotion to Major and graduated and received a degree in Industrial Engineering. My dreams of getting a college education had come true for the second time !!

After graduating from Southern Methodist University, I was assigned to the 1955th Communications Squadron at Itazuke Air Base, Fukuoka, Japan. The Wildermuth family now totalling four children and Dottie and I, loaded ourselves into our family car and headed for California by way of Ohio where we visited our parents to let them get a look at their new grandson. We arrived in Japan in August 1965 and by this time, our son Rob scarcely six months old had travelled over 8000 miles by automobile and airplane. He was a seasoned travellor at less than one year of age.

At Itazuke Air Base, I was assigned as the Chief of Maintenance in the 1955th Communications Squadron, the third worst Communications Squadron out of thirty one in the Far East. Shortly after my assignment there, we received word that our commanding General, Brigadier General Anthony Shtogren, was going to pay us a visit. General Shtogren was the highest educated general officer in the Air Force. He had three undergraduate degrees and two Masters Degrees, one from Harvard and one from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He had visited our squadron once before prior to my assignment and members of the squadron during his visit were still visibly shook to learn of his coming visit. General Shtogren had the reputation of being the meanest general in the Air Force and one of the foulest talking men on earth. I found this to be incongruent with his reputed education and found it difficult to believe for I had met several foul talking generals in the Stategic Air Command. I could however see that our squadron commander, Major Paul Hamelin, was extremely concerned and visibly distressed at the pending visit.

On the day of General Shtogren's visit, Major Hamelin called me on short notice and informed me that I was to have breakfast with him and the General. Although I had met and briefed general officers, I had never informally had breakfast with any and especially one of General Shtogren's nasty reputation. I must say the General at breakfast, certainly lived up to his reputation. He ranted and raved, cursed and threatened. He was upset with our squadron's poor rating as one of the three worst squadrons in the Far East and from our first piece of toast he let Maj. Hamelin and I both know it. He stated that he didn't even want to look around our squadron area and see such incompetancy but that he would be coming back for an in-depth visit in three months and if things hadn't improved by then he was "going to fire everybody and ship us off to Viet Nam where we'd be stuck out so far in the jungles the "Gooks" would be sure to get us". I was certainly glad that I was not in Maj. Hamelin's position but then the General did say "us". I don't know how or why but my glass of milk was curdled at the end of our meal.

Things went from bad to worse and there was no improvement in our squadron. Major Hamelin was incompetent, squadron morale was non-existent and the non-commissioned officers and men used to come to me and complain. Major Hamelin was an alcoholic and I could see our exile to a remote mountain top in Viet Nam as being a

distinct possibility. By this time, we had slipped in our ratings to the next to the bottom. One day Major Hamelin came to me and informed me that he had applied for retirement and that he was going to be returned to the United States in a month or so. That meant that I would soon inherit the job as squadron commander of possibly the worst squadron in the Far East. What to do?

As Maj. Hamelin had told me he was hastily re-assigned to the United States for retirement and sure enough I became squadron commander. We had just had an airman killed in a drunken motor-cycle accident; had three men absent without leave; had the worst up-grade training for the airmen of any squadron in the Pacific Area; had drunken parties and fights in the barracks and to make matters worse our Base Commander, Colonel Mammel, was a drunken party man who weekly led his junior officers on drunken sprees of all types. He had disgraced himself and the Air Force on at least two occasions before the Japanese civilians at local civic functions. I wondered what I had done to get such an assignment as this. There was no time,however, to sit around and brood . Something had to be done and done fast for the General had promised us a return visit.

I called all of my officer and non-commissioned officer staff together and apprised them of the situation and asked for their help and expertise to get this squadron turned around. I picked their brains for ideas and methods to improve. I called all the airmen in the squadron together at a Commander's Call and apprised them of our situation and asked for their complaints, ideas and ways that we could become the BEST squadron in the Far East. I even put a suggestion box in the orderly room so people could put in their suggestions, gripes or ideas. Several of the old time Air Base Officers told me this was no way to run a squadron. Democracy had no place in the military. I'd be swamped with bad ideas and if I didn't accept them I'd be asking for trouble. I always felt that to find out better ways of doing a job; one should ask the people who were doing the job. I held out for my method of approach. I did get some bad ideas but these ideas were discussed with my staff as well as those ideas with merit. I then explained to the one who made the suggestion or to the whole squadron at Commander's Calls why we accepted or why we had to decline certain suggestions. Things started to improve. The sqaudrons in the Far East Communications Area were graded on a number of categories each quarter and that's how General Shtogren got his ratings. The first quarter of my command, we jumped from twenty-ninth to number eight. Now at least when the General came to visit, I could show some improvement. The next grading period, we jumped to number three; we were now among the three best in the Far East. Let the General come !! I owed this success strictly to my staff officers, my NCOs and every airman in the squadron. Morale was great ; there were few disciplinary problems; no drunken brawls and no injuries leave alone deaths. Also there was still no General's visit.

After almost a year, I was notified that General Shtrogren was

going to hold a Commander's Conference in the Phillipines and I was to attend. Once again, I would have to come face to face with the old tyrant. The first evening at the Conference, the General scheduled a two hour cocktail party to be followed by a huge banquet. I arrived a little late at the cocktail party for I didn't drink and I certainly didn't want to be exposed to the nastiness of the General any longer than necessary. The entrance to the large banquet hall and cocktail area was across a large garden area and through a sort of garden gazebo. Right in the center of this pavilion area was where the bar was set up and where the General and his staff had positioned themselves. There was no way to enter except through this entourage.

I got myself a highly watered down drink and stopped at the edge of the welcomng party. The General spotted me and drew me into the center of the group of other Generals and senior colonels. The General was telling stories of his brilliant military career and seemed to be directing his remarks to me. He told how he waas the "Father" of the Air Weather Service and how he had built it into the finest weather service in the world. "Why" he said, "his service was so good that even the U-2 spy planes depended on him for weather predictions any place in the world". I had had a friend in the U-2 spy operation and had learned a little of their types of flights and since the General seemed to be looking at me for some comments or to join in the conversation, I said as a matter of making small talk and being impressed with the General's importance, "Gee, I thought the spy planes flew so high they were above all weather and weather was not a problem for them". With this the General exploded: "You're a stupid sonOof-a-bitch ! It's plain to see you don't know anything about weather -- do you know anything about communications ?" I was completely crushed, embarrassed and bewildered and stumbled off mumbling something to myself. Later in the evening, I was still feeling as stupid as the General implied that I was and I guess it showed for I was approached by one of the General's staff officers and he said : "Hey, don't feel so glum. Feel glad, the General at least noticed you and besides that's what he calls his wife when he first greets her in the morning". What a way for such an educated man in a position of leadership to inspire comeraderie, loyalty and team participation in his commanders.

Needless to say, I steered clear of the General, always sat in the back and tried my best not to draw his attention. Then one day the General announced that we were to have another big party and banquet to honor those among us who had just made "his" promotion list. He also sought me out and informed me that on his way back to his headquarters in Hawaii he was going to stop by Itazuke and pay me a visit. I hope the disgust didn't show on my face. Now here I was a thousand miles or more from my squadron and things back there needed to be done before the General's visit. He had his own private airplane but I had to either wait for our Conference airplane to get back or try to hitchhike on some other available aircraft. What a dilemma. I placed a hurried phone call back to my squadron and informed my second in command

to get that squadron ship-shape in preparation for the General's visit and if he beat me back to be prepared to give the General a good briefing. During my conversation with my squadron adjutant, she informed me that a message had come down from USAF Headquarters notifying me that I had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. The General had been scooped on his secret promotion party and I knew before his announcement that I had been promoted. Not only promoted but promoted below the zone of those normally eligible for promotion. Of course I didn't breathe a word of what I'd found out for I didn't dare up-stage the General and his secret announcement that he had made sound like it was his doings.

After the big promotion party where all squadron commenders had been promoted except two (the General's whipping boys now), the conference was adjourned and I began a desperate search for a flight back to Japan to get there before the General. Foretunately, he stopped to visit a couple of communications sqaudrons in Tiawan and two in Okinawa and in the meantime, I got a ticket on a commercial airliner going direct to Itazuke so I beat the General by about a week. I must say my sqaudron personnel had done an unbelievable job in preparing for the General's visit. They had made a huge "Welcome General Shtogren - welcome to the Best Communications Squadron in the WORLD" banner that they had on display at Base Operations where the General's airplane would park. Somewhere they had aquired about fifty feet of red carpet that would be rolled out for the General as he deplaned. The Base Commander had loaned us his personal staff car, a Cadillac, to take the General on a tour of our facilities. I must point out that the General had really chastised a full Colonel at the Commander's Conference because that Colonel could only provide a Ford staff car. There happened to be an army heliocopter unit visiting Itazuke from Viet Nam and Maj. Harris my second in command had talked them into providing a pilot and a heliocopter so I could fly the General to our outlying sights scattered over a 55,000 mile area of southern Japan. On top of this, somehow and someway, the sqaudron personnel had obtained some of the scarcest material in Japan, white paint, and had freshly painted every one of our squadron buildings. A miraculous feat. Everything looked spick and span and I eagerly waited for the General. The squadron people left nothing for me to do except prepare a rousing briefing for the General and I devoted all of my time into preparing a really professional Strategic Air Command type briefing. Here the new Base Commander made all of his printing and Base photo facilities available to me and we really fixed up a fancy talk for the Old Bear.

The General's visit went off without a hitch and by this time my squadron was rated number two in the Far East and I pointed out to the General that we really didn't mind being number two for like Avis the car rental company's slogan "Being number two only made us try harder". He liked that.

On the next rating period, we finally vaulted into number one

position and we never relinquished that position for the remainder of my stay in Japan. We had won every Far East Communications Commander's Trophy that there was to win and some of them we won so many times that we retired them permanently to our squadron trophy case. There were no more fields to conquer and even my old nemesis, General Shtogren, had been re-assigned to the Pentagon so I had noone to tussle with. At the end of my tour in 1968, I received orders transferring me to where else but the Pentagon !! Look out General Shtogren I'm on my way.

The Pentagon assignment was quite a plum. Only one in fourteen hundred eligible ever got such an assignment. It was a great boost in a military career but it was the the most frustrating assignment possible. I was assigned to Air Force Personnel Directorate as a communications specialist to plan, make policy, review and update all personnel policies affecting some 50,000 communications officers and airmen. Everything that was attempted and/or done had to be coordinated through every office where people might be affected. I started working on a proposal that was the pet project of a three star General the first month that I was there. Daily during my three year stay there, I spent at least two hours working on that proposal that had the three star General's blessing. The project progressed at a satifactory rate and there never was any adverse comments from the General but it had to be coordinated through thity-three other offices and commands throughout the Air Force. When I retired at the end of three years, the project had finally been approveed by all concerned and after I had been retired one year, it was finally published in the Air Force Policy Manual. This kind of frustration in getting something accomplished that had the highest approval originally was what led a lot of promising officers to retire from the military rather than face another tour of duty in the Pentagon. The assignment policy for those who worked in the Pentagon was one assignment in Washington then an assignment in the field and then another assignment to the Pentagon and one seemed to feel like a yoyo. Proprty in the Washington area was extremely expensive and being on an every other assignment rotation one had to almost keep a house in Washington and then get another in his off-assignment location. After three years of this and after having reached twenty-eight years for pay purposes with thirty being the maximum one could get, I decided to retire while young enough to still find employment as a civilian. In May 1970, I traveled to Florida and bought a house and got a job as I had planned as a teacher and then applied for retirement. On thirty-one May 1970, I retired from the Air Force and with the exception of daughters Terrie and Sandra, the family headed to Florida and civilian life and what lay ahead. Terrie and Sandy had enrolled in the University of Maryland and elected not to transfer to a Florida school. It was a mighty sad day for me when we drove away from our two oldest girls on the campus of the University.

Upon our arrival in Florida and after settling into our new home, I received some rather startling news from the Department of Defense in Washington. They notified me that my physical examination at the time of my separation from the military service disclosed sugar in my urinalysis. I was directed to report to a veteran's hospital in Jacksonville for further examination. Tests done at that institution confirmed that I was indeed diabetic and that I needed to be under medical supervision.

or a number of years, I was able to control my blood sugar level by carefully monitoring my diet but finally in 1984 I had to start insulin therapy. To this date in 1989, I have had no serious problems resulting from my diabetes so to anyone of my progeny that I may have passed the diabetic gene onto, have faith for diabetes can be lived with if certain care is taken.

After about a month as a civilian, I got another notice from the Department of Defense notifying me that for my work while stationed at the Pentagon, I had been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. Other awards of note that I received during my military service are: the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters. The oak leaf clusters signify that the award was presented three additional times; the Southwest Pacific Area medal with two battle stars indicating that I had participated in two major battle actions during the war; the Phillipine Liberation Medal with two battle stars; the National Defense Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters; the Air Force Commendation Medal and some others that were routinely given to all who served their country during World War II.

Inthe fall of 1970, I started my teaching career at Seabreeze High School in Daytona Beach, Florida. This was a beautiful modern high school located right on the beach in Daytona. It was too bad the school administration and the entire school system did not live up to the excellent school facility. My year of teaching was the first year of school integration of races in the South. Unfortunately the black students through no fault of their own were not prepared to compete on an equal level with the white students. They just didn't have the proper skills. I taught four levels of mathematics and this was a subject that the black students were sadly lacking in the basics; consequently if I taught at the white students level, the blacks became frustrated and disruptive in class. If on the other hand, I taught at the black students' level the white students became bored and complained. The schools were extremely overcrowded due to a large influx of new residents into Florida so the school day was split up into two shifts. Part of the students started at seven o'clock in the morning and went all morning and part attended in the afternoon. Since many students were bussed long distances across town (done to achieve integration) many of those who attended the early morning session were out waiting for a school bus at six o'clock in the morning and thus by about eleven o'clock they were all quite sleepy and not in a mood to study a dull class like mathematics. Many of the students who went to school in the morn-

ing got part time jobs in fast food restaurants and service stations etc. and those in the afternoon session worked in the morning. The part time jobs soon became more important than the academics and class preparation and interest suffered. Many students told me their cash registers or the automated gas pumps did their math calculations for them so why study math. The early seventies were turbulent years in both our colleges and our high schools with student protests both active and passive the rule of the day. The learning environment was very disruptive. Coming from the military, I was shocked at the lack of initiative and discipline. I soon learned that my military authority did not prevail in the civilian classroom. Even though I should have known better this came as a rather rude shock to me. With schools being badly over-crowded, I was told by the school administrators not to fail anyone but to push them through to make room for others the next year. I had students in the eleventh grade who could barely read and who if they could read could not comprehend what they read. These students had ambitions of becoming professional people after college and I couldn't even comprehend their being admitted to a school of higher learning. Narcotics usage at the high school level was just beginning and confidential information coming out of an educational conference held in Cuba was that drug usage should now be pushed in the high schools because it was already prevalent in the colleges. For my tenure as a teacher due to the hours spent grading papers and preparing teaching plans, I calculated I was earning $2.50 per hour and that all I was accomplishing was a low paid baby-sitting job. I was sadly disenchanted with the school system and education in general so I resigned my position as a teacher in the public school system. I tried several other jobs; sales work, State unemployment agent, golf course supervision, electronic computer technician and could not find my place in civilian life. Finally I remembered a briefing that a group of military retirees and I had received while in Washington and one of the speakers was from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. He painted a beautiful picture of employment opportunities well into the 21st century in the field of health care and if any of us who were retiring had the inclination towards that career it would be well worth our efforts to pursue that kind of work. Since I had an interest in health care and a college degree in that discipline, I inquired at a new University that had just opened in Orlando, the Florida Technilogical University later to become the University of Central Florida. I found that this university had a School of Health and one of the degrees offered in that school was a degree in Medical Record Administration. So at the rather advanced age for students , 48, I enrolled in college and went to work on another degree. I worked part time at a local hospital for practical experience and to earn some spending money and got my degree in just two years. Not bad, three degrees for a person who at graduation from high school did not have the where-with-all to take advantage of a short term scholarship.

With my new degree in health care, I went to work for Blue Cross of Florida as a Hospital Representative and later as a Charge

Auditor making sure that the Blue Cross patients got the health care that Blue Cross was being charged for. The work was interesting, very rewarding and I enjoyed it very much. Finally in 1986, at the age of 62, I took an early retirement and pusued my hobby of finding our family roots almost full time. My goal was to discover the towns of origin of our Fleming and Wildermuth ancstors. I feel that I have reached that goal and hope to visit those areas in Northern Ireland and Germany. At this time, June 1989, I am busily wrting little histories of all of my family members so that future generations will know where they came from; who traveled the byways of life on this old planet and brought them here, and some of the history of the times when the Wildermuth and Fleming forbearers lived. To any future genealogists, I say good hunting for the details that I couldn't find and have a good time for knowing one's origin and family background is a valuable and rewarding insight into how and why you are what you are.

RETURN TO GERMANY

On 2 November 1993, accompanied by my daughter, Sandra S. Clement, we set out from the Atlanta International Airport for Stuttgart, Wuerttemberg, Germany to visit the small village, Rielingshausen where the Wildermuth name is said to have originated.

We departed at 4:30 P.M. Eastern Standard Time for an approximate nine and a half hour flight. Our course would take us up the Eastern Seaboard of the United States, across Newfoundland, over the Atlantic Ocean, across Scotland and England to Amsterdam, Holland an intermediate stop enroute to Stuttgart.

We arrived in Amsterdam on a very gloomy day at 8:30 A.M. Amsterdam time and were told that those going on to Stuttgart could not deplane. We had no visa to visit Holland anyway. Security at this airport was unusually strict. While taxiing in, I noted a security guard stop a man on the parking ramp and make him show his identification card. As it turned out the man that was stopped was a man sent out to help service the airplane but his security badge was under his coat and could not be seen.

After the passengers who were terminating their flight in Amsterdam deplaned, security teams with bomb detecting equipment and drug sniffing dogs entered the airplane. Every Stuttgart bound passenger on the plane had to account for his carry-on luggage. None could be left unattended in the overhead baggage compartments. The security teams searched every inch of the airplane, took up all seat cushions and looked under all of the seats. The reason for all of this security was that in 1991, a plane bound for New York, passed through Amsterdam and then exploded over Lougherby, Scotland killing all aboard. The cause of the explosion was a terrorist bomb put aboard the airplane either at its point of origin, Frankfurt, Germany or in Amsterdam where it stopped for servicing. Security people were taking no chances at this time. Security was equally strict at Stuttgart both going in and returning.

Stuttgart was about a one hour flight from Amsterdam and we arrived at the Stuttgart International Airport at about 10:30 A.M. Stuttgart Time. The airport is located approximately eight miles south of the city and there were excellent taxi and bus service into the center of town. Sandy and I chose to take the bus since we had so much luggage and since the bus terminated its trip at the huge Stuttgart train station where our hotel was located. The ride through the country side gave us an opportunity to see a small part of rural Germany and as we approached Stuttgart from high on a hill had I been blindfolded and not told where we were going and then told to remove the blindfold and tell where we were, I would have said we are approaching Clarksburg, West Virginia. The country side around Stuttgart and the city itself with its location on the sides of hills and down in the valley looked exactly like West Virginia.

Stuttgart is a large (650,000 population), modern city devoted mostly to manufacturing. It is known as the "Detroit of Germany" since the main manufactured product is automobiles. Mercedes

Benz, Porsche and the plush Volkswagens are the three primary models produced here. In view of the cost and luxury of a Mercedes automobile in America,it seemed strange to see Mercedes being used as taxis, Mercedes trucks and Mercedes buses. Housewives were driving Mercedes to take their children to school and for shopping. We also saw many luxury cars parcked in the parking lot at our hotel in Stuttgart. For miles around Stuttgart, several good sized towns (part of suburban Stuttgart) were a part of the automobile parts manufacturing process.

We arrived at the massive stone train station (typical of heavy German architecture) in about a half hour and both of us were extremely tired. We could not see our hotel so thinking it might be on the other side of the street, we crossed over one of Stuttgart's busiest streets (looking back I'm sure that was illegal because they had an underpass down about a block where everyone crossed) completely overloaded with excess baggage (overpacked) and hardly able to tote that luggage any further. From this other side of the street we could see our hotel in the far end of the train station on the other side of the street. With almost super-human effort, we walked down the block, went through the underpass and after some difficulty found the entrance to the hotel and staggered in to register.

Our room was on the third floor and it was surprisingly excellent. Ultra clean with two twin beds, a desk and chair, a small circular table with two chairs, a small refrigerator, a television (all German programming except one English channel that showed horrible, dry typical English humor, poorly acted movies). We had a large bath-room with double wash basins, a tub and a hand held shower. However, there was no shower curtain and keeping the shower spray inside the tub was a problem. Our room overlooked the parking lot for taxis and people arriving to catch trains, additionally it was in the train station with trains (all electric) arriving and departing almost hourly I feared we would have a lot of noise. Quite the contrary however. With stone walls about two feet thick and with what must have been the heaviest sound proof windows, noise was no problem. The hotel room rate was one hundred and thirty dollars a day but it included an outstanding buffet breakfast (all kinds of great German breads and Danish rolls,a fresh fruit salad bowl,cereals,and of course many kinds of cheeses and sausages) and a free ticket on all public transit in the immediate Stuttgart area. This part of Germany is also heavy apple and grape growing country and every day the management of the hotel would have a large basket of freshly picked apples for its patrons. All hill sides, even in downtown Stuttgart, were covered with vineyards and Stuttgart is noted throughout the world for its fine wines. Our oldest know ancestor, Andreus Wildermuth, was a vintner in this area.

The hotel was located almost in the center of town only two blocks from Koenigstrasse (King Street) the main shopping area of Stuttgart. The train station with loading platforms extended down in the ground four stories and on each level were modern stores, banks,bakeries,restaurants and even an American McDonald's Fast Food Hamburger Restaurant.

There was a local train that we commuted on on our four trips to

Marbach, Germany a small tourist town about twenty miles north of Stuttgart. Marbach is the home of Germany's most famous playwright and poet, Johann Schiller (circa 1735). Schiller was the Shakespeare of Germany. Marbach is also the home of Ottilie Wildermuth, Germany's most famous female publisher and poetess. A main street that runs through Marbach is named Wildermuthstrasse after Ottilie Wildermuth. The old section of Marbach situated high on a hill overlooking the Neckar River is the old walled in city of ancient times. The walls are eighteen to twenty feet thick. It is said that in olden times a German farmer would acquire land and build his home. As soon as four other families moved in nearby, they would build a church and then start building a wall around their compound. Bands of Gypsies and thieves roamed throughout the countryside as well as warring factions of the loose knit kingdoms, duchys and city states etc. and the huge thick walls around the settlements were for the residents' protection.

About seven miles northeast of Marbach is the little farming village of Rielingshausen. This is the town where thw surname Wildermuth is said to have originated. We counted nineteen Wildermuths in the local telephone directory with even more in a town about twenty miles to the east. This is the town of Grossaspach from where great-grandfather Johann Michael Wildermuth emigrated to come to America in 1847.

After three trips to Rielingshausen, we found the old Evangelische church, built in 1752, and right next to the church up on a hillside was the old cemetery. At the church there was an old cleaning lady outside sweeping the walk. We indicated to her that we would like to go into the church and proceeded up to the door. The cleaning lady,looking rather hostile, followed right at our heels. The inside of the church was immaculately clean and the old wooden pews shone as if they were newly laquered. In the front of the interior of the church was a singular, elevated, narrow pulpit raised up about eight feet. A narrow brick and stone set of steps led up to the pulpit. I desparately wanted to take some pictures but I was intimidated by the cleaning lady who clung to our sides. I took no pictures inside the church.

Outside the church, a path led up to the old cemetery. Just outside the cemetery and near the wall of the church were about twenty hand-carved, small gravestones clustered in a small group. Carved into the stones were some symbols of unknown meaning. The cemetery was enclosed in a high sand-stone wall with big ornate iron gates at the entrance. Carved in the wall near the entrance were the names of soldiers who were killed in World War I. Among those names, were listed twenty-three Wildermuths. Inside the cemetery, there were tombstone after tomb-stone with the name Wildermuth carved on them. There were two elderly women visiting the grave yard and they smiled and spoke. In my best broken German, I told them "Meine Name Wildermuth ist. Ich bin ein Amerikaner. My Grossvater nach Amerika aus Grossaspach im 1847" (My name is Wildermuth. I am an American. My great-grandfather went from Grossaspach to America in 1847). The two ladies started speaking rapidly in German and directed me to an area on the other side of the grave-yard and indicated that that was the Wildermuth section of the cemetery. It was very eerie to see so many

tomb stones with the name Wildermuth on them. Incidentally, I had been told that German cemeteries were very well maintained and this one certainly was, All grave sites were outlined either in stones or bricks, many were carefully covered with freshly cut evergreen boughs.

After our visits (three) to Marbach and Rielingshausen, we were interested in seeing some more of the area and we wanted to buy some souvenirs. In Marbach there is a souvenir shop that sells plates with a picture of the Wildermuth Street gate through the city wall. I made two trips to that store but each time it was closed, I interpreted a sign in the window as saying that the store was closed for vacation but would re-open on 9 November so on the ninth I made another trip to try to buy some of those plates as souvenirs. This time the store was open but they had no plates. Octoberfest had just ended in Germany and Marbach plays host to thousands of tourists at that time so perhaps all of the plates had been sold.

Language was becoming more and more of a problem for us. Stuttgart is not a tourist city and not many people spoke English and our German was horrible. After addressing one in German, it seemed that he or she thought we could speak German and they would rapidly start talking in German. When they found that we were not fluent in German, they would just walk away and it soon became very embarrassing for us. I had heard that there was a big U.S. Air Force Base in Wiesbaden which was only about forty miles from Stuttgart so we decided to take a train trip to Wiesbaden where we thought with so many American airmen in the area the people in that area would probably speak English. Besides the weather in Stuttgart had turned chilly and misty. The railway system in Germany is highly computerized and in the ticket offices all personnel spoke English. All one has to do is tell them where you want to go and they enter that in their computer and it will print out the track number, the departure time, intermediate stops or train changes and arrival times both going and returning. We got our tickets and left the next morning. Again the trains were exceptionally clean, all electric and high speed. Going to Wiesbaden we had to change trains at Mainz but we had no problems.

Wiesbaden reminded me very much of Washington, D.C. It is a large city with many, many office buildings and apartment buildings. There were trees and parks and street after street of modern shops and department stores. With some difficulty, we found the number of the bus that would take us out to the Air Base about an hour's ride. On the outskirts of Wiesbaden, actually in a little town of Garmish, we saw off in the distance an Air Base but the bus did not stop any way near the Air Base gate and passed right on by. At the end of the line, I asked the bus driver if the bus went to the Air Base on the way back. The driver spoke very good English and he said he didn't stop there this trip but he would the next. Another hour !!! He said he would make a stop fairly close to the Base and he would tell us when. After about a half-hour drive, he stopped the bus way out near farm fields and told us the main gate of the Air Base was a short distance away and pointed it out. It appeared to be about four miles away so we told him we had changed our minds and rode back to Wiesbaden and

took the train back to Stuttgart. This experience kind of dampened our desire to travel even though we wanted to visit the town where great-grandmother Catherina (Boeshar) Wildermuth was born. That town, Breitenbach, in the Rhineland Pfalz over near the French border, was only sixty-five miles from Stuttgart but it is in a very rural area. We would have had to change from trains to buses and the round trip would take thirteen hours. After our experiences going to Wiesbaden, we decided to give that trip up and do it on our next trip to Germany when it would be much closer if we flew into Frankfurt.

We spent the rest of our visit sight seeing around Stuttgart and shopped their many stores for souvenirs. On one day, I went to the Wuerttemberg State Archives to try to do some genealogy research. I found that unless one could read old German script it would be impossible. A very nice young lady employed at the Archives gave me two addresses to which I could write for records and/or a Wildermuth history that had been written.

We found from a very nice souvenir shop employee who spoke excellent English that Stuttgart was the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Wuerttemberg. There are at least four major palaces built around the city square. The name of the city means "The Home of the Beautiful Horses" and it was the place where horsemen brought their horses to be bred. The city was over one third destroyed in bombing during World War II. The huge railway station was destroyed during the war and this created extreme hardships on this huge manufacturing city that was the rail hub for southeastern Germany. Two of the palaces had been destroyed and only one had been rebuilt in its entirety while just the facade of the other was re-built.

After eight days and loaded down with even more luggage, we repeated our journey back to America. One incident at the airport where security was also very tight. I wanted to take some pictures of their terminal. I took one downstairs in the main terminal and then went up on the second level where there was a large balcony . I took one picture up there and immediately upon the flash and clicking of the shutter, I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned around to face a big, Negro guard. He spoke perfect English and I suspect he was an ex-American soldier who got out of the service and stayed in Germany. He told me very politely that I was inside the "Red Zone" and no picture taking was allowed. I shrugged my shoulders and extended my camera to him so he could take the film but he very firmly said "No, just don't take anymore". What a way to end an otherwise enjoyable trip.

I have now been to the origin of my family who came to America so many years ago; saw some wonderful sights, ate some of the finest baked goods and sausages in the world and have a fuller understanding of my origin. I hope to return to the home towns of grandma Catherina Boeshar and hopefully that of Johann Peter Schlicher at some later date. But for now,

Aufwiedersehen

RUTH IRENE WILDERMUTH

It was on a beautiful spring day, 29 April 1922, that I first saw the light as a member of the brand new Earl Adam and Sadye Irene (Fleming) Wildermuth family. At precisely , I came into this world at the Tremont Hospital, Sixth and Montgomery Streets, Marietta, Washington County, Ohio. I might add that I was the only child born to Earl and Sadye that made such a luxurious birth in a hospital. Rarely done in those days. After three or four days, mother and I went home to daddy and they were some proud parents. For a couple of years, I remained the "Queen of the Domain" before my baby brother came along and then I had to learn to share our parents' attention and affection.

For a long time, my mother and father had a dream to head South all the way to Florida and as soon as baby Bob could toddle along, we all set out on this great adventure. Tent camping along the way, we saw wondrous sights of the Virginia and Carolina mountains. The scenery, adventure and experiences made a lasting, indelible impression on my mom and dad for they told family and friends over and over of their trip south. The entire journey to Florida however, was not to be for after a few months on the road money or the lack thereof became a problem and my dad and uncle who was traveling with us had to seek employment. They got jobs in the cotton mills near Thomasville, North Carolina where we stayed until some traveling money was saved up and until my mom and dad had become thoroughly homesick for their friends and families back in Ohio; then it was "pack the old tent into the car and head North".

Back in Marietta, my father started his apprenticeship to become a machinist his lifelong job. New family members, a brother Carl Edward, a sister Norma Jean and yet another sister, Betty Joan soon arrived. Money wise, we were not a well to do family, about average for the Great Depression years but we were a happy and loving family and we all supported each other and especially our hard working and proud parents. My father bought our first house at 413 Harmar Street on the West Side of Marietta and there we stayed until about the second year of World War II. By that time, I had graduated from Marietta High School and had taken employment with the Marietta Telephone Exchange as a switch-board operator.

During my "growing up" years, I had many dear neighborhood friends and we all had very enjoyable times together. We did the usual childhood things: played with our dolls, dressed up in our mother's clothes, played hopscotch, "jacks" and "pick-up" sticks and teased the boys. My younger brother and I were very active in Sunday School where in addition to religious learning, we had many group parties, trips to the Fair Grounds for all day outings, hay rides and special church plays. I took ballet lessons and my family even suffered through my early violin lessons.

Finally dad couldn't tolerate anymore of that violin screeching and the lessons came to an abrupt halt. My mother and father were very supportive of all of our childhood whims. Dad even built us a miniature golf course in the back yard; a very fancy swing, sandbox, trapeze set; a small merry-go-round and a five place bob-sled. In the summer, we camped along the Ohio River where we swam and "beat the heat" of those long Ohio summers. We had many home parties where mom and dad would take all of the furniture out of our rather large dining room and then turn it over to all of us neighborhood kids. We always had the biggest and best Christmas in the entire neighborhood and our friends always told us that they couldn't wait to come and visit our house on Christmas Day to see what gifts we got and all of the home-made candies and cookies. Christmas was the favorite time of the year for our father and he always went out and cut the biggest and best shaped pine tree in the woods. As an old German father, he insisted that the tree stay outside until Christmas Eve when old Kris Krigle would come and trim it. Over the years mom and dad had saved boxes and boxes of tree trimmings and weeks before Christmas mom would pop popcorn and we "kids" would string the kernels for tree trimming. Christmas at the Wildermuth's was truly a joyous time and dad was the biggest "kid" of all.

Shortly after I graduated from high school, my aunt Laverna (Fleming) Raison, started playing cupid to find me a steady boy friend. At this she was successful for she introduced me to the "boy of my dreams", Mr. Jack Ridenour, who was to become my lifelong friend, lover and mate. All through my senior year in high-school, Jack would commute on week-ends from Newark to Marietta (about ninety miles) so we could be together and do our "courting". Luckily we had met when we did for we were living in the troubled times of the beginning of World War II. Feeling patriotic as all young men of that time did, Jack went to Wright Patterson Field in Dayton, Ohio to enlist. Shortly thereafter he was called into the Army to start his long wartime duty. I took employment in a wartime indusrty, the Remington Rand Corporation, and we settled in to see what the next few years would bring. Jack finally got his over-seas' orders and while stationed at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, he sent for me to come join him to be married. On 8 May 1943, we became husband and wife and a week later Jack set sail on a huge troop ship bound for the China-India-Burma Theater of operations where he spent the next four years in anti-aircraft battalions guarding air fields throughout India and Burma while I returned to Marietta as a full fledged war-bride "widow". Thanks to my kind and understanding parents and their heart-warming support, I survived to be rejoined by my dear husband at the close of the war.

Jack and I started our family in 1949 with the birth of our first daughter, Karen Kay who was born on 8 January 1949. Mom and dad's first grandchild and were they ever pleased. Two years later, we presented them with another grand-daughter, Marcia Ann born on 7 April 1951. This then became the extent of our lineage to the Wildermuth/Fleming lines.

On 4 August 1976, my mother passed away of cancer (multiple myeloma). That was a really sad time for our family especially my dad who had dedicated his life to his precious Sadye. For several months, Norma, Betty Joan and I commuted to Marietta to care for my dad and my brother Carl who was blind and living with dad. As dad became more and more aged and required more checking on, the long week-end trips became too overwhelming so we finally persuaded him to leave his beloved Marietta and come and live in Newark. We had found him and Carl a nice little house and they settled in where my sisters and I could give them more supervision and help.

On 6 December 1977, my father, Earl Adam Wildermuth suffered a massive stroke and died. The stroke was the immediate cause of death but grieving for his dear wife was a major contributing factor.

My daughters had long before married and left the family home so Jack and I started our lives anew. We both became avid golfers (note avid but not accompished); we traveled extensively (Yugoslavia in Europe; Florida in the Winter and Hawaii a time or two). We lived the life of Reilly and did as we pleased and when we pleased. Things were great.

In , Jack was diagnosed as having multiple myeloma, the same dread and fatal disease that my mother had. He vowed to "lick it" and for many months he conducted his business (President and owner of the Fernier Sheet Metal Company), played golf, traveled to Florida and doted over his grandsons. Finally however, his horrible disease won out and on , he succumbed and is buried in the , Cemetery in Newark. I love him and grieve for him very much.

LINEAGE

JOHN ROE -- Revolutionary War Veteran
Susannah Meeks

John Fleming
CLARISSA ROE

LEWIS FLEMING
Synthia Bailey

THOMAS BAILY FLEMING
Martha Turner

JAMES WESLEY FLEMING
Verona Belle Kelley, Dunbar, Shepard

Earl Wildermuth
SADYE IRENE FLEMING

ROBERT EARL WILDERMUTH
Dorothy Marie Davis

Angelo Massaro
DEBRA JEAN WILDERMUTH

CATHERINA BOESHAR

Catherina Boeshar was born on 15 June 1840 in the town of Breitenbach, Rhineland Pfalz, Germany. She was the daughter of Christian and Margaretha Jung Boeshar.

Catherina Boeshar came to America in 1859 but as of this date (December 1988), I have not been able to find her listed anywhere in the 1860 Federal Census.

On the 7th of September 1862, she was joined in marriage to Johann Michael Wildermuth and thus became the grand old lady of the Wildermuth clan. To this marriage was born three sons: John Charles, William Clifford and Edward.

Catherina lived to the ripe old age of 93 -- 1840 to 1933. As stated, she was born in the Rhineland Pfalz in Eastern Germany forty or fifty miles west of Kaiserlautern and about 10 miles southeast of St. Wendel. This area was also known as the Saarland and it was through this area that Napoleon's armies and those of the German Dukes and monarchs marched back and forth in never ending wars. This was a very severe area to live in for it was ravaged by war, over-run constantly by marauding armies, pillaged, looted and robbed for decades. It is little wonder that a family would want to emigrate from there.

Catherina's father was a miner by occupation and at this time I do not believe that he migrated to this country with the rest of the family. Catherina had at least one brother, Jacob, who was three years older than she. He was born 29 September 1837. Her mother and father were married on the 8th of December 1836. Her grandparents were Abraham and Maria Lehmann Boeshar and Johann and Katerina Hofmann Jung.

The search for Catherina and her family has always been a tantalizing and frustrating experience. There are many Boeshars living in and around Marietta, Ohio. Many have the same names as her father and brother but I have never been able to associate any of them with her. I first learned Catherina's maiden name when I obtained a copy of the marriage application of Johann Michael Wildermuth and even though my father seemed very close to her, he did not know her maiden name.

My next bit of information concerning Catherina came through my searching of the International Genealogical Index on file in the library of the local Church of the Latter Day Saints in Orlando, Florida. Through that source, I found Catherina's birth place and with this, I enlisted the aid of a friend of mine, Mrs. Marlis Smith who is a native of Germany. I asked Mrs. Smith to help me write a form letter that I could use to make queries in Germany and we sent one to the Burgermeister (mayor) of Breitenbach. I asked for a birth certificate if there was one on file in that city. After several weeks, not only a birth certificate arrived but there was an accompanying letter giving the names and

I recall throughout my young adult hood that my father used to lament the fact that neither my mother's mother nor his mother lived until my sister and I were old enough to remember them. He was saddened by the fact that we never had any grandmothers to get to know and love yet here was this lovely old lady who was our great-grandmother, an original from Germany, and my dad never really emphasized that she belonged to us. She was or could have been our grandmother and great grandmother all in one.

On the 17th of October 1933, Catherina passed away at her family home, 115 Third Street. The cause of her death was old age and senility. She is buried in the Valley Cemetery, Marietta, Washington County, Ohio a long, long way from Breitenbach.

birthdates of Catherina's parents as well as the names of her paternal and maternal grandparents.

There is a little story I would like to relate concerning Catherina's birth certificate. It was written in a beautiful old German script. Unfortunately, it was a German script that had gone out of usage many years ago and none of the German people that I knew here in Orlando could translate it. Again, I called on the help of Marlis Smith and as it happened her husband Jacque had relatives living in France just across the border from the Rhineland Pfalz. Jacque sent this certificate to his relative who in turn gave it to a German student who sent the certificate to his grandparents for translation. The grandparents took it to an old German professor who translated it into modern German and it was subsequently returned to the Smiths where Marlis translated it into English. Although this may seem like a round about way to get genealogical information, it only tends to demonstrate all one must go through to get a complete picture of what took place. The translation of the birth certificate is as follows:

In the year 1840, the 15th of the month of June at 9 o'clock in the morning, there came before the Mayor Karl Bohnlein of the town of Fronhofen, Civil servant and official of the community, Breitenbach, Mr. Kantons Waldmohr of the district Zweibrucken in the Pfalz of the Kingdom of Baiern (Bavaria), Mr. Christian Boeshar, 29 years of age, miner by trade, living in Breitenbach to say that today on the 15th of June at precisely 4 o"clock in the morning in Breitenbach, his wife Margarethe Jung, who had no profession, gave birth to a female child, which he gave the first name of Catherina.

This announcement was also witnessed by Mr. Theobald Ofatt, 52 years of age, profession agriculture, living in Fronhofen and Mr. Michael Baum, 50 years of age, living in Bubach.

All of the above witnessed and signed this document. So happened in Fronhofen on the day and year stated above.

For many years after the death of her husband in 1903, Catherina lived with her youngest son Edward and his family, wife Jane Hayes and two children, William and Virginia. William was a few years older than my older sister Ruth and Virginia was a year younger than I. In the late 1920's, my family would visit "Uncle" Ed's house and I remember "grandma" Wildermuth very well. In my later life, I remembered her as looking much like the famous painting of Whistler's Mother. I never really knew who this old lady was but she was very gentle, loved children and dressed in her usual long skirts and duster cap, she used to sit in her rocking chair and peel apples for us children as we played about her. I recall she absolutely loved the vegetable, beets, and I did too as a young boy of three or four and that gave her and me something in common and it was our little secret and it made us very close.

JOHANN (JOHN) MICHAEL WILDERMUTH

JOHANN (JOHN) MICHAEL WILDERMUTH was born the 23rd of August 1830 in the town of Grossaspach, Duchy of Wuerttemberg, Germany. He was the son of Johann Christian and Maria Margaretha (Schmidgall) Wildermuth.

In 1847, traveling in the company of William and Frederika Roessar, he left Germany to come to America. William Roessar was from the Duchy of Baden and his wife Frederika was from Wuerttemberg, the same as Johann. Frederika may have been Johann's sister but at this time, this has not been established. She could have also been an aunt or cousin. Both of Johann's parents had died and Johann was only seventeen.

The Roessars and Johann arrived at the Port of New York and then proceeded on to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where they resided for five years. On the first day of November 1850, Johann presented himself to the Clerk of the Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace in Philadelphia County and renounced his allegiance to the Grand Duke of Wuerttemberg. He then stated his intention to become a citizen of the United States. After waiting two years, on the first day of November 1852, having reached his majority and having fulfilled the citizenship requirements (residence in one state for one year and the United States for five years), Johann appeared in court and petitioned to become a citizen of the United States. He took the Oath of Allegiance that same day and thus became John Michael Wildermuth, AMERICAN !!

No records can be found of John for the next ten years, however, the Federal Census taken on the 16th of June 1860 for Washington County, Ohio, lists John as a member of the William Roessar household. William and his wife now had six children. The first four were born in Pennsylvania (probably Philadelphia) but the last two children were born in Ohio approximately two years before the census date. Thus the Roessars and John had probably arrived in Marietta in 1858. This census lists John as a shoemaker by trade.

By 1862, John had found himself a sweetheart and on September 3 of that year he made application to marry Miss Catherina Boeshar an immigree from Germany also. On the 7th day of September, the Reverend A. H. Seipel joined these two in Holy Matrimony.

The Fedreal Census for Washington County, Ohio for the year 1870 indicates that John and Catherina had been blessed with two young sons, John Charles and William Clifford my grandfather. William was born in 1866. To this couple, one more son was to be born, Edward, who was born in 1873. For the next thirty years John worked as a shoemaker and at one time had his own shop located at 134 Front Street in Marietta.

On Monday 9 February, an obituary for John Wildermuth appeared in the Marietta Times newspaper. John had died very suddenly at his home on Saturday the 7th of February 1903. The cause of death was given as heart trouble and asthma. Johann (John) Michael Wildermuth is buried in the Oak Grove Cemetery, Marietta, Washington County, Ohio. At the time of his death, John was 73 years old.

JOHANN CHRISTIAN WILDERMUTH

Johann Christian Wildermuth was the father of our great grandfather Johann Michael. He was born the 10th of October 1794 in Grossaspach. On the 25th of April 1842, he married Maria Margaretha Schmidgall, daughter of Georg Wilhelm Schmidgall and Anna Catherina Lundai. They were married in the town of Ristenau.

Johann Christian was a shoe maker in Grossaspach. He died on the 7th of October in 1842. Age forty-eight.

MARIA MARGARETHA SCHMIDGALL

Maria, the daughter of Georg Wilhelm Schmidgall and Anna Catherina Lundai, was born in Rohrach on 25 October 1789. She died on 30 December 1847. Age fifty-eight.

GEORG WILHELM SCHMIDGALL

Georg Wilhelm Schmidgall, father of Maria Margaretha and one of our third great grandfathers, was born 12 May 1758. He married Anna Maria Lundai in Rietenau on the 24th of April 1785.

Georg was a farmer in Rohrach. His death date is unknown.

Anna Catherina Lundai

Anna Catherina was the daughter of Joseph Lundai and Maria Dorothea Wild. She was born in Rohrach on the 11th of October 1748 and died 26 February 1798. Age fifty.

JACOB SCHMIDGALL

Jacob Schmidgall, the father of Georg Wilhelm and one of our fourth great grandfathers, was a farmer in Grosshochberg. His wife's name is unknown as is his birth and death dates.

JOSEPH LANDAI

Joseph Landai was the father of Anna Catherina Landai and a fourth great grandfather. He was born on the 13th of August 1715. On the 2nd of April 1744, in Ristenau, he married Maria Dorothea Wild.

Joseph was a day laborer in Rohrach and he died 13 October 1787. Age 72.

MARIA DOROTHEA WILD

Maria was born in Eschuch on 21 January 1714. She died in Rohrach on 27 June 1787. Age sixty-three.

Johann Georg Werner

Johann Georg Werner, another of our fifth great grandfathers and the father of Anna Maria Werner married Barbara Phillipp on the 11th of February 1738. His birth and death dates are unknown.

BARBARA PHILLIPP

Barbara Phillipp, wife of Johann Georg Werner, was born on 9 October 1712 and died on 26 March 1743. Her age at death was only thirty-one.