



## *Introduction*

*December, 2023*

This written rendition of my memories began about 3 years ago. Organization was the biggest challenge. I began with *Part 1 Times and Places* with the first memory and proceeded sequentially chronologically. After writing a few chapters, I realized I needed to interject themes that transcended and combined numerous *Times* .

Therefore, *Part 2 Episodes and Memories* was created. Soon after that, I discovered poetry and began putting my words and thoughts in verse form, i.e. *Part 3 Poetry and Thoughts*.

I originally intended to search for the reason “why I am who I am?” I hoped to conclude that by writing Parts 1 and 2 to determine the answer. Alas, my brain is still trying to distill those conclusions. Trying to wrestle and define anything as complex as the life I have been given is either too difficult or not needed.

I still have more to write if I am able, and someone will care enough to listen.



# Acknowledgments

December, 2023

## Thank You!

**First**, for my *Soul Mate*, the past 36 and more years, *Linda*.

Without her encouragement for so many of these years to write these stories, which I insisted on telling her, this history would not exist.

She is beyond an *Angel*.



**Second**, to *Michael Burns* with his constant affirmations. His writings inspired me to wish that he could have been the father I needed.

**Third**, to *Jean Jackson*, whose tolerance during her guidance has led me to a new way of expressing my thoughts through verse.

**Fourth**, the wonderful neighbor and dear friend, *Peggy O'Connell*, who patiently and kindly edited my chapters over the past two years.

**Fifth**, a former student at the high school where, even though he was not in my algebra class, inspired me to write, as he wrote about his own life. *Mateen Diop*. [Books](#)

And, the ALIR groups of Memoirs, Poetry, Socrates Café, Mark Stokes, Hella Hennessee, Nancy Anderson, Thomas Gaines, et al, in which I have thoroughly enjoyed acceptance and space to express my thoughts. Each of you knows who you are. I love you all.

[ALIRSanAntonio.org](http://ALIRSanAntonio.org)

# *Part 1*

## *Times and Places*

## Part 1 - Times and Places

### Chapter 1 - The First (circa 1943-45)

It is dark.

The first conscious feeling of life is stirring in my new body.  
On my back, I look to my right and see something beyond.

Through the slats of my baby bed, my eyes see a curtained window.  
Through the curtains I see a pale light coming from outside.  
I do not know if I am crying or fussing. There is a faint sound of soothing talk.

Then sleep....



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 2 - The Big Hill** *(circa 1946)*

My living place changes. Father is home after three war years in Europe. I notice he is seldom happy.

Everything else changes too. No longer are the doting mother and mentally ailing grandmother (Granny) in charge. I meet blunt force consequences for my far-reaching independent behavior. I am supposed to learn that pain is to be the standard deterrent to 'not doing what I am told'. Regretfully, for everyone, this lesson does not take.

I am living in a small white house. I have a tricycle. I ride it around the sidewalks of W. 11<sup>th</sup> St., inside the yard by the house, just a block away from the Main St. hill.

One morning, just for fun, I ride toward Main St. past the hurtful Spanish Dagger plants that line the sidewalk to Main. After reaching the Main St. sidewalk, which is at the top of the steep hill and runs along the busy street, I cannot resist. I line up the trike on the sidewalk, mount the steed, and let her rip full speed all the way down the hill (about one long block)! I think I outran some of the cars!

Someone reports this to my parents. Pain is given...but what a ride!

One further memory of this location: On a Saturday, I think, Father puts on a pot of beans in the pressure cooker and we all leave to take a drive. Upon returning and opening the door into this high-ceiling room (which is the kitchen), the cooker has blown out. Beans are everywhere...ceiling, walls, furniture, and floors. The place smells like burnt frijoles. I hear some loudly shouted new words that I do not know. Father probably thinks he is still in the Army.

We move out soon after.



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 3 - Granny**

(Still on 11<sup>th</sup> St in Roswell. About 4-5 years old. )

The question is... Who is Mother's father? Doesn't everyone have a father? Mother's mother is Granny, but Granny does not understand the question or pays no attention to it. Granny says nothing. Mother does not answer either. Father is silent as usual.

Granny is worse. She acts different. It might be because Father is home from the war. Granny's eyes drift away when I talk to her. She does not focus. She does not know when I say anything to her. She does not answer. Granny does not recognize me. She sits all day and will not go to bed.

Father and Mother force her to go to the bathroom, to go to bed, to put clothes on, and to stay inside. Granny is large. She is hard to force. Sometimes Granny screams about strange things that I do not understand. She hurts me not, but I can no longer hug her. I miss my old Granny.

One night, I awake suddenly. There are strange noises in the house. Mother sees me up and says Father is outside getting Granny. She tells me to go back to bed. I guess something important happened.

The next morning, Mother tells me more. During the night, she says Granny ran out of the house without any clothes on. She ran down the street screaming. Father chased her and forced her back in the house. A few days later, Granny is gone. Mother says Granny is in a hospital far away.

Mother is sad. Father is silent as usual.





## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 4 - Favorite Place** (circa 1947-48 in Roswell NM)

I am living in my favorite place with my favorite person, always loving, my paternal grandmother. I could not say, Grandmother. I named her MomMom. Father moved us here for several reasons which I did not realize at the time.

The house seems big to me. Front porch, dining room, living room with a large upright (old player type) piano, kitchen, side bedroom off the kitchen, big bedroom with a restroom at the back portion of the house. It has a basement accessible from the outside which has been built to be a storm shelter. I want to explore.

The yard seems huge to me. The sides or the lot are lined with mile-high Chinese elms. I am so impressed. I can see and smell the linseed oil plant one block away along the railroad track. I hear the trains once or twice a day. There are huge storage bins near the railroad track

I am still on a rather short leash, warned not to go over the alley south to the busy 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. I manage to go over two lots near the house and find the most inviting huge Cottonwood tree. I know that I belong here.





## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 5 – Favorite Place with Brother** (circa 1948)

In the Spring of 1948, I am not aware of Mother being pregnant. I have a faint memory in late spring of someone mentioning that a baby will soon arrive. I do not remember Mother being larger than usual. She is large anyway.

Mother is missing for a few days. One afternoon, MomMom tells me to go outside and wait for Father and Mother to arrive. I play and wait. It is sometime in May.

Finally, they pull onto the dirt driveway. Father gets out and moves to get Mother's door. They all come around the front of the car slowly carrying a bundle of blankets and stop to let me see.

There is little Brother. He is bundled up tight I see rosy cheeks and closed eyes. He is small. He cannot even stand up, much less walk or run with me. He certainly does not meet my expectations. I want someone to play with.

Anyway, there is a lot of fussing and cooing for weeks. I sometimes wonder if they know I am still around. I learn to accept that I am not going to get the attention I am used to.

I learn to live with it. Actually, I learn to appreciate it. It means I have less supervision. I have more time to explore. They have no idea where I will go or what I will do..

But, I am *joyfully free*.



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 6 - Walnut** *(circa 1949 - located on the east side of Roswell at Atkinson & Walnut)*

We are in a new house. The place consists of 4 or 5 blocks of new houses in Roswell, east of Chahuahita, the original Mexican village. Our blocks are on the east side of the city. Most Anglo people live on the other side, west of Main St. There are vacant lots and bare ground all around our house, but houses fill in rapidly. No trees. I miss my favorite place and MomMom. No piano.

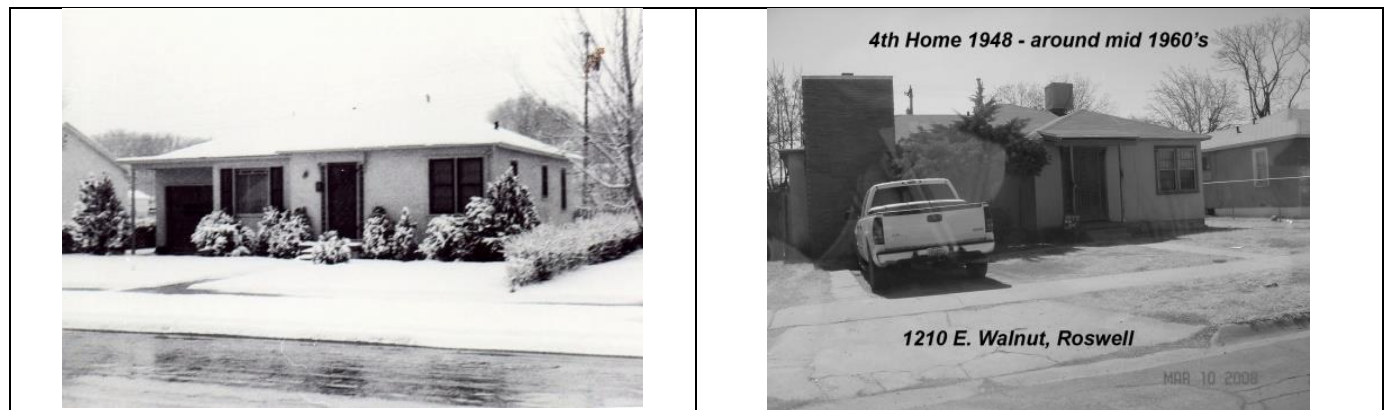
Father buys this house with his war benefits. It is a small two bedroom, one bathroom, a living room, a dining room, a kitchen, one garage, a small storage room, a very small back porch. There is a gas floor furnace. I stand on it to keep warm.

Brother and I are in the back bedroom. There is a noisy evaporative cooler mounted in the window. I live here for 10 years or more. It seems to get smaller.

Father builds a big heavy kite out of wood and some kind of cloth. He is proud of it. We go out to the vacant lots to fly it. It is too heavy to fly. He is disappointed.

Father works hard over the years to add more space to this small house. He eventually adds a double garage and workroom which is accessible from the alley. He converts the house garage to a den and builds a big fireplace. I am the mortarforker for the big brick laying job at the front of the garage. Father extends the kitchen to include the back porch.

Mother uses muriatic acid to clean the new inside bricks on the fireplace. She uses an aluminum pan. The firetruck comes to ventilate the house and Mother. Exciting!



**Chapter 7 - Edgewood Elementary School** *(North Garden St. about a mile and a half from Walnut).*

Big build-up to first grade at school. I have a cigar box with crayons and pencils. I have a red big chief tablet. I wear long pants and shoes. Mother combs my hair.

Mother takes me to the school. She walks me in the classroom. I am not used to being around so many other kids, especially noisy girls. Mother approaches the teacher, introduces me. The teacher, Mrs. VonWontock, takes me to my desk and reassures me. I vaguely remember Mother saying something to the teacher..”keep an eye on me”. Although I do not like the confinement in the classroom, I stay because the teacher is nice and pretty. I see freedom out the classroom windows.

I learn the color purple on my first day. I learn the nice smell of the long hair of the girl sitting in front of me. I learn to print my name...barely. I learn that recess and lunch time playing soccer is what I want to major in.

I do not yet know the way back to Walnut and home yet. I know that MomMom lives close by. I do not run away from school. Mother is happy. She knows Father will use the belt.

I do not remember much about next three grades in school except how much I enjoy the third-grade teacher. We sing so many great songs. I also remember rebelling against the cursive writing drills of doing overlapping circles, between the lines, across the page. I throw a fit one day in class for being forced to circle within the lines. I throw my pencil hard on the floor. I did not scream any ‘cursive’ words. I was a slow learner in writing. I made a ‘D’.

I become much better at soccer during the third grade. I am the fastest and the best dribbler. Everyone wants to play on my team.

At the beginning of fourth grade, Mother tells me that there may be some ‘Negroes’ coming to the school. I sort of remember that there is a small ‘Negro’ school on the southeast side of town. It is closing. It is 1953-54. I did not know any ‘negroes’. I am very curious.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

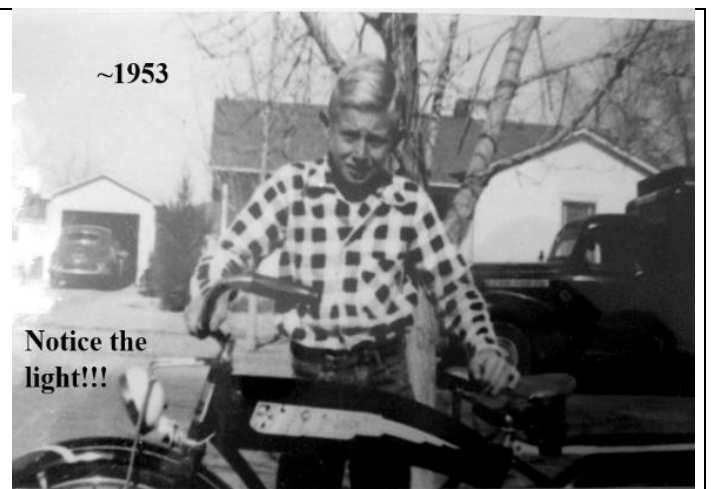
First day of 4<sup>th</sup> grade, I see one...only one. He is in my class with Ms. Raabe, who taught Father as well. At recess, I greet him and ask him if he wants to play soccer. OMG!..he is good. We become great friends along with some boys from Chahuahita. Good players!

I learn other important things at school. I learn the yo-yo, spinning wooden tops, marbles, lagging, and playing chicken with pocket knives.

I ride my bike to school in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. My hands freeze because I do not have gloves. Once at school, I learn to go into the classroom early. Inside, the hands and fingers hurt worse. I find that by opening a window a little and sticking my fingers outside in the colder temperature, the pain subsides as the fingers thaw out. The teacher seems to understand.

I love going across the street during lunchtime to the little Mom and Pop store. Kids buy sweets and little toys. The owner is nice. Twice a year, he hires a traveling Yo-Yo exhibitor to do shows in and outside the store. I am so impressed. I must have the best Duncan best yo-yo. I practice incessantly. I begin spinning wooden tops and keeping them inside the circle. I learn to knock other spinning tops out of the circle.

During 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4th grade, I learn to walk to MomMom's, my favorite place. Often Mother tells me on a Friday to walk to my favorite place and spend the weekend with MomMom. Heaven!! ... (except for having to go to church)



**Chapter 8 - East Side Elementary School** *(A new (old) school – located on East 5<sup>th</sup> Street.)*

I move on to fifth grade in a very old two-story building nearby on East 5<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Miller, my math teacher in fourth grade, is there. She often will not let me go outside to play. She says I look sickly. I have numerous episodes of strep throat. It is polio scary times. I feel that Ms. Miller is stealing away my best times outside at lunch and recess. She is so skinny. I think she is the one who is sick.

When in Miller's prison, I go to the second floor, open a big window, fold and throw paper airplanes all over the playground. Sometimes, I am required to go out and pick them up.

This old school is called East Side Elementary. It is only 2 blocks from MomMom's house. I walk to my favorite place after school. I spend Friday night and Saturday night. I am required to go to church on Sunday. I hate going to this "Church of Christ". It makes no sense to me. Often, I misbehave. I am sent to the little room in the back. I sneak out often.

MomMom sometimes lets me sleep in her bed. She tells me about her past life in Oklahoma. She remembers about being so afraid of Indians coming to the house. The dust storms are terrible, she says. Tornadoes are so frightening. Straw is driven into tree trunks. She remembers the fear of being in a storm cellar. I am mesmerized. I remember every word from this loving grandmother. I memorize the inside of the back bedroom so well as I fall asleep.

MomMom has four sons. Her husband leaves her alone with the boys and runs off with a 'Floosie' to Carlsbad. The two older sons have jobs as mechanics. Father, the third son, quits high school and goes to work to support MomMom. The fourth son stays in high school. Father gets his GED after returning from war.

The sons build MomMom a small apartment and laundry building on the alley of my favorite place. It has one bedroom, a kitchen with a small table, a restroom, and a laundry room about the size of a single garage. She has two sturdy washing machines with big power ringers on top and a drainage system of concrete canals. Along one wall is a counter for folding. On the parallel wall is a hanging rack, an ironing board, a big iron press and a foot treadle sewing machine. A radio is on the counter where we listen to Tennessee Ernie Ford and the Sons of the Pioneers. I learn and love the music.



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

Her patrons in Roswell bring her laundry to wash, starch, to dry, to press, to fold and to wrap in brown paper. Many are her church people

MomMom has what seems like miles of clothesline wire in the backyard. She stretches to pin the clothes on the wire. I try to carry back and forth the baskets of wet and dry clothes to her. Father and Uncles have built these clotheslines for her.

On Saturday mornings, after a great breakfast, MomMom and I walk west over the railroad tracks to Main Street. She goes into a beauty shop to get her "Go to Church" hair do. I walk down to Woolworth with about 15 to 25 cents to spend anyway I want. I spend away for about an hour. I see a guy put stuff in his pocket and watch him walk out. I return to the beauty shop to be with MomMom.

We walk towards home along Third St. We go into the small Safeway store. MomMom buys the groceries. I help her carry the paper sacks home. It seems a long way, but it is only about 2 blocks. I play the rest of the day climbing the big cottonwood tree, etching my initials many places in the bark with a spark plug. I know that it will be a big hurt if I ever fall out of that tree. I am lucky that I don't.

This is the last year East Side School was open.





## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 9 - The Farm**

For several summers, I am allowed to go to a working farm between Hagermann and Dexter, NM. Aunt D and Uncle W welcome me for a week or two. I do not know why they are Aunt and Uncle. I think they were related to Granny or her husband.

Mother takes me; Father never comes.

I have a Daisy BB rifle. I make fishing rigs to catch perch and crawdads.

I am an excellent shot. I target the English sparrows. I spare the other birds. I also became an expert at lying in wait for field mice peeking their triangular heads out of the stacked maize piles. I put only one BB in the chamber so that there are no rolling shots in the chamber. I wait until I hear a rustle. I slowly position the rifle in that direction. I know the mouse pathways through the maize stalks. I wait until I see the tiny head. From about 10 to 15 feet away, I pop them. One week I bagged 27 field mice. Uncle W was happy. It taught me patience.

One day, Uncle W tells me to climb up the inside wall of the barn to the top rafters. There are pigeon nests up there. He tells me to take the feathered young ones and drop them down to him. I leave the little ones alone. He wants the almost-grown squabs which cannot fly. The adult pigeons are not happy and buzz me. That night, Aunt D fixes the squabs. They are delicious.

Sometimes, I help Uncle W irrigate the rows from dirt canals. We start up the big well. The water gushes out and flows down the dirt canals. Metal tubes are placed along the dirt canals bridging into the the canal. They become siphons to get the water to the rows.

When the well is shut off, I get a piece of bacon and tie it on a string. I patiently wait on the edge of the canal at the well. Eventually, a crawdad will pinch and start eating the bacon. I slowly bring him up until I can flip him out. Then the tricky task of getting hold of him. I hate getting pinched. Once I subdue the little lobster, I harvest the tail and peel it. I use it as bait in the reservoir for perch.

I am up every morning at daybreak. I sleep on the screened porch on a cot. I fall asleep exhausted at nightfall. I do not remember ever taking a bath there. Aunt fixes a lot of chicken and dumplings. This farm is the place where I feel most free.

*Part 1 - Times and Places*



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 10 - Flora Vista Elementary School** *(circa 1955 – located on southeast Atkinson St.)*

I cannot see very well. Everything is blurry. Mother takes me to an eye doctor, and I get glasses for being nearsighted. I see much better now. The un-speckled students tease me for wearing them, but I make better grades.

The new school is built a few blocks away from Walnut. I walk to school. I know most of the 6<sup>th</sup> graders but it is very crowded. The teachers seem to think I am smart. That does not matter to me. I want to be outside playing ball. I get hurt playing tackle football. I do not like tackle football.

I try to high jump and land on my back along the edge of the pit. I can barely breathe but embarrassment makes me hide the hurt I feel. It takes a month or two for the pain to go away. I have difficulty breathing but I do not tell Mother.

Every day after school, I hurry home to listen to our big AM radio. Sgt Preston of the Yukon, Sky King, Lone Ranger, and Buck Rogers are some of my favorite daily serials. These stories are such a source of food for my imagination. Mother buys cans of applesauce by the case. I open and eat a can every afternoon.

This elementary school eventually is renamed Nancy Lopez Elementary who was born and raised about a block from the Walnut house. Her house was on my paper route.

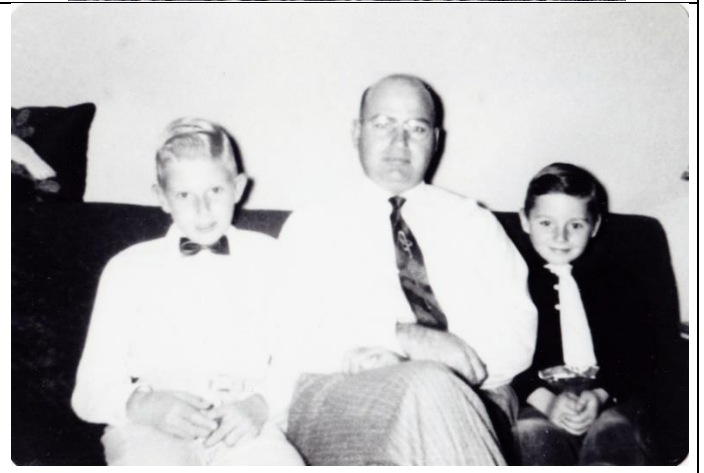
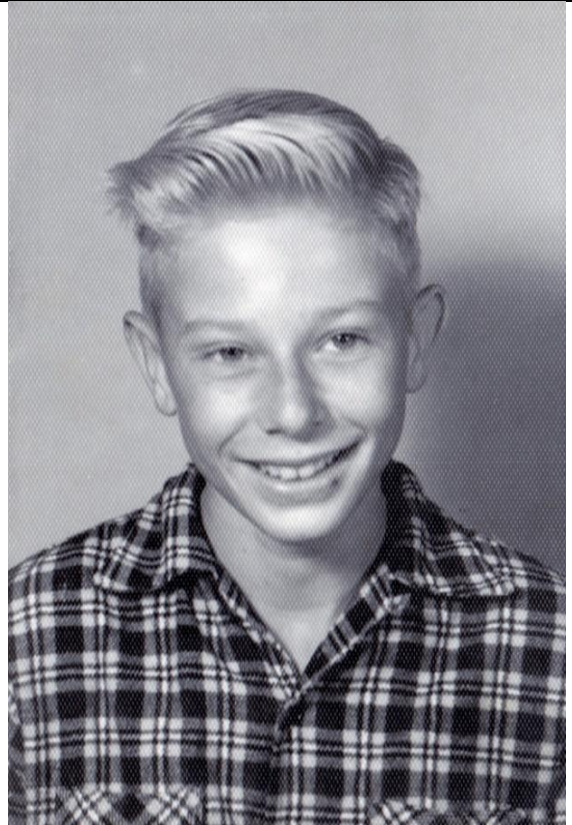
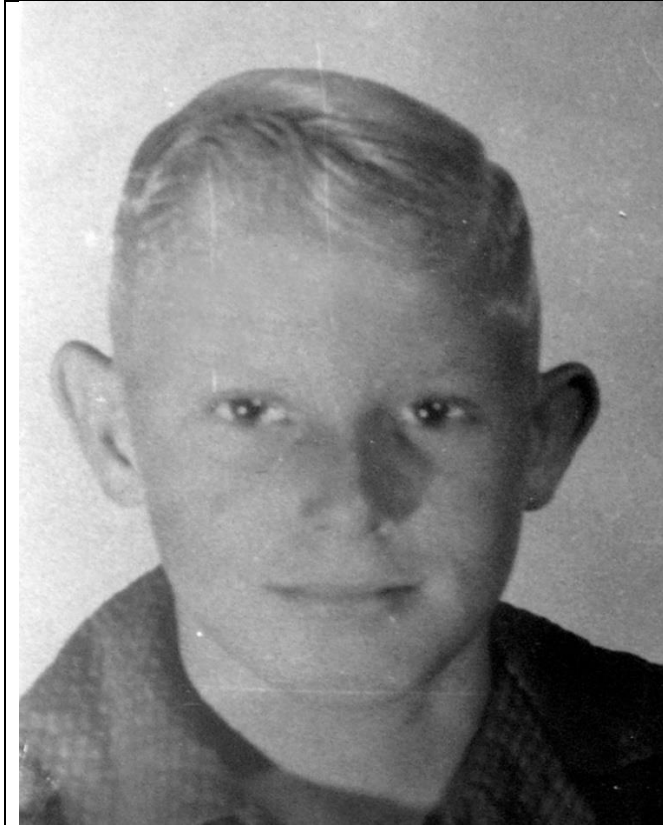
I experience my first discrimination issue. I realize for years that Father hates “Mexicans”. He refers to them as “Mess-kins”. What Father thinks or says does not affect me much.

Several times while living at the Walnut place, I ride my bike through the north edge shortcut past Chahuahita Village to Hondo Park and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. I am chased and rocks are thrown at me. Generally, those times frighten me, so I stay away from that route. I still have Mexican friends at school.

I notice this beautiful girl in my class. She always smiles at me. She invites me to her birthday party in the springtime of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I tell her I will come. She lives about two blocks away in a mobile home (trailer house).

I tell Mother. A few hours later, Mother tells me I must ask permission from MomMom. I ask MomMom and she says no. “We do not mingle with Mexicans”, MomMom says. Mother forbids me to go to the party. I do not understand. I am confused and embarrassed to tell the beautiful girl.

*Part 1 - Times and Places*





## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 11 - The Piano (age 9 and up)**

At my favorite place, MomMom has an old upright piano. She tells me that it used to be an old “player” piano. There is a ragged John Thompson music book for older beginners. I learn to read the notes. I find the keys on my own. It takes me a few months and some encouragement to learn to play “Long, Long Ago”. MomMom loves it. She wants me to play “Beautiful Dreamer”. It takes me a shorter time to play that one.

Mother is excited. Father seems to like the music. Mother wants me to take lessons. “Ok”, I say, not knowing what I am getting into. She takes me to a very old woman’s house south of town. Ms. C was not my ideal teacher, but I paid some attention. Brother took lessons there too.

My finger exercises reminded me of drawing cursive writing ovals. I did not like practicing finger drills. I have songs to play. The only reason I enjoy going to Ms. C’s house is that she has baby ducks running around. I talk her out of one or two to take home. I raise them in the backyard.

I am very frustrated with the constraints of practice scales and finger exercises. I know that I probably need it. I am resentful of having to go to Ms. C’s every week. I take it out on the piano. I find a book of matches and try to light one of the legs on fire. The leg was reluctant to burn. Father comes home. The belt comes out and it hurts.

I decide to play songs that I like. I find a book of Stephen Foster songs. I love the melodies. Father likes “Ole Black Joe”. I do not pay attention to lyrics. I play for the melody and harmony.

Later, in Junior and High school, I change piano teachers to a gentleman on the northwest side of Roswell. He wants me to play ‘classics’. I learn a few: [Solfeggietto](#), [Prelude in C# Minor](#), [Clair de Lune](#) and several more . In return, he agrees that I can play more popular songs: Autumn Leaves, Theme from the Apartment, Theme from Exodus, Under the Double Eagle. My recitals bring in a crowd. Teacher cries every time I play Moonlight Sonata.

I play for the high school queen coronations FFA, FHA, and other events. I attain some popularity with the west side Anglos. During this time, I have not related my East Side Walnut residency as affecting my social status.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

I begin working as a sacker at Safeway at the age of 15. I want a car. Cars cost money. Working after school and on weekends takes away time from piano practice.

Gradually, I stop playing during my college years except occasionally ripping out the double chromatic from “Autumn Leaves” just to impress. I start again in 1966 but I do not remember many of my old pieces. I start free play. Melodies form.

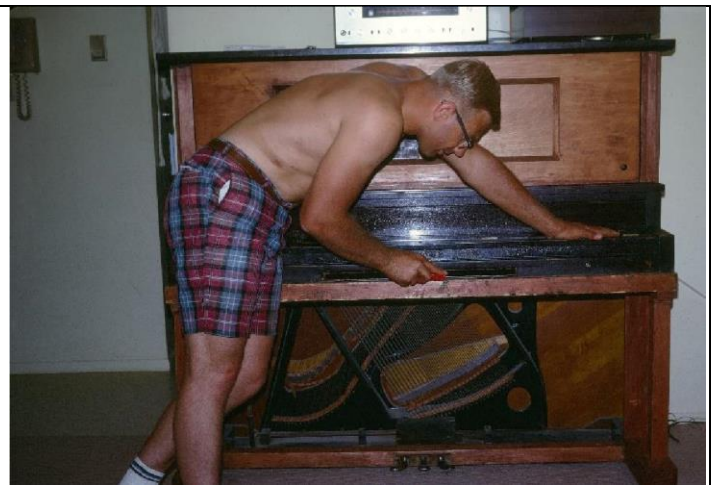
I develop a few of them and record them in 1967 on a simple cassette recorder. It satisfies my need for music.

Again, I stop playing until 1986 when, after meeting my soulmate, something turns on the need to express my feelings through the keyboard. I compose some more complicated melodies and record them in 1988.

My fingers have limits now after a bout with rheumatoid arthritis in 2017. I still sit down occasionally, and after a few minutes of tinkering, I can sometimes play the basics of a new melody. If I do not turn on the recorder on the electric piano, I will forget the new melody the next day. I feel that a home is empty without a piano.



[Don's songs 1967](#)



Don's songs 1988

[Linda](#)  
[Flighty Fun](#)



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 12 - Discipline**

When Father comes home from the war, my spoiled life changes. After ignoring simple instructions, my little butt is slapped. As I grew up, my bigger butt is strapped with Father's belt. Mother never hit me.

To deal with this, I do segregated behavior: one style when Father is home and the other when I am home alone with Mother. Then Mother and Brother started ratting on me. Father imposes more punishment. I have nowhere to hide except MomMom's. I always behave there.

From age 5 through 10, the most tough times are at the dinner table on Walnut. Mother often fixes pot roast with potatoes. I love mashing the potatoes and covering them with French dressing. Then I cut up the beef or venison and mix it into an orange mush. Somehow, this meal makes me ravenously hungry.

Father is always in his training mode. He constantly watches for fast eating, chewing with mouth open, sitting up, elbows off the table, etc. Sometimes he verbally warns me. Mother warns me as well. But sometimes the food is too tempting, and I lose myself in it. Then it happens.

Father reaches out while I not watching. He blindsides me with a hard slap across the face. The force almost knocks me off the chair. Right in the middle of my favorite meal, Father invokes hate from me. I cry. He will not let me leave the table. Brother is never done this way. Mother leaves the room and cries too. I am trapped. I do not want to eat at the same table with Father for the rest of my life. This happens many times. It is hard to forgive.

Other misbehavior events like riding my bike down in the forbidden riverbed or lying about something gets a strapping from Father. As I get older the strapping subsides and he makes me sit for about 15 minutes while he stares at me. That never works either. One late afternoon in my early teens, he decides to get the belt out again. I refuse to accept the punishment. We get into a wrestling match in the middle of the dining room. Chairs go everywhere. Mother is yelling. Brother is standing away looking frightened. I manage to put Father on the floor. I stand over him. I try to explain that the belt will no longer work. I feel ashamed for dominating my own father. I apologize to him. I try to help him up.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

When on his feet, he lands a right hook on my jaw, and I go down. (*that worked*). I stay down and let the event soak in. Brother says that Father knocked me out. I eventually get up and leave the scene. He never apologizes.

I have a very good 10th-grade English teacher. Mr. W appreciates my work. I do not misbehave in his class. Except for one time. It is the morning of the final exam at 1st period. I am in class well before the bell. Mr. W comes in, drops the printed test forms in the bottom drawer of his desk, and walks out.

There are two girls studying in the class. I do not know why I do it, but I go to the desk, pick up the stack of tests and wave them at the girls. I put them right back in the drawer without reading the test questions. I return to my desk. How stupid that was.

Two days later, Mr. W takes me to the principal's office. Mr. N sits us down. I am asked if I stole the test. I say "No", but I did pick it up before I was supposed to. I told him exactly what happened. Mr. N asks Mr. W about my behavior and performance. Mr. W. stands up for me and tells Mr. N that I have an "A+" for the course. Mr. N then pronounces the punishment. I can either take the 10th-grade course again and try for an "A+" or accept a "B" for this one. Shucks, that was an easy decision.

I manage to intercept the mail from the school. I never figured out which girl told on me.

In 11<sup>th</sup> grade English, I have a weak teacher, Ms. H. I do not sit still for weak teachers. I get in trouble a couple of times and Ms. H sends me to the Office. The Vice-Principal tells me if I am sent in again, I will be withdrawn from the course and sit in study hall.

I love to show off. Ms. H has a big standup placard advertising a play near the front exit door. Ms. H leaves the room. I decide to play around, go to the front of the room, and move the sign into the doorway. Then I hustle back to my desk. I do not make it. Ms. H writes a note and tells me to go to the VP.

I sit. I tell her I cannot go. She tells me again. The class is frozen in silence. What's going to happen? I say "No" and explain that it will mean that I will have to drop the course and lose the credit. I ask her to give me one more chance and she will have no more problems with me. She lets it go, thank God. The class relaxes. I received an A in the course and a few points with the girls for being a "bad boy".

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

I have a car for all 3 years of high school,. I go steady with a different girl every 3 weeks. A new girl moves to town. "S" is a 10<sup>th</sup> grader. I am an 11<sup>th</sup>. She is beautiful, has a locker near mine, and I am available. We talk. I get a date with her. We get along lovingly. I ask her if she wants to shoot a hook and let me show her the Bottomless Lakes Park east of town.

On Friday at lunch, we sneak out to my car and start out 2<sup>nd</sup> street. We stop for gasoline. We get to the Park. We 'park". I mention skinny-dipping and she seems to be game, but the water is like 50 degrees. So, we park some more and come home. Father gets a call from the gas station owner. He wants to know where I went. I tell him the truth. I went to the Lakes for a possible skinny dip with a beautiful girl. He is quiet and then says, "Well, I guess there are many ways to get an education".

You never know about this guy.

**Chapter 13 - Junior High years (age 12-14)**

Summer is over. I really enjoy Little League baseball all summer. The tryouts for the All-Star picks is disappointing. I am considered good enough to make it as first baseman and relief pitcher. I hit a good drive into the right field corner during a tryout and stretch it into a triple.

I sprain my right ankle sliding into third base. I cannot walk. It takes me almost 6 weeks to recover. I did not make the team. My friends on the team eventually made it to and won the 1956 Little League World Series! I listened on the big AM radio.

On to Junior High, grade 7, at North Junior High School on the northwest side of Roswell. It is a formidable huge three-story building made of thousands of red bricks. Each classroom has tall, wide windows, some open and some closed. There are outdoor water 'fountains' where you can sip from a water stream shooting up from a long horizontal pipe.

Rumors reach me that 7th graders should be aware that the older boys are looking for us. It is a bully scare that we will be "de-pants" and our pants run up the flagpole. It hits home for me. I am terrified most of the school year. I hide among crowds, avoid the older groups of boys, carefully choose times to use the restroom, and stay in safe places. I never see anyone get "de-pants" but it definitely affects my behavior.

I do not remember how I traveled back and forth to school. It was about 2 miles. I might have ridden my bike, but I remember thinking that might look like a little kid and make me a possible target. The big boys drove cars and Vespers. All students have a whole hour at the same time for lunch and recess. Some of the kids drive to one of the fast-food drive-ins like A&W or Tastee Freeze. Some who live close by walk home and then return. I eat a sack lunch at school. I usually stay on campus and play softball and tetherball (I was the champ with both my left and right hand).

During 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I can hit the softball on top of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the gym. I can catch high-fly balls with one hand by reaching higher than the shorter kids. With the catch, I earn the right to bat again. Whap! There it goes back on top of the gym. Somebody must go through the high window to the top of the gym to fetch the ball. I catch flack for the delay of the game. I feel proud of my abilities. Coach puts me in charge of getting and returning the equipment.

## Part 1 - Times and Places

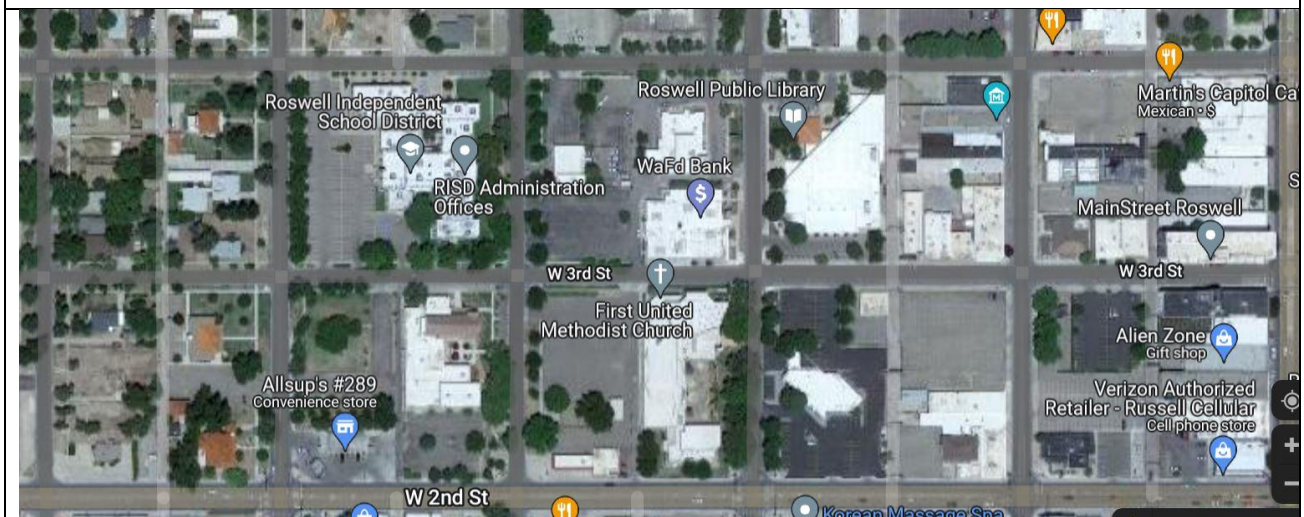
I live on the far east side. I do not know the west side neighborhood very well. Many of the west side students are not very friendly. I have just enough friends to feel liked.



*School Days 57-58*



North Junior High School, Roswell, NM - c.1930s



<http://scottymoore.net/roswell.html>

## **Chapter 14 – North Junior High Teachers**

In 7th grade, I have a wonderful English teacher, Ms. L. She is pretty and teaches me how to diagram sentences. That is fun and easy. I excel in her class. I start reading a lot of books.

I go to the Carnegie library on 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Books for the younger readers are in the basement. I spend hours there looking for outdoor stories of dogs, wolves, horses. I find my favorite author. [Rutherford G Montgomery](#). I also enjoy all the Black Stallion novels and some of Zane Gray's. I go by barbershops and read the Field and Stream stories. I am quite interested in the outdoors and wildlife.

Another teacher I remember in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade is Ms. P. the algebra I teacher. She has thin red hair. She and her sister have been teaching in the school district for decades. I do not pay much attention in class. I am interested in girls, and I notice those around me. I understand algebra. It is easy. For some reason they put me in a summer school advanced track between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I resent going to summer school for Algebra II.

One day during 9<sup>th</sup> grade, a friend with a car invites me to go on a ride during lunch with his girlfriend and another girl. I say ok. I end up in the back seat with a girl "E" who is in my Algebra I class. We make out a bit. You know, 'smacking lips' etc. I have no idea why we did that. A few days later, I am sitting in algebra class and a 'Slam' book is rotated to me. Those books have a page for each person in the class or school. You are supposed to 'slam' with comments about each person. I write something about "E" being easy. I pass the book on to the next person.

In a few minutes, when the book reaches "E", I hear a loud 'slam' noise. E gets out of her desk, walks around the room to my desk, and forcefully slaps me in the face. Then she walks back and sits down. I flush with embarrassment, compose myself, and wonder why I ever wrote in that book. Ms. P. does nothing about the slap, but I think she grins a little when she looks down.

Alas, education has many twists and turns.



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

The woodshop teacher, Mr. W., teaches 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders. I take the shop course both years because Father wants me to know woodworking. By 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I know how to run all the power tools in the shop. I master the power jointer, planer, band saw, table saw, miter saw, jig saw, and all the hand tools.

I become the shop “slave” laborer for Mr. W.

In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I am not given time to work on my own project which is a big gun cabinet. Father orders the Honduran mahogany raw lumber and blueprints. I plane, joint and prepare my lumber for assembly when I have time. Then it sits until April. I am doing all the labor for Mr. W. on the other students’ projects. I tell Mr. W. that I need help putting my project together. He ignores me. We all know Mr. W is drunk most of the time.

I tell Father. Father is angry. He goes to the woodshop. He asks Mr. W, “What is going on?”. Mr. W says I have been goofing off. Father does not believe him. He tells Mr. W to give me help. Mr. W is angry too but follows through. From that point forward, Mr. W curses at me many times because he is having to work. It is embarrassing in front of the other students, but they know I have helped them many more times than Mr. W.

Mr. W. messes up the lumber cuts on the bottom section of the cabinet by not following the blueprints. I warn him before he cuts, but he does not listen. Then after realizing his errors, he redesigns the bottom part of the cabinet with no drawers, only doors. I tell Father. Father is really angry now.

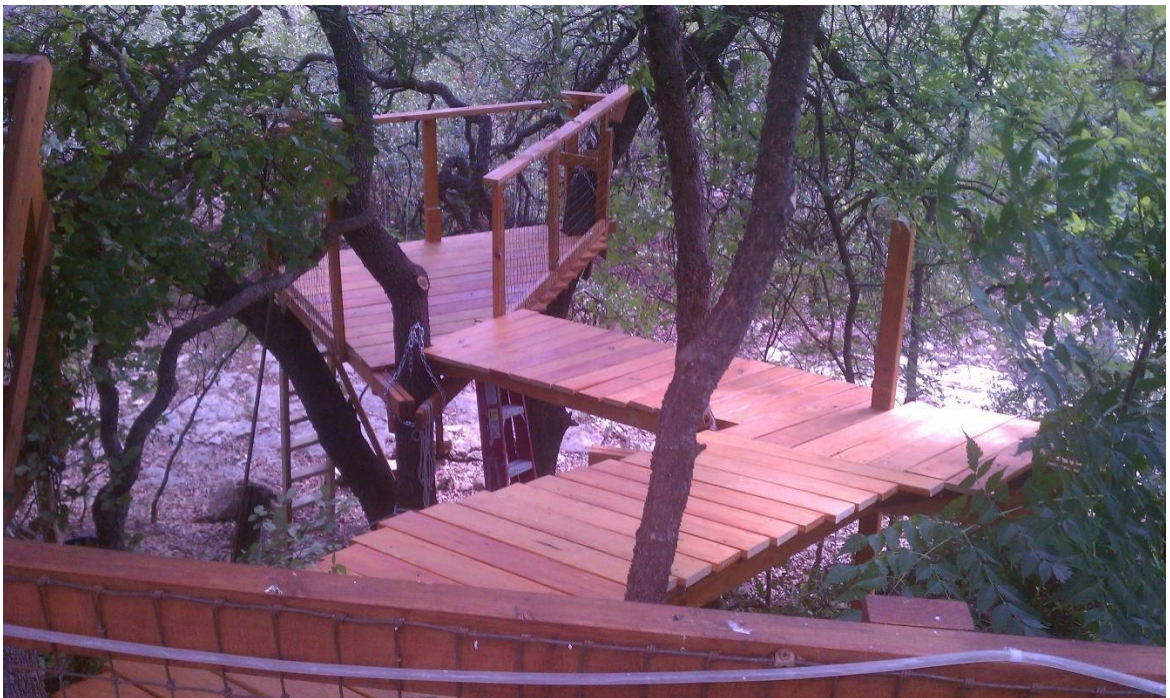
The gun cabinet is not finished at the end of the school year. Father brings it home and finishes it himself. He curses a lot too, but not at me. I help.

Afterwards, I learn that Mr. W. was Father’s teacher as well. The skills I learn there stay with me through life. I love working with wood. I build many things. Many years later, when Mother dies, Brother asks me if I want the gun cabinet. I reply. “Hell No”.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*



Before



After

**Chapter 15 – High School 9.5 – 12<sup>th</sup> grades**

My first acquaintance with Roswell High School is during the summer between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I have no idea why I am put in an advanced group of math classes. I must take Algebra II in the summer to finish plane geometry, solid geometry, trig, college algebra, and calculus before graduation. I am not thrilled to lose my summer mornings.

The man who teaches all these courses throughout my 3.5 years is named Mr. B.C. He is a very smart man and a whiz at math, but he is not a very good teacher. He never inspired me to reach further.

The same group is always in the same class, year after year. I quickly notice that none of the students in this accelerated math class are from my side of town. They generally do better with Mr. B.C. I must start studying my 12th-grade year to understand the calculus. This is the first time I have ever studied. I resent it. Math is not that inspirational to me.

Most of my other high school years are somewhat of a blur. I have a great biology teacher Mr. L in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. He leads all of us to discover life. But, most of all, he let me sit at the same table with Bettye. She is not the prettiest girl in school, but she rang my interest bell. We go on a date one time. I am amazed at the smoothness of her facial skin. I did pay attention on dissecting the earthworms too. Bettye did dump me after a while, but we are friends. Mr L. went on to become Superintendent.

Other than the two incidents I mentioned previously with the two English teachers, I have no further discipline problems. I enjoy one semester of Latin. I am good with languages. I also really enjoy a semester of 'personal' typing. With my piano hands, it was fun. The skill makes me money in later years with computers. It is still a mystery to me why the 'qwerty' keyboard is still dominant.

I take physical education every year during the last period. Coach M. is a great guy and encourages me to be a leader. I enjoy the exercise and top out many of the P.E. tests. I receive the P.E. award at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

I do not participate in athletics. I get a job in 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Safeway. I do not have time to be on any of the teams. I want a car. I buy a car.

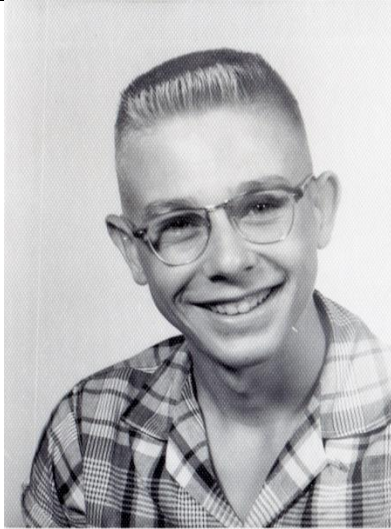


## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

Roswell High School is about 3 miles away from Walnut. I like to drive my car. One day, I put big stick-on colorful letters inside the back windshield. I park the car diagonally in the front lot, facing south. During one of the morning classes, I am directed out in the hall. The V.P. tells me to get the letters off the car or I will not be allowed to drive it here anymore. So, I excuse myself, drive home, razor blade the letters off, and drive back to school. I do not realize the word in bright colors would cause such a stir. What is the word?

T I T I L L A T I N G

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*



*School Days 57-58*

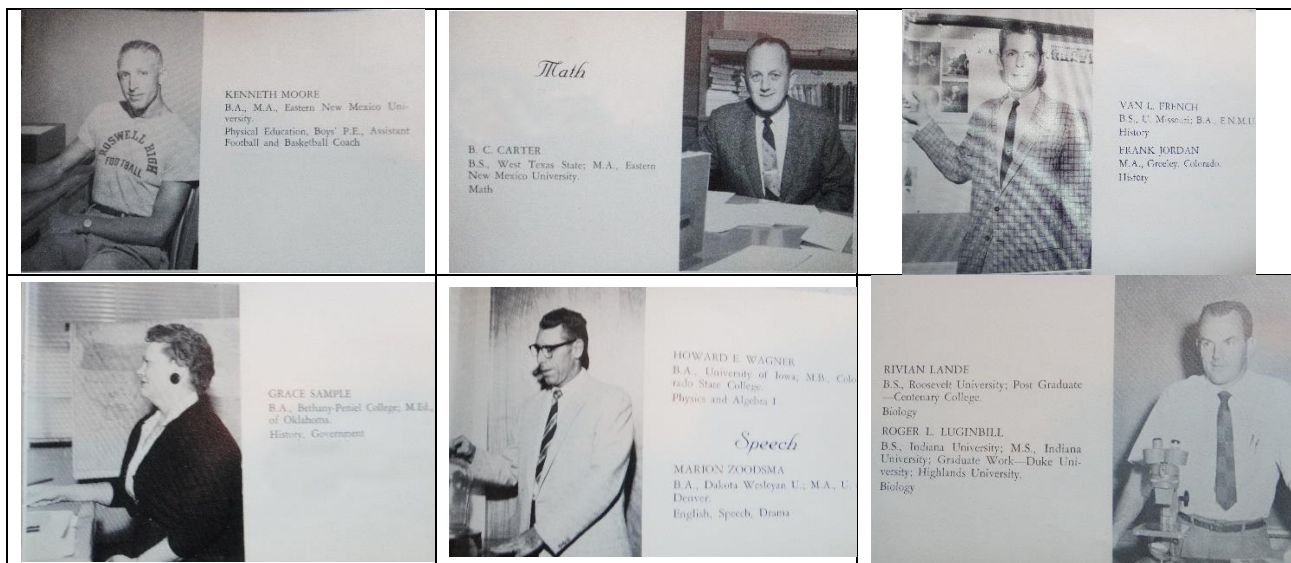


1961



**Never Better!!!**

## Part 1 - Times and Places





## **Chapter 16 – Jobs**

**Paper Route:** I remember little about how I receive money growing up. I do not remember ever having an allowance. Somehow, I have a little to spend on stuff and things. When I am big enough, I wash cars for the neighbors. I remember getting one or two dollars each.

After 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I am lucky to get the paper route around Walnut House. I have a sturdy 26" bike. The route has about 155 customers. I ride to Main Street to the Roswell Daily Record. I roll, fold, or bag each of my papers in the prep area behind the office and place them appropriately in the canvas pack on the back on the rear fender. I ride the two miles to Walnut and throw the papers at the houses Monday through Friday. It is a 5-mile route.

On Sunday, the papers are delivered to my Walnut driveway around 3:30 A.M. I must collate the advertising inserts and either roll or bag each paper. It takes over an hour to prepare to ride. Papers must be delivered by 8:00 A.M. or complaints are phoned in and I lose money. I do not enjoy Sunday mornings in the freezing winter temperatures and snowstorms.

Collecting is the worst part. I go house to house asking for the \$1.40 or so. Often, the customers say they do not have the money now. "Come back again". Sometimes, after several of those responses, I tell them, "Time's up". The Record office does not like that. I throw papers for a year and a half. It is about a 9-mile route daily, Monday through Friday. My legs are much stronger because I keep the seat in a low position to exercise my legs. I know well how to fix the chain and flat tire/bike problems.

The interesting part is that I never save any of the money. I faithfully pay my bill at the Record. I have no supervision or accounting system to determine what my profits are. I usually ride over to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the pharmacy when I have some cash. I sit at the drug store counter and drink several old-fashioned carbonated flavored sodas. One day, Father wants an accounting. I have nothing to show. He makes me stop working the paper route. It is disruptive on Sundays, he says. Father is disappointed. I have failed at accounting, really enjoyed the sodas, and I look forward to Sundays now.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

**Safeway:** During my 1<sup>st</sup> semester in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I land a sacker job at Safeway on Main St. and McGaffey. It is a union store. I must pay \$5/quarter to the union. I make \$0.85/hour. I work after school two/three weekdays and all day Saturday. make I can work Sundays for 1.5 times the hourly salary when slots are available. Most of the senior guys and union loyals get the Sunday time. Furr's sackers nearby only receive \$0.75/hr.

I enjoy the job. After about a year, I have a large clientele. My customers ask me to find the best watermelons, test their radio and tv tubes, and sack their groceries the way they like. "Paper or Box?" Carrying out is required. Accepting tips is not allowed. I find ways to be ready to sack at the register when a cutie pulls in.

I want to do more. I ask to check once in a while or stock the shelves, just for training. The union steward hears about it and says "No... Against rules". That does not make me happy. How else can one progress? I know the math divisions checkers must quickly calculate at the register. I remember checkers sometimes looking at me when he/she does not know how much to charge for an amount like 3 cans priced at 7 for a dollar or something similar. I tell them 43 cents or whatever it was.

I did manage to save up enough to buy a 1951 Ford 4-door with a standard stick on the column. Father might have loaned me a little on this. He does not want the bother of driving me to work and back. It is about a 2-mile trip one-way.

I never receive a raise. I sometimes volunteer to spend Saturday night locked in the store. I mop, wax, and buff the floors by daybreak. I guess the union folks do not like the hard work.

The end comes one day when the new whipper-snapper assistant store director makes a mistake. The normal procedure is: sackers stay with their customers when sacking is done and carryout is imminent. The new Asst. director is checking. He calls for a carry out. He looks at me and thinks I should drop my customer who is ready to go and run to his customer. I point to my customer. I do not go to his. I am called into the director's office. Both the new guy and the director (whom I have worked with for a long time and admire) are there. The new guy says that if I ever do that again, he will fire me on the spot. It really hurts my feelings. I look at the director for support, but none came.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

I tell Father. He can see how much it hurts and takes my side. He goes to the directors and tells them off. I was not in the room, but Father probably had some colorful language. That is the most Father has ever supported me. I appreciate it. I resign about a week later after I say goodbye to some of my customers.

**Mechanic:** I almost ruin my 1951 Ford by removing the front springs. I cut off 1.5 coils and replace the springs. I want to have a lowered front like other cool cars. No one ever mentions that an adjustment must be made in the toe-in. My wheels are splayed out at the bottom. Father says a few curse words. The car is dangerous to drive. Father takes my keys and somehow gets it to Alamogordo. He gives it to his brother, a mechanic. Father then gives me the old family car, a 1950 Nash Ambassador which looks like an upside-down, two-tone green bathtub. Amenities are that the front seats lay flat creating a double bed. The AM radio has a front speaker to rear speaker fade knob switch. The bathtub has a straight six-cylinder engine with a standard plus overdrive stick shift on the steering column. It can do 70 mph coming down the Big Hill on Main Street in 2<sup>nd</sup> gear, says the police officer. (Remembering tricycle ride)

I start taking the bus to high school. I use the car for Saturday night dates. I clean the basement of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank on Wednesday afternoons. The bank chief gives me \$5 each week. That is just enough for 4-5 gallons of gasoline, 2 chicken fried steak meals, and a dollar for the drive-in movie. I miss my midnight curfew often. That results in standing under Father's 10 – 15 minute scowl. **Life is good.**



## **Chapter 17 – The Chase**

This is wild. One Saturday evening, Friend P. and I are cruising Main Street. It is somewhere between 8 – 10 PM. Friend P. is driving my '51 Ford before I lowered it. He is driving because for some strange reason, I am sipping on a can of beer. I have no idea why. I do not like beer. I seldom drink anything.

We cruise south from the drive-by hangout on North Main to the drive-by on South Main by Safeway. Back and forth, north to south, south to north. We stop at the red lights and tease those beside us to peel out (leave rubber) and then race for half of a block.

Going south by the Court House, a car passes us on the right, cuts us off and bangs into my right front bumper. He does not stop. He pulls up to the next red light. I get out and run up to his driver-side window. It is an older man but not really “old”. I yell at him to stop. He looks at me and takes off quickly. I memorize his license number. Friend P. pulls up. I get in. I have no idea where the beer went. We chase for a couple of blocks.

As we cross over 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, I look to my right. I see a police car with lights on working a collision at the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Richardson. We turn right on 1<sup>st</sup>, then another right on Richardson. We approach the accident and turn right again on 2<sup>nd</sup>. We pull over to the right. I get out and start walking to the patrol car. Two other cars pull in behind mine and stop.

Just as I get even with the first car on my right, the 2<sup>nd</sup> car backs up and guns it into the first car. That pushes the first car into the back of mine. The 2<sup>nd</sup> car backs up again and squeals out to the left on 2<sup>nd</sup> street going east.

Adrenaline high and not thinking defensively I react quickly. I run after the fleeing car. I am well ahead of everybody. I hear the policeman's whistle behind me. The car only goes ½ of a block. He turns into the alley between two big brick buildings. He is going too fast to make the turn. He runs into the bricks on the right and ricochets his driver's side into the other bricks. Car stops. I am there to see the 2nd crash.

I reach the right-side door immediately and open it. The passenger falls out at my feet. The driver bulls his way out the passenger door and knocks me down. He then runs north toward 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. I am hot on his trail; crowd shouting and policeman whistling behind me. He turns left on third by the Yucca Theater and crosses 3<sup>rd</sup> going west.

I catch up to him in front of the library at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Richardson. I shove him down from the back. He gets up and shows me his hunting knife. I back off and prepare to retreat.

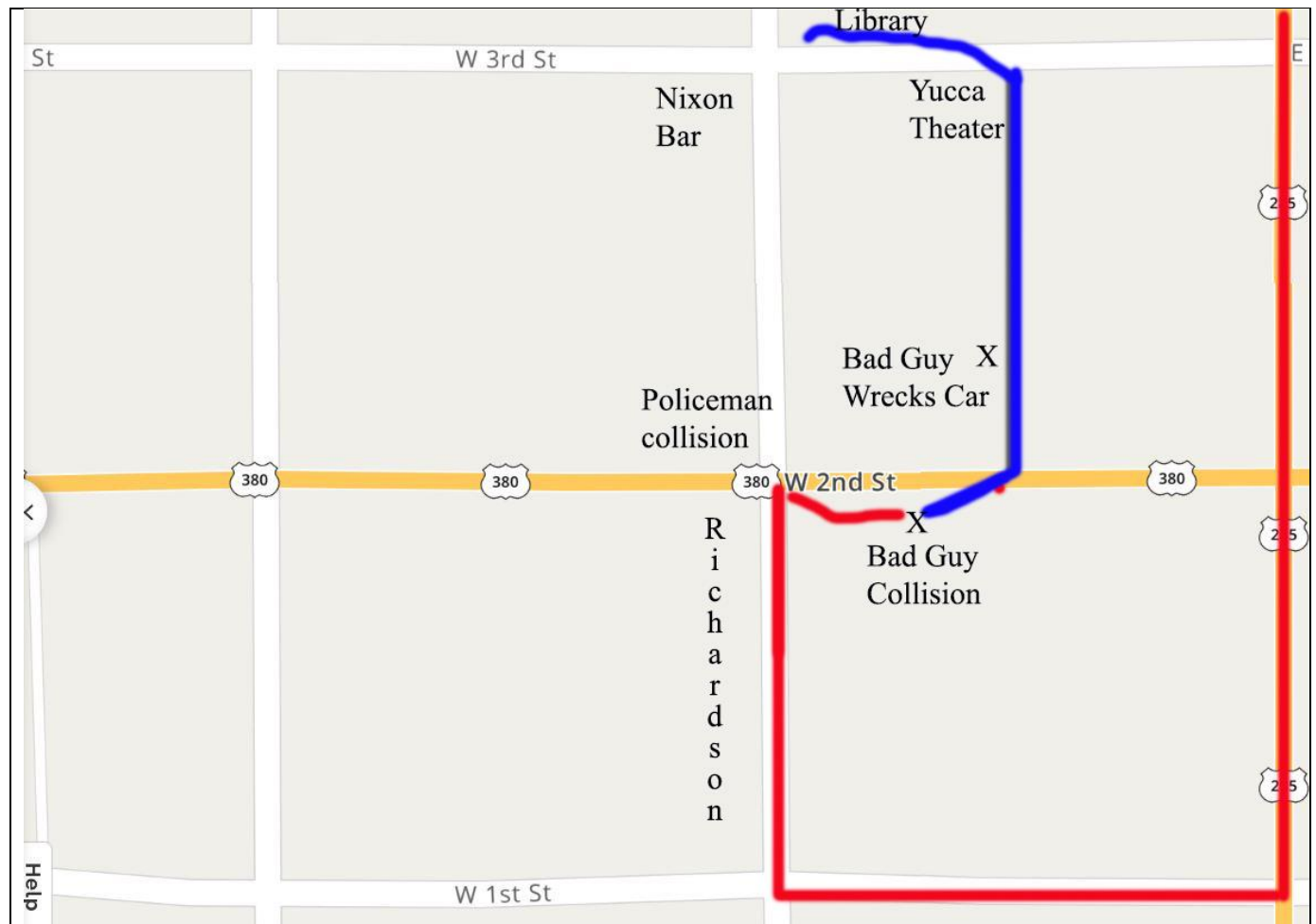
He runs caddy-corner into the Nixon Hotel and through the bar. The bouncer knows something is wrong and nails him with a body flip going out the bar backdoor. I wish I had seen that.

I never tell Father. I talk to the police and eventually receive a settlement for \$50 to replace my chrome dual exhaust extensions.

I wonder at my lack of judgment in getting into a situation like this. Obviously, I am not prepared to defend myself against bad actors and lethal weapons. With my other encounters, I feel lucky to be alive.



## Part 1 - Times and Places



## **Chapter 18 – Cotton**

The summer between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, I visit my cousins in Robstown for 6 weeks. It is a long way from Roswell. I am excited to be near the ocean and fish. I am given \$20. When I arrive, I immediately buy a fishing rod, reel, and line. \$5 is all that is left.

I stay at Uncle R's, who is Father's older brother. He has ulcers and drinks all the milk in the refrigerator. He is a mechanic. He is a chain smoker. Aunt is a homemaker and plays the piano well. She does not read sheet music. She hears a song and can immediately play it with chords and embellishments. I am amazed.

In all 6 weeks, we go fishing on the jetties only one time. I am terribly sunburned. Aunt puts me in a tub of vinegar. I shed skin like a molting snake. I string my fishing line on the clothesline to wash and dry it from the saltwater use. The youngest cousin cuts the line on purpose. I tie it back together, but it creates a knot that prevents me from casting it beyond 25 feet. I am heartbroken.

At the age of 77, I called and apologized to him for all the hate I felt most of my life. He apologizes too.

At night, I learn to put the water hose in a grassy spot and let it run for a while. Then late at night, I come outside and pick up the huge nightcrawlers. I also collect beautiful butterflies from that southern region of Texas. The best one is a cloudless sulfur.



Uncle R. has a farmer friend who agrees to let my cousin and I pick cotton for a week. He provides the cotton bags. We pick all day. He gives us \$1.50 for 50 pounds including bolls. All the other pickers get \$5.00 for 100 pounds (no bolls). This is the hardest job I ever had. My back hurts all day long. The bag is so hard to drag.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

I am ready to quit from day one, but I must work through day 5 to get paid. I do not make my quota for the week. The farmer pays me \$7.50 anyway. I have no idea where the money goes.

Aunt always has food preparation chores. She brings home a bushel of this and that. We often sit in the breezeway between the house and garage stripping out string beans, peeling this and that, and shucking corn. Occasionally we churn ice cream and carve watermelons. We all work to put food on the table. It is a good life lesson, except for way too little saltwater fishing.



## **Chapter 19 – University Part 1**

During the Spring of my senior year, Mother and Father tell me there is a university about 200 miles to the West. Father, who has only his G.E.D., is the main plant engineer who planned and built the telephone system for the city of Las Cruces. New Mexico State University is the name of my University.

I need about \$600 for the 1<sup>st</sup> semester, which includes room, and board.

The Red Cross offers lifeguard training at New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell at the top of the big hill. In February and March, I take and pass the certification. I also take the Water Safety Instructor course. I can make some money teaching swimming.

With the certifications, I am hired by the City to life guard and teach at Calhoon pool. It is a big pool. I make the \$600. I make 32 saves of swimmers who get in too deep.

In the fall, Mother takes me to NMSU. I matriculate in the cafeteria. Mother takes me to the Administration building. She introduces me to a former boss of hers and I get hired. The job is working the campus PBS telephone system at nights. Every other night. 10 PM to 3 AM. Then a switch of time after a couple of months from 3 AM to 8 AM. The pay is \$0.85/hr.

NMSU is the largest campus in acreage in the US. The ratio of men to women is 8 to 1. There are far more heads of livestock on campus than women.

Mother takes me to a new dormitory on the hill which is about a mile and a half from the main campus. No sidewalks, several dirt path arroyos to cross, no electric appliances, tv, etc. I move into a room with a Roswell Eastside friend as a roommate. He only lasts a few weeks. I have two suitemates from New Jersey – both are huge black football players. I get another roommate who is also from the Northeast. He is 23-year-old T.G. and is back from three years in the Navy. He became my best friend. All three teach me how to dance. I help them with homework.

I learn card games in the student center. The black students usually play a strange game called bid whist. It is a suit game like Spades. I catch on quickly. They are happy to have a white boy to teach. I find another group that that plays bridge. Duplicate bridge is in my future. Call shot and 9-ball Pool is fun and I become rather good at it.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

I have no idea what I am doing in selecting courses. I do not have a concept of what an “hour” is. Father says to enroll in civil engineering. I do not know what that is either. I choose courses on paper that add up to 32 “hours”. I think that I am expected to go to class all available hours of the day, like high school.

I meet with some guy who is an assistant to go over my schedule. He gets quite a kick out of my selections. I wait for him to finish laughing. He then explains that only a few are allowed to take 18 – 21 hours. He set up my schedule for 17 hours. I tell him that I already have college algebra credit, but he makes me take it anyway. The first two years of my math classes are easy and a waste of time.

I must take ROTC for two years. Every Tuesday from 10 AM – 12 PM. We march and drill and do some war classroom stuff. On Friday afternoons for two hours, we spit and shine our spit and shine stuff. We also have an hour to break down and clean our M1 rifles. Once in a while, we go to the shooting range and fire for qualification. I am expert on the M1. In the second year, we get the much lighter M14's. I qualify expert on that one too. Once a semester we spend weeks preparing for inspection. Dress greens, shiny boots, buckles, and brass. We practice for several weeks marching, standing individually for inspection, presenting our weapons, reciting the nomenclature of the weapons, and sounding off the names of our superiors in the chain of command. I hated ROTC. The only benefit I receive for those two years was earning the status of PFC when I was forced to enlist in the US ARMY.

My sophomore and junior years, I find two more campus jobs. One is lifeguarding at the new natatorium. The other is maintaining and running the Alumni Association's addressograph machine. I have the metal plates made, keep them in order, and load the machine for mailouts. That is when zip codes show up and are required. What a mess. I earn \$1.00/hr for each of those two jobs. In June of 1963, I make \$330 from those three jobs. Divide that out.

I pay for my Fall freshman expenses; Father pays for my spring Freshman expenses of \$600. From my sophomore year on, I pay for all my expenses with my \$1/hr jobs. Although they might exist, I do not ever consider getting a student loan. Father never again offers to help after I change my major to math in my sophomore year.



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

My major choice again changes to education in my junior year after finding much displeasure with differential equations. I enroll in theoretical math courses and do not like that branch any better. I enjoy literature and history. Chemistry and physics are a bother. Russian is fun. I enjoy intramural sports.

My biggest concern is my longtime girlfriend, "A." back in Roswell. We started dating when I was a high school junior. We are engaged. She is finishing her senior high school year. I am in my freshman college year. I write her all the time. Big changes happen in October of 1962, during my sophomore fall semester ....

## **Chapter 20 – University – Part 2**

During the summer between my Freshman and Sophomore year, I lifeguard and teach at the Roswell East Side Hondo pool. Most of the kids are dropped off by the parents for all-day pool care. Most are Black and Mexican. Their dark skin takes a beating in the hot sun. I bring bottles of mineral spirits laced with tinctures of iodine for color. I rub down the shoulders and back in the heat of the day. I make only 9 saves that summer. These kids are much smarter about survival than the ones in the pool on the white side of town.

After she graduates, my girl “A” and I stay at her apartment most of the 1962 summer. She is provided the living space as part of an “always on call service ” for businesses. We become engaged.

I drive my 1950 Nash bathtub to Las Cruces for my Sophomore year at the end of August. I change dorms to a closer, cheaper one near the Student Center. I work nights. I study. I write love letters. Suddenly I am the only one writing love letters. By the end of the first week in October, I call “A”. She says she wants to end the engagement. I panic! (Why?). It is a Tuesday evening.

I jump in the car and race to Roswell through the mountains on the windy, dangerous two-lane road. I make the 200 miles in about 2 hours and 50 minutes. I pull up to the apartment. “A” and I talk most of the night. She says she had an encounter with the man living in the duplex apartment next door. I convince her to continue the engagement and to marry me on Saturday. I call my parents on Wednesday morning.

Flabbergasted is an understatement. Plans are hastily made. The wedding happens Saturday at 10 AM in the same Calvinist Church I hated as a child. Perhaps that is a sign. My old Navy roommate “T.G.” is the ‘best man’.

We drive back Saturday afternoon and stay in Ruidoso Saturday night. Arriving in Las Cruces without a place to live on Sunday, we find a cheap motel. Monday morning, first thing, I go to student housing and rent a \$30 per month WWII studio barrack with a bed, a couple of chairs, and kitchen appliances. That includes pet cockroaches.

“A” gets a job right away in town at the telephone company. I catch up in my classes and keep on working the night shift at the University PBS board. I remember worrying about the Cuban missile crises. I listen every night on the AM radio. Thank God, the Russians blinked. After Bay of Pigs, I did not know if JFK had the power to pull it off.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

Things coast along for a while. We upgrade to another barrack building which is much nicer with one bedroom and is a corner unit. I start a little garden in the back. Life is good. For some reason, we do not use contraceptives.

Walking between classes is when I study. I never take notes. I walk long distances between classes. Rather than chat with others, I review in my mind what the previous lessons were. Somehow, that is enough to get me by on the tests. I doze occasionally in class. Working at night from 3 AM to 8 AM is tough. We buy a new 1963 VW Bug for \$1,601. It weighs 1,601 lbs.

The Kennedy assassination hits me hard. Classes are suspended and I watch the news coverage. I somehow developed a suspicion about LBJ. I watch the live scene when Ruby, wearing that distinctive hat, walks through the crowd toward Oswald in the basement and shoots. It was the only hat in the crowd moving. I had a feeling that hat was going to attack.

Sunday, April 5, 1964, at 11:05 AM, after one and a half years of marriage, standing in the kitchen, "A" says casually. "I want a divorce." Stunned, I did not try to fight it this time. I check into a dorm. I help her move to an apartment in town, walking distance to work. I keep the 1963 VW and payments; she gets the living room furniture and payments.

I hurt worse than at any time in my life. A deep, penetrating pain of loss that attacks every 3-4 minutes. It keeps me awake. Then I notice the time between attacks lengthens to 5-6 minutes. Deep in my gut. Two to three weeks later, the attacks are about 20-30 minutes apart. I often wonder what the cause is. Loss of "A", loss of self-confidence? I never figure that out. I do know that I am not willing to expose myself to that depth of pain again. Self-preservation takes over.

One of the ending moments was classic. After moving "A" into her new apartment on a Saturday, I find a kitten and take it to her early the next Sunday morning. Surprised, I see her keys in the front door. I open the door, and walk in with the keys and the kitten to her bedroom door. Guess who is there? Best man, best friend, "T.G." under the covers with her. I throw the keys at the wall over their heads, leave the kitten on the bed, and leave.

That event was probably a godsend. There needs to be a time when one knows to move on.

## **Chapter 21 – The University – Part 3**

Onward. Suppressing the hurt, trying to swim again in troubled sleep. It is the end of my Junior year in the Spring of 1964.

In May, the divorce day,. A campus cop gives me a ticket for speeding, 24mph in a 20mph zone.

I attend a math class and sit in the front row on the left side of a regular single-desk classroom. I have seen the young lady in math for a couple of semesters. She usually wears a long full skirt, a nice figure, not beautiful, but attractive. She is very friendly with everyone. She approaches and asks why I am looking so down. I tell her that I was just divorced this morning. She expresses sympathy and sits next to me. Her name is J.A.

I am usually quite a 'cut-up' in class when it is run by an assistant. Clowning is my nature. I make fun of the examples being used by some teachers by offering others, like instead of dogs and cats, let's use alligators and bumble bees. Classmates laugh. J.A. thinks I am out of line. She is a good obedient schoolgirl.

I heal slowly, looking around at my new way of life. J.A. asks me out to a nice party. I accept. We become better friends. I contemplate. At age 21, is there life after divorce? But, I am committed to keeping both feet on the ground. J.A. is affectionate, but I am not in a hurry to expose myself to hurt again. We date more often.

J.A. is obviously quite infatuated. I am flattered. Self-confidence returns. I figure she is a good solid candidate for a safe mate. One with smarts, reasonably good looks, good money-making potential, and will probably be an excellent mother.

On July 23, 1964, I invite our friends to a late afternoon get-together in the cafeteria. I sit on one side of the long, end-to-end cafeteria tables. J.A. sits on the other. At the right moment, amongst about 15 of our mutual friends, I pull out the engagement ring and place it on the table in front of her. "What do you think?", I ask her. She says nothing, but then jumps across the table, nearly bowling me over, and reply, "What took you so long?" I had been divorced for a whole 2 months.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

I follow her lead into the campus Wesley Methodist group and make close friends with good people. I form our intramural sports teams, and she becomes an officer, eventually President of the group. In November of 1964, we bus to Lincoln Nebraska to the Wesley Quadrennial Conference. MLK is the highlight speaker. She and I, as President and VP of our chapter, are invited to his hotel suite one night. We each shook his hand and talk for about 15 minutes. Besides, Richard Nixon, this was and still is the most important individual I have ever met in person.

We continue our studies and set an August 14, 1965, wedding date (a Saturday morning 10 AM wedding which is always my favorite time to get away quickly for the honeymoon). She is a bit worried about bringing me home to meet her family in Eunice, New Mexico. They are not thrilled that we engaged so quickly and that I was used goods. We visit the Christmas holidays in 1964. Her little brother and sister think I am cool. I show my highest level of respect for the two older siblings and parents. It also helps that I am a fisherman and bird hunter and eager to visit the Comfort Tx River property.

For most of the winter and spring of 1965, we manage to cause an early pregnancy. You know how college kids are. We visit the Comfort Texas home on High Street across from the Cypress Creek and Guadalupe River. J.A. was born in a small house on Groundhogs Day in Comfort in 1944. Her parents are solid German stock and everyone is related. I have a strange new German family. It also piques my interest in South Texas with water and trees. Southern New Mexico has dust and tumbleweeds.

J.A. continues her major in mathematics. I decide to major in education. Most of my coursework is in electives like Russian, English literature, and History. Education courses are a complete waste of time. During my Senior year '64-'65, I become active in the Wesley organization. NMSU has a week during the fall named the Inter-Religious Council week. Even though I am not very religious, I volunteer to find the speakers and publicize the event. I make posters, arrange the schedule, find the speaking spots, etc. It goes well, except practically no one shows up. Damn college kids.

I graduate in May of 1965 with a B. S. in Mathematics Education. I move off campus in June to a one-bedroom duplex near the campus. A friend stays for about 8 weeks during summer school.



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

I apply for a summer school job teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade remedial math at Alameda Junior High in Las Cruces. Those ruffians eat my lunch. At the same time, I pick up an assignment at Lynn Junior High for the fall teaching 7<sup>th</sup> grade math. The pay was \$5,000/year. This 7<sup>th</sup> grade math is the first of many “NEW” math schemes I have taught. This one is sets, logic, etc. I start a very popular after-school club called the “Double–O Subsets” since it was the era of James Bond movies. This is when I realize I wanted to be a school principal.

We were married and moved into the apartment in August. She was starting her senior year and was on fully funded scholarships. We are quite happy raising Siamese cats and praying mantii. We often go fishing, hiking, and camping on the Rio Grande at Caballo Dam, Elephant Butte, and the Gila Wilderness above Silver City. We play a lot of contract bridge with friends.

Both feet are on the ground. Although out of sight, “A” is never completely gone.



## **Chapter 22 – Work and More University**

1965, stepping into Lynn Junior High, wearing a skinny tie, a new sports jacket, and carrying a slick, shiny briefcase, a student commented, “Look!, Mr. Novak”. I found my assigned classroom with the help of a custodian (this was before the annoying days of in-services) and looked around. The chalkboards are all washed and dry. No chalk anywhere. Too many desks made the room very crowded. I pulled out my dot matrix printed a wide copy of my class lists, drew out my pen, and wondered what would happen next. The bell rings, disorder, and noise in the hall, and 7<sup>th</sup> graders filter in. “Where do I sit?” “Anywhere that is not taken.”, I reply. “Oh Boy!”, she says. Somehow, I make it through the day and end in good spirits. I found some chalk somewhere.

The Selective Service folks from my home county of Chaves, NM, keep me regularly updated. My status remains 1B which is equivalent to student and now teacher. It changes for a month or so to a 1C because I am a “Kennedy husband”, whatever that means. That designation was short-lived and is changed back to 1B. In the spring of ’66, I received a new card with a 1A designation. That means they do not care about me being a teacher and I am ripe for being plucked.

The Viet Nam call-up was in full swing and I was at the top of the list. Ironically, I glance at the signature on the notice and see a familiar name. It is the mother of a young lady I dated in high school. She was one of my three-week adventures whom I casually discarded. I then knew my status was not worth appealing.

Not wanting to be drafted and serve two years in Nam; Not wanting to enlist for three years and serve in Nam; Not supporting the Nam war, I looked around for a Reserve or National Guard unit. Eureka! A Military Intelligence Army Reserve unit in Las Cruces accepted me in November 1966.

I plan to get my master’s degree at NMSU. Enrolling in the summer of 1966 for 6 hours of classes in Ed Administration and continuing my classes in the fall and spring of 1966-67 turned out well. At the same time, my work assignment changed to teaching high school at Las Cruces High in the fall-spring of 1966-67. The high school teaching experience was also in my plan. While teaching Algebra I and Geometry, I attend college (6 hours) in the evenings.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

J.A. graduated in the Spring of 1966 and worked odd jobs for university professors doing research for the next year. Using Fortran, she assisted Dr Edward Thorpe in his research on his book "Beat the Dealer" which changed the game of "BlackJack" forever. She was not certified to teach in New Mexico. I do not remember what she did the year after she graduated.

In June of 1967, I quit the public school teaching job and enrolled full-time in the master's program at NMSU. Searching for jobs, I found an opening as an assistant to the National Teacher Corps program. It is a halftime position with the assignment of observing returned, degreed Peace Corps members. They are seeking teaching certification and are assigned to numerous nearby school districts in New Mexico and Texas. This fit in perfectly with J.A.'s need for the certification. I request and she receives a slot.

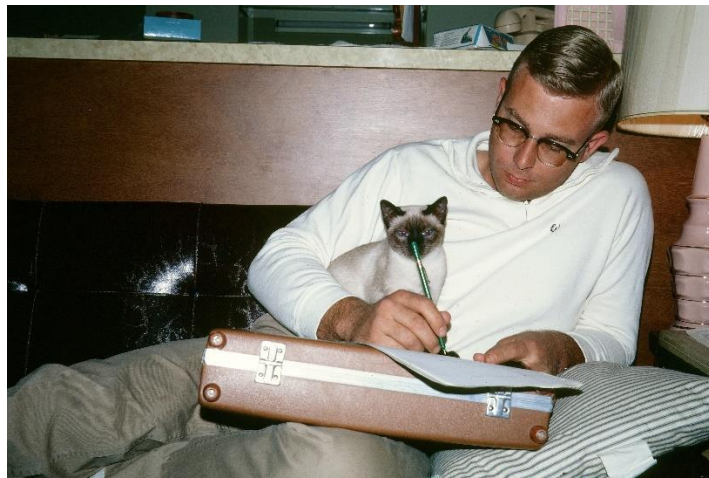
The trainee observation trips to Hatch, Las Cruces, Ysleta, and El Paso are very enjoyable. Juarez is a familiar haunt since during my freshmen year, I visited the bars and enjoyed the bar girls along with many nickel tequilas. During our Teacher Corps observation trips, the observer team would venture into Juarez and go to the best restaurants. Steaks cost about \$2.00 including sides. A beer is 25 cents. All on an expense account.

Graduation was in May/June of 1968 with an M.A. in Education Administration. Being the first in my family on both sides, including parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and many cousins, to graduate from college is special. This Master's ceremony was the first time Father ever presented himself at any of the events. The only time I remember him at any of my events is a little league game where I made a miraculous catch jumping up and leaning over the roof of the first base dugout and snagging a foul ball. He was happy about that. He never attended any of the piano recitals or shows where I played. At home, Father always and only wants me to play 'Ole Black Joe'. It was easier than Rachmaninoff.

Now, movement away from the tumbleweeds, sandstorms, and old times in New Mexico happens. On to greener, wetter lands with trees. On to pursue the Ph.D. But .... duty is calling.



*Part 1 - Times and Places*





*Part 1 - Times and Places*





## **Chapter 23 – Moving and Army**

In June, 1968, we (J.A. and I) looked at a map around Comfort, Texas, and saw that Austin had a bunch of green, water, and trees. UT in Austin offered me a doctorate program in educational statistics based on test scores. Next, the problem was to find a Reserve unit. In early June, we drove to Austin. I made an appointment with a transportation unit. The captain accepted me since I could type and knew payroll.

The move had its drama. Just before the move the VW bug was replaced by a brand new VW bus. It made sense that more stuff would fit in the box. And a trailer hitch was added. A Uhaul 10ft enclosed trailer was rented and filled. Care was taken to not overload the tongue. The old upright player piano had to stay. It was no longer tune-able. Stretching the strings would break the wood holding them—sad loss.

Taking the route from Las Cruces south through El Paso and then east on IH10, it must have been a late start. We ended up climbing the steep Guadalupe Pass in the dark. The bus was straining with the trailer. Several times, stopping was necessary to cool the clutch. The burning smell was in the cockpit. Finally, the crest was there and the downhill to the flat Texas terrain was ahead. Later, in Austin, the clutch had to be replaced.

No place to stay. Searching the ads, we found a duplex near the corner of Burnet Rd and Anderson Lane, northwest side, for \$165/mo including utilities. Nice place.

The next day, the Reserve unit is the destination. The Captain says he cannot enroll me like he had previously promised. I remind him of the chance that I took to move based on his promise. Stating my previous performance of rising from PFC (E-2) to Specialist 4 (E-4) in my Las Cruces unit and my marching, leadership, and clerical (payroll) skills, he capitulated. My E-4 status was very rare in that I had never attended Basic/Advanced training. He immediately set up the assignment to complete the required 4-6 month active duty training. Leaving in late August for Ft Jackson, SC precluded the UT coursework and teaching. J.A. landed a math teaching position in southeast Austin for the fall of 1968-69.

Off to training by Greyhound with my duffle bag. Ft Jackson, across the Mississippi, dreading the loss of freedom. The loud bossing of enlisted trainers (regulars) when loading and unloading the busses was annoying. I knew their fear tactics were baseless threats. My new home was in a WWII barracks building without hot water. My uniforms are carefully packed in my duffle

Donning my starched and faded camos with obvious dark shadows of removed Spec 4 patches, shiny boots, brilliant brass, and snappy responses to commands, the drill sergeant immediately singles me out during the first formation. He walks around me looking at the uniform and snappy position at attention. He asks, "How long have you been in the army, cadet?" "Almost two years.", I reply. Then, standing directly in front of me, he yells questions in my face. Without blinking I respond loudly right back in his face.... "Yes, Drill Sergeant Grippon!" He replied, "You, Cadet Gadberry, are the Cadet Platoon Sergeant". I even received a private room in the barracks. Dern good deal.

My job was to wake and muster the platoon, do cursory inspections, and assign latrine duties to the 30-plus boys/men. Most were draftees from deep southern states like Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. Some could barely read and none knew the King's English. My position of enforcing the rules soon made me procure a safety lock on the inside of my bunk room.

The barracks had a boiler under the floor but did not have a grate to burn wood. We went a month with cold showers and the Command did nothing to help us. Other barracks had grates. A few of my men formed a reconnaissance squad to find a grate from one of the other buildings. One day, the squad of 3 guys, stayed behind while the troops were out training in the Carolina woods. I covered for their absence in the training. They procured a grate and installed it in our building. Finally, hot water! The weather was turning colder.

Our platoon grew closer and policed themselves. Thieves and slackers met their justice. I seldom had to ask Sergeant Grippon for help. We left our latrine and bunkroom pristine for any walk-through inspections.

One morning I received a complaint from my latrine squad that a trooper from a different platoon had entered our latrine after it was cleaned. I ran up the steps to our latrine and found the guy messing up our spit-shine. He was not supposed to be there. Nobody liked the jerk. I ordered him to clean it up and leave. He talked back and became confrontational. A scuffle ensued. Pinning his arm behind him and marching him to the steps in front of the company muster, I gave him a little shove. He stumbled and rolled down the five steps. The company commander said, "Looks like Cadet Sergeant Gadberry is cleaning out his barracks." My platoon cheered.

More military to follow....

## **Chapter 24 – Army and Work**

Continuing to teach the spring semester of 1969 at Austin Reagan High, the Principal loved me. Not only did I refrain from sending my discipline problems to the office for punishment, I made them stay in class and put up with me. Other teachers who had problem students would occasionally send theirs to me. That way they did not have to send them to the office which would reflect upon their own appraisals. (Lesson learned)

The principal had a problem with students smoking between classes. Cigarettes were smushed everywhere. I proposed a solution, and he said go ahead. Forming a smoking squad out of some little gangsters, we procured three 55-gallon barrels, painted them Reagan blue, cut a hole in the top lid, and labeled them, “Throw your BUTT in the can.” The kids loved it. They thought they were getting away with a ‘bad’ word. It was very successful. Smoking was only allowed around the outside Butt Barrels and only during the longer passing times. The “Squad” helped patrol.

A more important adventure was starting a movement for higher teacher pay. The Austin TSTA Association was run by administrators back then. The AFT was just getting started by June Carp. I went to a meeting of the TSTA larger association and was called on to speak. I asked them, “What are you doing about getting teachers a raise?” Mumble, mumble, crickets, ‘what we always do’ was all I heard.

I replied, “That is not enough! Teachers are starving on this pay scale. As a group representing these teachers, you must demand a \$1,000 a year pay raise. Even that might not be enough”. (*Not by design, a labor leader is born*)

Many teachers approached me afterward and we formed a committee. Our plan: #1) Sign petitions and collect \$1 for each signature.; #2) Buy a full-page ad in the Austin Statesman newspaper demanding the \$1000 raise. We managed to collect \$600 dollars and signatures by mid-May.

At the Austin ISD Board meeting at the end of May, I signed up to speak. When called upon, I stated our demand and why. I submitted the petitions and a copy of the full-page ad from the newspaper. I told the Board that teachers cannot live on this pay scale. The Board President asked me if I knew what the Texas legislature was going to do. I replied, “No and we do not care where the money comes from. You know we need it, and it is your job to find it.” ***Loud Cheers!***

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

The Board President turned to the personnel officer and asked about me...right there in public. The personnel chief said that I was hired in January after returning from the army and that the principal gave me high marks, an excellent appraisal, I had two years of successful experience in teaching in Las Cruces and a Master's in Ed Administration.

The President asked about my contract status. The personnel chief said that my contract is in the first year of the required two-year probationary. The contract was never renewed.

Out of a job. Wondering if I should have taken on a large district school board, I started selling WorldBook Encyclopedias door to door.

J.A. never wanted to teach so she resigned in May and started working on her dream. Computer Programming. She applied at the largest shop in Austin which was the Dept of Public Safety. There were no females in the computer department. They ignored her application. After a couple of weeks, she began sitting on the back entry step of the building on Lamar Ave. and greeting the bosses, "Remember me?" Finally, they hired her just to get her off the steps, I think. She excelled and they were lucky to get her.

WorldBook did not sell well. The UT doctoral program attempt was next. That lasted about a month. The war protestors had taken over the campus. Students? Most were unrequited hippies, barefoot, smelly, sitting on the classroom floors contemplating their navels about the nature of man. I stopped going.

Bama Peanut Butter and Jelly had an ad in the paper for a traveling salesman. I was hired. Wow, a company car and a route that took me east to Shiner, south to ½ of San Antonio, and west to Johnson City. Chicken Ranch in LaGrange was on the route too.

My job: straighten up the jam shelves, try to get exposure, compensate for glass breakage, and sell/stock specials. Strange how much abuse the store managers put on salespeople. Not rewarding work. An expense account and car were new for me. Those were unknown in the public education world. Bama even flew me to Birmingham and showed me the big jelly pots mixing up all that apple juice and sugar. That job lasted about 3 months.

Next, in the Spring of 1970, I became a nightwatchman for a mobile home factory. I wore a gun (my personal .22 caliber). Working from 10 pm to 6 am, a little black-and-white TV kept me from going crazy. I watched the drama of the Apollo 13 mess on that little TV.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

Riding my 90CC Honda, which I bought for parking at UT, was always an adventure. One night in the rain, at the top of a steep hill, the traffic light changed to red on the way down. Brakes would not stop the vehicle or the passenger. Laying the bike down, all went sliding across the intersection. Shaking it off, the bike still running, I proceeded with the most dignified exit possible.

During May of 1970, at an Austin neighborhood party, I met a Norwegian. She was attractive with long blond hair and was a professor at UT. Through casual conversation, we learned of each other's involvement in the National Teacher Corps program. She was leading the project at UT and attempting to get school districts in the area to participate. She offered me a consultant job to help her persuade area superintendents to let the program in. We visited several districts.

None was as important as San Antonio ISD. We met with SAISD personnel people Victor Rodriquez and Steve Catalani. Since I had public school teaching experience, a Master's in Ed Admin, and was an administrator of the Corps program at NMSU, I convinced them that their fears of management problems were minimal. They accepted the Corps program. The blond professor was very appreciative...

On the way out, I casually asked Victor if he had any high school math teaching openings. He immediately said 'Yes'. Understanding that I would be commuting from Austin daily, he said Highlands High is near the Interstate. Pending recommendations, I would be considered for teaching there in the fall of 1970 he told me. I was so happy that Austin had not fired me nor entered any negative recommendations. Years later, after all my labor work, Victor said it was one of the biggest mistakes of his career. I am not sure that he was jesting.

I needed to return to the classroom. My one true calling. Promising never to be a troublemaker again proved to be difficult. Yet, I was so grateful!!!

## **Chapter 25 – New Job – Back with Class- At Last**

Fall, 1970. Highlands High School, on the southeast side of San Antonio near Pecan Valley, is close to IH 10 East. Easy freeway access. My 1968 VW bus looks perfect at home.

The drive from the north side of Austin is about 85 miles each way. The worst part is downtown Austin. They are building the new upper deck on IH 35. Sometimes, in the afternoon, I drive around Hwy 183 to avoid the jams downtown. It is much further. I leave Austin around 5:30 AM (sleepy time) and arrive at Highlands about 6:45 AM. The VW does not have a radio. Sunflower seeds keep me awake and the floorboard fills with salty shells. I want to install a radio but that would cost about \$60. J.A. (wife) says no. I find a portable battery AM radio that sits on the skinny dashboard. Every day I drive listening to the growing number of conservative radio jocks. Back and forth. Not missing a day and never late.

I met and befriended a 21-year-old first-year teacher named Ron Hagelman. He teaches 9th-grade history and is the most liberal person I have ever met. We have lunch in the cafeteria or brown bag in our classrooms and talk. He explained more to me about capitalism, socialism, communism, and different religions than I learned during all the years I sat on my can through classes. He was devoutly against the Viet Nam war, and all wars in general. He smoked weed off campus, never wore a tie or sport coat and the kids loved him. He loved them too, convincing them that history was thrilling to learn.

Ron thought that the library should be a learning center. He tried sending a couple of students per class to the school library with passes and assignments to research. The librarian did not like Ron. She complained to the principal who subsequently told him not to send individual students. Ron blew his stack. He went to the community and rounded up books for his library in the back of his classroom.

In May of 1971, thousands of Vietnam protestors were rounded up and put in fenced cages. Ron came to school with a black armband. He offered me one and I wore it too. The other teachers and the administration were appalled. We were black-listed. During that summer, a new principal arrived. He was a much tougher one and he transferred Ron to a very undesirable middle school campus. He brought me in for a conference and told me that if he did not need a math teacher so badly, I would have been moved as well.



## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

All '70-'71, my class assignments were low-level "Related and Consumer Math". I floated between classrooms. I did not send a single student to the office for punishment for the rest of my career.

In the fall and spring semesters of 1971-72, I was assigned the same low-level math courses, but I really enjoyed the consumer math. I wore a coat and tie every day. I broke up a couple of fights in the hallways. Tough, but I behaved. But, the teachers still resented me. I was not like them. Unruly students kicked out of the classes of other teachers would come to mine for sanctuary to get out of the halls. I was a "S" (*Student*) lover. I was scolded for letting them in. I answered the scolds, "Send me their assignments and they will do them in here...pretty good deal, Huh?" I was not appreciated by the grownups.

One teacher I will name "C" taught Algebra II. He was one of the worse. The kids would come by and tell me how he ridiculed them. One day in the hall, on costume day, one of the black kids dressed as an Indian. This teacher asked him if he was a "Blackfoot". The teacher confronted me one day in the lounge and verbally attacked me for listening to complaints against him. He said, "I am going to take you in front of the "ethics" committee!" I walked up to his face and said, "Bring your lawyer. You have a lot to answer for in disparaging these students." The other teachers standing nearby knew I was right. He was eventually promoted to an elementary school principal position. I ran into this man several times during the next 10 years. More is to come about the continuing saga of "C" during my teacher rights days.

The new principal never visited my classroom(s). He was never in the halls or eavesdropping outside my doors. My kids behaved. They were learning and happy. No parent complained. Teachers were starting to get friendlier toward the end of the year.

Yet, the principal gave me the worst appraisal I had ever received. I questioned "why?? He said that he could not trust my commute from Austin every day. I knew that was just an excuse to set me up for a transfer. In May of 1972, when the Guadalupe River was flooding almost over IH35 in New Braunfels, I made it on time. Even the principal said he was surprised to see me that morning. Yet, he could not trust me to be there? Never missed a day; never late. So much for being a 'good' boy.

In the middle of May 1972, I told J.A. that we needed to move to San Antonio. She says, "No." She will not quit her job at DPS and she is not going to commute. Big stand-off

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

I found her a comparable job at San Antonio College in the library computer department running the shop. Same pay. Plus, I put the dream bait on the hook under the bobber. “We can buy a house in San Antonio and be even closer to your parents in Comfort, TX.”

After she lands the SAC job, we buy a new small house in the Glen along the northeast edge of San Antonio for \$23,002. We moved from Austin and settled in the San Antonio area. We lived there for 13 years and started raising two boys, born in 1981 and 1983.

No more driving. 1972-73 begins my eventual success story in San Antonio ISD.



## **Chapter 26 – Teaching, Leading, and Fishing**

Fall, 1972-76. Back to work at Highlands High, beginning the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, I was pleasantly surprised that I had been assigned two sections of Algebra I. The other three were related math. Algebra is my favorite math genre. Mr “C” who taught most of the Algebra II sections has been promoted to a counselor position at an elementary school. (poor kids).

Also, I was elected as the ‘chief delegate’ among six other delegates to represent the 106 faculty members who joined the NEA/TSTA local San Antonio Teachers Council (SATC). I think I was elected because no one else wanted the job. American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was still trying to get a foothold. I represented faithfully at all meetings. My prestige rose in that I served the members and non-members. More joined the next year. I moved up in the SATC and was appointed head of the Teacher’s Professional Rights and Responsibilities committee. Through my encouragement, we changed the name to the Teacher’s Rights Committee. I also convinced the organization to start a Teacher Rights Legal Fund to help teachers get legal help. The fund was started from scratch with 5% of local dues each year until it reached \$5,000. I used it several times securing visits with lawyers for teachers in trouble with the administration. Many changes came about in battles for due process and fairness under the old unfair practices.

I also started helping with class sponsorship. One of my favorites, Mr. Roesler asked me to cosponsor the Class of 1973. It was fun. In 1974-75, the Class of 1976 was mostly mine with Mr. Roesler helping. The Class of 1980 was all mine. Graduations are big assignments for class sponsors. My abilities to organize and boss kids around impressed even my doubting Principal. Organizing proms is also a big deal. Raising funds, decorating school halls for homecoming and competing against the (now) four classes were all part of the assignments most teachers are too lazy to do. Becoming a rising favorite and a source of power, the principal denied me certain school-based committee assignments.

But I must digress. Back in the spring of 1969, living on the edges of lakes around Austin, we bought a 16 ft ski boat. \$66.71 payments for 36 months. J.A. cut up my new credit card but enjoyed the boat. We went skiing often on Lake Travis and Town Lake. The first launch is worth a word here.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

Backing the boat down the ramp for the first time at the upper reaches of Town Lake, the task seemed trivial. The boat trailer was in the water, the bow pulley latch was released, and the boat would not float off. I brought the boat/trailer back up the ramp and noticed there were aft latches holding the boat to the trailer. Took them off and tried again. I noticed the rear of the boat was showing incoming water. I brought the boat out again and drained the boat. Then I saw that there was a plug opening in the bottom aft. Ok, inserted the plug. The boat was finally brought to the loading dock. It floats. The car and trailer were parked successfully.

We get in the boat, lower the outboard, and push off before starting the motor. Big mistake. Knowing the gas tank was full, I turned the key and cranked the electronic starter. Nothing. We begin drifting into a thicket of underbrush. A guy from the dock yells, "Put it in neutral. Hold in the center button on the gear shift and put the lever in the up position." Then he yells, "Push in the key, hold it in, and turn the key". Ok, I push in the key, hold it in, turn the key and the motor turns over and sputters. "Oh, now I know where the choke is." I realize. I have never driven an electronic choke before, only a manual. We had a short boat ride after that.

During summers and long weekends, we took fishing trips to Port O'Connor, spending nights in the roach motel and fishing all hours of the day and night. Except on rough days, we beached on Matagordo Peninsula after traveling a couple of miles across Matagordo Bay to the jetties. Walking the mile down the dirt airplane runway to the surf, we gathered five-gallon buckets of big seashells and lugged them back.

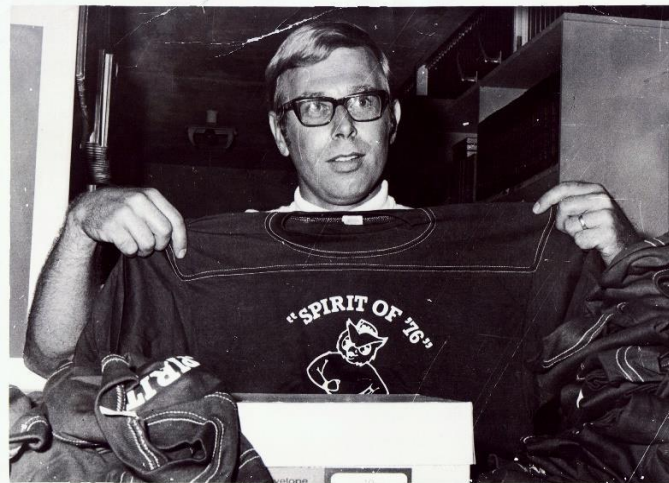
We ventured out through the jetties into the Gulf many times on calmer days and fished the oil rigs and around the huge granite stones, trying to catch mackerel, ling cod, tarpon, and big reds. Many big ones got away from our light bay tackle. Mostly we followed the birds in the bay and caught sea trout (weakfish), redfish, pompano, gaff top, sting rays, hardheads, sharks, croakers, Ladyfish, Jack crevalle, sunburns, and engine troubles. We fished the back shallow bays. It was an adventure to find the deeper channels and not go aground. We fished the old Coast Guard station along Caballo Pass which was destroyed by Hurricane Carla.

At the dock was a restaurant. The owner, Melba, served great meals of seafood and other goodies like chicken fried steak. We cleaned the catch at the cleaning tables. We would bring a few filets. Melba would cook them for us. Breakfast was to die for.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

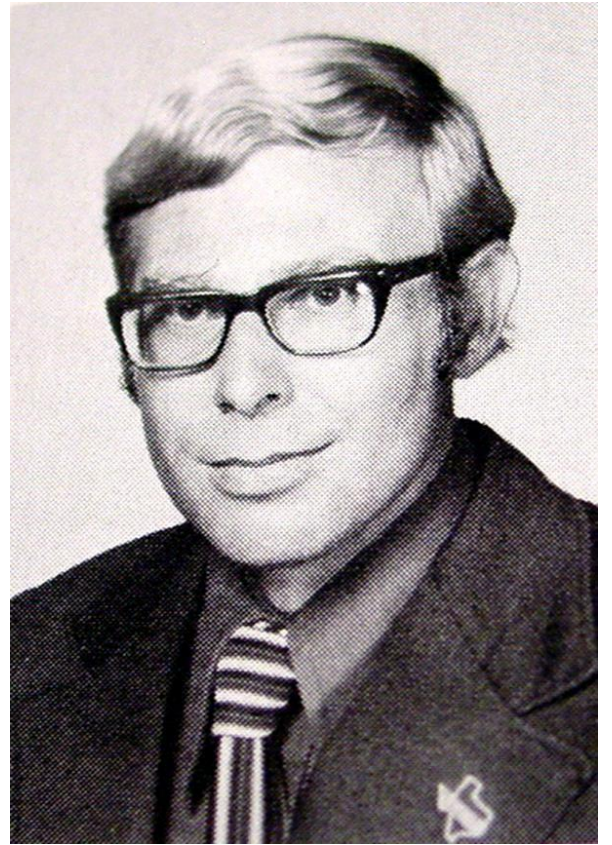
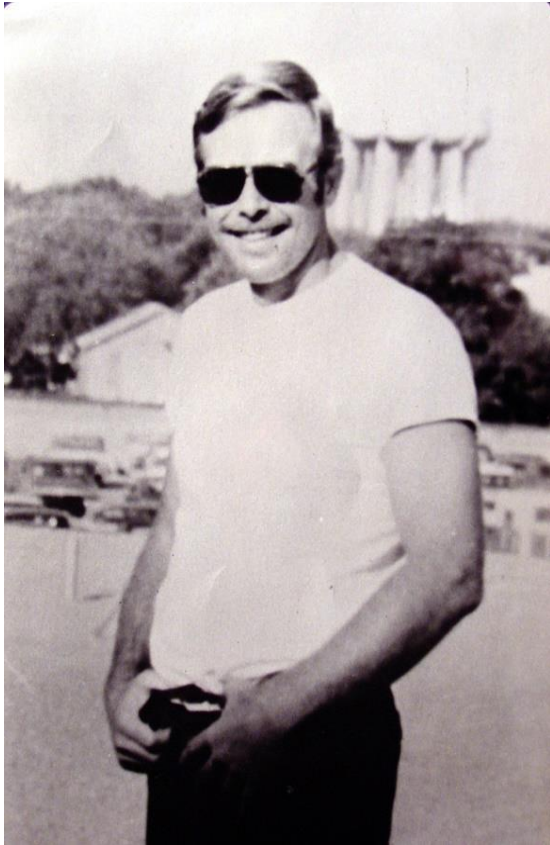
That boat gave us many joys and tribulations. The trailer was not galvanized and had to be reconditioned once. Finally bought a good trailer for it.

During this period and loving my summers off from teaching, I would drive to Roswell from San Antonio. Father would hook up the travel trailer. We would drive to Santa Fe to pick up his best friend. Then, we would head to the Weminuche Valley near Pagosa Springs in southern Colorado for a few days of trout fishing. Those were fun times spent with Father, away from Mother, enjoying his friendship with his best bud. He accepted me. He was a different man then.





*Part 1 - Times and Places*





## **Chapter 27 – Teaching, Teacher Rights, and the Stork**

1976-1981 A very productive and fun period. The number of Algebra II sections assigned to me grew each year. The process of sowing the seeds was to occasionally, for one period, exchange an Algebra II class with an Algebra I teacher and encourage the Algebra I students to follow me to Algebra II. That also allowed growth in the Algebra I teachers to prepare them for teaching Algebra II. By the end of 1977, I was assigned all Algebra II and even an advanced Algebra II section. I requested the advanced class be assigned to a different, stronger math content teacher to prepare those students for the higher math courses. Besides, I liked having only one preparation.

Beginning in the fall of 1978, the reticent Principal had been re-assigned to Director of Plant Services and a Godsend principal floated in the front door. A few days before the first day of school, I walked into the main office to pick up mail and greet the staff. I saw the new Principal and walked to him. Someone introduced us. He looked me straight in the eye and said, “I have been waiting to meet you. We have a lot to talk about. I want to get some of your ideas on what needs to happen.” I answered, “WOW! Thank you, that ends a long drought!” I instantly liked this guy and was highly energized. His name was D. Frank Clark. The “D.” was for “Doctor” because the parents either wanted to name him after his deliverer or could not come up with anything else.

The next few years were a blast at Highlands High. There is nothing more refreshing than for your boss to stop and speak those four most important words, “What do you think?”

The Class of 1980, which I sponsored, was (IMHO) one of the best classes to every graduate from the school. We were organized, had many events, honors, and quite a few high achievers who were admitted to prestigious schools on scholarships. Many of us are still connected in social media.

Still the Chief SATC Delegate for Highlands, I started mentoring my replacement, offering full backup. During this time, on the teacher union side of my life, fame was growing with Teacher Rights accomplishments. At the District level, the success of my role defending teachers in conflicts with the administration was picking up organization membership. It also focused attention on me from the Superintendent. Future episodes will describe some of the changes that were made in policy and procedure even in cases that were lost.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

NEA assigned a heavy hitter from Illinois to the San Antonio Teacher Council in 1976. This person named Roberta was assigned as an adjunct advisor full-time to assist in the growth of our large NEA/TSTA organization. Remember, the AFT was making a big effort to get a foothold in the State and our District. There was a membership battle between AFT and NEA.

Roberta was very patient when needed; and aggressive when it was learning time. Under her tutelage, I became knowledgeable about school board policy and administrative procedures, particularly the grievance process. She practiced with me on what to say in the first few cases, and how to write grievances. She was always there when I needed advice or re-direction. The goals were to stay within the guidelines, insist on the due process rights of being heard, represent, show the inadequacies of the procedure when it failed, and get changes made. *Extra information here* - Roberta and her husband were also ballroom dance instructors. J.A. and I joined and became members of their exhibition round dance team for several years.

A brief description of the grievance procedure is this. Level I – the grievant meets with the Principal (no representative present), presents a written grievance and awaits a response within 10 days. Level II – If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved, the grievant submits a written grievance to the Area Superintendent and asks for an interview (representative allowed). If the grievant is not satisfied, then the process goes to Level III – the same procedure. Level IV is the school board, but any Superintendent with a lick of sense does not want this laundry going to the school board. Usually, agreements are made at the lower levels.

I had several grievances go to the Superintendent. Some straight to him because he initiated the action against the teacher. Some were obviously going to be losses, but it was important to provide due process through representation/legal assistance for the teacher to make the loss decision. Along the way, it was an opportunity to change unfair parts of the procedures. I approached the Super occasionally, stated the problem, and was summarily asked to get out. Many of these conflict resolutions and the districtwide notoriety of such, influenced my future career.

Back to real life. In 1980, I stopped smoking. Early morning running. One mile, two miles, sprinting. I do not know why. Perhaps weight maintenance. I did this for about 6 months. Something changed my system. Not using any birth control since 1965, suddenly, 16 years later, J.A. started eating pretzels, not dill pickles, but craving pretzels. She was 37 and I, 38. Kinda' late for having a first baby. Life is changing and exciting.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

We were concerned about aged eggs, so we decided to have an amniocentesis. Scary procedure. Would not do it again. The results came back normal. I looked at the chromosomes. The count seemed to be the same as an alligator. We said yes to the question about knowing gender. A Boy! Name selection took a while. I won. "Aaron" for Hank Aaron/Aaron Spelling and "Lee", is my middle name. Aaron was born in July 1981. Difficult birth. High pressure from edema. Too many pretzels? The vacuum was used which temporarily misshaped his head. I greeted him and called him Yoda. So happy and proud.



Mahan



Clark



## **Chapter 28 – Promotion, Administration, and Interruption**

**1981-1991** In the fall of 1981, happily teaching Algebra II classes, proud of having a first-born son, and trying to cope with going from two incomes to one, the great principal calls me in and encourages me to change course and get into administration. I had dreams of being a campus principal for years. He tells me that the Super wants to talk to me about administering a project in the central office. Skeptically, not wanting to leave the sanctuary of my classroom, I make the appointment with the Super.

The white-haired sage, the Super, told me that the District had been offered a chance to participate in the Plato Project out of the University of Chicago. The project was to produce tests on a computer to track the progress of students in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in the fields of math, English, and History. I knew absolutely nothing about computers. I would hire two teachers to help with English and History and have a classroom in a middle school with students as guineas. Needing the money, I took the assignment in November of '81. Said goodbye to my sanctuary and started the process of setting a budget and timeline. Stationed in a big classroom at Connell Middle School, everything I saw was that I was taking valuable space that could be used for classroom learning. Nonetheless, I set it up. *(I will report more on this promotion)*

The Super retired. The Super-Elect took charge. This was the same guy who hired me in 1970 and we had many battles as he was the Super's henchman on teacher rights cases in the 70's. He did not like me. He ended the Plato project in May of 1982. I was assigned to the textbook office on Austin Street. The computer-assisted instruction (CIA) and library administration office were housed in that warehouse. I worked under Ms. Sample. My first assignment was to learn how to use machine language and hack the passwords on TRS-80 discs for CAI programs such as Oregon Trail. The hacked and duplicated discs could then be distributed to campus classrooms. I was also in charge of upgrading the old TRS Model I's and then the TRS-80 Model III with additional hardware memory. I started learning BASIC programming language and how to help with the textbook orders and distribution.

This lasted until the end of 1982. I was then assigned to the main central office complex to the Office of Evaluation under Dr. David Splitek. Dr. Dave was a few years younger than I. He was a 'Super' in training from UTSA. He was in the same class as NEISD Ricky Middleton.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

Dave and I hit it off well. He assigned me to program something in BASIC on the big TRS Model II with 8" floppy disks. I had no idea what I was doing. He figured that out soon enough. He then assigned me to evaluate a string of programs like Gifted & Talented, Language Efficiency Program, the program for off-campus detention learning, and the physical education testing.

I was also in charge of letting the bids for all educational computers and business microcomputers. I approved the purchases of hundreds of Apple IIe's for instruction.

Number 2 son, Travis Wayne, arrived in November 1983. Another surprise. Very easy pregnancy and delivery this time. Stubborn little boy. Did not talk...sucked thumb for years. J.A. still did not want to go back to work, but I was making enough to keep us above water.

I trained the Central Office business workers on various programs such as word processing, spreadsheets, and databases. That included TRS Superscript, VisiCalc, and Profile, and then evolved into the MSDOS programs like Palantir, WordPerfect, Word, Lotus 123, Excel, FilePro, and Access. I wrote various database programs for individual offices to collect, select, and report data. The Microcomputer world was exploding. I was in many offices helping the office workers with hardware and software. I wanted to get the computers connected.

Then my world changed. I met Linda in the cafeteria. She started walking with my buddies and me. Hypnotism for weight loss, then, something changed. Vowing to not interrupt our family lives, we started a torrid love affair in May of 1986 that was a maelstrom for 6 years. Talk of the town. Tore us both asunder. Should walk away. Could not stay away.

In 1987, I conducted a big study with IBM to take the SAISD computing in-house, away from Education Service Center Region XX. NEISD had just purchased its own mainframe. Several in the district wanted to know the advantages and costs. I recommended that to the SAISD Board. It failed, but I stood up and appealed to the Board to do something to organize our data and computing needs. I suggested forming an Office of Computer Services as an umbrella. I told them that waiting is not an option. "We are already so far behind, we may never catch up".

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

They bought it. 4 votes for and 3 against, as usual. Even the statistician, most computer literate, government working, board member voted against it. We brought the off-premises printing to the Central campus, built a computer office building around it, and established microcomputer helpers, maintenance, and instruction. We started hard-wiring the offices to share documents and data. The world of microcomputing was upon us. It was exciting to be in the vanguard. Assistant Director of the Office of Computer Services, corner office, was fun, but everyone knew that I should have been the Director.

Pressure from the affair, guilt, and the need to commit my energy somewhere drove me to talk to the Super. I decided to go back to my family. I reminded Super that he had promised 10 years earlier to put me back at Highlands should I fail or want to go. He was happy to move me out of the central office and assigned me to Highlands as an Assistant Principal in 1991.

I told Linda that I was breaking off and returning home. Linda could not handle that.

She moved out of her home. Started her divorce. The world became so confusing. My new Job was very difficult.

My life was in complete chaos.



## **Chapter 29 – New Job, Marriage, and Gang Wars**

**1991-1996** In the summer of 1991, I started my new job as Assistant Principal of Highlands High School on the SE side of San Antonio. Linda had moved out and was living on Broadway across from the La Louisiane restaurant. I moved out during the middle of August to a small apartment on the Pecan Valley golf course on Pecan Valley Drive, about 1 mile from the Highlands campus.

The new job was a big mystery. Not knowing anything about campus administration, it was on-the-job training. Assigned the textbook distribution system, the daily bulletin, the public address system announcements, programming the bell system, scheduling the class times, and discipline for one-half of each of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students, I was busy. All five administrators were new to the campus. No one knew the kids and very few knew the teachers. Chaos was abundant. I did my best. Totally exhausted every night.

I quickly found out that the campus was not the same as it was when I left 10 years earlier. The neighborhood gangs had moved in. Fights broke out early in the morning at the entrance of the school cafeteria. Bandanas, black, red, blue, and brown dangled freely from the sagging pants pockets publicly flying their colors, pledging their allegiance to their families on the streets. The strongest, most experienced A.P. was named Ken. He quickly guided me to use my power and radio to strip the rags, recognize the leaders, divide the groups, and to disrupt the lives of the troublemakers. It felt like war. Linda had warned me, but I did not listen. I had hoped Highlands was going to be my peaceful sanctuary forever.

During the next few years, Ken and I solidified our control of the student population. The teachers were very happy. A new principal moved in during the summer of 1993. He was a big guy, kind, experienced high school principal. He let me continue being the voice of the administration using the communications function. We strengthened the resource officer's presence. He appraised the probationary employees and any who were questionable.

We continued to thin out the gangs. Sometimes, we had to admit a gang member from a different school and his/her presence would cause a wave of violence among the peaceful members we had calmed down.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

Yes, I found guns, machetes, knives, chains, nun chucks, marijuana, and a few weird homemade weapons. Most weapons were for security getting to and from school. Most weapons were discovered by information about what had happened on the streets the night before. We would meet the affected kids at the door.

Linda and I purchased a house six doors away from the school in 1992 on the South Side Lions Baseball Park. It was a great place to live for the next 17 years. Ken died in a car crash in February of 1996. It took the wind out of my sails, and I retired at the end of 1996, two days before Father died.

## **Chapter 30 – Retirement**

**1997-2005** The loss of my best friend and co-administrator Ken on February 29, 1996, hit me hard. Ken died early that morning after running his car into the corner of a house at 2:30 AM. I was the first to get a call from the hospital asking about his emergency contacts. Extremely difficult time

I found little desire or energy for running the high school without Ken. Linda found that I could retire at 28 years plus two half-years which legally sufficed for the full 30 years needed. I went to the Austin TRS building to see the person's lips move assuring me that I could retire December 31, 1996. I would be getting \$100 per day, 365 days of each year for the rest of my life. I figured I could make it on that. Holiday vacation was to begin at the end of the day on Friday, December 20, 1996. But, Father died on December 18<sup>th</sup>. I had to leave early to return to Roswell for the funeral. It was a confusing ending to my career.

In 1997, as a retiree, I continued to help with small chores around the school. I was the only one who knew how to change the bell schedules and program the new telephone system. I also tried selling supplements through a website at home. Total waste of time and money.

During the summer of 1997, I yearned to get back into the classroom. SAISD did not want to hire me for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time as a substitute. I guess I had given them enough trouble over 26 years. TRS regs would not let me keep my retirement and work full-time in public schools. I contacted the Catholic school administration. They offered me a math teaching job at Providence High School for \$24,000. The girls all dressed alike, giggled a lot, and everyone prayed. I enjoyed the peacefulness of being around kids who were not bringing their gang fights into the building for two years. Some of the parents wanted me to apply as principal, but I told them I did not have a habit.

In 1999, TRS changed the rules. I could teach mathematics (a specialty shortage) in public schools and keep my retirement money. I thought about it and applied to SAISD. Personnel sent me to interview at Mark Twain Middle School for a math assignment teaching a very special group of geometry students (I hate geometry). The principal was glad to get me. He gave me a radio to help manage the cafeteria, playground, and the school when he was absent (which seemed to be often).

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

The next two years were very challenging for me. Of all things, I did not know how to engage unruly 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The agrarian curriculum was somewhat foreign to this long-time algebra teacher/administrator. I finally found some control during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a lonely barracks building during the school reconstruction. I received a commendation for physically breaking up a knife fight that semester.

I heard of a shakeup at Highlands High at the end of spring semester 2001. The Mark Twain principal was retiring and one of the assistant principals at Highlands was moving into the job. I also heard that he wanted to bring along his favorite math teacher with him.

I contacted the new principal at Highlands and gave her a deal she could not refuse. She was new and did not know the Highlands building. She had 4 new assistant principals who also did not know the building or the students. I had run the school for 6 years and knew everything about the building and most of the teachers. I told her I 1) only wanted to teach 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 2) I did not need a conference period, and 3) I would monitor the lunch cafeteria during all three lunches. All I needed was a radio. She loved it. I began my final 4 years teaching in 2001 through 2005 at my sanctuary high school, Highlands. I still lived one block away and rode my bike to work.

I innovated like crazy. Shower boards mounted in the chalk trays instead of using blackboards. Brightly colored markers on the shower boards. Music, computer-projected lessons on the shower boards with videos, and PowerPoints, using Photoshop to write and draw on photographs of lessons, and singing math lyrics to popular songs.

The principal nominated me for the SAISD Teacher of the Year and the Trinity prize in the spring of 2004. I won the former but lost the latter. At the recognition of the award, this gringo sang "Sixteen Tons" acapella with the lyrics changed to "sixteen jobs" in front of the SAISD School Board at west side Lanier High School right after the Mariachi band had performed.

I taught for one more year(2004-2005) and decided it would be a good time to go out on top in the spring of 2005. I resigned, bought a new boat, and went fishing for the next few years as well as building websites for organizations and businesses.