Early Years

I will begin my autobiography with a short genealogy of my family. My father's family migrated to Florida from Lumberton, North Carolina. They lived in Alachua, Florida, which is near Gainesville, on the site of a turpentine distilling operation. I do not know how long they had lived there when my father was born in 1902. His siblings consisted of one sister and three brothers. The oldest was Hattie, the only girl. Next was Hector, then Dad (Landis), followed by Clarence, and then Dewey.

Dad's father, my grandfather, was a foreman on the turpentine "still". The turpentine still operations were migratory, following the pine forests throughout the South. The sap from the pine trees was collected from the trunks of the trees where slashes were cut in the bark, allowing the sap to drain into clay pots. These pots were similar to clay flowerpots, except they had no holes in the bottom. The slashes were in the shape of a "V" with a leg length of about 12 inches. The bottom slash had two metal parts nailed under each leg of the V, which directed the sap into the clay pots. Workers would go through the forest, collect this sap in the clay pots, and transport it to the stills. "Still" is a slang word for the device that would distill the sap. The sap was boiled in the still and the vapors would be condensed, resulting in turpentine. There was a gummy residual matter formed in the process, which was called resin. Resin was used in many ways, but mainly to secure waterproof joints in sailing vessels. Thus, these products were called "naval" stores. At that time, there was a huge market for both turpentine and resin.

As a young boy, I can recall Dad telling us about his life as a lad growing up on the turpentine still. All of the workers were black. The white families were actually the minority group on the stills. My favorite story was one in which he told about going on a horseback trip with his father one day to inspect the area. During the trip, they came upon a house in which one of the black families lived. Going into the house, which was customary, they found no one home. However, they did find a hot meal on the stove. They then served themselves some of the food. Dad commented that this was probably one of the best meals of his youth. The food was possum and sweet taters, which was a classic meal for the black workers.

Another favorite story, although sad, was the occasion in which Dad's brother Dewey (Uncle Dewey) was blinded in one eye. As an infant, probably between one and three years old, Dewey would integrate himself with the older children while at play. One time, Hector (Uncle Heck) was playing with a drawn top. A drawn top was a toy, which was pear-shaped with a metal point on one end on which it would spin. To get it spinning involved wrapping a cord around the base

of the top and throwing it down, while jerking the cord away from the top. The spinning top would fly through the air and continue spinning on the ground where it landed. Unfortunately, in one of these throws, the top ricocheted, and the spinning pointed end hit Dewey in the eye. With no medical care possible, the only alternative was to try to make him comfortable. I recall Dad telling me that the primary means of comforting him was riding him on a railroad service vehicle. This vehicle was propelled on the narrow gauge railroad by two people pumping handles up and down similar to the action of a see-saw. Dewey lost sight in that eye. It was ultimately removed and replaced with an artificial one in the early years of his manhood.

Gramma Stone

The only story I remember about Uncle Heck was Dad telling about him being the family bully, always intimidating the other male siblings. Hattie (Aunt Hattie), being female and the oldest, was not intimidated by Heck. I guess the bully stories about Heck subtly created in me distant feelings about him for the rest of my life. I feel sure that Dad's favorite brother was Clarence, who became police chief in Orlando. All the boys revered and honored their only sister, Hattie. I was also very fond of my Aunt Hattie and looked upon her as a sort of second mother. All of Dad's siblings lived nearby in Orlando, and we visited with them regularly.

As for my grandparents, the only one which was still alive during my youth was my dad's mother, Grandma Stone. She lived in Orlando also, and visiting her was like going to see the Grand Old Dame. Her

relationship with her grandchildren was nothing like the relationship that most children enjoy with their grandparents today. I will never forget the fact that she dipped snuff. She always had a container beside her in which to spit. That was a requirement of dipping snuff. Whereas men would smoke or chew tobacco, it was not uncommon for women to "dip". On rare occasions, when she would visit us, we had to have a spittoon, usually a coffee can, available for her. I can vividly remember that the one she used in her home was white enamel, with a removable lid. At Christmastime, we children would pool our money and purchase a couple of cans of Buttercup Snuff for her.

I was born in Orlando, June 4, 1924, six years after the end of World War I and five years before the stock market crash of 1929 which marked the beginning of the Great Depression era. The Depression continued unabated until the impact of World War II and colored many aspects of my "growing up" years.

Lou as 1 year old infant

In those days, Orlando was a small town with a population of about 20,000 residents. It was known as the "City Beautiful" and was proud of the fact that there were thirty-two lakes within its city limits. The economy centered on two things: the citrus industry and winter tourism. Adjacent to Orlando was the town of Winter Park, the mecca of sophisticated winter tourism in Central Florida. Its many wealthy tourists were responsible for building most of the beautiful homes still existing around the chain of lakes in Winter Park. I mention Winter Park because during my youth my dad

managed the Bumby Hardware Store in downtown Winter Park. I would accompany him to work sometimes as a boy, and I later worked there in the summers during my teenage years.

Lifestyles were simple then. Indoor plumbing and electricity were not found in every household. Where indoor plumbing was installed, the sanitary systems were served by septic tanks, since municipal sewer systems were not very widespread. I remember helping my dad rebuild our septic system several times at our Conroy house. Electricity was used only for indoor lighting in the residences circa 1924. The common method of cooking was by either kerosene or wood stoves. An artificial gas distribution system had been built in Orlando, and gas stoves were beginning to appear. My first recollection of a kitchen stove at our residence on Conroy Avenue was a gas stove. The gas plant was located on West Robinson Avenue, just behind where the Omni Hotel at Expo Center is now located. This artificial gas service continued in the greater Orlando area until natural gas arrived in Central Florida in the early 1960's.

We had no hot water, except what we heated on top of the stove. During cold weather, a large pot of water was heated on the stove and then carried into the bathroom where it was poured into the bathtub. This took the chill out, and that is about all it accomplished. Our first hot water heater was a gas sidearm heater. It had no controls; you just lit it when you knew you were going to need hot water. This was a great advancement in improving our lifestyle! Soon thereafter, Dad installed a heating element into our wood-fueled heating system. This provided us with hot water as a side benefit from space heating in the winter. Later, Dad had a plumber friend build us a solar hot water heater. This was in the mid 1930's, evidence that solar heating is not a modern idea. Whereas now it is looked upon as an environmental saving, Dad's motivation was purely for financial saving. One of my chores as a boy was to drain the heater on a winter night when freezing temperatures were forecast. The solar water heater worked well and lasted until after Ken and I returned from World War II, and I am sure the old sidearm heater was also still working at that time.

Block ice, which was home delivered on residential routes, was the common method of refrigeration. It was kept in our "icebox". Our first electric refrigerator was a Norge, which appeared on the scene in about 1936. It was a used unit, which Dad bought from a friend who had an electric shop in Winter Park. It did not work at first, and I can remember the grief Mother gave Dad on making the deal. Ultimately, it was repaired and became a source of pride and joy for Mother, but I do not think she ever admitted that to Dad.

Telephones were available, and we had a telephone at our house on Conroy Avenue. Our phone number was 4340 until Orlando started adding exchanges after the war. In fact, Orlando was sophisticated enough to have a dial system, but party lines were common. You received a distinct ring for your number. When you wanted to use the phone, you picked it up and listened to see if it was

being used by another party. We had a four party line for many years. Just before I went into the army, we got a private line. Price was the primary consideration, rather than facilities, although the reverse was true after the war, when Helen and I were first married.

Automobiles were becoming the primary means of transportation in the 1920's, although horses were still being used for some delivery purposes. The only horses I can remember seeing were used by the ice wagons which delivered in the downtown Orlando area.

There was one radio station in Orlando, WDBO, which originally started operations at Rollins College. The station letters were identified as "Way Down By Orlando". Only a few families had the capability to listen to stations, which came from such points as Pittsburgh or Cincinnati, and the quality was such that you could only understand a portion of what was being broadcast. Uncle Heck was one of the few with the technical expertise and interest to have a radio. It was at his house that I remember hearing my first scratchy, static-filled radio program. I have no recollection of what it was. It was analogous to us in the early days of television in Orlando, in the 1950's, trying to receive a fuzzy program coming out of Jacksonville.

Radio developed and became the most popular home entertainment. As a boy, I recall Dad demanding quietness during the "Amos and Andy" show. It was broadcast at 7:00 pm. This was about our dinner (supper to us) time since Dad worked until 6:00 pm at Bumby's in Winter Park. "Amos and Andy" was followed by "Lum and Abner". There were no networks then, and we received the shows from WLW in Cincinnati, Ohio. This was known as the Crosley station, one of the most powerful stations in the country. There were many early radio programs that originated there that are now considered classics and contributed to the culture of our country at that time. Will Rogers was one of the most popular entertainer-philosophers until his premature death in a plane crash with Wiley Post near Nome, Alaska in the mid 1930's. He had a weekly radio show, as well as a newspaper column. His death was a great loss to grassroots America. The newspaper "Extra" published on the day of Will Rogers' death was found in Grandma Stone's personal effects after her death. This is a manifestation of how Rogers' death affected the common American.

Since newspapers were the primary source of news in those days, when an event of national significance occurred, an "extra" edition was published and released with the late breaking news. The extras were not distributed through the regular routes but sold from the streets at key locations. I can recall a few other extras during my youth. They were: the conviction of the Lindbergh kidnapper; the crash of the Hindenburg zeppelin; the national elections in 1932 and 1936; and the Pearl Harbor attack by the Japanese in 1941. The wire services of AP (Associated Press) and UP (United Press) were the main disseminators of news, and this was done on Teletype systems. Generally, the

newspaper offices were the only place where these teletype machines were located. As radio developed and news broadcasting became a part of its business, they also installed the teletype machines.

It is also worth noting that, at that time, Orlando published two daily newspapers. The morning edition was called the Orlando Morning Sentinel, and the one published in the afternoon was called the Orlando Reporter Star. My family subscribed to the afternoon edition, because there was never enough time in the morning for anyone to read the paper. It was a common practice for my mother and father to read the paper after they had retired to bed. The next morning, the paper could always be found scattered on the floor next to their bed.

My first memory of anything specific during my early years was the birth of my brother Jimmy. I had just had my fifth birthday. I can remember going to stay with Aunt Hattie and Uncle Gus. They then lived on Greenwood Avenue, just a block from where is now the entrance to the Greenwood Cemetery. I had also stayed with them during Ken's birth, but I do not remember that months old when Ken was born. Births at that time occurred in the home, attended by a midwife or the family doctor. My mother was attended at all her births by her family doctor, Dr. James A Ford. The "James" was the origin of Jimmy's name. On one of my visits to see the new baby with Uncle Gus and Aunt Hattie, I tugged on Uncle Gus after a while and said, "Let's go home". When Dad heard that, my stay with Aunt Hattie and Uncle Gus ended.

Aunt Hattie and Uncle Gus
Circa 1940

I am sure that it was during this stage of my life that I developed the bonds with Aunt Hattie and Uncle Gus that survived until their deaths. In fact, Aunt Hattie

named me as executor (now called personal representative) of her will. It was during this process that I developed a closer relationship with Dahlia, Aunt Hattie's daughter, and J.C., Uncle Clarence's son, a lawyer and prior county judge who handled all the legal aspects of the probate.

As a young boy, I began going to work with Dad on Thursdays. Thursday was chosen, because in those days it was the day of the week that many businesses closed for a half day. I helped Dad load his supplies at Bumby's in Orlando and unload them at the Winter Park store. Living in south Orlando made it convenient for him to be the re-supply carrier, bringing the supplies from the Orlando store to Winter Park.

One thing I can remember is that Dad always carried some type of small advertising book, about 2" x 4", in his rear pocket. It would contain the merchandise list which he was to pick up at the Orlando store. When he would load his truck in Orlando, he would scratch off the items he had picked up and charge them out to the Winter Park store. It was during those charges that I deciphered the cost code for Bumby's merchandise. Those that remained in his book would be the items he would order from salesmen who called on him in Winter Park. Dad was known for his terrible handwriting. His notebook of wanted items looked like a scratchy mess. I remember on a few occasions he forgot his book and called Mother to read off the items in the book over the phone. She could only interpret about half of them, and some of what was left Dad could decipher by clues from one or two letters. The remainder would go unfilled until the next day. After I had spent a few years as a handyman at the store, I learned his jargon and was used as the interpreter.

One of my chores was to sweep the concrete floors of the store from stem to stern using the "dust down". This "dust down" was nothing more than sawdust in which a small amount of oil had been added to control the dust. I continued to work in the store after my army service and while attending Rollins College. In fact, I was working part time there when I accepted the job with Orlando Utilities. I even worked part time at Dad's hardware store after he opened his own hardware business, and I served as his bookkeeper until we moved to Indian River City in 1960. The exposure at Bumby's during my formative years was a valuable experience for me. It developed my understanding of human nature, ethics, business procedures, and many other disciplines needed in life.

During the Depression, which occurred during the early part of my life up until the start of World War II, recreational activities were limited, due to the economy of the country. One of the major recreational activities of the middle-income class during that period was the game of softball. In those days, it was called "diamond ball" due to the diamond shape of the bases. My father was one of the leaders of that activity in Central Florida. All of the softball games in Winter Park were played at Harper-Shepherd Field, now the home of Rollins College baseball. Dad was the playing manager for the team sponsored by Bumby

Hardware in the Winter Park league. In softball, the manager is the “king bee”. He makes all the decisions regarding the fielding of the softball team. Dad also served as coach when the team was at bat and as the third base coach when they were in the field. I remember one of our perennial competitors was Lakemont Dairy. Our team won many league championships.

As a boy, I spent a lot of time at Harper-Shepherd Field. Originally, I was the “batboy” for the team. That job involved removing the bats when our team batter got on base by either hitting the ball or being walked. It is a position that all teams utilize, even in the major leagues today. The job also involved being the “gopher”, primarily for the manager but also for the team in general. It was an active and ubiquitous job. All batboys were dressed in the same uniforms as the rest of their team. As I became older, this honorable job was passed on to my siblings, Ken and then Jim. I then became a spectator, sitting in the stands with those from the neighborhood who accompanied us to the games. There was no charge for spectators to come to the city league games. There would only be an admission charge for special events, such as traveling team exhibitions or national team champion exhibitions. The commitment of the community to support the teams was overwhelming. At the end of the season, teams vying for a playoff spot would draw “standing room only” crowds.

Mom at clothesline

In the early days of softball in Winter Park, the standard uniform consisted of white cotton duck pants and a jersey, which identified the sponsor. The jersey was purchased by the sponsor, but the white duck pants were provided by the individual. It was the individual’s responsibility to have his uniform clean for each game. I can remember my mother’s commitment to having a clean, starched, and ironed pair of white trousers for Dad for each game. And this was before the days of our family having a washing machine. Mother spent countless hours making sure that Dad’s uniform was spotless. There were many superstitions about cleaning the uniforms. The most challenging one would not allow the cleaning of the uniforms when the team was on a winning streak. I remember this as being a point of conflict between my parents on many occasions.

One of my mother's favorite expressions was, "Cleanliness is next to godliness". All during the Depression, she never violated her detail to cleanliness. She often said that maybe her boys would wear the same outfits to school over and over, but they would always be clean. Another one of her sayings was that, "My boys look good in blue". She said that because if we were not in blue, we were nude. One of my early childhood memories is that of seeing my mother washing clothes using a hand scrub board, then two rinse tubs, one which contained "bluing", starching certain pieces, wringing them out, and finally hanging them to dry on an outdoor clothes line. All of this happened after the clothes had first been boiled in a large open flame wash pot.

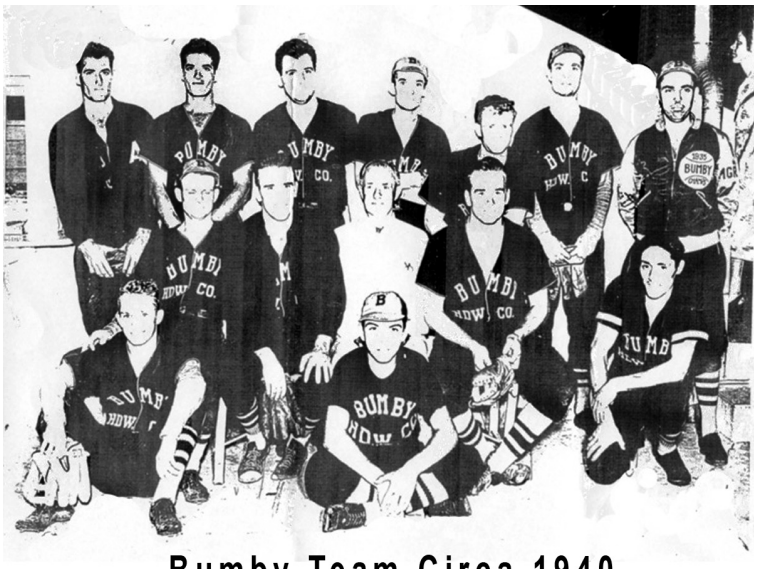
When I was old enough, one of my chores was to make sure that adequate firewood was available for the wash pot. This was not too difficult, due to the fact that my dad would bring home wooden boxes from the hardware store. In those days, most shipments came into the store in wooden crates. All of the washtubs were located on a wooden bench, which was shielded by the garage overhang. A dramatic improvement occurred when the tubs on the bench were replaced by two tubs coupled together on a roller stand. This did, however, create some confusion, due to the fact that the tubs on the stand were square in shape and had drain hoses for emptying. The other tubs had been round and sat on wooden benches. This was the first change in Mother's washing history.

The next change came about when Mother got a "modern" wringer washing machine. This machine changed the way clothes were handled during the scrubbing stage and when they were wrung out in the rinse water. Due to the agitation of the washer, it also eliminated boiling all but the dirtiest clothes. Improvements in detergents were also being made. The effect on me was only that I had less wood to prepare during the boiling process. Clothes were washed in the agitated washer and then passed through rollers to the rinse water. Two hand rinses were still required, as well as starching for those clothes that required it. The clothes still had to be hung out to dry.

Eventually the big breakthrough came with the invention of the automatic washing machine, which eliminated the rinsing. And then along came the automatic dryer. Along with this evolution came better detergents and, just as important, the development of new materials for clothing, which eliminated a lot of the old problems associated with the care of one's wearing apparel. Even in her later years, Mother had the reputation of being very focused on keeping up with her laundry. It was well known that if a garment was left lying around her house, don't bother to look for it. It would have already gone into the laundry process.

Going back to my discussion of our softball days, the sport grew in popularity in Winter Park, and also in Orlando. The city of Orlando built a softball stadium at

what is now known as Expo Park. The stadium was named the C. L. Varner Stadium, in honor of a long time recreational advocate in the city of Orlando. Clarence Varner was the individual who introduced tennis to the city of Orlando. The city facilities at Expo Park contained both the softball field and multiple tennis courts. The Orlando and Winter Park softball programs ran concurrently for many years, although it was generally recognized that the better players were a part of the Orlando league.



Bumby Team Circa 1940

After a while, undercurrents began to surface that maybe some of the teams in Winter Park might be competitive with the teams in Orlando. I was not privy to the details, but somehow Dad was able to convince Bumby's that they should sponsor a team in Orlando. The little "Raggedy Andy" softball team from Winter Park now was in the big league. Whereas, in Winter Park only upper jerseys and caps were furnished, the players in Orlando were furnished with the complete uniforms, including stockings. The team continued to be managed by Dad. This visibility significantly enhanced the sale of sporting goods by Dad, who was the only sporting goods salesman for Bumby's. Prior to that time, most of his sporting goods sales were to Rollins College. As things developed, his primary competitor in business became Denmark Sporting Goods, who also became their prime adversary on the softball field.

Softball flourished in Orlando and became one of the leading spectator sports in the city. One of the interesting historical notes is that during World War II, the Orlando Air Base had a team in the City of Orlando league. They became a powerhouse, since many of the able-bodied men from other teams had entered the military service. It is also a matter of history that many of the former Air Force Base veterans returned to Orlando after the war and became part of its growth.

Dad's contribution to the growth of softball in Orlando was later recognized. After the war and the return of the local veterans, softball continued to grow in all areas. There were many levels of play, with softball fields springing up in all areas of the city. Many of these fields were named after those individuals who had contributed to the growth of softball in the city. One of them was named the

Landis Stone field, after my father. As I remember, the field was located at the Grand Avenue school where my two brothers and I had attended grammar school.

Later on in life, softball played an integral part in my history at Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC). Shortly after I became employed in July of 1949, OUC joined an industrial league. They had previously employed "Runt" Waller, who had played softball for my dad in Winter Park. They were looking for a catcher to play opposite Runt. I turned out to be just what they were looking for. Softball got my career off to a good start at OUC, in that it provided me the exposure I needed to be noticed. Before too long, I was known by many people who were interested in OUC's softball success. This exposure created an atmosphere which allowed me to be satisfactorily employed by OUC for forty years, attaining the position of Assistant General Manager.

Orlando was just a small community during my youth and teenage years. In the 1930's, there was no I-4, no Mills Avenue, no OBT, and no Highway 50 through Orlando. Colonial Drive stopped at what is now the OBT (Orange Blossom Trail). Colonialtown was the center of commerce for the northeast portion of Orlando. My mother's sister Esther lived on a street in that area called Mount Vernon. I can recall that I learned to ride a bicycle on a hill near her house, which was one block west of Hillcrest Elementary School. I learned to ride by first coasting down the hill and learning to keep my balance.

I don't remember the year, but Aunt Esther and her family moved from that location to East Central Boulevard, near the airport. The airport was within walking distance of their house. In the late 1930's, a flight of B-17's landed at the airport. I can remember looking through the chain link fence at these gigantic aircraft. We all know that this plane later made a name for itself in the 8th Air Force in Europe and is one of the weapons credited with winning World War II. I had always had an interest in aviation, and seeing these planes served to further whet my appetite for flying. I was committed to entering the Army Air Force at the beginning of World War II, but my freshman year in college placed such a strain on my eyes that I was unable to pass the physical when the time came. In retrospect, it is my conclusion that there were so many volunteers for the Army Air Force at that time, I believe they were looking for any excuse to eliminate the volunteers. I had to put my flying interest on hold until I was almost fifty years old. Learning to fly at that age became the hobby that dominated my leisure time after that.

One thing I can remember about my childhood and until I went into service is the fact that we were never without chickens. I guess it is because of this that Mother was known by family and friends as being the finest fried chicken cook around. A fried chicken meal did not require any special occasion at our house. We had it many times a week. In addition, we had chicken in all forms that southern cooking provided. Dad's favorite chicken dish was chicken and dumplings. Mother always

made sheet dumplings rather than the now common drop dumpling. By sheet dumplings, I mean that she would make up her dumpling dough and roll it out on a flat table, as you would a piecrust. Then she would cut the sheet into strips about two inches wide, section the strips, and then drop them into the simmering chicken broth, which was filled with a lot of chicken meat and plenty of fat. Where all these chickens came from is a story in itself.

During the Depression, President Roosevelt (F.D.R) was elected on a platform of Depression recovery. He initiated the first in many governmental programs that Lyndon Johnson referred to as the Great Society. In reality, they were social welfare programs that form the basis of our socialist society in America today. It was in these turbulent times in the world that Adolph Hitler obtained his strength and power. One of Roosevelt's programs was the National Recovery Act, commonly called the NRA. It was used for a lot of infrastructure building, but its main purpose was to provide jobs. These jobs paid one dollar a day. The NRA was ultimately declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, but it had left its mark on American politics. I don't know the issue on which the NRA was invalidated. I only mention these social and political issues to set the stage for us having chickens during my youth.

Survival during the Depression was a struggle but very few complained. They did what they had to do to survive and raise a family. Raising chickens for eggs and food was a common undertaking. Baby chickens (biddies) were sold at many seed and feed stores, including Bumby's, but many people chose to order their biddies from hatcheries. The unit price was less, but when one considered the shipping charges and, even more profound, death to the day old biddies in shipment, it was probably a washout. In any event, many people ordered their chickens from the hatchery, C.O.D (cash on delivery) parcel post. On many occasions, the shipments were refused at the post office by the addressee due to lack of money or, in some cases, the large number of deaths in the shipment.

Shipments were made in a three-foot square carton, about eight inches high, partitioned into four quadrants with twenty-five in a quadrant, for a total of 100 chickens per shipment. Since the post office was not in the business of raising chickens, they had to do what they could to salvage, as much as possible, the cost of the postage and the cost of the chickens. Their means for doing that was by taking bids from the public who had stated their interest in obtaining chickens. Dad was on this list. In addition to being on the list, one of his closest friends was Gerard (“Jiggs“) Denning, the Postmaster. His name is still honored by having a street in Winter Park named after him.

The procedure was for the post office to call or contact those on the list and inform them that they were taking bids for a shipment of chickens. They generally set a deadline of 12:00 noon on the day of the bids. This was usually the same day as the refusal by the addressee, so the notification would generally be made around 9:00 am. This gave about three hours for those interested to examine the

chickens and submit their bid. If Dad was interested, he would go to the post office, about a half block away, examine the chickens and withhold submitting his bid. A short time before closing bid time, he would contact Denning. Denning would tell him what he should bid if he wanted the chickens. Depending on many factors, such as the chicken's health, the price, how many we had at home and other variables, Dad would decide whether he wanted to bid the necessary price. I am sure that sometimes he submitted a low bid just to keep things looking okay. In any event, when he was notified of his successful bid, he would call Mother and tell her to get the brooders ready, because he was coming home with a load of biddies.

I remember one particularly cold winter night when Dad arrived with a box of chickens. There were probably at least seventy-five three day old biddies. I make this estimate because they were generally shipped in lots of one hundred, and Dad would not bid on a lot in which many had died. His logic was that if many had died, the survivors could not be in very good shape either. It was too cold that night to put the brooders outside. They ended up under the bed that Ken and I shared. Light bulbs were placed in some coffee cans inside the brooders to be used as heat. Of course, you always had food and water available for them. You can imagine the noise of this many biddies cheeping and chirping all night under the bed in which we were trying to sleep. It is no wonder that I remember that experience more than seventy years later.

After a period in the brooders, they were ready for the chicken yard. We had several pens in the yard to separate the chickens by size and, in some instances, by variety. It was amazing how certain varieties were natural enemies with other varieties and would constantly fight with each other. They were also separated by those which were for eating only and those which were saved as egg producers. There was a certain size to which the chicks had to grow before they were ready for the frying pan, pot, or roaster.

The chicken yard also had a chicken coupe where the chickens roosted at night. It contained rungs across the inside at sloping heights and was slatted on the sides for ventilation. As dusk began to fall, it was amazing to watch them slowly migrate to the coupe and pick out a spot on one of the rungs in the coupe. By dark, not a chicken was seen anywhere. They were all settled down for the night inside the coupe. The bottom of the coupe in our pen was covered with galvanized sheet metal. This would catch the manure droppings and allow for cleaning, which was usually done on a weekly basis. This manure was our private source of fertilizer. I don't recall ever using commercial fertilizer until I was married and had my own yard, without chickens.

A mulberry bush and several castor bean trees were also in the chicken yard. The castor bean trees were for the prevention of fleas and chicken mites. I don't know if this was effective, but everyone I knew that had chickens also had castor bean trees in the chicken yard. They produced a cluster of green berries which were

spiny, but the spines were tender and didn't prick. They would eventually dry up and leave a hard bean about the size of a large peanut. These dried beans would then be used for producing castor oil. We never tried to harvest any of ours and produce our own castor oil. Also in the yard was our alligator pen. Yes, an alligator pen in the chicken yard. Maybe a little explanation is in order.

During those years, there was considerable interest by the winter tourists in purchasing small baby alligators and having them shipped back to their friends and family in the north. Dad saw this as an opportunity to make some added income. There were no rules governing the capture and sale of alligators at that time, nor were there any rules or regulations regarding their shipment. These baby gators were about ten to twelve inches in length. The primary source for these baby gators, for sellers like Dad, was young black boys who robbed gator nests and sold them. This was one of their means of survival. They would generally stalk a female gator and learn her nest location. They would then wait for the hatch. Alligators lay eggs in a mulch nest, and the eggs hatch after a period of incubation, like any other egg.

One of the miracles of nature is that the ratio of males versus females is controlled by the temperature of the incubation. Nature instills into the female how this balance in nature is doing. The female then adjusts the amount of mulch cover over the eggs in her nest, therefore adjusting the incubation temperature, which predetermines the male/female ratio of the hatchlings. This little bit of information adds no weight to my story but was reinforced when I visited the Grand Cayman Islands on one of my Mooney flights. I visited a turtle farm there and found that sea turtles use the same method of controlling the ratio. They do it by the burial depth of their eggs in the sunny sand. I don't know what the ratio is for gators, but at Grand Cayman they told us that the turtle ratio should be about one male per four females.

Now back to my story. The going price of the baby gators to the resellers like Dad depended on many variables, but all related to the fundamental economic principle of supply and demand. Dad usually paid something in the range of ten to twenty-five cents. He would generally buy them in lots of twenty-five to fifty and put them in a small pen behind the store at Bumby's in Winter Park. The pen was fenced with a small pool for them to swim in. The pool was generally a buried garbage can lid or some similar pan. He would place a sign in the Bumby front display window telling of their "For Sale" status. The price was $1.25, including shipment by parcel post. Now this was solely an enterprise of Dad's, not Bumby Hardware Company. During the Depression, it was common to do the uncommon thing to make an honest dollar. Shipment of the little gators was made in a wooden cigar box, with holes cut out for ventilation. I made many a trip to the parcel post window at the Winter Park post office to mail a cigar box containing a live alligator. At the end of the tourist season, those baby gators became excess, since they would be too large to sell next season. The winter buyers only wanted the ten to twelve inch little gators.

This is where the pen in the chicken yard at home came in. Dad would bring them home, and we would raise them in the chicken yard pen until they were ready to be sold to tanners for their hides. This was generally in the range of three to five years, and they would be in the range of three to four feet in length. I have no idea what they were worth for their hides. Caring for the gators was minimal, since they were rather lethargic. We only had to feed them once a week, although we would occasionally throw meal scraps to them during the week. The weekly feeding generally consisted of raw meat scraps that Dad would get from the local butcher shop. As a young boy, I was always puzzled at how they could survive and grow when only eating once a week.

I will recite one incident that describes the life of a gator farmer. One of Dad's chicken yard gators became extra lethargic, and he was not eating at all. I don't know how it was determined, but the suspected cause was due to an undigested castor bean in the gator's stomach. I think Dad had discussed the gator's problem with some of his friends, and they said that castor beans were deadly to gators. In any event, Dad concluded that surgery was the necessary remedy.

One of the characteristics of small gators (up to about three feet) is that they will become quasi-hypnotized when placed on their backs and their bellies are stroked. This was the method of sedation for the surgery. After the gator was hypnotized, Dad used a Gem single-edged razor to make an incision in the gator's underside where he thought the stomach was located. He then incised the organ he considered the stomach. Lo and behold, there was the undigested castor bean. After removal with a pair of tweezers, he then sutured the stomach and incision with some of mother's heaviest sewing thread. I am sure it was cotton, since synthetics had not been developed at that time. Probably the nature of cotton rotting after a period of time and not requiring suture removal contributed to the success of the surgery. After the surgery, the gator was rolled over and placed on its four feet on the ground. In a short while, it slowly crawled to another spot for recovery. In just a few days, it was as mobile as the other gators. I don't remember any facts after that, but I am sure the gator grew to the proper size, and he was sold for his hide. He made a great recovery, only to face this eventual fate.

I cannot recall a period of time in my youth when we didn't have someone living with us, even though our house was only around eight hundred square feet with two bedrooms and one bathroom. We had a sofa bed in the living room for transient guests. We did not have a third bedroom until we put on an addition to the main house in my adolescent years. The addition of the back porch bedroom was the brainstorm of Mother and Dad. The construction effort was done by Reece Wilson, my cousin and Aunt Hattie's only son by her first marriage. Reece had recently reappeared in Orlando after an absence of several years. I later learned that he had served a tour in the army as a result of being involved in a robbery as a juvenile.

That was a common option for juvenile offenders at that time. One could either enlist in a branch of the service or serve time in an institution. At the beginning of World War II, many of the veteran training soldiers were young men who had exercised that option and then chose to remain in the service. Crime was a common occurrence due to the state of the economy. Young people saw no future or answer to their dilemma and resorted to petty crimes. Smoking was prevalent among young boys, but drugs were only heard about in movies or novels about the Far East. Female smoking was rare, even among adults, and was looked upon as being ungodly.

Reece was an excellent craftsman, and he and Dad decided on a way to add another bedroom. We had a lean-to screened back porch on one side of the house. It was where we ate most of our meals in the summer time. It was also where I cleaned and cut up many a chicken with Mother. It was desirable, because with its screened in opening on three sides, it offered an open setting in the summertime. On the west side of the porch was a goldfish fish pond that Dad had built when we boys were very young. It was also where I had grown a record sized sunflower plant. I had scavenged the sunflower seed from the chicken feed. We had two types of feed for the chickens. One was a mash that we mixed with water and fed them. The other was a mix of various seeds, such as corn, wheat, sunflower, etc., which we called scratch feed, since they would scratch around on the ground for it. Before the construction was able to begin, demolition of the old screen porch had to commence. This was a part in which I could participate: demolition.

Nearing completion of the demolition, I stepped on a nail and ended up with a pretty nasty wound. A puncture wound is always the worst for infection, because it does not bleed freely and wash out the harmful bacteria. Turpentine was one of the standby antiseptics, but none of them was very effective. Antibiotics had not been developed, so any wound could be deadly. Blood poisoning was common and often the cause of the loss of a limb, or even death. I recovered and was able to help Reece with the construction. During that time we became closer and closer. He became like a big brother to me. After our job was completed, he worked for a plumbing company, and I worked for him one summer as a plumber's helper. It was during this time that he taught me how to drive an automobile. He was the closest thing to a big brother I ever had.

Our home was always the shelter for anyone Mother knew who needed a safe and secure place to live. Even though we had few of the amenities of life, Mother always had a door open for anyone needing help. She had provided a home for both her brother Tommy and sister Mary after their mother’s death, when she and Dad were first married. Later Dad’s brother Dewey lived with us. When I was away during World War II, I understand that Johnnie McEver lived with Mother and Dad. All this was possible with the addition of the sleeping porch that we had constructed. Jim had a single bed, and Ken and I shared a double bed

on that porch. That left our old bedroom unoccupied, and it was there that the visitors slept. However, it did not offer a lot of privacy, since all of us boys had to go through this bedroom to get to the only bathroom in the house.

I can recall a few of the individuals who lived with us during my teenage years. The first was Inez Calhoun, a neighbor who, as I recall the circumstances now, was subject to harassment by her family. Inez lived with us for a considerable length of time. In retrospect, I now feel that there was some sort of sexual harassment by her father. Of course, that was something that was never discussed with teenagers during that era. The Calhoun family unit was a classic example of southern rednecks. The father drank heavily and was often inebriated in our presence. There were four girls in the family. Teti (pronounced Tee-tie) was the youngest and about school age at the time. The next was Inez, then Hazel, and the oldest was Rudell. There were junk cars in the yard and the house was barely habitable, even for those times. I remember that they had no indoor plumbing and cooked on an oil cook stove, common for many families at that time. There was an outhouse behind the main house, next to a ramble shack garage, where Mr. Calhoun had some mechanic's tools and a crane he used for removing engines from cars. The place was filthy, having dirt as the floor and greasy items everywhere.

The Calhoun house was unfinished, with no ceilings and only wooden lathes on the studs in the main body of the house. For privacy, the bedroom walls were covered with what I suspect were old sheets. In those days, there was no such thing as drywall or any other type of wallboard. Most places were plastered. This plaster was placed on wooden lathes. These were about ½" x "1 strips of wood that were nailed onto the studs about 3/8 inches apart. They would act as the base for the plaster placement. A proper plastered wall consisted of two coats of plaster. The first coat was called the gray coat. It was the heaviest and was about 3/8 of an inch thick. It was applied and allowed to dry, generally about three days. Then the final coat was applied, which was primarily composed of lime slurry. It was troweled to either a smooth finish or some type of architectural finish. A true plasterer was not only an expert craftsman, but also a talented artisan. Plastered walls continued for generations until drywall construction was developed. All of the houses we have lived in during our marriage have been of the plastered construction. Drywall construction is much faster and cheaper due to the extreme labor intensity of plastered walls. Nowadays, the art of plastering has just about died out.

The neighborhood where we lived was not unusual for the times. We have often referred to it as the Conroy crowd, but it encompassed several more streets than just Conroy. It was bounded by Division on the east, by Indiana on the north, Avondale on the west, and Miller on the south. Much of that area is now a part of I-4, located "across the tracks" from the train station, which is still behind Orlando Regional Hospital. At one house, they routinely butchered hogs that they transported from Georgia. The butchering produced a lot of fat and grease, and

they made washing soap from it. This was lye soap and was much like the traditional Octagon soap, or what we later had as G.I. soap in the military. Another household cooked sugar cane and made sorghum or molasses. Another was in the produce business and would job out the task of shelling peas or snapping beans to neighbors on a unit price basis. That practice continued for many years, throughout World War II and even after. That became one of the sources of Grandma Stone's "cookie jar" money. I can remember having hampers of beans on our front porch. Mother enlisted the help of all the family and neighborhood children to help her in this endeavor. I know that my mother enjoyed doing this, especially having all of the children under her wing.

Mother was a woman whose total existence centered around her home and her family. Nothing else ever really mattered to her. That is why the trauma of two of her sons being in World War II, and the third being in military service shortly after the war, created such an emotional impact on her. As a mature parent now, I understand the miseries that my family endured during World War II. During the first few weeks of 1945, my parents were notified by the War Department that Ken was missing in action. There was no further communication concerning any of the details of his status. They held a dim ray of hope that he had been captured by the Germans, but they also knew that the largest battle of the war was taking place, the Battle of the Bulge. They speculated that it was in the area where Ken's division, a rookie division from Great Britain, had been recently sent. Coincident with Ken's status was the fact that they were not hearing from me, because I was staging for the invasion of Okinawa. For over three months, they had no word from Ken or me.

The first notification that Mother and Dad received was from the Red Cross, stating that Ken had been taken as a prisoner of war (POW) by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. A short time later, they received a letter from me telling them that I was in the invasion of Okinawa. Not too long after receiving the letter from the Red Cross, they received a confirmation from the War Department that Ken was a prisoner of war. Their anxieties were only slightly relieved, since they now knew that Ken was a prisoner of war and I was involved in a battle for the Japanese homeland. To the best of their knowledge, their two sons were still alive, but still in harm's way. They became elated in May of 1945, when Germany surrendered and Ken was released from the POW camp. They knew he would be coming back to the United States shortly. They also knew that I was involved in a life-and-death struggle with the Japanese for their homeland.

Ultimately, the U.S. prevailed in Okinawa, and a few months later I was on a navy transport headed back to the Philippines, where my division would stage for the invasion of Japan. On that navy transport back to the Philippines, I learned of the atomic bombs being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We were all elated. Shortly thereafter, Japan surrendered and the war came to an end. As young soldiers, we could not realize the emotional misery that our parents had undergone. It was only many years later, when we young soldiers became

parents, which we gained an insight into what war must have meant to our parents back home. One of the greatest loves of all is the love a parent possesses for their children.

The Conroy neighborhood was composed of a true cross section of lower middle income America during the Depression years. Across the street from us lived a typical family. The father was handicapped by being crippled from polio but worked on WPA projects for one dollar a day. The mother worked during the wintertime as a fruit packer at a fresh fruit-packing house that was within walking distance of where we lived. Fruit packing was a common job for women in those days. It was strictly "piece" work, which means they were paid by the number of boxes they packed. I can remember her telling some of the tricks the old-timers would pull over the rookies in order to get the best packing conditions. I guess mankind has never changed. There was no such thing as a wage and hour labor law then. You were paid for how many boxes you packed, irrespective of how long it took you. That family had no automobile. Their oldest son was married and was living comfortably due to his wife's family's status. The next son, in his late teens, was one of my mother's nurtured neighborhood offspring. He had run afoul of the law as a teenager and was sentenced to the boy's reform school at Marianna, Florida.

Mother would write the neighbor boy regularly and send him care packages. They became very close, and Mother was one of his confidents. After he was released, he spent more time with Mother than he did at home. The U.S. involvement in World War II began in 1941. This was not too long after this neighbor was released from reform school. He enlisted in the army, received his training, and became involved in one of the earliest actions of American forces in North Africa. I can remember that he continued to communicate with Mother via mail when he was in North Africa. As I recall, he was wounded, and I lost track of him after I went into the army. The youngest child of this family was a girl. She was a classic tomboy and fit in with the boys in the neighborhood. She was a year or so younger than I, but she had the responsibility of being the family housekeeper while her mother worked. She was married while I was in the service and became lost to the Conroy crowd.

Our next-door neighbors on Conroy were an elderly couple who had moved there from New Jersey. The husband was an immigrant from Scotland, known to me as "Pop McGinnis". He had retired as a machinist in New Jersey and was now working as a janitor for the Baby Grand Theater in Winter Park. He drove an old canvas-topped touring car, which he had rigged with a quasi-governor that prohibited it from traveling more than fifteen mph. Next to Pop's garage was a small building that he had converted into his workshop. It was filled with many, many tools and a large scrap pile. Almost everything he made came from that scrap pile. Every tool was manually operated, even the hand drill. As I recall, the only things electric in the shop were the light bulbs. Pop would usually come home from the theater around 2:00 pm, and I would arrive home from school

shortly thereafter. I would head over to the workshop whenever I could. He always had a project underway. It was he who taught me the love and care of tools.

As youngsters we didn't realize it at the time, but health issues were very critical. This was a time in our history before many of the vaccines we have today had been discovered, and even more significant, it was before the discovery of the antibiotics which are so widely used today. Many diseases were life-threatening. These were diphtheria, typhoid, tetanus, pneumonia, blood poisoning, and others that are now routinely treated. These also included many of the childhood diseases such as measles, chickenpox, mumps, etc. But the scourge of the generation was polio, although we didn't call it that at the time. It was called infantile paralysis. It was especially feared because it primarily struck younger children and was a crippling disease with no cure. I mentioned earlier about an adult neighbor suffering from this disease. Additionally, as part of the Conroy crowd, a young girl who was a contemporary of mine also was crippled by the disease. This disease was a Damocles sword hanging heavily over the heads of all youth at that time.

Polio received national recognition during the latter part of President Roosevelt's second term as president. It became known that he had been crippled with polio since his inaugural and could not walk a step. Shortly thereafter, the National Foundation of Infantile Paralysis was formed and the March of Dimes became a reality. This was a voluntary program to raise monies for research to find a cure for polio. The concept was that every household could afford a dime, and there were various types of fundraisers. As I recall, February was set aside for their big fundraiser, and young mothers would canvas the neighborhoods and raise money. During the war, these efforts were significantly reduced but not curtailed. After the war ended, the fundraising resumed full force with an emphasis on developing a safe vaccine for the prevention of polio. After many years of research, Dr. Jonas Salk developed the first safe vaccine. The polio vaccine has virtually eliminated polio as a dreaded childhood disease in our country.

Most families did not escape being exposed to at least some major health issues. As a young boy, I can vividly remember having pneumonia in one of my lungs. Unfortunately, my father was ill with the same disease at the same time. This is quite memorable to me, because it was during the trial of Bruno Richard Hauptman, the alleged kidnapper of the Lindbergh infant. Dad and I would lay in bed listening to the trial being held in New Jersey. We would eagerly await the arrival of the afternoon paper to read about the trial’s progress, after having listened to it most of the day on the radio. The jury's verdict was “guilty”, and Hauptman was executed for this crime shortly thereafter. Death sentences were carried out rather hastily in those days, without all the appeals and length of time commanded today.

Living in the days before antibiotics, most households used home remedies. The

most common means of treating pneumonia in those days was the use of a “mustard plaster“. A mustard plaster consisted of a mustard paste made with dry mustard and water and then spread with a knife on a cloth cover the size of the individual’s chest. When initially placed on the chest, it was very uncomfortable due to the mixture having been made with cold tap water. Soon thereafter, however, it would begin to warm up due to the action of the mustard and the heat of the human body. Eventually, it would become so hot that it became almost unbearable. One or two of these a day, coupled with bed rest, was the common treatment for pneumonia. Nowadays, laying horizontal is considered bad practice for the treatment of pneumonia, because it allows the fluids in the lungs to collect and become more infected.

Blood poisoning was also a very traumatic experience in many families. Most of the children in our neighborhood went around in the summertime barefoot, which exposed them to many foot wounds. Stepping on a rusty nail was very common, as were cuts from broken glass. The most intense case our family experienced was with Jimmy. He was riding as a passenger on the rear of a bicycle, when his foot became entangled between the rear wheel and the frame. It created quite an injury, which ultimately became infected, and blood poisoning ensued. I can remember sitting with him countless times while he soaked his foot in hot water in which a home remedy had been added. The most common remedy was table salt or Epsom salt crystals. His recovery was “touch and go” for a couple of weeks, with the prospects of him having to have one of his legs amputated. Fortunately, he recovered completely and developed into the best athlete in the family.

Another little-known fact is that Ken missed a complete year of school because he was diagnosed with rheumatic fever, which left him with a permanent heart murmur. As was the case then, medical diagnosis was not nearly as thorough as it is today. The treatment prescribed for him was constant rest and little stress. This occurred when I was in junior high school, so that would make it around 1937. Up to that time, Ken had always been one grade behind me. With him missing a full year of schooling, he now became two grades behind me. As the war began to develop, most people felt that Ken would never be inducted. He was not only inducted, but was captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge and became a prisoner of war.

It is quite an anomaly that Ken and I are still surviving, while Jimmy died as a result of aortic surgery. It is the old adage that the operation was a success, but the patient died. Jimmy died of a heart attack the evening of his surgery. I feel confident that the reason for Jimmy's demise was his addiction to smoking. Even though Ken still smokes cigars, there is no doubt that they are less harmful to the body than cigarettes. God was with me when I stopped smoking in 1964. It was one of the easiest things I ever did, although I had tried to quit unsuccessfully four times previously. My mother believed it was an answer to her prayers, which could be so, since I tried to quit unsuccessfully so many times.

Another childhood exposure, which is not very common today, was the risk of broken bones from climbing trees, primarily oaks. In my youth, climbing trees was a common activity for children looking for a pastime. In our neighborhood, there were three cases of broken necks. I imagine they would be classified as spinal injuries today, but they were frightful and terrible injuries. Tree houses were common and many of the neighborhood children would join forces to construct a tree house. Today those outlets are focused on gang activities, on drugs, on concerts, etc., rather than joining up with one's friends to work on a common project.

Earlier in this autobiography, I mentioned how important softball was in our lives. This caused me to recall many things, the most prominent of which was that I was introduced to a young woman who was the closest thing to a big sister I ever had. She was a cousin on my mother's side of the family. Her name was Evelyn Hunnicutt, later to become Evelyn Hagan. My mother was a Hunnicut before she was married. My first contact with Evelyn was the first time I ever went to Statesboro, Georgia. It was with mother's sister, my Aunt Esther, and her husband, Uncle Bill. I would estimate it was in the mid 1930's. My recall of that trip is very limited, and about the only thing I remember is that we went through Jacksonville and spent the night with Uncle Bill's sister. Statesboro is a small town approximately fifty miles west of Savannah. At that time, it was only a small farming community, whose major crops were cotton and tobacco. Two of Mother's uncles lived in Statesboro. They were both brothers of her mother, and were referred to by the family as Uncle Tom and Uncle Charlie. My impression was that both uncles were wealthy landowners. However, unknown to me at the time, they both were sharecroppers and ran rather large farms for the owners. Uncle Tom Was Evelyn's father, making my mother and Evelyn first cousins. Their family was the center of our visitation.

A few years after my first visit, my mother interested my father in making a trip to Statesboro. This developed into a regular sojourn for them, which they continued well up until after I was married. On one of the early trips, Evelyn made the statement that she would like to return with my mother and visit us in Orlando. As I recall now, this was a year before she graduated from high school, which only required eleven grades in Georgia at that time. She did this and, as usually happens, she fell in love with Orlando. After she graduated from high school, she returned with Mother and Dad and became a resident of our household on Conroy Street. She met one of the neighborhood boys, and we began double dating. This was during the height of Dad's softball activities, and she became a regular spectator of the sport. Living together and dating together, we became very close.

After living with us for a while, Evelyn began looking for employment. This was during the Depression and before the U.S. involvement in Would War II. She procured employment at Morrison's Cafeteria in downtown Orlando. While

working there, she befriended several of the other servers. After a short time, two of them decided they would accept a transfer to a new cafeteria being built in West Palm Beach. They did this, and at first it seemed to work out successfully. Before long, however, the two of them realized they had bitten off more than they could chew. After a few months at West Palm Beach, they returned and I had my sister back. Shortly thereafter, Evelyn made an application for employment at Kress' "five and dime" store. It was a new store in town, competing with Woolworth's and McCrory's. She loved the work and achieved a level of success while there. All this time she continued dating the neighborhood friend, C. A. Morrison, and eventually they fell madly in love with each other. They had many cultural similarities, and both were even from Georgia. None of their friends ever questioned the sincerity of their relationship.

Lou and Evelyn, Circa 1942

Soon, the dark clouds of war began to cover the sky, and the draft was initiated. It was known as the Selective Service Act and was administered on a local level by the local draft board. C.A. immediately received a classification of IA, which meant he was ready for immediate service. Unfortunately, C.A. was one of the first draftees from the Orlando area, and Evelyn lost the boyfriend with whom she had fallen in love. Shortly thereafter, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States was in the war in both the Pacific and Europe. C.A. was sent to Guadalcanal. Evelyn and C.A. corresponded regularly, but the war continued to become more and more of a burden on all Americans. Evelyn was from a family of seven children, two of whom were males. The brothers had been drafted, and working a hundred acre farm totally with brute force and no machinery was becoming burdensome. Her family suggested it would be prudent for her to return home to Statesboro. After much anguish and debate, she returned. I lost my big sister again.

I am not privy to what occurred between Evelyn and C.A. I only know that after her return home to Statesboro, I received word while in the army that Evelyn was getting married. Her husband would be Ernest Hagan, a local boy who was

exempt from military service due to his physical impairment. He was crippled, either from polio or as the result of an accident. He worked for the City of Statesboro and remained with them throughout his working life. Sometime after their marriage, they had their first child, a daughter named Sandra. Retrospectively, this daughter was only a year or so older than our oldest daughter Charlotte, and they became playmates when my parents would take Charlotte with them to visit in Statesboro.

After Sandra's birth, Evelyn worked in a privately owned grocery store as cashier. Eventually, she gave birth to a second daughter, Karen. Karen remained single all of her life and lived at home with her parents. As the children matured, Sandra went to college in Savannah, where she met a young Air Force pilot. They ultimately married and provided Evelyn with grandchildren. Her husband became a pilot for TWA after his release from the Air Force and flew with them for many years before having a heart attack. After this, he became an overseas pilot for an airline, hauling only cargo due to his heart condition. During his tenure with TWA, they moved to Virginia Beach, a suburb of Norfolk. In the meantime, Karen stayed at home and became the nurturing offspring for both her father and mother. Eventually Evelyn's husband Ernest died.

After Evelyn's marriage, she continued to be close friends with both my parents and me. Mother and Dad would visit them regularly in Statesboro. Evelyn and Ernest visited with my own family after I was married, when we still lived in Winter Park. After I learned to fly, I had several occasions to visit with Evelyn and Karen. On one trip, my two brothers and I visited them. On one occasion, I remember that my son-in-law Dan flew my Mooney and me to Statesboro for a visit with Evelyn and Karen. On January 13, 2010, while I was working on this autobiography, I received a call from Karen. She informed me that her mother, Evelyn, had died a few days prior. We had been close friends most of our lives, but now the loss of my big sister was final.

The attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor occurred on December 7, 1941, right in the middle of my senior year of high school. There were some classmates who immediately quit school and joined the military. Most of us went about our daily lives, but aware that a dramatic change was inevitable. The nation was now committed to a war on two fronts, and it began to mobilize. In retrospect, I can sincerely say that at no time in my memory were all of the citizens of the United States so committed to a common goal. The only other time I can remember that comes close to such a united commitment was in the 1960's, when our country was committed to landing a man on the moon.

In June of 1942, I received my diploma from Orlando High School, approximately six months after the war had officially begun. After graduation, I was in a dilemma as to what to do regarding my military obligation. My father was the eternal optimist, and he indicated that I should attempt to finish a year of college before selecting military duty. As it turned out, I was able to obtain a community

scholarship, and enter Rollins as a freshman in the fall. My scholarship contained a provision that I would work out a certain portion of it at the soda fountain at the Student Union building at Rollins. In the fall, I suddenly became a college student and a soda jerk at the same time.

Immediately after enrolling in school, the military began recruiting enlistments for the reserves. Their sales pitch was that they would not disturb us during our current year of college. Almost all of the men enlisted in a reserve unit. Our options were the Marines, the Air Force, the Army, or the Navy. Again I was confronted with the decision of joining an officer reserve unit or taking my chances with the draft. I had previously passed some of the preliminary physicals to go into the Air Force flight training program. At the time, this was my first choice. I decided not to join any of the reserve units and let fate decide my course. Things jogged along, and the entire country was getting geared up militarily for the war effort.

During the Christmas vacation, the War Department concluded that it would call up all of the officer reserve units. They would immediately report for active-duty. At the end of the Christmas vacation, I returned to school and found that I was one of the very few males left on campus. Most of the young men left on campus were those who were classified as unfit for duty, usually due to some physical impairment. In the meantime, my draft board had reclassified me to 3A, which meant that I would be able to finish my freshman year. At the completion of my freshman year, the draft board was true to their word, and I was inducted into the US Army in July of 1943. Thus began my “War Years” portion of this autobiography, but first my recollection of my school years.