
MY SAGA

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SERINGER JR.**



CHAPTER 1 - MY YOUTH

I was born on November 12, 1919 in Cleveland, Ohio at St. Anne's Hospital. My parents were delighted to have their first son, a red head at that! My father, Joseph, was a traveling salesman and my mother, Josephine, was a great homemaker and herded her three kids with a strong hand. My sister, Mary Jane, is 18 months older than I, and my little brother Bobby Bill was 18 months younger. I do not remember much about our house, except that we lived on the first floor of a two family. We all ran and played from dawn till dusk, whenever we were not going to school or visiting relatives. M. Jane and I both remember some of our playmates, Bobby Godard, Bernard and Rosalyn Finklestein among others.

My first memories are of kindergarten. Our school, Roselle, had the same name as our street. I was only a block from home and I loved it, mainly because I had a very pretty teacher named Miss Herb. She wore sleeveless blouses exposing a large vaccination scar on her left upper arm. I felt sorry for her. After that I hated shots for years. I loved playing with blocks made from two by fours. There were houses built and buildings constructed. I wonder why the skill left me when I grew up. The first grade was a big step. It meant changing schools and going to St. Philomena's, located on Euclid Avenue. This was about 10 blocks from our house, a real walk from our place passing across heavily trafficked streets. My sister and I made a real project of loitering on our way home. However, my parents trusted us and never seemed alarmed at the dangers. Coming home after school almost every day, we stopped at a big gate house, the former residence of John D. Rockefeller. Huge iron gates surrounded the estate (the mansion had long ago burned down). We would stand in front of the gates and taunt the gatekeeper. He was an old Irishman, Pat Lynch, who was usually well-oiled. He would chase us and cuss at us. We thought that this was great fun, since he never caught us. My mother really raised the family, since my father was only home weekends. She had gone to business college and had some excellent jobs before she was married. She was once the private secretary to the president of the Bailey Co., a large department store. She loved to tell the story of signing the boss' name and putting her initials below. Her maiden name was Josephine Elizabeth Wunderle. So she initialed it J E W. Her boss exclaimed, "Hey, I know I am a Jew and you know I am a Jew, but you don't have to flaunt it!" This was the standard joke that she repeated often. As kid, I laughed every time I heard her tell it.

Mom was born in Cleveland, Ohio. She had two brothers, Art and Carl. Art had eight children and visiting them was a real circus. They had friends and groups all over the house. Those parties were in the basement on up and spilled out to the front and back yards. The house had no carpeting, only linoleum. The yard had no grass and only bare ground. My Aunt, Cecilia, spent all of her time cooking, baking, cleaning, and washing. Of course, all cousins and their friends could eat and eat until huge pans were empty. No wonder my aunt always looked exhausted. At any rate, there was never a dull moment at Art Wunderle's house. Mom's brother Carl and his wife, Helen, had five kids. He had served in World War I in the First Division 18th Infantry. They lived in Kent Ohio and it was great to visit them. He had wonderful memorabilia. There were thrilling stories of combat and feats of his Company. He had been gassed and sent home before the Armistice. To this day I believe that the Big Red One was and is the best outfit in the U.S. Army - more about this later in my own service memories.

My father was an orphan and had been brought up by an aunt "Nanny" Reister in Norwalk, Ohio. He worked in their store. The long store hours required him to leave school in the sixth grade. However, in his whole life he was quick with addition, because of this experience. The Reister's had a daughter, Mabel, who was my parents' best friend for life. Mabel married Ferd Van Vliet, a wholesale grocery salesman. Ferd helped my father get a job with the same firm, The Wm. Edwards Co. He became a traveling salesman and had a territory that included eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania. Mabel and my mother worked together and she introduced my dad to mom and they were soon married. When we kids were young we only saw dad on weekends. My mother brought us up in a very stern but fair Germanic traditional way. Dad left for work Sunday night and returned Friday night. No wonder mom

ruled the roost! Dad never scolded or punished us. When any of us did something wrong, he would shout, "Joe make this kid stop!" This applied to whatever the trouble might be.

Being a typical salesman, he loved to tell stories and had all kinds of jokes for any occasion. The grownups played cards on the weekends. The most prominent games were pinochle and a German game named 66. After my youth, I never heard of that game again. Of course you can now see that the family was steeped in German culture. Both parents, although born in the U.S.A., spoke fluent German, but I found out later that it was considered as low Deutsch. The Wunderle's and the Reihle's roots were in Munich. My dad's were near Strassburg. Every time my parent didn't want us to know what they were talking about, German was used. This infuriated the three of us. We could not understand why. What were we being deprived of?

My Wunderle grandmother came on weekends to stay with us. She was a widow who did housekeeping for two doctors five days a week. Gosh, what a great joy it was to have her around. However, the German flew hot and heavy when she was there. She wanted to teach us the language, but neither Jane nor I would agree to it. Grandma, also called Nanny, had many wonderful tales about traveling to Europe and all over our country. Listening to these tales gave me the wanderlust and I still love to travel to this day. She was in Germany during the Weimar Republic and related that the inflation was so bad that it required a suitcase full of money to travel around. In fact while eating in a restaurant, the price of the meal could change three times. This so impressed me that I still am very conservative when it comes to monetary policies. All during my growing years, Nanny counseled and taught me about things available just for the trying. She gave me a love for classical music and I would sit for hours listening to her great collection of records of symphonies and operas. The value of a good education was her theme over and over again. Every child should be blessed with at least one loving and caring grandparent who is on the scene.

My Uncle Bill Blecking and my Aunt Emma lived on the street next to us. She came from the Reihle side of the family. She had epileptic seizures. We were told that these were spells. Bill had made a lot of money in real estate and had sold out a big hardware store in Cleveland Heights. This was considered the class area around Cleveland at that time. Then I didn't realize it, but he was close with a buck. He couldn't properly take of Aunt Emma so he always had my mother or Nanny close at hand. He owned a great big seven passenger auto and we would all pile in and go on vacations together. If not vacations, there were picnics every Sunday. Mom would do all the cooking and preparation. Those were wonderful summer outings. Every Friday, except when the weather was too hot, was mom's baking day. I can still smell the fresh bread, apple pies, kuchen and other goodies that came out of the kitchen. Incidentally, my mother's apple pies were far above any others I have ever eaten. On Saturday morning, my little red wagon was filled with these goodies and a hot towel was placed the top. Off we went, Jane, Bob and I, to the Bleckings. There was sheer delight shown on their faces as we climbed the stairs to their house. We each received a quarter from Uncle Bill. This became our allowance for the week. That was a large amount in those days.

The camping trips that the two families went on were special. The Peerless was rigged holding all the camping gear. This included a three room tent, a wooden box containing all the kitchen requirements and blankets we needed. Can you imagine all of this strapped on the side of the car of our rich uncle? We kids ran and played and were exhausted by nighttime. The grownups again played pinochle, 66, and ate big meals. I never remember hiking with them or playing ball with them. How come we didn't feel deprived or let down? At Perry Township Park, I did fall off the cliff almost into Lake Erie and broke my arm. That ended most of my fun for that vacation. It is still unbelievable that my parents didn't exercise but still lived to be over ninety.

Living in East Cleveland was an enjoyable time in all our lives. However, in life something is

bound to come up to disturb tranquility. Mom had taught us to lay out our clothes before going to bed so there would be no rush in the morning. When I was seven, early one morning there was the shrill sound of sirens. Smoke hung all over the room. My mother's voice was loud and clear. "Get up and get dressed," she shouted, "The house is on fire!" Man! Clothes went on in a minute and out the door we ran. There was confusion all over. Firemen with their hoses and water were everywhere. We kids felt like heroes and were the envy of the neighborhood gang. My mother was furious. The people who lived upstairs started it with a cigarette. No possessions were burned but there was smoke and water damage. My mother wouldn't speak to the lady upstairs and our only contact was me. Because there were three Joe's in the house, I was called Junior. The upstairs group had parrot and when anybody came into their house he would shout, "Junior, shut that door!" Even then, door and drawer shutting were not my best points.

Dad spent Saturday going downtown to the William Edwards headquarters to get his sample cases for the next week's promotions. When he came home on Fridays, all the samples from that week were gleaned over by us. Fights over contents ensued. We were admonished and mom would distribute the load as she saw fit. Dad just stood and laughed. Mom's red-headed temper would sometimes erupt, so that my father was bawled out as well as me. I felt I was always being punished and my sister could get away with anything. Bobby Bill was treated like an angel. Well the best time for sampling goodies was a couple weeks before Christmas. Also a week or two before Easter, candy abounded. The chocolates were glued to case boxes but mom cut off the bottoms. Our mouths would water but we were not allowed to eat candy during Lent. The visions of those chocolates were with us until Easter Sunday morning. There was a mad hunt for the baskets but woe was me, mom confiscated most of those wonderful bunnies, chicks, and other goodies. I guess we were satisfied that we got our fair share.

The following summer brought forth another calamity. Returning home from a picnic, we found our street to be closed. A policeman refused entry, stating that there was a fire in one of the houses. Of course it was ours. The upstairs was burning but the fire was almost out by the time we arrived. There was some loss of our possessions but I assume insurance covered most of it. Mom had a large black mahogany four poster bed that was scorched on one pedestal. That bed traveled with her wherever she and dad later landed. The bed was still in their St. Petersburg house where my sister lived until 2000. Every time I went there and slept in the guest room in the bed, I see the heat marks still there. Jane's husband refinished it years later. This rekindles the memories of the fire. Well, this second fire was too much for mom. We moved in two weeks over the protests of Aunt Emma and Uncle Bill. The new move took us to 89th Street off Superior Avenue. Another up and down. This time we were in the upper story. The McNamaras lived below and they again were some relatives of my mother's. We went to St. Thomas Aquinas school about five blocks from home. This period is sort of blank. I don't remember schoolmates or teachers. Actually, my wife Rita and I were in the same classroom but neither of us remembered each other. We found this out years later looking at First Communion group pictures.

A very hot summer arrived and on a particularly hot day while playing down the street, I heard a lot screams and tires screeching. I ran back towards the house and some kids shouted to me that my brother had been hit by a car. I thought my heart would stop but I ran into the house crying, "Mom, Bobby has been hit by a car!" She had just finished washing and was barefooted cooling her sore feet. She screamed and ran to the street. Scooping Bobby into her arms, she held him. Someone who was passing by opened the back door of his car and she got in with Bobby. They sped away to the hospital. Jane and I were numb. Someone took us to their house where there was an altar and we began praying while crying. Our prayers were to no avail. Bobby died on the way to Mt. Sinai Hospital where they confirmed his death. I can only remember the sorrow of the family and the terrible feeling of emptiness. My mother was never the same. She lost a sense of gaiety and her fun loving life no longer existed. I believe the reason I remember so little about my two years spent on 89th Street was due to that horrible tragedy. My father who was very religious (my mother often said he should have been a priest) went to early mass day after day and hardly spoke to any of us. We moved a month later; my mother could not stand the

neighborhood.

Since we were still renters, we moved to 14022 Lake Shore Boulevard, the boundary of Cleveland and Bratanhal. This was a lovely big many gabled Victorian house. There were eight big rooms and porches that covered two sides. The view from the front porch out the bay window faced Lake Erie. What a gorgeous sight to behold! At this time, dad had a Cleveland territory and was home every night. He still deferred to mom for all decisions regarding Jane and I. Eight or ten kids all played together. I can vividly remember them. They included Bob and Dick Turner, the Epaves, the Browns, Bobby Willie, and Elwood Themes. We played baseball, made huts from scrap wood, and built an ice skating rink in a vacant lot. There was an old vacant house next to our play lot that we used as a club house. Even though there was a big city park across the street from our house, we liked our homemade facilities. A huge night club, Willie's Lake Shore Gardens, used part of our back yard for overflow parking, so we couldn't play in the back yard. The Willies were our landlords.

Mrs. Willie, a tough and rotund German, ran the restaurant and raised police and Doberman Pincher dogs. We were all deathly afraid of these animals. They were kept in kennels at the back of the night club property. A high solid wooden fence surrounded the whole compound. One side faced our ball park and was a constant irritation. Normally in the daytime the dogs were kept in another kennel. Once while playing ball, I hit a home run over the kennel fence. Bobby Willie, who was playing with us, assured me that the dogs were in the other place. I pounded on the fence and made considerable noise. Nothing stirred. Bobby gave me a lift up and I climbed over and dropped to the other side. All of a sudden I saw two mouths of dog teeth rushing toward me. Terrified, I kicked both snouts and began to claw and climb my way back to safety. One of the dogs caught me on the middle of my right leg. I fell down on the ball diamond and began to cry. Blood was spurting. My mother was not at home so my sister bound the puncture and the bleeding stopped. We had been warned by mom never to go near those kennels, so I didn't tell her about the near catastrophe. My parents' bedroom covered the whole front of the second floor and I slept in a partitioned end and could hear everything my parents talked about. Mom was the cashier at Willies and didn't come home from work until late at night. That night, mom was telling dad that there was a case of rabies the area and how painful and critical the treatment was. Terrified, I ran into their room and blurted out my sad tale. We jumped into the car and sped to the emergency room of Collinwood Clinic. I was given shots but not for rabies; the dogs tested O.K. I still carry the scar on my right leg. The old fashioned treatment resulted, with a hard spanking on my fanny by mom. In my whole youth, my father never laid a hand on me; that was mom's job.

We lost our run down playhouse. It was sold, but surprising to all, no furniture was delivered. The yard seemed to always be filled with cars and trucks. Two months later, police cars and fire engines swooped down on the place. Soon after they arrived, the smell of beer in the making penetrated the whole area. Mash began to flow down into the yard and into the street. One illegal miniature brewery bit the dust. The house was torn down, thus we lost a playhouse.

In the fourth grade, my teacher asked me to become a mass server. This was at St. Jerome's located on our boulevard but at 152nd Street. This again meant walking 12 blocks to church and school. Lucky me, I always drew the 6:30 AM mass during the winter months. My sister Jane was forced to accompany me. We walked along being pushed by the bitterly cold winds off Lake Erie. Every store entrance was a shelter and we stopped at all available. Jane still talks about those chilling mornings. Serving mass was a serious thing to me. I can still recite some of the Latin responses of a server, "Adeum Qui Laetificat Juven tutem Meam."

One very cold day after the lake had frozen over, Bob Turner and I decided to walk out to the break wall on the ice. We proceeded on this adventure, even though both had been forbidden to go near the lake. Walking from one break in the wall onto another, the ice broke and I plunged into the water.

This was caused by an oil slick on the surface where I was walking. Thank God I grabbed a pipe wedged in among the stones. Bob helped me pull myself up and I raced for home, in my new overcoat that I had received at Christmas. I raced up the stairs, shed my clothes and jumped soaking wet into the bath tub. I had left a trail of oil and water all over the house. Mother soon came home and found a horrible mess of oil soaked carpets and clothes. She began crying and this time I didn't get a spanking on the fanny. I received the full treatment, whacks from my father's razor strop. I swore that I would never disobey her again. Amid tears she stated, "What ever am I going to do with this boy?" After this episode, I decided to run away from home. Mother said she would help me pack. I left with my Grandmother pleading with both my mother and me to stop. I guess I walked about an hour and turned around and came home. Mustering all the dignity that I had left, I announced, "Well, if I had any place to go. I would go."

My grandmother was wonderful. She had traveled all over Europe and the U.S.A. and was a fountain of knowledge. Since I was grounded, I spent my time reading and looking at her albums of her trips. Her library of classical music and operas helped me through the three weeks that I was not allowed freedom. She certainly loved me, I don't know why. After Christmas when I was in the fifth grade, I built a big work bench in the basement. My uncle Bill who had been in the hardware business gave me a complete set of professional carpentry tools. I used the tools to make something for my mother. I tried to put the knickknack under the tree and in doing so, I knocked over the tree and broke many of the ornaments. My punishment was again to be confined to my room. I lost my temper and decried such treatment for an accident. Instead of going to my room, I rushed to the basement and sulked. My grandmother came down to comfort me, but it infuriated me. Raising a hatchet, I guess I threatened her. White as a ghost, she ran up the stairs and related it all. You can guess it; the razor strap came out again. Grandmother was devastated and began to cry. She then offered to send me to Virginia Military Academy. My parents refused, stating that Junior will be reformed and soon. They talked to my teacher and she recommended that I join the Boys Catholic Glee Club. She would get me in. This was a fine diocesan choir that sang Gregorian chants and performed with a men's choir.

Maybe practicing during the week and going downtown to the Cathedral every Saturday settled me down. Something did it. There was apparently never again any necessity to use corporal punishment on my hide. I loved this great music even though at the first screening, I was put in the lowest group. A month later, however, I was elevated to a chanter. The choir master announced to all that here was the most improved singer of the group. I was elated.

In an hour or so, we were dismissed. I was singing for joy as I walked out on Superior Avenue. A street vender had hot dogs with all the trimmings. Without any thought of the cost, I gobbled down two. There was enough money to pay for them but it left me without a cent for car fare home or a nickel to call home. The walk home of 150 blocks was tiring but this was my great day. The family all remarked that it was surely a long practice. They didn't have to know.

Dads business was getting slow, the depression was at hand. The Willies, our landlord, requested that we take their headwaiter in as a roomer. Mom agreed because we needed the extra money. Later two show girls from their cabaret also stayed a week as roomers. They couldn't find decent hotel rooms or so they said. My sister Jane and I were all eyes and ears. Wow, a platinum blond and a gorgeous red head living with us was sure a treat! After the week ended, mom bounced them out. She didn't like the atmosphere they created. Jane and I could not understand this.

Dad's company, The Wm. Edwards Co., turned all their good customers into Edward's stores and they became house accounts. These conditions left Dad with little commissions, so he quit. A couple of tough months followed. Finally when I was in the sixth grade, he went into a partnership to make, sell and distribute a cathartic with the name Tru Lax. This seemed to me to be the same as Ex Lax and Feenamant. They had their products manufactured and they did the wholesale selling. The business was pretty good at

first.

My mother and Mrs. Willie decided to part company, so we were again on the move. This time it was a nice home in Cleveland Heights. I went to St. Ann's School on Cedar and Coventry. This was about 2.50 miles from home. They had a private school bus but most of the time I rode the bus to school but walked home. Jane went to Roosevelt Junior High and the next year to Heights High School. It happened again – I was tagged to serve the 6 AM mass. It was a very good time for baseball, football and swimming. Cumberland Park was only a block away and I practically lived there. I played left field on the Cumberland midgets and we won the district championship. St. Ann's had a great football team and we played all the parochial schools in the Cleveland district. We beat Parmadale Orphanage for the title.

Things went sour for Dad's business and when I was in the eighth grade and we lost our house. This time we moved to 7417 Wade Park Avenue in an old section of Cleveland. The home was the old ancestral place of the Reihle family. It had been converted into an up and down and we lived upstairs. Mom's pride was terribly hurt, but she carried on. Dad was trying to salvage his business. His partner just left town and pushed all the troubles on Dad. This was during the worst of the depression and very few could afford the luxury of laxatives. He was away most of the time trying to peddle Tru Lax.

Even though I lived down in the city, I still went to St. Ann's up in the Heights. This meant taking two street cars to get there. Sister Mary Ellen, my eighth grade teacher, befriended me and was the second motivator of my life. She helped in so many ways. She was a masterful teacher with an innate cheerfulness. Knowing of our circumstances, her kindness went a long way in helping during this rough period. I still served the 6 AM mass and had to get up in the dark and transfer street cars in the solid Black neighborhood. How times change. No one would let a thirteen year old boy travel by himself in the dark in such a place today. I was never afraid or felt insecure. Sixty years later, where is our progress in race relations? Sister wanted me to go to Cathedral Latin High School and promised to see that I would receive a scholarship. Mother said no. "You are going to have to get along as we do."

So Addison Junior High and later East High School were my lot for the next four years. High school was a delight even though there was very little cash for entertainment. I joined the Hi Y and along with about twenty other guys used the YMCA for all kinds of athletic fun. We also hung around together at school and went on picnics etc. Those of us that are still living still get together after all these years. To name a few, there was Steve Dale (he was then Djackovic), Les Bunch who went college with me, Bob Dearth who became an advertising executive. There were others, Bob Blake and George Weiss, later White, both of whom went to MIT. White is still the architect for the U.S. capital. I often see him on television. I remember going down to Ohio State University and visiting Bill Mauser and Bob King. They lived in the stadium club. Jim O'Connor and Dave Lebovitz have sort of kept in touch with all and keep us informed of the status of us all. Most of the guys later went into the service and two were killed action. I do not believe you could find a more diverse group of nationalities, religious beliefs, and economic statuses. Over 80 percent of the guys went to college. Looking back, we were lucky to go to a public school in a somewhat run-down neighborhood that had such high academic standards. There were no serious discipline problems and most were there for an education. I even suffered through Latin; a language was required for college preparation. We did pull one prank that was memorable. During one night, one of the guys climbed up the school flag pole and wired a Class of 1937 flag to the top of the pole. We cut the rope off and greased the pole all of the way to the ground. Our principal, Mr. Floyd Simmons who was a retired army colonel, was furious. He dressed us all down and made the class pay for the repairs.

I became the class treasurer and was also president of the National Honor Society. There were a lot of smarter gals but they quarreled and I was the compromise. I guess I was a friend to all. Everything was not all fun and games. Helping the family, I worked from 4 to 6:30 PM every week day and from 6

AM to 930 PM on Saturday. This really did not interfere with school or Kappa Beta activities (we arrived at this name to phase out the Hi Y moniker).

During my sophomore year, my father's business continued to decline. He was down in East Liverpool and mom received a phone call from a desk clerk in a hotel. "Your husband is laying in a room here deathly sick," he told her. Mom dropped every thing and took a bus to him. A doctor had seen him and left prescriptions but he still had a high fever. Mom bundled him up in blankets and half carried him to our old car. The weather was very cold and the heater in the car didn't work. The hotel kitchen heated bricks for her and she placed them around him. She had not driven for 25 years and had no license, but she drove him home and put him to bed with Jane's and my help. The doctor confirmed that he had double pneumonia and his chances weren't too good. There were no antibiotics in those days, so my mother sat by his bedside 24 hours a day ministering to him. There never was a nurse like Mom. Any time any relative or friend was seriously ill, Mom always went to them and nursed them.

Well, Dad finally passed the crisis and began to recuperate. Mom was terribly exhausted. Dad's frame of mind and spirit bordered on melancholy. It now became necessary for Mom to take over completely. The business had to be closed and a mountain of debt to be dealt with. A family council was hurriedly called. Mom announced that she had talked to her brother Carl and he would get her a job at Black and Decker. Carl was a supervisor and put her on an assembly line on a piece work basis. She now called herself piece work Liz. There was a role reversal here; now she was gone to Kent five days a week. Nanny now lived with us full time and it was up to Jane and Grandmother to run the house. My father was a broken man; he hardly spoke to anyone. Friends and relatives came to visit but he would go to his room as soon as they started up the steps. My mother was too proud to take charity and from her meager wages, she began to repay creditors. We never went hungry but there were slim pickings. My Aunt Mabel, Dad's half-sister, wanted to help, but mom refused any assistance. Mother tried to produce the products she was assembling faster, but the union complained and she was forced to slow down. Jane graduated from East High and the only job open to her was a clerk in a variety store. It all helped and I worked more hours at the fruit market.

CHAPTER 2 – I GROW UP

During my senior year, a school chum named Ellen Grubb introduced me to Rita Hagan. Their fathers were plumber buddies. Rita attended Ursuline Academy and she also was a senior. I don't know if this was love at first sight, but I knew I wanted to see her again and again. After two dates where we were in a group, I got up enough nerve to ask her out on Easter Sunday. She said fine, as we could go to church together. I scraped up enough cash to buy her a lovely corsage. Church never seemed as wonderful as it did that day. She was gorgeous in beautiful new clothes. We went back to her house after mass and had a lovely breakfast. I asked her what she would like to do for the rest of the day. There was a long pause, and she apologized by saying that she didn't know that I wanted a date for the whole day. "I have another date for this afternoon," she replied. I was crestfallen. Hurrying home, I wallowed in a mixture of anger and self pity. Mom consoled me and gave me good advice. "This wasn't really her fault, if she likes you and you like her, you will both overlook such little slights." Well a call during the week cured all the problems. Anyhow, she needed help with algebra.

Nanny kept pestering me to apply for college and to try to get a scholarship. My mother also agreed. Miss Thayer, my homeroom teacher encouraged me and obtained a number of applications for me. She wrote letters of recommendation and aided me with the various applications. We had no guidance counselors in those days. I was offered a 50% scholarship at Oberlin College. My family did not have the ability to pay the other half. I finally applied to Western Reserve University in Cleveland. I went to the campus and took an exam. Low and behold I was offered a full scholarship. This required maintaining a B average and also spending a few hours a week working at the university. Well the campus was closer than the trek I had to St. Ann's. I lived at home and took my courses at both the downtown branch and on the campus. Fraternities were out the question and I became a street car student.

Employment was necessary to pay for all the things other than tuition. The first summer I worked Canterbury Golf Club in the maintenance department. During the next winter through the college, a part time job opening was available. I grabbed it. This consisted of working three shifts a week at the Hotel Auditorium across the street from the public hall in downtown Cleveland. So Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays were spent as a cashier, room clerk, or store room manager. It was a real education about people. I saw both the good and the seamy side of life. Also the job required a planned juggling act. There were classes to attend besides working. Don't forget Rita and I went to a dance at least once a week. This was during the big band era. We danced to them all. Also it was my duty to call on prospective students for the university. This I could do at my leisure, if I had any. Remember too the requirement of maintaining a B average. At this time, I don't know how I did it. My good friend Runny Clark had a photographic mind. He was brilliant. He prepared me for all exams over beers at Stones Grill.

Ronny also belonged to the same local social fraternity as I did. We named it Sigma Rho Delta. We were all GDIs, God Damned Independents. I suppose this reflected our envy of national fraternities with their houses and parties. Most of my socializing, other than dating Rita, was with these guys. No wonder I was never home and learned to get along with six hours sleep. My room was the hallway to the front porch. It had room for a single bed and a dresser and nothing else. However there were advantages. Late at night or returning home early in the morning, I could shinny up a tree next to porch and jump up and over the rail and scoot into bed. Mom would say, "Gosh Bud, I never heard you come in last night." I had graduated from Junior to be called Bud. Other nights I would sleep in an empty room in the hotel.

Rita and I went to all the big dances at Reserve and at Ursuline College where she attended. One dance that was memorable was the Reserve Senate Costume Ball. This was a wild affair and the prizes were bottles of Old Crow booze. Who said later generations are out of line? Our junior prom was held at the Statler Hotel in downtown Cleveland. Jimmy Dorsey and his band with Helen O'Connell and Bob Eberley entertained us. We double dated with my old high school chum Les Bunch and his girl friend. As

I remember, we decided to take a flask along, since the prices at the hotel bars were outrageous. Les and I decided to avoid trouble we would drink in a public phone booth. Rita didn't drink and stood outside the booth for about three minutes I looked out of the booth and she was gone. I asked Les' girl friend what happened. She replied, "Rita said to me that she would not put up with this kind of behavior and left." I rushed out of the lobby into the street. She was just getting into a taxi cab. I begged forgiveness with promises that it would not happen again. We returned to the dance while Helen O'Connell was singing Green Eyes. This will always live in my memory along with a near miss with Rita.

At about this time Jane married Jack Mader. Times were still tough, so of course they moved in with us. It didn't inconvenience me because I was never home. But in a small house, it was a little bit crowded. Jack's brother would come over and I never saw two guys that could put food away like they did. Dad pulled out of his funk, but could not find work. He finally went to work for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), building brick highways in the Cleveland area. He was a time checker. Work brought back his self esteem. I still favor government work programs over other forms of assistance. My grandmother died at about this time. She had told me that her great regret was that she would probably go before I graduated. I dearly miss her. She was a great woman, a true major influence on my life. My mother was of the same mold, but with an indomitable will to prevail regardless of all odds. She kept the family together when all seemed hopeless. She never berated anyone but just carried on. When I was a little kid, I thought she was tough and unreasonable. However, as I grew older, I realized that she loved us very much but had to be both mother and father to us.

I spent a lot of time at Rita's house. Rita's Mom and Pop were like part of my family. I also came to know her Aunt Mary. She was Pop Hagan's sister, and being a maiden lady she really lavished gifts and affection on her niece. It goes without saying that she was the most unforgettable person I have ever known. When we were out late, Rita would stay at her house. One of her presents to Rita was a most beautiful long velvet evening coat trimmed in white mink. Rita's mother felt her aunt spoiled her and was sort of an interference in the family's life. However, I too learned to love her for her sparkling personality and famous Irish wit. Later, all my kids felt the same way.

The Hagan family owned a summer cottage at Chagrin Harbor Beach on Lake Erie's shores. Our college gang loved to go there in the summer to swim and picnic on the beach. The nights would be spent 10 miles from there at Mentor Beach Park dancing to Stan Wood's Band. The price was 5 cents a dance for each person. Our gang had an unwritten rule that the girl had to contribute her own nickel. One O'clock Jump was our favorite number and we always closed the place at one AM. Rita had a college group that rented a cottage at Mentor and I had the job of matching the girls with my buddies. I was both loved and hated.

Jane and Jack had a baby boy and named him John. Of course, with Nanny gone, the head count remained as before. Mom continued to work in Kent. The noise from little John was hard for a college kid to take, but everything was great. There was love with a wonderful girl and enough in the till (for monkeying around) with a little left over for savings.

CHAPTER 3 – THE BEGINNINGS OF WAR

While visiting prospective students in Cleveland Heights, the radio blared with news of Hitler's invasion Poland. This meant little to me, but our political science professor foretold that we would soon enter the war aiding our allies. In my senior year, draft registration was required of all young men. I had the fourth number picked. You were allowed to finish college. I graduated in June of 1941. The graduation took place in Severance Hall in University Circle. My cap and gown were borrowed from Rita. What did it matter that the cap was too small and had the wrong color on the tassel? When returning from the stage, I noticed my mother. She had the widest smile I had ever seen. She repeated to me her long time philosophy, "If you want things hard enough, through sacrifice you will obtain your objective." The placement bureau of the college had a rough time. No one wanted to hire draft bait. I went to the Ohio Employment Service and they sent me to General Electric Co. Their audit staff had been decimated and they were in bad straights at G.E. Credit Corporation. I accepted their offer, but found I would have to go to their Pittsburg office. The job was in their downtown office. Again I became a street car person. My rooming house was on Darragh Street in Oakland a block from University of Pittsburg. There were hospitals all around me and I did hang around with some of the nurses. We all went out Dutch. Weekends were spent back in Cleveland seeing Rita. The work was dull - auditing dealers' statements and reviewing their customer finance paper. The first Sunday in December, our fraternity from college had a banquet. This was held at my old stomping grounds, The Hotel Auditorium. We were all there except those who had gone into the service or lived some distance from Cleveland. After the festivities, I hurried out and people were standing in little groups all seemingly very subdued. I was shocked upon hearing that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Good heavens, two weeks before, the company saw to it that I had a deferment on a need basis. Also at the request of my boss, I had also turned down a possible acceptance to the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts in the Navy for officers training. On Monday morning, the office was in chaos. We understood that all deferments were cancelled. Everyone crowded around the radio to hear Roosevelt's speech to Congress. Two days later, the deferment was cancelled and two days later, the boom was lowered. Local Board 4 sent me greetings stating that a committee of my friends and neighbors invited me to join the armed services. So my family and Rita bid me fond adieu at the old post office in Pittsburg. The induction took place on January 4, 1942. Rita and I had sat up the whole night before talking. We talked about marriage on my first leave but decided to wait.

My induction took place the next day and naturally I passed the medical exam. I did have a slight herniated disc but this did not disqualify me. We boarded a train and went to Indian Town Gap near Harrisburg. There we were issued ill-fitting uniforms and knew we were in the army now.

On the train getting there, I had a real taste of tough characters. They tore the train apart, never stopped gambling and a number of fights broke out. Most of these guys were from the Soho district, a really tough section of Pittsburgh. These guys were to be my comrades. Oh no!

A day later we were shipped to Fort Meade, Maryland, where we were tested and segregated according to the branch of service that the army, in its wisdom, had decided upon. Two days later, the army shipped many of us to Fort Bragg North Carolina, an artillery post, for basic training. Some of us were going to be cannoners, some signal men and some of us, including me, were trained in fire control, mapping and surveying.

Basic training at the Field Artillery Replacement Training Center (FARTC) was a whole different life. I was not used to getting up in the cold and dark at 5:30 am. We had an hour of what we called "hog calling". This consisted of repeating commands. After breakfast, there was cleaning the barracks and then calisthenics. These were brutal for a guy like me who didn't have much chance to exercise in civilian life.

Then the process of learning all the specialties began. Some of these consisted of rifle care, its use

parts and cleaning. All the housekeeping duties must be mastered and done properly. Rudimentary vehicle care was taught. Finally, when these and other basic skills were mastered, we learned how to control direction of artillery fire, map interpolation, survey techniques and fire commands. We had a drill sergeant who was tough and “ate” you out as we called it, but he was fair. We also had a Second Lieutenant who we called “Junior”. He was a young, physically fit R.O.T.C. officer. As battery officer, he was mean and nasty and took great delight in driving the guys beyond their capacity. Some fainted and others just fell exhausted.

After a month, we did get weekend leave and took trains to Raleigh. The southern people took you to their homes and fed you and you slept in their spare bedrooms. It was sure great to get away from the camp.

We stood guard, had cleanup duty and KP. These were all tedious, but the inspections were the worst. Your rifle had to be perfect – not a bit of dust on any part including the barrel. I was “gigged” a couple of times for condition of either my foot locker or gun. One time “Junior” grabbed my gun, looked down the barrel and shouted “You did not clean this gun”. I replied, “Yes Sir, I did.” He shouted at me, “I wasn’t asking for a reply” and told the sergeant to give that man two weekends of KP. This was horrible. You had to scrub big pans in very hot water with GI soap. Also, floors were scrubbed, tables were washed and other miserable duties. To top it off, Rita and her family were coming back early from Florida to visit me. What to do? It was against all rules to trade KP with someone else. I waited until their arrival and snuck out of the mess hall and visited them. When I got back three hours later, the Mess Sergeant asked me, “Where the hell have you been?” I said, “Gee Sarge, you had me clean up the garbage and I helped take it over to the dump.” Thank God he accepted that and no more was said and no one snitched. My, Rita and her family looked great. They all had lovely tans. She and I walked and talked. It was a great reunion.

In due course, our basic training was coming to an end. An IQ test was given. I must have done OK because in a couple days I was called before an officer board for consideration for officer candidate school. Reviewing my file, they said I would be recommended to go to finance officers’ school. This would be delightful. The next week I received my orders. Glory Halleluia! Now I am a corporal at \$54 a month, where before as a private I made \$21 a month. But, the orders were to proceed to Fort Sill, Oklahoma to attend Field Artillery Officers’ Candidate School. There were about fifty of us from Fort Bragg and upon arriving, every one was assigned to a tent according to the first letter of his last name. Our tent was rather large and accommodated eight. My new buddies were Seybold, a graduate of Northwestern, Scully, a Williams graduate, Scoma from Stanford, Sharninghouse from University of Pennsylvania, Wilbur Sharpe, a real kid of eighteen who had been in the National Guard, two other guys and me. They were all exceptional fellows except Sharninghouse, who was from the Philadelphia Main Line. He continuously bragged and thought he was superior to the rest of us. The tactical officer assigned to us was tough. We arose at 5:30 am and did an hour of calisthenics, had breakfast and then did an hour of double time shouting mass commands during the entire exercise. We had eight hours of classes, interrupted by lunch and dinner. We always doubled timed and shouted those blasted commands whenever we went from building to building. There was one class after supper and then two hours of compulsory study.

The army tried to make it like a little West Point. There was a demerit system and anybody with 30 demerits was washed out. There was a whole laundry list of offenses to receive these demerits. There was a full field inspection every Saturday morning and the tactical officer paid attention to everything. He found some dirt under Scoma’s bed and gave him five demerits. Sharninghouse berated Scoma and inferred that Scoma would get us all kicked out. Scoma was furious and after all went to bed and were asleep, he took a partially empty milk bottle and put it in Sharninghouse’s foot locker. Nobody used the foot locker very much because the inspecting officers always thoroughly examined them and everything

had to be arranged and folded per instructions. It was much better, in between inspections, to put your clothes under your mattress. The day of the inspection arrived and Wow! The smell from Sharninghouse's locker when opened was horrible. The tac officer shouted, "Sharninghouse, what kind of a housekeeper are you?" Sharninghouse said, Sir, I didn't do this. Someone else is guilty." The tac officer said, "Did I ask you who did it? Twelve demerits." Sharninghouse, who had lorded over us that he was the only one without demerits, was no longer a virgin. He was furious and vowed revenge, but nobody would ever admit guilt.

My buddy to this day and later the best man at my wedding, Wilbur Sharpe, loved dancing and was a great jitterbugger. I told him that the USO had Glenn Miller playing at the Artillery Bowl on the main post. We were forbidden to leave the premises at night but I knew we could sneak out the back and not miss the big band. I gave him a shirt that did not have the OCS insignia printed on it and I had a pair of fatigues. Well, we waited for when you were allowed to go to the study halls at night. We passed the study halls and ran over to the bowl in time to catch most of the entertainment. I hung back in the shadows and told Wilbur to do the same. But, he got carried away and was practically on the stage going to town with the other GIs. I saw a tac officer out of the corner of my eye and tried to get to Wilbur, but I couldn't get his attention. I turned around and ran back to our tent. I jumped into bed and played possum. In about an half hour, Wilbur, half crying, was led into the tent by two M.P.'s. He had to go before the board and received 15 demerits and proclaimed true contrition. I didn't think he'd ever speak to me again. But later, all was forgiven.

All in our tent graduated and became Second Lieutenants in the Army of the United States. You could pick your choice of assignments out of twelve Army Units. One of the choices was overseas duty. Not being a hero, I sure wasn't going to sign up for that. Instead, at the advice of an old colonel from the main post, I told my buddies I would pick the 17th Field Artillery Regiment. There were three reasons. One, their weapons were old World War I 155 howitzers. Two, they were a regular army unit and were likely to be used for training replacements officers and men. Three, they were likely to stay at Fort Bragg for most of the war to try out new equipment.

Scully and Sharpe both agreed and we signed up for the 17th Field. Well the orders came down. The sign ups for overseas and all the others received a ten day leave. Those that signed up for overseas duty went to Hawaii. We who signed up for the 17th Field received no leave and were to report immediately to Fort Bragg. The outfit was evidently going overseas. Wow, what a revolting development! All the guys that I convinced with my big mouth to sign up for the 17th agreed that if they ever saw me in combat, I better never turn my back on them.

Contrary to orders, I took a delay en route and went to Cleveland to see my family and Rita. I told them all I would be away on maneuvers for a period and would let them know where to write when I was settled. "Please don't worry", I told them. Rita somehow guessed that it was long distance duty and we again thought about a quicky marriage. We were both practical and I did not want to leave her with child. We had a sorrowful farewell. Sadie Hagan, Rita's mother, was relieved. The night before, somehow we said we were going to church with my buddy from college, Ron Clark. Actually, we were going to see a friend of his who was going to the seminary. Sadie thought we were going to be married.

Well, all my buddies did the same thing and when we arrived at Fort Bragg, the 17th Field was gone. Through red tape because of war secrecy, we were finally told to go to the staging area at Indian Town Gap. We arrived there and the 17th Field had left four hours before for the port of embarkation.

Well, we had to outfit ourselves and get all the necessary shots. When all that was over, we rushed to New York to the port. Our unit was already out at sea on a ship joining a convoy.

CHAPTER 4 – OVERSEAS

The army decided to put us on another ship, the HMS Orcales. It had never been really torn down for troop hauling. I had my own stateroom and a boy to take care of the room and bring me hot tea. Officers had three meals with tablecloths and menus. Man, this was really living as an officer and a gentleman. However, I was put in charge of a group of AWOLs and deserter enlisted men. These thugs could steal your back teeth. Unfortunately, our convoy traveled the North Atlantic route. The weather was terrible. The waves were so high that the ship rocked so hard that no matter where you were, you would see nothing but sea and then nothing but sky. All the guys were deathly seasick. No duty was easy. As for me, I didn't miss a meal, but I was queasy a few times.

We landed in Liverpool and I turned my charges over to the MPs. We finally caught up with the 17th Field. They were in lovely permanent barracks vacated by British troops who had gone to North Africa. The place was Tidworth Barracks Perham Downs, near Salisbury, England. I was assigned to B Battery under Captain Joe Couch. He was a stern but fair West Pointer. My old buddy from high school Bob King was the Battery Executive. He had been commissioned from ROTC at Ohio State.

We recent "shave tails" were given quarters that had been non-commissioned British quarters. They were not sumptuous but were adequate. My goodness, an orderly was assigned to each six Second Louies.

This was a regular army unit, which had been in service since the Revolutionary War. During regimental parades, the battle streamers reached completely down the regimental flag. The officer corps was a mixture of West Pointers, ROTC and Thomason Act Officers, a number of National Guard officers and my group of lowly newly commissioned second lieutenants.

The commander was "Hooks" Howell, an old regular army tyrant, who blamed everything that went wrong on junior officers. It got to me when I saw a number of our class from OCS sucking up to the senior officers. But, so be it.

The artillery pieces had not come with the unit. They were being modified in the USA. Boredom quickly set in for the officers and men. These guys were old soldiers. They didn't need drilling, manuals of arms or exercises. That was all the malarkey that goes with green troops.

A system of passes was used and the GIs and officers went to London for fun. Unfortunately, women were loose in the blackouts and many of our guys contracted venereal diseases. The British would not allow licensed Houses or pro stations. We had to show the troops horror movies on venereal disease twice a week. These were nauseating. The commander finally cancelled all passes but the disease continued. Finally officers and selected non-coms formed a beating party and systematically combed all the barracks. We nabbed 32 gals living with GIs. They were English citizens and we could only warn them what the consequences could be.

One time, after coming back from a party, we were in the back of a six by six truck. There were ten of us including the gals. All of us were pretty well oiled. We had a Lieutenant Colonel commander of our battalion who had been a National Guard officer and was an incompetent blustery jerk. The rain was coming down in sheets. There were puddles and mud banks everywhere. The driver stopped to leave off the Colonel's girlfriend. She had been fighting off his advances all night and was glad to get out of the truck. After she alighted, the colonel was bending sick over the tail gate. Someone gave him a shove and out he went sprawling in the puddle and mud. Someone told the driver, "OK, let's get going." He did that. There was complete silence all the way back. Apparently, the colonel pulled himself up, banged on his girlfriend's door, called back to the base and had a car come and pick her up. The next day, all who were

on the truck were summoned to appear before a Board of Inquiry. Nobody admitted guilt. There were no conclusions. However, after that the colonel gave those of us Second Lieutenants who were on the truck every lousy detail he could find. I wonder why he didn't blame any of the Captains. I believe I know the Captain that did it, but I'm not sure.

We had wonderful dances at the big mess hall and our regimental band was first rate for dancing pleasure. All the local girls would jump at any chance when invited. The food was great and many of them had meat for the first time in months.

Bill Sharpe of course fell in love with a little English girl. After a dance with Bill, she went out to powder her nose. The band began playing "One O'clock Jump". Bill rushed out on the floor with another gal, and you guessed it, he was dancing up a storm jitterbugging. Now there was an absolute rule that no women were allowed on the second floor in the building. Scully tapped Bill on the shoulder stating that he just saw a lieutenant going up the stairs with his girl and they went into one of the bedrooms. Bill rushed up the stairs, ran to the room, opened the door and confronted them with, "What are you doing and what are your intentions?" I still believe that is the most concise and to the point reaction I have ever heard. All of our group felt the same and often repeated the phrase.

We still didn't have our Howitzers so our commander volunteered our services to the senior commander in London for other military assignments. One of the projects was to kill, dispose of and bury diseased cattle afflicted with cow disease. "Oh," the battalion commander mused, a perfect job for Mr. Seringer. He never called us Lieutenant. It was always Mr. I was assigned and given orders to report to London to Southern Base Command in Grosvenor Square, commanded by Two-Star General Dwight D. Eisenhower. I reported to a major with my detail of GIs and we expected to go to the farms and start this bloody assignment. To our delight, he told us that another group had taken over that chore, but he needed a good regular army group to train a field hospital unit for combat conditions and equip them properly. We said, "We are yours," and I took my twelve man team to the coast where the group was located. This was a complete army field hospital unit made up from Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard teaching hospital. They were a surgical hospital unit and had doctors of all ages. The nurses were from middle age to young girls just out of nursing training. They deeply resented us for training them in calisthenics, drills and bivouac procedures. We also made them wear GI clothes including GI boots.

I am sorry to say we howled and laughed at their attempts to march and become regular GIs. I wasn't in command of the whole detail. There was a quartermaster major who was supposed to run it. However, he wanted only to provide the equipment and material and left everything else to me.

My one greatest fear was the fraternization of the nurses with my enlisted men. I read the riot act to them and repeated the regulations of the army that forbid relations of enlisted men with women officers. All the nurses were at least Second Lieutenants and all outranked me because of time in grade. We went to London over one weekend and one of the doctors asked me a confidential question, "How do we get rid of the full Colonel commander of the outfit. He is a drunken, mean individual. He has no proper surgery qualifications, just being an old army doctor who had long outlived his usefulness." I told him I would speak to my major boss about it. I did and when we completed our assignment and he told me that this was none of my concern. Later I found out the colonel was shanghaied to detached service and on a special trip back to the USA to recruit other surgeons.

I hated to go back to my unit but it was inevitable. The major did give me a temporary assignment of officer carrier. I traveled all over England and Scotland in an English sedan. I delivered dispatches. In between deliveries, I lived at the Park Lane Hotel in London just off Green Tree Park. This was a plush, aristocratic hotel and was quiet and lovely. The assistant manager loved American cigarettes. I supplied him amply and received a number of his favors. My plans included begging the major to get me

permanently transferred to the Southern Base Command. He said he would do what he could. Meanwhile, I had to return to my unit. Things hadn't changed there, but our guns were to be delivered in the following weeks. We still could go to London every weekend and did. With my pull, I could always get a room at the Park Lane. Three buddies and I decided to hang out at the infamous Regent Palace Hotel Rathskeller. This was a huge basement place where the Yanks and the British girls hung out. To get a date, all you had to do was introduce yourself to a gal and if you appealed to her, it was a date. The place closed at 11 pm, which was curfew time. The girls, mostly from British Services, the WRENS, WACS and ATS, had left us. My old friend the major had told me about an after hours club, the Knights Bridge Studio Club, that had strict membership rules. But, he felt we could get in. We arrived and got out of the cabs and got as far as the foyer. The doorman refused to let us in. We demanded to see the manager. He came and threatened to call the MPs. Just then they were kicking out a boisterous drunk Air Force Major. A buddy, Lt. Tupper, remarked that this guy resembled President Roosevelt's son who was with the 8th Air Force in England. Hey, here was our entry. I told the manager that we were friends of the president's son and that he had asked us to meet him here. "And you were tossing him out," I said, "There will be hell to pay. You'll be closed up and put out of business." He did a double-take and started to back track. The drunken major caught on and delivered a barrage with half-garbled speech. We were ushered in to a great table. There was plenty of drinks and food. The gals were formally dressed and excellent dancers. Wow, what a time we had! At four in the morning when they were closing, we had to waken the major to sign the tab. He signed it as Roosevelt from the 8th Air Force and whatever unit designation. We left, carrying the poor guy out, and got some other fly boy to take him home. I wonder what that club did to find that deadbeat Roosevelt. The tab was huge. We never did know the drunken major's name.

Another weekend I went to London with Len Feldman. Len was a favorite of Rita's and my second wife Joanne's. Len was able to get a good bottle of scotch. Getting off the train, he got bumped and the booze in his muzette bag fell on the concrete and broke. "Well," I said, "Let's ditch it." No, he wouldn't do that and we walked down the street with scotch dripping all around. Finally, upon arriving at the Park Lane, I snatch the bag from Len and gave it to the concierge who promised to have it laundered. Len was a Wharton School of Finance graduate and a true intellectual. We attended Covenant Gardens and Albert Hall for a concerts. We visited the British Museum and saw a play in Strand Playhouse. About 10 o'clock after the show, I convinced Len it was time for him to go back to the hotel. It was my time to howl. Back to the Regent Palace, I met up with some other guys from our unit and we met gals who agreed to go out. I had borrowed a membership for the Hollywood Club. This was not ritzy like Knightsbridge, but I did not dare go back there. We had a great time, but it got very late or early. The gal I was with lived in Kent and missed the last bus. I suggested she stay with us at the hotel. She was shocked, but reluctantly agreed after I assured her that this was not a come on. I sneaked her up the stairs and busted in on Len. He was furious. I said, "Go to sleep Len." I threw a blanket to her and she lay down on the couch. I was conked out in a minute.

The next morning arrived and I had a big head. Both Len and Rowena were gone. She left a note on the bureau. "In case you forgot, my name is Rowena Burke. I had a wonderful time. If you would like to go out again my address is Little Brook Street, Edinbridge, Kent and the phone number." I told Rita of this episode when I got home a few years later. When Rita had our first baby girl, she asked me my thoughts on a name for her. I said, "I like Rowena." She flared up and threw the Gideon's Bible at me. So few understood my sense of humor!

Back to the grind; our guns were now there and we traveled to Oakhampton along the coast to fire them. This was a small village and had a few constables. A certain number of men were authorized to go to town. I was ordered to accompany them. There were no MPs so I sat and played chess with the chief constable. All was quiet until the 11 pm closing. Then all of a sudden all hell broke loose. The constable and I rushed to the pub with a couple GIs that I had in place of MPs. The place was in shambles. There were fights wherever you turned. A few calm heads, the constable and my men finally had things quieted.

Assistance came from our bivouac and we filled three big trucks with GI offenders.

What had happened? The boys were fraternizing with the English and drinking beer, ale and stout. Everything went along fine until closing. Every pub in England closed with the English standing up at attention saying "Gentleman, the King." Some drunken GI shouted, "F... the King!" That started it and it was soon out of control. Of course, the colonel blamed the whole mess on me. Well, I guess the US Army had a big bill for the wreckage.

We returned to Tidworth barracks and prepared for loading for an invasion. The destination was unknown to us and I was transferred to the second battalion. Thank God. I was now in D Battery under Captain Don Stewart. He was in the same class at West Point as my previous Captain Joe Couch. Captain Stewart was a real breath of fresh air to me. He was intelligent, fair and a true gentleman. He stood third in his class at the Point. Therefore, he outranked the other captains in our unit who were in the same class. That is how rank is determined in the regular army.

Wilbur Sharpe was also transferred into our battery and he was assigned as Assistant Executive Officer and I was designated as Forward Observer.

CHAPTER 5 –INVASION AND COMBAT

In the dead of the night in November of 1942, we entrained for Liverpool, boarded a ship, met up with a huge convoy and set sail for we knew not where. Once we were on the high seas, it all became known. I was one of the officers segregated and our orders were to land with the infantry, accompanied by naval officers and bring naval guns to fire on targets on shore. I had never seen any maps of North Africa before this. We had to study them and review everything with a naval lieutenant.

Our boat was not a big troop ship, but carried about three hundred of us with our equipment and only included two batteries of our battalion. We were heading towards Gibraltar and all was horribly dark because of the black out. My stateroom was a comfortable berth on the hold of the ship. There I went to get some sleep. Awakening early to my surprise there were no GIs roaming about the halls and the boat was stopped. In fact all was silent. Hurriedly dressing, I ran up to our boat station. My whole battery was standing and been standing all night. My captain asked, “Where were you? Don’t you know we could have sunk?” A torpedo had hit the tail of our ship, leaving us powerless and without steering. The convoy had gone on and we were being towed by a destroyer. Two corvettes circled us to avoid any more torpedo attempts. We reached Gibraltar and it looked like heaven. The English transferred us after a day to another ship. This process consisted of climbing down a bailley rope ladder into a life boat with full field equipment on your back. Needless to say, I fell in and was grabbed by a boat hook and was pulled aboard.

By the time we arrive in Oran, the battle was over. There was very little fighting in the whole landing, except at Arzew, where elements of the 1st Infantry Division landed. I was supposed to have been with them.

It took a week to assemble our gun trucks and equipment and we headed for Sidi Bel Abes to retrain and equip the French Foreign Legion. They were a dirty, motley group. They had old French 75s and no equipment to fight a modern war. Their troops were from all over the world and were a real bunch of cut-throats. After two weeks, we left the job to others and headed for the front in Tunisia. Here we took up defensive positions out in the desert. We did some firing and performed counter battery missions. At the time, there was a lot of probing but no real action. We were in II Corp Combat Command A. This consisted of two infantry divisions, the 1st Infantry and the 34th Infantry. The 1st Armored Division was also attached. We were the corps artillery both A & B battalion but A battalion was not sent to the front. I was on an observation point of the 34th and life was mostly dull.

We lived off C rations which often were not very appetizing. My detail and I really came to know the 168th Infantry of the 34th Division and the 1st Infantry Division front line soldiers. Just before Christmas we were moved to a position to protect Faid Pass, a break in the Atlas Mountains. I had to climb a mountain, Djebel Kasera, to establish line of sight to observe the enemy positions. We were now with a battalion of the 34th Division (a National Guard outfit from Iowa). There was little action – both sides seemed to be dug in. The Germans could be observed through the field glasses but there was not enough concentration to fire our guns, except in case of increased enemy activity. Christmas came and my buddy Gabe Gever found a little pine tree and he had some little candles. He wanted to have a Christmas tree for his men. He requested permission and was really chewed out. “Young men, there is a war going on. Do you want to expose us to the enemy?” Heck, they wouldn’t see behind our mountain but I guess the commander was right. We did begin to have infiltration and enemy sniper fire. A bullet or shell fragment anywhere near you was scary. You now kept down in your slit trench except when necessary for observation duties. The enemy would fire their 88s but such weapons have a straight trajectory and they couldn’t land the shells on our side of the mountain.

Headquarters demanded prisoners. Each assigned detail had to cross the desert at night and infiltrate the enemy lines. They always came to my OP to get the latest intelligence on enemy positions

and activity. I can still remember these young guys before going out on patrol. They would have to relieve themselves two or three times before leaving. They were always in a hurry to get it all over with. The first two nights the patrols went out, they lost two men each night and didn't bring back a prisoner. The third night, the battalion commander, a West Point Lt. Colonel James Van Vliet, came up with four men and stated that he was not going to lose anymore of his troops like this. He was going himself and he did. He and his men brought back two prisoners and had no casualties. The regimental commander was furious. Jim was a great soldier and a brave man but irritated the higher commanders by being outspoken and calling a spade a spade. He had a favorite story about the patrol reaching enemy lines. The Germans always put Italian soldiers out in front. The patrol silently ambushed one guard and the other guard close by suddenly couldn't talk to his buddy. He shouted, "Giovanni" three or four times and then ran to the rear. Van Vliet stated that the kindest thing you could say about him was that he was going back for reinforcements.

As often happens, three days later, two Austrian soldiers walked over to my slit trench and surrendered. They were sick of the war and hated Nazis. They were immediately taken to battalion headquarters and then to corps headquarters for interrogation.

On February 10, we could see all kinds of activity along the pass along the German side. We did fire some rounds, but most of the assembling groups were out of range. That evening, we were visited on the OP by General Freedendal, the corps commander, and General McQuillan, the Combat Command A commander. They reviewed the situation and asked me questions about the activities. Using my B.C. scope, McQuillan spotted a German on a motorcycle and questioned why I didn't bring fire on him. I replied, "Sir, we have 155 howitzers." He said, "I would trade a 155 howitzer shell for a German any day." I didn't reply. How could a general be so ignorant? Bringing one gun on a moving target 10 miles away has odds of about 100,000 to 1. Well, thank God, they left soon after that.

That same evening, I went down to battalion headquarters (below me on the mountain) for a briefing. While there, General Eisenhower arrived with his aide, Captain Campbell. I was not privileged enough to go to the brass meeting, but did overhear Col. Van Vliet flatly say in a loud voice that our positions were untenable. General Freedendal disagreed and rebuked him. Craig Campbell, the aide, begged Eisenhower to let him stay the night to get the feel of combat troops. Ike gave his O.K. Eisenhower left the headquarters at about 12:30 am. As I will relate later, the area was surrounded by the Africa Corp late the second day. Craig Campbell was captured. Had Eisenhower stayed all night, he probably would have been history. If captured, he would not have been Supreme Commander or President. This incident is a lesson of timeliness and luck. It plays a very important part in all our lives.

We all knew that the Africa Corps had been pushed back closer to our lines by the British Eighth Army. But what our intelligence didn't know was that Rommel pulled three crack armored divisions up to our front. John Scully, the forward observer for E Battery, and I took turns staying awake all night. An attack was imminent. About 4 am, we get a telephone call from headquarters that there was going to be an attack. Me with my queer sense of humor replied, "Who's attacking?"

At dawn, it began. You could see armored vehicles all over the desert floor moving out from German positions. They had mine sweepers to clear the desert. That made their progress easy. I didn't see one vehicle blown up by our mines. They kept coming and the First Battalion of the American First Armored Division came out to meet them. Oh my God, it was slaughter. This was the first time the Germans used Tiger Tanks and ours were no match for theirs. The Second Battalion of the First Armored then came out and tried to counter the attack but the Germans had great superiority and control of the air. We were even dive-bombed on the hills, but it was far worse on the desert floor. I saw countless American tanks burning. We were crestfallen and by the end of the day, we were completely surrounded. Another unit of the Africa Corp had gone around the mountain and came up from our rear. I remember

John Scully trying to bring fire on that advancing column. When he gave the fire command to his battery, the Battery Commander replied, "These guns aren't pinwheels and you can't turn them around that easy." At dusk, we no longer had communication with our battery. We all felt they were wiped out. Some escaped, but none from my battery.

We spent three days on that hill being shelled and fired on by snipers. The third day, an American plane (the first we had seen since the battle began) swooped down and dropped a message. "We have tried to relieve you and failed. Fight your way out." Colonel Van Vliet formed his battalion to try to make a breakthrough. I figured that these guys were going to be wiped out and I took off by myself. I crossed part of the desert and by sun-up, I was exhausted. There was a little Arab shack and in pig language, I got the Arab to hide me in a wine cave. This was after I gave him all my money and my watch. In the morning, I looked up and saw a German soldier pointing his rifle at me. He has been told by the Arab where I was. He stuck the muzzle down the cave and said, "For you, the war is over." He was right. It was a terrible feeling of despair. Also, my fanny was hurting. I had been hit with a small shell fragment a week before while crouched in our slit trench. An aide man had bandaged me up and refused to send me back saying, "This is just a slight flesh wound." Again, had he let me go to the Regimental Aide Station, I might not have been captured. Timeliness again.

You cannot realize the feeling of despair and hopelessness that there is in being captured. I didn't know whether we were to be shot or what. I had a terrible feeling of guilt. I should have escaped; I let my country down.

A few of us were herded and marched across the desert. We came to a mesa at the foot of the mountains. The sight there was worse than anyone can imagine. I thought that the whole U.S. Army was captured. The war must be over and we have lost. Everyone walked around in a trance. I finally saw John Scully and Wilbur Sharpe. God, I was glad they made it. John blurted out that Len Feldman was killed. John said a bullet hit Len right through the left nipple. He was bleeding terribly and an aide man was trying to stop the blood. He asked John for a cigarette but when handed a lit one, it fell out of his mouth. A few minutes after that, the Germans forced John and Wilbur to move out. Peering back, they assumed Len was dead.

CHAPTER 6 – TRANSIENT POW

None of us had much food and the Germans did not feed us that day. We shared whatever we had with each other. All were interrogated briefly and all I assume gave the army-regulated answer of name, rank and serial number. They asked a couple questions relating to your outfit and background. They somehow knew about you from examining your wallet.

I did talk to some crestfallen tankers from the First Armored Division. Their stories were all the same. They were no match in equipment or tactics with the Africa Corp. While I had been previously trying to escape, I had recognized from their uniforms that one of the divisions that was facing us was the Herman Goehring SS Division. These were fanatical troops and their ugly presence will continue to be noted in this chronicle.

The next day, they gave us water but no food and then began the march back to Sfax. This was very painful and anyone who didn't keep up was prodded with the butt of a rifle. After a two day march, we reached Sfax and were finally given black bread and thin soup. We were all terrible low-spirited and still did not know anything about our fate.

Here they separated the officers from the enlisted men and we were packed on a big field truck and headed where we knew not where. Along the way, the column was halted, pulled off the road and along came German Messerschmitt fighter planes swooping low, as if they were going to strafe us. They pulled up, apparently misjudging us for an American column. The famous Luft Waffe seemingly was not aware of the lost situation of our forces.

Eventually, we arrived at Tunis and were herded into little rooms. Here, we languished for two days, interrupted only when we were individually called out for interrogations. These were tedious mixed with threats and sympathy. They knew an awful lot about our outfit and our commanders. It was nerve-racking. Name, rank and serial number was all that any of us revealed, as far as I know.

During these long periods, the main topic of discussion was the terrible position we were put in by the Second Corps commanders. A defensive position where we were stuck out with three sides easily attacked. The First Armored Division had been split up and command had been taken out of hands of General Ward, a great tank commander. Our regiment and other units were split up without unified command. General Fredendall and General McQuillen were both sent home without any publicity after the debacle. We later learned that the media blamed German troops – bunk! It was foul up and inferior equipment.

Finally we were loaded on old German transport planes named JU 52s. These were similar to old Ford Trimotor planes. The last of these Fords that I know used to fly from the mainland to Put-in-Bay on Lake Erie. The planes flew about a 100 feet from the ground and jumped around more than an exotic dancer. About half the guys were sick and the stench in the plane was horrible. We landed in the Naples airport and were herded away from a German bigwig who had just landed. Our guards were quick to tell us that this was Field Marshal Kesselring, the Supreme Commander of the whole German Army for that theater of operations. He was resplendent in a uniform with all sorts of medals. He swaggered past us and looked distastefully our way. He chewed out an aide in typical Prussian fashion and then went on. We were trucked through Naples. The citizens shouted at us in Italian. They apparently hurled all kinds of insults because one of our number, an Italian, hurled back insults to them and gave them the finger. That really didn't quiet them, but they continued to throw rotten tomatoes and other spoiled fruit and vegetables at us. We arrived at a big compound in Caserta outside of Naples. The conditions here were intolerable. We had tents without adequate blankets and February in Italy had cold nights. All day, we huddled in the thin blanket that the Germans gave us and just milled around looking for food. We found

none.

After about a week, they lined us up and walked us to a train station. We entrained on a troop train. They crowded us in like sardines and the cars lacked heat, but at least there were small windows where the countryside could be seen. We went to Florence (Firenza), then to Venice (Venitzia) and finally to Milan (Milano). There were many guards on the train but they didn't bother us except on said to me, "You're going to Deutschland." Wow, was he wrong! However, thanks to the Third Reich, we saw beautiful countryside and many quaint villages as well as large cities. Each rail station was well marked so we knew where we were. Finally we went through the Brenner Pass and traveled through the Austrian Alps. The scenery on that cold day in March was breathtaking. The snow hung from the Tyrolian roofs and we saw the natives in their chaps and costumes. Well, all was not bad, but the food again was very meager. We landed at Munich (Munchen) and had to stay in the train cars. We were being bombed by allied bombers in the marshalling yard. The guards locked us in and took off for cover. The train wheels were dancing but none of our cars were hit. The damage was medium and they had repair crews out immediately. These mainly consisted of Jewish old and young men in black striped coveralls with Juden written on their backs. They were horrible specimens, emaciated with the look of despair on their faces. This was the first we had seen of how the Jews were treated by the Nazis. The guards thrust the butts of their rifles into the bodies of these poor souls if they were not satisfied with their progress.

Our destination was Mooseburg near Munich. It was a huge Stalag called Stalag VIIA. It housed many thousands of POWs from all the allies. There were British, French, Greeks, Serbs, Russians and now Americans. We were herded into tents and given the standard fare for POWs. This consisted of a thick slice of bread, a thin soup and sometimes a potato. We just wandered around all day and swapped things with other POWs. Since we had conserved our cigarettes after being captured, some of us swapped a cigarette or two for food.

One compound was filled with Russian POWs. Their lot was pitiful. They received practically no food and continually screamed at the guards all day and night. One night, the Germans sent in guards and dogs to quell the violent disturbances. It was all over the camp the next day that the guards were beaten with their own guns and the dogs were eaten alive by the "Ruskies". The whole area was then isolated and we still heard guns firing all day and well into the night.

I desperately needed a haircut and a Serb said he had just the man to do it. They said the Serb barber had been the King Peter of Yugoslavia's personal barber. For one cigarette, he gave me a haircut. He used no comb but used two scissors at the same time. This was the most unusual but good haircut that I ever received.

About a week later, all of the American officers were marched to a train station and shipped out as usual. We traveled on a prison train with little room to move around. We arrived at the town of Rotenburg on the Fulda River. There we marched up a hill and saw a huge boys' academy named Jacob Schuler. This was being used as an officer POW camp named Oflag IXAZ. Previously, this had been an all British Empire officers' camp. We soon learned that most of these men had been prisoners since Dunkirk. There were Brits, Aussies, Anzacs, and a number of Canadians who had been captured in the Diepe raid.

We were welcomed with open arms and cheers. All except majors and lieutenant colonels were housed in what had been a big gymnasium. It was quickly called Yankee Stadium. These Brits had their tea and typical British military customs. We soon learned we had to stand in files to be counted twice a day. A British General was the senior officer prisoner and he commanded all the prisoners. A lot was learned from these long-time Kriegies. They had BBC from clandestine radios and each evening a delegated person would read the news in each room. Of course there were look outs. Security became a

big deal. It was great however to hear news from Britain for the first time since our capture. The security officers were appointed by the senior officer and with their assistance, the whole camp was organized. Escaping was their big game and elaborate preparations were continuously in the making. False passports were created and German money was obtained. Clothing was made from blankets or other items and dyed for civilian appearance. An escape plan had to be authorized by the security group and participants were chosen on the basis of their importance in getting out. The developers of the plan were allowed a percentage of their own choosing. The plan had to be approved and revised if the security group so decided. Most plans were tunnel plans whereby men became moles and dug for weeks to come out beyond the barbed wire. German security snoops were always around but the Brits had many clever ways of diverting them and disposing of the dirt from the tunnels.

While we were there, one attempt was tried and the escapees were returned in three days and then thrown into solitary confinement to subsist on bread and water. After their original escape, we had to stand on the parade ground four hours while the Germans searched and found the opening and the tunnel and whatever contraband they could find. Incidentally, the name "goon" was what all German guards were called among the POWs.

A day or so after we arrived at 9AZ, we received British Red Cross parcels. Each parcel contained the first decent food we had been treated to since our capture. The parcels basically contained condensed milk, chocolate, a tin of crackers, corned beef, tea and Players British cigarettes. The parcel also contained cheese and one can either of Yorkshire stew or steak and kidney pie. These parcels were manna from heaven and were distributed to all once a week. We were warned to take it easy and conserve the food as much as possible. The Brits reminded us that there were lapses of delivery from time to time.

The Yanks got along splendidly with the Brits. We kidded them and played tricks on them and the natural buoyancy of the American spirit returned. This helped rejuvenate the Brits, many of whom had been in prison over three years. It was pitiful to see them out walking around the compound handicapped. Many of them were without a leg or arm. The little hospital in the compound took care of really bad cases. There was no repatriation at that time.

My slight wound had not healed and they did the best they could in cleaning it and dressing it. There were no antibiotics and there was some indication that it was not healing properly. The British doctor said that if it didn't heal properly soon, they would arrange for an operation.

An amusing incident happened while we were at 9AZ. There was a young American officer from Brooklyn, Bob Rankin, who played bridge constantly. We nicknamed him Eli after Eli Culbertson, the great bridge authority. He was a small guy and was the butt of some humor because he was not a great bridge player. The British POWs had received instruments from the YMCA and had a jazz band. They really weren't too bad but asked if any of our guys could play an instrument. Eli volunteered that he played the trumpet. The conductor handed him a beat up horn and requested that he practice to get his lips back in shape and then he could sit in with the orchestra. They had four trumpets available. At the next band rehearsal, Eli showed up and they gave him the fourth chair. Well, the band struck up a tune and I will always remember it. The song was "That's Why the Lady is a Tramp". After a few bars, the band stopped and the first chair trumpet walked down to Eli and gave him his horn and motioned him to sit in the first chair. He didn't say a word. Eli turned out to be a concert trumpet player who graduated from Julliard and played in the New York Philharmonic Orchestra! Wow, did that set all the jokesters back on their heels! Eli was immediately commanded to arrange the music to accommodate the degree of proficiency of the band members. Man, that orchestra sounded great after Eli's help.

A week later, all the American officers were again assembled and we packed up whatever clothing we had and were given a British Red Cross Parcel. We were marched out of the camp. Eli's

orchestra played marches and every Empire POW in that camp formed a phalanx in the parade ground. They cheered us all the way out of the camp. Even after we were marching to the train, they hung out of windows and cheered us. This was the greatest show of comradeship I have ever been a part of.

CHAPTER 7 – OUR HOME

Our journey took us through the heart of Germany, past Berlin and onto our final destination which was in the Polish Corridor. The town where our new camp was located was Schubin, some 100 miles south of Danzig. This was Polish territory that had been annexed to Germany after the German invasion. We were located in a correctional school for Polish boys. A number of low barracks had been added for use as a POW camp.

We were put in the main building, a big white stucco building. All lieutenants were again massed in huge rooms. I was on the second floor and had the upper bunk. The room was arranged in cubicles, three sides of a square. I could lie in my bunk and shake hands with five other guys. The bunks had wooden slats and straw mattresses. Two thin blankets were provided. Since we arrived there in late June, the weather was at least acceptable.

Colonel Tom Drake, the senior captured American officer, had preceded us there by a few days and he immediately organized the camp. He insisted on strict discipline except no saluting. We had to shave and keep our clothes as presentable as possible. A security system was organized with Lt. Colonel John Waters at its head. All field officers were given specific duties.

There was a small greenhouse in our compound and Lt. John Creech, an agronomist, was put in charge of growing anything possible under the conditions there. The Germans, with prodding, prevailed on the Red Cross to send seeds. It was quite late to plant, but we did have a few vegetables, thank God.

The Germans provided hot water for breakfast and coffee made from dried and treated acorns. It was called “ersatz” which means not genuine. It was terrible and nobody drank the junk. After two weeks, American Red Cross parcels arrived. What a celebration we had! After all, the Germans gave us thin soup for lunch, sometimes with a few dehydrated vegetables thrown in. Sometimes pig jowls or whatever were added, but when I found pig teeth in my soup, I couldn’t eat it for a week. Our daily ration of black bread was a slice about an inch and one-half thick. I shouldn’t call it black bread – it was gray – and most of us swore it was half sawdust. It was very difficult to cut. For dinner, we were given boiled potatoes, some portions with a lot of eyes, and turnips that were pithy and difficult to digest.

So now you can see we were so happy about Red Cross parcels. These parcels had a pound of Velveeta or cheddar cheese, a can of powdered milk, a can of spam or corned beef, a special box of crackers, a “D” ration chocolate bar and four packs of cigarettes. We were supposed to receive one of these parcels each week. I will get into these difficulties later on. But these parcels supplemented our daily diet to bring our calorie count up to 900.

A parcel detail was organized under Lt. Amos Carter Jr. and Tony Lumpkin. Amos’ father owned half of Fort Worth, Texas. He made a fortune in oil and cattle and helped found American Airlines. I never knew how, but Amos was the only guy in our camp who stayed chunky. The guards did defer to him and I believe when parcels finally came from home from our families, he pushed a lot of contraband to our guys.

We had a tailor shop that we staffed for mending our clothes. Lt. Don Lusordan, with help from the International YMCA, established a book bindery and library.

The YMCA also sent athletic equipment and sports were organized into teams in volleyball, basketball and softball. One of the drawbacks of softball came when a home run went over the fences and over the barbed wire. We usually had to wait a day for the guards to give us back the softball. I was amazed at the number of great athletes that were among us. Eddie Berlenski was quarterback and an

alternate All American at the University of North Carolina. Bill Lutteral weighed 250 pounds "before capture" and was on Tennessee's Rose Bowl team and an All American tackle. Lt. Scherck was an All American on Oklahoma's number one ranked team. Moe Moss was a quarterback at Georgia. There were three West Point grads who were varsity players for Army. It is difficult to remember all the guys who had lettered at many of the major universities in the U.S.

So you can see that the athletic program was very popular. However, lack of energy somewhat curtailed the program. These big guys really suffered from lack of food much more than little people lick me. On one occasion, "Timber" Lutteral was toasting a piece of his black bread with a piece of cheese on top of it. He had opened a little door on a tile stove to get direct heat. Unfortunately, the bread fell into the fire. He couldn't retrieve it. Big tears streamed down his face.

With reference to heat, the building had tile stoves that when the bricks were heated, warm air was radiated over part of the room. Five feet from the stove, there was no heat and the Germans only lighted the stoves in winter, and then only just enough to take the frost away for a couple hours. We slept in our long johns and put our great coats over our blankets. The air was so foul from so many in the room and the result of cigarettes fumes, that during the whole year, rain, sun or snow, we never closed the windows.

Another gift from the YMCA was band instruments. Eli Rankin, the guy who impressed the English at IXAZ formed a dance band and an orchestra. We were all amazed that almost all of our requests to the YMCA were fully met. The International YMCA representative was from Sweden. His name was Henry Sodebury. He attended every one of our reunions and always was a joy to everyone. He died in 1999.

I wish I could extol the International Red Cross in the same manner. They had Swiss representatives and these men were very pro-German. They listened to complaints but never did anything about them. They supplied clothes and food parcels but were oblivious to delays and lack of consistency in both areas. There were times when we were out of food parcels for weeks. They claimed the Germans would not allow them to provide an inventory of food or clothes for us. They were rude and acted like Duetschers. We never understood their attitude.

The YMCA also provided necessary things to have real theatrical productions. There was so much talent in the camp that even the English speaking guards would come to the productions. John Cook, among others, was a Julliard graduate and great piano player and directed musicals. He had been a performer in night clubs all over the U.S. and especially in the Catskills. His imitation of a Yiddish potter was hilarious. After the war, Russ Ford had the lead in Broadway productions. He played once at the Hanna Theater in Cleveland and met us after the show. John Glendenning was a pioneer in television and was on numerous TV shows. There were others; Frank Maxwell was a producer. My buddy Wilbur Sharpe had a great voice and sang with the band. There were also many other talented guys.

The band played all the latest hits. The music was supplied by the YMCA but Rankin adapted it to the talent available. They were great. I played in the percussion section of the orchestra. I was in charge of the triangle, the castanets and the glockenspiel. I will always remember my solo in the Showboat overture. The song was "Can't Help Lovin' that Man of Mine". I had four solo bars on the glockenspiel. I rehearsed over and over, so as not to make a mistake in the concert.

Classes were organized for various subjects and the call went out for teachers. I finally agreed to teach accounting. The truth was that I majored in finance, not accounting, at Western Reserve University. We had English texts and they didn't use "debits and credits" but used "to and buy". Also, like their driving, the assets and liabilities were reversed. I did enjoy this however and decided to become a

Certified Public Accountant (C.P.A.) when I returned home. Prior to that, I had never contemplated becoming a bean counter.

Originally, there were only 125 officers in the camp, but as the war progressed, small groups would appear at our gate. These guys had been captured in and Italy. They all looked like we did after capture. They were bewildered, crestfallen, and feeling mighty sorry for themselves. We gave them food and some of our extras and listened to their sad tales. Finally, we had a sign when they came in which read, "Please no Bull Shit. We've been in combat too."

I did not realize it, but every one had to be passed on by our Security before anyone was allowed to talk to them. Even all of us original guys were passed upon with our knowing it. Our staff was very afraid of German plants. As far as I know, there was only one occasion when Colonel Drake insisted on having a man transferred out of camp.

Well as you can see, no one was idle except a few who were anti-social. At night we would lay awake in our bunks and "kibitz". Everyone was ribbed unmercifully and all but a few could really laugh at themselves. Most of our humor would sound corny to others but it was great fun. One guy, Jim Bickers, was a leader in caustic humor. He used to unmercifully rib Jack Marlow. Jack had a curled-up, prominent nose. Bickers referred to it in many of his ribald jokes. Everyone would laugh and Jack would crawl out of bed and threaten Bickers. There were, however, no fights ever in our big room.

Everyone had a nickname. I have previously mentioned "Timber" Bill Lutteral. My partner, Gabe Gever, was dubbed "The Blue Beetle". John Scully was "Honest John the plumber's son". Actually, his father was a vice president of Universal Pictures. We always referred to Universal Pictures as spelled backwards P.U. John would become incensed at these remarks. John had a real Irish Boston accent. After he spoke, someone would always interpret, "As John Scully just said, ..." and repeat John's words. John and Wilbur were later in my wedding party. Wilbur was "Wilbuh" because that's how John pronounced his name.

One glorious day that August, a lone figure stood at our prison gate. Low and behold, the dead had arisen! Our buddy Len Feldman walked into camp. He hadn't died when he was shot but was sent to an Italian hospital and after four operations, finally recovered. The bullet had pierced his left nipple and came out his back with a huge opening. How he survived with a bullet practically touching his heart was indeed a miracle. Len to this day is my great friend and lives in Pittsburgh. He has come to many family events. We still talk about our trips together to London. Len, since he spoke perfect German, became part of the Security group of our camp.

Now, the Security group was something else. All plans for escape had to be passed on by this group. The founder of the plan could pick two buddies to be included in the plan and ant others were designated by Security. Anyone could be called up to help in the escape plot. Tunnels under the barbed wire fence were the most popular way of getting out. The preparations required much planning and work. Compact rations had to be baked. Civilian clothes had to be made. All escapees required fake I.D.s and all participants were thoroughly indoctrinated with necessary German language tools.

Digging the tunnels was the major job for any who participated in the project. All were subject to help. I helped in two projects, digging like a mole.

Everyone had to contribute two of his bunk boards to shore up the sides of the tunnels. Two men would go down and shovel dirt into a homemade container. When the container was full, a sleigh carried the material back to the main shaft. A cart hauled the material to the surface. Then many guys filled their pant leg with dirt, facilitated by long, thin sausage-like bags that opened at the bottom with a draw string.

A dirt carrier had to walk nonchalantly out to the sports field. There he emptied the dirt in his pant legs on the ground. Everyone crowded around and obscured the operation and helped scatter and pat down the tunnel earth. All of this was done under the scrutiny of the German guards. There had to be many lookouts to keep from being discovered by the Germans. They frequently went from barracks to barracks unannounced looking for unusual activities. Our Security people were well-trained in all sorts of diversion tactics. The projects were halted if the Germans were in the near vicinity.

I was down in the tunnel one time when the Germans came into the barracks. Our people closed the hole by carefully replacing the stove. Thank God their suspicions were not aroused and they left and the digging continued. After a stint was finished, it was necessary to climb to the surface in your wet, muddy long johns. Someone immediately threw basins of cold water all over you and washed you off. Then, after taking your long johns off, you dressed and beat it back to your own barracks. Then, hanging your long johns up to dry, you freezingly undressed and jumped into bed.

I don't know why many of us didn't get pneumonia. The one good part seemed to be that each stint was for just two hours a week. You can imagine how many people were involved in the escape project. I was only an alternate to escape and it didn't look like I would be going. I don't know how many man-hours went into this project, but at any rate, we all had plenty of time. After two month, everything was in readiness. On a cloudy night, 25 guys crouched in the tunnel or waited at the stove opening. Four of our men got out and raced into the nearby woods. The fifth man was observed by chance by a guard and all hell broke loose.

All of the remaining 20 men hurried to the surface. They ditched and hid all their civilian clothes, money and passports. The Germans found the source of the tunnel and dynamited the entire area. They took the barracks commander and four others into interrogation. I don't think they ever did figure who the main conspirators were or realized how we disposed of the dirt without their discovery.

Well the four that escaped had a variety of experiences. All were captured within three (3) days. All were put into the guard house and given bread and water. After two weeks, they returned to our camp. So much for the grand escape. They did however find a way to escape in the future from the guard house, without having to cope with 15 feet of barbed wire.

Harry Schultz and Ray Chappel from Cleveland used this ruse one month later to get into the guard house. They went to the yard after curfew and pretended they were drunk. They tried to sort of half fall over a guard. The guards threw them in the guard house. They escaped form there. Somehow from the first time in the guard house, they had formed a key to pick the lock or had bribed a guard to get an impression to make one.

They we captured a week later and received two weeks in solitary confinement. About six months later, Harry escaped again and our colonel had a very difficult time getting him back to the camp. He was informed that another attempt would result in him being shot as a spy. Harry returned home after the war and became a professor of English at Dartmouth University.

There were some bizarre individual attempts to escape but nobody ever got to allied controlled areas. Another tunnel dig was in the works just before our camp was moved. More about that later.

A compound of Russian prisoners was established next to our camp. They were a sorry lot. There were malnourished and moved like zombies. Some of them came early in the morning and swept our barracks. They were prohibited from receiving any food or clothing from us, but they did shuffle along and pick up our cigarette butts and take them back to their barracks.

The Germans gave Col. Drake a Russian orderly. Ivan became better clothed and fed than his comrades. The others were jealous. One of them finally hurled the worst possible insult to a Ruskie at Ivan. He called Ivan a Capitalist. This so infuriated Ivan that he pulled a knife and stabbed his tormentor to death. Of course, the Germans immediately hauled off Ivan and shot him the next day. That was the end of an orderly for Col. Drake and there was no more contact allowed with the "Ruskies".

CHAPTER 8 – HOPE BECOMES A REALITY

The invasion of Europe by the allies in early June of 1944 was the real turning point of not only the war but of our prison camp life. The periods of depression that hit all of us were now over. We heard of the invasion as it occurred from the BBC over our clandestine radio. The Germans did not announce the landing until late in the afternoon. Every POW was dancing and shouting from early morning. “Let’s go Ike” was chanted all over the camp. The band assembled and played our patriotic music. The German guards were perplexed. Two of the most hated of them, their security detail, hurried into camp to discover what was going on. We called one the Ferret and the other the Weasel. We harassed them fearlessly and finally they left the camp.

The price for our exuberance came the next day. A detachment of the feared SS troops stormed into camp. We were forced to stand in formation for five hours while they searched the camp for hidden contraband and of course our radio. They found an assortment of things including one pistol and two radios. We were threatened and our senior officers (except Drake) were publicly chastised and bullied. After this tiring day, our determination stiffened and we no longer treated any of our captors with civility.

When we arrived at the camp in June of 1943, my fanny was still acting up. Our doctor examined me and scheduled an operation, which was to be done in Poznan, a train ride away from the camp. Accompanied by a German guard, I went to the hospital. The operation was performed, consisting of cutting out the infected part. They had no antibiotics so the wound was stuffed with rolled bandages dipped in phenothalein solution and then treated with silver nitrate around the opening, so as to heal it from the bottom up. I won’t go into the pain or the cussing. They did give me pentothal for the operation but the treatment of changing the bandages was very painful. Three day later, I was shipped back to the camp and stayed in our little hospital for a week. I healed O.K. and I must say that every doctor that has examined me since then remarks about what a good job was done.

I had lost considerable weight during this whole ordeal and we were not getting enough proper food to gain weight. Everybody had the same problem. A minor cut any place on your body took weeks to heal. After all this was over and I returned home, I weighed 117 pounds. Why can’t I shed the pounds now?

Our guards were all wounded veterans of the Russian Front. They were informed by their officers that any escapes or uprisings by the Americans would be considered their fault and they would immediately be sent to the Russian Front. They now became very vigilant and harassed us more than ever. In a matter a weeks, a number of men captured in France appeared at our gates. We all eagerly awaited their stories and escapades. Now we were getting what we called the “real heroes”, the rangers and paratroopers. All of these guys were cocky and irritated those of us who were old ground force officers.

With the influx of these fine physical specimens, sports became more important in the camp and we had a track meet. The meet was run by paratrooper Major Sage and each barracks had a team. I told our team captain I could run the 50 yard dash. He was very skeptical but finally put me in the event.

It could easily be forecasted that these new men, still pretty hale and hearty, would dominate the whole meet. Major Sage, a West Pointer, played football and was captain of Army’s track team. He took one look at small, skinny me and said, “Hey kid, I don’t think you should be running in a fast race.” I replied, “I’ll be O.K., Sir.” Well, I won my heat and saved something for the finals. I don’t believe I have ever pushed myself like I did in that race. I came in second. Major Sage came up to me and shook my hand and said, “Kid, you have one of the finest kicks and acceleration I’ve seen here all day.” I almost lost it and was half-sick for the rest of the day. Larry Leas, our barracks team captain, said to me, “Joe, I

thought you were BS'ing me when you told me you had run in college on the relay team. You made a believer out of me." So now Cara and Ryan have a least some family history in track.

Following the war on big maps in each barracks became a passion with all of us. Speculation was rampant on the next moves of Ike and the Russians. The German radio and news papers were always a week behind the actual fronts, as we learned from the BBC. It was now apparent to the "Goons", as we called our captors, that we had radio access to London. In fact, the "Ferret" and "Weasel" would study our maps without comment. I am sure they wanted to know the true facts. They made constant searches, but never did discover many of our hidden radios.

German newspapers provided us with the maps necessary to follow the war. We then connected them to the true positions according to Allied releases. After their terrible defeats along the Russian Front, the atmosphere in the whole area in and out of camp changed. Most Germans could now see the ultimate defeat of their armies coming. The terrible loss of life, in the hundreds of thousands, on three fronts, began to affect their outlook.

We continued our daily tasks and our sports, theater and orchestra, but some of the zest was gone. The words going around were, "When are we going home?" Some smart alec put up a sign "Home or Homo by Christmas". Our leader was furious and had it torn down. He never did find out who put it up. I never heard of one incident of homosexuality in the camp of over 500 men. Looking back, this amazes me. Of course there were many rumors of nurses or Red Cross workers being captured and apportioned to our rooms according to our ranks - one per two Lt. Colonels, one per five majors, one per twenty captains, and one per fifty lieutenants. We all loved this type of humor.

As fall set in, conditions were now deteriorating. American and British bombers had severely interrupted German Rail traffic. Our food parcels came to us only on an intermittent basis. The Germans themselves were strictly rationed and our rations from them steadily declined. Our morale remained high, but we were sick of this existence. The Germans were becoming paranoid, fearing a general breakout of all P.O.W. camps and a resulting disruption of their war effort.

We had now established communication with partisan groups and London. I previously mentioned my friend Len Feldman. He was one of the "hush, hush" security officers and I did not know it. About that fall, London was being bombed by German V2 rockets. These landed helter-skelter and caused much damage and death. I found out after the war that Len and cultivated a guard and had bribed him on numerous occasions for minor pieces of information. Len knew where his man lived in northeast Germany. American G2, through coded messages, sent to our camp the approximate sites, which were close to this guard's home. Len, as he told it, begged the Deutscher to get the coordinates of the site near his home and relay this information to Len. The guard steadfastly refused to do so. However, as the day of his leave approached, Len kept at him with much skill. He promised favors to him after the war ended. He still refused and left for his home in northern Germany. When he returned, he sought out Len and said, "I am a traitor to my country, but this slaughter must stop. My parents were both killed recently by the bombings. Here are the coordinates." Len was dumbfounded. He relayed the information to Col. Alger and our radio technician sent out the message in code. At the end of the war, Alger was informed that the precise location of those sites enabled our Air Force to pinpoint the bombing of those sites and eliminate them. Wow, what a story! It is still confidential information.

After the war, we learned that all of the sites were not blown up. However, after May 1944, the number of rocket bombs raining on Britain diminished.

The Germans posted signs all over the camp stating "Escaping is no longer a game." "Any prisoner who attempts escape will be shot." "Any escaped prisoner, when recaptured, will be executed."

Our camp commander protested such flagrant violations of the Geneva Convention, but to no avail.

Word from London (we had ways of transmitting messages) commanded us to prepare for a massacre of prisoners by Hitler. We now took all precautions to at least be ready for such an eventuality. However, the Battle of the Bulge kept our attention focused on the Western Front. During this period, we received a lot of POWs and were not equipped to handle them. Furthermore, the Russians, after halting their drive before Warsaw, finally broke across the Vistula River. They were only 150 miles from our camp. We had witnessed an all day march in front of our camp, Germans supporting Russian Cossacks, numbering in the thousands possibly, on the road directly below my window. This lasted for six or more hours. Two days later, we were told to pack our belongings and prepare to march. We were assured that trains would soon pick us up along the way. All of us gathered whatever we could carry, including extra socks and long underwear. Our packs were full with clothing, plus all the food we could carry.

The next morning on a bitterly cold January day, the evacuation began. Only those who were unfit to march were left behind. Also, after the usual count, 20 of our guys were missing. The Germans conducted a hurried search of the camp but the missing weren't found. We all knew that they were hiding in the latest tunnel project. At least after all our work, some benefited.

The march proceeded on that bitterly cold day with a high wind swirling about us. None of us were in shape for a full day march, but we bore the pain and discomfort and finally at dusk were placed in a huge barn in a collective farm. The German civilians had already abandoned the place. In fact in that day's march, German civilians followed the highway out in every sort of conveyance imaginable. There were sleds, horses and wagons, autos, walkers and anything else you could use to move. They didn't even look at us as we were following the same highway. They were close to a panic.

Gabe Gever, my buddy, and I dropped down exhausted in the hay. We could hardly eat, but did manage a biscuit or two with water. We discussed our plight and I told Gabe that I was not going to march hundreds of miles back into Germany. The promise of train travel would not be possible. The conditions were too chaotic. The German Army was retreating near our group and was passing us by. They were headed in the same direction as we were. I told him I was going to escape into the Russian hands. He tried to dissuade me stating, "We have sweated it out this long. Why take chances?" Our intelligence stated that if you escaped into Russia, you may never get out. I said, "I am willing to take that chance." We then divided up all our food and wished each other luck. I feigned illness and was placed in the upper loft with others who could not go on any further. I did this because there were no guards surrounding this area. During the night, I broke open a board in the loft and slipped down a drain pipe.

I ran over the snow covered ground until I was completely exhausted. Another big farm with a huge barn loomed ahead. I slipped into the barn and climbed into the hay loft. Laying down, I immediately fell into a deep sleep.

In the morning, I was awakened by the noise of a farmer milking a cow. What to do? I finally spoke in German to him and found out he was a Pole. I asked him what the situation was. He replied, "The 'Deutschers' all have left but their troops are still coming through the area on their retreat." In fact, they had come to the farm house for food just last night. He said, "Just keep hidden until the Russians come." I felt this was the prudent thing to do and asked him for some food. He went off to bring food. When he left, five heads popped out of the straw and almost in unison asked, "What did he say?" I had not realized that others had taken off similar to my escape. I was in such a dead state of sleep, I didn't even notice them when they came into the barn.

We quickly agreed to all stay there until the "Ruskies" arrived. The Pole brought food and milk. Boy, we were living high off the hog. The German troops continued to pass the farm all that day and the

next. The second night, one of the cows in the barn was delivering and having a tough time. One of our guys, Capt. Ronck, had a background in animal husbandry. He pitched in and saved the cow and the calf. The Polish farmer could not have been more thankful. He now, with his wife, put on a great feast. This was the most food we'd had to eat since we'd been captured. He also gave us wine and we all became tipsy and had a hilarious time.

The third day was very quiet. There was no sound of gunfire as we heard the previous two days. It was kind of eerie. By evening, we were all silent too. About 10 O'clock, you could hear the unmistakable sounds of tanks. After about an hour, the first tanks were passing us. The Poles rushed out and welcomed the "Ruskies". He related that there were American escaped prisoners of war in the barn. The Russian captain beckoned all of us to come out and we did. There was much hugging and although they knew no English, they would all exclaim, Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, Hoopla!" They knew of our aid and would also shout, "GMC" for our GMC trucks. We had another big party and this time the drink of the day was called "spiritus". I assume it was a form of Vodka, but one drink knocked you back on your heels. I saw some of their enlisted men take some of the denatured alcohol out of the radiators and after passing it over cloth, drank it. My God, it's a wonder they all didn't die.

I was amazed that two Mongolian soldiers were absolutely ignored and were not allowed to participate in the party or dining. I guess there is segregation all over the world. I didn't realize it, but the whole tank column had stopped for the night near this farmhouse.

CHAPTER 9 – FREE AT LAST, FREE AT LAST

The Russian captain took me to the general's vehicle and to my surprise, the general had his whole family with him, including his wife and two boys. He spoke no English and only a smattering of German, but I did get his main suggestion: we should accompany his division to the front and fight the Germans. After thinking it over for two seconds, I declined, stating that we were all pretty ill and wanted to go back to the rear and then go home. After the party from the previous night, I guess I did look ill. Anyhow, I returned to the farmhouse to my buddies. The next day the Division pulled out heading for Posen and Germany. The infantry divisions passed the next day. There was no particular order. They too were on every conveyance possible. No one seemed to mind if they stopped over for a day. The only orders were apparently "On to Berlin". As long as the "Ruskie" soldiers were headed that way, nobody cared. However, unless they were transports returning for supplies, any soldier retreating was shot.

A day later, I decided to go back to our original camp. I walked back and the place was torn up and there were no signs of the guys that stayed behind. There was no reason to stay there and a couple of us decided to start a trek back from these lines. The farther back we could get, the better off we felt we would be. We still feared a German counter-offensive.

We hitched a ride with a Russian transport truck and arrived in Bromberg, Polish name "Bydgosch". The town seemed deserted and most of the buildings were demolished. Apparently, there had been a big fire fight here. Another lieutenant and I stayed with two British escaped POWs. They were non-coms and had been captured early in the war. We shared some food with them, but they didn't know anymore than we did about the situation. They did advise against trying to go north into Sweden. They had just come from that direction and had been in the middle of German and Russian fighting.

I decide to take off and head for Warsaw. My buddy thought that it would be better to stay put and stayed with the British non-coms. The highways were cluttered with Russian transports and refugees and all sorts of burned out tanks, vehicles and dead horses. Most of the bodies had been removed, but there were still dead Russians, Germans and Poles along the sides of the road. I hitched a ride with a Russian transport truck by bribing the driver with cigarettes. These trucks were coming back from the front for supplies and were all American made GMCs. We arrived close to dusk in Kutno on the road to Warsaw. He could no longer have me aboard, so I jumped out. Now there was a strict curfew imposed by the Russians. There were many MPs all around. They were mostly women and they carried sub-machine guns. They fired at every opportunity. Some of their favorite targets were the porcelain insulators on the wire poles. You can imagine how many rounds of ammunition it took to eliminate one set of insulators.

I was really frightened and ran to the first house along my route. A man answered my knock and after he understood from my broken German that I was an American prisoner of war, he hugged me and pulled me into the little apartment. We talked and with difficulty, understood each other. His wife would chime in and then prepared a meager meal for the three of us. I chipped in a can of spam that I had and they were delighted to accommodate me. The wife pulled a curtain, revealing a cubby hole with a bed. I thanked her and prepared to go to bed by washing my face and hands and stripping down to my long johns. I hopped into bed. Oh, what heaven – A big feather mattress and a feather down quilt. Sleep came quickly, but I was awakened when both the man and woman jumped into bed with me. Such a situation is almost unbelievable. How many Americans would share their bed with a complete stranger?

If anyone snored, I was in a deep sleep and would not have heard them. When I awoke, they were already awake and we had breakfast together. I used some of my Nescafe and they supplied dark bread and what appeared to me to be fat renderings. I ate it all with relish. Unfortunately, I had to leave. Again, I zoomed to the highway.

There was a truck in front of a field hospital picking up wounded Russians. They were being sent back to a General Hospital and most had some part of their body missing, a leg, and arm, or head all bandaged. They were having a difficult time climbing into the GMC. I asked the driver (again in broken German or by signs) if he was going to Warsaw and if so, could I ride in the cab with him. After a few American cigarettes and some brandy I had obtained from the English soldiers in Bromberg, we were big buddies. He started up the truck and began moving forward. Some of the wounded were still climbing aboard. There were cries and shouts and all of a sudden, I heard machine gun bullets hitting the cab. I dove for the floor. A woman MP came rushing up, menacing her machine gun at my driver. She must have read the riot act to him. He shrugged, turned off the engine and laughed about it all. I was scared green. I wanted to get out, but he pulled me back. All were aboard and the MP gave her permission to leave. Certainly this was cruelty that poor wounded Russians soldiers should be treated by their own people in such a shabby manner. Where were the ambulances, nurses and doctors to take care of these poor souls? Oh well, "On to Warsaw" both of us shouted in our own tongues.

The first glimpse of this once great Capital City was horrendous. From the outskirts down to the Vistula River, there seemed not to be a building standing. We were now in convoy, going along a narrow lane heading for the river. This lane had been bulldozed out of the rubble. Bodies of humans and horses were lying around. The stench was terrible. There were crews cleaning up the areas and as we reached the center of the city, there was less smell and debris. We passed the Warsaw Ghetto. It was leveled. I don't believe they ever restored it. In fact in 1996 when Joanne and I traveled there, there was a memorial but no restoration.

We reached the river and saw that all permanent bridges were demolished. The Russian engineers had built a lag bridge across the river which in itself was a marvel. We crossed because I thought there was an American air strip that shuttled our planes from Western Front to the east. This made it easier for Allied fighter planes to fly longer distances into the heart of Germany. I didn't know that the lines had shortened now and no refueling was necessary. When I arrived at Praga, the industrial city across the Vistula from Warsaw, I was told that the American air strip was gone and there were no Americans around. Just another letdown. They took me and some others who had gathered there to the provisional government headquarters. Here was a mixture of Polish communists and Russian overlords. They simply did not want to do anything for us. They gave us a cell in a jail to sleep in. This was like going back to Oflag 64 and the food and the bed were not much better. They would not give us any idea of what was in store for us. Their only orders were to stay put.

By this time, I could not accept being all cooped up. All the fellows from our camp (about 15 of us) discussed this and some of us decided to take off again. This time we were heading for Lublin, which was the provisional capital of the new Polish state. Again the method of travel was via the thumb; we hitchhiked. After a couple of days, we arrived in Lublin. This town had few visible signs of the war. It was a beautiful old Polish city and had charm and character. We all went our separate ways there. I went to the authorities in the town. Their only reply to my inquires was, "You are no longer free to move about. You must stay in Lublin and report to headquarters each day." At headquarters, I met a Polish captain named Raymon Goetz. He befriended me and shared food with me. I slept on a cot in his narrow room. The second afternoon he took me to an open air market and bought a whole cooked chicken. He had a bottle of good Russian brandy and along with the chicken, we had a sumptuous banquet. While "under the influence", he stated, "Today I am a communist, but if the democracies take over, I am a democrat." I didn't want to hear of these things and we had to part anyhow because his commander threatened him because of our relationship. He referred me to a kind matronly lady who took me to her villa. Her name was Countess Wanda Dzenofski. The regime allowed her to keep the place as a refuge for many orphaned children. She was a marvelous woman. She spoke four languages, including English, and was the tenth generation of Polish aristocracy. What a background and knowledge of arts and letters this woman possessed. She fed me and I was able to take baths every other day. Man, this was the way to fight

a war. It was almost as good as my London trick.

We played bridge with her friends and attended piano recitals. The friends showed me some art treasures hidden from the Germans and now hidden from the Russians. The Countess took me to the cathedral and introduced me to the Archbishop. After mass, he took me down to the dungeons way below the earth's surface. Here in glass cases were stored untold treasures of precious stones and pure gold. There were pure gold chalices and monstrances bedecked with precious stones. Crosses and other holy icons including ancient paintings were all hidden there. There were vestments for mass made in pure spun gold. The sight was overwhelming. There were tears in the Archbishop's eyes as he related to me that although he had sent word by various methods to the Pope requesting to somehow get these treasures out of Lublin, he could not be sure the message had been carried to the papacy. He pleaded that on my way home, I would relay his plea to the Vatican. I promised I would. Later, I will discuss that attempt. Wanda also requested that I contact her brother, a Colonel in the Free Polish Corp, fighting in Italy on the side of the Americans. She wanted me to tell him not to come back to Poland. Later, very few of those real heroes of "Monte Casino" did return home.

One day we were driving around with a friend of Wanda's and we passed a huge prison. Many of the fighters who had supported the Allied forces were thrown in prison. My new friend remarked that this was a terrible thing. He said, "In the next two days, we will free all the patriots." I replied, "Please don't get me involved in the politics. I don't want to know anything about their plans." Sure enough, in two days, partisans blew open the prison and many of the inmates escaped. What ever happened to them, I don't know.

Another day, the Countess introduced me to the head of the radio station. He spoke perfect English and after a discussion, promised to send out over the air my name and that of all the others I could give him. I never knew until I reached home that WKW in Cincinnati had picked up the broadcast. They relayed that I was free to my mother. She in turn called the Red Cross and the War Department. Both agencies denied any knowledge of any freed prisoners and told her not to believe such information. I do believe however, that mom became convinced that I was free and okay.

More and more escaped POWs were congregating in Lublin. No one was allowed to go beyond the city. Low and behold, my buddies Bill Sharpe and John Scully turned up. They had escaped two weeks after I did and of course their tales were as wild as mine. Wanda found families for them to live with and they got in the social whirl. John fell in love with a Polish girl. We all told him he was nuts. He had been away from women too long. Wilbur, who usually was the lover boy, did not become overwhelmed with the girls there.

We were becoming very apprehensive. The Russian commander would not even talk to us and no one was allowed to move out of the city. We began to think that maybe our warnings from the intelligence section of the Army were correct. In some of their coded messages to us in late 1944, they stated that escape into Russia was very hazardous and further there was no American liaison with Russian troops.

What we did not know was that Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt were meeting in Yalta on the Black Sea. Churchill and Roosevelt insisted that all Allied escaped prisoners of war be immediately transferred to Allied hands. Stalin used this as a bargaining measure to get other concessions, such as territory, from the British and Americans. He agreed and with a week, we were ordered to the train station. We were told we were going home. This was in the middle of March and it was still very cold.

Wanda came to the train station with me and we had a sad farewell. She gave me a large loaf of black bread and a half a dozen hard cooked eggs. She said, "I don't believe these "Rusgies" will feed you,

except bread and water.” This food saved me from extreme hunger on our trip. Along the way, I did share with my buddies. She was right. They gave us a little bread and grease. When the train stopped, we were expected to melt snow for water. However, we outsmarted them by drawing off boiling water from the escape valve on the boiler on the engine. At least that water was fit to drink.

The train cars were of course box cars and we had no conveniences. We were herded together in close quarters and everyone became lousy. We made frequent stops for convenience and Russian peasants would try to barter with you even when you were doing your business. What a country.

There was very little remaining of the towns. The Russians had a scorched earth policy as they retreated from the original onslaught. When the Russians recently beat the Germans back toward Germany, the Germans took everything movable and destroyed everything else. The towns were desolate and the peasants huddled about fires and scrounged for food. We passed through what is now Belarus, and their capital Minsk and the Ukraine, Pinsk and Smolensk. All of them looked the same, bombed out and desolate. A few buildings were still standing, but none near the rail yards or stations. These had been destroyed by the retreating Germans.

This was a frustrating and difficult journey. We had no idea where we were going. The best rumor and most logical was that we were headed to Moscow. One of the guys could read Russian and reading those city rail side signs, he could trace our journey. We were heading south, although in a zigzag manner. After five days, we detrained in Odessa, a seaport along the Black Sea. This was the first town that I saw since I escaped that was not materially damaged. They put us up in a Russian villa. We then went through the process of being deloused for all bugs. Finally, we were given Russian uniforms. Our GI clothing was in tatters. I still kept my great coat. This was warmer than the Russian coat they offered. Also, I kept my GI shoes. I did not want to wear their boots. Most all the guys accepted the clothing they gave us but saved this stuff as souvenirs. Our food was better, but not good. At least we received black bread, pork renderings for a spread and “Kasha”, a gruel. We also of course received plenty of Russian tea.

At this point, I believe I should go back and chronologically detail my journey home. I must admit that these dates were supplied to me by others after I came home.

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| March 27, 1945 | Left Lublin, Poland |
| April 1 | Arrived at Odessa |
| April 6 | Left Odessa |
| April 10 | Arrived in Egypt, Port Said |
| April 14 | Left for Italy |
| April 21 | Arrived in Capua, Italy, near Naples |
| April 27 | Boarded a ship for America |
| May 2 | Landed in Boston, USA |

So back to my story. Rumors were again rampant, but we felt that sooner or later, we would ship out for home. Finally, they informed us to get ready to move. There were now about 200 former POWs from the USA army and some Brits living in this compound. We assembled and began a march of three

miles down to the docks. A Russian band accompanied our march. They knew only one American song, the Beer Barrel Polka. So we listened and marched to that tune all the way to the dock. The “Ruskies” never stopped playing until we were herded on board an English tramp steamer. This was the first Allied ship that had come up the Black Sea, since the beginning of hostilities. This was a dirty cargo ship and they put us up in a hold in hammocks. The food was at least edible but not plentiful. The Black Sea was full of mines and the ship zigged and zagged. The ship’s company had fifty caliber machine guns mounted on the deck. A look out would spot mines and they would destroy them with machine gun fire. The whole sea about us would erupt like a geyser and the vibrations and noise was deafening. Wow, I had lived through everything, but I thought we were going to be blown up. Well, we finally reached the Straits of Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. This was a real thrill and was a great morale booster. The lights of a city shining in the night were a wonder to us. Turkey was neutral and had no “blackouts”. The silhouettes of the Blue Mosque and St. Sophia Mosque and others were a fantastic view. Many years later I visited that area and the mosques. I still believe the sight there is one of the greatest in the world.

We reached Egypt on the fourth day and we were bussed to a huge air field and depot outside Port Said. Now for the first time we felt truly free. The procedure of delousing and medical exams quickly followed, but only after the best and biggest meal I ever ate. We had a full turkey dinner with all the seconds and thirds one could want. The Air Force mess sergeant could not believe his eyes. He just kept shaking his head as he ordered more food.

At this point, I weighed 117 pounds. All my buddies were in the same condition. I know how Martin Luther King later felt, “Free at last, thank God, free at last.”

Someone at the Officer’s Club gave us a bottle of “Old Grand-Dad”, a good bourbon. Three of us promptly sat down and began to polish it off. We were more than slightly gone when an American Red Cross girl came up and wanted us to play a silly game. We refused but she would not take no for an answer. I was tired of this harangue and gave her a little shove and told her to be off. She became excited and stomped away shouting, “You will heat about this, striking a Red Cross Officer. You are subject to court martial.” God, I sobered up in a hurry. Along came a major who stated the girl’s complaint. I stated that I simply shoved her away and did not strike her. He finally said to forget about it, he would reject any formal complaint, but warned me to be careful. I was thoroughly chastised. In my mind, I thought I would have to stay there and await a bureaucratic decision. When would I get home?

At any rate, the next night regardless of being told not to leave quarters, four or five of us ventured to the Arab quarters. This was a real adventure. These people apparently don’t begin to hustle until after 10 pm. We lost our way and got into out-of-bounds territory. We were besieged by Arabs trying to sell us everything under the sun. Some of them got grabby and tussles ensued after harangues about prices. Finally, Wild Bill, one of our gang shouted, “Boys, let’s form a wedge and get out of here pronto!” We did and all trotted until we found MPs. How many messes could we “Kriegies” get into in our first days of liberation?

A couple days later we were hustled off to again embark on a ship to sail up the Mediterranean Sea. A couple of days later, we landed at Naples Dock and were taken to Capua. De ja vu – this was where the Germans took us from Tunisia. At least there were clean and decent barracks now.

Here for the third time we were interrogated. We had previously been interrogated by Army and Air Force intelligence officers twice in Egypt. Can you imagine we were the only American or Allied officers who had ever been in the front lines with the Russian troops? There had never been any liaison with the “Ruskies”. These intelligence people wanted to know every little detail of our experience.

We hung around there for a few days. In the meantime, I took off for Rome and a holiday. An

officer from our old outfit, the 17th Field Artillery, was now stationed near Capua. He took John Scully and me around the whole area. We visited Pompeii, Naples and Monte Casino. The devastation of that basilica was total. There was nothing left standing. Allies had bombed it day in and day out for almost a year to no avail. It had only been taken after the breakthrough near Rome. The Polish Brigade finally captured the mount after sustaining tremendous losses. My friend Wanda Dzenofski, the Polish lady I lived with, had asked me when I was in Lublin to look up her brother and tell him not to come back to Poland. He was a battalion commander in this force of the Polish Brigade. I endeavored to locate him, but was unable to do so. The head of the Polish Army in Rome told me they could not tell me where he was or if he was living or dead.

Also while in Rome, I tried to make the Pope aware of what the Bishop of Lublin requested. This was in regard to the church treasures hidden in the bowels of the Cathedral in Lublin. We did get an audience with a papal aide who assured us the Church knew about the situation and would properly handle the matter. I never did hear the outcome. Rome was not harmed during the year and was an open city. It was beautiful and we enjoyed St. Peter's, the Vatican and all the wonders of the Eternal City. These were wonderful experiences after being locked up for two years.

I remember going to a barbershop in Rome. A Roman barbershop is a place of delight and a two hour treatment. I had a shave and a haircut and manicure. I sang a few bars aloud of an aria from the opera La Traviata. All the barbers and customers broke out singing the whole aria and we had a great time singing pieces from many Italian and French operas. What an experience. Then I attended a performance of the Carmen at the Naples' opera house named "San Carlo". The old opera house was dirty and in a sad state of repair, but I enjoyed the performance very much.

At long last, we boarded a converted luxury liner and began our journey home. The ship was the Matsonia. It has run between Honolulu and San Francisco. We were very crowded, but we were going home and that was all that counted. The ship docked in Boston Harbor and we had to wait for clearance. A great trio of gals serenaded us with twenty verses of "Drinking Rum and Coca Cola". The Andrews Sisters had made this famous. It was about the gals from Trinidad. The last line of every verse went like this, "Both mother and daughter working for the Yankee dollar".

CHAPTER 10 – Home Sweet Home

Boston was John Scully's home. His father, who was a Vice President of Universal Pictures, had reserved rooms for us, gratis, at the Copley Plaza Hotel. This was the posh hotel in Boston. As soon as I disembarked, I called home and Rita. As everyone knows, I am not for long phone conversations. This was an exception, as we planned our whole wedding. The call cost 25 bucks, so you know this was out of character! I was sure anxious to go home and bought a train ticket to arrive in Cleveland the following evening. However, that night, John, Wilbur and I were the guests of Mr. Scully for a sumptuous feast of lobster, shrimp, filet mignon, baked Alaska and any drink we wanted. The meal was fabulous and they had an ice show starring Maribel Vinson. Also at our table, we had the pleasure of dining with Yvonne De Carlo – a famous movie star. She was in Boston to tout her movie "Salome Where She Danced". I danced with her and she was really stacked. My big enjoyment came from kibitzing with her publicity and press men. They were really sharp. The wisecracks and Hollywood jokes filled the air. Everyone laughed without let-up.

Well, the next day I left. Wilbur and John were both to be my best men and Rita and my wedding. I had some misgivings about John. However, he promised he would be there. Later he told me that he had stayed with Yvonne and they both had gotten well-oiled.

The next day I arrived at Cleveland Union Terminal. Home at last, home at last, thank God, home at last.

The whole group was there to meet me; Rita, my mother and father, my sister Jane and her husband Jack. What a joyful event! Everyone was crying and hugging and kissing. There was not much time to rest. We were to be married in five days. Rita, the planner, had mailed invitations before I arrived and had arranged for the church, reception and all the incidentals. I had to provide escorts for seven ladies of the wedding party. Luckily, there were other officers from our camp who were from Cleveland and together with her brother Tom, we had a military wedding. Thank God John showed up two days before the day. All of Rita's girl friends went gaga over him.

There were a round of parties and finally, May 5, 1945, we were married at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Cleveland, Ohio. Father Bill Cosgrove, Rita's cousin, officiated. He later became Bishop and married some of my kids.

We stayed the first night at the Cleveland Hotel, which was adjacent to Union Terminal, caught the Empire State Express for New York in the morning, and left for our honeymoon. Rita had forgotten her umbrella and her mother brought it to us before we left. I am sure the real reason was to see that her daughter was OK. Her mother was always very protective of her.

I do remember an anecdote at our reception. Rita's Uncle Danny, one of her mother's seven brothers, constantly stayed with the Hagan family. He said to Rita's father during the festivities, "Tom, a fancy event like this in a fancy hotel certainly deserves more than baloney." My father-in-law was livid. This was during meat rationing. He tried to get the best hors d'oeuvres and did have a sit down capon dinner for 150 people. He wanted to fight Danny. Young Tom, Rita's brother, had to pull them apart. Oh well, what's a good Irish affair without a fight?

We met several "just married" couples on the train and they queried, "Did you have a hall wedding?" Rita and I had both agreed that we would not act like newlyweds as she put away her corsage. So much for that, out came the corsage, and we admitted to anyone on the train who asked that we were newlyweds. We stayed at the Commodore Hotel; part of Grand Central Station. We were very tired and tried to sleep in the first morning. During the night, I opened the window to get a little fresh air. We were

both awakened by an awful clatter outside. Flinging open the window, the noise was thunderous. It dawned on us that this must be V.E. Day.

We quickly dressed, grabbed a bite to eat and headed to Times Square. Certainly, that was where the action was. We mingled in the huge exuberant crowd. In my lieutenant's uniform with my "fruit salad" (battle decorations), I was a target to be kissed by untold numbers of females. It was an exciting time and pictures of that event from time to time still pop up in newspapers and television.

What a time we had in New York! We danced to all the big bands in the hotels and saw musicals and shows. We also ate at some fancy restaurants. Once, while we were eating, a middle aged man came to our table and after pardoning the interruption, thanked me for serving our country overseas and insisted on buying our dinner. He had a son in the Pacific. A similar occurrence happened two nights later. Returning soldiers were royally treated by our people. Broadway shows were half-price and you could always get tickets as a serviceman. Tom Hagan was in New York at the time and took us to the Hotel Pennsylvania for dinner at the Café Rouge. Glen Gray and his great band were playing. Another night, we went to the Café Zanzibar and a great big guy insisted on dancing with Rita. He was Sonny Tufts, a Hollywood star. I danced with his lady and she was a real stone-face.

All good things come to an end and we returned home for the rest of my 20 day leave. However, all big time action was not over. The Army sent us for two weeks to Miami Beach for rest and rehabilitation. The Shelbourne Hotel was delightful. It was right on the beach and each G.I. had a huge room with one wall all mirrors. The food was gourmet and every recreation possible was free to our use. We went deep sea fishing and the chef cooked the big grouper we caught. We danced until the wee hours. Some of my fellow POWs spent most of the time drinking. What a waste of time. A contingent of army nurses who had been left on Bataan by McArthur arrived at our hotel. I have never seen such young old women. They had gone through hell at the hand of the Japs. The mere mention of McArthur's name would almost cause a riot. Certainly our treatment by the Germans could not compare to their privations and suffering. Again, all good things come to an end and we returned home to pack for reassignment.

My orders stated that I was to report to Fort Bragg, NC in two days. There I had done my basic training. Rita decided to go with me. We arrived by train at Fort Bragg. We checked in and found there was no married officers' housing available. I would have to billet in the barracks for casual officers and she would have to find a room in Fayetteville. This was a dismal army town and the rental rooms available were poor to terrible. Here was a poor girl never away from home, who had to put up with on friends, the terrible heat and alone, except in the evening. I'm sure she cried her heart out. She never complained to me. That is truly the story of our married life. Rita never complained about me or anyone else.

The men remained there one week attached to the replacement training center, but really had no jobs. It was decided that we should take a refresher course at Fort Sill OK to be ready to be shipped to the Pacific Theater of Operations. By this time, all of the old artillery gang were assembled at Fort Bragg. John Scully, Wilbur Sharpe and I received the same orders to proceed to Fort Sill.

Rita and I decided that this army life, separating us every night, was for the birds. I packed her off to Cleveland and I boarded a troop train for Oklahoma. The train was not air conditioned and the open windows carried the air with all sorts of train soot. It was a terrible ride, so when we arrived in Oklahoma City, I simply got off the train with my luggage and rented a hotel room in the best hotel there and fell asleep until midmorning the next day.

Showering, shaving and having a nice breakfast buoyed my spirits. The train ride (on my own money) to Fort Sill was some relief to my previous journey. Arriving at Fort Sill Headquarters caused

another donnybrook. I had been reported as A.W.O.L., since I hadn't checked in with the arrival of the troop train. The excuse I used was that I was ill on the train (basically true) and that I went to a hotel for medicine and rest. They excused me and assigned me to a battalion officers' barracks. John and Wilbur told me that Gabe Gever was here before us and was living off the post. I hadn't seen my old buddy since Boston.

Gabe had married the beautiful girl who waited for him as soon as he came home. That is the reason we couldn't go to each other's wedding. Gabe was bald, tall and thin. He was affectionately called the "Blue Beetle" in prison camp. We always thought this beautiful "chick" Jean would dump him when he came home. Gabe must have been very persuasive because they were at Ft. Sill and living off post in Medicine Park. Meeting her, I knew she was lovely and Rita would enjoy her company. They had a cottage with two bedrooms. What good luck, a quick call home to Rita brought a "Yes, when do I come" response. She bought a used 1940 Chevrolet and she and her girlfriend, Adele Chipko, headed out for Oklahoma.

Rita had a lot of food stamps. When she arrived, the four of us lived high off the hog. Wilbur and John Scully always showed up for our parties at either of our cottages or at the post Officers' Club. In the daytime, all of us attended the artillery school. We were bored most of the time.

Finally, the war ended in Japan and we were eligible for discharge. All of us applied as fast as we could. There was a hitch; to get out at that time, you had to sign up for the reserves. We gladly did this. Later, since I had never gone to a meeting and after a year, they gave me a final discharge. Wilbur stayed in the active reserves and was called up and fought in Korea.

We left Oklahoma in the Chevy and headed for the west coast. This was a wonderful trip and we loved the beauty of the west. We were even fortunate to cross the desert on the only day it had rained in the entire year. Coming down the mountains into Pasadena, a tire blew and we just glided down the hill. Finding a gas station that sold tires fixed up our problem. We were lucky but were really "soaked" for the tire. Rita's girlfriend Adele had gone from Ft. Sill to San Marino outside of Los Angeles to become the secretary for Mrs. Grasselli, the dowager of the famous Grasselli Chemical Company. They had sold out to DuPont and were loaded with money.

Adele invited us to the house and we went through the entire estate, while the family was eating in the huge dining room. That place was fabulous and all the gardens were lush and beautiful. They had three Japanese caretakers who kept everything near perfection. It is interesting that these people were never interned during the war. I guess money talks. We ate in the kitchen and had the same meal as Mrs. Grasselli, her children and their spouses. One was married to a count. The son was a high officer in the Bank of America. That meal was the best I had ever eaten in my life. We were very grateful but never met the Grassellis.

This was a beautiful trip, but on the way, we had to sleep in the car in Fresno. There were no accommodations available because it was harvest time for grapes. We loved Yosemite National Park and San Francisco and then started a homeward trek by way of Reno. We traveled beyond the Donner Pass and stayed in a small town in Nevada. The motel operator asked me if I had antifreeze in my car and said if I didn't, I ought to drain the radiator. Heck, it was 65 degrees; I thought he was nuts and just parked car. Sure enough, the next morning, the radiator was frozen solid. A day delay and a few bucks out of pocket and we were on our way back to Cleveland.

CHAPTER 11 – Life Goes On

The western trip was beautiful but I was anxious to get home and get a job. We arrived in Cleveland and were going to live with the Hagans until we found an apartment. I interviewed with two firms the second day I came home. One was Ernst and Ernst and the other was Haskins and Sells. Both were in what were called The Big Eight, the largest accounting firms in the world. Haskins and Sells said I could start right away and this is what I wanted. There I started work the next morning. I certainly was lucky. They needed accountants badly and during peace time only hired accountants with accounting degrees. I had majored in finance. This was certainly the best move I ever made. The pay was miserable but the experience and their training became the bulwark of my 45 years in the accounting profession.

In the meantime, Tom, Pop Hagan and I bought an apartment house on 90th Street close to Euclid Avenue. We all lived on the first floor. Tom, Sadie and Pop lived in the back with a kitchen, two bedrooms and a living – dining room. There was another small apartment separating our “digs” from theirs. We had a bedroom and a very small living room. We shared the bathroom. We all ate together and shared the expenses. Tranquility did not always prevail, but I was out-of-town most week days and came home Friday night. Then I left again Sunday night. I spent most of my evenings studying for the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam. It was a requirement then that you could not take the exam until you had three years experience with a CPA firm. That’s why these big firms could pay such small salaries. But, there were many sharp and great people on our staff. We would party with them almost every weekend.

Our first child, Joe III, was born in on February 14, 1948 while we lived at the apartment. We were so thrilled that our first born was a boy and he was given the family name, Joseph Edward. It was very inconvenient for Rita to take care of the baby in these quarters. At the time, Tom Hagan (Rita’s brother) said, “You know we don’t allow children in this apartment and I think you better find a larger place to live.” We did and moved to a rental house in Maple Heights. It too was small but comfortable. We were lucky because number two child, Patricia Ann, was born December 26, 1949. There was a snow storm that day and I left the hospital to tell the good news to Rita’s family, but hit a taxi cab in the rear on the way. I couldn’t stop. The cab driver was all upset, but I was so overjoyed at having a girl, that I couldn’t work up a sweat over the accident. He was crying as he stated that he had the best record in the company and hadn’t had an accident in 24 years!

I continued working for H&S (Haskins and Sells), mostly out of town. I felt it wasn’t fair to be out of town five days out of the week. This left Rita with all the chores and two kids to take care of. I spoke to the senior partner, Mr. Clark. He said he would keep me in town. I thought this over but I was sure the other staff men would resent such one-sided treatment. There was a fellow who had left our staff, Norm Frank, who had started a practice in Lorain, Ohio. He asked me and Loyal Chaney to join him in a new firm. Loyal had started with H&S about the same time that I had. He was also tired of living out of a suit case. I didn’t know much about Loyal. We had never been on a job together. Norm had been the senior accountant on my first assignment with H&S. He was a tough but a good boss and I had always liked him. After I became a senior accountant and was in charge of jobs, our paths did not often cross. He had left and was gone about six months when he approached us.

Loyal and I both decided to make the change, but only on the condition that we would work for him for six months and then decide whether we would form a partnership. So that meant another move. However, I would not be away from my family anymore. I found a modest home close to the Lake Erie on the east side of Lorain. We bought it and it was the first time we owned our own home. Norm and Loyal spent a whole week with me in January 1951 painting the whole place and getting ready for the family to move in. Rita and the two children moved in soon after. It was great fun to buy carpeting, appliances and new furniture. Our nest egg was soon depleted, but we enjoyed the process of our sojourn on 403 Haddam Drive. This proved to be a very happy period of our life. Joey went to kindergarten here

and subsequently to St. Anthony's School. There were plenty of kids living on the street and they played morning to night. Pat was the little mother to the little kids. Their mothers told Rita about how pleased they were that Pat took charge. Pat was all of four years old! Dr. Wilke lived two doors down and they had two boys about Joe's age and two little ones close to Pat's age, named Jimmy and Mary. This made the circle of the group, along with the Wyman's children, Beth and Mark. Next door to us, the Neubauer's also had a daughter a year or two older than Joe.

The Haddam Drive neighbors who surrounded us were the best group of people we could have possibly been neighbors with. Most of the men were executives at the U.S. Steel plant. Dr. Wilke and I formed a great comradeship. In the fall, we had Saturday group clam bakes presided over by John Neubauer. He had them in his yard and they were wild. It was a good thing that all of us only had a few yards to go home, because drinking was pretty heavy.

In the second year we lived in Lorain, Kathleen Jean was born on April 19, 1952. Of course, Dr. Wilke, an obstetrician, was our doctor. We had the RH factor which didn't show up with the birth of Joe or Pat. However, Kathy was born jaundiced and the doctor said we should wait a day or two before giving her blood transfusions. She came through it OK (without a transfusion) and prospered and we were relieved.

During our first year in Lorain, Rita's father Tom became very ill with cancer. They brought him home from Florida very ill and rented a home in Lyndhurst. Rita spent as much time as she could with him and her mother. However, she had a family to take care of. It was a difficult time for her. Pop finally died and Tom Junior and Sadie moved to a small home in Chagrin Harbor.

Joey was the first of our children to make his first communion and march in the Christmas procession. We called him Holy Joe. He looked so innocent and angelic. My parents thought he was fantastic and came to visit very often before they moved to Florida. My father, who we all called "Pop", was Kathy's favorite. She would jump upon him and hug him and kiss him. He really ate up all this attention.

When Kathy was about four, Pat six and Joe eight, we spent three or four summers at Put-in Bay. Rita's Aunt Mary had a good friend who owned a summer Episcopal camp for boy choirs. After the camp summer periods, my family would go there and stay for two or three weeks before school started. All three of the kids will remember the good times we had there. I would go to work in Lorain and be there on weekends. Milton Herd, Mary's friend, really enjoyed Joey and took him fishing and boating. We all took long rides on the boat. It was an old, heavy fishing boat with a large beam and was very safe. We named the boat "Chug Along". Wonderful times were spent diving off the boat, swimming and traveling from island to island in Lake Erie and even venturing to the Canadian islands.

Rita became interested in golf and since I joined Lorain Country Club, she joined the ladies league and enjoyed the game. She also joined the Lorain Ladies League. I joined the Junior Chamber of Commerce. We were not lacking in social activities.

Norm Frank had brought Loyal Chaney and me in because of two big jobs he had and no qualified people to do them. At the end of our six month employment period, these jobs were basically finished. Now he demanded that we partnership and pay him \$4000.00 each for a partnership interest. That amount had been predetermined at the outset. I was dumbfounded and didn't see great prospects for the future. Rita and I discussed this thoroughly. I also talked it over with Loyal. He had moved to Norwalk where he had opened a sub-office. This had been both his and his wife's home. I believe they had planned this move all along. However, we decided to agree to the deal and formed a partnership named "Frank, Seringer and Chaney".

Times were tough the first six months but we maintained a good professional reputation. The two big jobs Loyal and I had worked on resulted finally in additional business by word of mouth. However, during the first years of our partnership, we went without salaries more than a few times. We always had enough to pay the mortgage and pay our bills for food and necessities.

The practice developed and we hired more people and moved to larger quarters on the main street in Lorain. We now had two new partners, Art Damanski and Bob Ginty. Art had been an employee of Norm's before we joined. He had also been with Haskins and Sells while I was there. In fact he had been my assistant on a couple of jobs. I did not think he was partnership material mostly because he was very bullheaded. Both Loyal and I agreed on this but Norm insisted because he said he had promised Art a partnership if he got his C.P.A. We had never known this when the firm was formed. Well, we finally agreed and Art became a partner. Bob Ginty also became a partner. He was a lawyer and a C.P.A. He was a smart cookie. Loyal and I both agreed to this. We also had a young man – a senior accountant at Haskins and Sells – that Norm in his persuasive way hired. He was also apparently given promises.

In 1956, we decided to purchase a practice in Wooster, Ohio. It came down to who would go. I was tapped. I believe to this day that this was Norm's way of getting me to where I couldn't bother him. I had always insisted on running the firm according to our rules and agreements.

Rita and I rode all over Wooster and found it to be very nice and pleasant. I talked to the leading attorneys and bankers and they encouraged me. Then we went along with the deal. Rita and Aunt Mary Hagan spent two days with realtors. Mary was the first or second woman to receive a real estate license in Ohio. She had a realty firm in Cleveland and Milton Herd worked for her as did Pop Hagan before he died. The firm was called Hagan Realty. Their motto was, "Let Hagan help you". We always kidded her and said, "If Hagan helps you, God help you." Mary had no other family and spent a great deal of time with us. My kids adored her. My parents visited us often as did Grandma Sadie Hagan. We always enjoyed all of their company.

Mary and Rita found us a big, old, solid masonry home at 910 Quinby Avenue near downtown Wooster. Mary got the owner to take the mortgage at 4%. We all moved in and each of the children had their own room. Again there was a flurry of buying appliances and carpeting. We later bought dining room furniture, sofas and other furniture. The house had been built in 1912 and still had a cistern in one corner of the basement. It had two big furnaces and the ceilings were ten feet tall. Boy, the gas bills were huge in the winter!

We had taken over a practice that was very run down and the fees that were charged were way below the going rate for C.P.A. work. We did get a backlog of a few good clients. One was Seville Centrifugal Bronze, owned by Carl Simpson. I struck an accord with Carl and we became buddies. I also began to guide him in business dealings. He had been a machinist before taking over this small machine shop and foundry and had very little business experience. He expanded rapidly, driving our association and I taught him business language and reliance on good accounting. He was very appreciative. We socialized and went on vacations together for years afterward. Rita and I enjoyed going to Tangiers Restaurant with him and his wife Sarah many Saturday nights. He picked up the tab, since we discussed business the whole evening. The wives became friends and played golf together. We always paid our own way on vacation trips however and went all over the county. The resort always had to have a golf course. Carl dearly loved to play golf.

We had another good client in Sprosty Bag Co. Ray Sprosty senior was a tough client but the company received a big tax refund and I was aces high after that. He had a great cabin in Canada and along with others spent a week up there for three years with him and his cronies. I learned all about Canadian fishing in the French River and the upper Georgian Bay. Ray Sprosty senior had an Indian

guide whose wife did all the cooking. Jack Critchfield, an attorney, and I portaged up to a load that hadn't been fished for a couple years. The Indian guide paddled the canoe as we fished. I never have had or probably never will again have small mouth bass fishing like we had that day. Every cast brought in a big fish. We soon had our limit but continued fishing. Our guide (a true conservationist) would keep throwing the smallest of the catch back. The results were when we went back to the cottage, we had a limit of all trophy fish.

Later, Ray Sr. died and I inherited his son, Ray Jr. as a friend. After Ray Sr. died, Ray Jr. inherited the cottage on the French River, but it was a corporate asset and he sold it. Howard King, a judge, who had been Ray senior's constant companion on trips to Canada, went into mourning. No more free trips to Canada. Howard was a real character – more about that later.

Our three children went to St. Mary's School and they all did well in school. I still marvel that they all lead such admirable lives. Their characters were molded by their mother, Rita. She did this by example, constant care and guidance. She taught them Christian principles. The nuns helped too. As a consequence, we never had a dope problem. None of them has ever smoked and all have been happily married and are raising good kids themselves.

Rita never worked in commerce but as a homemaker she was superb. She seemed to anticipate all troubles that could happen to children. Consideration for others was her big theme. So I cannot take any bows for helping in bringing up the kids. I was so busy working that only at night would we discuss home problems. I never brought the many problems of the workplace home. In that way I do think I helped the family.

We were surprised and delighted that Carolyn Sue was born on April 9, 1958. She inherited what we called Grandma's room. This was a very small bedroom in the back of the second floor. The three older children pitched in and helped with the chores. We had no real disruptions and weathered schedules of boy scouts, tap dancing, girl scouts, plays and all the other children's activities.

I became a scouter and went to scout camp with Joe, slept on hard beds on the ground and hiked the hills with him. Joe became a Life Scout and we both went into the honorary "Order of the Arrow" group together. The ordeal ceremony was pretty tough on me and I was really tired and short of breath enduring it. It was then that I decided to quit smoking. I went home and never touched a cigarette again. Boy was the family thankful. I am now very intolerant of even the smell of a place or car where there has been smoking.

I had hoped that Joe would become an Eagle Scout, but when he went into high school, he had other interests. I had never attained Eagle Scout because after the first attempt at the Life Saving merit badge, I failed. I quit scouting soon after. Joe III was a great swimmer and could easily have been an Eagle Scout. Even after Joe left the program, I stayed and became a member of the Buckeye Council. I was also district training chairman for three years. I still believe scouting is a great mold of boys for good purposes.

Rita handled the girls' activities and she was a leader in scouting and other endeavors. She was also president of P.T.A. at St. Mary's. Of course she had Carolyn during her tenure and I had to take over. I fussed and fumed. I never wanted to take over the position in the first place. Oh well, I guess I really didn't suffer.

On February 2, 1961, Rita again gave birth to a child, Thomas John, named after her father Tom Hagan. We were certainly different from the whole trend to have five children. However, we were a closely knit family and had much joy and love for each other. Rita and I often said we have the world,

five wonderful children and all of us are healthy. We were at least able to provide for them what was deemed necessary. Tom had to sleep in a crib in our room while he was an infant as we were out of bedrooms. I soon learned what getting up two to four times a night entailed. By the time Tom was born, Joe was almost in high school and the girls would soon follow. Joe was active in speech and with another student, became number one on the debate team. He and his partner were finalists in the state tournament. They came in second. He was awarded the Freedlander Trophy at Wooster High School for being the outstanding debater of the year. He was also on the swim team and played a year on the golf team. He did well in school and worked part time at Young's IGA food store.

When Pat enrolled in high school, she too became a debater and did very well. She was the head majorette for the marching band and a class officer. She was also the editor of the school newspaper. Again, Rita and I were P.T.A. officers. Kathy also was a member of the band, playing saxophone. She also participated on the debate team and did very well. She too was the editor of the high school newspaper. I forgot to mention that the high school was only three blocks from our house, so there were no transportation problems. Carrie followed and was an excellent saxophone player. She earned varsity letters in basketball and tennis. She was also outstanding in individual events for the speech department. She went to Nationals in Washington D.C. and won a \$500 savings bond as an individual orator. Tom followed Carrie to high school. He was a class officer and an excellent debater and won the Freedlander Trophy thirteen years after his brother Joe.

As a family, we really enjoyed each other, except that Joe teased the girls and this Rita didn't like. Even to this day, he loves to tease and his daughter Kellie follows in his footsteps.

When we moved to Wooster, Rita took over our family tradition of having a big family and friends celebration on Christmas Eve. My parents had always trimmed the tree on Christmas Eve and had a big party. Soon after we moved to Wooster, my parents moved to Florida for the winter season. Rita promptly took over. We sang Christmas Carols and for all the years thereafter that Rita lived, we had a great family and friends party. Many people whom I seldom see remark that they have fond memories of those parties. After the guests left and the kids were in bed, we had a mad scramble to get all the Christmas presents around the tree. Aunt Mary for many years was always there to wise-crack and help in the festivities. Many of us went to midnight mass and in later years, I marched as a Fourth Degree Knight of Columbus at that mass.

On Christmas morning, no kid was allowed to go down the stairs until we were all up. They sat at the top of the stairs and begged to come down. When Rita said OK, there was a mad dash down the stairs. Presents were soon scattered all around the room. It was difficult to get them to eat breakfast. This process continued even with the advent of grandchildren. All eight of them followed the same process at our family Christmas get-togethers.

I should get back to my business. Our practice grew and in the early sixties, we moved to a new office building on Portage Road on the north side of Wooster. Five of the firm's partners, including me, formed a land company a few years before and built a new office building for the Norwalk Office. The same land company bought two parcels of land in Wooster next the new Young's IGA grocery store. We deeded a strip to be used as our entrance and also one of the entrances to the Young's parking lot. The building was designed for future growth. For the present, Young's rented half of the building with a private entrance as their office. Our firm paid a fairly low rent to the land company. We were really poised for expansion.

I must now go back again in time to relate the firm's expansion. By 1970, we had offices in Lorain, Elyria, Norwalk, Fremont, Sandusky, Ashland, Galion and Wooster. We had fourteen partners with very loose central control. Partner meetings were very unproductive. Norm Frank, our senior partner,

had the title of Senior Administrative Partner. Our partnership agreement was never meant to cope with the problems of a firm this large. Total agreement was necessary to change the partnership agreement. We had an attorney write drafts but never could we get unanimous consent to any substantive change. Each partner in charge of an office would not relinquish any authority. Some of the newer partners were very greedy and had all sorts of schemes to vary the split of profits. Foolishly originally we made all partners equal partners after three years of being junior partners. Being removed from the home office in Lorain, many of the other offices acted independently and without general approval.

Norm retired and it all fell on my shoulders to be the administrative partner. I really had a can of worms. I tried to bring reforms and have a managing partner without him and a board to guide him. To no avail, some wouldn't agree. I was ready to break away from the firm, but a few of the older partners begged me not to. I struggled along and essentially gave up reform. I put all my efforts into developing the Wooster Office.

In June of 1977, I was asked to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Wayne County National Bank. This was the largest bank in our county. I of course wished to accept, but had to have the partnership approval for my business duties outside the partnership. A couple of the young greedy guys resented the appointment. I pointed out that the director's fees were more than our hourly rates and all the income would go to the firm. At any rate, we had no chance of getting the bank audit. The bank had auditors of many years standing. They all finally agreed and I went on the board and spent 23 happy years with a great group of men and women directors. I was also instrumental in bringing a great deal of business to the bank and the trust department. I retired in 1997 and became and still am a director emeritus.

The ball bounces in funny ways. One day in the late 1970's, a fellow came into my office named Jerry Shapiro. I only casually knew him. He said a group was thinking of buying a centrifugal bronze company. He said he knew I was Carl Simpson's Seville Bronze accountant and he would like me to do a preliminary study and feasibility study. I took the engagement and immediately examined the facility and the books and records. I received little cooperation from the company bookkeeper. Their accounting system was terrible. However, I recommended to Jerry that the purchase the assets at the agreed price. It looked like a good deal to him when I made projections and forecasts. Then he said we always like to have our accountant have a piece of the action. We feel he will have more of an interest in helping the company prosper. I asked Jerry how much. He replied that all except me would own 12.5%. He said that would be \$10,000. I said I could really only put in \$5000, for a 6.25% interest. He said OK. In prior years, Norm and Loyal had put the firm in some bad deals and we had cleared all firm ownership of stock when new partners came in. It was a rule that no commitments of firm money could be made for outside interests. And no interests could be held in a client whereby we issued a "prepared from the books without audit" opinion. I explained to Jerry that I would have to sell my stock if ever anything was required more than the "prepared from the books without audit" and our statement would have to have the non-independent clause. This didn't faze him. So we were off and running. The first year was a nightmare. Grundel, the former owner who was supposed to continue for two years as a manager, quit. He had purchased some stock in the new company and sold the shares to Jerry. The bookkeeper was impossible to retrain. Finally, I put it to Jerry to fire her and he did. The sales manager who was one of the 12.5% guys was absolutely a flop. He had a bad contract with a company that I proved was losing money on every sale. However, a manager brought in by Jerry from New York was convinced he could make money from this customer. I was convinced we couldn't. At the time we hired a production man, Jim DelPropost, who was an expert machinist and tool and die maker. He had been a partner in a tool company which had been liquidated. He lasted two months and was fired.

Meanwhile, to stay afloat, all shareholders had to loan the company the same amount they had paid for their capital stock. Things deteriorated to the point that Jerry came to my office and said he

believed we should sell the inventory to smelters and the machinery to a used machinery dealer; in other words, liquidate. I implored him to fire the sales manager and also the New York guy and bring back Jim DelPropost to run the company. He did so and Jim came to me to see what he should do. I told him, "There is a great opportunity here but demand a good salary and bonus arrangement if the company gets out of the red." He recognized that he should receive a stock option to purchase a full share of company stock at the original shareholder price.

Jerry agreed to all these proposals and Jim went to work. He got out of the bad contract and obtained work from some of his previous contacts. In two years, the company was profitable and has never had a loss quarter since that first month of profitability. It was my primary source of income in my retirement, until I gave the stock to my children.

CHAPTER 12 – Retirement

Rita was ill at this point (she had a stroke in 1977) but always bounced back and never complained. Wanda Spencer (a wonderful lady) took care of her during the day and I did at night. We still traveled and visited my friends Gabe and Jean Gever in Cape Cod and Bill and Mary Sharpe in Bethesda, Maryland. Our children, all being married, live quite a distance from Wooster. That meant trying to visit as often as we could. Everyone came home for Christmas. The house on Quinby soon became full again of children's fun and laughter. The ritual of all kids staying up on the second floor until everything was ready around the Christmas tree became a family tradition. At the word OK, many came flying down the stairs and paper and wrapping filled the room. All during this times, Rita still had her great Christmas Eve party for all the family and friends. People still talk to me about what a wonderful and generous hostess she was.

Winter was a real hardship for Rita, so we began to go to Florida during the cold months. We settled in Marathon, Florida to be near Rita's mother. Jay Henthorne, a Wooster connection owned a condominium there rented his beautiful place to us for the months of January, February and March. We overlooked Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Sadie fell and was in a rest home in Marathon, thus enabling us to visit her often. The children and friends also visited us there. We had a second bedroom with a private bathroom at one end of the condominium. This gave complete privacy to all.

Grandma Hagan died soon after. She was a wonderful lady. We returned to Wooster and Rita was very ill at this time. She had a series of strokes but that never stopped her. We continued to travel and went to Florida, again to the same condominium. In 1988, we went on the finest vacation one could ever imagine. The whole family went on a Caribbean cruise. Rita paid half of the fares. Tom and his wife Joanne also came along as did Don Grove's father and wife Gwen and sister and brother-in-law. It was great fun and all the children and grandchildren lived it up, as did Rita and I. She was a good sport about everything. She even received a "Ship Shape" award for participation in athletic events. This she did while sitting in a chair. Tom Hagan was not in good health either. Rita had a spell leaving the air terminal but we arrived home safely.

That winter, Joanne called us and told us that Tom was close to death and in a hospital in South Miami. Rita insisted on flying down there. We did and Tom died the next morning after we arrived. Joanne had the funeral in Ohio and Rita was still grieving. The month before his death, Tom and Joanne visited Rita in Aultman Hospital in Canton and Tom said to Rita, "What are you trying to do, beat me to see mom?"

I don't know what I would have done without Wanda Spencer. She took care of Rita and mothered me. I stayed with Rita from 5:30 pm to 8 am in the morning. Then Wanda took over and did all the chores and helped Rita.

In June 1989, I again rushed Rita to the hospital. The doctors informed me to alert the children. They all dropped everything and came to the hospital. Rita died June 4 during the early morning. She was prepared and ready. We all miss her so. I have never witnessed the praise and true feelings of so many for this kind and gentle lady.

It was tough to get all families together at once. Joe married Linda. They have two children, Kellie and Michael. Joe obtained his masters in finance from Ohio State and worked in Detroit for Ford before moving to San Antonio, Texas. He now has a successful business in telemarketing and has over 200 employees.

Pat married Don Grove and they have two girls, Kristen and Cara. Pat received her masters

degree after obtaining her bachelors from Miami University in education. They live in Cincinnati and Pat teaches school and Don works in the construction supply industry.

Kathy wed Tim Stokes and they have two children, Ryan and Christopher. Kathy has a masters degree in education after obtaining her bachelors from Miami University. Tim and Kathy live in Williamstown New Jersey, where Tim works in a foundry and Kathy is a teacher.

Carolyn and Jeff Piotrowski and their son Phillip live in Rockledge, Florida. Carolyn is a chemical engineer from the University of Notre Dame and works for an engineering consulting company. Jeff has his PhD and is a manager in a research firm.

Thomas married Tammy Doyle. Both are Miami University graduates and have lived in Detroit and Chicago. They now live in Chagrin Falls, Ohio with their daughter Katherine Hagan. Tammy is a sales director for Nestle and Tom is a manager of a bronze company.

So you can see the difficulty in getting them all together. It was certainly difficult for them to help their mother but they all tried.

I sat around after that in my big chair after Rita's death and didn't even watch television. Ray Sprosty would come by and try to arouse me, but I couldn't get with it. I moped around and until 1991 when I thought I would like to travel again. I asked Joanne Hagan if she would like to go to Alaska on a Western Reserve University trip. We agreed to each pay our own way and really enjoyed the trip. I did get strep throat in Juneau and stayed in bed while Joanne went to the Red Dog Saloon and saw all the sites. A penicillin shot helped for a speedy recovery and we both agreed that it was a great vacation.

We decided to go on another trip the next year to go up the Rhine and visit Germany, France and Holland. This time we went without a travel group and I had to carry all our luggage, Joanne had broken her arm a week before our trip! We again enjoyed every minute of our trip. After a few more long trips, we decided to get married and did so on April 24, 1993 at St. Mary's Church in Wooster.

We always did things in a hurry. Joanne sold two houses, one in Florida (a mobile home) and the house in Chagrin Harbor. I sold 910 Quinby and we bought the condominium next to Jay Henthorne's in Marathon. We both loved the area and Casa Cayo was a neat place. All of the kids sooner or later visited us there. In fact, in 1994, all the kids rented three big condominiums at Faro Blanco, a few blocks from our place, for Christmas.

Joanne's family also came to Marathon and we had many good times. Both of her grandsons, Nicky and Nathaniel, stayed with us at various times. Joanne's daughter and Max, her son, also visited us. The biggest deal in Marathon was fishing and I bought a 23 ½ foot Bayliner with two 130 horsepower motors. It had a cuddy cabin just big enough for two. We went on trips with it, but mainly it was used for fishing. The Vargas, Kellie Seringer, Ray and Nancy Sprosty, and Bill and Mary Sharpe visited us there. We continued to travel and I believe we hit every cruise line and all the islands from the Bahamas to the Panama Canal. We also traveled to Venezuela, Columbia, and Mexico.

Summers were spent at the home I purchased at 1930 Edwards in Wooster. It is a ranch style with three bedrooms and a finished basement with two bedrooms, bath and a large recreation room. I live there to this day. We traveled to foreign countries in the summer. One trip was to Russia, Poland and Belgium. I tried to find the hospital in Poznan where I had been hospitalized during the war, but couldn't find it.

While living in Florida during the Christmas season of 1999, Joanne and I had a tiff. She stated afterwards that she wanted a divorce. I tried to dissuade her, but she said she wanted her freedom. I did

not contest it and since we had a prenuptial agreement, there was no property settlement either way. Since she owned half of the condominium, in the settlement I gave her an extra \$5000 so she could pay for a condominium she bought in Columbus without eroding her capital. I also gave her an additional amount to sign off joint ownership of 1930 Edwards. We parted amicably.

So I am an 85 year old guy living alone and liking it. I go to Florida for the winter months and visit my daughter Carrie and her family. I also have many friends there and attend dances at least twice a week. They have great parties there. I am still a director emeritus of the Wayne County National, though they just sold out to a larger bank, a director of Wayne Mutual Insurance Company, and recently retired as a director of Advance Bronze Inc. In the summer, I play golf in the old man's league and take long walks.

On the 29th of September 2003, a baby girl was born to Michael and Kate Seringer. Now Joe III is a grandfather and finally, I am a great grandfather. Her name is Rita Elizabeth. What a grand gesture to name the child after my departed wife.

On June 12 of 2004, I had a triple bypass and an aorta valve replacement at the Cleveland Clinic. I have completely rehabilitated.

Tom, Tammy, Katie and I use the boat in the summer on Lake Erie. Tom hopes to sell it to buy a bigger, more comfortable craft. The bridge group that Rita and I played in still plays together and I substitute in another bridge group. The Westfalls, Helen and Emerson, and I often go to the Elks, go out for dinner, or just sit at their house and eat and drink. So far, housework and yardwork (except mowing) keep me busy.

Life has been good to me. The pride that I have for my children, their spouses and the grandchildren and now great grandchild makes me feel good all over. I love them all.



1937 East High School Reunion 2001



The Four Tenors? No, the Seringer Men, Joe II, Michael, Joe III and Tom at Michael's Wedding



Joe (6 months) and (Mary) Jane (27 months)



Joe (6 ½ months) and (Mary) Jane (27 ½ months) with Grandmother Josephine



(Mary) Jane (3 ½) and Joe (21 months)



Joseph Senior with (Mary) Jane (4), Bobby (7 months) and Joe (2)



(Mary) Jane (4 ½), Bobby (11 months) and Joe (2 ½)



(Mary) Jane (6 ½), Bobby (2 ½) and Joe (4 ½)



Fishing in Marathon near the Seven Mile Bridge 1996



East High Buddies (Left to right, Claude and Mrs. Pittman, Jim O'Connor, Joe Seringer, Dave Lebovitz) circa 1999



The Seringer Family 1965 (Tom, Rita, Carrie, Pat, Joe III, Joe Jr, Kathy)



Joseph Sr., (Mary) Jane (13), Joe (11) and a Boarder



Rita, Wilbur and Mary Sharpe, and Len Feldman – Kriege Reunion circa 1985



High School Graduation 1937



Rita Hagan – 5 months old in Front of House at 6205 Hough Avenue



Josephine Seringer (Joe's mother) with Jane Mader (Joe's sister) and her two oldest boys, John and Bobby



Rita Hagan, 11 Weeks with Tom and Sadie Hagan (right) and Mary Hagan (left)



Pat, Joe III and Kathy, Lorain, OH



Wedding Bells! May 5, 1945, Joe and Rita Seringer with Tom Hagan (Rita's Brother) and Jane Seringer Mader (Joe's sister)



June 11, 1941 Joe's College Graduation, Western Reserve University, with Rita Hagan



**At Pat and Bob Turner's Wedding, June 14, 1946
Sadie and Tom Hagan, Milton Hird, Mary Hagan and Joe**



Second Lieutenant Seringer – 1942



Joe Seringer and Rita Hagan, Before shipping out to Europe



Joe as a Private, second from left, First weekend pass with buddies



**POW 17th Field Artillery and Observation Battalion
(First row far left - Wilbur Sharpe, second row far left - Len Feldman, second row far right - Gabe Gever, top row second from left - John Scully, top row far right - Joe Seringer)**



Rita Hagan at General Electric circa 1944

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All Our Love,
Your Children, Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren