

KOREA

25 June 1950



The determination of the American woman to survive.

By: Armond F. Stoneman

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While the events depicted here are true to the best of my recollection it is what I call bio-fiction. What began as my story of the first ten days of the Korean War became an account of the determination of the American woman to survive. I hope you enjoy this tale of how six women and ten children survived the trip from Seoul to Pusan in a weapons carrier. It was very exciting, yet frightening times. It was unforgettable.

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Prologue

It is my opinion that many of the events depicted here were exercised in the American Right to Freedom. Some lives were lost but only when it saved our own.

The Korean War will never be forgotten. Though it was never a declared war of the United States we supported the United Nations and sent troops to help.

At present there are more MIA - POWs in Korea than Viet-Nam. Your support of the Korean War Project will be appreciated.

Contact Hal Or Ted Barker for how you can help at hbarker@kwp.org and tbarker@kwp.org

Sincerely,

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Chapter I: Escape from Seoul

For the better part of a month I had been getting checked out in the C-54 (DC-4), a cargo/passenger aircraft with reciprocating engines. I covered the area around Tokyo, steering clear of volcanoes and air routes. This was a real experience for me since I was trained in all of the advanced jet aircraft at Edwards AFB in preparation for my duties as a test pilot. Suddenly, here I was in a line outfit doing bus driver duty in a ho-hum daily routine. My “ho-hum daily routine” was about to be punctuated with moments of sheer terror.

My first trip out of Tokyo was a “milk run” to Seoul, Korea. My load included five passengers, mail and a heavy cargo of practice hand grenades that our advisors used to train the South Korean army recruits. We had two interesting people onboard. One was Maggie Higgins, a WWII correspondent. I never learned why she was going to Seoul but we had a very nice chat. I later surmised that someone knew something we didn't. The other interesting person was a well-dressed gentleman with a briefcase handcuffed to his wrist. Diplomatic courier, I guessed.

Our landing and unloading was on schedule. The Korean Ambassador met Miss. Higgins with his limousine and uniformed driver...quite a show. The courier rode with them.

We had the plane towed to the cargo area and the grenades unloaded.

The radio operator, a WWII and Berlin airlift veteran supervised the unloading and I signed off the delivery. We struck up a conversation during our long walk over to the terminal where we could get a cup of coffee, a weather briefing and I could sign-off on my co-pilot's flight plan back to Tokyo. The only problem I foresaw was a weather front headed our way so I wanted to get out of there as soon as we could get loaded and wheels up.

Our walk to the terminal was interrupted by the high-pitched whine of engines which I promptly ignored, having heard this a several times a day at Edwards AFB...I never looked up. I suddenly I found myself spread-eagle on the ground, eating dust and wondering what had hit me. I started to rise but saw a couple of .50 calibers spitting lead my way and thought better of it. One hit between my head and my arm, another between my arm and side and another between my legs. The sergeant tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Let's go!” I looked up and he was fifty feet ahead of me. Instinct or early high school training kicked in and I was off like a rabbit.

In route to the terminal I heard several aircraft and all of them spitting lead. Once inside I looked outside to see what was going on. I saw our Charlie-54 go up in smoke. The announcement came over the P.A. system that the North Koreans had attacked the South and a State of War existed. All U.S. military personnel were ordered to report to the American Embassy as soon as possible.

Sergeant Glen Hickey, the radio operator, pulled up in a jeep honking the horn and waving like crazy. Lieutenant Marcus Kratz, my navigator; Lieutenant Glen Howard, my co-pilot and I made a cautious run and piled in. Corporal Ted Hughey, our loadmaster told Sgt. Hickey to take off before my fanny hit the seat. I do believe he got his basic training from a New York taxi driver. Cpl. Hughey, riding shotgun, was reading a map and telling Hickey where to turn. In no

time at all we were on the Embassy steps. We preceded the chaos by about ten minutes. The telephones were ringing off of their hooks as clerks were answering them screaming, “I don’t know but you better get down here as fast as you can!”

The military personal we had in Korea at the time were instructors and, since it was peacetime, they had their families there as well. It didn’t take long for the dependents to descend on the Embassy. One Major’s wife really let everybody know who her father was and she demanded to know what was going on and what the Ambassador was doing to get this mess straightened out. A very perceptive young clerk tried to assure her that everything was going to be all right if she would just calm down and listen. The Major’s wife wanted to know whom she was telling her to calm down.

The young clerk told her, “I’m just a clerk but you’re a loud brassy broad so shut up and listen, you can’t learn a thing with your mouth open.” At that moment the Ambassador stepped out of his office and addressed the crowd, confirming the announcement we had heard at the airport terminal. He informed all personnel—military and civilian—that they were under Martial Law and to follow orders regardless. The Major’s wife started to say something but was cut short by her husband’s tight squeeze on her arm.

The Major’s Assistant, a Captain, began reading off a list of names and told them to go to the Motor Pool and check out the largest vehicle they could find, load a drum of gas and oil on it, and report back ASAP. He told the ladies to go back home and get no more than what they could carry and get back immediately.

I worked my way through the confused crowd over to the Ambassador and told him my situation and that he had five more good drivers if he could use them. He thanked me and told the Captain to assign us a vehicle and dependents. Hickey had the jeep running and waiting when we came out of the door.

At the motor pool, I told the guys to take it easy and be careful. We scattered, picked our trucks and headed back to the Embassy. By that time the ladies were beginning to arrive and we loaded them on as fast as they got there. The long line of trucks moved out pretty fast and I was soon at the Embassy steps. The young clerk assigned herself to my truck and had brought a Thompson submachine gun with her. We helped the ladies into the back of the weapons carrier, a small truck, with nothing more than the clothes on their back and a small shoulder bag.

Unfortunately I drew the Major’s wife, four other women and ten children, the oldest being seven and the youngest three weeks old. Off in the distance we could still hear the North Korean aircraft strafing everything they could find. I knew it wouldn’t be long before they found us.

The guards had set up traffic control in the streets so our route out of town was defined. We looked for white leggings, white hands, white Belts and white helmets, and they pointed the way. I didn’t realize it but the Major’s wife had been sitting directly behind me, ranting and raving since we pulled out of the Embassy driveway. Fortunately the spacing between loading and departure afforded us the opportunity to travel at a fairly fast pace in spite of the narrow crowded streets, with close calls at several intersections. The civilians were running in every direction at

the same time.

My instructions were, “Get out of town!” That’s what I did. I soon learned that the young clerk, riding shotgun with the Thompson sub, had written instructions for us to head for Pusan, roughly two hundred miles south. She also told me that Miss Higgins had told her to keep a diary and that she would catch up with us later.

Both sides of the road had been destroyed by the bombing attacks. Rubble, ruin and smoke marked our path as we carefully threaded our way through the debris. Once out in the countryside it wasn’t so bad, except for an occasional crater that made travel a little dicey in places. The roads were narrow enough as it was, rice paddies on both sides. A crater here and there just made it more difficult. Thank goodness we had a vehicle with four-wheel drive and a winch on front. I would see later how blessed we were.

The children were beginning to realize that this was no picnic in the country with Daddy and his friends playing war games. They wanted something to drink or eat. The toddler’s Mamas had food in jars for them or nursed the smaller ones but from four-years-old and up, there was nothing for them or the grown ups. The Moms were great, they convinced the little girls to be brave and take care of the smaller children, then passed out the Zwieback cookies for babies who were teething. It was that or nothing.

I had come to regard my “Shot Gun” with new respect. When I first saw her back at the Embassy, all I saw was a “California Girl” in a spaghetti-strapped sundress and white pumps with short honey-blond hair, freckled face and big blue eyes. Her name was Sue and she really looked out of place sitting there with a Thompson sub-machine gun in her lap, riding the bumps as we bounced our way down the road.

My reverie was shattered when I heard a high-pitched whine again. I looked behind us and saw an aircraft bearing down. I stopped the truck and told everybody to hit the ditches. We made it none too soon, he missed the truck but he sure put the fear in all of us. The shocker was when I looked up. There in the middle of the road stood California Girl with her Thompson, blazing away and shouting as loud as she could, “Come back and fight you dirty sons-a-bitches!!!”

After he passed over we loaded up again and I started looking for a place to rest and assess our situation. I began to think we had turned down the wrong road; no other vehicles were in front or behind us. We found a lone tree, rare in Korea because they clear them out to make room for more rice paddies. I pulled under the tree and we unloaded. I soon saw how bleak our situation was. No food, no water, nothing but the clothes on our backs, a long way from nowhere and the bad guys shooting at us. I had no idea what I was going to do for these people, how I was going to care for them till we made it to Pusan. The bad part was we weren’t going to get there anytime soon because we couldn’t drive over 20mph, and most of the time no more than 5mph. I could not see what lie ahead and I was in no mood to rush toward it but we had to keep going. The realization seeped into my muddled brain that we would be better off traveling at night...less chance of getting strafed but more difficult to see the holes in the road.

Things sure had a way of changing fast. One morning I was flying into Korea on a smooth

carpet of air, a bright clear, sunshiny day...right into the jaws of chaos and death. It was amazing the amount of destruction we saw along the road as we raced for safety. We still had a long way to go.

In our small haven under the tree we made do with what we had and planned to rest until sunset. The ladies were able to quell the fears of their children worried about their Daddies. One boy said his Dad would straighten those guys out quick and we could go back home. What surprised me was how the Moms were able to get the children to lay down in a circle inside of theirs, their head on the next person's thigh. Nice pillow.

I began checking out the truck for possible damage, filling the gas tank, pulling the dipstick, kicking the tires etc. California Girl said, "Makes no difference where in the world you guys are, the minute you stop you gotta check the car." We had a good laugh on that one. Sure enough she was from California. As she said, "A little town in the middle of the Mojave Desert, you probably never heard of it, Lancaster."

With a big smile on my face I told her, "I was at Edwards AFB in Lancaster before coming over here a month ago."

"Lordy, things sure have a way of changing, don't they?"

"I was just thinking the same thing a little while ago. Ha! A few hours ago we weren't worried about getting strafed. All of a sudden I have to worry about feeding six women and ten kids."

We talked about Lancaster and found we had a few mutual friends. Bill Campbell ran the malt shop downtown next to the theatre. Julie and her Dad ran the Funeral Parlor. Monty McKibban, the local hot rodder, Alene Minter, Miss Mojave Desert... a few others we couldn't remember their names but we knew who the other was talking about...half-way around the world in the middle of a war that just broke out. Two kids thrown together with more responsibility than anyone should ever have to shoulder.

I guess it was the calm before the storm. Rachel, the Major's red-headed wife blew her cork. She started in about the bugs, something was making her itch, she knew someone was out there watching us, we were never going to get out of here, her girdle was driving her crazy, we were all going to die, on and on ... an incessant jabbering about something, good or bad, just jabbering. Finally one of the ladies couldn't stand it any longer so she reached over, smacked her in the mouth and told her to shut up. Well, that big redhead went off like a Roman candle. Straight up she came and jumped all over the gal that smacked her, like stink on camel dung. After some hair pulling, scratching, screaming, kicking and slapping we finally got them apart and calmed down. Found out that they both had diabetes. Geez, that was all I needed. Two hyperactive broads out here in the middle of rice paddies and no way to find their medication. What really surprised me was that none of the ladies were complaining about the aroma in the air, then it dawned on me, I was the newcomer here, they were accustomed to it. The odor was the rice paddies; they were fertilized with human solid waste.

I decided to let everybody rest until around nine and, while I still had an hour or so of

daylight, I went looking for food and water. I didn't want to go too far but every time I was ready to turn back there was another little hill to look over. Our lone tree made the perfect landmark so I was able to make a circle around the camp, roughly 100 yards radius, never out of sight more than a few seconds at a time. In the still air of dusk I could hear them talking, concerns and assurances. I had traveled about a two hundred degree arc from my starting point and it was beginning to get cooler.

Besides being a good Boy Scout, I had attended Allen Military Academy in Bryan, Texas, a private prep school for boys. We learned plenty about weapons and how to be a soldier but what I learned during an after-class bull session with one of our military department people saved our lives this night. I found a large damp spot on the ground. While surveying the area my "Shot Gun" showed up with a flashlight to lead me back to camp. I didn't dare turn it on for fear one of the many planes we had seen earlier might be on their way home, spot us and decide to lay a little lead or a few eggs on our tails.

Putting my hand over the lens I allowed a little light to come through my fingers. I found what I was looking for. It wasn't much but it was better than nothing. "Wild lettuce" was what Sgt. Willard called it back in '47. Half a world away and three years later I found some on a barren knoll that was going to make the difference between life and death. Back then I wouldn't have eaten it if Willard had begged me to, but if he told me to...that's a different story. Sue and I gathered up all we could carry and headed back to camp. The others greeted us with a lot of kidding about getting lost in the dark but weren't too enthused over "dinner." I explained our situation for the third or fourth time, eat it or starve. The older children thought it was great to be eating like the goats in their books but the Moms weren't too excited about it.

Rachel, was the most vocal, "I can't eat this, it'll give me the shits." Aileen, her scrappy opponent said, "Might do you some good, at least you'll loose some weight...twenty or thirty pounds wouldn't hurt you a bit." Everybody laughed at Rachel's expense. A couple of the girls said they could stand to loose some too.

During our salad, I explained our plan again and told them I hadn't seen anything to alter our course. I pointed out the North Star, mainly for the ladies, and gave a short astronomy class for the youngsters (good entertainment and it put their mind on something else). The one little boy that said his Dad was going to straighten those guys out said he'd keep an eye on the North Star for me, he wasn't going to let them steal it. The ladies began gathering their belongings, such as they were. Before we loaded into the truck, I had them all hold hands and we said the Lord's Prayer together...Jew, Catholic, Protestant...what difference did it make, we were talking to the same guy. Me? I'm half Native American so I'm talking to the Great Spirit, and he takes care of everybody.

They all found their places; I cranked up and rolled out. Without the headlights it was slow going but a lot safer. We hadn't been on the road more than twenty minutes when we heard an aircraft off in the distance. Friend or foe, I wasn't taking any chances. No headlights and keep poking along against the wishes of the ladies. Five to ten miles down the road we came to a rise.

Off in the distance I could see a glow on the horizon. I didn't dare get my hopes up, besides it appeared too yellow with smoke above it. I mentally crossed my fingers and drove on at a slow, steady pace. The half moon gave us a little light so we were able to make out most of the craters in the road and traversed them without too much difficulty. Slid into a paddy once but the four-wheel drive got us out. Hmmm, if we were near paddies there had to be people close by.

I stopped at the next rise in the road; Sue and I looked in all directions but couldn't see a light anywhere. I commented how a pair of binoculars would be nice. She snapped her fingers and said, "Dang it! I forgot to pack them. We left in such a hurry I forgot a lot of things." We had a good laugh and started rolling again, slowly. I was beginning to feel more uncomfortable. The question kept coming up in my mind, "Where were all the people? Somebody had to be out here on the road going south, our guys if no one else...where were they?" I could just imagine Hickey going full bore down a bombed out road.

Sounds of engines in the distance brought me back to full consciousness. Sue asked, "You okay?" "Oh, yeah. I'm wide awake now, just getting a little drowsy. Do you hear those engines? Sounds like vehicles to me, on the ground I mean." I checked the people in back; they seemed to be resting, in spite of how uncomfortable I knew they were. "I hope we come to a place where we can slide off of the road soon. I'd like to wait and listen to those engines for a few minutes without ours."

Maybe another hundred yards or less and my prayers were answered, with a clump of trees thrown in for good measure. The truck was totally hidden from the road so I turned off the engine and waited. The sound of the engine or engines seemed closer. I began to think it might be a train, steam engine or something similar. I lowered myself down to the ground and made my way, quietly, to the roadside and waited. I kept hearing strange sounds. Sounds I didn't recognize. It was to be expected I guess, being in a foreign country.

I saw, what I thought was a man coming toward me in the middle of the road. It was one of those times when you can see the object better if you don't look directly at it. The person was impossible to identify, being just a shadow at about two hundred feet. From across the road, I heard a whistle, like someone whistling through his teeth, just one tweet. The hair on the back of my neck was standing straight up.

Just then I felt a pair of warm breasts in the middle of my back and a pair of warm, soft hands came up under my arms. Instinctively I wheeled, grabbed one hand and twisted then stepped into the armpit and almost gave the Adams apple a quick crack before a sound could come out. I sure felt stupid when I realized it was Sue coming to keep me company. I later learned it was a good thing I did. It put my senses on full alert. We both relaxed then tensed again when we heard another tweet, this time on our side of the road and not far away. I was able to distinguish a man in the middle of the road, less than two hundred feet by now. It was a pretty safe bet he was friendly but we weren't willing to bet the North Koreans hadn't dropped a division or so in behind us to catch the fleeing refugees. The Inscrutable Oriental, you never knew what to expect.

My danger sensors were now fully aware of impending danger. We heard another whistle

from our side of the road, a single tweet as before. A short breathless moment later we heard another from across the road. I told Sue to go back to the truck and stand up in the middle of the bed of the truck with the Thompson. She realized the significance of my concern. The man in the middle of the road was no more than fifty feet away now, friend or foe, he sure had a lot of gear hanging on him. The pattern was becoming clear; whoever they were they were sweeping the area from south to north. I began to think they might be the ones that started what I thought were fires on the horizon to the south. I lay perfectly still in a small depression on the side of the road, hardly breathing, waiting for my prey to come to me.

I heard Sue whistle like a Bob White, our prearranged signal that she was in position. The minutes ticked by, each seemed like an hour, the sweat was pooling in the middle of my back and dripping off of my chin as I observed my prey. He was now no more than ten feet from me. I lay motionless and breathless...hoping he was not aware of my presence. His boots crunched in the gravel of the road as he passed me by, sounding like a tank going full bore.

I heard a shot from behind me. My man ran toward me. I tripped him and rolled him up in a ball in the ditch. My knee in the middle of his back and my hand pulling up on his helmet to the point that his voice was choked off by the strap. I asked, "Are you American?" He tried to nod. I relaxed the strain on the helmet a little and told him to name the guy that dropped the A-Bomb. Through clenched teeth he said, "Tibbets." I began feeling around his equipment and pulled a bayonet, a knife, a .45, a .38 and a wire Garret. "You come equipped don't you?" Pulling his flashlight I rolled him over and could see a good old American G.I. As I reached to help him up Sue hollered, "I got one down over here in the bushes." I saw a shadow come flying out of the corner of my eye and ducked. He caught the other G.I. full force and they went tumbling. The man in the road grabbed his buddy before he could get a round off in my direction. I had picked up a .45 and was ready to take him with me if necessary.

They both got to their feet. I gave all of the weapons back to the man in the road and we went to see what Sue was making such a fuss over. We knew she must have caught their buddy on the west side of the road before he saw her. She was bending over the guy, using his flashlight, and surveying the damage. Turns out she hit his helmet a glancing blow and knocked him out cold as a mackerel. We brought him around with some cold water in his face.

We explained our reason for being where we were. Being a bit embarrassed they told us what they were doing out there in the middle of the night. They were looking for people like refugees and us. The Sergeant, the man in the middle of the road, got out his radio and told somebody about their situation and us. The Sergeant still didn't know we had all these women and children in the truck so we walked over there and explained what had happened up at Seoul. He relayed this to his superiors. They talked in muffled tones for a few minutes then he came back to us.

"I don't know if they are going to be able to help you or not but if they can get a chopper in here they'll get you out. I've been instructed to give you all the rations we have. I'm sorry it's not more. There's only about a days supply for each of us so you'll have to spread it thin. We'll give you two canteens too. I don't know how you're going to handle that with all these children."

The ladies and children thanked him as he waved in the darkness and started to walk away. The Corporal from across the road said, "I don't know who you are Captain, but you just took out our battalion instructor." I told him his secret was safe with me and, "I've been playing war since I was a teenager; my training started a few days before the Sergeants."

The Corporal went back across the road. The Sergeant checked his gear as he headed for the road and the PFC on our side of the road shook his head and moved out. I caught up with the Sergeant, thanked him again for his help, apologized for embarrassing him in front of his men, told him about the rice paddies up the road and what to expect when he got to Seoul. He told me the next town was about five miles but not to expect anything, it had been bombed out...totally. We might be able to get some sleeping gear and a few groceries but don't expect too much. He said it was a poor town and they didn't have much to start with. He stepped back, gave me a sharp salute, thanked me and moved out. I said I hoped I saw him later some time; I'd like to buy him a beer. Sue said, "You're going to buy me one the first chance you get, tomorrow I hope." The Sergeant laughed in the distance as he walked back to the road.

We took a break and nibbled on what we could spread around. I had part of a dried cracker, a bite of roast beef from a can, a drink of water and a piece of hard candy. I savored that candy, sucking instead of chewing, rolling it around in my mouth for maximum benefit as we headed for the road, on our way south to who knows what next.

Well, the "what next" slapped me in the face when one of the ladies leaned up and whispered in my ear that she had run out of diapers. All I could do was sit there and laugh. It wasn't funny to her but she laughed with me. Sue asked what we were laughing about and then joined in. Her name was Barbara, I said, "You'll have to do the best you can unless we find a place in this town up ahead. The Sergeant said it was bombed out and for us not to expect too much. From what I've seen in the boondocks of Tokyo, they don't seem to worry about putting diapers on infants over here. Think about that till we can get some." The other two Moms with babes in diapers heard this and moaned but said they would share what they had till they ran out. I told the ladies I was going to have to change my diapers pretty soon or I was going to start getting a rash. We all laughed and started singing along with the children.

They were sitting up in the bed of the truck playing hand-slapping games in the dark...I mean DARK. We poked along for an hour and finally approached the town the Sergeant told us about. He was right, it was bombed out. Parts of bodies lay scattered like cards from a card game. The debris was everywhere and what few people that survived were crying over a loved one. It was a small town, certainly of no strategic value but it had been leveled. Nothing was left standing more than four feet high. They must have used it for practice.

We found what was left of a pharmacy and put together a basic first aid kit, including some aspirin and, a first for me, three complete Penicillin shot packs (syringe, water, needle in a blister pack). The people in town needed them more than we did. Rachel found some Insulin. We dodged our way around body parts and debris as we went through the town looking for something to eat. By accident we found four cans of sardines and three mattress pads in what

was left of what looked like it could have been a store of some kind. The town was worse than Atlanta in “Gone With the Wind.”

Daybreak found us thirty miles south of the town and sitting on a hill looking for a place to bed down. Off to the west looked like a grove of trees. I told the ladies, “Somebody is watching over us.”

Little did I know how well, till we rolled in under the canopy of an unusual tree I had never seen before. I felt the right front wheel go down. Sue looked out and said, “It is wet.” I didn’t want to chance it so I didn’t go any further. Everybody unloaded and fanned out.

Behind a rather dense growth of bushes we found what appeared to be a spring, the water was as clear as I’ve ever seen. Some of the children were ready to jump in but the Moms held them back. A morning swim sure sounded great. It appeared to be three or four feet deep, about the size of an acre and rocks all around the edge. The water spilled over the west end going to another small, shallow pond and then into a stream eight or ten feet wide. It was a beautiful oasis. The surprise was there were fish in the big pond; we could see them on the bottom, two to three feet long. Good sized suckers and here we were without a pole, line or a hook.

Jamie, the youngest Mom, said she’d catch them with her hands. That was the way they did back on her folks ranch in Texas ... if they couldn’t catch ‘em they would scare ‘em up on the bank and pick ‘em up that way.” I could see we were going to enjoy this stop. Maybe Rachel would enjoy it too.

I thought it might be a good idea to take a look around when some of the ladies began looking at me nervously then at the water. I stepped thru the thick bushes and a roar went up, about two seconds before I heard the first big splash. I looked over the truck and went thru the routine with it. It needed a little oil. I topped off the gas tank, checked the tires (kicked ‘em, that’s all I could do) then moved it around so it was heading out. The sound of the Moms and kids having fun sounded great.

I have never seen anything like the soil in Korea, rock hard clay. Can’t imagine how they grow anything. I took a long walk around “Our Oasis”, as we came to call it, just as I had done at our first camp. About a hundred yards out then swung a big arc, only this time I went all the way around. I wanted to give the ladies plenty of time to take care of them selves and the children. When I crossed the stream on the west side I found what appeared to be oysters. Aha!!! It occurred to me, fresh water muscles. Maybe I’ll find a pearl. I cracked open a five or six and found two. This drew me on; an hour later I had Seventeen Pearls, what a fantastic souvenir of our odyssey.

Time to get back to camp. Good thing I did.

As I approached “Our Oasis” some harsh words being spoken, some in a low voice. My footsteps were cautious and quite, heel first then slowly forward. I drew my .38 the Sgt had left me and tried to hear what was being said. It wasn’t difficult to understand, “Now!!” in a loud masculine voice. This explained the uneasy feeling I had while shucking shells and looking for pearls, so much for greed. Listening carefully I heard almost whispers, a whimper, a moan then

the little man shouted, “You leave my mommy alone.” Caution was the order of the day. I imagined all sorts of things and chided myself for thinking we were the only people left on the face of the earth. Slowly I made my way around to a place where the brush wasn’t as thick and could see, partially, what was going on. It appeared a band of marauders were taking advantage of the unrest brought on by the attack from the north. As best I could make out there were at least five heavily armed young men. Knives in their combat boots, side arms slung low, ammunition belts across their chests, an extra gun in the waistband and another weapon of some kind with the butt resting on the hip. The one I assumed to be the leader had Rachel by the hair and was talking in a low tone. I couldn’t hear what he was saying but it was obvious his words struck fear in her heart. The other men nearby just grinned. Apparently the women had been taken by surprise because they were all nude, their swim had been interrupted because of my negligence. Well, it was up to me to get them out of it.

I circled the oasis and found a section that wasn’t quite as thick. I was able to get a better view and tried to assess the situation. Call it ESP or what have you, Sue looked straight at me. A smile came to her mouth and a small nod. She turned to the man next to her and looked at the weapon on his hip then back at me, she got the attention of the Mom next to her and conveyed her intent. Showing fingers on a beautiful bare thigh...1...2...3 we all jumped at the same time. I took out the leader; Sue and Jackie took the weapons away from the men nearest them with a quick elbow to the crotch. The man nearest the leader sprayed the area at my feet and his partner was slow in bringing his gun down. A big red spot appeared between his eyes before he pulled the trigger. I hit the deck and rolled then dropped the shooter. Sue and Jackie jammed the barrel of their weapons into their captor’s bellies. When they bent over they clubbed them behind the head. The rest of the ladies all laughed and cheered when I stood up and said, “Act One.”

We counted our blessings, no one was hurt. Just a little pride and embarrassed as they quickly put on their wet clothes. I thanked them for their guts and apologized for leaving them alone. I promised it would never happen again but we’d been on the road two days and I was beginning to get a little weary. We stripped the two that were alive then tied them up. In their packs we found ammo and food. Well, it was food for them, rice. We also found a map on the leader, it was in Korean but the symbols and terrain were easy to read. We’d look at that after we surveyed what else they were carrying. Maybe we’d be able to find our way.

While Sue, Jackie and I took care of our prisoners, alive and dead, Barbara was collecting and sorting the articles we had liberated. Lots of items we could use if need be, a snakebite kit for example. We now had an assortment of pocketknives, combat knives, pistols, whistles, wallets and lots of Korean money. I thought we’d make good use of the blankets in their packs but Rachel pointed out they were full of lice, walked over and covered the departed ones. This was the second time she surprised me, much to my chagrin there were more surprises to come.

I marveled at how skinny and young those guys were before I slipped into a quiet, restful sleep with my head in Sue’s lap. It was fitful, haunted by the past two and a half days that seemed like a lifetime. Scenes of explosions, debris, low flying aircraft with guns blazing, body

parts and beautiful ladies danced thru my dreams with shocking irregularity.

I awoke to the aroma of fresh cooked food. Sue and the girls had posted guards. One of them was wearing the pants off of one of her captors, she said, "He ain't gonna need 'em, besides they fit pretty good." She pulled up the skirt of her dress and shook her buns, fantastic. I thought to myself, no one but Americans could bounce back from what we'd just been thru and never show a sign, the marks were there, deep, but not on the surface. One of the guards had found several birds' nests and made a terrific omelet with the rice and sardines from the town back up the road. I asked her where she got the skillet. "On the side of the road in that town back there. Figured we'd need it sooner or later." Jamie, the little Texas girl had caught some of the fish and made a bunch of filets we could take with us on our trip. After having a bite to eat I felt guilty, all this activity and me doing nothing. I silently slipped away to the small pond and slid in, clothes and all. That was absolutely the coldest water I've ever taken a bath in. I peeled off my clothes and rinsed them out, laid them on the rocks then just sat and soaked...the summer sun shining on my face.

When I opened my eyes Sue was sitting there on the rocks. I tried to cover up but gave it up as a lost cause. She said, "Hey, you saw me, why can't I see you?" "I answered, "Yeah, but that was different." "Well, ok. Here are some clean clothes for you." "Where'd you get these?" "Off of the one I shot. I washed and dried them while you slept." "I had no idea I was out that long." "You were really sawing 'em off, dreaming too. What about?" "Oh, you'd never guess."

She walked away and I got out on the bank. I stood up on rocks where I was hid from the rest and shook the water off. My shorts were still a little damp but they felt cool on this hot day. I finished dressing and walked back up to where the group was. Needed a pressing but then so did everybody else. My fifty-mission crush Air Force hat didn't look too bad with the bandits black fatigues. Sue grabbed my dirty clothes and said, "You ought to go check on the guards while we get things ready to roll. It'll be sunset in another 45 minutes. Let's see if we can find a nice hotel in the next town and you can buy me that beer." The other gals said, "You can buy us all one...or two."

I went out through the bushes and checked the vehicle. Sure enough, the bandits had pulled the distributor wire. We couldn't have escaped if we had wanted to. I called a couple of the children and they started looking for it while I went to talk to the guards, one north and one south. She was doing ok but the house shoes she had on when we left Seoul were beginning to show a little wear. She asked about her children and did I have any idea when she might see her husband. I couldn't give her any encouragement and talking longer was only going to make it worse. I told her I had to see how Jackie was doing down south and set out. She told me to tell her, "Hi."

I skirted the camp to the west so I could get a drink from the stream on the way and to stay away from the road. We weren't so far south that we were safe and I was just being cautious. Besides, who knows there may be other bandits out there. I crossed the stream a little farther down from where I'd found the fresh water muscles and stopped for a drink. The burbling water

sounded restful but I heard something in the distance that sounded like more rushing water. I wanted to go have a look but knew I didn't have time. I found Jackie sitting down, leaning up against a tree with her weapon at the ready, like she was going to shoot me if I came any closer. We weren't more than a hundred feet apart; I could see a hurt expression on her face. I moved wide to my right, her left. She still faced where I had been. Something strange here I thought, what now? I moved in closer, she still didn't move. She was in a position like she was ready to attack someone by jabbing them with the barrel...like a soldier in bayonet practice. I moved up beside her and took the gun out of her hands. She was as stiff as a board, her eyes stared fixed...unblinking. I checked for a pulse, steady and strong. I saw her lips quiver, like she was trying to talk, then I saw the reason for her immobility. Two glaring red puncture wounds on the underside of her upper arm...snake bite. I looked around and saw nothing but his slithering track in the dust. I urged her to stand up, put her weapon on my shoulder then draped her over my shoulders and carried her into camp. Rachel met me and I told her to get the snakebite kit. I laid Jackie down, some one brought her a blanket, and the rest hovered around wanting to know what had happened. By now the wounds had swollen, four puncture wounds, inside and outside, in the soft flabby part of the upper arm. I was afraid one of the fangs had entered the artery. Rachel had the tourniquet on the upper arm and we began the suction on the wounds. This was too slow for her, she slashed the swelling marks on the outside and began sucking the blood out with her mouth, spitting out the blood every few seconds. Not taking a chance she did the same thing on the inside. When she was satisfied she had it all she bound the wounds with the gauze wrap we had picked up in the Pharmacy then soaked it with water. The oddest thing happened. Instead of turning red from the blood the gauze turned a vivid yellow. Rachel stayed with her, holding her like a baby, while Jackie's children put their arms around her. We checked her pulse, steady and strong... nothing to do but wait.

With this event we made arrangements to stay the night. The only problem was our two prisoners, they were beginning to complain. Not too much to worry about, complain all they wanted, we couldn't understand a word. Barbara had tried to learn enough Korean to get by in town so she got the point across that we weren't concerned and if they didn't shut up we'd tie them to a tree out side of "Our Oasis." She walked them over to look at their comrades and they shut up, but not before they warned us that wild animals sometimes came to this watering hole. I told Barbara to tell them that would be great, they couldn't be any wilder than us and maybe we would get some meat for a midnight snack.

Sue went up and brought the north guard in, telling her about Jackie on the way. Jamie had gone south to fill in for Jackie and Barbara was getting ready to go north. Aileen was making a fire for the night so we all just kind of settled back for the vigil with Jackie, taking turns holding her. Some of the other children got a little cranky, babies were crying cause Mama didn't have enough milk but all things considered we weren't in too bad a shape except for Jackie. We'd just have to patiently wait and see, that was hard to explain to her children. Especially the little guy with all the guts. He was getting a little weary, he wanted his Dad. He wanted his Mom to get up

so they could go home. He wanted a sucker or an ice cream cone. I took him on my lap and we had a nice long talk about being a big guy and taking care of everything, like his Dad did. He said, "Like you been doing?" I told him I was sure his Dad could do a better job. He put his arms around my neck and said, "Nope." Before I could dry my eyes he was sound asleep in my lap. Sue grinned, leaned over and kissed me on the cheek.

Chapter II: Bandits attacked us in our Oasis

I awoke with a start, sat up, looked around, rubbed my stubbled chin and wondered what startled me. My sensors were on end. I got up and took a walk around. Everybody seemed to be resting easy so I took a walk out to check on the sentries. Barbara was a little uneasy too. Said she heard something a few minutes earlier that gave her a start, nothing she could put her finger on ...just an unusual sound. I told her to stay on her toes and holler loud if she needed us.

“Oh, you can bet I will,” she said enthusiastically.

“Very good. Hang in there, I’ll have someone out here to relieve you in a few minutes. I want to have a look down south then I’ll send someone out, Ok?”

I came up on “Our Oasis” with caution; I didn’t want to awaken anyone with an itchy finger. Looking through the bushes I could see everyone was fast asleep except our two prisoners, and then I knew what woke me. They were gone. I didn’t think they would get very far, hobbled and no clothes but I wasn’t about to go looking for them in pitch black dark. I’d probably never find them anyway because they certainly knew this country better than I did; besides I had more important things to worry about.

I gave Jamie our “Bob White” whistle and she came back then walked out to meet me. I was a bit shocked; she was crying and apologizing for going to sleep. Our prisoners had overpowered her and taken her weapon. I was just glad that was all they had done. Good sense said they were long gone so we didn’t have to worry about them for awhile. I put my arm around Jamie and we walked back to camp. She was still crying when we approached. Sue came out to meet us and quickly figured out what had happened. As soon as we got Jamie calmed down I woke everybody else. I told them, “It’s time for us to roll. Our prisoners escaped and they may come back with some friends. We need to be gone when they do. Let’s get loaded up ASAP.” No argument out of them, they were real troopers. A couple of the children whined a little but that was to be expected. I helped Rachel with Jackie; some of the others lifted her up into the truck and got her settled. Sue came in with Barbara, they got her kids, empty diaper bags and we were moving. All I had to do was go east till I hit the road then turn right. I didn’t account for the rough terrain, it was treacherous but it served two purposes. It slowed us down and woke Jackie up. It was like she woke up from a long sleep, “Where are we? Where are my kiddies? Come here guys; give Mommy a hug and a kiss.” I could not believe her resilience, as if nothing had happened. Everybody was happy that she appeared to be normal and breathed a sigh of relief, including me.

It wasn’t just the terrain that slowed us down, it was the pitch black dark like I’d never seem before. Best I could tell from my watch it was 0217/28. All of a sudden I felt a long way from home, not just Haneda in Tokyo...I mean a long way from Dallas , the Arcadia, Kelly’s Pig Stand, the Lakewood...the guys and girls I grew up with. I was jolted back to reality by a jab in my arm. I was still apprehensive about turning on the lights and had asked Sue to help me look for anything in the way.

“What is it?” I asked.

“I was just wondering if you saw that tree you’re about to run into.”

“I guess not. I was about eight thousand miles away. Thanks for waking me up.”

She asked, “Back home?”

“Yeah, the old Saturday afternoon movie. Popcorn and necking in the balcony. I’ve been wondering how I got here so quick.”

I had negotiated around the tree and there, directly in front of us was the road. I approached with caution then turned in on a southerly course. The road was almost white so we could see, generally, where we were going. It was still looking off to the side you could see better and it appeared there was something in the road ahead. Traveling very slowly it took us a few minutes to get to it, it was a huge crater. Again we had to steer off of the road to continue, only this time we slid sideways into a ditch. No matter how hard I tried I couldn’t get us out. I gunned it back then forward, then into four wheel drive. Nothing worked. I considered letting some air out of the tires for more traction but then I thought about how far we had to go, that cancelled that out. Here we were on the side of the road longer than we had been on it and no closer to getting back on. Right now this seemed like the worst thing that could happen to us but when I thought about all we’d been through this wasn’t so bad. We still had to get out, that’s for sure, but how? I climbed out to look at the situation up close and I really stepped in it...mush. It was mud of the worst kind. I thought, none of it is good but this is the worst kind. Soft and gooey on the edge of what could be a swamp. One of the ladies had a small flashlight in her purse, she handed it down to me. We were in hub deep at least. Unloading to lighten the load wouldn’t help, probably more weight would, we were mired in good. I got back in the driver’s seat to ponder our predicament. Just as I was about to get out again Sue squeezed my shoulder and pointed behind us. One light in the sky, about two hundred feet and heading our way. There was no mistaking the kind of aircraft it was ...thump...thump...thump... a helicopter, but was it ours or theirs? We unloaded in no time and scattered on the opposite side, hoping we didn’t fall in more mud. We didn’t make it too soon cause the chopper started sweeping the area with a spotlight, both sides of the road. About the time they came over us they cut the power and landed two hundred feet or so south in the middle of the road. Two guys with lights jumped out and headed back. Rachel was right beside me, she started to jump up but I held her down and put my hand over her mouth. She struggled but realized her folly. They surveyed the vehicle without saying a word then went back to the chopper. I could hear them shouting to be heard over the engine noise but not what they were saying. The wait was excruciating. After some deliberation two more climbed out and they all came back to the truck. Less than twenty feet away one of them said, “It’s from our pool, look at the numbers on the” The rest was drowned out by our cheers and they were startled. We laughed and made our way up from the ditch. After introductions and happy hugs the man from the motor pool remembered me. He asked if Mrs. Barclay was with us (the Ambassador’s wife). Rachel had met her but that was all she could say about it. One of the men asked if Capt. Dietrich’s wife was with us, that was Jackie’s husband. The Cpl. handed her a note then held a

light for her to read it. Our discussion quickly turned to our vehicle and what they could do. The Cpl said they could run a winch line out and give us a tow. One of the other men, I later learned he was a Major was talking with Rachel. I assumed she was telling him who her husband was so she could go with them. The Cpl had a walkie-talkie and told the pilot we needed a tow. He lifted off and hovered overhead, the hook and line came down. He stirred up so much dust we couldn't see to do anything but the Cpl hooked on to the truck and told me to get in and steer. We were on the road in no time and the ladies and children loaded. The Cpl. unhooked from the truck and one of the guys came running back from the chopper with a box, which he tossed in the back. They all disappeared with waves and shouts faster than they arrived.

The quiet voice in my ear said, "The Major told me there is a nice hotel in the town up ahead about fifteen miles."

I was surprised and, as if I could see, turned to look at the voice.

I asked, "What are you doing here? I thought you'd go with them."

"Oh, I figured I might be able to help out here more than back in Seoul. The Embassy is destroyed; the military facilities and several other buildings along with the airport are severely damaged. James was able to get away in one of those little cubs he used to take me up in so I'll see him when we get to Pusan, I'm sure he's too busy to worry about me anyway ."

Jackie said her husband told her in his note he was en route to Pusan also. This news gave encouragement to the others that they would see their loved ones soon. This gave me a moral boost, I dropped it into low gear and we pulled out with everybody cheering. Not far down the road we saw the sun begin to rise. A new day and brighter prospects for us all.

Traveling was a lot easier and faster after Sue told me there weren't any Commies ahead. She got that information from one of the crewman on the chopper. I expected they had dropped a few thousand troops in after the air strike. We later learned they had massed thirty thousand troops on the thirty-eighth parallel then started south with the aircraft. A quick calculation said they would be getting in to Seoul about now, no place for my ladies.

In spite of the bumpy road we made pretty good time, almost thirty miles per hour. The early morning damp air was cool but it felt good. We felt good. I felt the weight of the world had been lifted off of my shoulders. Rachel said the guys from the chopper had given us a box full of C-Rations. Not the world's greatest chow but a feast when you don't have anything else. If we could make that hotel this morning I thought we might plan to spend the day and night there, then press on the next morning. A hot bath, a good nights rest in a bed, clean clothes and a good breakfast...Wow!!! We'd be ready to fight the war single-handed.

On the outskirts of the town we came to a roadblock. I had to get help from Barbara. They still wouldn't let us go through and were going to hold us captive. I told Barbara to tell the man in charge to check on our vehicle numbers on the bumper. He was on the phone jabbering in Korean when suddenly he hung up, drew his pistol and walked out of the guard shack. His men activated their weapons and surrounded our truck. I thought, "Oh, geez, what have we done now. The way these gals emotions were taking a roller coaster ride I was afraid one of them would

crack. Barbara was trying to understand what the Guard was saying but he was too excited, spitting as he talked through wide gapped buck teeth and wide eyes behind his thick glasses. He looked like he was scared to death. We started to unload. I couldn't imagine what the children were thinking about all this. The pick nick in the country and camping out had lost its adventure for them. They were more than ready to go home. The little guy told a guard to keep his hands off of his Mom. The guard knocked him down and grinned real big, I never saw so many teeth and silver. Jamie went to pick him up, she was knocked down also. I was beginning to wonder why we wanted to help these people. The thing that bothered me was I couldn't see anyplace for us to go after we unloaded. That little shack was too small and there was no place else to go.

A few minutes later a taxi-cab pulled up from the south...looked like a cab. Lights on top, stripe down the side and a sign on the door (couldn't read it). The driver stopped in front of the guard shack, jumped out and opened the door for the large gent in the back seat. Biggest Korean I've ever seen, before or since. He and the Guard "Dog" talked for a few minutes, looking sideways at us, the vehicle, back down the road then back at us. The Guard "Dog" said something and motioned for me I thought. The guard near me put his rifle muzzle in my face so I stood still. Another guard stepped up to Barbara, grabbed her by the elbow and literally threw her at the other two. She got up, brushed herself off, glanced at me then spoke to the large Korean. He grinned and bowed. I couldn't hear what they were saying, wouldn't have made much difference anyway. I glanced up at Sue, she blew me a kiss. That made me feel better.

Barbara came back over to the group and told us what was going to happen. We were going to be taken to the City Jail and detained until our story could be checked out. She said he offered no estimate of how long that would be. In the meantime all of our belongings would be confiscated and impounded. In short, they considered us spies. A group disguised to infiltrate into their society. Barbara asked him how all these "round eyes" were going to do that? The Korean told her there were other white people living in their village. I thought that was interesting and tucked that little piece of information in the back of my mind, not knowing why. We huddled on the side of the road as several cars and trucks passed, north and south. One had a two-way radio and the man on the passenger side was talking a mile a minute as he looked at us till they were out of sight going south. The large Korean got back in his "Cab", said something to the Guard "Dog" and drove away. The guards moved us into a small group and stared at us as if we were a bunch of wild animals.

About ten minutes passed and I was getting uneasy. If our guys were going to do anything surely they would have heard by now, if they were going to move us they weren't in any hurry. The prospects of spending the day on the side of the road like this really didn't appeal to me or the ladies. The morning comfort was quickly turning to mid day heat. The children were cranky, the babies were crying and the ladies were frothing at the mouth like I was but there was nothing we could do. Some of the ladies had pistols in their purses and I still had mine under my shirt in the waist band, I never understood why they didn't search us, but it would have been suicide to try to escape.

I had my head between my legs and the sun beating on the back of my neck was lulling me into a drowsy state. I was rudely aroused by a rifle butt in the side. The guard motioned for me to come to the shack. Inside the “Dog” handed me the phone. The voice on the other end sounded familiar, when he identified himself in almost dropped the receiver. I listened to what he had to say then gave the instrument back to the “Dog” and went back to the group and sat down. I whispered to Sue, “We’ll be out of here in about.....” That was the last I remember till coming to, laying on my back in the bed of the truck. We were moving, Sue was driving and Rachel riding “Shotgun”. She had that Thompson Sub across her chest like no one was going to take it away from her again...I would not have tried.

Barbara told me a few minutes after the guard hit me a six by six rolled up with about twenty good old American G.Is. on board. They quickly took charge of our group, helped the ladies, loaded me in the truck and watched the Guard “Dog” execute the guard that hit me, right there in the street. I thought what a terrible sight for the children to see. Seeing him hit me was bad enough but to be killed for it was too much. The oldest child, Bonnie, was holding me in her lap. She had wet a handkerchief and was wiping my forehead. Man, I had a headache the size of Mt. Fuji and it was throbbing like the lava was getting ready to come out. I was ready to puke up my guts so I hung my head over the tail-gate. Bonnie was right there with me. I took the handkerchief and wiped my face, the back of my neck and waited for the next wave. A few dry ones and that was it. I wiped my mouth, she wet the cloth again and handed me a canteen. That sure tasted good. I rinsed then drank freely after she told me we had plenty of water. The men in the six by six brought food and water. They had heard about us from the Chopper guys up north and the foot patrol we had encountered. She said they told her they had heard that the guy with those ladies didn’t do much but they were one tough bunch of ladies. She said Rachel told them, “He took care of us so we’re taking care of him.”

The children began to sing one of their funny songs. Jamie told them to be quiet but I assured her it was ok, “Let them sing, I’ll feel better as soon as we find that hotel.” We rolled merrily along. The street in the village was barely wide enough for more than one vehicle and there was no way we could park on the side street at the hotel. The Capt. with the men in the six by six had given Barbara a card with the name of the hotel and a picture on it, we just hoped it was the right place. Barbara went in and was back out in two minutes. They told her we had to pay in advance. I noticed these people who need help are real hospitable.

Chapter III: Hotel – An attempted kidnapping

If the ladies didn't have enough Korean money we were in trouble. She said it was going to cost about \$100 for all of us. I threw in what I had and Barbara collected from the rest, wouldn't you know it, not enough. I suggested that we try to bargain with them and I would sign a paper that the U.S. Government would pay the bill on demand. If that didn't work I'd liberate the Hotel in name of Uncle Sam. We went inside and she got the message across. The ladies moved into a room for each of them with their children. The owners were very nice and extremely helpful. I asked Barbara to find out why there weren't any other refugees from Seoul.

I stepped outside to have a cigarette and survey the truck and what we had to eat etc. The lady of the house came out and motioned me to come inside. I followed her to a room, she slid the door open and I was invited to enter. To my surprise her husband and the Giant Gent from the road block were sitting on the floor. I was invited to join by hand motion from her husband. This whole concept of sitting on the floor was still new to me. I crossed my legs and joined them at the table. The Giant Gent spoke with a thunderous voice, "How do you plan to pay these people?" I sure was right about him, he was the clown I spoke with on the phone earlier. I explained, "When we are ready to leave they will prepare a bill for services rendered and I will sign it as a representative of the U.S. Government. They can present the bill and be paid." He explained this to the owner who accepted this with a bit of suspicion in his eyes but relaxed when I assured him this was normal under the circumstances. With the business out of the way we had a very pleasant conversation.

The owner had graduated from Tokyo University and the Giant Gent from U.C.L.A. I almost fell over backwards when he told me this. I took another sip of tea to shield my surprise. Looking down at the table I pondered my next move. I wanted him to introduce me to the other white people he mentioned. Apparently this caught him off guard. I noticed he flushed as if I had caught him in a lie, embarrassed. He sipped his tea and looked down at the table. I wondered if I had given myself away as he had. He explained it would take a day or two to arrange and I told him I didn't have a day or two, perhaps they could join us for dinner this evening. We would have a feast here at the hotel. The owner grinned real big thinking of the fee when this was translated to him. He said he'd try to set it up and after the usual pleasantries made his way to the door. I thought it quite odd, the turn of events and how the spots on the leopard had faded, the Giant Gent was really a very accommodating fellow.

I went down the hall to Barbara's room to hear what she had found out. Good or bad we had taken the less traveled road out of Seoul. Most had taken the train or their own cars. She said the peasants were beginning to arrive with their carts, wheel barrows, motor scooters, water buffalo and bikes. Many carried everything they had on their backs. To this day I don't understand why they didn't hook the buffalo up to their carts. The lady of the house interrupted our conversation to inform me that my bath was ready. In my newcomer ignorance I leisurely enjoyed the "HOT" water, learning later that the ladies would use the same bathing area.

Chapter IV: Kidnapped – We were all actually kidnapped

Assuming the rules for bathing were the same in Korea as in Japan, I had rinsed off, lathered up and rinsed again before relaxing in the large, ceramic tile lined “tub.” It was at least five feet by eight feet. A few minutes after I had slowly eased down into the extremely hot water the door slid open and the owner came in, bowing and smiling. I couldn’t understand a word he was saying but he was too pleasant to suspect he was anything other than sincere. He dropped his robe and dipped out a pan of water and performed the same ritual. When he started to climb into the same tub I realized this was my first experience at “Public Bathing” which our indoctrination had made us aware of. I wasn’t ready for this step in my “Orientalizing Process” yet and made a polite, but hasty, retreat, lots of bowing, smiling and covering my inadequacy.

When I slid the door open to my room I was shocked to find a young girl who appeared to be going through the pockets of the clothes I had worn in. She didn’t seem concerned that I had “caught” her so I watched. Each item she removed from a pocket she carefully placed on a small table, no more than an inch high, near the wall. When she was finished she took my clothes and, bowing and smiling, disappeared down the hall. I slid the door closed and decided to take a short siesta. Ha! I rolled that around in my mind for a minute...here I was half-way around the world still thinking like a Texan. In a foreign land that had just been attacked and we were calmly looking forward to a dinner party and the unknown guests. The incongruity had, somehow, escaped me. Mortal conflict was in progress no more than fifty miles away, our group had been subjected to life or death situations no more than fifteen miles away, that should have told me something but I was too tired to recognize the warning signs.

I was awakened by the silent sliding of the door. I heard soft foot steps across the room, cracked open an eye and watched the tiny feet. They stopped at the small table where my personal things had been placed then retreated. I sat up on the Tatami (a measure for the size of a house, about a meter wide by two meters long) and turned, crossing my legs. I must have slept more than thirty minutes because my clothes had been washed and ironed, not the ones I had worn in but my regular uniform...all of the insignia had been carefully and correctly arranged. The clothes I had worn in were neatly folded and placed on the floor near the small table. I looked down at my personal things and there among them was a small piece of paper I didn’t recall having before I came in. I leaned over to pick it up just as the door slid open. Another young girl came in with a tray and a pot of tea. I thought, they sure know how to make a guest welcome, I hope the girls are getting the same treatment. They deserved it after what they had been through. The ritual for pouring the tea was very entertaining. Not a word was spoken, her movements were graceful, even the invitation to drink what she had prepared. Just as I picked up the cup the door slid open. Standing in the doorway Sue said, “Don’t drink it, it’s poisoned.” The young lady kneeling before me seemed startled and wary. I threw the liquid in her face and she ran screaming from the room.

I asked Sue what was happening? How did she know? Were the rest ok?

She said the girls are packing up to leave as quietly as possible, so it will appear they are going out for a walk. You and I are to leave in the truck and pick them up on the road west as soon as we can get moving. All I could say was, “The lull before the storm was nice while it lasted.”

I quickly dressed ignoring Sue’s presence and silently thanking our benefactors for the clean clothes before the treachery. Sue went back to her room, got her belongings and was ready in a minute. We nonchalantly walked down the hall, slipped on our shoes at the doorway, walked out and climbed in the truck. It occurred to me we may have problems but it started right up. We both breathed a sigh of relief as we eased out onto the road. I turned east at the first intersection to deflect any observers. A block or so later I turned north then west at the crossroad Sue said the girls would be on. We picked up Barbara and her children shortly after the main intersection. A block or so later we found Rachel helping Jamie and her children, Jamie had recognized the odor of the contaminant in our tea...that little girl had a nose for fertilizer. Jackie and her kids were on the outskirts of town and hustling along when we pulled up. They quickly loaded; she said she thought she saw someone bothering Ailene. I pulled out in a hurry. When we arrived at the place where she saw them last, there was nothing but a diaper bag and it’s scattered contents. We heard a scream and looked up, there in the window of a two story building was the terrified face of a little girl reaching for safety, and an anguished look scarred her innocent features. I threw the truck in gear and turned in the driveway leading to the building, wishing we had the Thompson Sub that the Guard “Dog” at the road block had confiscated. I drove through the front of the flimsy structure, it collapsed around us. I came up ready to kill. To my surprise the ladies had retained their weapons and were right behind me. Sue took out the first one on the stairway, Rachel found Ailene screaming in a downstairs room. The sadist was in the process of attacking her. Rachel brought a well placed foot up between his legs and he passed out from the intense pain. Jackie and her little Jimmy went up the stairs to find Bobbie, whom we’d seen from the road. They found her but before Jackie could get her untied she was attacked from behind. The first blow almost put her out but little Jimmy picked up a loose board and clubbed the guy in the knee. He went down and Jimmy hit him again, lights out. We found Ailene’s baby in a room across the open bay on the other side of the building. The lady there was preparing to leave out the back window. Barbara grabbed her foot and jerked her back in then proceeded to stomp her into lifelessness. She was a gory mess when we pulled her off. I thought she had gone off the deep end but she calmly said, “The bitch deserved to die, nobody steals mine or my friend’s babies.” Triumphant we cheered and loaded in the truck. Ailene stood up and saluted as we drove away saying, “So long suckers.” I knew she wasn’t going to have any nightmares.

I couldn’t believe we were back on the road in less than fifteen minutes from the time Sue and I left the hotel. We later learned that similar poisonings and kidnappings had occurred in the recent past. One of the girls remarked about a kidnapping on the downtown streets of Seoul in broad daylight. The little girl was never found. She was a dependent of one of the advisors, he went berserk, killed several people then himself when he thought he had found his ten year old

daughter in a strange, seedy place with a bad reputation. The resulting investigation showed he did not die in vain. They uncovered the Korean end of a “White Slavery” ring, several American girls that had disappeared from Tokyo, Pusan, Seoul and as far away as Manila in the Philippines, were rescued.

Around the next bend and a little ways on we came to the railroad track for the Seoul-Pusan Luxury Liner. Ha! Some luxury liner, bare wood bench seats in cars modeled after those in a ‘30s train movie. Air Conditioning was 220...two windows down at twenty miles per hour. Usually they had all the windows down and it still didn’t help ... Rachel had made the trip a few times , she said in the winter the only heat they had was a pot belly stove just like on her daddy’s farm back home in Iowa. She said it reminded her of the trains in India. When her husband was stationed there she had taken sightseeing trips out in the land of Rudyard Kipling, as she called it.

Chapter V: Merrily we roll along – and survive another attack

Rachel called the train rides “sojourns”. Each was fraught with overcrowding, animals and unwashed bodies. After the second “sojourn,” that was all she could take. The Korean train rides were easier, they were crowded, sometimes the passengers brought their animals but they were cleaner.

A short distance beyond the tracks we came to the main road, the Seoul - Pusan Superhighway...all two lanes of it. Rachel said it ran beside the train tracks almost the whole distance and the people use to comment, what few vehicles there were usually went faster than the train. Even the overcrowded and overloaded buses. What few trucks there were usually ran empty one way or the other, the drivers always tried to pick up a little extra money, even those with bicycles would pay something for the ride. Didn't make much difference which lane you were in it was too rough to doze off and you couldn't read so you were bored to death just sitting there. The desolate terrain was worth your attention the first time. You anticipated seeing something but you were rewarded with the sameness at every turn...nothing. Fortunately or otherwise we weren't that lucky.

Our solitude was interrupted with moments of sheer terror. I'm sure the oriental people think the same thing about us, “you people all look alike,” but I'll swear the group in the car that pulled up beside us looked exactly like everyone else we'd seen except these guys had guns pointed in our direction. I hit the brakes and let them pass then pulled over behind them. Our Weapons Carrier would only do forty because of the governor so trying to catch them was out of the question. Didn't have to worry about that. They slowed down. I had planned to climb all over them with the truck but next thing I knew they were shooting out of the windows from both sides until Rachel unloaded two rounds from a shotgun she'd picked up at our last encounter. Made me wonder who our enemies were, the guy she kicked out the prisoners we had at “Our Oasis”? Didn't matter much, the highwaymen sped off as quickly as they appeared before I could ram 'em with the truck, but I knew that wasn't the end of them, they'd be back. We just had to be alert for their arrival and prepared to fend them off somehow.

Rachel surprised us again, she opened a bag she had picked up. It was almost full of ammunition, even a belt full of shotgun shells. The boxes had ammo that fit the pistols the ladies had so they all reloaded, took a few extra and waited. It didn't take long but our attacker came from an unexpected direction, overhead. One of the North Korean planes strafed us then dropped a few eggs in our vicinity. I was able to miss the craters and no one was hurt by shrapnel. Aside from being shook up and showered by dirt we were ok. The Mig veered off to the east then headed north. I was thinking what I wouldn't give for one of the advanced aircraft coming up, presently in test at Edwards, I'd nail that guy in nothing flat. I was brought back to reality when one of the kids in the bed of the truck yelled, “I won! I won!” Nobody but Americans could have so much fun while faced with total tragedy...nobody else could make such a joke out of it. I said something about the Mig dropping his load and Rachel said, “That's what my Daddy use to say

in the outhouse.”

We made real good time and a lot of miles. I was beginning to think in terms of a place to sleep. All I could think about was the bed we were supposed to be in and thanking my lucky stars I had taken a good nap, yeah, siesta I had called it. We checked the map and rechecked, we weren't near a town of any size. I told the girls. “It looks like we camp out tonight. I'd like to get settled somewhere before it gets too late. I really think we ought to drive on through the night, who knows what lies ahead? “What is it three days, a week, a month? How long we been on the road? We're not a hundred miles south of Seoul. Back in Texas we'd have driven from Dallas to Houston in four hours, max. ‘Course I have to admit, back there we wouldn't have all these people hindering our movements.”

I heard one of the girls say, “No, we gotta go.” I looked around over my shoulder and Rachel said, “They vote for rollin'. The sooner we get there the better off we'll all be.”

“Glad I had that nap, I can handle it.” Sue jumped in with, “I can drive if I have to.” Rachel put her two cents in, “Me too.” Next thing I heard was little Jimmy, “Me too.” Everybody broke out in a real belly laugh. He was a trooper.

As the night wore on the more I thought this was the best course to take. I hated the thought of being trapped in a room somewhere and no place to run. No telling when the highwaymen would show up again. The more distance we had between us and them, the better. According to my calculations we should be at a town of some size by daybreak. I was thinking it might be a good idea to get a bite to eat and move over to the road we were on before. Besides, the traffic going north was beginning to pick up. One group of troops, about eight six by's then a little while later a group of supply trucks. No telling what all was coming out of Pusan right now. I speculated how far down the pipeline things had been rattled. How long would it take to get our troops in to do any good? At this point I realized the United States was not at war and it would take an act of Congress to declare our intentions. Right now it was North Korea against South Korea, a minor skirmish on the world scene. During the night two groups of vehicles went by going north. Six in one group, eight in another. What caught my attention was a train full of boxcars instead of passenger cars. About daybreak a train-load of troops rolled by, we waved, they hollered. Appeared to be Korean.

I started looking for that town I thought ought to be here. Turned out it had been burned out a few years before, so much for our map, chow time and no place to stop and eat. “OK, girls, break out the C-rations. It looks like we dine on Uncle Sam this morning. What do we have? There ought to be some ham and eggs in some of those cans. Wasn't there a couple of large cans in that box, gallon size? Should be fruit. I wonder what the President is having for breakfast this morning?” Several of the children yelled out, “Ham and eggs!”, then laughed. In the face of adversity how can you beat that kind of optimism...the American Spirit, indomitable.

Several aircraft went over, some cargo, some single engine fighter type. Everybody was up and at 'em this morning. We'd seen a few in the days prior but this was by far the most activity we'd seen. I sure felt guilty. Just then I saw the windshield shatter and heard a bullet whistle by

my ear. I saw another muzzle flash from the bushes in the left front and jerked the wheel to the right. We went off of the road, through some tall grass then came to an abrupt stop.

“Everybody...bailout and scatter,” I said, just a little above a whisper.

I dove for the tall grass and began making my way south, parallel to the road and angling back toward it. Just as I came to a spot near the road where I could see but not be seen, two men were coming my way...about fifteen feet apart, one on each side of me. I waited for them to get settled in the tall grass and, as I expected, two more came across the road. All four were dressed like our prisoners, bandits we called them. They had all different kinds of weapons and other gear hanging on their belts. They hit their bellies in the grass ahead of the first two. I heard some whispering then stillness.

The thoughts were racing through my mind and kept coming up, “Damn, what am I gonna do with four of ‘em?” The answer kept coming back, “The same thing you did with those five at the “Oasis.” “Yeah, but I had help then.” “So?” Easing through the grass I made my way toward where I thought the one to the south had gone down, I almost crawled on top of him. He must have thought I was his partner, he whispered something just before my gun butt cracked his skull. His partner said something and I said, “Hai” hoping it meant the same thing in Korean as it did in Japanese, “Yes” and fit the situation. I was hoping his buddy had asked him if he was ok. One down and three to go. I crawled toward the guy on the north but I didn’t find him, he wasn’t where I thought he ought to be. My sensors were still on end. I turned slightly and caught a glimpse of a shadowy figure raising his gun. He was a half second too late, mine went off in his face. I raised to look for the other two, they raised and turned toward me...man, I’m dead. I heard the blasts of gunfire but never felt the searing pain I knew would follow. When I opened my eyes I saw Sue and Rachel standing about five feet behind the two still figures in the grass. We paused a moment to start breathing again then quickly set about stripping our assailants, everything but their clothes. We took their boots so they’d get a hot foot in Hell and maybe we could use them before we got where we were going.

The girls came out of the grass and met us at the tailgate of the truck after Sue gave our “Bob White” whistle. The sun was coming up and the air was still damp. It was as still as I can ever remember, like it was one morning we were fighting the battle of “Cat Claw Creek”, practice maneuvers at Allen Military Academy while I was in high school. Taking a deep breath I looked around at Sue and Rachel, then it hit me. I put my arms around both of them and broke down crying like a baby, I was sure glad these gals were on my side. I looked down and little Jimmy and Bobbie were hugging me at the same time. I was so glad to be alive. We all said a silent prayer. Then coming to our senses, stripped the bandits of their weapons and loaded our gear. We went up front to see why we came to a quick stop. The truck had come to rest with the right front wheel hanging off of a four foot wall. “Like I said before, someone is watching over us.” Several said, “Amen.” I said, “I’m sure glad this happened in the daylight, it’s gonna be hard enough getting out of this as it is.” I got in the truck and put it in four-wheel drive reverse. All it did was buck and the back wheels began to dig in. I thought it was going to buck it’s way over

the edge and we'd be free but it didn't work out that way. Well, what now? I lit a butt and sat down to give this the serious consideration it deserved. Like the old man said when asked why he hit the donkey with the two by four, "Ya gotta git their attech fust." This had my "attech" alright. I was sitting there not even thinking about the problem when the answer snapped at me out of the corner of my eye. I never let on, just sat there slowly smoking my Lucky.

Aileen, who had become impatient with my seeming inactivity a time or two before said, "Well, genius how you gonna get us out of this mess?" I smiled and said, "I'm gonna call the Triple A tow truck, we'll be out in no time, they're just down the road." She showed her exasperation, turned and walked away. When she said that it reminded me of Stan Laurel where he says, "Well, It's a fine mess you've gotten us into this time, Ollie." The thing that snapped the corner of my eye was the winch...right there on the front of the truck. It was like one of those things you see a hundred times but no one pays any attention to it. Now the problem was finding something to hook it onto. There wasn't a tree in sight. I took a walk down the four foot wall hoping to find something. I did, about thirty feet away. I went back to the truck to see if I could figure out how to get the winch to unwind. After a few minutes of tinkering and derogatory kibitzing from Ailene, I had it working my way. It was a power take off drive from the front axel. I got Ailene to hold the lever in place with the engine idling and pulled the cable out till I reached the break in the wall we were hanging over. She shut it off, I made a loop and dropped it over the end of the stones, I signaled for her to pull up the slack then hold the lever in place. The cable got tight, the truck moved, not much but some. The right front wheel was up against the wall sliding parallel to it, not about to come over. I had all the girls get in the truck and concentrate their weight in the opposite, left rear, corner. Ailene held the lever and gave it some gas, the truck slid along the wall some more. I said, "Ok, that ain't gonna do it. You girls don't weigh enough." One of the girls said something to the effect of, "That's the first time a man ever told me that."

This was disappointing to say the least. I didn't want to bring it to the break in the wall because then we'd have no leverage at all. I looked in the truck tool box, aha! Good old G.I. spade and small pick. I began digging out a small space on the dirt side of the wall. When I thought it was big enough I used the pick and whacked out a few stones from the wall, hoping this would be enough for the tire to get a grip on. I told Ailene to pull the wheel over as far as she could to the left, hold it tight and step on the gas while Sue held the lever in place. I stepped down to watch and yelled, "Now!!!" They hit and it came out of there like a homesick angel. Everyone loaded up while we reeled in the rest of the cable and got everything ship shape, Sue and Rachel checked out the weapons we had liberated and determined we were in pretty good shape. I began thinking back at the trail of bodies we'd left behind, for someone not in the war our group was making pretty good dent for our size. I began counting our blessings and saying a silent prayer.

Winch reeled in, tools back in place, girls loaded, kids happy...we rolled out singing "Merrily We Roll Along."

Chapter VI: Trouble-Trouble-Trouble – Nearly caught by rushing water

It took us awhile to get our bearings but we were back on the road and the kids were singing. Good sign.

My pleasant reverie didn't last long. Ailene whispered in my ear that as we pulled out she noticed one of the four bodies was missing. That could only be the one that I thought I cracked his skull. I told her to keep a watchful eye out, that one could come back to haunt us. The uneasy feeling started at my toes and worked it's way up, slowly. By the time it reached my neck the hair was standing on end. I looked around in all directions, told Sue and everybody else to do the same. We couldn't see a thing. No reason to be upset, but I knew there was.

About eight miles down the road we came to a cut off to the left, east, that I hoped would take us back to the other road. It was beginning to get real crowded and I felt guilty about driving south.

I was doing the right thing it's just that the action was up north, I needed an airplane and I knew there weren't any up there. If I could get back to my outfit at Haneda I knew the Squadron Commander would transfer me to the fighter outfit over at Tachikawa. All they had was a few P-80s but surely I could get one of those. I just wanted to get one Mig, that's all. Then I'd feel I had my revenge for the C-54 we lost on the ground. If I got a couple more so much the better.

Our road east was a real beaut, washboard is the best name I can think of. What was so funny was it seemed we were bouncing. The spacing between the hills and valleys was the same as the spacing between the front and rear wheels. The children thought that was funny. Something outside for them to laugh at instead of something they created. Little Jimmy put on a show, bouncing with the truck and making a funny noise with his throat, "ooogah! ooogah! ooogah!" in time with the rise and fall. I was watching him thru the rearview mirror, dark hair down in his face, smooth white skin, red lips pursed, his arms out like a bird ...he was flying . The other children loved it. He was the big man to them, even Bobbie, and she was the oldest of the group. The Mamas and children clapped for him and he bowed like in old time vaudeville, one hand across his waist and the other behind. I told Sue, "I'd give anything in this world to have a movie of that ...straight out of 'Our Gang Comedies' huh."

We came to a rise and looked ahead. The road seemed to go as straight as an arrow. As far as we could see there wasn't a curve at all. It was dirt but it had been well traveled so it was relatively smooth. I was able to get up to thirty so we were moving along pretty good for an old weapons carrier full of Mamas and kids but something was bothering me and I didn't know what it was.

Aside from the train we saw when we crossed the tracks, the other vehicles on the road and the aircraft there was a distant sound that kept sneaking in under all the other sounds. A dull roar, it kept getting my attention but I couldn't identify it or pinpoint its location or direction. I stopped the truck and sat silent for a few minutes. The girls wanted to know what I was doing, especially Ailene. Rachel and Barbara told her to hush for a change and just listen. One of the

babies tuned up and really started to wail. As long as the engine was running she was ok. I started the truck and climbed out. I walked fifty to a hundred feet out ahead and listened. My Scout, military school or Native Indian instinct wasn't working...I didn't think. What it was telling me was that something was out of tune with nature. I was receiving more than I realized. I was receiving all it could tell me.

Up ahead I noticed the road came to a long slope down and to the east. It looked like maybe a drop of a hundred feet before it started up again on the other side. Looking across a depression can be deceiving but it looked to be about five miles with what appeared to be some vegetation at the lowest point, which meant water. I thought maybe a creek, more good luck...I sure didn't see anything like this on the map we had and I was pretty good with maps in the Scouts and ROTC in school. Most of my buddies didn't like it because I went on instinct more often than not.

The sun was beginning to get pretty low so I started looking for a place to settle down for the night. When I got back to the truck Rachel said, "I'm still hearing it and it's getting later by the minute. If we can make it to the other side and find a place to camp we ought to be in good shape." I told her, "There isn't anything wrong with that intuition, course most men would call that common sense." She got a chuckle out of that and laughed even more as I ground the shifter into gear. We all laughed when I said, "Gotta learn how to use a clutch. Sue would you remind me next time. I'll tell you what's really ironic about all this, I'm checked out in some of the most advanced aircraft in the world but I don't have a civilian driver's license yet. Don't ask me why, just never got around to it. I went down to sign up for the Paratroopers but they were closed so I went across the hall and signed up for the U.S. Army Air Corp. 17 Sept. 1947, just a few months after graduating from high school. Turns out I was in the Army Air Corp. one day...the next day it became the U.S. Air Force."

Rachel said, "That sounds almost exactly like what James did. A few years before you did I'm sure, I have sons your age. One is in Panama, the other is in Australia. My daughter is in the Pentagon and my father is a Senator on the Foreign Relations Committee. I have to tell you this and you young people should take it as a compliment. I am real proud to be here with you. I know I really made an ass out of myself back there at the Embassy but I sure have learned a lot since. When we get to Pusan I know I'll be a better wife and I'll try to be a better Mom." Bless her heart she started bawling, it had been a real confession for her. She was ashamed of her actions but proud that she had seen the error of her ways.

"Well, old girl, I gotta tell you...even without your makeup you're a beautiful lady and I'm proud to know you." If I could have I'd have turned around and given her a big hug, she sure deserved it. "I sure am glad you're on my team."

We were quite for a few minutes but then the sound we heard before came rushing back with such force we were jolted out of our self pity and/or appreciation. We were about a hundred yards or so from the lowest point in the depression and off to the north was a wall of water about four feet high headed our way. I got the truck up to as fast as it would go and was contemplating whether to try to out run it or turn into it, might be a toss up. If it didn't get any more that four

feet deep we wouldn't get anything but our fanny wet. No big deal. The thing that bothered me was where it came from. Either that front that was bearing down on Seoul when I wanted to get off of the ground or the Commies had hit a Dam. Either way it was bad for us, nothing to do but deal with it.

"No slowing down now, we're going. I had it floored, that old truck was shuddering and the girls were getting everything up off of the floor in back. It was going to be a race, we were really bumping along. Little Jimmy started singing, "she'll be coming round the mountain when she comes..." Couldn't imagine where in the world he'd learned that.

We were still a couple of hundred yards from where I thought we'd be dry and I kept saying, "We're gonna make it! We're gonna make it!" Then we went into another small depression. The water hit hard and turned us a little but I kept charging. We came out on the other side with nothing more than our hubs wet. A cheer went up from the back, everybody was clapping. Ailene confessed she couldn't swim when Jackie put her arms around her to calm her down. She was shaking like a leaf but smiling. When I was sure we were high enough to be safe I eased off and stopped. I looked over at Sue and she had the "liberated" binoculars out trying to see where it came from then where it was going. "Nothing to the north," she said, "but it looks like there's a dam or something similar about a mile or two down yonder." I said, "Yonder? How'd you know that word? I know what it means and I'm sure Jamie does but I'll bet no one else on this truck knows."

That got a rise out of everybody.

Chapter VII: Band of Gypsies – My Ladies Were Special

Sue handed me the binoculars. I looked at where we had been. Way back down the road it appeared we had some hard charging pursuers. The only one I could think of was the boy in the weeds from our last encounter; then again, maybe they were just fellow travelers. Why borrow trouble we've got enough already. In any case whoever it was they weren't about to cross the "lake" that had filled up since we crossed and I knew it was too deep for them to cross without a boat. I handed the glasses to Sue and said, "Let's roll." I didn't want to be anywhere near here when they arrived on our side. If my suspicions were correct I didn't want them or him to follow us. If not it didn't make any difference.

Farther east we made a few long curving turns, first south then back east, down a fairly deep depression then back up a little higher than we had been. I had us pretty well pinpointed on the map. I just didn't trust any of the man made landmarks. We were getting close to the other road and my little band of gypsies was getting pretty tired...so was I. It had been a busy day, more so than some of the others. The sky was getting red, time to find a resting place.

The "band of gypsies" phrase stuck in my mind, I was reminded of my aunt telling me stories about my grandmother. She was an entertainer in the old Wild West shows. I thought about the pictures of her in costume, her native dress. She was the proud, defiant, Sioux Tribe "Princess White Cloud." Her costume was hand made by her. White deerskin with beaded and fur fringe decorations. She had white, full-length, Squaw Boots with all the fur fringe tassels and beading from top to bottom. The beadwork was awesome, lots of intricate designs which I learned to duplicate for one of my many merit badges relating to Native American History, back then we didn't think of it like that. My aunt used to tell me about grandma going from city to city and putting on these shows. In my mind's eye I had visions of her riding behind a horse on a blanket between two poles. In her single days, arriving by train in Rhyolite, Nevada, she entertained in a saloon owned by Burt Stoneman. It had the longest bar west of Mississippi. They were later married. He walked out of town after he and a friend rolled dice for the whole "ghost" town. My gypsies were riding in the blankets behind my horses. I wondered what my aunt would say if she could see me now. I imagined she'd pat me on the back and say, "Take 'em home, Son. You're doing a good job."

We found a pretty good place to bed down for the night, about a mile from where I thought the road ought to be. We were on a small rise, no bushes for cover...out on a bald-faced prairie. Any body could see us from fifty miles in any direction and it wasn't long before we had a visitor. The Chopper Guys from up north slid in on us as quiet as a chopper can, I think he auto-rotated from pretty high up, that way they don't make a lot of noise. They landed about twenty yards away to minimize the dust he'd normally kick up. One of the guys came walking over with a large box in his extended arms, it was obviously very heavy so I ran to help.

We didn't bother shaking but nodded our "howdys" and kept walking. I asked him, "What did you bring us?" He said, "A bunch of stuff we thought you could use, plus, most important I

guess, some letters for your ladies and a million apologies from the brass for not being able to send someone out to help bring you in. We've passed over you several times but were either unable to stop or couldn't find you. We got pretty worried at that situation back there in that little town where you stayed in the hotel for a short time. We saw you go in there and thought you'd be safe but after we dropped our man off we came back to check. Man! You guys sure left that town in a shambles. What happened?"

"We'll tell you about it sometime when you have more of it. What's the good word up north? Are they moving south pretty fast?"

"Fast is not the word for it. They are over running every position we've been able to set up. Course our troops can't get involved, we're just the instructors. Besides the language barrier we're short on supplies. It doesn't look good. If I were you I'd move out as quickly as you can, don't stay the night."

"My little "Merry Band Of Gypsies" are pretty tired. We've been on the run I don't know how many days now. We've fought off bandits, bugs, snakes, highwaymen, and probably a lot of stuff we don't even know about. Right now we're tired, we'll roll bright and early", I told him.

"What ever you say, I'm sure you know your people better than I do. Oh, here's a pack of butts. Thought you might need some."

"I'll tell you what we need more than anything, diapers or a good washing machine.

"That's out of my line; I wouldn't know where to start looking for those."

"Let me tell you, these gals are the greatest. They've saved my bacon more than once. They can handle anything...even another day or two on the road if we have to. I don't know who put them thru Commando School 101 but I sure would like to thank him."

The Lt. gave me a short, snappy salute and walked away leaving us a terrific "Care Package." I watched him climb aboard, touched my hand to my hat and watched the girls dig in. The mail was the first thing they grabbed. One lady said, "I'll never ask why my husband wants me to write. This is better than...I was going to say sex but not quite...it is better than food. Please excuse me." They were all quiet for a few minutes then things began to liven up. Every body was busy fixing or eating a good old- fashioned Ham sandwich. These guys had raided the mess hall, only place I figured they could have found a ham and all the fixings to go with it. We really had a feast, mayo, lettuce, tomato...even milk for the kiddies and a beer for me...fantastic, even if I had to share it with Sue and Rachel. A taste was better than none.

Aside from the mosquitoes, bugs and other varmints we didn't sleep too badly. I was up before daybreak, double checking what I had checked the night before. The truck was ready to roll and so was I. Amazing what a good nights sleep on a full belly will do for a guy. Sue woke up feeling pretty frisky too. Looking sideways and blowing me a kiss, hmmm. Maybe after we get to Pusan?

Chapter VIII: Road Block – We Were Going To Jail

My little band of gypsies were loaded and ready to go in no time. Little Jimmy liked it when I called him my Head Gypsy. He said, “That means I’m a Honcho,” then he’d grin as big as his little face would let him. He’d stand up straighter with his shirt tail hanging out in front and give me a salute, which I always returned.

We were on the main dirt road before the sun was in the sky. Looked like we were going to see lots of activity today and I was eager to be part of it. Aircraft everywhere you looked and every kind you could think of. In the distant north you could hear a rumble, different from thunder. We made the road and turned south just about the time a flight of migs came over. Probably a good thing I turned when I did because his .50s were digging dirt on both sides of the truck, otherwise he’d have caught us broadside. Sue had the Thompson Sub up and was firing as he went over. To this day she swears she hit him with two rounds. It was going to be a bad day for our guys in the sky; most of them were cargo and no fire protection. The migs slid in under everybody; it was like shooting fish in a rain barrel. Didn’t make any difference which direction they came from, underneath, overhead, side...no resistance, they were shooting down everything in the sky. All we could do was sit there and cry for our wounded and pray that everyone got out safe. Each one that went down Bobbie counted out loud and Jimmy saluted the fallen Airmen. I told Rachel we had to come up with some kind of a hat for Jimmy, little man like that needed a hat.

About an hour down the road the girls started passing out a breakfast snack they’d put together from that “Care Package” the Chopper Guys brought us. I don’t know how they did it but the ham was cooked and on a slice of toast. Man, that was good...the surprise was the coffee that followed. I had a quizzical look on my face and Sue said, “They waited till we were rolling so there wouldn’t be any smoke. The guys put three packs of sterno in the box with a large aluminum tray and a small pot, the coffee didn’t perk, it just boiled.” “Man, who could ask for anything better. This is better than a dining car on the train or a Stewardess in the sky.” Jimmy was standing in the bed in back and leaning forward between the seats...grinning and chewing.

Off in the distance it looked like a town on the west side of the road. Sue said she thought it was Taejon and that there may be an airport there if the Commies hadn’t hit it. One thing was certain, they had but it was a matter of how hard they had hit it, how much damage was done. We found the airport but before we turned in to the hangar area it was apparent it was useless. Damaged aircraft were scattered all over the place. Some on the taxiways...one on each end of the only runway. Looked like one had been shot up and the other was going to take off going the other way...he didn’t make it. An old Lockheed Electra nosed over in the middle of the runway. We kept on rolling. Sue checked and said, “We must be pretty near halfway by now. Maybe a little more,” I thought, “Geez!!! All this driving and only a hundred miles.” About another five miles brought us to a roadblock on the south side of Taejon. The Sgt.-of-the-Guard couldn’t believe our story but he was tickled to death to hear it. Some of the things the girls told him

about struck him speechless; a look of disbelief crossed his face. A translator passed the information on to the local Police doing duty there also. We had a nice big lunch and a welcome rest in their tent. The cook reloaded our "Goodie Box" and we were ready to get on the road. I used the sergeant's phone and talked to some one down south. They said they would pass on the information that our "Band of Gypsies" were doing fine and on our way. While we were loading up an Army Staff car came roaring in at fifty miles an hour, skidded to a stop and an Army Capt. climbed out. He wanted to know who we were and what we were doing out on the road in an Army vehicle. According to him, "All of the vehicles are in use by military personnel, not by "The Ladies Aid Society" out joyriding. Our explanation fell on deaf ears...he didn't believe a word we said. He ordered us to leave the vehicle there and he would have a man pick it up the next morning. He climbed in his Staff car and roared off as quickly as he arrived. The Sgt. said, "I'm sorry but I can't permit you to leave with the truck." I told the Sgt., "I'm not about to put you in jeopardy but he was unfair and you know it. Now I can't complete my assignment from the Ambassador. My Band of Gypsies is really upset over this. I don't know what they're going to do." The local Police were taking all of this in and jabbering back and forth like a bunch of magpies. One of them came over to me and said he could get a small truck from town for us to use and he'd be back in a few hours. I thanked him and returned his sharp salute.

A few hours went by and no Korean Policeman. There was a lot of talk when the relief arrived on their bicycles but no news. An hour or so later the three Americans, including the Sgt., were sound asleep and I had begun to doze after an excellent meal. I felt a tap on my shoulder and voice in my ear said, "Are you ready to get out of here?" I quietly picked up my hat and slid out of my seat. The Korean Police smiled and bowed as I walked out to the truck. The girls were already loaded and a few other Korean Police were pushing the truck down the road. I jumped in the passenger seat just as Sue hit the starter. I thought we were on our way but the Army captain came roaring in and cut in front of us. Sue had to stop. He jumped out ranting and raving about renegades running off with the equipment and was arresting us for Treason. He suddenly fell silent when Rachel shot out his two front tires and calmly climbed back in the truck. Sue pulled out and around his car and proceeded on down the road. About a hundred feet further and she broke out in unrestrained laughter, then everybody joined in. Sue said, "I wondered what you were doing when you climbed out and walked up front there. I just knew that was going to wake up the guards." We looked back and the Capt. was standing out in the middle of the road ranting and raving again, this time he was waving his arms in all directions at once. The girls were getting pretty good at this ...escape under cover of night is not one of the things they taught in Dependent Wives 101 classes and I was sure mama had never brought it up around home before they left. Chalk it up to good old American Ingenuity. Just like the sterno and the aluminum tray.

I knew the Capt. would get on the phone to somebody so we had to be watchful ...deceitful if necessary. Running without lights now was too dangerous with all the traffic going north. Now we were fugitives. I knew the Capt. would throw the book at us, me especially, but I couldn't care less. At this point we were motoring south and moving pretty good, almost forty. I was

thinking I'd pull that governor off at the next stop. I told everybody to lay low in the back and get as much rest as they could because we were going to keep on rolling as long as we could. I figured if we were lucky we'd be in Taegue by morning. I had forgotten that old adage, "Don't count your chickens before they hatch."

Chapter IX: The Gypsy Wagon Falters

Our experience with the towns and roadblocks along our route hadn't been too good up till now so we weren't holding out any hopes for the immediate future. The next towns of any size were Yongdong-po, Kimchon, Taegue and Pusan. We were all looking for that last one. The only thing we really had to be thankful for was that "The Gypsy Wagon" hadn't faltered once. Every now and then I'd put my hand to my mouth and pat the dash or hood. I'd think in my mind or softly murmur, "Good girl. Keep it up, you're doing great." Sue caught me a time or two and teased me about how guys are with their cars. I told her, "You ought to see me and my airplane. I literally become part of the machinery, I can feel every nut and bolt, every hinge when it moves, the wings when they flex, the engine when it burps, coughs or wheezes." Sue asked me, "Why do you speak about it so reverently?" With a slight grin, I said, "You have to think of it that way if you want it to bring you home. Have to take care of every rivet so it does it's job for you, like the men in your outfit, take care of them and they'll take care of you."

Yongdong-po wasn't much to look at, there were a few curious faces watching us. I suppose they were wondering who we were and where we were going. I wasn't planning to stop but I had no choice when a "Honey Cart" pulled out in front of us from a side road. Two young men made some snide remarks and jumped on the truck, one on each side. Apparently they had been working pretty hard because they both had those head-bands on and they were soaked thru. The small man with the big buck teeth and the Sterling Silver Smile on Sue's side said something that she didn't like so she let him have it in the crotch. She didn't understand what he said, it was just the way he said it. He fell off clutching the injured parts. The guy on my side looked like he was going to do something in retaliation but I jammed my .38 in his gut...he changed his mind and disappeared in the crowd. Sue and I looked at each other and laughed. The crowd ahead of the cart began to thin and the driver was flicking the Water Buffalo with a small whip. I revved the engine and slipped into low gear. Sue said, "Don't forget the clutch." Barbara started laughing, remembering my remark from earlier. Except for the bicycles we were tying up traffic, the street was so narrow nothing else could get by us. I really wasn't in a big hurry because Rachel had jumped off of the truck and went into a shop... fine time to go shopping. Well, it didn't take her long, she was right back out and in her seat in a few minutes so we slowly eased on thru town. I was getting that uneasy feeling again.

The policeman at every intersection waved us on thru and smiled real big like he was granting us a privilege. I saluted each one and slowly moved forward. My "Band of Gypsies" waved and smiled but the guy behind us in one of those three-wheeled pick-up trucks was honking for all he was worth. During my short time in the Far East I had learned that the only way they knew how to drive was honk and step on the gas. One thing I've never been able to understand is how they can go down thru a small street at thirty, honking away and never hit anybody, even when it looks like the street is jammed with people, that's a mystery. The honking behind us was getting to the point where I was ready to go back and poke out the horn or the

honkee.

Finally the way ahead began to clear and we were moving a little faster, about ten mph. I asked Rachel why she got off back there and she replied, "I'll show you after awhile." I turned to see what she was doing, couldn't figure it out so I concentrated on driving and wondered why I still felt uncomfortable. It wasn't long till it was obvious; the road ahead looked like it went up thru some mountains. Not too bad I thought, as long as it doesn't get winding. Maybe we'll see some decent scenery.

Wow!!! Did we ever see some beautiful sites. About halfway to Kimchon we came thru a pass and the view was spectacular, to the south and west there was a beautiful large green valley. One structure of some kind in the distance, Temple maybe? Sue used the binoculars but said she couldn't make out what it was. Perhaps it was the landowner's home. I geared down to take the next downhill run. It was a long, easy turn to the south and we were soon on the same level with the bottom of the valley. A few miles further and we were on our straight shot into Kimchon. Nothing to do but open 'er up and let it roll, I knew we had a good ten miles to go from the last time I had checked the map. I heard little Jimmy singing and clapping, in the rearview I could see him dancing for the girls. Quite a guy, a real entertainer.

I guess our smooth sailing was too good to last. "The Gypsy Wagon" began to miss, I thought maybe it was a vapor lock and shifted into neutral. We coasted about a mile. The engine seemed to be idling smooth enough, I stepped on the gas. The rpm came up ok so I shifted to third, eased the clutch out and added some gas. Ok for now. That lasted about three miles, when we started uphill it started missing again. We made the top and coasted a little ways. The road started back uphill and all it would do was cough, no power. Here we were sitting in the mountains and the engine is ready to conk out. I was able to get it over to the side of the road, what there was of it. Barely room for another vehicle to get by if one came our way. I sat there for a few minutes listening. The idle was perfect, it faltered when I added gas...even the least bit. The only thing I could think of was carburetor. One of the jets wasn't letting gas thru. I hated to shut it off but I didn't have any choice. Naturally the minute I did Ailene started in, "Well, Genius, how you gonna get us out of this mess?" Jamie said, "Can it Ailene, I don't want to hear it and I don't imagine anyone else does either. Don't you know he caused that carburetor to stop up on purpose? Think about it. While you're thinking about it let's go over behind that rock and pee." Everybody chimed in, "Great idea, bail out girls."

I climbed down, raised the hood and began looking. I was also hoping there were the right tools in the toolbox to do the job. I thought, "If I'm lucky I'll get the governor off at the same time and maybe I won't have to take the carb out all the way." I started to climb up on the fender so I could get a better look and almost stumbled over Jimmy. The little guy was right there..."Ready to dig in? ", he said. "Yeah, man. Let's get after it, ok?" After a close examination I was satisfied my diagnosis was probably right, now how 'bout a wrench or two? Look at this, one small and one medium crescent and four other wrenches of different sizes. "Maybe, just maybe we can get this thing fixed, Jimmy. You gonna help me, Honcho?" Beaming

proud, he said, "You bet, Boss." I told him, "No, we can't have a boss and a honcho. You're the number one honcho, ok? I'm just a wrench twister. You hand me the wrenches and we'll get'er going in no time." Well, he thought that was a great idea and climbed up on the opposite fender. Somewhere he'd found a rag and spread it out then laid the tools on the rag in a straight line...best mechanic I ever saw, my father, did it that way, somebody taught this boy right. He smiled and said, "We'll be going down this mountain in no time."

Maybe a few harsh words, a barked knuckle and twenty minutes later we had the governor off. Ailene peeked over the front end and gave her disapproving look and "Harumph." I broke out laughing when Jamie grabbed her arm and drug her away. I heard her say, "They don't need your supervision." Ailene said, "Maybe they do, I use to help my brother build Hot Rods when we were teenagers." I asked Ailene if she agreed with my diagnosis and she said, "Yeah, It's the jet on the left, just a minute, I have a bobby pin to clean it out." She walked up to the front and handed it to me. It slid in just a little way and stopped, I pushed it a little it didn't budge. With her feet on the bumper she leaned over, took the bobby pin, made a slight bend in it then inserted it again. It slid right through like it was supposed to. Small piece of black stuff came out and dropped in the intake. She said, "That won't hurt a thing. It'll probably go right thru and out the exhaust if it don't get burned up, which is ok too." About thirty minutes later Jimmy and I buttoned up the hood. I turned to him and said, "We better go thank the lady for her help and the special tool, don't cha think?" "Yeah, we'd still be here tonight if she hadn't had that special tool. I'm gonna put that in the tool box with the other tools." He smiled real big when I said, "Good idea, Honcho." Gave me a big salute and jumped up in the back to put the tools away. I could hear him telling his Mom how he helped fix the truck and that Lady had this special tool. "Where'd she get that? Ladies aren't supposed to carry tools around." Unabashed youth, I wondered if I had been like that then I remembered when my Dad and I went Crop Dusting on week ends in a plane he built just for that purpose. We didn't have a seat belt so he used a piece of rope to tie us in. Me sitting in his lap.

I must have been staring off into space, lost in thought. Sue poked me in the ribs and asked, "Where were you, eight thousand miles away again?" "Yeah, maybe a little further. My Dad and I were Crop Dusting down on the Texas coast. I use to sit in his lap and feel his legs moving the rudder, my hand on the stick feeling the elevator and ailerons; watch how he moved the throttle, watch the instruments when the controls were moved. Course I was too little to see over the side of the cockpit so I learned to fly by, what I call, osmosis. Flying by instruments was second nature, that's all I could see. The most fun was landing. We'd make a turn on final, he'd pull back on the power and let it glide, then just as we were about to set down he'd pull back on the stick a little bit and the plane would settle down feather light. You could hardly hear the wheels touch. That, my dear, was early thirties, not many instructors around, he taught himself how to fly, fly by the seat of his pants, .imagine this, his first time up was his solo. I remember one time we were spraying and the engine quit, I mean quit dead. No sputter, nothing. He leveled it out and landed in the road. We unbuttoned the cowl and looked at a few things, he took something

loose and blew on it, asked me to blow on it, put it back in, closed it up and we took off smooth as glass. With basic training like that how could I miss in the Air Force?"

"Now I understand what you meant when you said 'You became part of the machine. Just like what you and Jimmy just did. That was great the way you showed him how to help and thank Ailene for her help. You should have heard him telling his Mom how y'all fixed the truck. He'll remember this as long as he lives.'" "I hope that's another seventy years." "Me too. I hope I live another seventy." "I'll do what I can to see that you make the next twenty-four hours."

I walked around back and guess what I found? A cup of hot coffee, um, nectar of the Gods. I lit a butt and stepped behind a big rock for a few minutes. Then I was ready to get on the road. I said, "Ladies are you ready to rumble?" I was almost deafened by the roar, "Yeah!"

About an hour later we rolled into Kimchon and another unforgettable chapter in our lives unfolded with a swiftness we weren't prepared for.

Chapter X: Rolls Royce – Nice To Have A Good Vehicle

We passed a large area of rice paddies on the west and several vegetable gardens on the east, then a few homes. The homes seemed out of place for the area, too large and ornate. They were set back from the road about a half mile with a tall fence and guard gate. Sue, looking through the binoculars said she couldn't tell that much about them and suggested we ask when we got into town. That thought went to the back burner as we eased up to another roadblock.

We all went through the expected Q and A, "What's your name? Where are you coming from? Where are you going? Let me see your ID," before telling us, in a very friendly way, "be careful." Just before I pulled away Rachel played the tourist and asked the guard about the houses on the north side of town, he stepped into the guard house and a few minutes later a Sgt. came out. He wanted to know why we were asking. Rachel told him, "My husband was in the American Embassy in Seoul and I was just curious. They look so imposing, really beautiful and out of place."

The Sgt. smiled and said, "They are out of place alright. They belong to some people from Russia, been living there for several years." "Ok, thanks."

As we rolled away I told Rachel they may be connected to the "white people" the Giant Gent spoke of--the ones that were going to come to dinner before they tried to poison us.

I said, "I'd sure like to know more about those folks. I'll bet there's a real tale there. They may control the people that tried to kidnap Jackie and her kids."

Rachel was quiet for a moment then said, "That's a very interesting thought, I don't like it but it's interesting. You sure have a suspicious mind. That might explain a lot of things that happened in Seoul that my husband wouldn't talk about. I'd ask and he'd say," Not for your pretty little head to worry about." A day or so later I'd meet with the girls in the club and we'd speculate about the significance of different things that happened that our husbands wouldn't talk about."

I pointed out that some things are best you don't know about cause if you don't know you can't talk. A lot of times we're involved in circumstances that are sensitive and the less you know about it the better.

I said," That reminds me of the ladies at Edwards. Their husbands wouldn't talk about a new aircraft on base, a crash or the goings on at Pancho's." Sue kinda smiled and rolled her eyes, fanned her face with her hand and whistled through her teeth. Since she was from Lancaster, just west of the base, I knew she had heard of, or been to, Pancho's. That was a terrific place to have fun. Pancho operated it as a Fly-In Dude Ranch but the formal name was The Happy Bottom Riding Club. It was "The" watering hole for everybody that was anybody in the world of aviation, out in the middle of the desert all by itself. Didn't make any difference how much noise you made there wasn't anyone close enough to hear and if they did complain the powers that be would have descended upon them with the wrath of God to back them up. Some how these people were imbued with the thought that there wasn't anyone on this earth that mattered more

than them or what they were doing. In retrospect, maybe they were right...the aircraft that came out of that era kept the world free and still are.

The interesting thing is they were all there...Yeager, Kinchloe, Ridley, Boyd, Goodlin, Salmon, Ascani, Bridgeman, LaVier, Hooverjust to name a few, even Hughes came through once. I shook and got acquainted with John K. Northrop (proved to be a real advantage at a later time in my life) and Donald Douglas. You should have seen the walls at Pancho's. There were pictures of the world's greatest aviators, to hear them tell it, some of them really were, Amelia Earhardt (Pancho taught her how to fly down in San Diego), General "Hap" Arnold, Gen. Spatz, Gen. Doolittle, Gen Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Jacquilyn Cochran and all those "Powder Puff Derby Gals", they took off from what became Pancho's. Aviation History took place in that desert, just as surely as Kill Devil Hill.

Pancho Barnes had the misfortune of having an unattractive envelope for the biggest heart in the world. She was a rather large woman, over 6', medium build, full lips, big eyes, large nose, ruddy complexion and ready to give you the shirt off of her back if you asked. I had the pleasure of her friendship; she once picked me up like a baby and carried me up to one of the motel rooms at her place. She dropped me on the bed and said, "You're not the first one I put to bed." Then closed the door and left.

In addition to her other attributes she was an excellent pilot, flew by the "seat of her pants", like Yeager, she became part of the machinery. More than once she force landed, sometimes dead stick in the middle of nowhere... pasture or desert...wherever ...and fixed something then flew on to her destination. Rumor has it that she had Private Pilot License #3 because the person in charge of that early bureau stayed at Pancho's during a trip out west. There were many stories circulated about the activities at The Happy Bottom Riding Club, some true, some vicious lies by people who were obnoxious snots that nobody liked in the first place. Hell, they didn't even like themselves. In most cases they didn't know what they were talking about.

Sue reached over and poked me on the shoulder saying, "You off somewhere else again?"

"Oh, yeah...I was just thinking about Pancho's...one young lady I danced with a lot, Helen Stone. Everybody called us both "Stoney" so we never knew which one they were calling. Instead of staying at Pancho's we'd go to a pile of rocks out in the desert and enjoy the stars. I was always talking about going to the moon. Anybody that would listen I bent their ear on the subject, there was no mistake about my interest."

There was one Colonel's daughter that was a terrific artist. I use to pose for her up in those rocks when she was home for holiday.

There was a civilian employee, most energetic guy I ever saw. Had something going all the time. If he wasn't calling Bingo at the club he was getting a group together to put on a show, I sang a few times. He painted ties also, most beautiful work you've ever seen, he'd write your name down the middle of a tie and the mirror image right beside it. Really beautiful.

We were rolling along pretty good till we come up behind this honey cart out in the middle of the road. Honking wouldn't get him to move over so we could get by so we poked along at about

2 mph, looking for a place to swing around. I realized too late that he was a plant .

As we rounded the next bend another vehicle came up behind us, several guys bailed out and covered us with weapons and gas. When I came to I was so groggy I couldn't stand up. Didn't make much difference, I wasn't going any place. The room was just wide enough for the cot and not much longer. There was barley room for the pot in the corner. I started pounding on the door which quickly opened. A well armed guard handed me a canteen. I smelled and tasted before taking a drink. I tried to talk to him but it was no use, he didn't understand English. He waved at someone down the hall and a few minutes later a man came to my door. He was extremely pleasant, spoke with an accent that I didn't recognize, dressed in an excellent suit.

He apologized for the treatment and assured me the ladies and children were being well cared for but wouldn't answer any questions. He invited me to join him for dinner and escorted me to a lavishly appointed table on a balcony overlooking a vast valley of green vegetables. The sun was setting and the dim lights weren't much help. A waiter came with a tray and candles, two glasses of wine...it was superb.

The pleasant, idle chatter turned serious as the last light of day disappeared. The night air was cool and comfortable, just like his attitude.

“You know, of course, why we brought you here?”

“No, sir, I'm afraid I don't, but for some reason I think you're about to tell me.”

“Ah! Very perceptive. You are a young man with lots to learn but very resilient. From what I have observed, very capable also. A bit crafty. Most Americans are so open and naive but you have a dark side I find interesting.”

“Well, I'm not in the least bit interested in what you think of me. I want you to release me and the women. In the name of the United States Government I order you to release us immediately.”

“Bravo!! Well done.”

To my surprise I found three guns pointed at me from potted plants around the balcony. My host waived them off and invited me to sit down and let's have some dinner. This is all so unnerving.”

During the meal I learned he was a descendent of some big Russian official from some years back. He retained a bit of Diplomatic Immunity and used it to his advantage. With the events up north he was hoping to be useful to the South, a true mercenary.

I asked if he knew anything about the activities when Jackie was kidnapped. He said he had heard about it and apologized for the unfortunate incident, saying, “These people don't understand the extent to which they can go and sometimes are a bit over zealous. You must understand, you and your ladies are very valuable commodities. I may have my transaction completed this evening, in which case, you, the ladies and the children can leave in the morning. We'll give you all the provisions you'll need for your trip to Pusan and you can be on your way.”

“You don't understand. Either you heard me and didn't listen or vice-a-versa, I want to leave

Now! Is that clear enough? We've been harassed every mile of the way...first it was the fighters, then the highwaymen or bandits, we got stuck, then the flood, difficulties at the roadblocks...enough is enough."

He stood up, clinched his fists and turned as red as a beet. After a few seconds he took a deep breath then slowly said, "I hesitated to bring that up but since you mentioned it, you have cost me a great deal. Weapons, which I retrieved from your vehicle. Personnel, it takes time but they can be replaced. My prestige can be repaired but, like the personnel, it takes time. Now, you can both relax and enjoy the rest of your meal or I'll have you taken to the basement and put in irons like that feisty little lady you call Sue. She gave us a real fight. Two of my men are still nursing swollen, tender private parts. I didn't think she was going to let one of them go till she pulled them out by the roots. Unfortunately she has a bump on her head but I assure you that is all the harm that has come to her."

I started to jump at him, but, as the saying goes "Sometimes discretion is the better part of valor." At least I had provoked him enough to tell me he was responsible for our problems on the road and where Sue was. I sat down and finished my meal in silence, which he seemed relieved to see. The steak dinner was quite good. Idle conversation had dwindled to a grunt or an "um, huh" on my part. He appeared satisfied with the one sided discussion until he mentioned, "You appear to be rolling something around in your young, fertile mind. I'm not sure I like that. I hope you're not planning to try to escape because I must caution you; any attempt would be futile and would most surely result in your death. I would have a difficult time explaining that to my host country. My status would be damaged. Then I would have to do something with the ladies and children. You wouldn't want any harm to come to them would you?" He said it with a sneer, like he would enjoy every minute of it. Almost made my skin-crawl and certainly sent my blood pressure thru the roof. I was sure he could see the veins on my neck and temples pulsing, it was everything I could do to remain calm and hope I appeared serene. We had finished the meal and I was sure he had little or no further use of me so I got up to go to my room. Before turning to leave I strolled over to the railing to see how far up we were, second or third floor. Much to my disappointment it looked like the third level. That meant if I was going to get out of here I had to go through another level of guards.

My host motioned for his men to escort me to my room. It was just down the hall here on the third level. If I was going to do anything now was the time.

I'm not a big man so I have to use every trick and leverage in the books...my two escorts were B-I-G, to say the least. The guy on my right was the largest so figured he'd be a half-a-second slower than the other one.

I timed it just as his left foot hit the floor I stomped on the instep. He went down and I grabbed the arm of the guy on my left. I swung him around just in time to take the round aimed at me. I pulled my man's weapon and took out the one on the floor. My host came running in from the balcony with his weapon drawn and got off a round in the dead man I was hiding behind. I guess I was in too much of a hurry, my aim was low and I gut shot him. He pumped

another into the dead man and I returned fire with one in his throat.

The others in the house would be getting here any minute so I gathered up two more pistols and found the stairs. The second floor man was on his way up until I got him in the top of the head. At this point I didn't know there were any others but I wasn't waiting for them. As I passed the guy on the stairs I picked up his pistol, now I had four.

I had no idea where the girls were in the house but I did know where Sue was. I approached the landing at the second level and stopped, standing perfectly still...listening. My sensors were up. For some reason I brought one of the .45s up to eye level just as a one of those "Killer Stars" came flying at me. It dinged off of the barrel as I saw the Samurai headed my way. Gentleman or not he had no weapon and I had the unfair advantage. I laid the weapons down and met him on his ground, knowing nothing about Tai Kwan Do, or what ever it was he was about to use. I had won my weight in the Golden Gloves and figured a right cross to the crotch would beat a high kick any day of the week. He made a couple of those high foot passes at me, I ducked under. He got in a couple of chops and I went down. He stepped in a little too close, I hooked my toe behind his heel and applied the heel of my other foot to his knee...down and crippled. I pulled the knife and stars from his arsenal, went back and picked up my guns and found the stairway down to the first floor. I couldn't believe it, not a sound or anyone in sight. I thought to myself, "You can't be this lucky."

It made sense to me that the way down to the basement would be in the kitchen area, now if I could just find that. I looked down a long hallway, no clues. The other way and I saw the worn wood from a doorway, may not be a kitchen but I'll find something. This led back toward the center of the house, made sense to me. Aha!! There were pots and pans hanging everywhere and an open doorway to the right. I gently pushed it open with the barrel of the .38 and listened. I knew that waiter had to be around here somewhere. He was, a heavy Karate Chop to the neck drove me to my knees. As I went down I rolled around and took a blurred shot at his head. If I didn't know better I'd be willing to swear he caught that bullet in his teeth. His head popped back and he went down, I was up and had a foot on his throat. His eyes were a bit wild. I felt his carotid artery just as the last pulses went through.

Still wary I went down the stairs with all senses tuned to any possibility. Half way down I saw Sue in a cell, chained to the wall. Most beautiful cell I had ever seen with polished wood and immaculately clean. There wasn't even any dust on the floor. She didn't say a word but her eyes were talking a mile a minute and flicking to my left. I moved to the right but couldn't see a thing. Just as I reached her side this huge machete came flying through the air. I dropped to the floor and pumped one into a small alcove. The machete stuck in the wall over my head. My assailant fell out with a look of disbelief on his face. I blew off the locks on Sue's cuffs and gave her a short tender hug. As we started up the stairs she was telling me about several others that were due back any minute and one of them looked familiar.

We came up to the first floor level and Sue started opening doors. Rachel, Jackie, Jamie, Ailene and Barbara. Little Jimmy and Bobby were jumping up and down.

Ailene said, "I don't believe it but you did it again. You're a cat with nine lives."

Sue said something about seeing a big Rolls-Royce bring our host in earlier so it must be in the garage. I told her and Rachel to get that and I'd take the weapons carrier. Barbara and Jackie gathered some chow in the kitchen while we found the Rolls.

I said, "We're going into Pusan in style."

I checked the WC and topped off the gas tank and checked the oil, ok. The Rolls I knew would be ready to go because any chauffer would get it ready before putting it to bed. We rolled up beside the house and the girls and children loaded up, Sue and Rachel up front, the girls in back and the children on the floor. That back part of the Rolls was big enough to be a one-room apartment. The grin on Rachel's face was from ear to ear when I helped her up to her seat. She remarked, "My daddy will never believe this...he'll never believe this whole trip."

"Well, we aren't there yet but we don't have far to go."

It took Sue a few minutes to get the shifting and steering down but we were soon rolling. I led off with the WC. Just as we went through the gate I saw the others Sue mentioned coming up the drive. No turning back and it was a single lane driveway, bluff 'em out. I floored it and headed straight down the middle. The six foot or so drop off on each side was not too inviting. My concern was, did my opponent have any guts. His passengers didn't cause they started bailing out as fast as they could, then at the last minute he turned for the drop off. The other six by truckload behind him weren't that fortunate. As soon as he saw me he veered to his left with his whole load of troops. I clipped the rear end near the back wheel and flipped the truck end over end. Bodies went flying, must've been twenty or so in each vehicle. I heard the kids and everybody in the Rolls cheering like crazy.

We turned on the road and headed for town. This was going to be our second try for Kimchon. The Sgt. of the guard was a bit surprised to see us again. I didn't give him any details but I did tell him we found out about those nice houses out there on the north side of town.

"They even let us have the Rolls for our trip to Pusan."

Chapter XI: Taegue - It took us to tries but we made it

Strange how we make transitions--good to bad and shades of gray in between. I later learned that Rachel had found and raided the weapons room and Jamie had emptied every wallet she could find. The surprise was the dresser drawer of our host's bedroom, full of Korean money, which she carried out in a plain canvas shopping bag. Her thinking was that the girls will want to go shopping before we see our husbands." Too bad we didn't find the "safe." The Chinese keep their money in a large wooden chest-- I wondered about the Koreans and Russians.

Another thought that had been formulating in the back of my mind slowly took shape and became a dominating force...what was the strength of the Commie Sympathizers that had infiltrated South Korea prior to the invasion? As events unfolded we could see their numbers were high. Their influence in every walk of life, extremely difficult to escape their scrutiny.

When we went through the roadblock on the south side of Kimchon we learned that the "chopper guys" had left us a message and a package. The message was, "Bravo!" I didn't understand that. Sue said she thought it was for our escape from the house --- made sense. The package was mail and money. Thoughtful bunch of guys. I gave the Sgt-of-the-Guard a list of our people and asked him to contact the American Headquarters. in Pusan during his next allotted time, by now the limited communications facilities were over loaded --- tell them who and where we are and our estimated time of arrival at the best hotel in town.

The Sgt said, "From what the guys told me you all have really been tearing up the country side."

"Well, we had to protect ourselves, we didn't go looking for trouble but it found us in bunches. All we wanted was to be left alone so we could get on down south."

"They said you destroyed that one village?"

"Not really, but some unsavory folks kidnapped one of my girls and her kids. We just went in and brought 'em out."

"What about those guys on the road?"

"We think they were part of the same group, they deserved what they got. We didn't know if they were sympathizers or bandits. I doubt seriously if they knew the South had been attacked, they had their own program going."

I became unusually nervous when I came out of the Guard office. I gave the girls the mail and noticed the interest a six by type truck full of Korean soldiers showed in our group. Perhaps they weren't soldiers...maybe they came from the "house"? In any case I felt like it wouldn't take long for them to make their intentions known. I knew we weren't going to hear from the authorities 'cause their activities were illegal and they had lost their leader. We certainly weren't going to say anything to anybody because our host country had enough troubles right now and something of this nature was difficult to bring up. We just had to do the best we could under the circumstances.

I asked Sue what the big grin was for, she just grinned wider and turned away. She was still grinning when she cranked up the Rolls and drove away. I jumped in the WC and gave chase at a comfortable distance, more concerned about that six by than Sue's grin, but as it turned out my fears were unfounded till we were well into an evening of relaxing at the hotel in Taegue. Rachel showed me what she had been working on, a hat for little Jimmy, crocheted to perfection. He had a fit over it and wore it with pride, giving me a salute when I put it on his head.

We had a big dinner at a table with chairs for a change, the Mamas, their children...everybody. I finally had the opportunity to buy them that beer we all looked forward to. I think we all sensed this could be our last night together.

Tomorrow evening they would be with their loved ones.

I tapped my glass, signaled for the waiter to fill them all and stood up. A moment of silence for my intent to register then I said, "Ladies, I can't thank you enough for saving my buns more than once." There were a few giggles then everyone cleared their throat. "You are absolutely the finest group of women I've ever come in contact with. I'd give anything if everyone of you were with me day after tomorrow when I go back north. I'll have one of Uncle Sammy's Fighters then and I'll cherish the memories you've given me. I'll take out two migs for each of you. Each of you have given me a part of you, I hope I have been able to reciprocate. I want to take this opportunity to thank our opponents for contributing so much to our well being, for making us a strong group and for donating so generously to our party this evening. I hope you have gained as much from the passed several days as I have. I wish you the best cause you sure deserve it."

A few of them dabbed at their eyes and noses as I sat down--I didn't want it to become a going away party, we would say our goodbyes tomorrow. I wanted this night to be a celebration, a good happy time for all. Bobbie and Jimmy came to my chair and gave me a hug then stood by me when Rachel stood up, raised her glass and said, "To the finest man I've ever met, including my husband. Even when you gave us weeds, bugs, snakes and tubers to eat you gave us hope, you gave us strength. You saved our lives more than once, you wiped our noses, gave us a hug and patted our fanny when we needed it most. Thank God for men like you, I wish there were more. Sue, if you don't grab him it's your loss. Here! Here!"

Everyone took a drink and sat silent for a few moments, afraid to move I think, for fear the magic would disappear--it was magic that we were here. It was magic that brought us together.

Our reverie was interrupted when several doors slid open at once and what appeared to be Korean soldiers stepped in with the old fashioned "grease guns" at the ready. The leader stepped over to my chair, leaned down and whispered, "You and the ladies will kindly leave by way of the rear door indicated by my man at the other end of the table. You will load onto the truck out back and we will take a ride to our headquarters." I started to ask a question but was informed there would be no questions. He had given the orders and we must obey now or there would be physical pain to one of the children.

I asked, "Are we under arrest?"

His reply told me we weren't. He said, with force and volume. "Move!"

The party was over. I rose and motioned for the ladies to do the same. I pointed toward the back door and for Rachel to follow the man to the door. There were men outside leaving a path open to the truck I had seen earlier. The ladies filed out and into the truck, quietly and without incident. The driver started the engine, the tailgate was raised and latched. A guard stood at each corner of the truck-bed diligently watching what they thought was the most dangerous women in the world but whom I knew to be the sweetest, kindest, most caring people I had ever known. Unfortunately these boys were hell bent on exacting their revenge for the death of their leader and the others. The truck came to a dead-end alley in an industrial area, a large door opened and we drove in. The door closed and the lights came on, glaring flood-lights.

We were told to unload, shown to a bare room and told to wait. The door was closed and I heard the lock click in place. The room was bare, no windows and no other doors. The floor was immaculate; it was shined to perfection--as if for some performance. The overhead lights didn't appear to be useful if an escape attempt were to be made, except maybe the electrical wiring. The brain is always working. The material in the walls appeared to be a heavy stucco, maybe a sharp blow would make an easy hole but what was on the other side? The girls were becoming unnerved, agitated, worried. The wait was taking its toll.

I said, "Come on, girls. We've been in worse situations; get out your bobby-pins."

Sue said, "Yeah, but we've never been cooped up like this."

"How 'bout if we link arms. If they try to take one of us they have to take us all"

We put the children in the middle and linked arms. The activity made us think about something else and our minds went to work on departure as a group.

The door opened and the guard motioned for one of the children. In unison we replied, "Nooooooooo."

A rather large man appeared in the doorway. He looked American. He walked over and slapped me hard enough to rattle my teeth. I shook my head and asked, "What was that for?"

"For causing so much trouble, the whole length of this peninsula. You and your ladies have brought irreparable harm to our efforts. Years of ground-work has been destroyed. You will pay and money is not the question though we will recoup some of that when the children and the ladies are sold into slavery. You will watch as each are degraded in the vilest manner imaginable. I sincerely hope it drives you mad when you realize you can do nothing to save them from a fate worse than death. Actually, death would be a blessing.

He left the room. He left us to our thoughts. This was worse than anything they could do. Our imaginations ran wild. Jackie and Ailene began to sob, Jamie and Barbara sniffled a bit, Rachel and Sue looked teary eyed and Jimmy and Bobbie had their arms around me, hugging tight. I never felt so useless in all my life as I did right that minute.

I asked Sue and Rachel if they saw anything worthwhile from the opposite end of the hall when we came in? They agreed it looked like a dark hallway beyond the length of the room. Probably went into a manufacturing facility of some kind, hmmm.

"Look, girls, I suspect there is a guard with at least one weapon outside that door. It's not

likely we can surprise him but we can startle him into confusion and I think the sooner we do that the better. Whatever it is they plan to do with us they have to get set up to do, so let's not be here when they are ready, Ok?" The sniffing stopped and I could feel the excitement begin to rise.

Ailene said, "What now, genius?"

"I don't think this wall here at the doorway is very substantial. If enough of us hit it hard enough I think it'll give away. So let's all get over here and lean on it a little, let's see what happens?" We all put our hands on the wall and leaned into it. It did give a little. I inspected the area around the doorknob, looked like it would "Go" pretty easy also.

"Ok, time to look at options. We make a bunch of noise, kids crying etc. anything to attract attention and get a guard in here. We can find out if there is more than one guard on the door, when he comes in we overpower him. Or we bust the door and take him by surprise. I vote for plan one because we have a chance to see what's outside before we proceed and we have a chance at getting his weapons. Either way it's a crap shoot, what do you say?"

Ailene said, "Let me get him to take me to the restroom. I can look around then bring the kiddies. If there's only one guard we got it made. In either case let's do it after cause I really gotta go."

Everybody laughed and Ailene knocked on the door, the guard got the message and she was out and down the hall in a minute. This was when we learned we had two guards. Good! That meant we could get more than just one guard's weapons. We also saw that the hallway was very narrow, just a bit wider than the door when it was open so when Ailene came back if one guard was behind the door while the other was letting her in we'd grab him, slam the door back and grab the other one, ha, ha. Can't wait for this to happen.

Surprise, surprise. It didn't happen that way. The other guard came over to see that Ailene came in ok so we waited. Next maneuver; send all of the children out to the bathroom. Good move, they are out of the way and we only have one guard to deal with. While the children are gone Barbara asks the guard for a cigarette and a light. She holds his hand steady for her cigarette while Sue takes his pistol out of his holster. They bring him inside and I take his Grease Gun, bayonet, ammo and everything else we can find worthwhile.

By this time we were getting pretty good at knowing what was useful. Rachel tied him up with his own "Sash" and Jamie pulled the headband tight at his mouth. We waited patiently for the guard to return with the children and Jackie...it was a long wait. 'Course anything over two minutes was too long.

The door opened slowly and the children filed in. The guard looked in as Jackie came in. Jackie grabbed his collar, pulled him in and tripped him. Rachel and Sue were on top of him like ants on a June bug. He was stripped and tied before he had time to breathe. Now we had two Grease Guns, two pistols, two bayonets and assorted paraphernalia. Do we go for the back door or wait for our host and his henchmen? Well, with no guard outside our door we had to make a decision soon cause somebody would notice.

I ventured out and down the hall toward the back, slowly stepping backwards and listening for any sound to set me off. I made it to the back end of the building and a door leading out. I was reasonably sure we could make it if the children hurried. I felt even more sure when I saw the Rolls. It looked too inviting but I was ready to chance it, I didn't think these clowns would do anything to harm it.

I was ready to move back up to the door and make our escape as quietly as possible when the hall filled up with our adversaries. I opened up with the Grease Gun and leveled everybody in sight, then, using the Grease Gun drew a picture of a door in the backside of the room my people were in. I kicked the wall and the "door" fell out. Sue, the first one thru, led the way into the open manufacturing area. Rachel had the weapons from the other guard and brought up the rear of the group. Everybody piled into the Rolls after Sue got it turned around in pretty close quarters. I didn't see the "Gypsy Wagon" so I figured they must have left it at the hotel, we had to go there anyway but first we had to bust out of this place. By now our host and a few more men had gathered at the front door to halt our departure. I told everybody in the back to lay low, Rachel and I laid over in the seat, Sue revved the engine and let out the clutch. That old Rolls leaped for the door like a Bull out of the shoot. A couple of shots rang out and we realized the glass was bullet proof. Sue moved into second gear and floored the pedal; it didn't look like the guards were going to get out of the way until they made a last second jump.

The door collapsed under the force of the Tank-like Rolls and quickly fell away. We were free and clear in the streets of Taegue having no idea which way to go. The only thing good about it was no traffic. We quickly learned there was a blackout and the local police led us to the hotel. I expected all sorts of questions but they seemed to think it was an every night occurrence with the "clazy Amelicans." The children stayed in the car and all of the girls went to their rooms to gather what they could. Rachel and I went through the banquet room to pick up anything left behind. She said, "I'm getting sick and tired of having to leave in such a hurry. Now that we've got the Rolls I'm beginning to feel like Al Capone."

Jamie found the "Gypsy Wagon" and brought it around. What the girls didn't need at hand was put in the back of the truck. Inside of ten minutes after we arrived we were ready to move again. I took over the truck and Jamie went back to her children. An MP jeep came up and wanted to know what was going on. We explained our situation and we were just leaving town sooner than expected, no details. The Sgt. seemed to think it had something to do with a Rolls that disappeared from a warehouse over on the north side of town. I called his attention to the fact that this one had been here at the hotel since earlier in the day and we had brought it in from Kimchon.

"What we need Sgt. is your guidance out of town. In the quickest, most direct route you can show us, please." "Yes, Sir. Follow me." Ten minutes later we were singing down the highway, a merry band of Gypsies, in search of Pusan.

Chapter XII: Pusan – At last

We had the expected roadblock on the northern outskirts of Pusan, just a few questions, they knew we were coming. The Sgt.-of-the-Guard took me to the Officer-of-the-Day and he gave me the rundown of what we should do and where we should go. I told him I was taking the girls to the finest hotel in town and they better have room, we're going to clean up and rest up, then we'd do what we were suppose to do.

When I talked to my CO he sounded like he was mad for taking so long but was glad to hear we ALL got in ok. He said the others all made it in ok but not with as much excitement behind them. He said a few of his friends were on the phone daily wanting a progress update on our status, worried about their wives, naturally. The big surprise was when the CO said General Mac Arthur himself had called. You know you got it made when God is checking up.

The OD called someone to take care of my uniform situation and the hotel rooms. He was sure curious about that Rolls-Royce, I just let him wonder. He arranged for my transportation back to Haneda and set us up with an account at the hotel for anything we needed.

With all of the preliminaries out of the way I drove the Rolls over to the hotel, right up to the front door and parked. We had a nice, happy meeting in the back of the Rolls. I told the girls about all of the arrangements they had made for us and how everyone had anticipated our arrival. We would have the remainder of the day to rest up, this evening for their husbands and meet the press tomorrow morning at ten. I had a nice few minutes with Bobbie and Jimmy, they promised to take care of each other and their Moms. I opened the door and helped each of the girls out of the car and gave them a Pearl plus one for each of their kids. It was all I could do to maintain my composure when they gave me a hug and a kiss. There were several bellboys to help with their belongings, weapons and all. I followed them into the hotel and made sure they got registered and on their way to their rooms. I followed Sue to hers, we stepped inside and immediately embraced, saying, "Oh, God. How I've wanted to do that. I never could have made it without you. When this thing is over I'm gonna be camping on your doorstep, I don't care where you are." She broke down and bawled. Haltingly she said, "I'll be waiting."

We were not prepared for the onslaught of the foreign press that was turned loose on us...turned loose is putting it mild. We were like lambs led to the slaughter. We didn't know how much we could say or what we could talk about. A reporter from France asked Rachel about her husband. Rachel cut her off dead with her reply, "Why don't you ask my husband?" One reporter queried Barbara about the people she killed in that village. Barbara looked at me with an incredulous look on her face and said, "I don't remember anything like that ever happening." I supported her statement with, "A lot of times there are rumors that get started and they seem to grow tails" The big question came from a Korean reporter, "Where did you get the Rolls-Royce?" I answered that one with as much grace and finesse as I could muster, "Some very nice folks in Taegue thought the ladies ought to have something a little better to travel in than a weapons carrier, which we lovingly called the "Gypsy Wagon." This brought the house down

and started a whole new line of questioning that was in a lighter vein. The press had a terrific time with Jimmy and Bobbie, especially when Jimmy told them about eating the grass and bugs. They thought he was kidding. He said, “No joke we really did, we had too but it was fun.”

All in all I thought the press conference went very well. It was G-2 that really raked me over the coals, the debriefing went several different ways at once, related to the subject at hand most of the time. Naturally they wanted to know about what I saw in Seoul and on the road. They kept coming back to the aircraft, what did I see, what did I think about them, how fast were they flying, were they maneuverable? Then the lead man in the debriefing wanted to know what we knew about the people we came in contact with, the bandits, the highwaymen, the kidnappers in that village and lastly, those that we did away with in the big warehouse in Taegue?

To explain his many detailed questions he told of how they had been trying to infiltrate and destroy the “Slave” market they had been running. Diplomatic protocol did not permit direct intervention from an outside source and they were unable to make much headway from within. In the span of a few days “Me and my Gypsies” had been able to wipe out the whole “rat’s nest” from top to bottom. Nothing would ever be said about it, as if it never happened. I did have a chance to tell them I really didn’t appreciate them throwing us to the “Wolves, our debriefing turned into an interrogation. That was unfair, what we had to do was a matter of survival.

“Well, we did run into to some difficulties here and there but we took care of it. My mission was to bring the ladies to Seoul as safely and quickly as possible. Those that got in the way suffered the consequences. The Ambassador told me ‘Don’t let anything get in your way’ and I didn’t.”

Chapter XIII: Haneda A.F.B. – Back to home base

Immediately after lunch I was on a good DC-3 headed for Haneda and I suspected more of the same. I was in for a surprise. General Born, Base Commander, and my CO met the plane. The General told the pilot to stand-by for another trip. We had a short discussion in the coffee shop and I was on the plane again headed for Tachikawa. A small group of P-80s but no one to fly them so I put together a “Short Course” to check these guys out. We had reports that an F-86 Wing was on the way but it was going to take some time for them to make it. The pipeline had been “shook” all the way back to the States and it wouldn’t take long for things to start showing up. Two Flag Carrier Groups had already made it to the area.

It didn’t take long for my “Short Course.” A few days in the classroom studying the aircraft systems, then six hours in the air. As soon as I finished with one the next one was ready to go. The first one trained another, the second did the same and before you know it we had a Squadron of P-80s in the air. Getting enough fuel and ammo to sustain combat operations took some time. When the supplies caught up we were ready because we had put the time to good use, practicing for our first “Dog Fight,” the first aerial encounter of jet aircraft. I think it was also the first time a Squadron Commander became one by training the whole squadron. One thing was for sure, the Cargo Group was looking forward to some fighter protection. The only thing holding the A-20s, B-26s etc. back was bombs...no sense getting in the air if you don’t have anything to drop.

We made three sorties and my CO called me home. Great, now I had to turn the Squadron over to a man that was greener than me. He was capable and diligent but...I told him to read the book we had been studying, make the men practice, practice, practice till it was second nature, that’s the only thing that’s going to get them home.

The CO had a few VIP flights lined up for me, a small reward for the short turnaround after getting in from Korea with the ladies. Wow! VIP Flights isn’t the word for it.

Our Squadron was the west end of the Military Air Transport Service (M.A.T.S....I called it the GI Airline), good training for a future airline Capt. It was our mission also to provide connections with the other American Embassies west of us and connect up with the MATS people coming from the States in Dhahran, Arabia. I was getting excited about this. I applied for a per diem advance and borrowed from my buddies. I may not get a chance like this again so I was going to get my parents some souvenirs. I was flying right seat on this run so I had to do the flight planning (weather, altitude, headings...all the good stuff).

I had handpicked the crew except for the Plane Commander, glad I didn’t cause Kelly was the best. He was a tall, slender, red-haired Irishman...a true asset to have on your team. Little did I know how many times he would bail me out of “mouth-overload-your-fanny” situations. Lt. Marcus Kratz, Navigator, T/Sgt. Howard Markle as Crew Chief, T/Sgt. Glen Hickey on the Radio, Sgt. Ted Hughey as Loadmaster and Steward. Having Hughey on board was a real comfort. He had been in the Air Police and was an exceptional Airman, as we were to learn later. I tried to get Glenn Howard on but the compliment only called for bare minimum.

Shortly after lift-off Hughey brought all of the paper work forward...exactly what the cargo was and who our passengers were. We were set-up with twenty passenger seats, all installed on the right side of the aircraft, a C-54 fresh from overhaul at Temco in Grand Prairie, Texas (I later wrote a note to the Boss, Bob McCullough, at Temco thanking him for a job well done.). I felt like I was with friends, fellow Texans were riding with us.

The passengers were an interesting group, a Diplomat on his way back to Calcutta, an Ambassador's wife going to New Delhi to be with her husband, an Air Attache on his way to duty in Saigon, French-Indo-China, two enlisted men on their way to Bangkok, Siam for a few days of fun, another group of five civilian men (military connected no doubt) on their way to Clark Field in the Philippines and one extremely well dressed gentleman with a briefcase handcuffed to his wrist, whom I had seen on our first trip to Seoul, curiosity was eating me alive. I had everybody's Passport but his, he was some high "muckety-muck."

Our first stop was Kadena AFB on Okinawa. Kelly explained that sometimes we went to Iwo Jima instead and that the Iwo Landing was fun, downhill north to south and you really had to stand on the brakes. I could see that this whole trip was going to be educational, little did I know.

The Capt. signing off for the weather equipment being unloaded looked kind of familiar. I couldn't believe it, Kenny Rolighed from Edwards. He was trying to upgrade the weather forecasting but wasn't having much luck getting the instruments he needed. The man with the briefcase heard us joking and I noticed he was making notes, hmmm. More curiosity.

Didn't take long for us to get airborne and above the clouds, destination Clark AFB, Philippines and Manila for a couple of cool ones, a big steak and a nice long sleep for our next jump. It just didn't work out that way...best-laid plans of mice and men oft times go awry. We had a couple of cool ones, and a steak dinner but our trip back to base on the local Jitney was interrupted. We passed this place where there was a lot of noise and then this American came flying out the door, literally. Kelly told the driver to stop but he said, "No, no good. Bad place. You don't come out alive." Kelly grabbed his hair and told him he'd break his arm if he didn't go back. Screech, clutch, reverse and we were on the front door. Turns out the guy was one of the five we had brought in and this place was a real "JOINT", like bad news. We helped him up and talked for a few minutes, the people inside were holding his friends till he came back with \$50,000 dollars (American). He was in no condition to help so we told him to stay by the bus.

Though we usually wore Hawaiian Shirts off base at Clark there was no mistaking we were American Airmen, we were wearing Khaki pants. Kelly and I ordered a beer and looked around, some shouting in a back room, two greasy looking guys sitting in chairs leaned back against the wall and eyeing us like we had the plague. Kelly made a suggestion then asked the bartender where the restroom was, just as we suspected, right next to where the two guys were leaning back. This was going to be easier than we thought. I told the barkeep to fill 'em up and we headed for the restroom, we feigned ignorance and started between the two greasers, hooked a toe under the chair leg then stepped on their throat. Mine got a little frisky, I guess because I was the smallest, he twisted my foot and came up with a knife. He swung, I stepped in, grabbed his

wrist with one hand and his arm over mine inside then down real hard, crack! As I stepped away I stomped his instep.

Kelly pointed at his man and told him, “Stay, like a dog, stay.” I noticed the barkeep was coming our way. I side-stepped and stuck him in the leg with my assailants knife. ‘Course all this commotion brought the other men out, equally as greasy and downright hostile for some reason. Kelly stood right there in the door and took them both out, one left and one right. Like I said, “good man.” We stepped inside and closed the door. One was cut pretty bad, one was out, the other two were groggy. Took us a few minutes to get them to help us out the back window. To my surprise it wasn’t necessary; our man by the bus had the barkeep’s gun on the bunch. We loaded up and the Jitney driver took off like a bullet for the base and the hospital.

Kelly and I walked into the BOQ sweating like we’d just run a marathon. Kratz and Markle were playing chess. Kratz looked up and asked if we’d had a good time in town and Kelly told him, “Naw, too quiet tonight.” I showered and died, Kelly was reading a book like that was the only thing in this world on his mind.

The next morning the crew met for breakfast in the terminal building. The view was beautiful. The terrain was perfectly flat for several miles except for Peso Mountain in the east, it rose to more than 8,000’. Kelly said the Huks from WW II ruled the roost out there. They were cannibals but they joined forces with the U.S. to fight the Japs. He said they were ferocious fighters. I thought to myself, “He’s calling them ferocious, what was he last night?”

I cleaned up my pancakes, finished my coffee and headed for Briefing and Flight Planning. Hughey and Hickey checked out the aircraft, dipped the tanks for fuel and oil, kicked the tires, looked for leaks, pulled the control stops on the rudder, elevator and ailerons. Markle wrote down the readings from dipping the tanks. Ground crew was standing by with the fire bottles when Kelly shouted, “Clear one!” It fired off with a belch of smoke like it was supposed to. Then, “Clear two!” Just like clock-work. I yelled, “Clear four!” It was a little slow but it kicked in. Then, “Clear three!” We were ready to roll. Ground crew brought up the tail post, checked the door from outside to make sure it was locked. I looked back and Hughey gave me thumbs up then brought the paper work. We unloaded about half of our cargo with the five civilians. I was worried about them, especially the one that was stabbed. Later learned they were headed for Enowitok Island, an atoll that was being set-up for an Atom Bomb test.

Chapter IV: Saigon, French Indo-China – Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!

“Off we go into the wild blue yonder...” this became a ritual every time I flew with Kelly. The sky was smooth and blue that day except for one small system off the left wing, south. The sun was just right and I saw my first full circle Rainbow...it was dazzling. I later would see many but this was my first, I was in awe. Perfect circle and very vivid colors.

Saigon, somewhere off the nose to the west in what was called the Far East. I guess Columbus was right, this old world is round, if not we went over the edge and onto the other side. Another exotic port of call, foreign places I never dreamed of seeing. We asked Air Traffic Control for permission to make a wide sweep over the city for our passengers. It was different to hear those French accented voices, good clear English but accented. I wondered what to expect in Bangkok. We were allowed one pass and directed to approach Tan Son Nuit on a high, short pattern for the North-South runway. We were cautioned to watch for the guerillas about five miles out, they had been shooting at aircraft on long approaches, especially airliners.

On our pass over the city I was surprised to see two U.S. Navy freighters at the docks, looked like they were unloading. Kelly said they were probably unloading supplies for our instructors in the Military Advisory Group (MAG). I grabbed the glasses, he was sure right about that. One ship had boxes and small cannons, looked like the 20mms we had trained on in military school, the other had jeeps and a small tank. Kelly brought the aircraft around for a short final, I got on the controls with him. I heard a “Ding” then he said he heard one also. Then we heard two or three more. We were hoping they hadn’t hit any hydraulic lines or electrical, no warning lights came on so we breathed a sigh of relief. Do some checking when we get on the ground. Fuel tanks ok because they were self sealing. Kelly handled that C-54 like a fighter, set her down as smooth as glass. You didn’t feel it but you heard “Squeek, Squeek”, the mains were on, that’s all we needed. When we taxied up to the terminal one of the ground crew signaled a flat tire. After we closed down everything and the passengers deplaned Kelly and I went for a look see. We had eight holes but they were all in the tanks except the one that went thru the wheel well door. The Line Chief started rattling off in French, none of us understood a word. I saw Hughey take off for the terminal and in a minute or two he was on his way back with the Air Attache, he had learned the Col. spoke French, required for the job. They talked for a few minutes, then Capt. Kelly, then Kratz, he went to get his maps, then Kelly again. They made a deal for a replacement tire. The ground crew handled the Air France Constellations and could do the job in a little over an hour. We thanked the Air Force Col. for his help. Kratz showed him about where the guerillas were on the map. He invited us to stop in and see him on our return trip thru. He said he’d have some Johnny Walker Black Label and some Dry Monopole Champaign ready for us. I was glad Markle was so conscientious, he stayed to supervise the Frenchmen and help if needed. With the excitement over we went into the terminal for a cup and a short breather. Two hours after we landed we were wheels up and climbing...Bangkok to the North West, about an hour and a half but over very dense jungle. The thought of going down in the jungle gave me goose bumps so I

thought of more pleasant things. Dancing girls tonight maybe. I asked Kelly about that prospect and, with a glint in his eye and a smile on his face, he said, "Does a bear make a mess in the woods? Yeaah!" A few minutes later there was a heavy thunk in number two and lot of smoke came pouring out. The fire warning sounded, Markle hit the extinguisher once...then twice. Kelly called, "Feather on two, prepare for emergency." I called for Hughey to get everybody in their Mae West life preserver, sit down and pull their seatbelts up tight. I called Saigon rescue for alert and the Tower for approach. Kelly was in complete control of the aircraft and brought us around for a straight in approach to the active runway. Thank goodness we didn't get any "Dings" this time.

After we taxied up and parked the Air France guys came over to see if they could help. We explained what the situation was and as soon as Markle checked it out we'd know what we were going to do. Everybody deplaned and went into the terminal coffee shop again. Markle changed his clothes...he made me sick. He looked good in anything he wore, even his fatigues were pressed. He said his Mamasan took real good care of him. I am going to get one of those when we get back to Tokyo. I hung around to watch and help if need be. With the dzus fastners it didn't take long to get to it. It was pretty cut and dried, if there were metal filings in the oil screen we had to have an engine change, just that simple. If not we did some other checks. At the most we were talking three extra days in Saigon, a really beautiful city, The Paris of the Orient as the locals called it. Aside from the oil coming out of the oil screen recess it didn't look too bad but the screen appeared to be stuck. Markle couldn't get it to slide out as it was suppose to do. I handed him a good long handled screwdriver to assist in the removal, a little leverage did the trick and it slid out for all to see. Markle had laid out a white towel and laid the screen on it with care. No question about it, we were stuck for an engine change. Now we had to see how soon the engine change crew from Clark could get here. To our surprise our Liaison man showed up, he had been notified by the Tower when we called in that we were returning. He took care of the passengers and reported back that the crew from Clark would be in this evening before sunset and asked that we do what we could to help facilitate the change. We all sat down in the rear of the cabin and had a cup while we checked our status, what funds on hand, where we were going to stay, what we were going to eat. What we were going to eat was easy; as long as it lasted we were going to have Ham sandwiches, maybe eggs in the terminal in the morning. Definitely sleeping on the plane. If we went into town we had to meet the jeep at the Hotel Continental at nine PM for the ride to the airport, the town was under Martial Law and no one was allowed on the streets after nine o'clock at night. No Exceptions. Nothing to worry about there, we didn't have enough money to go running around so we stayed put, wishing we had an extra tool box so more of us could help loosen everything to make it easier for the change crew. We explained our dilemma to the Air France guys and they said they would rent us the tools to do the job. Markle said, "RENT, Thanks a lot you bunch of jerks. Next time you give a war don't call us." I'm not sure any of them understood him. Any time you asked one of them anything he always said, "Je ne compompa." Shrugging his shoulders and palms up, like he didn't know what we were

saying. Kelly and I went to help Markle, at least give him moral support. One of the mechanics from Air France came over with a few tools and sheepishly offered them. I thanked him, Markle ignored him. Unfortunately they were metric sizes and our nuts and bolts are SAE so we couldn't use his tools anyway. I took them back and asked if he knew that to start with, he grinned and nodded. I realized they were putting us on and because of the language difference we didn't understand them and vice-a-versa.

It began to look like we were making some headway when more and more pieces of the engine were being laid out on the tarmac. The crew from Clark would be bringing a lift to handle the prop and the engine so that wasn't a problem. Markle sure had a system. He'd take something off and lay it down in a row with something related to it then take something else off. Just like I did with a weapon...his just had a lot more pieces. There was a method to our madness also, if we had every thing done for them we got to sleep and they did the night shift work. With luck we could make it to Bangkok tomorrow evening.

The sky was beginning to get a little rosy so I went over to the operations office to see if they had heard anything about our change crew. They had an ETA that looked like another forty-five minutes. That's ok, later than we expected but still ok. I got three cokes out of the machine in the lobby and headed back to the plane. Walking along there drinking my coke it suddenly dawns on me that here I am halfway 'round the world and I'm drinking a coke like I'm at home down at the corner store. Markle and Kelly were up on the platform when I got there. I said, "Hey guys, look here, I just went down to the corner store and got some cokes. Take a break." The irony of it struck them funny also.

Hickey found a Frenchman in the Tower to talk electronics with and they became friends real quick. How things had changed with the new transistors and speculating how the equipment was going to change in the future. There was a Mayday and the Frenchman became real busy. Hickey stood silently by, waiting and listening.

We were all getting greasier by the minute helping Markle peel off the different pieces so the change would go quicker. I kept a wary eye on the sky looking for the DC-3 change crew plane when I saw Hickey walking our way and shaking his head. He motioned for Capt. Kelly to come down and I sensed that something was wrong. They took a few steps away from the plane and spoke in hushed tones. Kelly made a wild gesture and said, "Geez!!! I can't believe this", then calmly, "Ok, get the crew together, let's have a cup in the tail of the plane." When everybody assembled and was comfortable he gave us the bad news, "Our engine change crew went down in the jungle not ten miles from here. The bad news is the French Rescue helicopter couldn't land because of the guerillas and they didn't see any signs of life. We should hear more after they refuel and go back to the site. They'll come straight here to let us know, hopefully they can find out something before it gets too dark. I'll have to talk to Capt. Williams to see what can be done about another change crew. They certainly can't get airborne before daybreak so let's go into town, relax over dinner and get a good nights sleep. We can hit it bright and early in the morning and have everything ready when they get here. OK?"

Ol' Gung Ho Hughey wanted to organize a party and go bring our guys out but Kelly dissuaded him. Kratz sided with Kelly, "No good would come of that. Our place is here to be ready to go when we can." Didn't make me any difference but I was ready to see the sights in downtown Saigon if given half a chance...and this looked like it. As if on queue, Capt. Williams, our Liaison man appeared with a jeep to take us into town when we were ready. Everybody started digging out their shaving gear to freshen up. I fished out our Passports for those going into town. Between the two rest rooms on the aircraft and the one in the terminal all of us were ready to go in thirty minutes. The jeep looked like there was nothing but arms and legs sticking out in all directions after all of us climbed on. A merry bunch of airmen on our way to town for an evening of fun. Even though some of our fellow airmen may have died there was nothing we could do to help and standing around wringing our hands was useless.

Williams let us off in front of the Hotel Continental and pointed out a few good places to have a bite but gave us strict instructions not to cause any trouble and to be at this exact spot at nine PM for the ride back to the airport. The only way to get to the airport was with a driver that knew the password to get thru the check point. Welcome to Martial Law, learn something new everyday. It is a bit sobering when it slaps you in the face in such cold terms. We all bailed out and went into the hotel.

The hotel was like a sidewalk cafe in Paris except the entire first floor/lobby was open air, about two hundred feet square. The hotel was above, supported by the columns. The check-in desk was in the middle, lobby/cafe/bar filled the rest of the area, really unique. The six of us took a table that had green felt in the center, appeared to be a card table, to get our bearings and make plans for the evening. Who wanted to go to what restaurant, shop for souvenirs, find a dance hall. All the discussion was fueled by the bartender who kept us supplied and answered our questions in faltering but good English. The sun had set and if we were going to do anything before nine o'clock we better get at it. Just then I saw a familiar face on the front sidewalk on a bicycle. It was the young lady in the information booth at the airport. I caught her attention and went to talk with her. She was a perfect example of mixed Asian and European blood, small, slender but well endowed, as beautiful as her name, Pleon Thongpow. She wore a high-necked, white, stylish, native dress. The big puffy shoulders and tight sleeves, full-length skirt that was split to the hip, making it that much more enticing.

Her bicycle was a work of art, we had a difficult time talking about it but we each got our point across. She finally understood that I wanted to take her to dinner so we set off down the street to a very unique place owned by her Uncle. The aunt met us at the door and began howling and laughing and called the uncle. They ushered us to a seat and showered us with service. I understood I could have the service either way I wanted it, sitting on the floor, in a chair, knife and fork or with chopsticks. What few occasions I'd had in Tokyo to learn the ways of the Far East I'd learned well and wanted to impress her so I chose on the floor and with chop sticks. Her aunt grinned real big and bowed, then quickly brought us some very good French Wine. The meal was three different kinds of vegetables and meat. Best tasting beef I ever had, water buffalo

cut in thin strips...very easy to eat. After the meal we had another glass of wine then set out for her home before the curfew. She lived just on the edge of the downtown area so I thought I'd be able to make it back before the last ride to the airport. The only problem was we tarried too long beside a tree in her front yard. It's odd how language is not a barrier at a time like that.

When I arrived at the Hotel Continal the Gendarms informed me I was too late. Oh, Geez! Now what? One showed me to a small hotel but they wouldn't open the door per their instructions. The guard walked me back to the Continal, it was closed up tighter than a drum. He gave me his pillow and suggested I lay on the bar. "Domia, Domia", he said many times with his hands together and his head laying on them. I got the message and got up on the bar, laid my head back and was asleep almost immediately.

In my dreams I felt something on my forehead and crushed it with the back of my hand and woke up instantly, yelling. The guard came running to see what had happened. He shined a light on my face, the floor and exclaimed. I couldn't understand him. He leaned down and picked up a monstrous, 4" to 5" long cockroach. I almost puked, I had the bug's guts all over my forehead. I used the guard's pillow to wipe the mess off and went to sit on the curb with him and his buddy. Trying to talk to them was a lost cause, little or no English and little or no Vietnamese or French. I realized that these people were really caught in a difficult situation. The French were going to move out, they had been occupied by the Japanese in WW II and now the Chinese would probably move in. I'm sure their leaders were ready to throw up their hands and surrender. The guerillas out in the boondocks weren't making it any easier.

I had almost fallen asleep leaning against the street light post when we heard a tremendous explosion in the distance. We finally realized it was down toward the docks. The street in front of the hotel went due south to the docks and we could see something on fire and see more explosions taking place. I thought to myself, "There go the ships in the dock." I later learned my thoughts were correct. While we were looking south we saw a vehicle start up the street, maybe a few blocks, then turn west. As still as it was at maybe midnight we could hear the engine, he was really motoring. We heard tires screeching and the engine accelerating. From where we were we could see directly west up the main boulevard, a miniature Champs Elysees, walkways, benches, Gazebos...really beautiful. The vehicle turned east, toward us then realized it was a dead end. When he turned in front of us he crashed into the post I had been leaning on. One of the guards threw me a .45 when the four men in the stolen jeep ran for the building across from us. In a flash they were up the fire escape. One of the guards went to intercept the people chasing them and told them they had gone up on top of the building. The guard I was with fired two or three shots at the fugitives as they ascended the fire escape. Yelling the whole time, expletives I'm sure, because he missed with every shot. The people inside the building must've been about to go out of their mind wondering what was happening and hearing the slugs hit the wall.

I heard our guys over on the other side, they were hollering like it was Custer's last stand. Sounded like a whole army was over there. The shooting served it's purpose... the fugitives came back to our side. One of them stuck his head over the parapet and the guard I was with got him.

The swan dive was straight out of a Hollywood western. I mean, ooossssseeewwww, splat!!! I watched all this from the safety of a fence but when another stuck his nose over I got in the fray and brought mine down...first blood. It didn't feel good but I was ready for more. The rest of the fugitives on the roof went to the other side and were taken care in similar fashion. I sat down on the curb when I was sure the excitement was over and waited for my Guards to come back. They made fun of me sitting there, leaning against the pole, half asleep with a .45 in my hand. I know I must have looked pretty stupid. The people from the other side turned out to be our Navy Shore Patrol. One checked my ID while the other one tried the jeep. Fortunately the damage was minor so they took it back to the docks. The local medical people arrived to clean up the mess and I sat down on the curb again.

That's exactly where I stayed, sound asleep, up against that pole. Getting a ride to the airport in the daytime was no problem. I had a good breakfast at the Cafe in the airport. The little Vietnamese girl looked at me kinda funny but I explained to her what had happened and asked her to have dinner with me again. She nodded and we planned to meet downtown at the same time, same place.

Man!!! I'm telling you, Kelly was all over my case when I showed up at the aircraft. I explained what had happened so he wasn't too upset with me. To tell the truth I think he was jealous and the guys really let me have it all day. Kelly gave me the rundown on our guys in the jungle, all had perished but not from the crash...that was the hard part to take. The French Commandos had gone in and brought out all eight bodies, decapitated. Our people at Clark had assembled another crew and they were due in before sunset. Markle and Hughey were bustin' buns and knuckles to get everything as ready as they could and had just about reached a stopping place.

The news about the explosion on the docks was bad. A team of guerillas had thrown a large bomb into a bar killing all occupants including fifteen American Sailors. Nothing was mentioned about how they were caught or how they died. The chase thru the streets of downtown Saigon deserved mentioning, it was as funny as a Keystone Kops movievehicles up on two wheels around corners, shooting in both directions, the fabulous crash at the end. Hollywood could never get a stunt crew to do it that good.

The day progressed slowly. We did everything we could to tidy up as much as possible. Markle inspected the parts that had been removed, disassembled and cleaned a couple. Kelly and I visited the Embassy and gave the Ambassador our report and obtained permission for our crew to get a partial payment, roughly equivalent to what we would have spent for hotels and meals...this, of course, went on our expense report and we would be reimbursed when we got back to Tokyo so it all balanced out in the end.

We had a big surprise when we got back to the airport, the engine change crew was there and were at it hot and heavy. The crew chief estimated he'd be through about sun-up, said we'd be safe to schedule a nine o'clock departure for our passengers. I thought, "With luck we'll be out of here by ten, maybe noon."

As the evening approached we loaded up in the jeep for the ride into town. Going thru the check point was weird, our driver had to know the password, one for going and one for coming... he got them mixed up and our Liaison man had to come check him out. No body moved for almost an hour. My date was getting tired of waiting. She'd phoned the airport to see if we'd left and learned our situation from a friend. Dinner was terrific but it seemed to be a waste of time, a necessary evil, we hurried thru it and set out for other activities of a more personal nature.

Unaware that there was any danger I was walking down the middle of the street whistling and singing just like I was back in Dallas on my way home from the neighborhood movie and, as luck would have it, I was too late for the ride back to the airport. Fortunately the Gendarms recognized me and waved...big grin on their face. With some hand signs and broken English they got the message across that I shouldn't be walking alone, certainly not whistling. If there were guerillas in town I may be kidnapped and held for ransom. In short, sit down and shut up. They both grinned and looked at each other, shaking their heads. More hand signals and talk, they said I was big man on the radio news. Well, so be it, I was ready to try for a few of those "Zs" that are so popularly characterized as rest.

I must have been asleep at least twenty minutes when a special truck came by going to the airport. I really think the guards called in and told them who I was and how I had helped the night before. At any rate I recognized the driver as one who had driven Kelly and I to the Embassy earlier in the day. There were three other men in the back and he spoke good enough English to make me understand that he was going to the airport and for me to get in up front with him. His English name translated to Steve and he thought my name was great, "Oh, Stoney...Steve", pointing at me then himself. "Stoney...Steve...buddies." I told him, "Ok", and gave him the big O with thumb and forefinger. I thought to myself, "Back in Texas at A&M that's Thursday." The little finger being Monday, the ring finger Tuesday and the middle finger being Wednesday. Didn't make sense to me either.

The night air was cool and comfortable so I relaxed and enjoyed the ride. When we came to the roadblock where Steve was to give the password we had to stop and get out. My sensors went up, something was wrong. They didn't ask for our passports, password, nothing, just, "Get out", in plain English. Made me wonder till I realized that was all they could say. The five of us were standing three on the passenger side and the driver and one of his men on the other. The shooting started and I went down with the others. I was hurt but not bad, a round had grazed my forehead. The executioners came down in the ditch to see if we were dead so I lay perfectly still, no breathing. They were satisfied and they all jumped in the truck and took off laughing at their good fortune.

I came out of the ditch about two steps ahead of Steve. He had a wound about the same as mine, looked bad but wasn't. We shook hands like we were brothers, in a sense we were. We had endured adversity together, we had survived. We gave each other a hug, as the French always do, but this time I didn't mind. I was glad to be alive.

The language barrier wasn't as wide between me and Steve as it was with the guards

downtown so, like true troopers we turned and headed for town. A mile or two down the road Steve went off to the side, I heard voices and he came back with two bicycles, God only knows where he got them and I wasn't about to ask questions. I made the sign of the cross on him and climbed on the girl's bike he offered me. I thought, "Gender schmender, I'm riding." I looked over at Steve and he's riding along there grinning as big as life and enjoying it.

Another three miles or so and Steve motioned for me to follow and I did. We rolled into a beautiful yard, like an Oriental Garden. Steve stopped and got off then knocked on the door of an extremely attractive house. The man invited us in. We kicked off our shoes and sat on the floor. Over wine and/or tea Steve talked, I picked up a word here and there ...a little Japanese. The man went to the phone on the wall. "Hai, mushy, mushy...ahn no nay...choto dozo ..." from there on I was lost, too fast or too intricate but it didn't take long for his words to take effect. Before he sat down there was a knock on the door, "Mamasan, dozo." His wife opened the door and a man stepped in, obviously Eurasian. He asked, in perfect English, "What is it you need?" Steve looked at me and I took that to mean we were going to attack. I told the stranger we needed a Bazooka, some rifle grenades, a BAR and a couple of '03 Springfields with sniper scopes. He looked at our host, bowed and left. Less than thirty minutes later he was back, not only with the weapons but the people to use them. I took one of the sniper rifles and Steve took the other. We said our goodbyes and thank yous to our host and stepped out side. A fair sized vehicle was waiting, the men were inside. Steve stepped in and we were off on a hunting Safari

It didn't take long to find our prey. They were a bit to brazen. About a mile north and a quarter mile east of where they took us out we saw a campfire. Steve turned off of the road and headed toward the blaze. When he pulled up and stopped the men in the back bailed out and assembled on either side behind us. Slowly and watchfully we made our way toward the gathering of guerillas. I signaled to the Bazooka man to aim and wait for me to signal. That old 1903 Springfield felt right at home as I brought it down to aim at the head of the leader standing in the middle of the clearing. I made a few adjustments then aimed again and squeezed off a round. The leader went down and in the confusion the Bazooka round hit the group, exploding it's shrapnel and the fire. Our group jumped to the task and took out the rest of the guerilla camp, even after they were dead they slashed and stabbed to confirm the kills, this was their revenge. Their opportunity to even the score and they took advantage of it.

When we regrouped, cleaned up our gear and confiscated all of the weapons one of our team mentioned that a victim was his brother. He shrugged with a look of hatred on his face. The weapons we acquired were mostly Russian made, the sub-machinegun reminded me of Sue and her standing in the road. What a sight, never forget it.

Steve slapped me on the shoulder, grinned real big and gave me the universal, "Thumbs Up" for ok. We climbed in the vehicle, leaving the bodies for their comrades or the vultures, whichever came first. Cold? You bet, they were just as cold when they took out our friends, they didn't deserve any mercy and we weren't going to show any.

We drove on out to the airport and Steve dropped me off at the loading door. It was wide

open because it was a warm night. I hoisted my self up on the rope easy enough and bedded down without disturbing anyone, I thought.

At breakfast Kelly steered me to a table so we could talk and let me know in no uncertain terms that I didn't have his permission to go running off into the night with some native girl. I replied, "Hey! She's not just some native girl, She's a sweet young lady, like your sister I imagine so get down off of your high horse. I spent some time with her and enjoyed it very much, as I hope she did. I was late getting back to the pickup point but a special run brought me home."

"Yeah, at three AM. I hope it was worth it."

"What is this, jealousy or envy? If it is envy, you wish you were there, if it's jealousy you WISH you were there. Do you know the difference?"

He answered, "Yeah, I wish both."

We both laughed and finished our eggs with a grin on our faces. Over coffee and toast, third course custom in French-Indo-China, Steve came by the table. I was afraid he was going to spill the beans but he got my signal, shook hands and went on his way. Kelly asked, "What was that all about?" I explained that he was the one that made the special run last night and he seemed satisfied. On the way out of the terminal I detoured over to the Information Counter. She grinned real big, I mean REAL big. I stepped behind the counter to her obvious dismay, took her in my arms and gave her a kiss we would both remember for a long time. When our lips parted the crowd that had gathered smiled and clapped, amid," Mon Ami, "Sacre Blue." One American in the crowd. "Damn, lucky stiff." As I walked away I said, "You're damn right."

Out at the aircraft our people were buttoning everything up and getting ready to go. Our passengers were standing on the veranda waiting for the signal to load. The crew was dressed and waiting on us. Kelly and I quickly got into fresh Kahkis while Hickey and Hughey put our brass and ribbons on our shirts. One of the engine change crew moved the steps over into position and the crew chief stood at the bottom. He gave a signal but not to the passengers. A large band and a group of dignitaries came toward the steps; the band played the French National Anthem then the Stars Spangled Banner. We didn't know what was going on, some celebrity maybe.

The distinguished gentleman stopped at the bottom of the steps, unrolled a document and began to read in French. I recognized my name but nothing else. Our Ambassador, not a part of the ceremony nodded and I understood. I went down the steps and the distinguished gentleman, the leader of French-Indo-China stepped forward and placed a ribbon and a medal around my neck. Then he spoke in English, "for meritorious service to the people of France and the people of French-Indo-China you are awarded the Crouix de Guerre. The Cross of War. We thank you for your bravery. We shall forever be indebted to you. You have but to show this medal and what ever you wish will be granted. I am personally grateful; you are welcome in my home anytime."

I was spellbound, shocked is more like it. I was doing ok till he kissed me on both cheeks and the band played the Stars Spangled Banner, never could get through it without shedding a tear.

The band played the French National Anthem as they marched away. Here I was surrounded by maybe a thousand people and totally alone. I looked down at the medal and said a silent thank you. For the first time I think I realized that just a few hours before, without regard for self, I had put myself in harms way to protect others. I didn't deserve it but maybe that's how Audie Murphy felt.

Our guys came down the steps and crowded around, a member of the French Legation came to give me the box for the medal and the rolled Citation with a hug and a kiss on each cheek. The French never know when to quit. Our passengers came forward and slowly climbed the steps, shaking my hand and congratulating me. Our Ambassador, last in line, said, "You understand, of course, that the United States cannot acknowledge that this ever happened?" I asked, "What?" He smiled and walked away with a grin on his face. About twenty paces away he turned, facing me at rigid attention, gave me the sharpest salute I've ever received then turned and walked away, not waiting for a return salute. The ultimate honor.

En route to Bangkok I told Kelly what had happened.

Chapter XV: Bangkok, Siam – Fun and Games

With clipped, sharp, perfect English the controller gave us landing instructions and yes we could make a sweep over the city. I saw some beautiful Buddhist Temples from the air that I would later see on the ground in town. Up to now I had been on a sight seeing trip, Kelly told me to take it in. Nervous I guess, after watching the master I felt guilty but when I looked at everything there was very little to do. He had rolled out from our sweep over the city and lined up on the west-east runway. All I had to do was call Manifold Pressure, RPM, Prop pitch control, Flaps and Gear down. You let it settle, ease back on the wheel and grease it on, “Squeek-Squeek.” Right on the numbers.

When we rolled up to the terminal it looked like the entire city had turned out to see someone off on the airliner parked ahead of us. It was a small four engine aircraft, De Havilland Dove, beautiful and fast. There was very little ground crew so our guys slid down the ladder and put in the locks and tail post. Hughey and Hickey found a set of stairs and brought them out. I could just imagine the Ambassador’s wife going down the ladder in her dress.

The Air Attache had the Liaison man meet us and take care of getting the passengers in to town and a Jitny for us. On the way into town we made a short stop at a very impressive residence. It was up on pillars, solidly built and decorated in the traditional Siamese style, lots of extra flourishes, pretty tails on the eaves, extra floors to make it look like a Pagoda, trimmed in gold...accented with red, orange, turquoise and a little black here and there. A distinguished gentleman in uniform, with three stars on the epaulet, met us where the drive curved in front of the house.

He greeted the driver as an old friend. “Beely, my friend. How are you? Bring your friends in for lemonade in the shade of my porta-cochere. We must visit for a few minutes and I am eager to meet these people. Come! Come!”

He was a gracious host, absolutely insisting that we relax and enjoy the beauty of the countryside and the understated elegance of his home. He talked privately with “Beely” for a few minutes then came around to meet each of us. He took the time to find out something about each one of us before moving on to the next. Our lemonade was presented on a wheeled cart that would put the Astors to shame. The young lady, his daughter, was equally attentive with unmatched grace, charm and typical Siamese beauty...indefinable.

About half way through my lemonade a man about my age, in a uniform similar to that of our host, drove in the drive and under the house. He came up the stairway to the porch, embraced the older man and greeted everyone with a wave. The gentleman with the stars was his father and he brought his son over to shake hands with me, it was truly an honor. He graduated from Texas University two years prior and was presently in the equivalent of our Cadets program in the Siamese Air Force. His father was the Commanding General of the Siamese Air Force. The son was to be the first to join our forces in Korea and was to return with us to Tokyo. The son and I had a very animated and exciting conversation, flying planes with our hands...dogfights and all.

All too soon we had to leave. The General was expecting some later guests.

His name was Bill but we called him “Beely” from then on. Beely was a fantastic guide. He helped us get checked in to the hotel, showed us where to change our money at the best rate (would you believe they had some real Confederate States of America money on display under glass). He informed us if there was anything we wanted to buy we should order it going west and change our money for the next country coming back. That way we could almost quadruple our available spending capital. He told us where the best steak house in town was and left us to our own devices. The Chez Paree, a restaurant and club, was owned and operated by an American G.I. that took his discharge in Siam after WWII. He was making a fortune and glad to share a few tips. I ordered a few items, Sterling silver rings with pigeon blood Star Ruby stones and Bristol Blue Star sapphires. I was also able to acquire three stones, uncut Star Rubies, that looked like dark colored rocks you’d find along the side of the road. After dinner we made our way back to the hotel in the Samilars, my driver was Pyek from that time forward, several trips and two years later. He was also the driver for our mutual friend, T/Sgt. Bert Woolum. Bert was in my first Flight when I went through basic training as an instructor, he was now in Washington, D.C. in the V.I.P. Squadron flying dignitaries all over the world.

After walking around town and shopping a little we were ready for some action. Hughey wanted some girls and I think Kratz was too shy to say he did too. Pyek and his friends took us on a short sight seeing trip. The bells on the Samilars sounded like the ones on that David Rose record, “Sleigh Ride.” We had a quick visit at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. The grounds and entrance immediately grabbed your attention. I was spellbound it was so beautiful. I thought this was something and we hadn’t been inside yet. We went thru a large Torii style gate and stood at the opening of the garden, it was breath taking. Pyek explained how everything fit together as man nurtured the earth, lived in this atmosphere and ascended to the sky. He then led us down a long walkway beside the Temple. At the doorway he picked up the three foot long mallet and struck the five foot diameter gold disk. This he explained was to drive away the evil spirits and to alert those inside that honored guests had arrived. He opened a box car sized door and we all just stood there, transfixed...as if in suspended animation. The Buddha, with it’s many arms, tight curls on it’s head sat twenty feet or more tall on a raised altar. two of it’s arms curved down to it’s lap and, on a large red pillow, sat this huge green Emerald. It was at least a foot long and ten inches wide. It’s energy and beauty made it glow. Pyek went to his knees and said a prayer, I joined him as did a few of the others.

We slowly backed away and found the door. No one said a word till we were back in the Samilars and had ridden down the street. Kelly looked at me and said, “That is the most awe inspiring thing I’ve ever seen.” What could I say but, “Me too.”

“I noticed you even forgot to take a picture.”

“Man, I forgot everything. That is incredible.”

Pyek thanked us for our reverence of his country and it’s beliefs. “You are fine gentlemen, I am proud to know you.”

Markle stuck his two cents in and said, "There are a few people that would argue that point." We all had a big laugh and the spell was broken. "On to an evening of wine, women and song", shouted Hughey.

On the way we passed the monument that the Siamese people hold most dear, their victory in WWI and the dead are honored there. It was impressive. Not far down the boulevard was our destination, the club Cathay. An open air place, more like a palace. The typical turned up corners and all brightly colored. Pyek parked at the edge of the street and walked to the entrance, said a few words to a man, handed him something and came back to his Samilar. He smiled and said, "You will have good time."

This place would drive most American Clubs out of business. The decor was magnificent, typical Siamese. The overhead fans were powered by humans and the band was too. They were right out of the Big Band Era. They played Claude Thornhill, The Dorseys, Harry James, Glenn Miller, Woody Herman... you name it they were great. The girls we danced with were exceptional, but then they had to be, they had to dance with men from all over the world. The lady I was dancing with said she liked to dance with the men from Spain, they liked to do the Tango. Well, I'm not the world's greatest but I sure gave her a whirl or two she won't forget anytime soon.

Early the next morning "Beely" picked us up at the hotel and, in his usual "lead-foot" style, drove us to the airport. Kelly, Kratz and I went to briefing. Kelly spoke to the Officer-in-Charge and was escorted behind the counter, I expressed my concern and Kelly allayed my fears by asking me to check weather and fill out our flight plan. Kratz was too engrossed in the winds aloft to notice what was happening. Markle came in with the totals, fuel and oil, manifests for passengers and cargo and Hughey's figures for aircraft weight and balance. Kratz did his magic and finished up about the time Kelly came out of the Airport Manager's office.

What a beautiful day it was to be flying...not a cloud in the deep blue sky and only a breath of wind coming right down our runway. Just as we were about to climb on board a sharp looking, twin-boomed Gloucester Meteor Jet landed. Half way up the steps another "squeaked on", then another till there was a complete Squadron lined up on the ramp, parked side by side. Climbing out Kelly told me what the Airport Manager had to say. I stopped him and said, "The Meteors are coming." He just grinned and said, "Yeah and that group of Meteors? They are on their way to Korea. Looks like everybody is going to get some combat experience out of this one. I wonder when Congress is going to vote us in."

Chapter XVI: Calcutta, India – Crisis at the Airport

Bangkok to Calcutta was just short of 625 miles so our passengers had a chance to settle back and read, have coffee or get a good nap. That last part sounded good to me but I had several things to check on, the Ambassador's wife in particular. I was surprised to see she was sitting with the Diplomat going to Calcutta and seemed to be enjoying his company. No matter, that was my main concern, that she was comfortable and happy. The gentleman with the briefcase seemed preoccupied with his thoughts, staring out of the window. He hardly acknowledged my question, "Everything alright, Sir?" All I got was a, "Umh." I must admit it was beautiful looking out the window. The sky was clear, we could see the ocean 8,000 feet below...like a dark green carpet. Off to the north was a high bank of clouds, billowing up to more than 35,000 feet. It was a giant thunderhead working up a storm. Thank goodness we were going to pass well to the south of it, probably never feel the slightest breeze from it but we'll keep an eye on it anyway.

Hughey was checking his paper work and getting everything ready for the Customs man since this was our Port of Entry into India. Kelly said sometimes this Customs Officer was a real bear, other times he was a breeze. Approaching Calcutta we could see the huge Delta formed by the infamous Ganges River. It was so red it reminded me of Oklahoma and the Red River, in the winter the winds blow that red Okie dust all over Texas. I pulled my flashlight and took an inspection survey of the tail section behind the rear bulkhead. The cables, pulleys etc. seemed to be in good order. Interesting to watch the autopilot move the controls. After a short stop in the restroom I poured a cup and had a visit with Hughey. I was really impressed with his plans for the future. After his present hitch was up he planned to go to college then re-enlist and try for OCS or Cadets, he was going to major in Electrical Engineering. I told him that was a good move and he might give some thought to Electronics. We talked about the USAFI school in downtown Tokyo, maybe pick up a few courses there in the evenings like I was. We could go to classes or mail in the assignments. On trips like this that was ideal.

We hit a little clear air turbulence, I almost lost my coffee. I checked my watch and made a quick calculation, we were off at 0715 and it was 1015 now, should be on deck in another twenty to thirty minutes. We had some cargo to unload, probably the Diplomat's affects, I made a mental note that we'd be on the ground about an hour then started for the front office. "Mr. Briefcase" waved for my attention and informed me he was going to be meeting with some people and would need about an hour. "We'll have to clear that with our Liaison man ." He smiled and replied, "You don't clear anything with him, just tell him I need the time, ok? If you like, my people will tell the Tower to hold your clearance?" I thought, " That pretty well clears that up, in no uncertain terms." I smiled, gave him a short salute and said, "Yes, Sir."

I slid into my seat, put on the headphones, cinched up my seat belt and told Kelly of my conversation with "Mr. Briefcase."

Kelly said, "Geez, who does this guy think he is? He can't tell us how to run our airline."

Air Traffic Control was quick to answer when I advised them of our location and intentions.

In very precise English he came back, "Yes, Sir. Our visibility is unlimited, our barometer reading is 30.01 inches of Mercury, you should prepare for a left hand pattern for the West - East runway. You can come right to a heading of 270* and you should have the Airport in sight."

"Yes, sir, we do have the airport in sight and coming to 270*. Are you expecting any other traffic on the runways?"

"We have been advised that there is a group of aircraft in bound. We have been instructed to give them every service as quickly as possible. They will have priority."

"Aha, there was a fair sized group over in Bangkok. Did you service that group?"

"Yes, sir. We understand they are en route to Korea. We wished them Godspeed and Happy Landings."

"We are directly north of your control tower and will be turning on final shortly. Thank you for your courtesy."

"A pleasure, Sahib."

Kelly called out his numbers, Markle and I fed in the changes in preparation for landing. Final approach was perfect, the flare flawless and he "squeaked" it on like a pro.

I told him, "Pan-Am couldn't do it any better."

"I plan on going to Lockheed when I get out. If I make it I'll let you know. If I get the job I'm shooting for I'll hire you and we can both go back to Edwards," grinning from ear to ear.

"U.S. Aircraft # 5501, our Customs Officer will require all of your papers and Passports when the door is opened. Please instruct your passengers to be patient. This is a new procedure for us and we will process your papers as quickly as possible. You may park directly in front of the Terminal Building. The Limousine for the Diplomatic Courier will be waiting. Calcutta Tower out."

I clicked the mike button to acknowledge receiving the message then thought about what the tower had said.

"Kelly, something's up. You never call attention to a Courier like that. The handcuff on his case is bad enough ." I got on the P.A. and asked Hughey to come up front. He had a knack for looking guilty when he knew he didn't do anything. He asked, with a nervous grin, "What'd I do?"

"Nothing I hope and I hope you don't have to. Some how you have to go with the Courier, as a last resort, follow him and I mean stick with him like three day old shorts...but...don't let him know it. I don't know what you're looking for but I don't like the way they called attention to the fact that he is on board. Call the tower the instant the Limo stops, I want to know where and, if you can find out, why. You got that?"

Slightly confused he replied, "Yes, Sir. No, Sir." He headed for the rear to take care of the Customs papers before he opened the door.

The minute we stopped in front of the terminal two uniformed guards rolled out the red carpet and the Limo pulled up. A very distinguished looking gentleman alighted after the driver opened the door and walked briskly up the carpet to the steps and waited at the bottom.

The customs man had his hand open the instant Hughey opened the door and he obliged him. Kelly and I locked down the aircraft. Hughey and Markle started to go down the stairs to put in the tail post but the Customs man cautioned against it and the two guards at the bottom of the stairs unshouldered their rifles and pushed a round in the chamber. The Limousine driver drew his weapon and assumed the position, like it or not we had a stand-off and we didn't know why. Thank goodness our passengers knew nothing about the activities on the ramp. At this point I didn't either but it took Markle about half a minute to bring me and Kelly up to speed with a quiet whisper. The Diplomat, the Ambassador's wife and the Courier showed some interest but Hughey allayed their concerns when he told them, "Customs has to verify our papers, it'll only be a few minutes."

I stepped out on the platform at the top of the stairs to speak to the Customs man. I explained it was a necessary safety precaution for our men to install the Tail Post to prevent the aircraft from tilting back when people crowded at the door. This seemed to satisfy his concern and he allowed Hughey and Markle to do their thing after he explained it to his two guards at the bottom of the stairs. The gentleman waiting was getting a bit nervous the longer he waited. I really thought we were going to have an incident on our hands. One of the guards followed him and stuck the barrel in his ribs when Hughey opened the baggage door for the gear pins and control locks. Hughey took the rifle and decked him in a flash and had the weapon pointed at the other guard before he knew what was happening. The Limo Driver was in position with weapon in hand again. The other guard quickly assumed a peaceful, passive posture and politely bowed to the gentleman across the carpet with hands together in the prayer position, saying, "A thousand pardons, Sahib."

Much to our surprise everything went smoothly from here on. Our papers were cleared and our passengers deplaned. We all went inside for a brief cooling down when the Airport Security Chief suggested we all calm our nerves with a cup of tea. During the conversation that followed he explained they had a Russian Diplomat arrive less than an hour earlier and everyone was still a bit on edge.

The Courier, the Diplomat and Hughey shared the limo into town and the American Embassy branch office in Calcutta. Hughey feigned some excuse to get a message to his Mom back in the States and the Courier was ready to go back to the airport in twenty minutes. Instead of the limo they had a driver in a jeep, quite a come down.

Our MATS Liaison man finally showed up and smoothed everything out, he spoke the language and knew the people. Kelly knew him from the States at a previous posting. It was like long lost brothers meeting. They had been at some base up in Utah or Idaho, I never did get it straight.

An hour or so later we were ready to make like a bird. For lack of ground crew Hughey did the honors with the Fire Bottle while Kelly, Markle and I started the engines. Hughey pulled the gear pins and tail post then scampered up the stairs, locking the door behind him. The Customs man pulled the stairs clear and I was glad to get out of there. Kelly looked at me, wiped his brow

and said, “Wheeeeew.” Kratz, the Navigator got a belly laugh out of that and said, “Come ten degrees right and head for the Khyber Pass.” Some of these jokes were over my head but I laughed with everybody else for fear of looking like an idiot. Hickey was sitting there with his earphones on and didn’t hear what was going on. I think he was listening to a stateside or Aussie station most of the time cause he’d come out with some of the strangest remarks at odd times.

We had a straight out departure and headed for New Delhi. I had hoped Kelly would make a detour and fly over the Taj Mahal, sure wanted to get some pictures. Checking with Air Traffic Control we learned no one was allowed to fly near the Taj Mahal for fear the vibrations would harm the structure. Silliest thing I ever heard but I guess it had some merit.

Hughey had ordered two large platters of snacks and cold cuts from the in-flight restaurant and we made a feast out of it. The Ambassador’s wife seemed to enjoy it more than any one, she really put the chow away. We all wished Hughey had ordered more.

New Delhi proved to be a real exciting adventure, more than we were ready for. Arrival was normal, customs was a breeze because our Port of Entry had been Calcutta. The Ambassador met his wife and thanked us for taking such good care of her. She was most gracious in her praise for the entire crew and Hughey’s snacks. The Ambassador had some of his people unload his wife’s things which Hughey supervised. The Ambassador and his Lady departed in the long, black Cadillac Limousine with the American Flags on the fenders, their van followed. Made me proud.

I went through Operations to check things out and joined the crew in the restaurant. We were down for the night so everybody was having a beer. I passed on the beer, it was European style, room temperature, hot. Our Liaison man was going to drive us into town then bring us back out later so we could soak up some of the local flavor. We planned to sleep on the plane cause the overnight per diem was higher here than anywhere else. The hotels didn’t have air conditioning anyway.

Captain Charles “Marty” Martin was a wild man in the mini-bus he had for our transportation into town from Don Pallam Airport. I never understood why the Indians were so proud of it. The airport was way out in the country, dusty dirt roads all the way. The only thing good to be said about it was the unusual sights to see on the way. Going out the front gate we turned right and went about a mile then turned left. Near the corner was a water well, about twenty feet in diameter with a rolled and polished red granite lip about a foot thick all the way around it, that the people in the area used. They would haul up some water, wash their clothes, fill their jugs and take a bath right there. We had a treat and my camera was going as fast as I could make it click. Two young voluptuous beauties were naked getting their weekly bath. Marty stopped so we could get a good look. I thought Kratz was going to loose his marbles, “Look at the jugs on that doll. She’s hairless to boot.” Finally we turned and headed on down the road.

About two miles from the well we came upon a “herd” of monkeys. Marty said about two hundred, not uncommon. There was one baby straggler. I wanted to get off and catch it to take with us but was cautioned I would be eaten alive before I could get back on the bus. “The baby might be a straggler but it was being watched by the older Mamas,” Marty said.

We unloaded in front of the restaurant Kratz had heard about, Marty said it was the best in New Delhi and left us to our own devices. The service in the restaurant was excellent, the food was perfect, and the beer was hot. Ruined a good meal for me. I was more interested in the local color anyway so my mind was diverted, after eating I went outside to take pictures.

Just off of the main street there were residences and I got a picture of one of the strangest sights I had ever seen. A big Brahma cow strolled through this home and left a large "Paddy." The gentleman of the house picked it up and stuck it on the wall. I told Marty about this the next day and he said it was a sign of good luck. I thought to myself, "Yeah, stinking good luck. Do that in my yard back home and you're steak dinner tonight."

I caught some of the guys coming out of the cafe and we went for a walk to look at the stores. There were lots of people and everyone seemed well dressed, the ladies in their Sari, lots of jewelry, some had a spot in the middle of their forehead and the men wearing "western" style and native dress with their Turbans. Some had beards. It was very interesting to watch the melee of people and vendors. We had walked quite a distance when someone noticed we were walking in a circle. The center of town was indeed a circle broken only at the four points of the compass by streets coming into the street around the inside. No vehicles were allowed inside from midmorning till the next morning around six. There was a beautiful park area and fountain in the center which many people were enjoying. I was going crazy taking pictures.

We came upon a large store that Kratz had heard a lot about and he said we just had to go in. He was right, it was magnificent. It was the Ivory Palace. Its name told it's story. Almost everything in the place was Ivory, all of it hand carved and so unique you'd never dream it was possible. A large Chess Set, the King sat on a satin covered bed in a Houdah on an Elephant as large as two fists...his trunk trumpeting the King's arrival. Each piece was a magnificent work of art in it's own right. There was a chain with each link individually carved, the links never opened to come apart. The entire set was housed in the playing surface that closed up with each piece in a special compartment, each square was stained or natural Ivory and the case latched for only the owner's "key." I saw a complete King size bed. Each leg, about two feet long, was the head of an Elephant and his trunk. The sides were like boards but were hand carved ivory with very delicate and intricate designs. The headboard and a room screen were breath taking. I can't imagine the size the elephant had to be to produce tusks big enough to cut flat "boards" at least ten inches wide. These were 1/8th" thick and carved to look like a screen (like a window screen). The nightstands were like the bed, each joint was hand carved to fit without glue or any joining device. I saw many pieces of jewelry made with precious stones. Some Ivory inlaid with gold and silver and set with Pigeon Blood Star rubies, Blue Star sapphires, and White Star sapphires. Large snake heads set with rubies for the eyes, large Lion heads set with stones in the eyes, there were also some very exquisite pieces made to appeal to the more conservative buyer. I preferred the garish snakes and lions because most people were less likely to believe the stones were real. I was also able to purchase loose uncut "rocks" which I carried in my pocket as mere souvenirs of an area, red white and blue stones. Back out on the street we wandered into an undesirable area,

the slave market...legal in India. An interesting sight to see, much the same as slaves were sold in the early south. They were brought to the block, examined if you wished and the bidding began. One such incident brought out our cameras. A young lady was offered, about sixteen years old, extremely well developed. This, of course, prompted close inspection in minute detail. Her nostrils, mouth, armpits, naval, virgina and anus...her dignity was violated. The bidding began and it was high, many rupees. When the bidding slowed we heard an American English voice top the last bid and lots of grumbling about American money. She was his and was led to him.

We strolled out of there and went to get a cab for a ride to another of Kratz' sights. This was a true tourist's sight, the Temple of the Great Buddha Penis, the fertility God. This was huge, twenty to thirty feet tall with a shaft at least that long and scrotum to match, solid red granite. I recalled seeing miniatures of this in a stall on the circle in town. There were many ladies praying at the base of the statue, naturally stud Hughey wanted to offer his services at no charge. It was getting late and we had a long ride to the airport, we hailed a cab and rode downtown to meet our Liaison man.

"Well, did you guys have an interesting evening?" he asked.

Kelly and I laughed loud. He said, "Yeah, it sure was. We saw a cow shit in somebody's house and the guy stick it on the wall, we saw the slaughter of many elephants in the form of their tusks in the Ivory Palace, and we saw the Fertility God and the slave market. We saw the good and the bad of New Delhi, of India. I can't imagine how these people can justify their existence or how they can produce such a man as Mahatma Ghandi. I can't imagine why he would burn himself alive or why the people would honor his death, such a waste."

The ride out to Don Pallam was quiet and beautiful. The sky was as clear as could be and full of stars. We could see nothing in any direction. Marty went through the gate like he owned the place. The only light on the airport was the tower, the row of gaping hangar doors was like holes in the side of a mountain. Our aircraft had been moved to a remote area. Marty explained this was a safety precaution so the Tower could keep watch on it for animals etc. Animals? Why were they going to bother a lonely old airplane? Pure curiosity. It occurred to me it didn't make any difference whether we were on board or not, if they were curious they were going to come looking.

Marty parked under the wing and we sat still listening to the silence for a few minutes and letting the dust settle. He offered everybody a beer and recommended we take that and another to help us sleep. He said the silence kept him awake more than anything else. I took the second but saved it for when I woke up later. Little did I know what was going to awaken me.

Hughey and Hickey opened a sleeping bag and laid out on the wing, Kratz and Markle opened some blankets in the side seats and Kelly and I opened a stretcher, peeled down to our skivvies and lay down near the back door. I had my .45 under a makeshift pillow as did Kelly. It didn't take me long to hear the sandman, my busy day caught up and knocked me out.

I don't know how long I'd been asleep but I awoke to the foulest odor I've ever smelled in my life. Something told me to lie perfectly still and slowly open my eyes. With all of his teeth

bared and saliva dripping from his mouth a wild Hyena was about to attack me. No way I could get my weapon out and fire, he was too close. The slightest movement on my part would trigger him. I had resigned myself to a badly injured arm before I could break his neck. Just as I was ready to make my move a flashlight shown in the animal's face, for a split second he was diverted and then he was dead. A .45 slug blew his brains all over the back wall of the plane. Kelly saved my bacon again. The others, woke up by the blast, came running. "What was that? What's happening? Who shot who?" A thousand questions all at once. Kelly explained while I scooped up as much of the remains as I could find and dumped them out the door then proceeded to deposit my dinner along with our menacing friend. I'll never forget the sight of those teeth, the saliva and the foul odor of his breath; I was looking death square in the face. I've faced death before but never anything like this, the thought of it still makes my skin crawl.

Best we could figure out was this poor guy was out looking for something to eat and smelled us. The amazing thing is he climbed the ladder in his determined quest. Once inside probably became a bit confused in the unfamiliar surroundings and was slow to attack. That and Kelly's good aim saved my life. I was twice as thankful when I later heard Kelly say, "First time I ever hit what I was aiming at."

When we realized what time it was we settled down for at least three more hours of rest AFTER I pulled up the ladder. The quiet night and a gentle breeze soon calmed our frazzled nerves and once again sleep crept into my brain but part of it stayed awake. The quiet was soon pierced with the hungry cry of Hyenas devouring their fallen comrade; they were the garbage collectors of the jungle. It was difficult for me to realize we were on the edge of the jungle. This was too much for me, I gathered up my gear and made a journey to the Terminal building. A good shower and shave would put me back on top of the world and ready to go. My anticipation was doused by no hot water....so....quick shower and careful shave. I had just finished dressing when Hughey and Hickey walked in, "We couldn't sleep either."

"Let me tell you, you are going to be wide awake the minute you step under the shower...no hot water." I barely finished the sentence and Hughey started yelling, "Oooooohh that's cold. What is it 33 degrees?"

By seven thirty we all met for breakfast in the terminal cafe. Eggs and toast with Marmalade was no problem but anything else was out of the question. Odd customs in other countries. I guess I'm odd too, can't stand the taste of Marmalade. Kelly signed the ticket which would go to the American Embassy and everybody set about their tasks to prepare for take-off. Our aircraft had been towed to the terminal and was the only one on the ramp. Kelly was still doing his walk-around when Kratz and I brought the news of more aircraft heading for Korea. Ops said we'd probably see them on our way to Karachi. The Limo arrived with our Courier and the Liaison, Marty, arrived with the M/Sgt. we'd seen the night before at the slave market and his "Purchase." The Sgt had tried several times to set her free, legally and otherwise, but no one was having any of it, least of all the girl. It was an honor and she was proud she had been bought by an American. Marty said they really had to work some strings to get her a Passport. The Sgt. had

completed his business, his time was up and he had to leave the country, the trouble was the Indian Government said he wasn't going without the girl. He bought her and she was his responsibility. The Sgt. asked Kelly to refuse to take her, any reason he could think of. Actually there were several reasons, not a citizen, not a dependent of the Sgt, no shots, no medical, try as they may Kelly and Marty were stymied. They talked with an Indian that worked in the American Embassy. He tried every loophole he could think of, every turn was a dead end. So they gave up and told the Sgt. he was going to have to take her. His problem was trying to figure out a way to explain her to his wife in Dhahran. Hughey told the Sgt. he'd love to have her but told him to tell his wife he'd brought her a "Maid."

During all this confusion the Indian from the Embassy and I became friendly. I learned he had a son that had gone to America to go to school, "University of Texas", he said with pride. I told him, "Great, I'll look him up if he's still there when I get back."

Marty also brought some pouches for the Embassy in Karachi and Dhahran and four more passengers, three men and one female. She was really something, tall and slender, milky-white skin with high cheek bones and deep set blue eyes...topped off with almost orange-red hair that hung down below her shoulders. Marty handed me all of the customs papers and passports and I gave them to Hughey.

The three men were dressed as if they were Archeologists... cargo pants and jackets, boots and bush hats...wide brim. They were a gregarious bunch, apparently had known each other for quite awhile. No one seemed to know the lady. She was wearing a flowered chiffon dress with a low, square neckline that revealed the upper portion of her ample breasts. Her smile and friendly manner drew your attention to her face, perfect teeth, a hint of lipstick.

Kelly said the magic words and everyone turned for the stairway except Hughey. He was doing the honors with the fire bottle etc. I think Kelly was smitten, he immediately slid his hand under the lady's elbow, guided her up the stairs and to the best seat in the Cabin, right over the wing where the ride was the smoothest.

With everyone onboard Hughey pulled the stairway clear and took his position on the ramp behind engine #1, fire bottle ready. Hickey saw that the seatbelts were fastened and stood by the door for Hughey. Markle and I went through the routine of starting the engines and the Capt. got the message. Kelly finally tore himself away from the "Big Red Cat", as he called her and slid into his seat. I had all the preliminaries out of the way so I called for clearance to taxi out for take off. The Tower gave us our instructions, which way to turn and which runway was open. We paused just short of the runway and went through our engine run-up, checked the magnetos, pitch controls, manifold pressure and RPM...we were good! I called the Tower for permission to take-off and we were cleared. I told Kelly, "Let's snap the trigger on this bird and get in the blue."

He grinned and said, "I sure envy you. That's Jet-Jockey talk, shortly after we get back to Tokyo you'll be in the Fire-Breathers again. Wish I were going with you. They say my reaction time is too slow so I have to fly these big birds now." We lined up and pushed the levers to the

wall...what a tremendous feeling it is when you break free of earth, when you feel the wheels leave the ground. An exhilarating rush comes over you that is impossible to define, especially if you are in a fighter...you are the master of your destiny. It's like the last line of that poem...I put out my hand and touched the face of God," I get goose pimples every time I think of it.

Climb-out was uneventful and it wasn't long till we saw four groups, three fighters each, a little higher than us, headed east. I called them on the International frequency. They were Dutch. We wished them well.

Hughey and Markle brought everybody a cup of coffee (Indian Mud from the Cafe) and Kelly thought it would be a good idea for him to check on the passengers, make sure they were comfortable. I told him I thought that was a good idea and to tell her I said ,"Hi!" Everybody laughed as he went through the door to the cabin. Aside from the clear-air turbulence every twenty minutes or so the trip to Karachi was long but as smooth as glass.

We saw a few other aircraft headed east. Kratz said one was a DC-7 from Belgium, he recognized the flag on the tail, and the other was an Air France Constellation. The Conny was probably headed for Saigon and the "7" was probably headed for Tokyo. The way the aircraft was porpoising I could tell there was a lot of activity in the rear. I had to keep an eye on the pitch control of the autopilot almost constantly.

I knew it was getting close to halfway when Hughey came through the door with our box lunches. They were usually pretty good but you really had to be hungry to eat a box lunch from the cafe at Don Pallam. They weren't really bad but dry beef from a country that doesn't eat it isn't my idea of a good sandwich. At least they could have put some lettuce, tomato and Mayo on it, this was a DRY sandwich.

Chapter XVII: Karachi, Pakistan – A new friend

Karachi was a quick stop, unload and go we thought, so we weren't looking for any problems. Turns out our three archeologists had left a bill unpaid in New Delhi, the Karachi Police boarded the plane and escorted them to the terminal. It seems the governments of Pakistan and India take a dim view of that sort of thing. Didn't appear to be a problem, they paid it and were allowed to continue on the trip. Our problems were our Courier and the Sgt. with his "Purchase." The Courier was late and the Sgt. tried to free his girl there at the airport. The guards wouldn't even let them off of the ramp to go to the restroom and the girl hung on to him like a second skin. Apparently one of the guards became upset and called a Customs man and he called his buddy at the American Embassy. I thought, "Well, here we go again" and sure enough the man that came out was a very friendly, accommodating person. I knew this wasn't going to take long when he said, in very sharp, clipped English, "Ah, my friend. We don't have a problem here. It is merely an inconvenience. A small bump in the road of life. Perhaps you can join me for a cup of tea and we can discuss this like reasonable men?"

The Karachi Terminal Cafe is not the greatest in the world. It looked like a sand storm had blown through from Midland, Texas. There was dust an inch thick everywhere, on the table, in the chairs and, I'm sure, in the cups, hence the reference...Indian Mud.

I soon understood why Kelly delegated me to handle this. Jawa, the man from the Embassy, was so nice it was pathetic. You could taste the honey dripping from his words but the meaning behind them was as subtle as a velvet hammer. I knew we were going to take off with the girl so what was all the talk about. I could see the hungry look in his eyes as he looked at her papers and her scantily clad body. No mistaking it, she was a beauty. I could see it in his eyes, "I'd sure love to take her home with me." Finally he spoke, "My friends. Allah says she must go with you. It is what is best for her and for my country. To be perfectly honest, we will not support her, she will starve and die if she stays here and that is such a waste of such a beautiful young lady."

Jawa and I had become good friends during our discussion. He said he was looking forward to coming to the States for a visit. I invited him to my home. He graciously accepted. We shook hands and parted as a big black car pulled onto the ramp.

When the Courier's Limo pulled up to the steps everybody boarded and settled down. We tried to get some ice for our "honey-bucket" but they didn't have one cube anywhere on the airport. We wanted it to keep the odor down because the hop from Karachi to Dhahran was low altitude and hot all the way. About half-way across the Persian Gulf Hughey called me back and asked, "What are we going to do about the honey buckets? The book says we can't land with human waste in them and there's no where we can empty them between here and there but in the Gulf." I thought for a few minutes then suggested we open the back door and "DUMP." Hughey said, "That's the only solution I can see but I just didn't want to do it without your authorization." I said, "Do it." Hughey and Markle were deep in a difficult task when I went back up front. They were both afraid the wind was going to blow the waste from the bucket back

inside, if not, was the wind going to suck them out the door? When I left them with their dilemma Hughey had a rope tied around his waist and through a ring on the floor, Keystone Cops if I ever saw it. These two were hilarious.

The only good thing about crossing the Persian Gulf was being able to see the huge fish; whales, sharks, whatever...they were BIG...basking in the sun, possibly mating. They were silhouetted perfectly by the light color of the sand on the floor.

Chapter XVIII: Dhahran, Saudi Arabia – An experience in the desert

Dhahran was like being back home, smelled like Beaumont, Houston, Corpus Christi...good oil town. It was the headquarters for Aramco, jointly operated by Arabian and American oil company. It was more like, "We'll get it out of the ground if you'll sell it to us?" The airport was immaculate, Aramco insisted on the best and we enjoyed the fruits of their labor. The American Community was a walled in facility because our morals may infect the local populace. Working was one thing but the religious leaders insisted the Americans live apart from the Arabians. Mixing they didn't mind, just don't live next door. The Americans liked it better that way too because the sanitary conditions were much better inside the compound, the same was true at the airport.

The problems started when the Sgt. started down the stairs with the young lady in tow. His wife met him, gave him a hug and a welcome home and the top blew off when the Sgt said, "Honey, look what I brought you." Local radar units went Code Red when she went off. Hughey and Hickey were the only ones at the bottom of the stairs, the Sgt looked over at Hughey and said, "That's what you said tell her. I didn't think she'd get that mad. Last time she blew her cork we didn't find her for several days, she was lost out in the desert. The car ran out of gas and she was barefoot in the hot sand."

That expected crisis over with we were caught by surprise when the courier and the three archeologists got into an argument over the Limo. During the altercation one grabbed his arms while another tried to cut the links on the cuff to the briefcase. Airport Security Guards escorted them off after Hughey defeated them with the most fantastic display of Martial Art I've ever seen. We later learned they were terrorists intent on sabotaging the talks in progress between Israel and Egypt and the tall red head was part of their decoy. She was later found dead in a Dhahran back street.

We hadn't planned to go into town because it was too expensive and we could pick up a few extra bucks by staying on the plane, like in New Delhi, but every body wanted to go see the local color and get a few pictures so we decided to go in for dinner. Our Liaison man arranged for transportation and we had planned to walk through the terminal. Halfway across the ramp Kratz was hit on the shoulder by a piece of fruit of some kind, it splattered. We were pretty upset by that and wanted to know who and why. An older gentleman rushed out to explain that the local people did not appreciate the shoulder patch Kratz was wearing. He pointed at the red six-pointed star, the Star Of David...the emblem of his military unit during WW II. The old gentlemen tried to explain to the crowd but there was no sympathy...pure and simple, the Arabs didn't like the Jews. Capt. Kelly raised his hands and said, "They don't get any of our money till this is solved." Everybody agreed, turned around and went back to the aircraft.

Hughey and Hickey fixed a stack of sandwiches; we chose up sides and settled in for a quiet evening "at home." Our Pinochle games usually got exciting and this was no exception. No one just laid a card down on the table; it had to be slapped down with force to say, "I'm taking this

trick.” Sometimes you did, sometimes you didn’t. We had more fun playing Pinochle amongst ourselves than we could possibly have had in town at some house of ill repute or dance hall where the girls always gave a tremendous account of themselves with the infamous “Belly Dance.” It was unbelievable the way they could make their belly muscles gyrate, up and down and side ways, sometimes simultaneously. They were only rivaled by the girls of Hawaii doing the Hula .

We were about to call it a night when our Liaison man came up the stairs with a message for T/Sgt Hickey, our radio operator. He spoke quietly with Capt. Kelly for a moment then Kelly said, “Sgt. Hickey has been invited by an old friend to spend the night at his quarters in the desert some distance away. Transportation to and from is being provided. I’m staying to get some sleep but any of you are welcome to join Sgt. Hickey. The host will see to it that you are back in plenty of time for departure.”

I was the first to accept the invitation and, to my surprise, the only one. Wow, this was really an opportunity, visit with the natives in their home....at least they didn’t have dung stuck on their walls, well maybe not. I wondered about the Camel dung.

The transportation arrived and it almost blew my mind. A double-stretch limo. It was magnificent; it even had a kitchen sink. The section behind the driver was large enough to be a one-room apartment. On the way into town Hickey told me how he met the Sheik. During WWII Hickey’s crew bailed out in the desert near Tobruk, Libya and the Sheik gave them a lift to the airbase. They became friends and have kept in touch since. I asked Hickey how the Sheik knew to send the Limo. Hickey said he sent a Morse code message when they were close enough for his men to catch it and they notified him.

We stopped in town long enough for me to look around and take some pictures then we were off across the desert. It was then I realized why the Limo had exceptionally large tires. The driver didn’t spare any of the horses, his foot was on the floor. Why not, there weren’t any cops or traffic out here. After about thirty to forty-five minutes I saw a faint glow on the horizon. The closer we got the brighter it became. When we rolled up in front of a huge tent I would have sworn I was on a movie set in Hollywood, “Desert Song” or something like that.

Beyond the carport was a huge pot of fire, large Tiki Torches at each corner of the tent and at the door (tent flap) way two more. The tall, slender guards had on some shoes that turned up at the toes, loose fitting pantaloons, a large sash and a big dagger. They were bare chested with wide gold bands on their full biceps, big earrings in each ear and a large turban. Each had a spear in his hand and made an arch for us to walk thru as we alighted from the car. At that moment I realized I didn’t have my wallet and looked in the back seat, it wasn’t there. The driver asked where we were when I knew I had it last. Best I could remember was downtown. He assured me it would be alright and we should go inside and enjoy the evening.

When we walked inside I kept looking for the cameras, it was unbelievable, carpets everywhere, ladies carrying food on a tray approached us. Dates on one tray and something delicious on the other, I still don’t know what it was. The ladies were straight out of Arabian

Nights. They were dressed in sandals, see thru pantaloons, skimpy, see through tops, veils and scarves, rings on their toes and hands, gold bands on their arms and silver and gold bracelets with stones the size of bird eggs.

The sheik was seated on a raised platform behind an array of food that is beyond description, maybe fifteen feet long. He immediately arose and bid Hickey come forward. They embraced, kissing each others cheek then stood holding each other at arms length grinning like two school boys. Hickey turned and motioned for me to join them. I couldn't believe this was happening, I knew I was dreaming. I took a few faltering steps then made my way to Hickey's side. The Sheik gave me the same greeting and I reciprocated as best I could. He expressed his appreciation for coming to his humble home and that it was graced by our presence. Made you feel like a King. We were shown to a side room off the main tent and the girls began taking our clothes off. I didn't quite know how to take all this but Hickey assured me it was worth the cooperation. We were anointed with oils, a cleansing ritual and made to feel relaxed, parts of me weren't but that soon subsided. We were given sandals, native robes and a turban, Hickey said, "Befitting our station in life." I felt more pampered than at any other time in my life.

Back in the main room the Sheik was most complimentary of our transformation. Hickey's red hair, white skin, freckles and blue eyes just didn't fit. On the other hand my dark tan made me look like a native. The Sheik encouraged us to eat and enjoy the food and drink. It was superb but I didn't see any knives or forks so I assumed you just dug in. The Sheik looked down my way the up at Hickey. He smiled and said, "Good man, you have good friends. He is welcome in my home anytime." I hardly had to do anything, the girls were feeding me, wiping my hands and chin, pouring liquid into my mouth...pampered beyond belief. I had the feeling of a lamb being led to slaughter.

While enjoying my newfound Kingly treatment I was brought to earth when the driver came in. I noticed the Sheik nod, the driver walked to him, handed something over and the Sheik examined it closely then turned to me and said, "Your personal and private possessions appear to be intact." He handed me my wallet and he was right, everything was there including \$8,365 of mine and other people's money. The Sheik commented, "That's a lot of money to be carrying around like that. Me, yes. I carry a great deal more when I go to your country but not here. May I ask why?"

"You certainly deserve an explanation after graciously returning it", I said. "Many of my friends have asked me to shop for them and bring back a small treasure. It is a trust I cannot deny."

"You are a revered man, by your friends. I too will treasure your friendship if you will so honor me."

"How can I refuse such a magnanimous offer?"

I didn't dare ask where the driver had found my wallet or anything else about it. It seemed to be the accepted nature of things and one just doesn't question that.

The Sheik clapped his hands and immediately the girls began dancing. I noticed one in

particular favoring Hickey. That lady was doing a belly dance like I've never seen before. Her stomach muscles and lower torso was going every direction you can imagine and sometimes all at the same time. Hickey sat there staring like a kid in a candy store. He had one on each side and the prize in his sights. I told Hickey, "It's a good thing Hughey isn't here. He'd embarrass us all." The Sheik saw me grinning at Hickey and asked, "Why?"

I explained about our friend back at the plane, what a "Bull-in-the-China-Closet" he was. The Sheik thought that was a great joke, I assured him it was no joke. The quizzical expression on his face deepened.

The next morning we were up before sunrise, a cold water shower sure opened the eyes. The Sheik was there to see us off, he gave us a hug and a kiss and clapped his hands. Four girls appeared, each carrying a "Token", something to remind us of our evening in paradise. Each gift was wrapped, to be opened this evening at midnight, delightful custom. Hickey and I climbed in the Limo and the driver sped off across the desert like the Devil himself was after us, the Sheik and the girls waved. An unforgettable experience.

Chapter XIX: Turn Around – Head for home

The ride back to the airport was too short. I was deep in a good dream when the driver woke us up just before we arrived. We had a chance to shake the sleep off of our face. Hickey handed me a wet washrag (from the kitchen sink). It was refreshing. The driver ignored the guard at the gate, speeding on thru and stopping at the foot of the steps at the aircraft. Before I could reach the handle the driver was there and had the door open wide. I thanked him, which I wasn't supposed to do, and asked if there was anything I could do for him. He said, "A thousand pardons, Sir. May I see inside of your airplane? This humble servant will never fly but I have always been curious."

I replied, "From this day forward you will not be curious, come with me."

I led him up the steps and through the door. He gave a silent prayer before entering, bowed his head and surveyed the interior. I showed him the Galley and the Rest Room then explained the rings on the floor were for tying down cargo, that the Passenger seats were removable and the aircraft could be converted to All-Cargo, Troop Carrier with side and center seats or Medical Evacuation of wounded personnel, if need be, in just a few minutes. Up front he really was surprised at the Crew Compartment, a doorway to a small toilet, the sink and the floor to ceiling rack of electronic equipment. On the Flight Deck his eyes got big and he whispered, "Allah be praised."

"What is it?"

"I had no idea it was like this, there is so much to look at. I could never see it all, not in this lifetime."

I tried to explain to him that it wasn't really that complicated, if he really wanted to he could learn how to fly. He should speak to the Sheik, ask him. With an apology he explained he could never ask for such a privilege. I assured him I would speak to the Sheik for him. His eyes absorbed everything and a small smile came to his mouth. He closed his mouth; a determined expression came to his face. He nodded and turned toward the rear of the cabin. As we walked back I waited for more questions but none came until we were at the door, "Where are the other Pilots?"

I explained that two were probably asleep in the crew compartment in the bunks behind the curtain and the others had slept on stretchers, which had already been put away, they were probably in the terminal freshening up for our departure. He nodded then turned to go down the stairs, bowed at the doorway and said a prayer. I followed him down and thanked him for his courtesy. With a wave of his hand he turned, got in the Limo and drove away.

It was the wave of his hand that caught my eye and nagged at my brain for several minutes. When it dawned on me where I'd seen that gesture before, Hickey and I were having breakfast in the Cafe. My face lit up like Opening Night at a movie in Hollywood.

Hickey jumped and said, "What is it? Geez, scare me to death. What's up, did you remember the combination to your safe?"

“No, I just remembered where I saw that gesture the driver made before he drove away. He touched his lips, his forehead and his heart before waving goodbye. I think it was Charles Boyer I saw do that in a movie once. The lady, Hedy LaMar, asked what that meant and he replied,” May the words of my mouth, the thoughts of my mind and the feelings of my heart go with you. It is a truly friendly gesture for your best friends or someone you love.” He took her face in his hands and kissed her lightly on the lips and was gone in an instant.” I think the movie was “Algiers.”

“Any way it was a beautiful gesture and I want to thank you for permitting me to join you at your friend’s home, an unforgettable experience. I will treasure this memory as long as I live. I really appreciate it.”

One by one the rest of the crew came thru the door and joined us at the table, eager to hear of our experiences in the desert. Hickey told them the driver took us out in the desert and dropped us off and we had been walking all night to get back in time to leave. Kelly wasn’t having any of that and playfully slapped him on the head with his cap and laughed like it was the best joke of the day. I kept my mouth shut since I had been Hickey’s guest, it was his show if he wanted to tell it. I simply said they should have gone with us.

The airport was beginning to come to life. A KLM (Dutch Airlines) was due in any time now; the schedule said a TWA and an Air France, at ten minute intervals, were due right behind that. Busy little place. It would be interesting to wait around and see who deplaned from each but we didn’t have time to waste.

Kelly stood up and said, “Let’s get at it, guys. We have a lot to do before our people get here.” Kelly, Kratz and I went into Flight Ops to do our planning etc. The Officer-in-Charge had everything laid out for us; who our passengers would be, what and where the cargo was, the Embassy Pouches would have to be signed for at the door as they arrived, as would the mail. Kratz finished his numbers crunching just as Kelly finished reading the passenger manifest. A worried look crossed his face.

I asked, “What’s up, Boss?” I didn’t like that look on his face.

He looked at me, licked his lips and grinned, saying, “This is going to be an interesting return leg. We have a special note from Com Nav-Pearl Harbor that we will have a prisoner and his escort on board...all the way to Clark. We’re supposed to see that he gets turned over to the Pilot-in-Command of a waiting aircraft. Hotstuff. I know Hughey can handle it but he’s going to have to be on his toes. He and the escort can compare notes.”

Kelly breathed a sigh, Kratz looked worried and I was singing, “Off we go into the wild blue yonder...” Kelly slapped me on the back and Kratz made me stumble, they were always picking on the little guy. Markle and Hughey had brought the figures in for Kratz and came out of the restroom just as we were laughing down the hall on the way out.

We were an unusual group. There was all of the Military Protocol, respect for rank etc. but we were a bunch of guys that had come to respect and admire one another ...each for his own expertise. I thought it was a shame we couldn’t fly together all the time the way crews did in

WW II. Maybe we would when we got into the swing of this conflict we were involved in...our Commander-in-Chief called it a Police Action. I still couldn't understand why Congress hadn't Declared War so we could get in it and get it over with. Oh, well. Mine is not to question why, mine is but to do or die. Kelly became a little perturbed with me when I started philosophizing, "Doesn't do any good to think on it, just do your job and don't let nobody step on your toes. That's the way we live back in the hills in Virginia."

How in the world this tall, skinny, red-headed Irishman ever got back in the hills of Virginia I'll never figure out, Yeager was another mystery.

I stood at the bottom of the stairs to greet our passengers and sign for the pouches. Curiosity more than anything, I wanted to see the prisoner that was going to be riding with us.

Hughey had been briefed and was ready for anything at the top of the stairs.

The KLM, TWA and Air France had come and gone, just like a bus, some got off and some got on. Geez!! I wanted to get back to Korea. I know the ol' man was right, I needed time off for the right perspective to soak in but I thought I was balanced well enough for that. I was jolted out of my reverie when the prisoner and his escort arrived. Per instructions they were seated before the others so seeing him in cuffs wouldn't upset them. He was one mean looking devil, dirty uniform, no shave, no cap, scruffy shoes and a scowl on his face to match. Yeah, mad at the world for giving him a bad deal when the responsibility was his all along...attitude.

Hughey met the escort at the door and guided him and his charge to their seat, the last two at the rear. That way when he had to go to the restroom he wasn't paraded down the aisle. This was going to be an interesting trip, like Kelly said.

The rest of the passengers began arriving...orderly, pleasant and courteous...what a contrast.... twelve in all. Not counting the escort and his charge we had four women and eight men.

Kelly said he wanted to be off the ground at 0900 and we were pretty close, it was 0903 when we were "wheels up." Kratz made the notation in his log and confirmed our heading, Karachi, here we come.

About halfway across the Persian Gulf we started have these little nit-picking things pop up. Nothing serious, just bothersome. The auto-pilot wouldn't stay on heading, engine #2 kept missing a beat now and then, the altimeter on Kelly's side would suddenly start spinning and we weren't changing altitude, the manifold gage on engine #3 was fluctuating too much...little things that can drive you up the wall. There seemed to be no apparent reason and no connection between them. Cruising at 9,000' in clear air you tend to sit on edge when everything isn't smooth. Markle was beside himself, he had exhausted all possibilities and he had no explanation so he pulled out the schematics for the entire airplane...hydraulic, electronic and electrical. He went to work on the hydraulic, Hickey on the electronic and me on the electrical. Following every line on the drawing, looking for something to grab your attention, something that might be the cause. After an hour or so we were no closer to a solution than we were at the start. A look of studied disbelief was on our faces.

Kratz said, “You guys look like you can’t believe there is no needle. I do the same thing when I make a miscalculation, like the time I missed Johnston Island, well I knew it was there, I could see it on the map...but it wasn’t out there in the ocean where it was supposed to be. Somebody moved it, must’ve had an earthquake, it was not much bigger than an Aircraft Carrier...maybe it just sailed away. Capt. Shirley got tired of flying around in circles so he turned on the DF and we were on the ground in ten minutes. A half of a degree, the width of a compass point at Hickham was eight miles out there, the haze made it that much worse. Everything looked the same, we think that’s what happened to Amelia Earhart. Keep looking guys, you’ll find it.”

He was right, a few minutes later it jumped off of the page like a bright red beacon light. I told Markle to get his flashlight and follow me.

“We’re going down below and start digging in the heart of this old bird, she’s ailing and needs some tender loving care.”

We pulled the floor hatch in the crew bunk area and peered into the darkness of the baggage hold. A couple of pouches, a few boxes, nothing much in the way so we were going to be able to maneuver around pretty good. The main thing I was looking for was the Main Bus and Fuse Box mounted on the back wall of the cargo bay. Markle handed me a screwdriver and I had the cover off in no time.

Chapter XX: Dhahran to Tokyo – Same Stops, More Fun And Games

I looked until I was blue in the face but couldn't see a thing wrong. Markle pointed to a connection and there it was, one small strand from the connection right next to it. Can't imagine why it never bothered us before, vibration I guess. All of the wires hadn't been included in the crimping.

Kelly hollered, "That fixed it." We buttoned up and came up out of the baggage compartment. When I got in my seat Kelly was still upset about the airspeed on his side, it was still acting up. I dove under the instrument panel and twisted the tubing on the "T" connections for the Altimeter and Air Speed, they were air operated, age on the rubber was my conclusion. Anyway that fixed that and went in our log of stuff to look at when we got back into Haneda. Had a similar problem back in Cadets at Randolph that caused a crash. Lost a good man.

The trip over the Persian Gulf was uneventful, smooth air and flying high at 9000. Reminded me of that old saying, "Odd guys fly east." Kelly was in the seat reading a book and tweaking the autopilot now and then. The passengers were resting or having a cup of coffee and talking.

Karachi was a breeze. My new found friend, Jawa, came out to meet us and helped us through Customs, papers etc. Our people deplaned, baggage and all. He helped me with my money exchange, I gave him 10% for his trouble and he was most appreciative.

Departure was by the book, nothing in sight but clouds off in the distance, nothing to worry about. Just puffy cumulus and a little low flying scud. I took my turn in the seat and monitored the "robot", worked pretty good except when people walked back and forth or congregated at the coffee pot.

New Delhi was as smooth as you could expect. We piled in the station wagon and went into town. Passed the same watering hole but there was no one there. "Shucks, wanted to see that pretty girl again," Hughey said. I made my purchases at the Ivory Palace. I talked to the owner for a few minutes. He advised me of a good place to change my money, a friend of his he said, would give me the best rate. I found the moneychanger a few doors down on the circle. It was very nice of him to be so accommodating, profitable I'm sure.

Calcutta we went through like a dose of salts through a widow woman. Don't ask me how that is, just a saying in Texas.

Bangkok, I was looking forward to that. A few good deals and a good time in town. The Cathay Club was high on our list of excellent places to stop after we had a bite to eat at the Chez Patee. Pyek fixed me up with the same lady to dance with and a good time was had by all. Fun and games, that's what we came for.

Little did I know, I was to learn several years later, that a good friend and former classmate, Justin Bryant, from Allen Military Academy was flying for the CIA with Air America's Airlines up north and was based in Bangkok. I flew for them several years later. He had a huge Estate with all the trimmings; servants, chauffeur, man Friday and lots of female visitors. Man, what a life.

The next morning we had to wait for a special passenger. We originally thought we were going to be empty for our leg to Saigon, except for some pouches and a small amount of cargo. Kelly was pacing up and down, we were already an hour late. He was fuming. "Beely", our Liaison Officer couldn't offer much of an explanation; the Ambassador hadn't told him anything about this VIP.

When he arrived we were surprised to see our Courier from the trip out. He said there was a truck coming with some cargo and that we were to wait for that. Cargo isn't the word, cages is more correct. There were enough cages of Mina birds to fill the cabin from the back door to the crew compartment, barely enough room to open the door. To get from the back to the front we had to walk on the armrest of the passenger seats. This was the noisiest trip, you can't imagine. They were all squawking at the same time, learning to talk. Imitated everything we said. The worst part was we had to take them all the way to Tokyo. The manifest said they were going all the way to the States. Lucky birds.

After loading the birds and lashing down the cages we were three hours late getting off. It was a pretty long haul into Saigon and on into Clark AFB. At our stop in Saigon we picked up the Johnny Walker Black and Dry Monopole our friend the Col. had for us. He expedited our passenger, cargo, pouches, papers, etc and we were off and running for Clark. We arrived after dark, nobody slept, the Minas kept us awake. On final approach I called Hughey on the intercom and told him to rattle the cages so the birds would fly and we'd be light touching down. Everybody got a laugh out of that. Our Courier didn't think it was funny but he laughed anyway, he was as sick of them as we were. I guess it was a Diplomatic thing; he had to accompany them all the way home.

We fed the birds and buttoned down the hatches. Had our evening meal at the cafeteria and hit the sack. I was bone tired. Took me every bit of three seconds to go to sleep. I dreamed about those stinking birds. Kept me awake in my dreams.

We had our briefing at breakfast. Our briefing officer was kind enough to bring everything to us. Kratz crunched his numbers as soon as Markle and Hughey brought in theirs. We had a Typhoon brewing down south. This was not our most desirable departure direction because we had to make a left turnout and that took us over Peso Mountain, Huk country, the cannibals.

Roughly three hours later we touched down at Kadena AFB on Okinawa. I didn't have time to visit with Kenny but I did get to wave. He was in the Tower checking some weather gear. It was a quick turn-around for us, a few pouches on, a few off, two passengers on that griped about the Minas, fill up the tanks and "Off we go into the wild blue yonder."

Oki to Tokyo was a milk run, watch the "robot" and take a nap if we could have fallen asleep.....stinking Mina birds squawked all the time. Even up front with the door closed we could still hear them. I'm sure they were nice birds and a lot of fun for kids to have as a pet but that trip soured me on Minas. There was a Dentist in Dallas that had a small zoo in his backyard. Somehow he had split the tongue of a crow and taught it how to talk, craziest thing I ever heard, "What're you doing? Where are you going," they would say. The Minas reminded me of him.

After a debriefing at Haneda I was off for three days. I felt I had earned it. The CO wanted a short resume of our encounter in Angeles. I couldn't imagine how he knew about that but he seemed satisfied with my explanation. He certainly didn't like the happenings with the Courier in Dhahran but he readily signed my request for three days and I was off and running.

Chapter XXI: R&R – Head For The Slopes

My buddy Roberts was off also and he decided to go with me to Mount Fuji for some R & R. We checked out a jeep from the motor pool and headed out of town knowing nothing about the road than we saw on the map. Getting out of town was the hard part. No check-points or the like but just finding the right turn. Once out on the open road it was like breezing along going to west Texas. It wasn't too long till we hit the hills and started up. Twisting and winding, one small town after another. Barely enough room for the jeep to get down the street without hitting anybody. Then we hit a stretch of real uphill. Coming around this bend, dead ahead, was a "Honey Cart."

A wagon loaded with several 20 gallon containers of human waste that the driver had picked up on his route. He used this to fertilize his rice paddies. I hit it square. Roberts bailed out. One of the wooden containers came over the windshield and dumped on me. I was pinned by the big bucket. I could hear Roberts standing there laughing. "Come here, help me get this thing off of me." My nice clean uniform was covered. Fortunately there was a stream nearby and I dove into that. Clear, clean water, fresh off of Mt. Fuji, colder than the "Oasis" in Korea. Man, that was cold. Must've been snowmelt. At the top of the hill we started down into the valley. I saw the lake on the right, Lake Fuji, and knew we were close to the hotel we were going to stay at. The next intersection to the left led to the hotel. Jeez, it was beautiful. Typical Oriental architecture but more so. A bit of Buddhist influence, it looked like a Temple. They received us with open arms and were very gracious. For a hotel that could easily hold a hundred we had free run of the place. There were only eight guests signed in. All American except one, probably a businessman on holiday.

We still had plenty of daylight so we decided to go for a sail on the lake. We changed into fatigues and headed for the lake. On the way down I assured Roberts I had a merit badge for sailing on White Rock Lake in Dallas while I was in the Boy Scouts. "Ok," he said, dubiously. The boys at the dock were hesitant till I made the sign for a merit badge and gave them the Boy Scout salute. One of them said, "Ahhhh so deska, Boy Scoutu." We hoisted sail and set out. I said, "Avast ye lubbers, Maricaibo off the port bow." Roberts laughed and we had a great time. We tacked back and forth, almost made it to the other side then turned around and started back.

That's when our troubles began. Can you believe we were becalmed. There wasn't a breath of air. We looked around in the boat for oars, not a one. Nothing we could use for one, not even a bucket if we had taken on water. Ok, nothing to do but peel off and hit the water in our scivvies. Hands on the stern and kick till we got in.

The boys on the dock saw our predicament and cranked up the power boat to come out and tow us in.

Up in the room we were shivering. "Gotta get a fire started We don't have any kindling or small wood" Roberts says, "Ok, Boy Scout, how do we get it going? Rub two Josans together?" I said, "Yeah, if we can find any." I suddenly had an idea. We could douse the wood with a

bunch of Scotch. Whoosh, we had a fire. Can't believe I wasted that much Scotch on a fire.

After a good steak dinner we settled down to a good nights sleep on the big bear rug in front of the fireplace wishing we had a couple of Josans to keep us company.

The next morning we relaxed and took a walk to see the scenery, take some pictures of Mt. Fuji etc. Had a good breakfast of bacon and eggs and planned to leave around 2 PM. We got our gear together and headed out. Outside of a few narrow misses in the small towns our trip back was uneventful.

All things considered our trip was terrific.

Chapter XXII: Movies – One dream came true

To my surprise, Capt. Tony Finelli, our Public Information Officer, had arranged for me to take a screen test at the Shintocho Movie Studios. I had no idea he was working on this, quite a compliment. He covered the VIP desk for me and I made the appointment, read the short script a few times and we were “On.” Maybe my Drama Training at Hardin College helped. I was shocked a few days later to learn that I had won the leading role.

The movie was called, “Ozora No Chikai” (A Pledge in the Sky), about an American WW II Pilot that is shot down and lands on an island. A few minutes later a Japanese Pilot crash lands and I rescue him from his burning plane. We live out the rest of the war depending on each other for survival.

In the movie, after the war I go to work for Philippine Airlines and look up my old friend when I arrive in Tokyo. He is running a newspaper, The Asahi Shimbun and is having trouble with the Communists. We clean that mess up in a hurry. Lots of fun.

This was an experiment to see how the Japanese people would react to Americans and Japanese in the same movie. During the filming I became acquainted with Ken Uehara and Kuchi Asami, the Tyrone Power and Hedy LaMar of Japan, really nice people. They invited me to their homes at Atami, the Japanese equivalent of The French Riviera with beautiful estates and golf courses.

The reaction was good. I appeared in four other movies; one portraying a mob boss that came to Japan to set up the rackets. I guess it was because I had a mustache, the Japanese like mustaches. Being a celebrity was a real kick in the head. I couldn't go anywhere without being mobbed by autograph seekers. The studio finally sprung for a car, not a Limo, a charcoal burner. The charcoal gives off a gas that powers the car. An unusual looking contraption on the back of the taxis.

The people at Shintocho were extremely nice and presented me with a Scrapbook of stills from the movie. Jack Abe was the Director.

Chapter XXIII: Motorcycles – Round and Round

I never made it to Ken's or Kuchi's but I did make it to Atami a couple of times with a bunch of other motorcycle nuts. I had a BMW 750cc, flat twin, beautiful touring bike, there were a few others in the club but the bulk of them were Harleys and Indians. Some of the guys bought local made Rikuos, a copy of the 30s Indian. It was a pretty good bike. We had the first American Motorcycle Club outside of the United States. Our club taught the Japanese about hill climbing and they later taught us about making motorcycles.

After we arrived at our destination we'd have a business meeting then we'd go for a cruise, usually through the local rice fields. Single file over the one foot wide dams between paddies, one slip and you were in the paddy, stink is more like it, at forty mph.

On the way down one time we stopped off at a local bar, you could touch the shops on both sides of the street if you stretched out your arms, less than a quarter mile from the hotel we were stopping at. Personal policy, I never rode my bike after I had a beer. The guys started ragging me, "Chicken", "Gutless wonder", etc. So I got on and cranked up, it wasn't that far. I snapped the trigger on that dude and roared off down the street. At the end was a dead end twenty-foot high concrete wall. On the right was a large hole roughly twenty feet in diameter, if I lay it down I crash, I cranked it up to full bore and headed for the hole. Like the guys in the circus, I went round and round. Then I thought, "How the hell am I going to get out of here?" In my stupor I reasoned that if I slacked off on the top and coasted I would become weightless on the next go round and maybe I could get out of this thing. Sure enough that's what happened, however, I was going too fast to turn out so I went back in the tunnel. Up one side, then the other till I was down at the bottom and slow enough to get off. I walked it out. The guys were standing there cheering like crazy. "Most fantastic thing I've ever seen." I later learned the tunnel had been an Air Raid shelter that went all the way to Tokyo, planned to be a subway after the war.

Chapter XXIV: School – Had to learn something

Between flying, movies, entertaining and going to school at U.S.A.F.I., I had a pretty full plate but I needed some more credits so I could get my degree in a semester or two after I got out. I had already been to two schools; Hardin College in Wichita Falls while I was at Sheppard AFB and Antelope Valley JC while I was at Edwards AFB. At USAFI I was studying Russian, Essay Writing and Speed Reading. The Dean arranged for me to take Calculus at Tokyo University. I got a lot of help from the Japanese students in the class, like the guys in my classes at Allen that were from other countries. Thank goodness I could do some of the work and send it in. My flying dovetailed perfectly with the movie schedule most of the time. Sometimes we would work late to catch up.

Chapter XXV: KGB

During my wanderings around Tokyo I became acquainted with a distinguished looking gentleman named Gregory Sandrovich. He had an unusual accent that I didn't recognize right away but I figured he was Russian. We'd see each other occasionally at the Hobby Shop in downtown Tokyo and compare notes on building models, doing the miniature details. Sometimes we'd go for coffee and draw up some particular detail for each other and we'd compare notes on other things too. I was apprehensive when he asked me what I did in the Air Force. I just said, "I fly". This didn't put him off one bit.

"I'm sure of that but where do you fly?" he asked.

I was non-committal in my answer and told my CO about this incident. He seemed very interested in my encounter with this person and said he'd get back to me as soon as possible. I really didn't have to wait long. That afternoon I was at the Base Hobby Shop putting the finishing details on a four-foot U-Controlled flying model of the C-54 like I was flying. My buddy Finelly came in, out of breath and sweating, "The CO wants to see you ASAP. Don't clean up, he said, 'Now'".

Boy, oh boy, what had I done now? He met me at the door and sat me down. With very little preliminaries I was ordered to go the Intelligence Officer, G-2, at the Dai Ichi Building. General MacArthur's headquarters in downtown Tokyo.

About thirty minutes later I was in the outer office waiting. When I was ushered in I recounted the innocuous meeting/relationship I had with Gregory Sandrovich. I learned they had me under surveillance since I enrolled in Russian at USAFI and were particularly interested in the questions asked by my friend, it really didn't amount to anything, I didn't think. Posing as a Liaison Officer he was KGB. I was instructed to string him along and find out all I could from him. This became easier as time went on. It later became clear that he was trying to turn me and I HAD been trying to turn him. I remained on Flight Status but had additional ground duties. Courier for low level documents between Macarthur and the Russian Embassy. I saw Gregory a few times but we didn't speak.

I ran into him at the Hobby Shop downtown one afternoon and we visited for a few minutes. He said, "I understand you go on these Embassy Fights occasionally?"

"Yes, I do", wondering how his people knew that, thinking they knew more about me than I cared for them to know.

"I wonder if you would do me a favor?"

"If I can, I'd be happy to."

He went on to say, "There is a small tobacco shop in downtown Manila that makes the best Philippine Crooks in this world". He showed me one, a small cigar that was the hardest thing I ever held in my hand with the intent to smoke it. I could put it in my back pocket and sit on it and it wouldn't bend. "I'll give you the money if you'll pick up a box for me the next time you're there. I'm almost out and I love them. I usually order by mail but you would be quicker".

I told him, "I'd be glad to. What's the name and address of this place?"

I reported this incident to G-2 and was given the ok plus quite a bit more briefing. The address was of particular interest to them. 'Course I had no idea at the time but I determined that much later.

Oddly enough I was scheduled for the next Embassy Run. Kelly and Childers were the Pilot and Co-Pilot, I was back up. My old buddies were there too. Kratz, Markle, Hickey and Hughey. Childers was a monster. Kelly was a tall, slender Wide Receiver type, Childers was a 6'4", 280 pound Running Back if I ever saw one.

The trip out and back was uneventful, not like the others. When we landed at Clark I asked Kelly to go with me, Childers wanted to go along so the three of us made a night of it in Manila. I picked up the cigars before we went to dinner so I wouldn't forget.

We left Clark straight out to the north and were up at cruise when I took over watching the "robot". The more I sat there thinking about that little box of cigars the more uneasy I became. After a brief explanation to Kelly I conveyed my concerns. He suggested I contact G-2 at the Dai Ichi building. I asked Hickey to patch me through to G-2, the Boss' headquarters It took a few minutes but I was soon talking to my contact. I explained that it was a non-descript tobacco shop on a side street in downtown Manila. They conceded that it may be innocent enough but I should have the boys at Oki G-2 have a look at the box, "They're real good", I was told.

When we landed at Kadena AFB on Okinawa I requested a Staff Car and went directly to the Base Cops. They were expecting me. I delivered my package and waited. Small talk, a few butts, a cup of coffee and my package was returned, apparently not opened. I was to learn later that a message had been intercepted, false info substituted and my friend Sandrovich was demoted and sent back to Moscow. In retrospect and after consultation with G-2, we surmised that Mr. Sandrovich had tried to compromise me as a courier for Soviet Secrets.

I continued my Courier walks to the Russian Embassy, listening to every word for tidbits, they were unaware that I could understand most of what they said. I never saw Gregory again until several years later. G-2 was most appreciative.

Chapter XXVI: VIPs – Met some wonderful people

One of my other duties at Haneda was meeting the VIP when they came to Japan. I saw to their needs, issued their ration card, verified their accommodations, handled their transportation and anything else they needed. On one such occasion I met and was driver for General Gaven, Commanding General of the one-o-first (101) Airborne that made the landing on D-day in France. Fine gentleman, treated me like a buddy. We went all over Tokyo delivering flowers to the ladies of his friends and finally to the home of General Mac Arthur.

On another occasion I met General Old and his son Robin. Robin was the older brother of one of my classmates at Allen Military Academy. The General seemed impressed that I had gone to Allen with his son, Donald. I took care of them in the same manner and was later rewarded with the dream duty, Mac Arthur's "Dog Robber" while his regular was on leave when his father passed away. I guess General Old put in a good word for me, I like to think he did anyway.

I had the extreme pleasure of meeting such greats as Al Jolson, Gene Krupa, Raymond Burr, Richard Green, who beat me out of the role in Big Valley, Connie Francis, Ann Margaret, Connie Stevens, Bob Hope when they came to entertain the troops

Chapter XXVII: Shiga Heights – Deep snow

On one three day leave I went to an area known as Shiga Heights, in Northern Japan. The trip on the train was cold to say the least. The farther north we went the thicker the snow and the colder it got. We were met at the train by a Weezle, an Army tracked vehicle, with the wildest driver I had ever met. Had to have been a Kamikazi Pilot, like the one that had worked for me at Haneda. Ugly, this guy was double ugly, I mean UUUGly.

I wanted to see if I could learn to ski, that was the reason for the trip. As it turned out I spent one day on the skis, I drew the line at learning to jump, the rest of the time I was in the hot tub. Fortunately I wasn't nursing wounds. The second night several of the guests gathered in the big room in front of the fireplace after dinner. Beautiful room, see the fireplace from both sides. I started telling stories like a stand up comic. I'd reach over for a sip of my coke and it tasted better each time. Little did I know my friend Andrews was spiking it. I guessed he had found out that it was my birthday and the strongest thing I had up to that point was a coke. The night wore on and a group of guys started playing the instruments on the stand and a fast friendship was forged. Except for one belligerent soul, a Korean Vet on R & R. He stood up in the back of the room and said, "Why don't you shudup?" He charged up to the front of the room amid the protests of many in the crowd and Andy stopped him with a simple gesture, a shaking of the finger in his face and said, "Ah, ah, mustn't do." I thought that was the end of it but I was in for a surprise.

Andy and I went off to our rooms with the bath in between. I went down the hall knocking on everybody's door wishing everybody pleasant dreams. When Andy finally got me into bed I couldn't have felt better.

All of a sudden the door swung open and there stands "Man Mountain Dean", that charged me in the big room. In one move I was out of bed and out of the window. Nothing could have been as bad as him, an enraged drunk. We were on the second floor and the way Japanese buildings are designed a short roof sticks out on each floor so it looks like a Pagoda. I hit the short roof and, in the snow, slid off on to a second building that was out back. From there I slid off onto the ground, not a high drop. I ran around to the front, freezing cold in my shorts. Man-Mountain-Dean came charging out of the door like a Sherman Tank. I took off across the front lawn of the hotel like a jackrabbit. As light as I was I didn't sink into the drifts. I looked back to see if he was gaining on me and he was nowhere in sight. I thought I saw a hole and went back to investigate. He had fallen into a deep drift and lie at the bottom moaning.

All the noise and excitement had roused the staff. They came to see what was going on. I motioned for them to help me get him out of the drift and inside before he froze. About an hour and lots of heavy pulling, pure dead weight, we had him conscious in the kitchen and drinking coffee. During breakfast he came by my table to apologize, we shook hands and forgot the incident. An hour later we were all on the train and headed back to our duties.

Chapter XXVIII: Cole Ham – A Buddy From Home

One of my old buddies from high school days was Cole Hamm. He went to public school and I went to a military school for boys in Bryan, Texas. We'd get together on holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and summers. We lived a few miles apart and both of our neighborhoods were crowded with girls. So he'd come over to visit me and I'd go over to visit him. We had a great friendship going as long as we didn't hit on the same girl.

Shortly after I joined the Air Force Cole joined the Marines. As time progressed and our assignments changed we kept in touch. While I was at Edwards AFB he was at Camp Pendleton. We used to meet in L.A. and have a great time. His aunt was kind enough to put up with both of us for a weekend. I think she enjoyed it as much as we did. During this period he met and married a beautiful young lady that was a movie star, never forget her as long as I live. Really gave Cole a hard time all the time. Best thing that ever happened to him was the Korean War. It got him away from her and his mind on other things, taking care of his men. By then he was a "Gunny" Sergeant and had a lot of responsibility but he was equal to the challenge. I often wished he had been at Allen Military Academy with me but he couldn't give up the girls. I tried to tell him that there were plenty of girls in Bryan. My words fell on deaf ears.

A few days after the Inchon invasion in Korea the "Boss" made an inspection tour. At this point in time I went where he went. It was such an inspiring time in my life. I was where history was being made, he was the man that made it and I was a part of it.

Not long after this I was transferred back to my outfit, 1273rd Air Transport Squadron at Haneda AFB and a day or so later received a letter from Cole. A buddy reaching out for a buddy. He made the invasion and had found time to write a letter. I made a vow that if I ever got close I'd do everything I could to look him up. Half a world away from Greenville Ave. and the Arcadia theatre, I had to find him. On one of my trips to Korea I had my chance. Mechanical problems gave me a day to go looking. I checked with Base Ops and the OD made a few phone calls for me. As luck would have it Cole was no more than five miles away.

There was a lull in the fighting and I was able to find him. We had a reunion that's hard to describe, great to see my old friend. That evening he took me with him while he checked on several Guard Posts. Very interesting.

One of the Posts we checked was a Supply Depot, spare parts, engines for trucks, ammo, weapons, you name it. We climbed the Guard Tower and walked in. It was enclosed to give the guards some protection from the cold. Nice, and a pot of coffee going but no lights, better to observe in the dark. The PFC. was looking through the binoculars and said, "I don't believe this. Look Cpl." He handed the glasses to the Cpl. and pointed out in the northwest corner. The Cpl. took one look and said, "Son-of-a-bitch. If he can pick it up I'm going to let him have it." He handed the glasses to Cole. After watching for a few seconds he said, "I'm with you." Cole handed the glasses to me. You will not believe what I saw. I know these small Orientals can carry heavy loads on their backs but this man had a headband, a shoulder harness and a waist

band.... tied to a truck engine. He hunkered down and with the help of two other men lifted that engine and walked out of the Depot with that engine on his back.

We each had another look with the glasses and marveled at his tenacity and strength. All of us shook our heads in disbelief. Cole and I left shortly after he told them to mend the hole in the fence.

Our next stop was the Post manned by the Turks, also part of the U.N. Forces in Korea. These guys were having a party. I was astonished. Cole said that's the way they are, after the sun goes down they party down, bonfire and all. That day they had captured four or five Chicoms and were holding them for the evening's event.

"Evening's event? What's going on?" I asked.

"You will see my friend, come, have some food, I will pour you a drink."

After a few pleasantries with his men the man in charge got up and told one of his men to bring the prisoners. They were poorly dressed for the weather and certainly not a very good example of the invincible Chinese Army that had attacked Seoul and pushed the Americans all the way back to the Pusan perimeter. Untold thousands were captured and put in POW camps at Teague and other areas. These men were caught on patrol, little did they know their fate.

The man in charge, a Major in the Turkish Army, stood one of the prisoners up at the head of a group of blankets laid out end to end, sort of a runway. His men laid a few pieces of their money down then the Major sliced their head off. They were betting to see how far he would run before falling down. I never witnessed such a brutal act in my life and hope I never do again but, I have to admit it the result justified the means. The Chicoms knew where the Turks were and avoided them like the plague.

Cole and I went on to inspect a few more Guard Posts and called it a night for some personal time together. Cole told me that "Hat Check Charlie" came over every night around two AM just to keep the troops awake and about three AM all you could hear across the valley was dead silence and "Chug-chug-chug." Sounded like a train in the distance. It would become silent again and then the biggest "BOOM", you ever heard. Then "Chug-chug-chug" and silence till the shell hit. It was tremendous. Must've been bigger than a 105 Howitzer. I later found out that it was a huge gun mounted on a flat car and was wheeled out of a tunnel just to harass the troops. Several times our guys thought they had found the "hole" but it kept coming out, ever night.

Cole and I parted the next morning and promised to see each other again, to get together after the war was over. We did but that's another story.

On our way back to Haneda we went by a volcano that was acting up, beautiful sight to see until you realized the destruction it was wreaking on the people nearby. The smoke was tremendous. The lava flow was far more than I thought it would be. We were at 9,000' but the fiery flow filled our window.

Turning on final at Haneda we encountered a storm. Well, ok, we'd done this before, Guam, Midway, Iwo...even Honolulu, no big deal. We were on GCA (ground controlled approach) on glide path and down the pike so to speak, we actually had the runway in sight as we dropped out

of the clouds. Just then we saw a sudden flash, like a whole case of flash bulbs had gone off at once. Glen Howard, a salt of the earth Nebraska boy, my Co-Pilot, said, "God Damn, I'm blind." So was I. Fortunately, Markle, the engineer, had been looking down so he wasn't affected. He talked us down along with GCA.

By the time we got on the ground and deplaned, Hickey and Markle had to lead us down the steps, we had almost regained our vision. A couple of guys from GCA came over in a jeep and asked, "What happened up there? Never saw anything like that in Berlin." Markle and I looked at each other, then at Hickey, I said, "This isn't Berlin." I turned to the first guy from GCA and told him, "We had a lightening strike. Unfortunately it hit our nose." We all walked around to the front of the old C-54...right there, for all to see...three nice black marks where the lightening hit. Looked like three burnt welding spots. We reported in to Base Ops and checked out.

A week later I was transferred to a new F-100 Squadron that was forming up. Same problem as the P-80s. We had the aircraft but no one to fly them. I went through the same procedure as before. Trained the seniors then they trained the new arrivals. In no time we were operational. The F-100 was equal to the Mig-15, better in many ways.

About this time I met a few WW II Aces, Jablonski, Gabreski...can't imagine how these arrogant idiots lived through the big war. Absolutely no regard for anyone or anything, beyond me how they were such friends. They both had a hard time making the transition to Jets, the P-47 "Jug" was their bird in the "big war", as they called it. I must admit, they acquitted them selves in good fashion. They got a few migs.

A week or so later I was transferred back to my old squadron. My first trip to Korea was to evacuate as many as we could carry, Hamhung or Hungnam I think, they were on opposite sides of the river from one another. Anyway, we had to get our guys out of there. The aircraft was loaded but we had to wait for a Squadron of "Corsairs" to land before we could depart. I had a call on the tower freq. to come to the back door. When I opened it, a Sgt. disarming a missile on the wing of a P-51 accidentally fired the thing, narrowly missed the tail of my bird, about eight feet over my head. The OD handed me some papers, I stuck them in my shirt and I went back up front just in time to see one of the "Corsairs" hit a dry patch, brake and flip. Instantly there were a couple of hundred Koreans out there. They literally picked up the aircraft and carried it off of the runway. While I was at the back door Howard and Markle had completed the run-up and we were ready to roll. Just then Hughey tapped me on the shoulder and said, "We aren't going to get off. We're too heavy." As we taxied to the end of the runway I looked at the figures. He was right but I knew from an experience at Edwards that this bird would carry twice what the figures showed. True, we had mail etc. stacked from the back door to the front, personnel in all of the seats, tied down in back and in the bunks up front but I knew this bird would get us off and back to Tokyo. My confidence waned as engines two and three faltered. Markle said, "The Commies are coming. We have to go. I'll get 'em started." We roared down the runway with an over loaded airplane, two engines out, the runway ending at the beach and full of faith. Faith won out. Markle performed his magic just in the "nicotine", as I like to say. We pulled the gear as we

neared the end of the runway, a slight drop, then we were, “Off we go into the wild blue yonder”, Howard was singing, off key I might add. Our props picked up the spray from the waves and made four barrels of trails behind, spectacular sight.

During the trip to Haneda I had an occasion to go back and talk to the troops. Much to my surprise, Cole was among them. I almost broke down, with tears in my eyes I said, “Thank God, I can take you home.” Little did I know he had been on the Chosen Reservoir and had to walk out with blankets wrapped around his feet. A fact that plagued him to his last days, he couldn’t stand the cold.

Finally I made my way to the back, where the guys were tied down in the cargo loading area, two of my classmates from Allen were there. Landa Abbott and “Barney Google” (never did know his name). “We’re going home guys, bet the farm.”

Haneda never looked so good, I had made a difference and I was proud when I helped every last one of the men off of the aircraft, especially Barney, Landa and Cole.

Chapter XXIX - Entertainment

Several young men that I met at the Shiga Heights Resort played the instruments that were on hand, good music. It sounded like they had been playing together for years. They were Army, Navy and Air Force. We came together many times when I was able to get them a date at some of the clubs around Tokyo. Like an agent I guess, made a few bucks anyway. One such engagement was at Maxim's, a high end French club. I met a beautiful French lady there named Jeanne. She was about 6' or so and very voluptuous, when I danced with her I rested my head on her large breast. My nose was in the BIG valley between and Ohh, such perfume! Fantastic! She could really belt out a song or sing it soft and tender. Quite good. She joined or group of "Merry Men" as we were known. We entertained at Service Clubs, Hospitals for recuperating vets and anywhere else we could draw a crowd, even did a Concert on the Campus of Tokyo U. Jeanne was a tremendous hit singing French songs. I always served as MC for our happy bunch.

Chapter XXX: Mig-15

“Well, enough excitement in my life. I’m ready to relax. Go into Tokyo and have some fun, entertain the troops, dance at Maxim’s (they gave me Carte Blanche), kiss a few girls.... something besides war.” As I settled back in my sack that night I realized that there were American soldiers in foxholes in Korea, freezing, maybe dying....and I never had it so good with a nice warm bed, clean sheets, someone to fix breakfast and a roof over my head. My good fortune in the movies and dates in the clubs had afforded me the opportunity to acquire an extremely nice Japanese home with an Oriental Garden with a pond and some Koi, and two nice people to take care of all the niceties of life. All of this reverie was shattered by a telephone call that would change my life. I was ordered to report to Base Ops ASAP. I was there in thirty minutes, full dress uniform and ready for anything.....I thought.

What they dropped on me was totally unexpected. The Base Ops OD, Charlie, told me to go out on the ramp and tell them what we had. He said, “I’m told you’re the only guy in the Far East that can load a C-123. There’s a crate in front of it, guard and all.” I asked him, “What about the loadmasters that came with the aircraft?” He said, “They didn’t send any.” I thought, “That’s me, right place at the wrong time.”

The “Pregnant Guppy”, as we called it, has large clamshell doors in the nose. When these open a ramp automatically extends to facilitate loading. The crate was inches away, ready to be slid into the cavernous cabin of the aircraft.

When I approached the guard asked if I had authorization, I assured him I did but he asked for ID. I produced what seemed to satisfy him and was allowed to pass.

I observed the large crate, in it appeared to be a disassembled aircraft. Further investigation revealed it to be Russian Mig-15!!! “Holy cow, where’d they come up with this?” I immediately asked the Sgt. on duty to treat this as Top Secret. He stepped over to his jeep and used his radio, asking for additional support and told his dispatcher that this was a Top Secret event. I also told him to get a curtain built around the crate and keep EVERYBODY out....even the Base Commander. A few minutes later there were four airmen building a “fence” of sorts, three sides, around us and draped with sheets to keep out prying eyes. My main concern was the Russian Courier aircraft for their Embassy landed at Haneda and parked just a short distance away. Lots of “Stink” if this got out. The open side of the “fence” was toward the runway and the beach.

I took some measurements and walked up the ramp to the cargo bay. My first thought was the crate was too long, too high and too heavy but somebody smarter than me sent this airplane for this job. Had to work. Subsequent consideration gave me insight to a solution.

A forklift wouldn’t do the job, it could push the load up the ramp but when it tipped over on its balance point the top of the outside end would damage the floor of the Flight Deck where the crew operated. What the hell to do? I pondered for a several minutes and the solution became crystal clear in a flash, like the lightning on the nose at landing. I would have to call a friend, Fukashi Kaeda, a Japanese national that had been a Supervisor for me when I was in charge of

Fleet Services Group. He called “Movie Star”, a former Kamikase Test Pilot, can’t figure out how he managed that.

While “Movie Star” was busy rounding up some help Fukashi and I surmised that the best way to do this was to push the crate as far up into the cargo bay as we dared. The end inside would have to be held up till we were sure the top of the outside end would clear the Flight Deck when the inside end came to rest on the cabin floor. I wasn’t sure the floor would hold it but this was the bird they sent me. When Fukashi and I turned around there were over a hundred “helpers” ready and waiting.

The forklift did the pushing while the “helpers” guided and held the inside end up. The old “Guppy” creaked as the crate slowly eased up the ramp. The nose gear was taking the bulk of the load at this point and had bottomed out on the strut. This created an even more difficult situation, it decreased the size of the opening provided by the clamshell doors. The top of the inside end was getting dangerously close to the top of the cabin so it had to be let down a little at a time. It was an inch by inch project, doing it at night didn’t help one bit. Finally, after more than an hour we had it far enough in so that the top of the outside end cleared the Flight Deck. Now getting it far enough back in the cabin so the weight was evenly distributed and as near CG (center of gravity) of the aircraft as possible. As little as six inches off with a load like this, the aircraft would be difficult to fly. Using the reference points they had given me for the crate and the aircraft the helpers inched it into place. I told Fukashi, “Tie it down good. We can’t have this thing moving around when it gets in the air.” Using everything they could find and a few they purloined from the Squadron Hangar they got it tied down so it was part of the airplane. I have to hand it to them, cleared for Top Secret or not, they did a terrific job. One of the helpers noticed the “Red Star” on the wing and really set up a discussion among them, animated and excited.

With the project completed we buttoned up the “Guppy.” Activating the doors pulled up the ramp automatically. The nose gear was somewhat relaxed now, my mind was at ease on that score but other things kept nagging at the back of my mind.

Ok, we had it in place. Now for some research. After several calls I was able to determine the background of our “captured” Mig-15, the most feared fighter of the Korean War. A Chinese pilot had defected and landed gear-up in the mud flats of Inchon Bay. Maybe two hundred Koreans waded out into the mud and “lifted” it out, carried it up on the beach and held it while someone got in and dropped the gear. An amazing feat. It remained there till a crew could be brought in by helicopter to disassemble and crate it. It was loaded on a flatbed trailer and driven to Pusan, then by boat to Tokyo Harbor and driven to Haneda AFB which was also Tokyo International Airport. The cover of darkness had been an ally for our task. All of this in less than three days. Who says the military can’t move fast when necessary?

Daylight fueled my curiosity. I wondered if I could get in the cockpit. A short walk across the ramp, the Security check and a precarious climb up and across the crating, ten minutes later I was easing down into the seat of a Russian built Mig-15. I felt elated but the odor was pretty bad. Bad rice or the pilot’s mess when he landed. I started looking around, had to be a pocket here

somewhere. Ah, there it is. Ummm, what's this? A complete operating manual I hoped. Sure 'nuff, one in Russian and one in Chinese, forget that. Though my Russian was limited I was able to decipher enough to determine that my suspicions were correct. What I couldn't translate I was able to fill in the gaps because of my knowledge of jet aircraft.

I suddenly had a sense of foreboding. How many of my fellow airmen had he shot down? I became very nervous and angry. A quick look at the left side under the canopy didn't show a single kill. That put my mind at ease.

I had a long talk with the crew that was going to fly it to the States and found out that their destination was Edwards AFB, my former post. I went over to base headquarters and asked to speak to the Base Commander. The General was very cordial and complimented me on a job well done after I told him how the loading went. I explained that I had spent some hours reading the operating manual and could fly this bird to Edwards. He laughed and was unprepared for my request. I asked if I could accompany the "bird" to Edwards AFB. After some serious thought he picked up the phone and issued an order that I was to be assigned to the "package" to Edwards. Man, to say I was elated is a gross understatement. I had hopes of staying to do the evaluation. Couldn't anyone else but me read the book, made sense.

I called home to ask Mamasan to pack my bags for an extended stay in the States. She was more than generous and ready when I arrived a short time later. I explained that when I was ready to leave for good I would sign the house over to them. She and Papasan were excited and thanked me profusely. They had been so nice to me I thought they deserved it.

We lifted off at 1800, bound for Midway Island then Hickham AFB in Hawaii. That old "Guppy" creaked when the wings took the load, gear up and away. "Off we go into the wild blue yonder." The Capt. turned and looked at me with a quizzical look. I explained how that came to be and everyone laughed.

I really liked this "old Guppy", affectionately because it was a fairly new airplane. I could look down from the Flight Deck and see the load. A Mig-15, unbelievable. A few hours earlier and I would have said, "Impossible." Never underestimate American ingenuity.

I whiled away the time reading the manual and going thru the procedures in my mind. Dozed off a time or two, even dreamed of flying the Mig.

The radio operator asked if I wanted to play some cards. I suggested Pinochle, right up their alley, the Navigator and Co-Pilot joined us while the PC watched the "robot." A good four-handed game. It wasn't long till we were deep into a hot contested game of Double deck, enjoyed it very much.

Midway was always a kick. The "Gooney Birds" always tried to imitate the aircraft. They'd make an approach, fan the feathers on the back of their wings (flaps), drop their gear then roll end over end. Get up, shake their head, as if wondering why they couldn't roll out. This was the only place in the world the Albatross has ever been found on land. Their mating ritual made everyone laugh. They'd bob their head then flap their wings at their intended, she'd reply if he was acceptable.

After refueling we were off again with Honolulu off the nose to the southeast. I saw another full circle rainbow on approach to Hickham that evening, twenty-two hours after lifting off of Haneda. We called for Security as we taxied up to the cargo ramp. The Air Police gave us everything we needed. We would be parking over night and departing early the next morning, non-stop to Edwards. I was anticipating seeing some of my old buddies and especially my old instructor, Yeager. With the aircraft secure we headed for the BOQ and a well-earned rest. Tomorrow was going to be a long hop, which I was excited about.

The crew teased me about flying those unknown birds...you never knew what to expect. I told them they were right but the challenge was worth the effort and that they wouldn't be flying this one if someone hadn't put his life on the line...sorta changed the tone for awhile. You always have to watch for pitch and roll on take-off. After you get up to altitude you can go through the procedures without much trouble, just get some air between you and terra firma so you could recover. Landing was always a problem, you had to watch for ground effect...that cushion of air just before touchdown. Yeager had that problem with the X-1, "Glamorous Glennis", there wasn't any. I had that problem with the Northrup X-4 and Bridgeman experienced the same thing with the Douglas 551, Stilletto. In retrospect the difficulty was easy to figure out...no wing or not enough to do any good. Trouble, trouble, trouble, it stared us in the face everyday and something was due to reach up and slap you back to your senses...you came to expect it.

Morning came too early for me, I was slow to acclimate. Shower and shave two days of growth felt good. 'Course I didn't have too much to shave. A young "shave tail" and being half Indian, I thought. Several years later I was to learn that this may not be the case.

Our departure party, the APs were most accommodating and complementary. We were off and flying in no time. The trip across the Pacific was superb, smooth as glass.

An hour out of Edwards they let me call approach control for L.A. and declare our intentions. When we approached Edwards I called for clearance. What a thrill that was. The Tower guy came back saying, "That voice sounds familiar." I replied, "It should, you gave me clearance to land many times in the not too distant past, this is Capt. "Stoney." He came back, "Capt. Stoney? Congratulations. Cleared to land. Taxi into position four, we'll have the Air Police meet you. We've been looking forward to your arrival." I told them, "I suspect they're going to be rather upset when they see what we're going to need to get our cargo off loaded. It's big, heavy and a cumbersome crate. But it's beautiful.....well worth the effort to get it here."

Edwards is a high security base but the grape vine works extremely well. One young man got busted out for spouting off to his girlfriend what he had seen in one of the Hangars. Her mother repeated it at her bridge club. Most people keep their mouth shut about things they're supposed to but some times they whisper out of the side of their mouth when something this big turns up. There was a tremendous crowd at the tower before the crew jumped out and put the pins and locks in place. The Line Chief grabbed my hand and said, "Welcome home, good to see ya." The APs cordoned off the immediate area.

The Line Chief got his instructions from the Crew Chief as a Staff Car rolled up. General

Boyd, the Base Commander, stepped out and was shaking hands with everybody. Surprised me because he was usually very reserved, good man to work with but very quiet. He ordered a personal debriefing in his office ASAP. He said, "People are waiting." The Plane Commander, Co-Pilot and Navigator got in with the General, I and the rest of the crew rode in the jeep with the Sgt.-of-the-Guard.

The conference room was all abuzz with idle speculation, when the General walked in the room became silent. The General asked some of the men seated to make room for the Crew. They were all there, all of the GREATS; Yeager, Ridley, Ascani, Bridgeman, Salmon, LaViere, Hoover, plus the General's Staff. His Secretary was taking notes on her shorthand machine.

The General asked, "Capt. tell us about your trip?"

"Well, Sir, there's not really much to tell. When we arrived in Tokyo the Base Ops OD told us we were through and to come back the next afternoon or call in. I called in and he said, 'Get on you horse'. We did and lifted off at 1800 yesterday. Stoneman took care of the loading and everything. All we did was drive the truck." This brought a few snickers.

The General turned to me and said, "Weren't you stationed here before?"

"Yes, Sir. Not as long as I would have liked, but yes I was. It seems someone had something better for me to do. Shortly after finishing school I was sent to Tokyo, to a line outfit, 1273rd Air Transport Squadron-MATS. On my first trip we went to Seoul, Korea, lost the first aircraft in the Korean War. A C-54, shortly after unloading a few tons of practice hand grenades it was shot up on the ground. I spent the next ten days with six women and ten children, dependents of the MAG, driving from Pusan. An assignment to get a P-80 Squadron going so we could strike back. etc. then this assignment came up. As best I understand a Commie defected and brought this bird to Inchon Bay. We boxed it up and brought it home."

He smiled and said, "Damn, hell of a story. You'll have to give me the details over dinner. Did you have any problems with the ladies while you were driving to Pusan?"

"Outside of no food, a snakebite, attempted poisoning, attempted kidnapping, being strafed a few times and running out of diapers, no problems." This brought the house down. "There's no way I can describe how wonderful those ladies were, they saved my bacon on more than one occasion. You will not believe it."

This caused quite a stir in the assemblage. A lot of quiet mumbling. The General sat back, shook his head, regained his composure and went on to say, "Ok, here's what we have. A foreign aircraft and an opportunity to evaluate it. We need to know everything we can find out. Its weaknesses and its strengths. If the Cold War gets hotter we're going to be up against a lot of 'em and our guys need to know as much as possible about this airplane. Yeager,..."

I interrupted, "Begging your pardon, Sir, with all due respects, my instructor taught me well, I'd like to make my bid to do the evaluation tests. I brought it home, give me my just reward."

"Son, you deserve it but I can't put you in the seat. I will do this, you will be lead Chase and Chief Consultant."

"Sir, no one else can read the Operations Manual. I studied that thing all the way across the

Pacific, I can fly that bird now.”

“I know, Son, but the future of the Free World depends on these tests. We have to know what we’re up against. He has seen combat...”

“So have I. Who do you think taught those guys how to fly the P-80s? Taught them everything I learned here and I might add, not a one has been lost in combat. They shot down some Migs with a far inferior aircraft. When the 86 Wing came over I got those guys started. On one mission after a strike on the bridges on the Yalu my wingman had a flame out. I stuck my radom up his tailpipe and pushed him home. We saved the bird and the man. Sir, I’m not looking for any medals, I just want you to know that, on a level playing field, I have earned it. You’re a fair man, always been square with me and I know you’ll do what’s best for the Air Force. I’ve said my piece, thank you.”

I wasn’t prepared for the applause. “Here, here!” “Well said,” and other congratulatory remarks. Made me proud, my peers, my teachers, my Gods. Guys who were legends in their own time were patting me on the back.

The General looked at Yeager, Ascani, a few others and back at me. “Son, if I ever have a Court Martial I want you on my side. Good case, I still have to go with Yeager. You’re number one Consultant, let the record show that. I doubt we could do the tests without you since you’re the only one that can read the ops manual.” That brought a laugh and the meeting was over till 0600 the next morning.

I couldn’t believe the hand shaking and kind remarks that followed. Jeez, these guys were my Gods. Even the General stopped to shake my hand and slap me on the shoulder. He said, “Thank you, Son, for serving our country, we’re proud of you.” I know he was sincere.

That evening at the “O Club” during dinner several others came by to shake my hand. I was humbled by their remarks. Hey, I was just a guy that went out and did what he was supposed to do. No big deal!

After dinner a bunch of us went out to Pancho’s. I thought it would be good R & R for Capt. Moore and his crew. It turned out to be an education as well. I took them around and pointed out the Legends in the pictures on the walls, even introduced them to Pancho. She was an imposing figure. Taller and broader shoulders than any of them but a real “Powder Puff Queen,” an absolute Darlin’ in my estimation.

I went out on the patio, hoping to find Stoney, my female counterpart and dancing partner. We had a marvelous time that night and headed for the “Rocks” as we called them. I bent her ear for a couple of hours talking about going to the Moon, how I wanted to be the first man up there, before we called it a night. Early wake up so I had to be fresh.

Chapter XXXI: Tests

Getting the “box” out of the 123 was a chore and a half. They didn’t believe me when I told them how to do it so they had a few problems. You couldn’t just grab hold and pull. You had to hold the inside end down and inch it out then hold it up. It almost got away from them a time or two, not enough “meat” on the inside holding on to keep it from tipping. They slid it into a hangar and set about opening the crate. Straps and crating material held the wings, rudder and elevators in place till they were ready for them. Lots of little sacks of nuts and bolts taped to the parts they were supposed to fit. There was a cradle for the fuselage, a forklift handled this well enough till they could mount the wings and activate the gear. Rudder and elevator were no problem. Hoist them into place and add the nuts and bolts, inspection, fairings and cover plates.

It took a day and a half to get everything hooked up and checked out, I mean thirty-six hours of straight steady work. Everybody would work as long as they could, take a nap and get back at it. Yeager and I were there with them every minute. The first big problem we ran into was the nuts and bolts, we didn’t have any metric tools and had a hard time finding some. Needed allen wrenches too. When the Line Chief was satisfied he said, “Your airplane gentlemen.”

We had gone over the aircraft with a fine tooth comb while they were putting it together. We learned the systems from front to back and every angle. Had a hard time opening the ammo bins to empty them so we wouldn’t have any accidents in the air.

The next morning after we got into our gear I met my instructor, on the ramp beside the Mig-15. Sure seemed out of place, a Mig on the Edwards Flight Line. The crew had worked hard and steady to put it all together. Great bunch of guys. It was guess and by golly in a lot of cases, after all, nuts and bolts are just that. Mate up the parts and put what you think fits in the hole.

Looked like everybody on the Base was on the line to watch us burn holes in the sky. Ridley was there to see if Yeager needed anything and assist both of us getting in and strapping the bird on our butt. He was really our Engineering Genius. Even the General came by to wish us luck.

We climbed up on the wing and as he was hoisting his leg over the side of the cockpit, the ultimate compliment....he said, “You know, you ought to be doing this.” I said, “Thank you, Sir. You are my mentor. I’ll be on your tail, wing, underneath and overhead, like glue and three day old shorts, I’m stuck to your butt.”

This was a switch, student teaching the teacher. I went through the procedure with him in minute detail, repeated several times, after all it was a single seat aircraft and this was going to be his solo in a new airplane but, what to do if he had to bail out became an important issue. Depending on attitude, position of the aircraft, and speed. You had that rudder-mounted elevator to contend with and we weren’t too impressed with the ejection system.

I talked with him on the ground freq a few times on some finer points after start-up and while we were taxing out...unnecessary. I was following in an 86, best we had to offer for chase at that time. The F-100 was just getting into the program. The master flew that bird out of there like he’d been flying it all his life. He waggled the wings as I came up behind him. He throttled back

to cruise, I pulled up along side. I looked over his way and he gave me the “thumbs-up.”

We went up to 20 angels and started the stall tests. The most important thing is, how does it feel when it falls off and how fast can you recover. The ailerons, rudder, elevator etc. were all routine. Now we started landing tests at altitude, to get a feel for the bird’s characteristics. Some bad points showed up. It had a tendency to pull up and to the right, nothing new, they all did a variation of that, when it hit what we thought was ground effect, ‘course we couldn’t tell for sure at altitude but that’s what it looked like to us. We made a few turn arounds, duplicating what we had just done then we started the real tests. I was chasing his ass all over the sky and couldn’t get close enough to make a “Shot.” I began to see why he was an Ace in WW II. He’d turn and I’d follow, nowhere near the capability of the mig. On approach we really ran into trouble, not serious but worrisome. He said it felt like he didn’t have enough control, slow response. After we got on the ground we discovered the problem, hydraulic leak. One thing our Line chief didn’t allow was a “leaky” airplane on his line. Then the problem was compounded. Our hydraulic fluid was not compatible with theirs. There was nothing to do but drain theirs and replace it with ours. Hopefully that would do the trick. Anyway our flying was over for the day while the ground crew drained and purged the system.

We dug into some other details. Firing systems, electronics, not near as much pilot protection as our aircraft, very little armor plate. Good grief, the pilot was the most important part, you can replace the aircraft.

Studying the systems and sub-systems, how they functioned was a “booger.” Translation took time. Since I had been over the material I could fill in the gaps but not completely.

Giving it considerable thought I could see the wisdom behind transferring me to the Far East when they did. Never was able to find out who was responsible for that. They must have known something nobody else did.

The next afternoon while we were waiting on the ground crew to bring everything “up to snuff” I was taking it easy by the pool at the “O Club”, soaking up some rays, as they say. A young lady, a Colonel’s daughter, whom I had met shortly before leaving for Tokyo said, “Hi, haven’t I seen you somewhere before?” I was jolted out of my reverie by this picture of loveliness.

“Jeez, you are a pleasant surprise and a sight for sore eyes. Just what this old tired airman needs. A beautiful young lady to soothe his tired brain. The sight of you is breath taking.”

Heather was an absolute beauty. Long red hair, bright blue eyes and unblemished complexion, not a freckle in sight, just beautiful, soft, white skin. A slender beauty with rather large breasts and long slender legs. She was wearing a gossamer thin “cover-up” over her one piece bathing suit. When she took it off her breasts were almost in full view, the tie-string went up around her neck and pushed them together. The under-curve of her breasts was visible from the side. The piece across the front just barely covered her nipples, the fabric was strained to contain them and the large bumps were very evident.

I had danced with her a few times at the club and became good friends. Her father was a

Prince of a guy, I really liked him. We shared a beer and before we went for a swim I said, "I'm not going to ask you to race, it wouldn't be fair, I'd beat you easy. That big pocket would slow you down." She asked, "What pocket," and saw where I was staring. She looked down and smiled, "Maybe you're right, just swim along together?" She had a beautiful stroke, cut the water just right. When I saw her dive I was impressed. To me there's nothing more beautiful than when a woman dives, if she knows how to do it. It's something they know inherently, they cut the water just right, never make a ripple.

After several laps we got out, she sat in one of the chairs under the shed. I said, "I'm enjoying the view but I think you want to rearrange your suit."

I got us another beer out of the cooler and she asked if she could sketch me. That explained the sketchpad etc. she was carrying when she came into the pool area. I had done some modeling before so I was complimented and readily agreed. Thinking she wanted me standing in the sun I posed like an Indian pulling an arrow in his bow, I asked, "Like so?" "No, over here under the shed and in a ball on the table."

A ball on the table, I thought, "How weird." That's what she got. Me in a ball, legs up under me, bent over and my hands on my head.

About an hour later she had finished the sketch, really excellent. I was amazed at her talent. I shouldn't have been, her father painted the most beautiful ties I had ever seen.

She then suggested that we take a drive out in the desert to some rocks. We could climb up to where she could get the sky behind me. So, still in my somewhat brief bathing suit we set off for her desert location. Turns out it was the same location where we had a going away party for the club manager, my predecessor, a little over a year before. We used to have some really "Wild Stag" shows, total strippers, and Crap games in the back room on the pool tables, thousands of dollars changed hands. There was one stripper that the guys really enjoyed, can't remember her name but she was a "true Red Head", top and bottom. Man, I couldn't believe all that had happened since then.

It was a climb, I worked up a pretty good sweat. She had brought a blanket and pillow from the car and spread it out with some nice fruit and a bottle of wine...including the glasses. The glasses were a nice touch. After some talk about what she wanted I was ready to go to work. This time posing like the Indian pulling an arrow.

She said, "You gave me the idea for this place when you posed back at the pool. I get the impression you've done this before."

"Yeah, a time or two."

About thirty minutes later she showed me a sketch, her work was excellent. The detail was impressive. She was a talent.

"Have you ever posed nude before?"

"Yes, I have, but it was always with a female to make it a pair. Like Adam and Eve or lovers."

"Well, I'd like you to pose nude. I want to see 'all' of you so I can get a feel for your soul."

I said, "Not unless you're nude also."

Several days later we were finished with the tests, took another day to write up our evaluations and get them into presentable form. The General was very complimentary and thanked us for such a thorough job in such a short time.

He said, "We'll fast-track this to those that need it and you'll get a Commendation. I'll personally see to that."

"Chuck, we have another job for you."

"Yeah, I saw them unloading it yesterday. I never get any rest."

"Stoneman, you have a few days off till we decide what to do with you. I'd like to keep you here. I'll let you know as soon as I do, ok? Go over to the club so I'll know where to reach you. Pancho's maybe?"

"Stoney" and I danced at Pancho's till we were blue in the face. We did everything, the tango, the swing, foxtrot, jitter bug and, our favorite, slow dance Exhibition Ball Room. She was lovely, full skirt and sandals. We spent two marvelous nights on the "Rocks." Just sitting there talking. The stars were too exciting to think of anything else.

The next morning I reported to Base Ops to see if I could get some Flight Time, chase or something. The OD said I was to report to the General ASAP.

My orders came in, I was disappointed to read that I was being sent back to Tokyo.

And this was only the beginning.