

Bob Rice

I am writing this biography in the hope that some of my descendants, two or three generations removed, might read and get an idea of how privileged I was to live in the greatest nation in the world, and at the very peak of it's greatness. Not that the world has not know great nations, but never such great democratic nations. And there is no doubt that a thousand years will pass before such an era will again occur. Shear numbers of homo sapiens will insure that the standard of living that the common man enjoyed during my lifetime will not be seen again for eons. That and the fact that my sister and my son keep bugging me to write my biography.

I was born in the little village of Kibbie in southwestern Michigan. Four miles east of Lake Michigan and the town of South Haven. I was born on March seventh, 1921, so I am told. My earliest recollection, outside of my mother's soft warm bosom, was sitting with my brother-in-law Gabe (Grant Gabriel, my oldest sister's husband.) feeding the squirrels in Lincoln Park in Chicago. I believe that I was over there for treatment by specialists for what was determined to be a calcium deficiency.

Eight children were born to my parents, Charles Edgar and Grace Lyman Rice. They were born over a twenty-five year period. In fact, since there is seven years between the birth of the third eldest and the fourth, it's almost as if they raised two separate families. And that may account for their expertise as parents by the time I arrived. No child ever had greater parents than I. Six of the children were girls and the other son was eighteen years older than I and I can recall very little of him living at home. About all I recall is riding on a Model T chassis that he and a friend owned. That chassis was parked in the barn for years where the chickens roosted on it and I played on it and got covered with chicken lice. I also recall he and his friend Merle Ruell having a tomato fight. And so that was about it, the rest of my young life was spent with just sisters and they probably influenced my memories and you know how unreliable girls can be. And all but one were older than I.

My recollections of my earlier years involve mainly playing with my toys and with the resorters. My parents, like other farmers, supplemented their incomes by providing room and board for city folk from Chicago in the summer months. We had a family, the Montgomerys, who came for several years and who had children our age. My sisters Eleanore and Shirley and the Montgomery kids and I slept in an open air shed in the back yard and I recall running the length of our beds waking everyone and getting in big trouble.

The Montgomerys were also the source of many toys that I would probably not have had otherwise. The family tells me that I also tried frequently to sell my younger sister, Janis, to the neighbors at about this time. And I can recall our minister, Dr. Kent, in Sunday school in the community house across the road and his gently informing me that we couldn't sing Onward Christian Soldiers every Sunday.

The primary crop in that part of Michigan at that time was fruit. Apples and cherries on our place, but peaches on all the farms north of us, which were mostly owned by my mother's brothers and sisters. I recall playing in the orchards and the packing sheds, especially with my cousin Bill Ireys. As I recall it wasn't very long before that play became work.

For my first eight years of school I attended Kibbie School. In the early years, my sisters claim that I continually embarrassed them by wetting my pants. I don't recall that, but I do recall the older kids entertaining themselves by getting my best friend, Ross Kirchner, and I to fight every recess period. In those days the school was large with over twenty students. When I became a big kid I don't recall ever having twenty kids in school, I recall one period when we had thirteen. In fact, except for two brief periods, I was the only one in my class during the seventh and eighth grades.

Somewhere around about age ten, I suppose, I was old enough to venture down to the river, usually with my friend Jack Schlaak. His grandparents lived down by the river and had a great big canoe that was at our disposal. We also fished, using worms to catch chubs and the chubs to catch bass and northern pike. Tom Sawyer should have it so good. In addition to the river, all the kids in Kibbie used to come out to play after dinner (Supper, it was called.) Usually in a field just north of our house called Rice's Half Acre, although it was closer to an acre. We'd play Run Sheep Run, Pom Pom Pull Away, Come Away or I'll Pull You Away, and other games until Dad called us all in. Dad had a really loud voice and when he called us it was the signal for all the kids to go home. We played a lot of baseball there too. And Dad staked our cow out there to keep the grass mowed and on some occasions some kid, usually from town, would get a little messy sliding into the wrong third base.

The railroad track ran through Kibbie just north of our property. On the other side of the tracks were a pickle factory, a fruit exchange and a cider mill. I can recall, as just a little tike, when fruit was shipped out

of the exchange in barrels on the train, and watching the cooper make barrels. But early on in my life fruit began being shipped to the cities by truck in baskets and the fruit exchange became just a feed and grain store with a small general store in one corner. It was in that store that I started and ended my criminal career. I decided to steal a dried herring, but when I noticed the proprietor watching me I put it back and gave up a life of crime. Later, when I was old enough to drive, I worked for the man for a short while. I made deliveries in a Rio truck of about 1922 vintage, later when he got a new Chevy truck it took away half the fun of the job.

At the pickle factory they stored the pickles in a brine in about ten thousand gallon vats until they were shipped to the cities for processing. Since we figured the pickles would be eaten by city slickers, we enjoyed drowning sparrows in the vats and urinating in them.

The cider mill used vats of the same size to hold cider that would be made into vinegar. We used to drive a nail into the bottom edge of a vat, after the cider season, and have us a source of hard cider. It lasted for a very brief period before it turned to vinegar. But during the season I always came home from school by way of the mill. There was always a community mug sitting by the press where you could get some of the freshest, sweetest cider ever made. I also used to gather the apples that fell from the trees in the old orchard and sell them to the cider mill. On Halloween we used to disassemble things like the hand truck at the Railway Depot and reassemble them on the roof of the big apple bin at the cider mill.

Speaking of Halloween, I recall one year when we found a huge billboard made of metal with just a light 1" by 4" frame backing and we decide to erect it across one entry road to the exchange area. As we were erecting it a truck entered the road and we all scattered, at least most of us did. The truck driver drove around the billboard, thank goodness, because when we returned to our task we found that we had trapped Tag Tripp under the thing when we made our fast retreat. Of course we always tipped over everyone's outdoor privy, that is everyone's except ours. Dad foiled us by building a concrete foundation to which he firmly attached the outhouse.

As I reached my teen age years my responsibilities around the farm increased, picking and hauling fruit, pruning, fertilizing and spraying. Lime and sulfur, was a primary insecticide in those days, leaving my mother's silver all black and my hair yellow for the whole summer.

We attended South Haven schools from the ninth grade on. I rode to school with a kid from Casco during the ninth grade but hitchhiked the five miles the rest of my high school years. And yes I walked a lot in the cold and snow. I went out for football and baseball my first two years, but by my junior year I finally realized that I lacked the speed and dexterity to become a sports hero. But that did not stop my enjoyment of school. Everything but the academics that is. I got involved in just about everything except sports. Almost everything, the work at home did cut into my activities a little, but not much.

It was a wonderful time to be a teenager. It was the big band era and they all played at ballrooms on Paw Paw Lake south of town, Harry James, Lionel Hampton and of course Glenn Miller, the greatest of them all. We danced to the music of them all. And on the way home we all stopped at Holly's grill for hamburgers and a malt. And when the big band visits became less frequent, during the winter months, we danced to the tunes of our local dance band made up of musicians from the high school marching band and/or the school's symphony orchestra. They were damn good, and they didn't all play electric guitars hooked to 100,000 megawatt amplifiers to cover their mistakes, they didn't make mistakes.

One winter Doc Kinchner and I ran dances at the Community Hall in Kibbie for the kids, dancing to the music of that high school dance band. It was a lot of fun, while it lasted. But, like most of Doc's and my business adventures, we soon went broke and had to give it up.

We were not sexually promiscuous like today's teenagers. Most of we boys carried a condom in our wallet. They lasted a long time in there so it didn't cost much. Their purpose was to create a circular design in the wallet to prove we were real Romeos, not for sex. We thought too highly of our girl friends to have sex. One didn't have sex with good girls, you had sex with the promiscuous girls from down in the bottoms, only there were no bottoms in South Haven and so no promiscuous girls. I cannot recall any teenage girl in South Haven, or the surrounding two counties getting pregnant during my years there. We did get into some heavy petting, that was nice. Even if it did sometimes lead to stone ache and wet dreams.

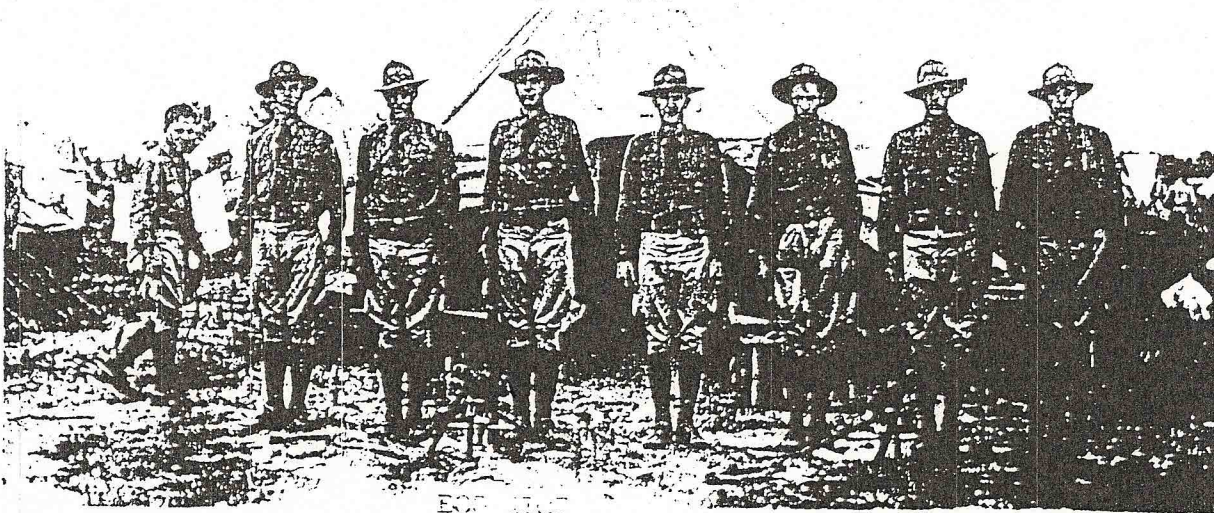
When I was about twelve or so my father farmed me out to our neighbor, Jess Piper for a few weeks one summer to learn how to handle a team of mules. We had no draft animals at our place at the time. But during most of my teenage years a horse trader named Slim Coleman stabled horses at our place during the spring and half the summer. Slim was a lot of fun for we kids,

he weighed 265 pounds and could out run any of us, that is until my sister Shirley finally beat him from the house to the barn on evening.

I learned a lot about horses from those years. In fact for two summers I ran a small riding stable at a local resort for the owners son. I guess horses got into my blood, I observed some of the guys from the local National Guard unit riding their horses in the big, tall sand dunes south of town and I wanted to join them. So, with my parents permission, I joined the Guard at age seventeen.



Three members of Troop A, 106th Calvary, Michigan National Guard
From left to right: Nyman (Tag) Tripp, Bob Rice and Jack Bunche



Most of the machine gun platoon of Troop A, 106th Cav. 1939
Pvt Bob Rice fourth from left, with rifle, Tag Tripp, fifth

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Upon my graduation from high school I attended General Motors Institute of Technology, a damn good engineering school. But during the Christmas break in 1940 the First Sgt. of good old Troop A informed me that the unit would be ordered to active Federal duty in the spring. And he was right. My academic pursuits at tech ended in the spring. I didn't mind too much as I felt that the United States would soon be involved in the war raging in Europe, and that there was no way the Fascists could be defeated without my help. I left Flint during the alter part of March 1941 to return to South Haven and prepare for a new life in the military.

The unit had been re-designated the Anti-tank Battery of the 1st Bn, 177th Field Artillery Regt. of the 72nd Field Artillery Brigade. We were motorized and no longer had our horses. We were ordered to Federal active duty on April 7th, 1941 and left home for Fort Knox, Ky one week later. We spent only a couple of months at Ft. Knox before moving to Camp Leonard Wood, Mo. The camp was still under construction and we spent the first few months there making the camp livable. A good idea, since we had no equipment to train with. Our equipment consisted of a few old vehicles and two French 75mm howitzers.

A couple of months after our arrival at Leonard Wood I was sent to the Enlisted Mens Communication Course at Ft. Sill. Ok. A three month course. I wonder what they call it now that they have women in the Field Artillery.

Upon completion of the course I returned to Ft. Leonard Wood to find that all of the Anti-tank Batteries in the 72nd FA Brigade had been re-organized into the 72nd Anti-tank Bn. and were down in Louisiana on maneuvers. They had been issued some ;of the new 6x6 trucks, jeeps and six additional anti-tank guns per battery, guns made from old car axles, fence posts and 2'x4's. I was informed that there was a good chance that I and some others still at Leonard Wood would be transfered to other units in the Brigade, so we all decided to go AWOL and catch up with our outfit before the orders could be cut. We all made it, and just in time, as the unit was moving out for maneuvers in the Carolinas.

While in the Carolinas five of we NCO's were reduced to privates for having been involved in a minor altercation with some troops from the Red Force at a tavern in Charlotte, NC and spending the night in jail. However, with help from the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, we did not remain privates long. As I recall I was promoted to Corporal on Dec. 15th, Sergeant on Jan. 1st and Staff Sergeant on Feb. 1st. In fact the unit arrived back in Ft. Leonard on December 7th, 1941. I was on an advanced detail that arrived on the sixth to police up the

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mess-hall and prepare the evening meal for the troops arrival. It was the only time in my military career that I was ever assigned to KP duty.

The unit was again re-designated, this time as the 772nd Tank Destroyer Battalion. Tank Destroyer Battalions were a new type of unit that were still mostly on paper. In February several of us were chosen to cadre another Tank Destroyer Bn., the 808th Bn. In March the cadre was sent to Cp. Joesph T. Robinson at Little Rock, Arkansas. I was promoted to Technical Sergeant around the 15th of March.

At Robinson a board of officers was convened to select candidates to attend the Field Artillery Officers Course. Six of us were selected and so I returned to Ft. Sill for three months, attending OCS Class 32 and was commissioned Oct. 1st 1942.

After graduation I was assigned to the Field Artillery Replacement Center at Cp Roberts, Calif. During the six months that I was stationed at Cp Roberts I spent some weekends in North Hollywood at the home of a fellow officer, Tom Peterson. There I took quite a liking to his step-daughter, June Grimes. While the social life in California was great, I was afraid the war would end with my never having the chance to become a great war hero. I heard about some Airborne units that were being made up of parachutists, and I applied for admittance to the parachute school. In late February I was sent to the Parachute School at Ft. Benning, Ga., Officer's Class 30, earning my wings on March 29th. I was assigned to the 11th Airborne Division at Cp. Mackall, NC.

At Mackall I was assigned to Division Artillery Headquarters as a communication officer. In September I was again sent to Ft. Sill, this time to the Officers Communication Course. A few weeks after my arrival I ran into Tom Peterson and his wife and step-daughter. One look at June and I knew that my liking for her had grown even more since California. A whole lot more. We were married three days after we met again in Lawton, Ok., on October 10th, 1943. I finished school just in time for a Christmas leave back in Michigan in which to introduce my bride to the Rice family. Talk about a scared gal. I not only took that California girl home to a cold and snowy South Haven and a large family that she had never met, but I left her there when I returned to duty.

It was a lucky thing that June did not accompany me to Cp Mackall, I arrived at two AM and was on a train for Cp Polk, Louisiana by four AM. The Division was on it's way to it's final maneuvers before going overseas into combat. While in Louisiana I did have the opportunity for a short visit with my brother Ashley,

who was then the Ordnance Officer for the 9th Armored Division. June was able to join me for a few weeks before she had to return to California as we were shipping out. She did meet Ashley in Louisiana, when she spotted him in a Shreveport hotel coffee shop. She identified him from pictures she had seen of him while staying with his wife Alberta back in South Haven.

The Division left the United States in May, through San Francisco's Golden Gate. After thirty days at sea we reached our destination, New Guinea. We disembarked at Oro Bay and moved a few miles inland to the Buna-Dobudura area where we spent about five months becoming acclimated and becoming proficient in jungle warfare. But the greatest thing that happened to me was a wire from Hollywood informing me that I was the father of a baby girl, Sharon, and that mother and daughter were doing fine.

In early November we loaded up and headed for the island of Letye in the Phillipines. We traveled in a large convoy made up of serials or groups of ships with five or ten miles between serials. The Japanese aircraft attacked the serial behind us and the one in front of us, but never attacked ours.

We arrived on the east coast of Letye around mid November and dis-embarked at Bito beach a few miles south of the village of Dulag. The Japanese did not ignore us while we worked unloading our transports. They bombed and strafed us. I watched a kamikaze pilot dive into one of our transports and sink it. We did not stay on the beach long, within a week we were ordered to relieve the 7th Infantry Division in the Burauen area, several miles inland from Dulag. Our headquarters was established near San Pablo airstrip, not far from Burauen.

A few days after arriving at the new site I was sent back to Bito beach for communications equipment and supplies. It was a full days trip each way. I arrived back at the unit just at dusk on the second day and just as a large flight of Japanese aircraft started disgorging parachutists. I fired several rounds from my carbine into one before I realized it was an equipment bundle. I hurried over to the Battery area found that our commander had been transferred and that I was in command.

All hell broke loose and no one knew what was happening. There is no twilight in Letye, you go from dusk to dark instantly. The Japanese had timed their drop perfectly. About 50,000 rounds of small arms rounds were fired that night by Division Headquarters and Special Troops and not a Jap was hit. In Div. Arty. Headquarters Battery we organized our portion of the perimeter and maintained firing discipline. I gave one machine gun crew permission to fire

one burst at something they saw moving out in front of them. Daylight showed the something to be some ones laundry.

Just as we started to eat breakfast that morning a Jap Zero strafed the battery area. A U.S. Naval Corsair was on his tail and another Zero was after the American, all three wound up strafing us. They caused a little damage to some equipment, but no personnel were hit. They had no sooner left and the men again lined up for chow and we officers seated in the mess tent when machine gun fire sprayed the tent and the kitchen fly, just above our heads. After a minute or two on the ground amid spilled dehydrated eggs, muddy toast and hot coffee, we got up to try breakfast one more time. And we received another burst, with the same results, only this time the first sergeant and another NCO thought they spotted the gun. They took off for Division Headquarters area. A second or two later I thought it wise to follow them. And it was lucky I did, they found a sergeant from the Division Medics who had gotten a machine gun somewhere and was trying to play John Wayne and it's likely they'd have killed him had I not arrived on the scene.

While none of the Japanese landed within the Division Headquarters area, they did land in force on San Pablo airstrip where some 5th Bomber Command and some 11th Div. personnel were killed, including one of our own Div. Arty. pilots.

The war in Letye was all but over by Christmas and we moved back to Bito Beach to lick our wounds, repair equipment and prepare for our next assignment. ¶The majority of the men in the Battery were young 18 year old draftees spending their first Christmas away from home. Some special services supplies we received had some phonograph records in with the cigarettes and tooth paste, including "White Christmas" and "Blue Christmas". And I, like some others listened to the music and walked alone and reminisced and hid my dewy eyes.

I received a letter from Ashley at this time. I had written him from New Guinea and had apparently complained of our chow. In his letter he had decided to rub it in a little and told me how he was stationed in Luxembourg and billeted in the home of a couple who were originally from Kansas and that he was providing the fresh US rations, steaks, etc. and they were cooking gourmet American meals for him. His letter had lost some of the rub by the time I got it though, the Battle of the Bulge had taken place and Luxembourg was back in German hands.

Perhaps I should tell what a Division Artillery Headquarters Battery did. We provided the communications and topographic survey for the Division Artillery (Div Arty) Commanding General (CG) and his staff in order for them to provide

control and operation of all artillery units organic to the Division and all attached artillery units. We also provided all the cooks and clerks and drivers and mechanics to support the CG and staff. There was supposed to be a captain and two lieutenants in the battery, but we never did have a captain during combat.

We got a new Battery Commander at this time, an alcoholic, who General Farrell, the Div Arty CG assured me he would relieve at the first opportunity. We also received our next mission. To invade the island of Luzon at the town of Nasugbu south of Cavite, our old naval base on Manila Bay, and to capture the prison camp at Los Banos and free the Allied prisoners. Sixth Army had landed at Lingayen Gulf north of Manila and was moving south toward the city.

As I recall we hit the beach at Nasugbu about the middle of January 1945. Our plan was to move inland to Tagatay Ridge, turn left and head for Manila 35 miles away. Army Intelligence told us there were 8,000 Japs in the area.

To successfully unload thousands of men, hundreds of vehicles and tons of supplies while under enemy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire is a miraculous accomplishment. And can keep a guy real busy. I recall very little of that day. Some time after midnight, about 20 hours from the time we hit the beach, I staggered out of the school house being used as the Div Arty Command and Operations Center wondering where my personal gear was and where I might get a couple hours rest. I headed for the only pup tent in the school yard that showed a light. I was greeted by the First Sergeant and another NCO who shared a bit of some local rum with me and informed me that they had erected my tent next to theirs and stowed my gear in it. I could have kissed them. They also informed me that I was again the Battery Commander. I don't know what happened to the alcoholic, I never saw him again, and I never asked.

We arrived on Tagatay Ridge within a few days, joining up with the 511th, one of the Div Infantry Regt that had parachuted on to the ridge. The Division Commander, General Swing, rounded up all the trucks he could find and sent the 511th hell bent for Manila. They reached the outskirts of Manila in about 24 hours and the Headquarters elements caught up a couple of days later.

We set up in the home of some wealthy boxer on the shore of Manila Bay in Paranaque, a suburb of Manila. I was walking across the lawn one day when a 90mm Anti-aircraft round landed on the road about 60 meters away. I didn't hit the dirt, like we were suppose to, and as I took another step, a fragment about a foot long and weighing about ten pounds hit the ground just in front of my foot. I figured that if I had hit the dirt it would have gone right through my chest. What a big part fate plays in our lives. I recall the day I was

returning to the unit from Bito Beach, the day the Jap parachutists dropped on us. My driver and I were just riding along minding our own business when all of a sudden two rows of bullets began hitting the ground in front of us. They ripped up the supply truck in front of us, killing the driver and his assistant. Had that Jap pilot started his strafing just a fraction of a second sooner, he'd have gotten us too. It was not our time.

Lt. Clagett, the other lieutenant in the Battery, had been transferred to the 457th Fa Bn just before we left Leyte, so I was not only the commander, I was the only officer in the Battery. Staff officers helped as much as they could but they all had their own jobs to do. I reached the point where one of the men could address me during one of my limited sleep periods and I would reply, and remember both the question and the reply when I awoke. Boy, would that be hard for my Dad to believe.

The Japanese had planned their defense of Manila for an attack from the south, and so we were facing some rough defenses. Including 500 pound bombs and torpedoes placed under their land mines. I was following a light tank, at a safe distance, one day when it hit one of those mines. It flipped the tank in the air and rolled it 240 degrees. But none of the crew were seriously hurt. But things were different for one of my wire crews. When one went off near them it buried most of them, put one in the hospital and killed one of the crew.

I got to know several staff officers from a Philippine guerrilla unit, influential men, college professors, business men, etc. They had been separated from their families for sometime and were anxious to see them. The families lived just across the Paranaque river in the high rent district along Manila Bay. They had all been in good shape and pretty much left alone by the Japanese the last they knew. Which was before the Americans invaded Luzon. They used to come up just about every evening to see if we had taken the area yet. The day the 511th Infantry cleared the area where their families lived I went with some of them up to the Paranaque Church, Headquarters for the 511th Inf. Regt. Some of their family members were at the church and I heard some of their tales. Seems as the Japs were faced with defeat in the area, they no longer ignored them. Some of the wives and daughters had been raped and some killed within just the past few days. One small group was enticed to climb under some corrugated metal at the end of a building to protect them during the fire fight for the area that very day, but when they were all under the metal some sadistic Japs threw gasoline on them and set them afire. One of the staff officers wife and mother was among them.

As the battle for Manila entered it's final stages, mopping up operations were assigned to XIV Corps which had been attacking from the north and the 11th was assigned to mop up in the area south of Manila. One of our primary targets was a Prisoner of war camp at Los Banos. The camp held 2500 mostly allied civilians, including some American nurses and other women, who had been there for the duration. The operation called for a company of the 511th to parachute on to the camp at first light and for the Division Reconnaissance Platoon with an attached guerilla unit to move in under cover of darkness and make a coordinated attack along with the 511th. The operation went smoothly with few casualties. However, one of the casualties was Burnell Ballard, one of my radio operators who was on loan to the Recon Platoon. He was wounded in the arm by a Jap hand grenade. He was evacuated to a general hospital where he was declared unfit for combat and assigned to a labor battalion on the docks in Manila.

Another objective was a 300 mm navel gun located on Mount Macolod to our south. A task force under General Farrell was sent to do the job. I don't recall what the infantry units in the task force were but we had most of the Division's artillery units and an attached 155 mm Bn, the 756th. We received some infantry replacements fresh from the States during the operation and I recall a young blonde passing thru the headquarters with his rifle still in the protective grease in which they were shipped. He was assigned to a company located not far from our headquarters. The Japs pulled a small Bonzi attack on the company that night and his corpse came back thru the next morning with his rifle along side, still covered with grease.

One time I came upon one of my wire crews laying a wire line and they were starting to go cross country a few hundred yards from a crossroads. When I ask them why, when they were so close to the intersection, they said because the intersection was covered by Jap machine-gun fire. About that time a brigadier general, who commanded the brigade that the 756th was assigned to stopped to see what was going on. As he started to continue, and was told of the machine-gun, he turned to his driver and said "Let's go see." They went down to the intersection, the Japs opened fire and they did a fast 180 and returned. They stopped briefly, the general said "You're right." and they moved on. There were bullet holes thru the jeep on both sides of the gas tank under the generals seat and beneath his and his drivers legs. We'd heard that that general lead a charmed life.

That big Jap gun fired several rounds at us before we spotted it and silenced it. Most of them missed us by miles, but one round landed in a battery area of the 756th. I went down to the site with Major Riley, our S-2. The round landed right between two of the howitzers. We measured the crater it made, it was eight feet deep and twenty five feet across. It did no physical damage to men or equipment, but the gunner

on one of the howitzers had to be pried from his gun controls. He had no physical injuries but mentally he was totally out of it. We located the Jap gun within a couple of days and silenced it.

Two of the infantry units mopping up in a deep stream valley ran into a large Jap unit and called for help. I was detailed to take a group of about twenty men from the 756th and assault the Japs from the flank. When we got to the rim of the valley we found that the Jap unit was a very small one caught between two of ours, making each outfit think they were facing a much larger force. But while I was talking to the officers down below, a man standing next to me directed my attention to a Japanese rifle muzzle pointing at me from some bushes about ten feet below me. I dropped behind the rim and tossed a hand grenade into the bushes, as did about four other guys. By the time I stood up several men were firing into the bushes, including one with a machine gun. When I finally got them stopped there were two very dead Japs in the bushes and my infantry fighting days were over. Thank God.

During the Mt. Macolod operation our headquarters was located at Alitagatg school, a group of buildings built around a central square. As I was returning to the headquarters one day, I spotted a young sailor sitting on the steps of one of the buildings. I recognized him from pictures I had seen, he was June's brother, Gordon. He was in the Coast Guard and serving on a sea-going tug that had put into Batangas Bay about 20 miles away.

Upon completion of the Mt. Macolod operation we established a base camp at the nearby town of Lipa, our battery was located just off Lipa Airstrip, used as a departure airfield by the Japanese airborne troops that had dropped on us in Letye. Our rear echelon had caught up with us and so we had our large tents, canvas folding cots and other luxuries. My duties were all of the housekeeping type, they still kept me busy for long hours but they were very routine.

It was here that we heard of the atomic bombs being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And at a party to christen the 674th FA Bn's new bamboo officer's club, on August 14th, I believe, we heard over a portable radio that the Japs had surrendered. Boy, did that party turn into a celebration.

The Division built a Rest and Recreation area at a beach down on Batangas Bay and about 20% of the unit were on three day passes to the "Resort" at any given time. Everyone went down there two or three times, except me. As the only officer in the battery my pass was always put off for some reason or other. Finally we got a new commander, a captain I'd known since back in Mackall.

And I was promised a full week at the beach. I went down on a Saturday night and enjoyed a rather wild evening with some buddies from the 511th Inf. Sunday morning I went out in a outrigger canoe with another lieutenant. We noticed that many people on the beach were looking at us and trying to get our attention, so we went into shore, where I learned that my "rest" was over. I was wanted back at Base Camp.

When I got back to camp I found Capt Jackson up to his ears in paper work trying to compute the plane loads to move the Battery to Okinawa. Several sets of plans were required as the type of aircraft we would fly in was not yet determined, and he had a very short deadline. I called in the NCO section chiefs, gave them each the possible aircraft they would be flying in and told them to get their plans in ASAP. The job was completed before morning. Some folks just don't know how to delegate.

Within a few days we moved to Okinawa. The Battery spent a couple of weeks in Okinawa while we waited for the Japanese to complete some tasks laid on them and for the big C-54 aircraft to arrive to fly us to Japan. I heard that every C-54 there was in the world was sent to Okinawa except FDR's "Sacred Cow" and one that was not flyable. I did not do much while on the island except play cut-throat pinochle with a couple of our cooks. Capt. Jackson was doing a good job and didn't need much help from me.

On September 2nd I flew into Japan. We were flying at twelve thousand feet when we arrived, the cloud cover extended up to eleven thousand. We descended thru the clouds and broke out at four thousand feet. Tokyo harbor was in full view and there seemed to be some sort of a ceremony being held on a battleship in the bay. It wasn't until later that I learned that I had observed the signing of the surrender of Japan aboard the battleship Missouri. We landed at Atsugi airfield, a large base outside Tokyo.

We were billeted at Atsugi for just a couple of days, but while there I explored some earth-works built under the field. There were miles and miles of tunnels with bunks along one or both sides. They could have billeted at least 50 or 60 thousand men, along with supply facilities, machine shops, maintenance hangers and just about everything else needed for war. The plans for the invasion of Japan called for the 11th Airborne to drop on Atsugi. I've never known a member of the Division since, who felt bad about the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. If they hadn't have been dropped my descendants probably would not exist today.

We next moved to a military base outside of Yokohama, one that had been

the Japanese army's officer training school. While there I experienced my first earthquake. The ground probably moved about an eighth of an inch, but when you're running in formation it feels like at least a foot. Plans were made for the Division to spread out across the islands to begin our occupation duties. The Div. Arty. units were to be split, two battalions at Yumoto and two at Akita, along with Div. Arty. Hq. Yumoto was located about dead center of Honshu and Akita was on the northwest coast.

About a quarter of our troop strength was to go by road in jeeps while the rest, along with the heavier equipment would follow when rail transport could be arranged. I was to travel with the jeep convoy. A day or two ride out of the Tokyo area we began to run out of highways and were soon on some pretty narrow trails. The backbone of the island of Honshu is a pretty damn rugged mountain range and we often found ourselves on goat trails with sheer cliffs on one side and thousand foot drops on the other. But every time we came to a pass too high or a gorge too deep, we found a modern four lane tunnel or bridge. We were told that the Japs had built them with the aid of German engineers prior to the war with the intentions of building the connecting roads themselves.

My main duties in Akita were to establish and maintain communications with the battalions and with Division Headquarters down in Sendai. We used the existing Japanese telephone service to communicate with Div. Hq. and the battalions at Yumoto. The Japanese were very polite, friendly and cooperative. I liked them.

In early October I received a call from Capt. Morgan, the Asst. Div. Signal Officer and our original battery commander, he said that orders were on their way for me to return to the United States. My war was over.

For me it had not been as bad or as long a war as it had been for most. Thousands of men, particularly infantrymen, had been exposed to much worse. But I had been bombed, strafed, exposed to artillery fire, small arms and automatic weapons fire and I had seen men killed and broken by the stress, I'd smelled the rotting flesh of the battlefield. I had participated in the killing. I had had enough.

I went by Japanese train from Akita back to the military officers school where we were stationed before. It had become the home of the 4th Replacement Depot, whose job it was to ship us home. I ran into my friend Claggett there and we made plans to go into business together when we got home, something we had discussed when he was still in the Battery.

I requested to go home by the first available aircraft but Clagett had had enough flying and opted to go by boat. But we were both held up for several days due to a typhoon. The storm did not hit the Japanese islands, but it did hit the island of Okinawa and we did hear later that June's brother Gordon experienced the worst of it. His ship was at Naha in Okinawa at the time it hit there. It did considerable damage to many of our ships, including sinking some and putting some way up on dry land. Gordon and the crew of his ship were lucky.

I finally got orders and flew home on a C54. It carried a large stack of rubber rafts in the center of the plane on which I spent most of the trip, fast asleep. I don't recall now where we landed in the United States, but I finally wound up at Ft. MacArther, just south of Los Angeles for separation. Separation should have taken twenty four hours. But I called June, who was living in North Hollywood, and arranged to meet her at the Biltmore Hotel in LA. I did not want to get too close until I had had my last physical, tropical diseases and all. And then we decided there was nothing wrong with my going home with her just to see Sharon. When we walked into the room where Sharon was sleeping she woke up, stood up in her crib and put her hands out to me, the little hussy. Well, to hell with tropical diseases, I wound up taking three days to get out of the army rather than 24 hours.

A few weeks after I got home Clagett and his wife and daughter arrived and we started to look around for a place to open our electrical appliance business. We soon found out that the guys that had not gone to war had secured all possible sites. Except Bakersfield, they said come to town with anything and we'll almost guarantee success. But who wanted to go to Bakersfield, a bunch of oil wells out in the desert. Little did we know. So both of us went to work for Bell Telephone, attending their school, while continuing to plan. But Clagett's wife got lonesome for Oklahoma and they went home. I went on to work for Bell out of the North Hollywood office. I spent one weekend helping to install dial phones in the village of Van Nuys. I was assured that I would move up fast in the company, but they didn't pay a living wage while I waited to move up.

I next tried selling life insurance, for Forest Lawn. I must have done all right, I got two really good offers from two other outfits. But I did not care to spend my evenings in someone else's home, I'd already spent too much time away from my wife and daughter. So, when June's father visited us from Oakland and said that Greyhound needed men up there. we moved on up.

We bought a house in San Leandro, for \$7500.00. We paid four times that for our last car. Our second daughter Kathy was born in East Oakland Hospital on 13 September 1946.

Seven months after I started driving bus I returned to the Oakland station to find my old buddy Clagett waiting for me. And he was back in uniform. We went across the street for a couple of drinks and then to the Post Office where I applied for return to active duty. We then bought a bottle of scotch and headed home to tell June. To our surprise, instead of throwing us out, she was glad that I had done it. It was mid December and I figured I'd be called in a couple of months, if at all. Not so, I got a wire in four days telling me to report to the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina on the day before Christmas. I wired for and got a four day delay in route and departed for Ft. Bragg on Christmas night.

June joined me in February. Flying from California on a DC-3 with a cruising speed of 120 knots and many many stops along the way. She did not enjoy the trip, what with a two year old and a colicky infant for companions. Another officer who owned a car, Bob Hutton, offered to drive to Raleigh with me to pick them up. The airport was a large field with a corrugated hanger on one side that had what served as a terminal in it. The weather was not good, colder than hell with a strong wind blowing and a fine dry snow. Sharon came down the steps of the plane and was blown over. The pilot picked her up and headed for the terminal. June made it in with Kathy on her own. She was not a happy traveler.

I had rented us some rooms in an old house in Parkton, a town about twenty miles from Post. Another officer living out there had a car. After a few months some friends of ours moved out of a house on Huske St. in Fayetteville and we were able to move in. A Lt. Everett (Red) Andrews lived near by and had a car, several of us rode to and from work with him. My sister Shirley came to visit us at this time and when she went back to Michigan, I had to send June and the girls home with her, we just could not afford the \$125.00 a month rent on that house. A couple of months later I was able to get

quarters in a government housing area called Honeycutt, located where Fayetteville Technical Community College now stands. And June and the girls came on back down. Then the Army started converting unused barracks into family quarters and we were able to move on Post. First to Smoke Bomb Hill and later to the hospital area.

During the three years we spent at Ft. Bragg we became good friends with Bob and Hilda Hutton, Red and Margaret Andrews and P.A.Clark. Friendships that have lasted thru the years. In fact, June was matron of honor at the Hutton's wedding.

On 16 March 1949, our son Robert Jr. was born at the Post Hospital. And I got orders to Japan. Because dependents could not travel overseas if they were under six months old, I went to Washington, DC to get a six months delay in my departure. In August we received new orders, this time to Europe, with a departure date in September. We went home to Michigan for a couple of weeks leave. While there I received a wire from Brooklyn Army Base extending my stay two more weeks. They couldn't handle us at the time we were due there.

We left the US on the 30th of Sept. and arrived in Bremerhaven, Germany on Oct. 10th, our wedding anniversary. The eleven days aboard ship had been very interesting, the girls had a living ball and were total hellions. Rob slipped thru the end of his crib and nearly hung himself. We hit a real bad storm and when the Captain had to turn during the storm we heeled over about 30 degrees, causing some un-secured furniture to slide around, injuring several passengers. We all survived the trip in good health.

Arriving in Port late in the day, we were informed that only field grade officers would be allowed to disembark that day. Were we surprised when 1st Lt. Rice was called to disembark. The officer running the show turned out to be a friend of ours from Ft. Bragg.

We traveled by train thru the night to the town of Bad Mergentheim, where families were stationed until quarters were available at the place the husband was assigned. I was assigned to the 74th Field Artillery Battalion in Landshut, a town a

little northeast of Munich. There were ample quarters there, but they were all taken up by high priority German families waiting to go to America. Like Dr. Warner Von Braun's family. So my family had to stay in Bad Mergentheim. There had been amebic dysentery in the pipe line (Term used to cover the whole military personnel transit system, from the US to wherever and return.). And Rob had come down with it. He was hospitalized in Wurzburg, about fifteen miles from Bad Mergenteihm. Babies were dying daily and Rob sure looked like he was going any time, and he damn near did. Then girls came down with respiratory infections and the doctor told June to get her kids out of town.

I heard that there were quarters available in Sonthofen, where a sister battalion, the 519th FA Bn., was stationed. So, I applied for and got a transfer to the 519th and got my family moved. Our quarters were in the little town of Obersdoref, as beautiful an alpine village as can be found in all of Europe.

But alas, such a beautiful assignment was not to last. I received one poor efficiency report in my career and it was a mistake, but it occured at the wrong place at the wrong time and there was not much I could do about it. The Army was cutting back in size and due to that bad report I was one of many officers relieved from active duty. At the time we were allowed to enlist as master sergeants and that is what I did.

I got a job as First Sergeant at the Intelligence School at Ober-Ammergau. In a month or so my family joined me and we enjoyed several months of peace and quite in another great Bavarian village. While there we saw the first showing of the famous Passion Play since Hitler's rise to power. And then came the Korean War.

Because of my combat MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) I was transferred to the 1st. Division Artillery at Furth, a small town on the northweat edge of Nurnberg. I was there only a few months when they formed a cadre to return to the States to form the 4th Division. I volunteered in order to get back to Washington, DC and check on my career. We were supposed to be gone for six months only and were allowed to take our

families or leave them in Europe. Ober-Ammergau was a nice place to live and we had no place to go in the US, so we decided that June and the kids would stay in Germany for the six months that I would be gone. We knew that with the build up of troops in Europe, it would be months before they could return if they did go home. So they stayed and I went home.

The cadre was sent to Ft. Benning, GA and I took a short leave to go to Washington, DC to see about my commission. I was told to just apply for active duty, which I did and I was returned to the commissioned ranks within a few weeks. I was assigned to the 20th Field Artillery Battalion, the general support battalion of the 4th Division. We were armed with 155mm howitzers.

Upon our return to Germany the Division was assigned to the Fulda Gap, the historical route of armies attacking from the east. The 20th was stationed in Hanau, a short distance from Frankfurt. I was assigned quarters right away and went to Ober-Ammergau to get the family. The quarters assigned to us was a fairly large German house about three miles out of town. For six months my family was the only one in the battalion. Our house became Rice's country club and fellow officers came out for cookouts after football games or any other excuse they could find. June fed every Officer in the Battalion Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner that year. She had to serve two meals each time as only half the officers were allowed to be gone from the battalion at any given time, and besides, we couldn't begin to feed them all at once. Luckily the house had two ranges and she had plenty of German maids and the help of the junior officers from B battery.

We led a very busy but good life for the next three and a half years. For fear of the Russians, the high brass kept us training all the time, we were in the field and away from Hanau sixty percent of the time. But the other forty percent was enjoyable, June had a maid and an excellent teen-age nanny who lived with us. After nine months or so we had to move into quarters in Hanau, in order to return the house to the German family that owned it. Our quarters were in apartments in a family compound much closer to the American facilities.

While in Hanau our third daughter, Maureen Ann, was born in the 97th Army General Hospital in Frankfurt on the 8th of August 1952 and Cynthia Gail, our fourth daughter on the 25th of November 1953, at the same hospital. Boy, was June thankful for Erika, our nanny.

I had received a six months extension of duty in Europe and had another approved by the Army Headquarters in Europe when June and I and another couple took a weeks leave to visit Berlin. Upon our return we were told that my extension had somehow been lost and that I had orders from Washington to return home. Not only were we disappointed, but we had to hurry to make our departure date.

Back in the States I was assigned to the 55th Field Artillery Battalion in Fort Sill. OK, an eight inch howitzer unit. In addition to the four eight inch howitzers, I had four 4.5 inch and four pack 75mm howitzers. We did a lot of firing for the Artillery School and for the Artillery Board. It was a good assignment, our days were full but we worked an eight hour day and spent most of our nights at home. We went on no more than three or four overnight training missions during the whole time. I was sent to Ft. Hood one time for about two weeks as an artillery

umpire and evaluator. But of course the good life couldn't last. In just one year I got orders to Korea with a reporting day in October, just 60 days away.

This time we decide to leave June and the kids on the west coast as June's family had not met most of them and June had not seen her folks in years. And so we loaded up once more and headed for Michigan for a short visit with my folks and to buy a new car. Ashley did not want to take a trade in when he was selling me a car at wholesale, so we sold our car and took a train to South Haven.

We left Michigan in a brand new (overloaded) Chevrolet station wagon and headed for Oakland, Calif. We stayed with June's Grandmother until we could find a place of our own. You could not rent anything in the Bay Area at the time but we finally found a developer who would sell us a lot and build us a home on it. He would also rent us a place until our's was finished. So, we got a home on Shakespeare Dr. in Concord, Calif. I never saw it until I got home from Korea.

I flew to Korea where I was assigned to the 13th Field Artillery Battalion of the 24th Infantry Division. We were right up on the 38th parallel. I was assigned as the S-2 for a couple of months to straighten out the mess the records left to us by the 1st Marine Division were in. Then I was given Headquarters Battery, what a gift. I found the VD rate was 120 percent and other problems were about the same. During our tour we were able to improve living conditions 100% and combat readiness about the same. Of course we can't take all the credit. Washington took notice and started correcting things about that time.

In January 1956, I received orders to the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. When I got to the United States we sold the house, shipped the furniture and headed cross country one more time. Cross country trips were a lot longer in those days. There were very few inter-states or motels. And we couldn't have afforded motels or hotels anyway. But this trip was a long one even for those days.

Our first stop was Hollywood, where we were forced to spend a few days with June's step-grand-mother and step-father from WWII. From there we went to Disneyland and then to Palm Springs to spend the night with a buddy of mine from Korea. Then it was on to the Grand Canyon where we splurged and paid for a night's lodging. After the Grand Canyon it was on to Fort Sill to see old friends and give June a chance to catch up on laundry etc. By the time we left Ft. Sill we had to travel fast to get to Ft. Bragg on time.

Upon arrival at Fort Bragg I was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division. I took command of B Battery, 319th Artillery Battalion. It was a good assignment and I enjoyed the duty very much. We had quarters on Post and, like Ft. Sill we trained right on the reservation. In the summer of 58 I was ordered back to Ft. Sill for three months to attend the Advanced Officer's Course. We kept our quarters on Post, but the family went up to South Haven to spend the time with my family. We rented an apartment and the kids all had a chance to attend Michigan schools for one semester.

I completed the course 9 December 1958 and returned to South Haven to pick up my family and return to Fort Bragg. Upon my return I was assigned to the 82nd Division Artillery Headquarters as the Fire Direction Officer. For the next year I spent most of my time out in the field testing Howitzer Batteries, Mortar Batteries and the Honest John Rocket Battery. I never worked so hard in all my life, but it was very interesting work and so I did mind too much. But, a friend of mine ask me if I would up to XVIII Airborne Corps to take the job of Installation Range Officer. I did, and that is where I

spent the last two years of my military career.

It was the most interesting job I'd ever had. The ranges and training facilities had been neglected for a long time. Bringing them into the twentieth century was a challenging job. The Range Section was a branch of the Training Division of Corps G-3, about the most influential part of Corps Headquarters. And I had a run of good training chiefs who realized the value of good facilities for developing well trained soldiers. I enjoyed the job until April 1962, when I had to retire.

For some time prior to my retirement Col. MacDonald, the Deputy Corps G-3 had been talking to me about taking a job as the assistant Range Officer as a civilian. At the time President Eisenhower was pushing retiring Army Officers to go into teaching. Since I had just a few hours to go for a BA, I was sort of looking at teaching as a second career. Col. MacDonald had gone to a lot of work, including a trip to see the Assistant secretary of the Army. So I took all of the tests and did real well, and so I took the job. My starting salary was more than I would ever make teaching so I didn't complain. In fact it was damn smart of me to take the job. I enjoyed the whole twenty years, even the bad ones. Never a dull moment.

The Department of Army (DA) Manning Tables changed, allowing a civilian to be Range Officer in 1965, so I went for it and was promoted immediately.

When the Vietnam War broke out DA really dumped on us. In March they informed us that we would have a twelve company basic training center at Fort Bragg with the first company arriving the first of July. We didn't have the facilities for four companies. XIII Airborne did have an engineer Brigade that went right to work making temporary ranges and training facilities out of some obsolete ranges left over from WWII. In the mean time DA authorized the construction of new facilities (Funds Included) to meet our needs. Fort Benning had just completed a whole set of modern training facilities and ranges so I spent considerable time down there determining what they were. And what changes we would have to make to the Corps of Engineers plans to make them work on our terrain. For the next three months I spent normal duty hours on my job and with troop engineers, Corps Engineer inspectors. At five o'clock my chief of operations sergeant and I went into the woods to lay out areas for the new ranges. Believe me, those ranges got one fast test and they were in full use.

As the war accelerated so did the Range Section, or at least the work load did. Actually the section was increased some. Not as much as you would like, but then, it never is. As always happens in time of war, new weapons were added to the inventory. Some of which required new training facilities, or modifications to older ones.

The Vietnam War was the longest one we ever fought. But as our personnel and our facilities were brought up to meet the training requirements, our duties became routine. And we could return to the 40 hour week.

After the Vietnam War commanders began to realize that their soldiers needed train on modern, well kept training facilities and ranges. And that they needed to; train with live ammunition and to maneuver under live ammunition. So we lead the parade to some very interesting live fire exercises. We soon became the experts in the field and had staffs from all over visiting us. And on many occasions I was sent off to aid in planning and running exercises being conducted around the country.

Since the number of helicopters assigned to XIII Corps had increased about twenty fold. And since we were now using high performance Air Corps aircraft in our live fire exercises, it was obvious that we need a modern, up to date Air Traffic Control Center, So, I was sent off to FFA's Air Management Course in Oklahoma City and we developed one.

I guess I must have impressed a lot of active duty officers, very few ever gave me any trouble. Except for some visiting folks who never knew me while I was in uniform or didn't know some one who did. National Guard from out of the State of North Carolina tried occasionally. I was given curtsies that are not normally given civilians. Especially civilians working in plans and training. And who seemed to have the authority that I had. It made my job a lot easier. But it also scared me, I frequently had to make decisions that could have meant the death or serious injury of one or more soldiers. Thank goodness none of the serious accidents we had happened because of me.

With in the Range Section were an operation branch, that planned and scheduled all ranged and training areas and training facilities. We also had an outside branch made of NCOs each of which was responsible for a group of ranges and/or training areas and facilities. They aided using units that needed it and insured that the units used them properly and left them in good shape for the next unit. Most of the ranges were electrically operated so we had an electrical section to maintain them. We also had a wood working shop and a metal shop that fabricated targets and kept facilities repaired. In addition to all the ground facilities, we also controled the air space up to 29,000 feet. We had troop carrier aircraft flying thru the area dropping parachutists, many helicopters and high performance aircraft, so we had to have an air traffic control center. Plenty of action to keep things from getting boring.

As I stated somewhere earlier in this epistle , those years I spent as Installation Range Officer at Fort Bragg were the best and most interesting time I ever had. But I was 62 years old. Although I observed it every day, I had not had any military training in twenty years and it was time for me to hang it up and turn it all over to a younger man. And there was a young retired major working as the Division Safety Officer for whom I had a lot of respect. So I talked Joe Hibst into applying for the job and I put in for retirement.

The kids had all grown and married or away at college, and it was time for June and I do some of the things we had always talked about. We bought a travel trailer and a tow vehicle and for five years we saw the country. And we moved to warmer country in the winter, mostly in the Florida Keys. And then I was diagnosed as having mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer that does not respond to any form of treatment nor can it be surgically removed. There has been many people trying to help and I was evaluated at Duke University. When it was discovered we were told that I had from three months

to two years to live. And now as I approach the two year mark, I am thankful for every day I've had.

I know that my children wanted this to be more of a family story, but story right from the start. Sorry about that Sharon and Rob. And besides, the last 25 years had been spent right here at home where everyone could observe me and spot all the lies I've thrown in to make it more interesting.