

Edward Taft Regenhardt

1908-1996

Memoirs

Written early 1995

Chapter 1

It all began on 2 April 1908 in a home close to the Normal Quarry where my father obtained the stone for the Academic Hall that he finished in 1906 and two other buildings all on the college campus.

Like my two brothers, William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, I too was given the name of a president, Taft. And I was named after a man who became president as I was born on 2 April and Taft was not elected until November 1908. The same was true for my older brother, William.

On October 26, 1909, President Taft was on his way to a Deep Waterways Convention to be held in New Orleans October 30 to November 3. Because the flotilla of 14 boats was passing Cape Girardeau around 5:00 AM no stop was planned. An executive committee with my father as chairman went to Washington. They convinced the President to stop in Cape Girardeau.

At 4:00 AM when the fleet passed Neelys Landing north of Cape, the telephone operator rang all the phones giving all customers a 2-hour notice that the president was coming.

The Miller's 101 Ranch Wild West Show was in Cape at that time and they broke out all the cowboys and Indians, including William Cody (Buffalo Bill), winner of a Congressional Medal of Honor. In the parade from the riverfront to the college campus, my father and J. H. Himmelberger rode in the car with the president. I was told that my mother brought me out to the parade route and the president kissed me! What makes this so remarkable is that the population was approximately 8500.

After a speech on the college campus my father joined the flotilla along with Fred Naeter and W. N. Harrison going to New Orleans as delegates to the convention.

Soon after the Deep Waterways Convention President Taft appointed my father as U. S. Marshall in St. Louis. We moved to St. Louis first on Cleveland Avenue and later out to Jennings. On Cleveland Avenue we were close to Shaw's Garden. I was told later I wasn't happy going there as I thought the prone statue of Mr. Shaw was actually Mr. Shaw.

While in Jennings my father would take me to the office once in a while. I remember lunch at the Gem Restaurant where my father and his cronies had a table reserved every working day. I remember one lunch on my father's birthday. He had ice cream from I. Ben Miller's in Cape sent up for the occasion. If you never had any of I. Ben Miller's you missed a wonderful treat. My best buddy's (Chester Brown, who retired from the Allied Chemical Corporation as Chairman of the Board) father was in charge of the plant so we had lots of free ice cream.

During our last year in Jennings I started my schooling, which lasted one day. They teased me and when I got home I told my mother I was thru with school. Since I was so young my mother said OK.

When my father was no longer the U. S. Marshall we moved back to Cape to a rental house on North Street. The house was on the north side of the street, the 2nd house west of the Frederick Street intersection.

At this time my sister Norma had a teaching certificate and was teaching the 7th grade at the Washington School. On the first September when we were in Cape, my mother one morning got me up and dressed me in my Sunday clothes. I asked what the occasion was and my mother said I was going to start school. I replied that I was not. This stalemate lasted some time until my father appeared at the door with a switch in his hand. About halfway up the hill I agreed that I would go to school. The Uhls lived on the corner just east of our place and every time I saw her (Helen Uhls), she would relate the story of my father, me, and the switch.

When my father awoke each morning, my mother was at his bedside with his clothes for the day and helped him dress. I thought that this was a good way to start the day, so when I got married I tried the routine with my Irish wife. What worked for a German wife, didn't work for an Irish wife!

While at school I remember riding a friend's bicycle. Ben Miller's bike, son of the ice cream man. I was showing off, riding without holding the handlebars. I crossed the intersection of a dead-end street when a rural mail carrier entered the intersection in a Model T Ford. He hit me broadside and didn't turn his wheels as he thought he might run over me. He didn't know that my belt was hooked over the crank and my head was the first thing to hit the curb. Took a few stitches at the time, but in the late forties I started having double vision. An eye doctor put me on a program to correct the vision and also said that I must have had a severe blow to the head.

I finally reached the 7th grade, and had my sister as my teacher. At the time I had a paper route and when she had contests for selling tickets to some benefit I always won the contests, which really disturbed her. Finally left the 7th grade and went to Central High School. Was there for six weeks when the study hall teacher and librarian resigned to get married. Who got her job? Sister!

Going back to my paper route, it was during World War I. Since there were no radios or TVs the people got their news by newspaper extras. We were called at all hours day or night, from classrooms, our beds to sell extras. On the Armistice signing I sold over 100 papers in three blocks.

My brother Bill was in the Navy during the war.

The story told me was that during World War I a neighbor of ours on Themis Street told my father that all German Americans should be deported. With a son in the Navy, my brother Bill, this statement upset my father. He reached out, grabbed the front of Mr. Taylor's coat, raised him up to dad's eye level and told him what he thought of the remark and then lowered him back to the ground. I understood he was as white as a sheet and I am sure he never repeated the remark again.

As I grew older, every day my father became more of a hero to me. But it wasn't until my great nephew, Rob Lewis, started to send me information about my father that I realized how wonderful it would have been to have all of that information when I was a teenager.

He wasn't only successful in two diverse businesses, but had time to perform civic duties for his city, state, and nation. Not many sons can say that a President of the United States bestowed a nickname on their father. President Taft called him the "Lighthouse of the Mississippi".

During my youth I had the pleasure of enjoying steamboating.

On Wednesday and Saturday the steamboat would arrive from St. Louis laden with cargo and passengers. Each afternoon they had an excursion to Commerce, Missouri. Good food, dancing,

etc. We could board the boats on a trip to St. Louis. Stateroom Wednesday night, three wonderful meals on Thursday, stateroom Thursday night. Off the boat in St. Louis early Friday. All for \$4.86.

Each Spring the excursion boats would stop over on their annual trip from New Orleans to the upper Mississippi River. The same was true for the showboats. On their way back to New Orleans they would stop again each Fall.

After my father returned to Cape after his job as U.S. Marshal, he became associated with the Harrison family in paving streets and highways.

Each summer while in high school I worked for my father. In Poplar Bluff we roomed together. One day the Ku Klux Klan had a parade and rally. I missed the parade but went to the rally. At the rally I picked up some literature about the Klan. When my father saw it I thought he was going to beat me. But he firmly told me if I ever brought anything like that again I would suffer the consequences. I never did!! I also worked in Kennett, Chaffee, and my father's first state highway job between Millersville and Fredericktown on Route 9.

Graduated from High School in May, 1925. That year my father had a stroke and instead of going to college in Rolla, I stayed home and went to the Teacher College in Cape. My father passed away May 12, 1926. That Fall I enrolled at the Missouri School of Mines in Rolla, where I received a B.S. Degree in Civil Engineering in 1930.

While at MSM I joined the Grubstaker Club and when they became part of the Triangle Fraternity System, I became a charter member and served as President in my Senior year. Each summer I worked with my brothers on paving highways. In fact, during my senior year they paved U.S. 66 from Rolla to Cuba, Missouri. That summer, while working by the fairgrounds, a circus arrived. The teamsters had trouble controlling their horses when the elephants went by. Also at noon, just when all the teams were at the feed wagon, they started playing the calliope. We spent the most of the afternoon rounding up the horses.

At the Missouri School of Mines St. Patrick's weekend was the school event of the year, as it was at all engineering schools, as St. Patrick was an engineer. At Rolla, St. Patrick, a junior, arrived on a railroad handcar. A big parade followed. Each fraternity tried to outdo each other with their float.

During the weekend St. Pat would knight all Seniors. During the ceremony you had to kneel to kiss the Blarney Stone (a ceramic model of a woman's breast). Since there were only ten females they got by with it. I am sure with the large increase in female students they use another Blarney Stone.

Since there was a scarcity of females at MSM and Rolla, too, most of the fellows had their hometown sweethearts as their guest that weekend. All fraternity houses were turned over to the girls with chaperones. Students bunked where they could - private homes, motels, etc.

Thursday night all of the fraternities have an open house dance, they staggered the hours. Some would start at 8:00 PM. some at 9:00 PM, 10:00 PM until all were open. I remember each home dance lasted 2 hours. On Friday night there was a Masquerade Dance at the gym with a nationally known band. One year I remember Coon and Saunder's band played. Saturday nite was the Junior Prom, a formal dance, with the same band. When the train left at noon, it wasn't long before most of us were in our own beds getting some much needed rest.

The first year at the Missouri School of Mines I roomed with Mr. And Mrs. Cook. My roommate, also from Cape, was Dennis Miller. Our room was on the ground floor. Upstairs also from Cape were Clarence Weiss and Paul Weber, graduate students in chemistry.

One night I yelled out and either Clarence or Paul said what was wrong. Dennis replied that a bed bug had bitten my toe.

The next morning I came to my room about 10:30 AM and Mrs. Cook had our bed stripped down to the box springs. One look at me and she knew we had tricked her. Left in a hurry and didn't come back until the storm had passed.

Clarence Weiss was brewmaster for Mr. Smith who had a pool hall in Rolla. Since this was during the days of Prohibition, home brew was quite popular. Clarence got half of each batch he brewed.

One Saturday night when the Cooks were away for the weekend, Clarence had what we called a beer bust. Home brew, sausage, limburger cheese, etc.

The next morning I was the first to leave the house to go uptown for my breakfast. When I got back and opened the front door you can't imagine the odor. I aroused everyone and we opened all the windows. It helped, but not enough. The Cooks let us know that this was not to happen again. We concurred!

Up Route U.S. 66 from Rolla there is a town called Bourbon. The State had a trout hatchery and the Von Hoffman Press Company had a lodge for their employees and customers. On a Sunday when there was a chance of rain we would put on our yellow slickers and Mrs. Cook would drive use to Bourbon and the hatchery.

When there, one of us would kneel down, shielded by the rest of us and get two trout, one for each pocket. We all took turns. Believe it or not. Later, Mrs. Cook cleaned all the fish and fed us a fish dinner.

In May 1930, I received a B. S. degree in Civil Engineering. I had a job offer from the Chicago Sanitary District, but Mother convinced me that I should go to work with my two brothers in the Regenhardt Construction Company, which I did. While with the company I was Assistant Superintendent on a highway bridge across the Black River in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. When we put the steel beams and tied them together, they raised up on one side about 1/2 inch. After checking our piers they decided that the rolling mill had barely stayed within the rolling tolerance. We ended up putting lead shims under each beam.

Chapter 2

Another thing that enters my mind. In the early 30's we had no contract. At the time W. H. Harrison had allied himself with a dentist from Kansas City who had purchased some property from the county on the road between Cape and Jackson on which to build Memorial Park Cemetery. I took a crew over and did the grading and built the roads. Since my mother and sister were in Colorado while Sis went to summer school, I pitched a tent on the property.

I had taken Sleepy and Rosie Chapman, a black couple, to the project. Rosie became our cook. At lunch one day one of the farmers we had hired for the grading with their teams asked Rosie where she got the corn on the cob we were having for lunch. She replied that Mr. Eddie went to town early that morning to buy it. She possibly was talking to the farmer that had the corn patch where she had picked it.

When I graduated from college I thought that men who wore woolen underwear were sissies. That Fall we extended our paving season quite a bit. I had rented a room that had no central heating system or indoor plumbing. Getting up at about 4:30 am was really an experience. I would shudder when I looked at that pile of clothing I had to put on each day. Being outdoors for 14 hours, it didn't have to be too cold for it to bother you.

After getting up and making my trip to the outhouse and then going to a cafe with Bill Porter that was just opening and the owner was just getting the heating stove going . . . I was in woolen underwear real quick!!

Since I was in charge of covering the concrete with burlap my days were longer than the rest of the crew. Concrete doesn't set up fast in cold weather. Usually my days were 14 to 15 hours long. All for \$1800 a year.

Following are some more memories of my years with the family company:

On one job we had a labor dispute between 2 counties. To protect ourselves supervisors worked 36 hours on, 12 off. We also had a deputy sheriff, who was a rather small man. Each evening after we shut down, our Black water boy, Foxy cleaned out the drum of the paver. One evening our small deputy put on a white sweater of mine. Then we turned off the gas supply to the light in the drum that Foxy was using. In a short time he came out to see what happened. Then he heard the moans coming from bushes on the side of the road. It was the sheriff in my sweater with no head showing and long white arms. One look and our water boy (Foxy) was on his way to the camp. He never cleaned the drum after that.

On our job between Jackson and Fredericktown we had our first fatal accident. One of the laborers jumped off a truck while it was moving. He, with several others, came from the same community in a truck. When the owner of the truck was notified, at his request we put the body in the truck. We covered it with a tarp and finished the day's work. In another accident near Compton, IL, a laborer got off a moving truck and hurt his head. Ted took him to a doctor in Compton who had an operating room. Ted was standing close to the table when the doctor cut the skin on the head. Blood got on Ted.

A short time later Ted started having problems and he thought he caught a venereal disease from the blood. He later found out that when he had colitis, some organs had dropped down, causing his problem.

Going back to our first highway contract: We had trouble with people driving thru our barricades. Bill put some tacks on the pavement one evening in front of the barricades. The first person to enter

was a district highway engineer. Our water boy, Foxy, at a safe distance, got on his knees and imitated Bill picking up tacks and apologize to the engineer at the same time as Bill was.

Another Foxy story. He was very touchy, especially if somebody goosed him. One day he was walking with Bill carrying about a half a pail of water when somebody touched him. Up went the bucket and came back down on Bill's head. All hell broke loose.

One night in our camp the laborers were shooting dice when Sleepy Chapman shot and killed another laborer because the laborer was too friendly with Sleepy's wife Rosey. He ran all the way to Bill's house while Bill was on his way out to the camp. He later was put in jail. When the time came for a trial, the defense lawyer would get a continuance. Then Bill and Ted would fire some of the witnesses. After this went on a few times the case was dismissed because of the lack of evidence. Sleepy was one of the cement finishers and was the best I ever saw. He was a valuable asset to the company. If Bill Porter had trouble with the paver he would yell for Sleepy.

One time we were approaching a bridge so the burlap truck would have to travel the county road to get past the bridge. One day I fired my truck driver and drove the truck myself with a laborer sitting on a pile of burlap on a flat bed truck as we headed around the bridge. On a county road my front wheels had just cleared a bridge when it collapsed. When I realized I wasn't going to turn over I looked back and my laborer was on some burlap and swimming like hell in just enough water to get a little wet.

When my father went from construction of buildings to highway construction he bought a fleet of trucks named Hug. Hug was the name of a highway contractor that saw the need of a specialized truck for paving highways.

In the early days dry batches of concrete were hauled to the construction site where the mix was added to water in the drum of a paver. Each truck hauled two batches.

The Hug trucks had a lifetime guarantee on the chassis. Every two years we would take the dump beds off and pull out the motors. The motors were sent to the Buda Co. for overhaul. Hug would send in a crew to tighten all loose rivets, replace them when necessary, as well as any other part of the chassis that was defective.

The trucks were assembled in Highland, Illinois where I went many times to pick up spare parts. On one of my visits a truck had just come off the assembly line. It was to be used in a quarry operation and it had 12 speeds forward and 7 in reverse. If my memory is not faulty I think my father paid about \$4500.00 for each truck. There was not a shiny piece of metal or a windshield on the trucks. The gas tank was under the driver's seat and a missing gas cap often caused blisters, you know where.

When Dad started on road paving he had a crew that handled the bags of cement. Instead of an hourly wage they got so much for each bag of cement used. This included emptying the railroad cars, placing the required number of bags on each truck and the emptying of the bags at the paver site.

This reminds me that at Poplar Bluff our cement was in cloth bags. Each bag had to be shaken to garner all of the cement. That was my first job that summer. Every hour or so my father would open the door to the shed and ask how I was doing. My pride kept me from stating my real feelings. Fortunately after a few hours he gave me another job to do.

In the early days the employees were black with the exception of machine operators and supervisors. A camp was set up to house the black employees.

During the off-season the employees could get money to tide them over to the new season, when they paid it back. We had very little turnover from season to season. Many Saturday nights we had to bail out an employee after his wife had charged him with domestic violence.

We also set up a tent for gambling. Many Saturday nights I spent the entire night with the Blacks shooting dice. If you haven't heard a Black talking to the dice you missed part of the folklore of the Blacks. On the other hand, if my luck was not good I got home early.

Regenhardt Construction Company

- Original mechanics, machine operators, and supervisors:
 - Charles Cole - Head bookkeeper
 - Gene Andrews - bookkeeper
 - Charles Kassel - Master Mechanic
 - Walter Frenzel - Assistant Mechanic
 - Frank Merritt - Assistant Mechanic
 - Jack Quill - Crane Operator
 - Earl Conroy -
 - Hubert Morrison - Blade Operator
 - Bill Porter - Paving Superintendent
 - Bob Phillips - Paver Operator
 - - Form trenching machine
 - - Form setter
 - - Form setter
 - - Finishing Machine
 - Sleepy Chapman - Concrete Finisher

Notes on above employees and equipment:

Charles Kassel was the finest mechanic I have ever known. He could do blacksmith work, welding, and work on both diesel and gas engines.

When we purchased the Form Trenching machine it replaced 10 to 15 laborers

A social note:

While going to the Cape Teacher's College, I dated Hortense Bagby. Her father was named Lee. At Rolla the following year I became involved with the school physician's daughter, Helen Baysinger. Her father's name was Lee. On to Compton and Mendota where I met and dated Helen Butler. Her father's name was Lee. 3 H.B.'s and 3 Lee's!!!

Another thing that has bothered me is that my father was a brick and stonemason and had built numerous homes in Cape Girardeau and SE Missouri. I can't figure out why he didn't build one for his family. Until his death and shortly thereafter when my mother bought a house (at the intersection of Luce and West End Boulevard on the northwest corner) I had lived in rented houses.

During the 1930's I left the company as it became impossible to work with Bill. Shortly after Ted also left for the same reason. For the next few years I had a newsstand and soda fountain in Effingham, Illinois. I next worked for the Illinois State Highway Department and W.P.A.

In 1940 I got a job with the Federal government with the Quartermaster Corp. of the Army building a powder plant on U.S. 66 south of Joliet known as the Kankakee Ordnance Works. When that job was finished the colonel in charge took six of us as key employees to start construction of a new plant in Clinton, Indiana close to Terre Haute.

Chapter 3

In the late 20's or early 30's Dwight F. Davis, donor of the Davis Cup in tennis, ran for Senator from Missouri as a Republican in the state primary. My father was his campaign manager. I am sorry to say he lost.

When I was trying to get a Commission in the Civil Engineering Corps of the Navy Mr. Davis was Secretary of War. I wrote to him asking for his assistance in getting my commission. Received a terse reply - Army yes!! Navy no!!

In January of 1943 I applied for a Commission in the Civil Engineering Corps of the U. S. Navy for service with the Seabees (Construction Battalions). I was turned down for being overweight at 286 pounds. In May they accepted me at 230 pounds with a 42-pound waiver. Lost 56 pounds in 5 months.

In June I was sent to Camp Peary, VA for indoctrination. The indoctrination and later training was to prepare you for the rigors, trials, and tribulations for duty on some island in the war zone. After my indoctrination and further training I got a set of replacement orders. The order stated that I was to join the 49th Construction Battalion wherever it may be. When I showed the orders to a Yeoman in the headquarters he said I would get a new set of orders. This new set sent me to the Seabee Base in Davisville, Rhode Island for outfitting for duty on Island X.

Three days later I left there with two wooden crates about 5 feet long and about a foot square on the way to Baltimore. There I reported to the Port Director who put me on a ship headed for my Island X.

On arriving on my Island X I opened my crates. I had mosquito netting, pup tent, machete, carbine rifle ammunition and sundry other items. I couldn't figure out how I would use these on my Island X, which was Bermuda!!!

When I reported to my battalion skipper he assigned another officer to get me settled in our BOQ. He said on departing that he would pick me up a little early for dinner as they were having a party. At the appointed time we entered the Wardroom. From the door I could see a long table covered with beautiful white line tablecloths on which were elegant silver pitchers, etc. Booze flowed like water, with some wonderful snacks. This was my Island X.

The next day the skipper called me into his office and asked me if I had ever unloaded cargo from a ship. I replied that the first ship I had been on was the one I arrived on. He said good, your extra duties will be as stevedore officer.

While there we built a large warehouse, small piers, and numerous other structures.

On unloading ships I was first assigned on the graveyard shift. At those hours I had to eat in the enlisted men's mess. I found out that they were eating like kings. The Commissary chief was from a large catering firm in Boston and really knew what good food was.

During the Christmas holidays our Battalion sponsored a Dinner Dance. Our chef closed out the dinner with a desert called Baked Alaska.

When our tour ended in Bermuda I was assigned as an Equipment and Transportation Officer.

Just before our departure our skipper advised me that at 5:00 AM, I would report to the Pilot Shack in the Harbor and accompany the Pilot out to the ship. On board I was to figure out our loading diagram to speed our loading so that we could sail before the submarine nets were closed.

The ship didn't show up until 2:00 PM, which made it impossible to load before the nets were closed.

I had to follow orders and went out with the pilot. When we reached the side of the ship the crew threw down a Jacob's ladder. This ladder is made up of two ropes and wooden steps. One minute I was against the ship - the next minute I was out over the ocean. The fact that I couldn't swim made this a terrifying experience and I am sure if you could find that ladder you can find my fingerprints imbedded in the ropes.

Chapter 4

Leaving Bermuda we went to the Seabee base in Davisville, Rhode Island. Although I had only been with the Battalion four months, I was granted a thirty-day leave. Before departure about five couples agreed to meet in New York about a week before going on to Davisville.

While in New York we went to Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe, Leon and Eddie's, Rockefeller Center, the Music Hall, Statue of Liberty, and various other attractions.

While in New York, I had a reunion with Ted and Lois as Ted was going to the Stevedore School. Some months later they discovered that Ted had TB and they released him from duty after a stay in the Navy Hospital in Oakland, California.

On Memorial Day, another officer and yours truly picked 250 men each and participated in a parade in a small town (can't remember the name). When the first unit reached a cemetery all the bands played a funeral dirge. It took a while to march to the new beat.

While at Davisville we rented a room in the caretaker's house on this small Rhode Island estate. Mr. Porter lived in the big house with two ladies and one man. One of the ladies was the housekeeper and the other one was the cook. The man was Butler and Chauffeur. Mr. Porter's late wife was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and had turned their home in Providence over to the DAR as a museum.

We started getting invitations to the big house for dinner. Later on we found out that Mr. Porter could have more drinks when he had company. Alone they let him have one drink.

Jymme started having bridge parties in the gazebo.

One time Mr. Porter took us down to the docks and told the captain of a fishing boat he wanted some clams. A peck of little neck clams was placed between us and we started shucking and eating clams on the half shell. I think I liked them better than oysters.

Right down the street a family had a stand between the sidewalk and curb. Here you could get clam chowder, clam cakes and pie. All very delicious. From the summer proceeds they wintered in Florida.

Chapter 5

Left Davisville, Rhode Island for Camp Parks in California. After an uneventful stay in September of 1944 went to Port Hueneme, CA for shipping out to Guam.

Our major project on Guam was building the housing facilities for Admiral Nimitz' Advance Headquarters. The 94th NCB built the Administration buildings.

When the 49th NCB left for Guam in September 1944 we had approximately 1,500 personnel. The average age was 38 years. We had master plumbers, electricians, carpenters, mechanics, etc. who were in their 60s. Being associated with all of this talent was the high point of my Navy career.

When a battalion would leave a base on deployment many of the disbursing officers (Supply Corps Officers) would lock the safes. We had an enlisted man that never failed to open a locked safe. Good thing he was honest.

When we setup camp on Guam one of my Chief Petty Officers asked me where I wanted the paint shop. I replied that with all the brand new equipment why a paint shop? The chief replied that when the equipment would need painting all of it would need it at the same time. It goes without saying that we immediately started painting brand new equipment.

Later on the commanding called me to his office he congratulated me on my foresight. I told him he was patting the wrong person on the back and told him about my chief petty officer. The C.O. later commended the chief. While we are talking about painting, when we checked our manifest we had one two and on-half ton truck that was not on the manifest. I didn't think it important so I never informed the C.O. Believe it or not it was one of the first items painted. Later on I was summoned to the C.O.'s office. He asked me if we had an excess truck. When I replied yes sir, another voice said I told you some S.O.B. had stolen my truck. After a reprimand I was dismissed. Sure glad to leave that office.

Especially during one phase of my life I was very lucky.

At the time I entered military service I was a civilian employee of the Federal government. When I entered the military the law, that applied to my volunteering stated that all the time I was in uniform Uncle Sam would put in my donation for Civil Service retirement. As a result, I worked as a civilian for 18 years and with my ten years in the military I got credit for 28 years on my civilian retirement.

Luck number one.

After I was released from active duty in November 1945 I went to work with the Corps of Engineers in Chicago and lived in Chicago.

In 1948 I moved to Des Plaines, Illinois and stated going to a neighborhood bar owned by a former Seabee. One night he advised me that the Navy was starting a Reserve program and if we earned 50 points a year, after 20 years we could get our retirement. You earned your points by going to meetings of a Reserve Unit, active duty, correspondence courses, and training duty. In fact the bar owner was establishing a Reserve Unit in Des Plaines. I joined and in May of 1950 I had two weeks training at Great Lakes. Shortly thereafter I was called back to active duty and was on active duty until June 1957.

Luck numbers two.

After getting out of uniform in 1957, I returned to civilian employment with the Navy. I joined a Reserve Unit and had some training duty. When I finally had my 20 years, it was the last year I would be eligible in rank. I am now on my second quarter of a century in retirement (2/25/96).

Luck number three.

On Guam I was introduced to different types of food, such as breadfruit, Land Crab, and Fruit Bat. I passed on the bat. The first one I saw in Guam had a wingspan of over two feet. They had one at the Wild Animal Park near Escondido. Recently I read in the paper that they were in short supply and they were importing them from the Philippines. They are a gourmet item. I ate some Land Crab and they tasted like coconut, which they could crack, open with their claws.

Being 6' 3" in height I had trouble with my Jeep on Guam. The canvas top kept beating me on the head. I posed my problem to mechanics in our shop. They solved the problem by taking the gas tank from under the driver's seat and dropping the seat. A gas tank from a Japanese vehicle was hooked on the back of the Jeep. They raised the top and raised the drivers side more that the passenger side. It goes without saying that I got a lot of double takes from people I passed with a 6'3", 240 pound driver and the Jeep slanting toward the passenger side.

While on Guam I met two officers on Admiral Nimitz' staff and we became real good friends. One of the officers was Vaughn Paul, in civilian life as assistant director at Metro - Golden - Mayer studios, and the other, Chuck Wheeler, was a cameraman at the Disney Studios. At the time we met Vaughn Paul, he was married to the musical star Deanna Durbin and during our tour on Guam they were divorced.

Later on as an officer escort I picked up two nurses with the Army Command and brought them to our battalion wardroom for a party.

One of the nurses was a red haired Irish gal who prior to the war was living in St. Louis with her brother who was a priest. Her name was Ethna Higgins. Can't remember the name of the other nurse.

After extolling their virtues and beauty to Chuck and Vaughn, I arranged a double date. This relationship lasted all the time we were together on Guam. After the war I got word that Vaughn had married Ethna and they had a daughter.

In my office in Chicago the phone rang and when I answered a female voice started giving me a line. I finally gave up and she said she was the other nurse on Guam. She was on her way to Denver, but was held over in Chicago because of a bad storm in Denver.

Jymme and I met her for dinner and found out she quit the nursing profession and was modeling. At the time she was the Revlon girl. She later married an air force officer she met on Guam and then I lost contact.

About four years ago Wilma and I had lunch in the LA area with Chuck and Vaughn. Chuck lives in La Quinta and Vaughn lives in the Palm Springs area.

Chapter 6

When the war was over I went to work with the Army Corps of Engineers in Chicago located in the Merchandise Mart. We couldn't find an apartment so we stayed in the Paxton Hotel on La Salle for about three years. We then bought one half of a two-story duplex in Des Plaines, Illinois and commuted to work on the Northwest Railroad. This railroad is the only left-hand railroad in the U. S. as it was built by British interests.

The couple that bought the other half had a son about four and gave birth to a daughter, who is my Goddaughter. She and her husband, a doctor, live in Farmington, Missouri and he has an office in Cape Girardeau.

After I returned to civilian life in the late 40s my brother Bill bought my stock and Ted's stock in the Regenhardt Construction Company. Up to the time of Bill's death he had paid the 8 per cent interest, but no principal. After his death we had an attorney, Rush Limbaugh, to find out about the status of our stock. He informed us that Bill had left a note saying he was sole owner of the company and that it was too late to do anything about it. I have wondered what our shares would have been worth when the company was sold.

Chapter 7

In 1950 I was called back to active duty. Sold our duplex and reported to Port Hueneme, California for further indoctrination. When that was over I was assigned to MCB 103. Since I was the senior officer at the time I had the duty of organizing a new battalion.

When organized we went to the Aleutian Islands on a Top Secret project. The scientists were going to put off the first underground nuclear shot. After about five months they realized we were about five years ahead of the scientific planning and we returned to the states.

As I was operation officer for our tour I had to write a report on our operations. I was then assigned as the courier to deliver the report to Task Force Headquarters in Washington, DC. Since the report was marked Top Secret, I had to be awake at all times or turn it over to a command en route, who would give a receipt. When I landed at the McCord Air Force Base they would not take my pouch. They finally called a navy base on Pier 13 in Seattle, Washington. They even sent a car for me. I spent the weekend in Chicago visiting friends after I turned over the pouch at my office I had worked in. On Monday, I arrived in Washington, DC where I got rid of the pouch permanently. Since I had written the report I couldn't understand all the Top Secret stuff.

On returning to the states I was given a special assignment for the Department of Defense on Tinian in the Mariana group of islands.

After the war, the Interior Department had developed a Leper colony on Tinian and it was built by the Seabees. When we arrived, my enlisted men, 35 total, occupied the facilities used by the Seabees when they established the colony. I had handpicked these 35 men from the MCB 103. A battalion on Guam gave me logistic support, such as cooks, clerks, etc. The only qualms I had when I had to go to the Leper Colony for booster shots.

Leprosy was very strange as a family lived together with the exception that children under twelve were not permitted to live with the families. Leprosy is only contagious the first 12 years, with the exception of blood-to-blood contact.

From Tinian I was assigned to the Seabee base in Gulfport, Mississippi as Planning Officer. The base was just reopening after World War 2. After a short time the Officer-in-Charge of the construction equipment depot went on inactive duty and I was transferred to that billet.

Our mission was to maintain in readiness all the equipment needed by the Seabees on a deployment. It entailed testing equipment arriving from the manufacturer and then keeping it in a fully operational status. This included jeeps, trucks, cranes, shovels, steel pontoons, well drilling, water purifiers, etc.

On Easter Sunday 1955 we had over 8 inches of rain in 6 hours. In Mobile in the same period of time they had over 12 inches. My concern on the Base was that the water could get deep enough to enter the filling pipes for the oil. Fortunately this didn't happen.

Every month we started all engines and ran them to full operating temperatures. This dissipated all the moisture in the crankcase. The Bureau of Yards and Docks directed that we drain all crankcases and replace the regular oil with preservation oil. When I inquired why, they said that at the facility in Davisville, Rhode Island, an inspection of some of the equipment had shown rust on the bearings. I surmised they hadn't reached operating temperature. To keep from dropping crankcases to look for rust we got some medical equipment to go down the filler pipe and we could detect any rust.

When my tour was up I was transferred to the 12th Naval District, Public Works Office, as the Planning and Design officer. To me they had scraped the bottom of the barrel to assign me as a design officer since my entire career had been in construction.

In this billet I realized that you could handle any job if you could analyze your subordinates. Some of my department heads - I could accept any of their decisions without any qualms. On the other hand some of them I had to go behind their back to get the right answer from one of their subordinates.

Chapter 8

On June 30, 1957 I was released from active duty and found a position as Project Manager in the District Public Works Office in the 11th Naval district, San Diego. Two projects stand out in my mind as very interesting.

Number 1 - Dredging of San Diego Harbor

In the late 1950's the Navy announced that super carriers such as the Kitty Hawk would be berthed in San Diego. These ships needed a 42' draft and the harbor was 35'.

Our office designed a new pier just inside of the harbor at Ballart Point. The ships would be berthed port side so they could get to the ocean in a short time.

The city fathers saw the advantages of a 42' depth harbor and convinced the Navy to use an existing pier at the NAS, North Island with a 600' wide channel to a 1200' turning basin in front of the pier. This we did.

Then what to do with the dredging material. The Port Commission of San Diego said they would take it, if the Navy would build an island to their plans. This we did and now San Diego has Harbor Island.

Number 2 - Observatory, Flagstaff, Arizona

Normally our office was only concerned with the construction of the building and the Navy supply department bought all the equipment. For some reason or the other the entire project was awarded to our office.

This meant buying the mirror, 60" in diameter, having it ground and polished, designing the telescope and all control equipment and having it built. I worked with quite a few noted scientists and astronomers. Very proud of the fact that Dr. Strand, director of the Naval Observatory in Washington, DC gave me credit in his publication concerning the Flagstaff facility.

The man in charge of the Inspection Department in the Construction Division retired and I was able to get the position. I was responsible for furnishing all of the resident officers in charge of construction an inspection group to fit his needs. We also assisted all of the resident officers in seeing that all projects were built to government specifications. We also reviewed all projects being submitted by the bases to the Bureau of Yards and Docks.

Chapter 9

Retired from Civil Service and then the Reserve program of the military. I was able to retire on my 60th birthday in 1968.

In retirement Jymme and I traveled from coast to coast, and Hawaii and New Zealand.

Lost my Jymme in 1985 after 52 years of wedded bliss.

In 1986 I married Wilma Harrison. I am a very fortunate man as I hit the jackpot twice!! In addition to traveling in the USA Wilma and I took an Alpine tour - Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, and Italy.

In closing I can truthfully say that I had an outstanding professional career and a wonderful private life. As I look back, day-by-day I realize I had wonderful parents. My father has always been my hero and my faith is strengthened each day when I review his many accomplishments in the professional field and the political arena. To me the Academic Hall of the college is a monument to my hero, my father. The top of his gravestone is in line with the dome of the Academic Hall. My mother above all things taught me about good food. To me she was the most wonderful German cook to trod this earth. She also taught me good manners, right from wrong, and many other things to enhance my life.