

Married Life

The offer of an engagement ring to my beloved Helen was typical of my immaturity at the time. That was the beginning of our life together, but our history of getting to that point began slightly more than two years earlier. So I will begin our story at the “very” beginning.

After finishing basic training at Fort Hood, Texas, I was assigned to the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), and my training was at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago, Illinois. IIT had been formerly known as the Armour Institute. Its roots were from the Armour family, who owned one of the original large meat



Composite says it all

packing businesses centered in Chicago. Chicago had one of the largest stockyards in the nation, and was known as the center of the meat packing industry. Kansas City and Omaha were also known for their meatpacking, but Chicago was the largest. The meat packing industry evolved around large rail center destinations. The trains would bring cattle from the large cattle growing states, primarily Texas and Oklahoma, to the rail center stockyards. The logical result was the growth of meatpacking in these destination cities. Armour, Swift and Cudahy are names I recall from that era as being the leaders.

IIT was located on the south side of Chicago, adjacent to the El, Chicago's rapid transit system, and near Comiskey Park, home of the Chicago White Sox baseball team and the Chicago Cardinals NFL football team. It was recognized as one of the leading technical schools in the country. To keep technology in perspective, it is important to remember that World War II is what gave impetus to the technological revolution. Before that time period, we were living in the era of the Industrial Revolution, which had increased productivity many fold over the manual efforts of man since the beginning of time. It was that effort, industrial and technical, along with the United States being immune from enemy aggressive action on its soil, which provided the margin of victory for the Allies during World War II.

The technologies developed during the war included radar, jet propulsion, rockets, magnetic recordings (first wire and later magnetic tape), and the most notable one, nuclear power. These developments spawned many offspring, the most active now being the computer revolution with all of its applications, which includes space travel. It was in anticipation of these technological developments that the Army ASTP was created. The U.S. Navy had a similar program. As an aside, Harry Luff, my co-worker at OUC, was a product of the navy program. Another participant in the navy program was C. R. Munn, my quasi-cousin, who ended up making the military (U.S. Marines) his career.

During my stay in Chicago, my living quarters were the 108th Engineers armory, a national guard unit called to active duty, located at 3401 Wentworth Avenue. This was on the south side of Chicago, across the street from Cominsky Park and in the heart of a Polish neighborhood. To the south of us was a Black section and to the north, towards town, was a Chinese section. Even with these diverse ethnic neighborhoods, there was never any concern about safety on the streets, even when alone or in very small groups. Being out in the neighborhood was not of particular concern usually, since our free time was very limited. Our time was extremely structured. I described in the "War Years" how intense our schedule was. But we did have a few hours on Friday evenings to relax, although this was not enough time to travel far from the armory.

The first weekend I was there, a group of three or four of us went out walking to explore the area near where we stayed. Not too far away we found an inviting small neighborhood bar. We decided we would go in and have a drink, being the macho men we were at age nineteen. While seated at the bar, we began a discussion with the lady barmaid, who was obviously the person in charge. During this discussion, she asked me some personal questions as to age, where I was from, etc. Of course I had to lie about my age since I was underage for being an alcohol customer. There was never any mention of that fact again. Soon the truth came out. The lady barmaid said that I reminded her very much of her son who was also in the service. Right then and there, she adopted me, without me even realizing it.

She was not only the chief barmaid, but also the owner of this neighborhood bar. She filled us with Polish food and drinks. When it came time to leave, she said we did not owe her a cent. Additionally, she asked that we come back. We told her that Friday nights were our only opportunity and that we would be back the next Friday. We did, and she had freshly cooked Polish food for us. It was there I was introduced to "kielbasa", the famous Polish smoked sausage. I didn't realize it then, but Chicago has the largest population of Poles outside of Poland. My friends and I had found a "home away from home" on Friday nights for the entire time I was in Chicago. Others from our dormitory found this same neighborhood bar with its pool tables and camaraderie, but none got the treatment of an adopted son like I did.

Chicago was a haven for service personnel, especially those of us from “small town U.S.A”. It had everything in the way of entertainment that anyone could imagine. For sports, it had college football. Northwestern University was on the north side and the University of Illinois to the south. It was in close proximity to the Wisconsin and Minnesota teams as well. Basketball was the same. For professional football, the city had two football teams, the Chicago Bears and the Chicago Cardinals. For hockey, it had the Chicago Black hawks. It also had many excellent theaters performing live stage plays. It had two great downtown movie theaters which had first class live entertainment when showing first run movies. It was in Chicago that I saw many bands such as Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, and Charlie Barnett, as well as other well-known entertainers, Frank Sinatra being the most notable.

Chicago also had the world’s two largest ballrooms, the Trianon and the Aragon. The Trianon was located on the south side of Chicago, and the Aragon was on the north side. While I was there, Eddie Howard was playing at the Aragon and Lawrence Welk was playing at the Trianon. I don’t remember the details now, but somehow I had met a girl from Winnetka, Illinois, and she was my date at the Aragon Ballroom. I had planned to meet some of my roommates from school, but they didn’t show up on schedule. It became time to leave in order for my date to catch a train back to Winnetka. As I was leaving around midnight and walking down the stairs from the ballroom, I encountered some of the group from my school. We were introduced to each other’s dates and one young, beautiful girl, with red hair, immediately caught my fancy. Not only did she have these fantastic physical attributes, but her date also said that she had been born in Gainesville, Florida. The attraction became even more interesting. Little did I realize at the time that I would celebrate our 64th wedding anniversary with her while writing this autobiography. To complete “the rest of this story”, my early departure from the Aragon ballroom in order for my date to catch the last train to Winnetka was in vain. We missed it by a few minutes. She had no recourse but to call her father to come get her. Winnetka was about thirty miles from the ballroom, which was significant travel at 1:00 am. Needless to say, that was the last date I had with her.

The following week I attempted to obtain the name and telephone number of the pretty Florida girl I had seen at the Aragon ballroom. In no way would her date for that night give it to me. However, during another casual conversation, I learned that one of my roommates dated the girl who had arranged a blind date for the Florida young lady. So I asked if his girlfriend would make a date for me with this Florida girl for the next weekend. It was subsequently arranged. We planned a double date, and we were to meet and pick up the ladies where they were working at Marshall Field’s Department Store in the downtown Chicago Loop.

I remember arriving with my roommate the following Saturday afternoon at Marshall Field’s. I was overwhelmed with the size and volume of merchandise of

such a large department store. The largest department stores I had ever seen were those in downtown Orlando, which was just a small Florida town at that time. One thing that really impressed me was the fact that the store had its own station on the El line. That gave me an insight into the significance of Marshall Field's. Following closely behind my friend, we located his date for the evening, who in turn took us to where my date was working.

I was introduced to her and for the first time I learned her name was Helen Taggart. I certainly did not remember that from the casual introductions the previous week. When I first saw her, I did not immediately recognize her, but after seeing her beautiful red hair, her gorgeous smile, and hearing her distinct laughter, I knew it was the same girl I had met when leaving the Aragon Ballroom the week before. It was the Christmas season, and her job for Marshall Field's was gift wrapping merchandise which their customers purchased. I later learned that, even though she was still a high school student, the school system allowed students to work at the various retail stores during the Christmas season. This helped to make up for the shortage of employees due to the war effort.

When our dates finally checked out from their work, we all began a discussion of what we would do. As usual, we guys had made no plans whatsoever. Whatever we did would be limited, because our financial resources were limited. We finally decided that we would eat at a moderately priced restaurant and go to a movie. We soldiers had not yet been in Chicago long enough to learn about all the "freebies" that were available to the military personnel. As with all endeavors in life, we were at the bottom of the learning curve. I remember the name of the restaurant where we dined on that first date. It was called Stauffer's. I don't recall the movie which we saw or any of the other details of that date. However, I do remember getting Helen's phone number so that I could contact her again, and I remember that phone number to this day. It was Bayport 7-0767.

The following week I called Helen to see if we could have a date on the weekend. I do not recall the details today, but I do recall that for a short time she was vacillating between dating me and dating George Reno, the one she was with when I first met her at the Aragon Ballroom. I finally became the beau of choice when both of us showed up for a big date during the Christmas season for the Sonja Henie Ice Show. Sonja Henie was an Olympic ice skating champion from Finland. She catapulted ice skating into the forefront of the nation's recreational entertainment, just as Babe Ruth did for baseball and Arnold Palmer did for golf. Her ice show was the highlight of the Christmas season in Chicago. Obviously we soldiers couldn't afford tickets to such a prestigious show, but they were made available to us at no cost through the USO. This is just a small example of how servicemen were treated in Chicago during World War II.

The night of the big show neither George nor I was aware that both of us had a date with Helen. As we left the armory where we were living, a large group of us were waiting outside for a streetcar. Shortly, one came by that was headed

downtown to the Loop. All got on board except two, me and George Reno. Neither of us acknowledged the other as we boarded the streetcar and headed south. Helen lived on 77th Street, but the streetcar only stopped at 75th and 79th Streets. The two of us almost simultaneously reached for the cord to request stopping at 75th Street. When we got off the car, both of us began to realize things were a little fishy. We soon realized that both of us had dates with Helen for the ice skating show. When we appeared together at the entrance door to the apartment where she was living with her parents and sisters, the look on her face said it all when she answered the door.

We quickly learned that she knew she had committed to both of us, but she was unable to reach us to resolve the situation. Because of this, she had made arrangements for the odd man to have a blind date with one of her friends. I quickly learned, then and there, that I was Helen's date of choice. It was a tense situation. We spent so much time debating and discussing the remedy that we realized, due to the time constraints, going to the ice show was out of the question. After more discussion and deliberation, a decision was made to go to a local movie. One of the audience members in that movie was watching George Reno constantly looking over our way at us holding hands. That seemed to be the act that demonstrated the fact that he no longer had a chance to be Helen's suitor.

For the rest of my stay in Chicago, I dated Helen every Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon. Additionally, I would phone her every evening after our supervised study and before lights out. Those calls consumed most of the evening free time since there were only a limited number of telephones in the armory where I lived, and many of the G.I.'s had the same idea as I. Sometimes the wait to get a free phone to make a call consumed more than half the free time. When the bell rang ending our supervised study period, there was a mad dash for the phones. Since most rooms were on the second floor, those wanting to run for a telephone would always feign the need to use the toilet facilities, which were on the main floor and much nearer the phones. This became such a problem that ultimately guards had to be posted outside of the living areas, and only those who could demonstrate a compelling need to use the toilet facilities were allowed to leave their rooms.

Shortly after we began dating exclusively, the photograph of Helen and I and her family's black Cocker Spaniel Tarbaby was taken in front of the apartment where they lived. To this day, that picture represents a pictorial record of how we appeared in Christmas of 1943. Before I was transferred to a combat division in March of 1944, Helen and I had created a union and love for each other that continues to exist to this day. We also had a lot of fun seeing the sights and enjoying the opportunities which Chicago offered to the young. One of my fond memories now is walking back to her apartment from the I.C. train station which we used many times for our commute to the Loop and other points north of where she lived. Most of the time when we did this, the sidewalks were frozen

and glazed over with a thin sheet of ice. As a young man from sunny Florida, it was all that I could do to keep from falling or slipping when walking on these glazed sidewalks. The antithesis of my stumbling and staggering was Helen taking a few rapid steps and then skimming along the glazed ice, similar to what we now see with young people skimming along the shallow water at New Smyrna Beach. In the past sixty-four years, she has taught me a lot, but that is one thing that I never learned.

Another incident that will always identify the early romantic years with Helen was my experience with a Chicago beat cop. Our normal dating routine was for me to arrive in the late afternoon, visit a while, and then Helen and I went off on our evening date, wherever it may be. All of our travel was on commuter trains, the most common being the Illinois Central (IC). We would then return to her apartment, usually around midnight. We would then do what all young lovers would do then, “smooch”(kiss). We also used that time to talk and get to know one another better and better, gaining insights into one another’s personalities. In retrospect, it was during those times that the seeds were planted for what has proven to be a lifelong relationship. All of these “smooch sessions” were conducted in the living room of the apartment in which she and the rest of her family lived. After a couple of hours, generally between 2:00 and 3:00 am, I would give her my final “goodnight and goodbye” kiss. I then walked a couple of blocks, where I would catch a streetcar back to the armory.

On one particular night, the temperature was in the teens, and I saw the streetcar heading away from my stop when I was about a block away. Not knowing the streetcar schedules, I did not know when the next one would be, but I knew that I would have to wait for it. Without an overcoat, and with only light socks on, I began to feel chilled and located a doorway in which to stand. This at least shielded me from some of the wind, but did nothing to warm me up. After a short while, I was startled by the bright beam of a flashlight shining in my face. I immediately recognized the flashlight wielder as that of a policeman. He asked me what I was doing there. I replied, “Freezing”. I then went on to explain to him the circumstances associated with me being there. He told me that the streetcars only came by once an hour at that time of day, and that it would be fifty minutes until the next one passed. He then said that he would take me over to an all night coffee shop, where I could wait until time for the next streetcar.

At the coffee shop, both of us had a hot cup of coffee and doughnut, compliments of the shop. After chatting for a little while and finishing our coffee and doughnut, he stated that he needed to get back on his beat, but that I should stay at the shop until time for my next streetcar. He then went on his way and out of my life forever. However, he left a lasting impression with me because of his kindness and consideration. This attitude towards the servicemen during the war was indicative not only of the people of Chicago, but of all of the people of the United States. It is my strong conviction that World War II was the last time that all of the people of this country were united in a single purpose.

After dating Helen for a little while and becoming acquainted with all the other members of her family, I was granted the opportunity of staying overnight one weekend, with the understanding that I would sleep on the sofa in the living room. I do not recall whether it was on my first overnight visit or on a subsequent weekend visit that I sustained the ire of Helen's mother, later to be known affectionately by all of us as "G-Tag" (Grandmother Taggart). The first occasion was created by me causing some disruption to her favorite radio program. At that time there was a fledgling news reporter from a local Chicago radio station. His name was Paul Harvey. He attracted a lot of fans among the locals, and G-Tag was one of them. In some manner, I interrupted her when Paul Harvey was reporting the news. Never one to keep her feelings suppressed, I found out quickly that I had committed one of the unpardonable sins of that household.

Another occasion in which I violated one of the house rules was a result of my using the bathroom. Since my use created some rather noxious odors in the bathroom, I slightly raised the window in order for fresh air to come in. I gave little thought to the fact that the temperature outside was in the teens. I left, and soon thereafter, the bathroom could have been used as a refrigerator. G-Tag went to the bathroom with her newspaper in hand. She soon screamed out, "Who raised that bathroom window?" I acknowledge that I had done it. She then explained to me that the bathroom was located on top of the furnace in the basement. As a result, it was the warmest spot in the house. More importantly, it was G-Tag's favorite spot to sit and read the newspaper while answering the daily call of nature. Even in spite of these two formidable violations, I became G-Tag's first son-in-law.

I don't recall every place Helen and I visited, but we covered the gamut from the cultural, by visiting the museum of science and industry, to the sporting events, by watching the Chicago Black Hawks play ice hockey. Even though I do not recall us ever talking about a future life together, the bonds that have held Helen and I together ever since were then being created. We certainly packed a lot of things into our schedule during just four months of seeing and being with each other. Little did I realize it then, but our relationship was creating for me that strong motivation and desire to return from the war. One of the most depressing aspects of being in the service during World War II was the fact that we were in for the duration of the war, and no one knew when the duration would end. That indefinite endpoint became even more of a consideration once you were confronted with combat. We saw the war end for many when they were killed or wounded and sent to a hospital as a casualty of war. The total and complete surrender of the enemy was not in sight for the rank-and-file soldier on the frontlines.

When it became known that the army was closing down the ASTP program, I recall that I was less concerned about my future than I was about leaving the companionship of the young woman whom I had only known for a few months.

We had been together for a short span of time, but she had become an integral part of my life. As plans were being made for my departure, I vowed to her that I would see her again, even though I had no idea of when or where or what the future was to bring. The train trip from Chicago to Bend, Oregon, the location of Camp White, took almost a week. We took the northern route, which was beautiful, but to us young G.I.'s, this was not a sightseeing trip. The experiences of my war years are covered in more detail in another section of this autobiography.

Prior to shipping out for duty in the war in the Pacific, our division was granted a furlough, probably about two weeks, when we could return home and see our families before leaving the States. Shortly after I left Chicago, Helen's family had moved to Jacksonville where G-Tag had gone to work for the U.S. Navy at the large Jacksonville Air Station at Mayport. She took the ferry across the St. Johns River each morning and afternoon on her way to and from work. Helen was enrolled in high school at Landon where she graduated. She later said this was her twelfth school in twelve years. Their relocation to Jacksonville made it very convenient for me to see her on my furlough. I elected to stop in Jacksonville to see her on my return to California, rather than upon my arrival in Orlando.

After visiting with my family and friends in Orlando, I headed for Jacksonville to



Lou & Helen, Jax, POE furlough

spend a few days with Helen. I remember that they lived in an area that had just been built and lacked many of the amenities of home ownership. In particular, they did not have an electric refrigerator and were required to have ice delivered regularly to preserve their perishables. Many items of convenience were in short supply. Since the total productive economy of the United States was centered on the production of war materials, such consumer products as electric refrigerators were not being produced. In fact, this

was the case for most items that required metal for their production. Only the

very essential products necessary for survival were being produced. Many of those, including shoes, were rationed. Nonetheless, Helen and I took up where we had left off in Chicago.

Not long before my furlough, while in training in California, I had sustained a small cactus thorn wound in my left hand during our simulated invasion of San Clemente Island. While visiting Helen in Jacksonville, my hand became much sorer and showed signs of being infected. Being a member of the military, I reasoned that I should seek medical treatment from the local military. On our next trip to town, we went to the railroad station and contacted one of the MP's stationed there. Events transpired quickly, and without Helen understanding or knowing what was going on, she saw me walking off, flanked by two MP's. She did not realize that I was being escorted to a local aid station, where they would attend to my hand injury. I learned later that she thought this would be the last time she would see me. This incident has always been symbolic of our final visit together before I left for combat. As we parted, both of us were wondering whether we would ever see each other again.

After a few days with Helen, I departed for my return to California where I would ship out to the Pacific theater of operations. Only those who have experienced it from the days of World War II can really understand all of the fears, anxiety, and other emotions that such a departure generates. In retrospect, I suspect the greatest anxiety was due to the fact that we were facing the unknown. At that time, there were two terrible wars under way, against Germany and the Axis in Europe and against Japan in the Pacific, with neither showing any signs of victory. The only images the American people had of those two wars were the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor and the horrendous air attacks during the Battle of Britain. Very few people in America saw any hope of an end to the conflict.

During my time in the Pacific, the courtship of Helen and I existed in two mediums. The first medium was that of our hearts. The second medium was those words contained in letters to each other. It is absolutely necessary to understand the simplicity of communications at that time. There was no such thing as the Internet and no long-distance telephone calls available. The mail was the only realistic means of communication. Since transportation was almost totally handled by railroads and ships, the mail often took at least two to three weeks to reach its destination. I wrote as often as I could, and I knew that Helen would write me everyday if at all possible.

One of the things that still remain vivid in my memory is the little artistic drawings at the end of each of Helen's letters. They were sketches of sexy female figures drawn in the style that had been created by a very popular cartoonist at the time, Vargas. It is difficult to describe in this written autobiography how meaningful the words and letters from back home meant to a lonely soldier, who often had doubts about whether he would ever see, touch, or hold his family and sweetheart again.

When I left Chicago, there had not been any serious conversation between Helen and me relating to marriage, children, or spending a life together. The foundation for our relationship was established by getting to know each other as we dated for a period of less than four months. However, our relationship evolved through the magic of being absent from one another for one and a half years and communicating constantly by mail. Eventually it became understood between us that we would marry when I returned from the war. Helen even moved to Orlando and lived with my parents.

When the armistice with Japan was signed and the war was over, the United States was faced with the need to convert from a war-based economy back to a civilian-consumer economy. Additionally, it was confronted with the need to return its soldiers back to their homes so that their lives could begin again. It was this last need which was in the forefront of my every thought. I knew that Helen was waiting for me in Orlando, and this meant that our wedding would take place as soon as reasonably possible after I returned home.

I was discharged on January 15, 1946, and we planned our wedding for February 10. This short time frame necessitated that our wedding would be simple and our lifestyle would be basic. Considering that newly wedded couples have so many decisions to make with respect to housing, career pursuits, etc., it is obvious that little thought was given to these elements, other than the fact that we were in love and were going to be married. Helen had at least taken care of one of the issues by having made arrangements for a place for us to live. It was a garage apartment in which my cousin Doris was living. The apartment was owned by my Aunt Pete. Doris' husband Roy was coming home from service in the navy, and they had found another place to live. The garage apartment was one of two, a duplex arrangement, behind a residence on Amelia Avenue, which was located where the front part of the now active T.D. Waterhouse Center is located. I recall that Helen and I did some painting, as part of our refurbishing efforts before we moved in.

In order to accommodate propriety, it was proper that I should give my engaged lady an engagement ring. I purchased the ring from Orlando's premier jeweler at the time, Lawton Jewelry Company. Anyone familiar with the history of Orlando will always remember the large towered four-faced clock that was in front of Lawton's store. It was probably about fifteen feet tall. When they moved from South Orange Avenue, next to the First National Bank, to another location to the north on Orange Avenue, they also relocated this clock. It was an icon of Lawton's until they went out of business.

Having the ring, I was super anxious to give it to my beloved. All the stories about giving your sweetheart her engagement ring in a romantic setting were meaningless to me. I just wanted to give it to her and see her wearing it on her finger. When I arrived home after my discharge, Helen was working at the local

Southern Bell Telephone Company, a job which she had also obtained through my cousin Doris. As I mentioned previously, she had moved in with my family and so we were living at the same residence.

The day that I purchased her engagement ring, Helen was working. When she came home that evening, I was in a tizzy to give her the ring. The event still remains with us as one of the benchmarks of our relationship. With the ring in its case, and the case in my hand, I walked into the bedroom where she was starting to remove her stockings after a day at the office. She was standing with one stocking off and attempting to unsnap the other while still standing, I approached her with the ring case in hand and, in my most romantic tone, I said, "Here". What transpired after that has been the subject of discussion for more than sixty years. In any event, it was the only engagement ring either one of us has ever had.

Due to our ignorance, we ran into a little snag when we attempted to secure our marriage license. At the time of our marriage, Helen was only nineteen. When we applied for our license, we learned that she needed parental consent to be married, because she was under legal age, which was twenty-one at that time. Helen's mother was in Florida, having come down from Chicago to her father's funeral in Groveland, but she was ill. She was scheduled for some gynecological surgery in Gainesville about the same time we were to be married. Gainesville was chosen since it was the home of her sister, Helen's Aunt Grace.

Since Helen's mother was incapable of driving at that time, we decided we would drive to Gainesville. This would accomplish two objectives. The first was the opportunity to visit with Helen's mother before her surgery, and the second was to secure the written approval for Helen's marriage. When we arrived, we learned that her mother was in the hospital awaiting her surgery. It is necessary to place this in its proper perspective. At that time, hospital stay was not a significant cost issue. It was not uncommon for surgical patients to remain in the hospital for at least two weeks. In fact, most births also included a hospital stay of two weeks. We thought nothing of it that Helen's mother was in the hospital for several days prior to her surgery.

This scenario prompted another of the classic stories of our marriage. When we entered the hospital room where Helen's mother was assigned, the first words she said to me were, "What type blood do you have?" It is a joke of ours that, instead of me asking for Helen's hand in marriage, her mother asked for my blood. Interestingly enough, our blood types were compatible and I gave her a person to person transfusion prior to her surgery. I was able to trade some of my blood for her written approval to marry her daughter. As events occurred, she had her surgery just a few days before our wedding and was not able to attend. On our honeymoon, we visited her in the hospital at Gainesville.

Even though the wedding was very simple, it required some planning. Helen's

dress and my suit had to be selected. I recall purchasing the suit in which I was married from Walter Menges store for men on North Orange Avenue. My Aunt Hattie was a dressmaker and was the de facto wedding consultant for our wedding. She evolved into this position as the family member with the most knowledge of social protocol and etiquette. She designed and organized the floral arrangements, and she assisted Helen with her wedding dress. Helen spent the night before our wedding with Aunt Hattie and Uncle Gus. This was to accommodate the tradition of the groom not seeing the bride on the day of the wedding until she comes down the aisle of the church to be wed.

The wedding ceremony was held in the College Park Baptist Church. The church at that time was an old wooden building. The pastor who performed the ceremony was Fayette Hall. Over the years, in addition to being our church pastor, he developed into a close personal friend. We only had two attendants at our ceremony, Jimmy and Alice Poole. Jimmy had been my closest friend when I went into service and remained so until his relocation to Baltimore in the late 1960's. Alice was chosen as the matron of honor due to her relationship with Jimmy. One of my regrets now is that we had no photographs taken of our wedding. We had none before, none during, and none after. There is no pictorial record of Helen in her wedding dress or me in my wedding suit. In



Gussie Carter, Lou and Mom
on POE furlough, 1944

addition to having no photography, we also elected not to have any type of reception. After greeting a few of our friends and relatives in the church foyer immediately after the ceremony, we were on our way as a newly wedded couple.

We had indicated that we were leaving immediately after the ceremony for our visit to Helen's mother and our nondescript honeymoon. Between the two of us, we decided that we would spend the first night as husband and wife at our apartment, but we did not want to arrive there until late in the evening, after having our first meal together at a restaurant, which we had not yet selected.

As an aside, our mode of transportation was in an automobile owned by a close

family friend, Gussie Carter. She was a close friend of my mother's, and also to me before I entered service. Even though I owned the old 1932 Ford which we called "Geraldine", the use of Gussie's newer Chevrolet coupe was a treat. Another perspective to remember is that we were wed immediately following World War II, and our industries had not yet made the transition from a war to a consumer production. Therefore, new automobiles were not available. The newest were those that were purchased before the war began.

As we meandered up 17-92, we arrived in Deland. We selected a restaurant in the heart of town for our first meal together. I remember us telling the owner/manager that we had just been married. He gave us a note stating that we had eaten a hearty meal just a few hours after we were married. We wasted some more time waiting for it to get dark and then returned to our apartment in Orlando. We left the next day and visited Helen's mother in the hospital in Gainesville. We then went on to Jacksonville where we spent the next few days before returning to our apartment. The honeymoon was about as simple as the wedding itself. Little did we realize at the time that we were embarking on a relationship that would continue for more than sixty-four years. No end in sight at this writing.

Even though we think of our years after retirement as our "golden years", I consider the golden years period of my life as beginning just a few months after Helen and I were married in February of 1946. Helen was feeling sickly, and, since she was a nineteen year old new bride, we suspected that she could be pregnant. Helen made an appointment with the Stone family doctor, Carl D. Hoffman. Dr. Hoffman had recently renewed his medical practice in Orlando, after serving as a field surgeon for the army in Europe. He was a prominent physician in Orlando, and he had married the daughter of an early Orlando Mayor. He was in general practice, but he also provided obstetrical care, since at that time Orlando had only a couple of obstetrical specialists. After an examination of Helen, he confirmed that she was indeed pregnant.

After observing the distress in Helen's features upon receiving the news of her pregnancy, Dr. Hoffman attempted to console her. This consolation talk with her began with the remark that this was the best thing in the world that could have happened to her and to our marriage. He stated that raising children in the early stages of our marriage would allow us to enjoy the fruits of our companionship with each other later in life. His rationale was that in the early years a married couple would be inhibited in their activities by causes other than having children. He stated that I would need to be educated before starting a career. I would then be in the early stages of a career which would translate into low income. He finalized his consolation with the statement that we should have our children while we were young and then, when my career had expanded and our children were grown up, we would be able to enjoy life with each other.

To this day, Helen and I often remark at how profound her doctor's comments

were. In retrospect, this incident was a part of our learning process in understanding just how wise older people can be. As the saying goes, "They've been there, done that". Following up on that piece of advice from Dr. Hoffman, Charlotte was born in December of 1946, Beth in March of 1951, and Les in June of 1954. Helen was twenty, twenty-four, and twenty-seven years of age, respectively, when her three children were born. On her fiftieth birthday, our youngest child was twenty-three and my career had advanced to the point where I was the number three executive at the Orlando Utilities Commission, ultimately to move into the number two spot. We had completed our child-rearing years and now had the freedom, as well as the means, to pursue travel and other interests in life. How true Dr. Hoffman's words of wisdom proved to be.

The first year of our marriage was marked with such significant events that it is difficult now to understand how we withstood all of them. The first event was Helen's pregnancy, conceived in the first month of our marriage. We had stated to Helen's mother that our intentions were to refrain from having children until after I graduated from college. When Helen called her mother to tell her that she was pregnant, her mother's response was that she must have married the smartest guy in the world to have completed college in less than two months. This is one little family story that demonstrates G-Tag's personality and sense of humor. We have a lot of G-Tag stories.

The next obstacle was that the apartment which was owned by my aunt was sold. The new owners quickly told us they wanted us to move. To put things in perspective, immediately after WWII came to an end in 1946, millions of service personnel returned home. Many, such as I, married and were looking for places to live. During the war years, no new construction had taken place, so housing was very short. With our apartment no longer available and acceptable housing not to be found, our only recourse was to move in with my parents. That created an awkward situation, with Helen being pregnant and the usual tension that occasionally arises when two families live under the same roof.

I have often referred to Charlotte as my "lawnmower baby". The reason for that is that I started a lawnmower repair business during Helen's pregnancy. The proceeds from that business provided the money for Helen's prenatal care, delivery, and postnatal care for her pregnancy with Charlotte. The professional fee for this entire care was \$200. Health insurance coverage was not common at the time, and certainly we had none. We would only become covered when I obtained a full-time job at OUC three years later. In addition to the doctor's care, I was obligated to pay all the hospital costs, which, as I recall, were even less than the aforementioned amount for the doctor.

My entrance into the lawnmower repair business came about as a result of World War II. During the war, no new lawnmowers were produced, so all of the existing lawnmowers had to be maintained and repaired. The traditional and standard lawnmower at that time was the reel type, which required pushing. The advent of

the power mower was several years in the future. Actually, there were wealthy homeowners with large lawns who had power mowers, but this was definitely the exception and was a curiosity. With hand lawnmowers requiring so much maintenance, the lawnmower shop at Bumby's became so overwhelmed that the turnaround time for sharpening and repairing a mower extended to almost a month. This was significantly impacting their business, since lawns in Florida grow considerably in a month's time.

Under these conditions, I offered to sharpen and repair mowers in a makeshift workshop in one of Dad's buildings behind the Conroy House, where Helen and I were living at the time. The agreement was that I would receive all the compensation for labor, including sharpening, and Bumby's would receive the profits from all parts installed. As a matter of information, the charge for sharpening a lawnmower at that time was \$2.00. I sharpened them by lapping in the reel with the cutter bar by using a makeshift turning device for the reel. The entire lawnmower unit was located in a shallow container. The rotating device which I rigged up was rather ingenious. I would then apply a compound made up of emery powder and waste oil. After the sharpening was completed, I then needed to clean the unit which I did with mineral spirits and compressed air. The compressed air was generated by the use of an old compressor, which I had salvaged from a refrigeration unit. The proceeds from this operation gave us the ability to pay the doctor and hospital bills for our "lawnmower" baby.

The day that Helen began having labor pains for Charlotte's delivery was Sunday morning, December 22, 1946. I took her to the hospital where we were met by Gussie Carter, a good friend of our family, as well as a registered nurse. She led Helen up to the labor and delivery area and told me it would be several hours before she gave birth. I then went back to my parent's house where we were living, and decided to do some work in the lawnmower shop. In less than two hours, I was called and informed that Helen had delivered a baby girl. This was the first of Helen's three very short labors. We were now the proud parents of a baby girl, after having been married ten months. In retrospect, we have no regrets and are very proud of our family history.

The next challenge arose when I had to decide whether or not I would return to college. When I learned that Helen was pregnant, I considered the idea of not returning. I applied for several jobs, but in every instance the men who interviewed me stated that they had a job for me, but that I was a fool if I didn't return to college. Hearing this from successful people, I began to reassess my decision to not go back to college. After talking it over with Helen and trying to outline the difficulties we might have for the next three years, we agreed it was a wise decision to continue my education. I started my sophomore year while we were living with my parents.

In the meantime, with the help of my dad, we explored the possibility of building a house under the G.I. Bill. Bumby Hardware owned two fifty-foot lots on



Our first home in Winter Park, 1947

Pennsylvania Avenue in Winter Park. I purchased these lots with the savings I had accumulated during my time in service. They became the genesis for the G.I. loan I acquired to build a two-bedroom frame house. The location of the house was ideal, since it was within easy walking distance of Rollins College, as well as downtown Winter Park. We moved into that house shortly after our

first wedding anniversary. It is easy to see now why I consider our first year of our marriage as being so traumatic but, in reality, we were building the foundation for our family years.

During the next three years, I attended college under the G.I. Bill, which provided us with a subsistence allowance, as a married veteran, of \$120 per month. This was supplemented with part-time work at Bumby Hardware, which provided another \$80 per month. We were able to furnish a new house, care for a new daughter, participate in various school activities, as well as support all the other activities of new parents, with a total income of \$200 per month. I cannot let the opportunity go by without recognizing that it was through the efforts of my father that the part-time work at Bumby's was made available for me. Without that help, I doubt that I would have been able to finish school and accomplish what I did in my career as a result. I will always be grateful to Dad for this.

In my senior year at Rollins, I pledged a fraternity, Delta Chi. This increased my exposure to other students, as well as our social life. As a married couple, our little house near the college became a gathering place for social activities for other married couples and fraternity brothers. We would regularly have social events at our house, usually involving some type of card game but very rarely involving any kind of alcohol. In retrospect, I imagine most of us were too poor to afford the luxury of drinking many alcoholic beverages. One of the highlights of our college activities was when we and one other married couple were able to act as chaperones for my fraternity when it was assigned the weekend privileges at the Pelican. The Pelican was a large dormitory style two-story building at New Smyrna Beach owned by Rollins College. The college had a procedure whereby they allocated the use of the Pelican during the school year to the various fraternities and sororities. One of the conditions for the use of the Pelican was

that the group using it must be properly chaperoned. Since Helen and I were an adult married couple, we qualified as chaperones. This was a fun weekend for all of us.

Not only did Rollins make the Pelican available to sororities and fraternities during the school year, but they also made it available to alumni during the summer months. There was a specific procedure for scheduling a reservation through the alumni office. Not being able to afford an expensive vacation after I graduated, I took advantage of this opportunity for many years when the children were young. Our family has many fond memories of summer vacation at The Pelican. In 1986, when Helen and I purchased our condo in New Smyrna Beach, just a few miles from the original Pelican, we named it "The Stone Pelican". Since then, our children, grandchildren, and now our great-grandchildren have enjoyed many special times together at New Smyrna Beach.

Charlotte was our only child during my three years of college. I remember one occurrence during my senior year. Every year the college would have a Christmas event for the children of students. On one occasion, Helen took Charlotte to the Christmas party in my senior year just as Charlotte turned three years old. The president of the college went around to each student's child and engaged the child and its parent in conversation. When approaching Helen, he asked Charlotte's age. She replied that she was three years old. Hamilton Holt responded by saying that three was his favorite age for the early years of all of his children. When Helen told me what he had said, I was delighted and have thought ever since about how right he



Lou, Helen and Charlotte

was. Little did I know at the time that that Christmas party would be his last at Rollins. He resigned as president at the end of the school year in 1949. I received my baccalaureate degree in June of 1949 and began work at Orlando Utilities Commission in July. The story of my career and work at OUC is chronicled in another portion of this journal.

My employment at OUC began another phrase in our marriage as I transitioned from a college student and part-time employee to a full-time professional. At the beginning, I did not feel the status of a professional but, retrospectively, I now know this was the beginning. It was also the beginning of a certain level of independence in our lives as a married couple. At last we had a degree of economic independence. Even though, in the beginning, our income was not much more than when I was a student and part-time employee, we had hope and expectation that it would grow. Even more importantly, we felt a certain sense of financial security.

As evidence of this new financial independence, we purchased another automobile. This purchase was from Dewey Stone, my uncle. As I recall it was a 1949 black Chevrolet coupe. Even though it was a coupe, it was more than seventeen years newer than "Geraldine", the 1932 Ford which I and my family had owned since I was a junior in high school. It had served all of us well, but it was now time for an upgrade. Some reading this may question why we purchased a coupe as a growing young family. The answer is that it was the right car at the right place at the right time. As a coupe, it had room behind the front bench seats where we placed a little stool where Charlotte rode.

Another manifestation of our newfound independence was our decision in 1950 to have another child. Our second daughter, Louis Elizabeth (Beth) was born March 6, 1951. The circumstances concerning that birth were exciting. At that time OUC sponsored a softball team in the commercial league in Orlando. The team was a perennial powerhouse and won several league championships. I played on that team as catcher. On the night of Beth's birth, I played softball. Upon my return home, Helen advised me that her water had broken. She had planned to take a shower before going to the hospital, but when we called the doctor, he told us to get there without the bath and to make haste. Helen's sister Joda was living with us at that time. We all left the house together, and the plan was to take Charlotte to my mother's house and Joda would then accompany me to the hospital with Helen and sit with me during the many hours until the baby was born. On the drive to Mother's, Helen began to have labor pains rather close together. The further we drove, the closer the pains came. I will never forget that at the corner of South Street and Summerlin Avenue, we made the decision to take Helen by the hospital first and then let Joda drive Charlotte over to my mother's. When we arrived at the hospital, they immediately took Helen up to the delivery room. Beth was born at 11:47 pm, the exact numerical address as our home in Winter Park. I don't recall whether Joda made it back in time for the

baby's birth or not. One thing I do know is that Helen's attending physician, Dr. Carl Hoffman, did not make it to the delivery. Beth was delivered by one of the interns. In any event, it was a pretty close call and set the stage for the circumstances of Les' birth, which would come a little more than three years later.

Even though Charlotte was four and a half years old and was able to exhibit some degree of independence when Beth was born, we could never lose sight of the fact that we now had two infants in our household. We had become one of those families after World War II which produced the "baby boomer" generation. Helen had settled into the routine of being a mother, homemaker, and wife, while I was beginning to build a career at OUC. We took a great deal of pride in our home located on Pennsylvania Avenue within walking distance of downtown Winter Park. Helen's love of beauty was manifested with all the flowers, shrubs and plants which we had in our yard.

While we had friends from the college while I was attending Rollins, our primary friendship centered on Jimmy and Alice Poole. Jimmy and Alice were married while still in the service and their first offspring, a boy, was just a few months older than Charlotte. They had a second child, also a boy, which was slightly older than Beth. Jimmy had been my best friend while in high school. He and Alice were the only two attendants at our marriage. We were frequent visitors at each other's homes, and Jimmy was my helper in performing many of the chores of a new homeowner. I recall one occasion where all four of us planted grass in our front yard. Their close friendship continued, and I was able to direct Jimmy to an opening at OUC, where he became employed approximately a year after I started. Both Jimmy and Alice struggled to complete their college educations and both successfully accomplished that goal. Alice



Jimmy, Alice, Lou circa 1946 - 1947

became not only a schoolteacher, but an elementary school principal in Florida,

and later in Maryland. Jimmy also became a professional water chemist and we were not only friends, but business associates for many years. We both lived and worked together at OUC's Indian River Plant in the Titusville area.

When I was promoted to director of OUC power generation and my job as superintendent at the Indian River Plant became vacant, Jimmy became a little disenchanted with me because I did not recommend him for the superintendent's job. Shortly thereafter, he resigned and took a job with a water consultant in Baltimore, Maryland. In this capacity, he would now make his mark in his chosen field. Jimmy's talent lay in his knowledge rather than in his leadership ability, which is why I had not recommended him. His new job as a water consultant took advantage of that talent, and he ultimately became a partner in the consulting firm for which he worked. Eventually, our friendship was rekindled, and he became the water consultant for OUC's boilers both at the Indian River Plant and the Stanton Energy Center. In the early stages of his water consulting career, he made many trips to the Middle East where their infrastructure was being developed due to the discovery of crude oil in that area. Jimmy's death came about as a result of a heart attack when he was on the way back home from a trip to OUC's Stanton Energy Center.

When Beth was around two years old, Helen and I began debating and discussing whether we would plan to have any more children. One fact that was significant in our decision was the difference in our blood factors. I was Rh positive and she was Rh negative. Not a lot was known then about the blood condition of offspring resulting from these two parental conditions. One thing that was known, however, was that each pregnancy created a condition that was more tenuous than the previous one, and that couples should cease having children no later than the third child. This was the Damocles sword that hung over our heads while we were making this decision. I was also concerned about financial considerations, and I will always remember a conversation I had with my dad about having a third child. While riding with him one day, the subject came up about having another child. I mentioned to Dad that we were slowly beginning to see the light of day with respect to our financial condition, and I did not know whether we would be able to afford a third child. He instantly responded, "If you wait until you can afford something, you will never have anything". That comment remained with me and impacted many decision in my life. Shortly thereafter, Helen became pregnant.

In 1954 there was no such thing as a sonogram, only old wives' tales to indicate whether the sex of the unborn fetus was a boy or a girl. Both Charlotte and Beth were excited about having a new baby, which they named "Susie". When Helen's pregnancy advanced to the point where movement could be felt in the abdomen, Charlotte and Beth were continually asking to feel Susie's movements. By the time Helen's pregnancy advanced to the point of delivery, it was almost an accepted fact that the baby would be a girl. I remember well the day of Les' birth. On that day, I accompanied Helen to her visit with Dr. Hoffman, who told us that

Helen was ready to have the baby, that very day. We picked up Beth and Charlotte, who were attending summer Bible School, had lunch together, and then went home to pack for the hospital visit. We then took both girls to Grandma Stone's and went to the hospital. Helen still had no indication that the birth was imminent. G-Tag came by the hospital and asked what all the fuss was about, since Helen was not in labor. We were all waiting together, including Helen, in the waiting room. Finally, a nurse came in and said she was going to prep Helen for delivery. We did not see Helen again, but a short time later, Dr. Hoffman appeared in the waiting room and said, "Lou, we don't have a Susie this time!" Louis Edward Stone, Jr. (L.E.S., i.e. Les) was born on June 25, 1954.

One thing I can remember vividly is that I had already developed a response to those people who offered their condolences about having another girl instead of a boy. My response would be that I was proud of my children whether boys or girls and that I resented any regrets. That was the way I felt then, and I feel the same way now. While on that subject of mixed sexes in the offspring, I have a few comments based on experience and a perspective that covers more than fifty years. Any parents who raise their children with only one sex do miss out on a significant element of parenting. The old cliché "I'm from Mars and you're from Venus" is readily apparent after having been the parent of both sexes. Seeing their differences from infancy to maturity is one of the great joys of being a parent. This difference is manifested in their first demonstrations of likes and dislikes. It is readily apparent when the infant begins to show their interests in the different types of toys and playthings. This unique difference exists throughout their formative years into adulthood. I know it is a matter over which we have no control, and I would have been very happy and content to have three girls. However, I feel very fortunate as a father and a parent to have experienced all of the various joys and exultations of raising both sexes.

It was not long before we discovered that our growing family had outgrown the capacity of a coupe automobile and a small house with only two bedrooms. Knowing that moving into another house was out of the question and that a major renovation was beyond our financial capabilities, we explored the possibility of modifying our existing residence with the sole purpose of obtaining another bedroom. We accomplished this by converting the existing dining room into a bedroom and closing in the screened porch and making it into a dining area. This was done without changing the roof line and was made possible by the fact that I did most of the work myself. This change made our living quarters adequate. Yes, our next car had to be a sedan. We purchased a four-door Chevrolet that wasn't much newer than the coupe we owned, but it certainly had more room. No longer did Charlotte and Beth have to ride on the little makeshift seats we had fashioned for them in the coupe. Now they had their own adult seats. That sedan served us well until we purchased a station wagon in the late 1950's, which was our family car when we moved to the Indian River Plant.

Due to the rapid growth of Orlando, the demand for electrical power eventually

exceeded the output of OUC's two power plants in Orlando. OUC was in the process of building a new power plant on the Indian River, halfway between Titusville and Cocoa. There was a lot of interest and speculation as to who would become the superintendent of the new plant. It was considered one of the outstanding positions at OUC. Obviously, I had my dreams about such a job, but I knew it was impossible, because there were so many power plant personnel who were much senior to me. I received the shock of my life when I was informed in the latter part of 1958 that I would be the new plant superintendent.

Around the middle of 1959, before we moved, we learned that Helen required some serious lung surgery. All during our marriage she had been plagued with a chronic cough, and she was susceptible to lung congestion and infections which would cause her to become bedridden for days at a time. Her problem was finally diagnosed as being bronchiectasis, a chronic lung condition that resulting in fluid retention in the lung, which eventually caused the tissue to die. This could only be resolved by removing one of the lobes of her lung and scooping out a portion of another lobe. After lengthy discussions and debate, we decided to proceed with the surgery. This meant that Helen would be immobilized for quite some time, even though she was a busy homemaker and the mother of three children. We were able to manage the situation with help from family and friends. Les stayed with my parents. Beth stayed with Al and Joda, and Charlotte stayed with one of her schoolmate's families. Even with the removal of half of her lung on the left side, Helen's recovery was remarkable. I don't remember exactly how long it was, but before too long we were all back together as a family.

One aspect of my new job as the power plant superintendent was that our family would live in the residence being built directly across from the power plant on the banks of the Indian River. Even though Helen's rehabilitation was slow, we could now begin our planning for the move to the superintendent's residence at the Indian River plant. When I was first appointed to the job and we knew that a residence would be provided, we planned on moving before the beginning of the school year in September of 1959. As happens to most schedules, this one was changed due to Helen's surgery, as well as delays to the completion of the superintendent's residence because OUC changed the architect. The end result was that we moved into the residence at the Indian River Plant during the Christmas holidays in 1959. By doing this, Charlotte and Beth could begin their schooling in Brevard County at midyear.

Even though the residence was located on a beautiful spot on the shores of the Indian River and the house was the first one we had ever lived in that had any kind of air-conditioning, the early months we were there were less than desirable. The large area between the house and U.S. 1 was barren, and the sand blew across the property like the Sahara Desert. Additionally, the garage was not enclosed which exposed everything out there, including the laundry, to the blowing sand. Ultimately, these deficiencies were corrected and life on the

Indian River began to take shape. Many changes occurred while we were there. The first was that the huge area between the house and U.S. 1 was completely grassed, with a sodded lawn being placed around the house. The second big improvement was that the carport was remodeled, making it into an enclosed garage. It was heavenly to me that all the yard and lawn work was done by OUC's maintenance personnel.

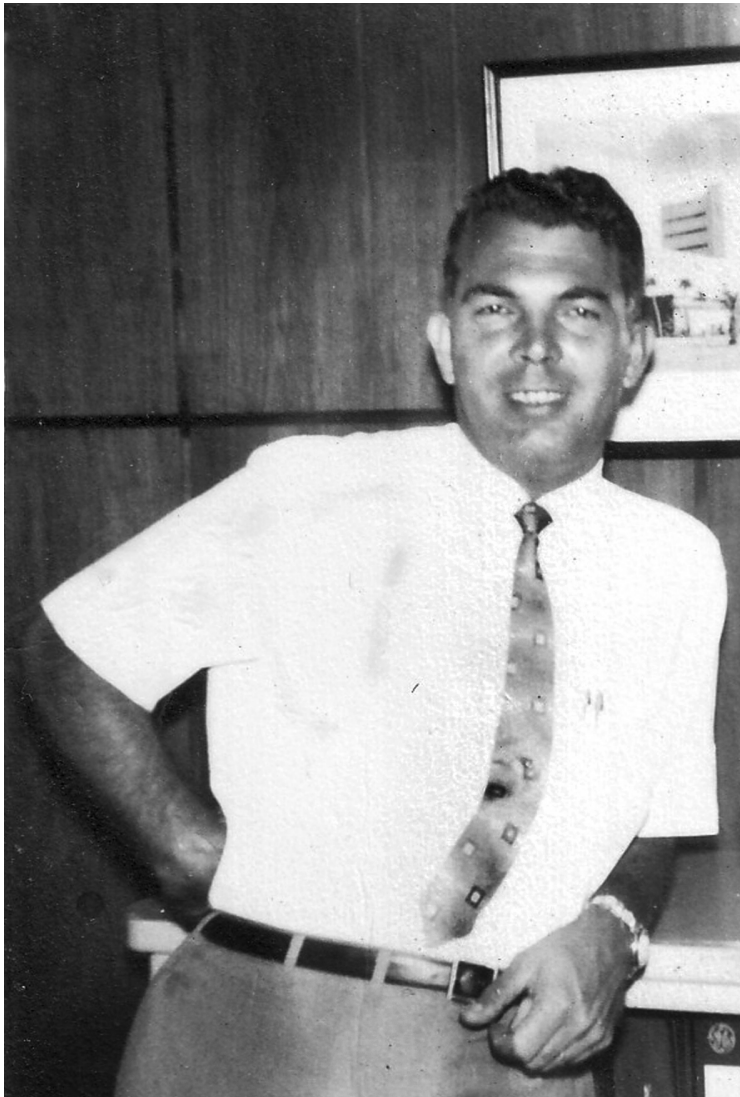
Our family was now living on the Indian River with all of its amenities. Foremost among these was the sea life that it provided. The water from the river which had been used for cooling in the power plant was discharged back into the river, by means of a manmade canal from the power plant back into the Indian River. This "discharge" canal bordered on the north side of the house. This water was warmed by the process, and the canal attracted all sorts of marine life in the winter, including manatees and many types of fish. With our interest in sport fishing and our love of seafood, this was a fishing haven for our family. The fishing was phenomenal, and I called it my "million dollar fishing hole". At the "intake" canal south of the house, there were traveling screens which prevented the sea and plant life in the river from entering with the water for the cooling of the power plant. This provided a plethora of shrimp and crabs for us to harvest. We could fish or gather from the intake and eat our catch for supper that evening. My father especially relished his trips over to visit us and fish at either the intake or discharge canal. I suspect these were the most successful and pleasant memories of his fishing life.

Even though living in this environment provided many wonderful experiences for all of us, I would say unequivocally that being smack dab in the middle of the missile and space development program was the most exciting of all. Our residence at the power plant was directly across from Kennedy Space Center, although at that time it was still called Cape Canaveral. When we first arrived in Brevard County at the end of 1959, the military missile development program was the center of most activity. By the time we left in 1964, NASA was beginning to take precedent over all military activities. This was due to the fact that in his inaugural address, President Kennedy had made the commitment to land a man on the moon within 10 years. As mentioned in another portion of this autobiography, I don't recall in my lifetime, other than during World War II, a time when our country was so united to a specific cause.

The development of the military missile programs had provided the knowledge necessary to create rockets capable of sending a human to the moon and back. During my tenure at the Indian River Plant, I witnessed the development of such rockets. It was such an exciting place to be and witness from the periphery. In the early stages of rocket propulsion, liquid fuels were the primary means of power. This did not satisfy the military's needs, since handling and storing liquids presented a serious logistical problem. This opened the door for the development of solid fuels for rocket propulsion. One of the first applications was the development of the Polaris rocket for submarines. It allowed the storage for

many months of a missile that could be launched from beneath the water anywhere in the world. After it came the Minuteman, the ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) developed by Martin Company, and then the medium-range missile, Pershing, developed by the same company. Both of these overcame the logistics of handling liquid fuels, which allowed the Minuteman to become the military's choice for placement throughout the U.S. in strategic locations. The Pershing missile became the military's choice for a mobile launcher intended for intermediate ranges.

OUC's Indian River Plant started up on February 20, 1960. The children had been enrolled in school, and we began to integrate ourselves into the life of Brevard County. At that time there was no significant NASA presence on Cape Canaveral. All of the Cape activity then was focused on developing the various rockets for the military. The Brevard community was like a town patterned after



Lou at Indian River Plant

those of the Gold Rush period. There was a classic saying among Cape workers, "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow the contract will expire". Such was the attitude that prevailed during that period of the rocket/missile development. This paints the picture of the atmosphere under which we lived during our four years at the Indian River Plant. Most of our friends and acquaintances were associated with the missile industry in some form. From the early days of my tenure at the Indian River plant, many people tried to convince me that switching over to the missile development program would be the right thing for me since there was a crying need for my expertise in pressure systems. History proved that I was correct in not succumbing to this temptation by virtue of the

fact that many of my friends who had tried to get me to convert came back to me looking for jobs after I had returned to Orlando when the missile industry suffered a severe cutback in the 1970's. Destiny ultimately proved that the electric power industry was the place to be for me.

Our years of living at the Indian River Plant were very significant in the history of our family. It was not only my first management responsibility at OUC, but it was a time that provided many of the values and actions which became so significant to our family. In 1964, I was promoted to the position of director of electric operations, which meant relocating back to the Orlando area. As a side story, in 1999, twenty-five years later, our family had a reunion with our old home on the river on OUC's IRP property. This was the idea of our son Les who made the arrangements for this visit as a surprise and part of my 75th birthday celebration. At the time, the house was vacant. We took a picnic lunch and spent an enjoyable day reminiscing together about our special shared experience of living there on the power plant property during those exciting years in Brevard County.

Upon planning our relocation back to Orlando, we had decided to research the areas of new home development. Even though it was in the mid-1960's, home construction was beginning to take a firm grip on Orlando. Helen was very diligent in her research of our options for an area in which to live. On several occasions, she went over to Orlando with a packed lunch and spent an entire day in a neighborhood that she was investigating. At that time, one of the most popular areas being developed was in Dover Shores. Helen spent considerable time investigating that area, but she finally vetoed it because of the air traffic noise due to being on the flight path of the B-47 bombers flying into Pine Castle Air Force Base. These were still the years of the "cold war" with Russia, and the noise would become even more profound when SAC made the transition to B-52 bombers. That became a profound decision, due to the fact that the air base later became the location of the Orlando International Airport, one of the busiest airports in the country now, due to Orlando becoming such a popular tourist destination.

After considerable deliberation, we chose a site for our new home on Sweetbriar Road, just outside the city limits of Orlando but within the service area of OUC. We chose a builder and were on our way to becoming homeowners again. The location was



Our Home for 44 years on Sweetbriar

on a dead-end street that had formerly been an orange grove. As an aside, two families, the Buckners and the McGaughys, who were residents when we moved into the neighborhood in 1964, still occupied the same homes on the street when we moved into the Westminster Towers forty-four years later. Our street was approximately fifty percent completed when we started construction. In approximately one year, it was all sold out. The house plan that we selected was one which we had seen in Winter Park and was originally designed by Rutenburg Homes. We made some minor adjustments and the contractor had plans drawn up for it. After going through the torments that all homebuilders go through during construction, our house was finally completed, essentially on time. The total price we paid for the house and the lot was \$25,000. It was a well-constructed and designed home.

As another side story, I recall that, approximately ten years later, I ran across the contractor at lunch one day and commented to him about how well the house had been built. I told him that after living in it for more than ten years, not once had I referred to him as "that SOB contractor who built my house". This was the highest compliment that I could give any homebuilder. The quality of the material and construction was one of the reasons we were able to sell it so quickly when we retired to Westminster Towers. One of the ironies about the house on Sweetbriar is that it was the largest house we had ever lived in since our marriage, and yet we moved in at a time when our family was showing signs of becoming smaller. Charlotte had just entered college, and in a few more years both Beth and Les would be leaving the familiar trappings of our household. Nevertheless, the house on Sweetbriar served us well for the next forty-four years. It became the site of many joyful family times, as well as a few family sorrows.

Charlotte began her college life at the University of South Florida, Beth was enrolled at a local junior high school and Les attended a local grammar school. I began my second step in the hierarchy of OUC as the director of generation. Helen became more deeply involved in the many facets of being both a wife and mother. The latter two assignments encompassed a multitude of virtues and challenges. Life for our entire family had begun anew.

Helen had the most formidable job of all, creating a new home in which the family would live. From a basic house built on a lot in a desolate, old orange grove, she created a thing of beauty with her artistic talents and hard work, both inside and out. I have always particularly enjoyed seeing what Helen could do with outside landscaping. The landscaping around our home became a thing of beauty, and everyone was always impressed with Helen's knowledge of plants and their welfare. The house at 902 Sweetbriar before too long became the home of the Stone family. Even though living at the superintendent's residence at the Indian River Plant held many exciting and enjoyable times for our family, the crux of family life was fully established while living at 902 Sweetbriar.

Charlotte was enrolled at the University of South Florida in Tampa in 1964, which made her class one of the earliest ones to graduate from this new university. It was only in its infancy at that time, but it subsequently became one of the leading universities in Florida. It was a liberal arts school originally, but it developed into strong technical college, and a medical school was eventually added. In 1964, Interstate 4 through Orlando was in its final construction stages, and that portion between Tampa and Orlando had been completed. The drive from Orlando to Tampa was very short and enjoyable, with traffic being at a minimal. Charlotte was elated to learn that one of her classmates from Titusville High School, Allana Bourne, had also registered at the University of South Florida. They became roommates and very close friends. Dan Holland, Charlotte's boyfriend from Titusville, was attending a Christian school in Tampa, and he would offer rides to Charlotte back to Orlando on many weekends. Such a ride back to Orlando is the source of one of my funny stories.

During the strawberry season in Florida, Dan and Charlotte decided to stop at one of the strawberry fields which had a special offer if you picked your own strawberries. The owner told them that since they were college students headed home, they could have all the strawberries they could pick free of charge. When Dan and Charlotte arrived at our house in Orlando that evening, Dan's automobile looked like one big mobile strawberry. There were strawberries coming out the roof, the windows, the doors, etc. They unloaded many at our house and we ate strawberries in every form possible for days to come. The whole family was involved, and I remember that we attempted to make strawberry jam. It never set up properly, but we had a huge quantity of what we called "strawberry syrup". The main thing that is so memorable to me is the pride that Dan and Charlotte had in their conquest of the strawberry field.

Another memorable event about Charlotte's college days is that she and her friend Allana were selected as exchange students to the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Allana had an aunt who was living in Newport, Rhode Island. This became their center of traveling almost every weekend while attending the University of Massachusetts. I can vividly remember receiving a collect call from Charlotte Stone late one evening, about midnight as I recall. As any doting father would do, I accepted the call since I thought my daughter needed my help. Immediately upon the call going through, she responded with, "Daddy, guess where I am!" I replied, "I have no idea." She immediately informed me, "I'm calling you from the top of the Empire State Building in New York City." Obviously this got my attention. She and Allana had driven down to New York City for a day of sightseeing. This was one of the many trips she and Allana took, all over New England, while students in Massachusetts.

After an off and on romance throughout their college years, Dan and Charlotte were married on February 9, 1968. This was during Charlotte's senior year back in college at Tampa, but even more profound, it was during Dan's furlough before leaving to serve in the army in Turkey. Charlotte was a good wife and became a

schoolteacher while awaiting Dan's return from Turkey. Upon his return, he was stationed at Fort Ritchie, Maryland, only an hour's drive from Washington, D.C. They were living there when our entire family, including my mother and dad, visited them. I will always remember that trip, since it was in their living room that we saw on television the moon landing and the first man walk on the moon. Upon their return to central Florida, Dan completed his education at FTU, later to become UCF, and was hired by Florida Power Corporation and assigned to the Winter Park office.

In 1974, Dan and Charlotte provided us with our first grandchild, a baby girl named Carin Ruth, "Cari". Cari's middle name, Ruth, was a testament to my mother, Ruth Stone. During Cari's preschool years, they lived not far from us, and we were able to see them often. Then Dan was transferred to St. Petersburg, where Florida Power's corporate offices were located at that time. As Dan's career progressed, his family moved to Monticello, Florida, and then ultimately back to the Orlando area, where Cari graduated from high school. Cari excelled in her studies and decided to attend Florida College, a small private Christian college in Tampa, Florida. Her father had also attended this college. It was there that she met the fine young man, Aaron Smith, from the mountains of North Carolina, whom she would eventually marry. I have more to say about their marriage later on. Cari did return home to Orlando and complete her degree in elementary education at the University of Central Florida.

Beth was beginning to make her mark in Cherokee Junior High School. This was the same junior high school that my siblings and I had attended. She became very interested in public speaking and debating while a student there. She became close friends with her young speech teacher, Sharon Bowers, and that friendship remains to this day. Beth's training in speech served her well through her years as a student and even more so when she confronted the world of business. After receiving her high school diploma, Beth attended the University of South Florida where her sister had graduated. After a time, she became disenchanted with college life and living away from home and returned to Orlando where she obtained a job at Sun Bank. Before too long, she was in contact with her former junior high school speech teacher who was then working on her PHD at LSU in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Sharon knew Beth's capabilities and was eventually able to talk Beth into going to Baton Rouge and becoming a student at LSU.

The decision to go to Louisiana was a turning point in Beth's life. She received an excellent education while there. And, even more profound, she found a wonderful Razorback from Arkansas, Steve Rudolph, whom she married in her senior year in the student chapel at LSU. Steve was working at the time as an application engineer for Square D. Upon their marriage, he decided that he wanted to move to Florida, and he sought a job with Florida Power Corporation. He was ultimately employed by them and assigned to the office at Lake Wales, Florida.

Beth and Steve have lived in Lake Wales continually since settling there soon after their marriage. Over the years, they raised two fine sons there and became pillars of their community. Steve has never left his job at Florida Power Corporation and has actually survived several employee layoff/buyouts. Ironically, both of my sons-in-law have worked in the power industry. Both were engineers and worked their entire careers primarily with Florida Power Corporation, now known as Progress Energy.

Beth and Steve's two sons, Jason and Jeremy, were good students and athletes in their formative years. They were both enrolled in dancing classes as youngsters and excelled in that activity for many years. An annual outing for the rest of the family was to attend their dance recitals at the end of the year. My recollection is that Jason was an excellent hip-hopper, and Jeremy was an outstanding tap dancer. Also, Beth and Steve worked hard as supportive parents for the annual recital, as lighting and stage managers and many other various jobs over the years. We learned that dancing is a sport that requires just as much energy and skill as other more traditional sports for young men. Plus, as the boys explained, there are no girls on the football field.

Jason attended Wheaton College near Chicago. Living in Illinois was quite an experience for a Florida boy, but he survived, and ultimately graduated with his degree in Christian Formation and Ministry. In January of 2009, he married and gave Beth and Steve their first "daughter". Jason and his wife Joy are now living and working in Orlando, not far from where Helen and I live, and we enjoy seeing them periodically. After completing high school and working at Olive Garden restaurant in Lake Wales, Jeremy had an opportunity to move with a friend to Reno, Nevada. He is currently living there and working at the Olive Garden in Reno. Obviously, we do not see him as often as we would like. He is very interested in pursuing a career in photography, following in the footsteps of his Uncle Les.

Back at home on Sweetbriar Road, as a young man, Les was continuing his venture into photography during his high school years. One of the earliest remodeling jobs accomplished to our house on Sweetbriar was made to the guest bathroom. We allowed Les to paint the walls black and convert that room into his darkroom, in order to pursue his interest in photography. At that time, all photography was wet photography, since the era of digital cameras had not yet come. Les became close friends with a neighborhood boy, John Barnett, who was the same age. Shortly thereafter, the two of them became acquainted with another neighborhood boy, Rob Byers, who lived across the lake from where we lived. Their common meeting place was at the CAP (civil air patrol) search and rescue meetings. This organization was a quasi military group, which instilled a sense of discipline in all of them. In retrospect, it is interesting to note that both John and Rob made a career out of serving in the military until their retirement. Rob also received his military training as a cadet student at West Point.

Les' photographic interest manifested itself when he became the photographer for his school newspaper while a student at Boone high school. His commitment to a career in photography was indicated when, immediately upon graduation, he accepted an offer of training and a career photographing performing arts groups in high schools. He moved to Detroit for his training, and afterwards his job involved traveling. This experience provided two elements to his development. The first was that it gave him tremendous experience in working with large groups. The second was that it made him independent in planning for his long trips and managing his schedule. These two elements were highly instrumental as he became older and more mature. After being on the road for a while, he decided that he would settle down and return to Orlando. Shortly thereafter, he became employed by Sea World as a staff photographer, working with Britt Runion, who was Sea World's chief photographer. He worked with Sea World for fourteen years and had many interesting and exciting experiences, such as traveling with them and filming sea life "gatherings" of different species in different parts of the world. He filmed everything from autopsies to the birth of the first "Baby Shamu". Ultimately, Les became a freelance photographer, and his own independent photography business was born. As the digital age developed, he made the transition to digital photography and was very successful in that area. Now he is making inroads into using his photographic experience in matters of digital security. What the future brings for his career, only time will tell.



Les and Becky Wedding

One of the highlights of living at our home on Sweetbriar Road was the wedding of our son Les and Becky High. This was one of two such weddings that were held there. Les and Becky were married on July 4, 1981. Becky moved from Atlanta to Orlando when they married and, as an elementary school teacher, readily found a job teaching in the Orange County school system. Becky had an outgoing personality, and she easily integrated herself into our family. I remember that the "girls", Helen, Charlotte, Beth, and Becky, enjoyed outings to the condo together, and they took a few trips to places like St. Augustine, Savannah, and Charleston. It was a difficult time for our family when we lost Becky to cancer in 1992.

The other event in the setting of our backyard was the wedding of our granddaughter Cari to Aaron Smith. They were married on December 17, 1994, the same day Cari graduated from UCF. She chose to attend her marriage rather than her college graduation ceremony. Upon marrying, Cari and Aaron returned to the area of his hometown in Mitchell County, North Carolina. At that time, Aaron was a barber, but his heart was elsewhere. He began studying at night and passed the exam to be a building contractor in North Carolina. He has specialized in building log homes in the mountain settings. Because of his expertise and his affable personality, he has been quite successful. And this is a good thing, because ten months after they married they provided us with our first great-grandchild, Heather Shay Smith. Two years later Emma Leigh Smith was born. Five years later, Sarah Anne Smith was born. Then, to our surprise, another five years later Luke Aaron Smith joined the family and two years after that Mark Aaron Smith arrived. They are, of course, beautiful children and each and every one of them is dear to Helen and me. This helps to explain our many flights to Asheville which I describe in my "leisure life" section.

Like most families, we have some family traditions that form the basis of our family culture. Probably, the most memorable are our Christmas celebrations. Of course, when my children were very young and my parents were still young enough, my brothers and I and our families all convened at my parents' home. Santa would come in the night and we would have the usual commotion of opening our presents, followed by a big Christmas dinner later in the day. As time progressed, the gathering was moved to one of the son's homes. When we moved into the house on the property of the power plant, and then when we moved back to Orlando, the gathering was primarily at our home. It was a lot of work for Helen, but she especially enjoyed decorating for the holidays and wrapping the presents. My dad was interested in photography, and in the early days of movie cameras, he started one tradition. He set up his camera in the living room. Everyone was required to remain in the other room and then, in single file, we walked in and waved to the camera. We did this year after year, in the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's primarily. Smiling and waving, we have a motion picture family Christmas history recorded on film.



Cari and Aaron wedding

The extended family, my brothers and their families and Helen's sister Joda and her family, made a special effort to attend so that we could all be together at least this one time each year. My brother Ken worked in the Orange County school system for his career. He was a history teacher for many years before becoming assistant principal at Cherokee Junior High School, which he had attended as a youngster. Later in his career he worked in an administrative position in the adult education program. He eventually married Mary Ann Cartwright, and they had a son, Kenny, Jr. Kenny married a local girl from Longwood, and they have two young children whom we see occasionally. In his later years, Ken was remarried to Rita Arnold. Helen and I enjoyed flying in the Mooney to Maggie Valley and being present for their wedding. We have a tradition of getting together with Ken's family in September to celebrate the birthdays of Helen, Ken, Rita, and Kenny's wife Laura.

My brother Jimmy married a girl from Georgia, Patricia Aldridge. He and his wife "Aunt Pat" had two children, Debbie and Buddy. Jimmy worked for Sears in downtown Orlando for many years. Then when Dad opened his own hardware store on west Highway 50 in Orlando, he went to work with Dad. Eventually Pat also worked at the store, and when the children grew up, they also worked there. Jimmy and Pat took over ownership of the store after Dad died, but when their family had to face the untimely death of Jimmy, the store eventually was sold. But even today, due to their background, Buddy and Debbie both work in the hardware business.

Speaking of the hardware business reminds me of another family tradition. For all of the years that Dad had his hardware business, the family would be called in for the annual taking of the "inventory". For tax reasons, this is required to be done annually and reported to the state government. Nowadays, this is all done by computers. When we buy any item, its bar code is scanned and the computer system automatically deletes it from the store's inventory. At any given time, a store can print out its current inventory. But that was not the case before computers. For the hardware store inventory, one day was set aside and marked on the calendar by all the participating family members. In the course of that day, every item in the store was counted and then the item, the quantity, and the price were manually listed on "inventory sheets". Imagine counting every item in an old-fashioned hardware store. It was a job for the whole family, including the children once they were old enough to write. There was one redeeming event of the day, however. Around 1:00 pm, Grandma Stone and her helpers would bring in a fabulous southern-fried chicken dinner with all the appropriate trimmings and desserts. There was one other benefit of the experience. Just like my days of working at Bumby Hardware when I was a student at Rollins, everyone in the family had a "ticket" hanging in the back of the store. All during the year, when we came in to get something at Dad's store, instead of paying for it, we would just record it on our "ticket". After inventory day, our ticket was usually wiped clean, and that was our pay.

Helen's sister Joda and her husband Albert have also been regular attendees at our family's Christmas gatherings. Albert's family owned the Orlando Forge in Winter Park, and when his parents passed away, Albert "Uncle Al" eventually bought out the business from his brother Carl. This came at a time when Orlando was beginning to experience its phenomenal growth. The Orlando Forge was well-known for its custom handmade wrought iron work. He received lucrative contracts from Disney World and other large industries moving into the area. Al was an excellent craftsman and also a good businessman. Al and Joda have one daughter, Lisa Mahoney. Lisa now lives near Seattle and has two grown children. Al and Joda have always been an important part of our lives, but now in our retirement years we have been able to spend even more time together. As an aside, as I write this, it is eminent that they will be moving into our community at the Westminster Towers.

In more recent years, Les, our only child living in Orlando now, took over hosting the family Christmas gathering. Somewhere back in time, Helen learned to make a Christmas wreath butter cookie which everyone in the family loved, so making several batches of those cookies became one of our traditions. I can testify to the fact that making those cookies is a labored task. Our granddaughter Cari, along with her children, has now taken over this task. Since she lives in North Carolina, she makes them and freezes them. Then they make the journey to Orlando in dry ice, in order to be fresh for Christmas morning. When we lived on Sweetbriar Road, we had a navel orange tree in our yard, and I began making a large bowl of ambrosia for Christmas morning, which everyone still looks forward to every year. At some point, we changed our tradition from a large Christmas dinner in the afternoon to a large Christmas brunch in the late morning. In addition, we changed from the women cooking the dinner to the men cooking the breakfast. The women in our family have been somewhat liberated.

Over the years, Helen and I have been blessed with a loving family who try their best to be supportive of one another. Each one of our children (sons-in-law included), grandchildren, and great-grandchildren has his and her own unique personalities and talents, and each one is important to us in his and her own special way. In 1996, Helen and I celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary. When our children came to us to discuss the plans for this celebration, it was our choice to have a small family dinner, rather than a large party with many guests. At our dinner celebration, we were toasted and honored with tributes by the family members present. I remember that they spoke about how grateful they were for us, but it was also a special time for us to look back over the years and be thankful for our family.

As our children matured, we grew older and therefore less capable of maintaining our residence. Our zeal was still present, but the infirmities of getting older with their limitations prevented us from doing the things we were accustomed to doing. We found that those things now had to be farmed out to others. Whereas

I bragged earlier in my life that I had never paid for an appliance service call, I now found that I had to make such a call for any anomaly. Helen also felt the same way about issues connected with the maintenance of the yard. All of our children were an immense help when called upon, but we realized that such calling could not go on forever. We realized that each of our children had their own lives to live and that caring for their parents would not be in their best interest.



Lou and Helen move to Westminster

appears that this was one of the smart decisions we made during our almost sixty-five years of marriage. The lifestyle here suits us well, and we both are very happy being residents at Westminster Towers. We are quite content living an undisciplined and unstructured existence as retirees without the chores and problems of home ownership. We now can visit with our children in a new environment, without having to worry about those many problems associated with owning a house.

Our children still offer their love continually and their help and support when needed from time to time. Les now serves that role which I had to abandon many years ago due to my human frailties, and I would be remiss if I did not mention the fact that the help and assistance from Les is and will continue to be passionately appreciated

After much investigation and after careful consideration, we decided to move into Westminster Towers, which most likely would be our final residence. We were able to quickly sell our Sweetbriar home, which I think was primarily due to the beautiful yard which Helen designed and maintained. In retrospect, after almost two years of residency, it



Lou's family reunion at IRP residence
on 75th birthday



Stone family Christmas 2008



Char and Dan on Porch in N.C.



Aaron and Cari



Our five great grandchildren