

Life Story v101 part 1

Life is all about growing ones own soul, and facilitating the growth of others. Each of us came here destined to have different experiences. The following are mine. The early part of this story, that of my youth, was primarily written 20 years ago. The later part, that dealing with my adult life has been written more recently, delayed in part because much of my adult life was on the hard side, so I put off writing about it. I've made mention of my children herein, but to keep the story somewhat manageable I haven't written too much about them. They each, after all, have their own stories to write.

We often visited my mothers mother Lucille Putzel and her step father Walter Putzel who were very dear to me. This was the second marriage for my grandmother, her first husband and first love of her life Karl Schmidt MD succumbed to the great pandemic as a Chicago physician in 1921. The Schmidts were, because of his profession, in the upper class of society, and Lucille no doubt had been well taken care of financially. Outside Chicago they owned a country home which my mother enjoyed visiting. The Putzels home in Burbank was nice but not ostentatious though I remember that they had a black housekeeper. Walter and Lucille were happy together. I called Lucille Mamama and Walter Bapapa. They had a little study in the front of the house where he held me on his knee. I hope he knows how much that meant to me. I remember a times he would smoke one of his pipes and blow those wonderful rings of smoke into the air. I have never smoked in my life, but I have a special memory of Bapapa and the smell of his pipe smoke. He also gave me nice empty Cuban cigar boxes for me to keep things in.

Speaking of smoking, my mom smoked cigarettes early on, but knew it wasn't good. She particularly knew that it would be hard on me to ever do it. With this in mind, when I was very young, she set out to demonstrate the fallacy of the proposition to my little ever curious self. She lit a cigarette, put it into my mouth, then placed and held a paper bag over my head until I was gasping for air. The little demonstration worked marvelously, as I have never had the slightest inclination to smoke.

Solana Beach

When I was 4 we moved to Solana Beach, California (405 South Granados Avenue). My parents had about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre on a west sloping hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean. We were about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the ocean. My mother had a horse. She let me, as well as Brandon feed it from a little shed on the north part of our property. She often took it down to the ocean for a run along the beach. We lived up the hill to the north of the racetrack. The racetrack just to the south and down the hill from us had a little estuary that connected it with the ocean. She rode the horse to the racetrack then down to the ocean. The area was lightly developed with a lot of open space making it easy to get from place to place. The southern California coast is famous for its moderate maritime climate. We had avocado, lemon, orange, and pomegranate trees either on our property or nearby. The school bus stop had a pomegranate tree next to it so many of the kids arrived at school with purple stained hands.

Our family often went to the beach. I remember having suntan lotion spread all over my back, and the times when that was forgotten, the horrible resulting sunburns and blisters. I liked building sandcastles. I built them overly strong as a challenge to the waves, but eventually as the tide rose, the ocean always won. There was something about this however that became part of my character, always try to build things with extra strength.

I remember seeing my fathers father for the last time as he visited us at the house in Solana Beach. We

called him Pa. Pa had worked in construction most of his life, and was a member of the masonic order. He came down to visit us shortly before he died in 1956 at about 90. I remember him holding me as he sat on a chair in the front yard. I was at the start of my life, he at the end of his.

Childhood Illness

I was a sickly child due to asthma. This was hard on my folks, especially my mom. It also caused my father to take a salaried job as an aerospace designer so that they could have health insurance to take care of me (I think he preferred to work for himself). By the time I was 4 or 5 I'd been hospitalized for asthma several times. I remember that breathing was very difficult, like breathing through a straw, and I vaguely remember being under the oxygen tent. I also remember weekly trips to my doctor (Dr. Manning) where I would receive a shot of penicillin or house dust (per Scripts Institute recommendation), or a medicated candy of some sort.

A Friend and Starting School

I remember having a great little friend whose name was Rene (Irene Coffin). She and her family lived slightly up the hill from us on South Nardo Avenue, making it a short walk of about a block. I remember that her mom used to make really good and aromatic homemade bread. We used to play the game Chutes and Ladders. They had an evergreen tree in their front yard that was likely topped. It seemed really high at the time but probably wasn't. We used to make peanut butter sandwiches and climb to the top of the tree to eat them, sort of picnic like. Rene liked to pick a piece of bread with holes in it and let me hold it while she spread the peanut butter and jam. I didn't have a care in the world at that time.

My mother enrolled me in a little cottage preschool. I remember playing with Mr. Potato Head and doing finger painting. Somewhat later I graduated to kindergarten. The first thing that comes to mind about kindergarten was the great nap time. We each brought a little blanket and at an appointed time (probably when the teacher was tired) we all got to lay down on the floor and close our eyes and take a nap. But sometimes I didn't just nap. If I squinted my eyes just right I could see all sorts of stars and patterns while under the blanket.

Our Mother, a Caring Person

I'm grateful for a memory that I have of my mother that occurred while living in Solana Beach. She became aware of a poor family living in a trailer house down the road from us and she performed several acts of kindness for them. On one occasion, after going to the market, she decided to take some food down to them. I was astonished that, no sooner than we entered their home, the little children took a bag of bread, ripped it open and stuffed their mouths with the morsels. I thought it was so sad. I've often thought about my mother's kindness in doing this for them. It's one of my best memories.

My first bicycling experience came after my folks bought a tricycle that I rode with no shoes. I managed to get my foot caught in the spokes of the front wheel and lost a toenail. A couple of years later I graduated to a real bike with training wheels. Solana Beach was where I learned how to swim. Before that however my father had to build the swimming pool! According to family letters at the time the pool actually started with a hole that I had started digging, and went from there. It was a fairly good size pool, with a deep end and a shallow end, and plenty of room for my folks to swim. My father dug the hole by hand and put the steel reinforcement in. He then hand packed the concrete, mixed in his mixer, to finish the project.

Father, Strong and Tireless

My father's strength and endurance were only a part of the great man that I still call Daddy. He was always honest, kind, and loyal to my mother and our family. My mother told me once that he never used bad language, nor did he like off color jokes. That was my experience with him too. He treated me tenderly in my youth. I remember fondly that as a very young boy I would stand on his feet and he would walk me around the room. He also protected me from bad dreams that I sometimes had. I used to dream that an invisible train was coming down the tracks at me. I had to cross the tracks but I was afraid the train would run me over. He heard me crying and picked me up. Somehow he was never afraid of that invisible train.

Father was a good artist, mainly sketching, but some painting. He took his supplies with him on frequent trips to the ocean. He also had an interest in model boats. He kept one that he'd made in his youth but never ran it because at the time I saw it he no longer had the engine. He was an avid water skier.

Early years in Solana Beach were my first years of learning and discovery. I remember Mamama visiting and taking me to a store to buy a little box with lights and a battery. I don't remember exactly what it was, but I played with it and learned a little bit about electricity. I was probably 4 years old. I also remember having an Uncle Milton's Ant Farm. I remember that I was a little surprised that it didn't come with ants. After buying the Ant Farm, my mom sent a coupon from the box to Uncle Milton's company. After a couple of weeks the little container of ants arrived in the mail. It sure was worth waiting for. Watching them make tunnels and move food around was fascinating to me.

My mother played hide and seek with me. She liked to hide in a little doorway at the back of the house and jump out at me as I ran by. I was so thrilled that I can still remember it! My father had an old hand cranked ice cream maker with a wooden bucket. After mixing all the ingredients we sat on the back patio and throwing ice and salt in the machine, after which he cranked and cranked until the ice cream was done.

Back to Los Angeles

After living in Solana Beach for about 3 years, my uncle, Dr. Karl Schmidt, and Dr. Manning felt that the moist ocean air of Solana Beach was detrimental to my health. My parents decided to make the move back to the Los Angeles area. I believe we moved to Van Nuys, but that's only a guess. I know it was in the San Fernando Valley somewhere.

I remember as a young child riding in a car with my grandmother handing me potato chips. She was always happy and really loved me. Aunt Shirlee (my mother's half sister) also loved me. Once she took me to a local 5 & Dime store and bought me a small scarf to make a parachute out of. With strings attached to a rock, it worked very well when tossed into the air.

I don't have many early school memories. I generally used pencils for my schoolwork, but early on used something like a fountain pen, which dipped into an ink reservoir in the ink well in the desk. Technically a dip pen. I have a vague recollection of dipping or thinking about dipping the ponytail of a girl in front of me into that ink. Idle hands. My mother also gave me a fountain pen but I don't think I used it much.

Asthma was a constant companion during my growing up years. I had an inhaler that I took to elementary school in case I had an attack. Limited physical activity also limited friendships and

activities.

I have a tremendous gap in my memory for most of the time between my 6th year and 11th year. I can't say for sure where we lived at any point in time. My folks liked to buy, fix-up, and sell houses. In the course of doing so, and because my dad frequently changed jobs, we moved a lot. When I graduated from high school I remember figuring that I had gone to at least 12 different schools by then. We lived in almost as many houses and I can't say where we lived, or what schools I attended.

Pools

We had swimming pools at several of the homes we owned. Swimming was just a part of life and I became a great swimmer, especially under water. I could go the length of a pool underwater, return to where I started and complete the loop again before coming up for air. With a nozzle on it, a long length of garden hose provided lots of excitement as it snaked around in the pool and occasionally surfaced to spray water all over. I happily found that plastic model airplanes glide nicely underwater.

Trips to the Pacific Northwest and Palo Alto

I have many great memories of trips to relatives up north. My aunt and uncle, Rose and Harold Johnson lived in Bellevue Washington. Bellevue is located just east of Seattle. It was a beautiful area. The trees and greenery that I became acquainted with there forever affected my feelings and desires. Once I saw that such beauty was possible, I don't think I've ever been satisfied with the more barren landscape of other areas.

Aside from the magnificent natural beauty of the area, trips up north meant visits with Rose and Harold, and my cousin Fred. These visits were particularly memorable because they often occurred over the Christmas holidays. Rose and Harold had a nice house, warmly decorated for the season. They believed in Christmas traditions. One of these was a big Christmas tree. And around the tree they had a large, O-scale electric train which made a perfect Christmas.

Rose and Harold were a great example for me. It's funny that as a young person you just take things for granted. I never appreciated how unique Rose and Harold, Al, Fred and Anne were until many years into my adult life. They were honest and hard working and also happy with good family lives. Fred was about 10 years older than me, and always kind. We shared a common hobby, model airplanes. In those days, Fred was interested in control line airplanes, so when we visited I'd go out to a local schoolyard and watch him fly. This was the beginning of a life long interest in model airplanes and aviation.

Big Bear

My mother loved the beauty and solitude of nature. She was certainly accustomed to city life, but I think she always longed for the country. She was in many ways a private person. She told me once that she was closest to God when walking in the forest and seeing His creations. I share that view. Every once in a while her longing for the country took us on pleasant side journey to a more peaceful spot on the earth. The first of these were the years we spent in Solana Beach. Then, when I was about 8 years old we made a move to the little town of Big Bear.

Big Bear is located at about 7,000 feet in the San Bernardino mountains. I remember her telling me one day that they had just bought a piece of property up in the mountains. She tried to get me excited about the prospects. I don't think that I had much of an idea of what such a place would be like, and I didn't

want to change schools again, but it did sound a little bit like an adventure. Well, it was an adventure for all of us, but especially for my mom and dad. As it turned out, they bought a really interesting house up in the mountains, but my dad had to keep his job in the city. So, for the 9 months or so that we were there, he stayed at our other house during the week then joined us on the weekends. I suppose they had some long-range plan to get him out of this, but it apparently never worked out. My mom on the other hand was taking care of a large piece of property, and two semi-small (and sometimes sick) children, by herself, in the middle of a very snowy winter at 7,000 feet. She was a determined woman, but eventually distance and weather won out. In the mean time we had a great time.

Big Bear was one of the highlights of my youth. I loved the country life. As we traveled up the mountain we would always reach a certain point where we would get above the smog. Looking out to the west, this thick gray yellowish blanket would spread as far as eye could see. The trees were even sick at that elevation. They seemed to be dying right at the level of the worst of the smog. Above that level things were fine again. Everything was clean and the sky was beautiful. Big Bear Lake welcomed us as we came around the final bend in the road, then we drove around the lake, through the little town, and north a little way to our home.

I don't know how large our Big Bear property was, but it had to be several acres. Prominent on the property was an old mink farm. I remember that it was enclosed by a seemingly tall fence with angled wire at the top to prevent the mink from getting out. I recall getting on top of this and going clear around the enclosed area. Another part of the farm was a building, within which was a large walk in refrigerator. There was also an old school bus on the property, but Brandon and I were forbidden entrance to it. We never did anything with the mink farm portion, but it contributed to the uniqueness of the property, and to its distinctiveness with respect to cookie cutter parcels of the city.

When I first started going to school in Big Bear I remember being scared of the new surroundings. In fact, on several occasions I feigned sickness so that my mom would pick me up and bring me home from school. Eventually she and the school nurse figured I was faking and I had to go school more regularly! I eventually enjoyed going there. We had a long bus ride each way. I fell asleep on the way back one day and missed the stop by our home. I remember being scared but things worked out okay. Elementary school in Big Bear was a little bit different than in the city. The cafeteria food was really good and they had delicious hot lunches. But on the snowy days they instead served cold box lunches. I couldn't figure that out until one day I found that a lot of the kids were going skiing during lunch and preferred the boxes!

I had a great tree house while in Big Bear. It was a nice platform up in a pine tree, constructed apparently by the previous owners of the home. It was huge. One time my grandmother Mamama came to visit and even climbed up into my tree house! In expectation of her visit I made some "make-up" out of dirt and had it all ready for her to try on. She tried just a little bit so as not to hurt my feelings. The trees in Big Bear were really tall, with large trunks and the typical sparse vegetation under their massive shadows.

Going to the Dump

Big Bear had a great dump! One of my favorite activities was going there with my parents. At the dump we not only dumped things but I also searched for treasures! I once picked up an old pinball machine, which yielded may good parts for experiments. I know that going to the dump might seem like an odd thing to enjoy, but I've seldom been one to waste anything and it seemed to make a lot of sense to me to

reuse what others no longer needed. They burned most everything at the dump before burying it, and I still fondly remember the smell of that smoke!

The city of Big Bear had a craft store, which we visited often. I had several friends who lived near us. The family to the north had a little pond in the back of their property. We had great fun in riding our bikes down a hill and into the water.

I was getting more and more interested in electronics. Transistors hadn't yet made it to consumer electronics but I had a portable battery powered tube type radio that used a 45V or 90V 'B' battery. My favorite was a large antique radio that had a huge '80' rectifier tube in it.

I really liked living in the country and once got the hankering to go panning for gold. I came up with an old gold pan and went to the dry creek bed down the hill from our house. I don't know what I planned on doing without any water, but I was young and it was fun anyway. I did come up with some pyrite that I was later sad to find was only fools gold. My school teacher brought a large rock collection to class, and she knew the difference between gold and pyrite.

There was something about being out in the open with those big mountains and trees that enlivened me. I've found that a good beautiful, wholesome, outdoor, peaceful environment seems to make every other aspect of life better. I have never felt so alive as the times I've spent living among the big trees. The Big Bear experience was one of, if not the best time, of my youth.

Back to Civilization

Big Bear was a wonderful experience. Finally the stay ended and we moved back down to "civilization," again to live in the San Fernando Valley. We lived in and around Sherman Oaks, Tarzana, Encino, and Woodland hills. Sometime my folks would take me to the Sepulveda Recreation Area (we knew it as the Sepulveda Basin). People used to fly control line model airplanes there. My dad helped me build a balsa model. It flew well and I was very happy at our accomplishment. I then built a larger "free flight" model with a small 020 engine. This model was designed to catch thermal air currents and keep going up. It had a small pneumatic timer that went off after a few minutes and safely brought the airplane down by tripping the elevator, causing a stall.

On one of our trips to the Sepulveda Basin I saw a model airplane being controlled remotely by a radio. I was very excited about the prospect and asked the man who ran a hobby shop about it. Amazingly he told me that it would never be very practical and tried to steer me away. Too late however, for I soon found a mail order catalog from ACE RC and bought my first radio control system. It wasn't anything fancy. In the early days of radio control the sets only allowed control of the aircraft's rudder. This was accomplished by a device called an escapement, powered by a long twisted rubber band running the length of the fuselage. When the receiver was triggered it would cause an electromagnet in the escapement to pull in, which in turn allowed the escapement to turn 90 degrees each time. This actuated the rudder. Very simple but it worked well, and I was able to control the plane from a substantial distance with no wires! All of the technical advances and bigger models of later years have never replaced the joy that I experienced with that first R/C model.

Mothers Trip to Europe

Adventurous souls used to visit travel agencies for brochures picturing exotic foreign destinations. Mother had her eye on Switzerland, made the arrangements, and before we knew it was on the plane to Europe! She made several friends while there including a couple who later stayed with us in the United States. I don't know much about the trip itself but I do remember her bringing back several toys and a

whole bunch of tiny firecrackers.

The Schmidt's

During our time in the San Fernando Valley, especially during the early years, we had family get togethers at the Schmidt house. My uncle Karl and his wife Marion had a beautiful house in Van Nuys (I think Fulton Street, but I'm not sure). It was to me at the time a mansion, with a formal dining room and large living room. The property itself was probably at least an acre with a beautiful front yard where the kids would play games, and a nice secluded backyard for quiet evenings. Karl was a prominent pediatrician who had part ownership of the local hospital. His father had also served as a physician and we had several other members of the Schmidt side of the family who were pharmacists or otherwise in the medical field. Marion was a beautiful woman of probably Italian ancestry, and a great hostess.

Karl and Marion had three daughters, Karen, Trudy, and Paula. Karen was a few years older than me, Trudy was about my age, and Paula about 4 years younger. I don't remember much about Karen, but Trudy and I used to play games together frequently when we'd come over. Trudy had nice red hair. My mother and Karl had us in competition school wise. Trudy would almost always pull straight A's and I generally got B's so my mom usually lost. I was always made aware of Trudy's grades, in an attempt to improve my scholarship! Paula was little and I hardly got to know her as a child. I have talked with her as an adult however. She has a nice husband and family in Colorado.

Our family get-togethers occurred mostly at holidays. Marion was an excellent cook and we used to have huge feasts. I remember everything being very proper in terms of the china that was used along with real silverware. They had a huge table in the dining room. I don't think these niceties are essential to a happy life, but I feel fortunate to have experienced them at some point, even if just on special occasions. For amusement during these visits the kids would often play games such as Monopoly, Life, and a detective game called Clue. We didn't watch any TV. Karl banned it because of something that Karen had done. We did look at 3D slides mounted in a circular fashion through a binocular device called a View Master. Karl was mean to Karen and Trudy, and that affected them throughout their lives. Karen at one point left the house, and Karl in looking for her came to our house where my mother diffused the situation. Karen told me much later how much our mother had helped.

We also made frequent informal visits to the Schmidt home, generally entering by Karl's art room where I was lucky to see Karl's latest masterpieces in progress. Karl was a very talented and prolific painter. He painted many dozens of fine original oil landscapes, seascapes and portraits. Even with his busy doctor's schedule he'd get up early every morning and paint for a couple of hours. Karl would also take vacations in the great southwest where he'd made friends with the Indian people, some of whom he portrayed in his portraits. His paintings were displayed in many prominent civic and private buildings throughout the area. Karl was also an inventor and had a good home shop. As a child I used to bring little model boats over to him and he would help me with soldering batteries and so forth.

Art and Violet

I can't say exactly why, but I don't have recollections of our parents having many friends. I'm probably wrong about this as both my mom and dad were gregarious. Most likely I just wasn't interested in what they were doing and don't remember their adult associations. One notable exception was their long time friendship with Art and Violet Arntzen. The Arntzen's lived in what, at the time, was one of the last remaining rural areas of the valley. The area was a few square miles that had been zoned or had restrictive covenants which prevented it from being subdivided into small lots. Thus, our visits to the Arntzens were always a trip to a beautiful rural setting in the midst of the city. The house was set

towards the front of their property towards the east. At the south side of the house was tiny addition with a little sign that read "The Lean-To." The back of the property contained a long series of sheds running along the north side. These sheds contained antiques that Art was refinishing. The last of these buildings (towards the west) was the refinishing shop. It was here that Art, and at times my dad, would perform their miracles on old pieces of furniture. I remember them stripping furniture of the old finish, applying new, then "antiquing" the finish by flicking bits of paint on it, etc. I wasn't too interest in that at the time, but I was interested in the gold leaf that they applied! It was fascinating to thumb through a book of gold leaf and play with that microscopically thin metal. Another fascination was watching Art levitate a screwdriver with compressed air.

Art and Violets property was fairly wide and deep and towards the back of it, just south of the refinishing shed, was a large blacktop area. They and my folks were avid square dancers and they hosted regular square dances with Art calling. Generally when they had the square dances they'd also put on a large barbecue. Their hamburgers were great because they used a secret ingredient. The west side of their property was lined with eucalyptus trees and they incorporated eucalyptus leaves into the hamburger producing a very distinctive and wonderful taste. We always had a good time at those barbecues and our folks had a great dance and evening afterwards.

I imagine that the dances were held on a Friday or Saturday evening. We also visited the Arntzens on Sunday evenings, but that was a different experience. Sundays were spent inside their beautiful but old fashioned house. By old fashioned I mean that it was furnished and decorated in early American. I really enjoyed it and marveled at the old pieces of furniture. Made by the hands of a generation of sturdy men, stemming from the dawn of our republic, these antiques held a special place in my heart. I remember watching Bonanza and Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color on those visits. Perhaps we didn't have a television of our own at this time, certainly not a color television. Color televisions were just becoming available, but were extremely expensive. Art had a chest full of wood blocks that he cut for children to play with. The Arntzen's friendship and their homes warmth were an important anchor for our family during much of the time that we lived in the San Fernando valley.

American Basic Science Club

I was in my early teens when my parents subscribed to a monthly kit from a company called American Basic Science Club. The kits cost \$3.45 each. These kits, more than anything else in my youth, fueled my interest in electronics and science. A few of the over 110 projects / labs included were: photoelectric eye, photography, spectroscope, ultraviolet lamp, radio receiver, strobe light, atomic energy, radio transmitter, microscope, telescope and weather station!

La Jolla

Our family moved from the Los Angeles area to La Jolla in 1966. Aerospace companies had continually changing contracts with accompanying hiring and layoffs. No doubt the move down south was the result of this. I suspect that my mother was in favor of the move as I think she always liked the area. Property prices were apparently still within reach of my folks. Ours was a small house on Genter Avenue with a small back yard and detached garage. I had a very small attic bedroom with a tiny door, but it was okay. I was very much an introvert, primarily interested in electronics, model airplanes, and chemistry experiments.

My first model sailplane was called a Zephyr. It used an escapement as a control mechanism. I believe that I first flew this plane in the Sorento Valley. I soon discovered that people were flying sailplanes at the cliffs of Torrey Pines. Not just model sailplanes, but full size too. It was a scenic area where full-size and model sailplanes happily co-existed.

Torrey Pines is named after the tree found in the area. Torrey Pines State Park is just north of the flying site. It's situated on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, approximately 500 feet above the water. The cliff is very steep. It's not a straight drop off but comprised of many strangely eroded and deep channels. In the park itself there were several hiking trails going down towards the ocean. One of these was called "fat mans misery" because at points the channel closed to about 10 inches wide. That was a challenge but I was thin. It's since been closed because people got stuck. Toward the south, and at the flying site, the channels are shallower but still present an interesting descent to the ocean.

Sailplanes

The flying site had a large runway for full size planes, set back from the cliff somewhat. Full size planes had a couple of options for getting airborne. A winch was used at times to pull them aloft although I don't remember ever seeing this method in use. The other method was with a tow plane. While flying model sailplanes we frequently were over flown by the tow plane and a sailplane. It added to the overall flavor of the experience. Brandon took a ride in the full size at one point and really enjoyed it.

The model sailplane site was a small knoll overlooking the sea and used only by a few adventuresome souls. I say adventuresome, because it did take a little bit of faith to throw my plane way out over the ocean. Digital control electronics was in its infancy in the 60's. A few flyers were still using escapements. One was using a reed relay multi-channel system. Reed relay systems utilized a special relay with metal reeds tuned to various audio frequencies. This allowed several (6 to 8) separate control channels to be transmitted over one radio channel. Reed systems represented an important stepping-stone in the development of R/C systems. Unfortunately, while they provided separate control of rudder, elevator, and ailerons, each control was simply full on or full off. Left or Right, Up or Down etc. To fly a reed system the pilot would constantly toggle each of the control levers. It worked but wasn't smooth control. I never had a reed system.

Digital pulse proportional systems with servos were just being developed when I began flying at Torrey Pines. I soon bought a used Cannon system from the father of my friend Kelly Pike for \$100 or so. At the same time I designed and built my largest model airplane. Its wing had a chord of about 9" and wingspan of approximately 8 feet. The wing section, covered in Monokote, was undercambered, resulting in slow flight and great lift. The wing was built in two halves, which plugged into the fuselage via 1/4" music wire dowels. I over designed the wing and molded the fuselage out of fiberglass so both were exceptionally strong. People at the site called it the tank because of its smooth slow flight and strength. The hobby was still in its early days, and there was great comradery between pilots. It didn't matter what one flew or how expensive or inexpensive the equipment was, guys were just there to have fun.

Flying at Torrey Pines was a tremendous experience, allowing me to get out of the house, away from my cloistered existence, and experience the outdoors in a uniquely beautiful setting among great friends.

I launched the sailplane by holding it and running rapidly toward the edge of the bluff, where I gave it a hard throw over the cliff and toward the ocean. The updraft coming up off the ocean then caught it and it rose very suddenly as though on a fast elevator resulting in a 30-60 minute flight and very leisurely experience. I'd often lie down on the edge of a grassy hill and lazily fly the plane back and forth along the edge of the cliff.

Few people are able to experience the silent flight of their model sailplane out over the blue Pacific, with a gentle wind at their face and the warm rays of the sun. I enjoyed it for 3 years.

A Trip Back East

My mother longed to visit New England so when I was 15 we began a cross country road trip. My parents, Brandon and I started the drive. I remember huge thunderstorms and pelting rain in the darkness as we drove across the desert. It had been pre-arranged that my father would go as far as Las Vegas, then fly back for work. So our mother drove pretty much the whole trip by herself. The car was packed with stuff. I brought a model airplane thinking I could find a place to fly, but that didn't work out.

I was tall by that point and physically unmanageable, and remember spending the night in a cheap motel. In the middle of the night I had a nightmare and sleepwalked out the door and down the main street. We had a flat tire in Texas, and I was just standing around when a Texas Ranger arrived. He chastised me for not knowing how to change a tire.

We were greeted in New Hampshire by my godmother Lee Locke, one of my mothers best friends. Lee was member of the Eastern Star, a womans masonic organization, and had blessed me under a lilac tree as an infant. Lee Locke had a rural house and she let me shoot a .22 rifle, my first time shooting a gun. I think Lee Locke hoped to convince my mother to move back east. The seed was planted, but for the time being we made an uneventful return to La Jolla.

Tide Pools

Besides Torrey Pines, the La Jolla area offered nice beaches and most of all tide pools. The pools are holes formed by erosion in the rock that extends from the shore out into the ocean. When visited with the tide out the tide pools are home for lots of tiny sea creatures, either fixed to the walls of the pools like barnacles, or starfish making a temporary visit. I enjoyed running out and jumping from tide pool to tide pool.

Body Surfing

Brandon was a pretty good surfer. He had a nice surfboard with a great big shark bite out of it, but I think it was fake. I didn't surf with a board but instead body surfed. I'd swim way out like surfers do then catch a wave and ride it in. Body surfing was common. I swam quite a bit in the ocean. Ocean water is noticeably heavier than pool water, and harder to swim in, or so it seemed. I always had to watch for areas of rip tides that could drag a person out to sea.

Hit by a large wave I would hold my breath and be turned over and over again until eventually surfacing. I remember one time underwater that I was surrounded by a large group of poisonous jellyfish. Fortunately I missed getting stung.

I enjoyed and really miss the beach and the ocean. There are a few places that put my life into perspective with respect to the larger picture. One is looking up at the stars. Another is climbing to the top of a mountain. The expanse of the sea also brings me that type of perspective.

Tennis

Uncle Al was a good tennis player and a wonderful and very interesting uncle. His Palo Alto home was stuffed with rows of newspaper stacked chest high. I couldn't see over them. He was a fantastic gardener professionally for the Sequoia school district. He had several trees his back yard that he'd grafted different fruits onto, which for a youngster such as myself was very interesting. He was also an

avid stamp collector, many of which were stolen from him from time to time. The street he lived on, while once very nice, was finally taken over by a different culture. It was the street incidentally where cousin Fred first met and dated his wife Anne (from Minersville Utah). Al's most shocking achievement was eating common garden snails on a dare from a friend. Al also oil painted and enjoyed taking painting classes.

Since Al never had children he cared deeply for Brandon and me. He frequently made trips to visit us and during those trips we generally went to the court for a game or two. I was fairly good at tennis, best with my back hand, and played it off and on throughout my teenage years.

Experiments

My interest in chemistry blossomed while in La Jolla, mainly my interest in explosives. I had a chemistry teacher who taught a bit too much, including how to make nitrogen triiodide, a substance that violently decomposes with a sharp explosion when barely touched, even by a feather. When initially prepared it is wet, and I was under the mistaken impression that it would be safe while wet. With that in mind, while I was scraping some off wet filter paper without eye protection, it exploded. I was temporarily blinded and had to go to the hospital. My folks were both very concerned, and a little bit upset with me.

I also enjoyed making little explosive devices by emptying the powder from several firecrackers and inserting a small electrically initiated hot wire wire detonator. I wrapped the whole thing up and coated it with wax to water proof it. Then I put it in a used empty yogurt container and submerged it under water. When detonated it would produce a huge and very satisfying splash. The yogurt container had enough air in it that it somewhat cushioned the shock of the explosion. I conducted my "experiments" in a concrete wash basin outside the back of our house. For my last great experiment I decided to eliminate the yogurt container, instead placing my uncushioned device directly in the bottom of the concrete basin. I had left my parents out of all the fun till this point, but for my greatest experiment invited them out to watch. When I detonated this device, instead of splashing water out as usual, it only produced a dull thud. With the thud the concrete basin shuddered, and hundreds of hairline cracks appeared all over it, and through them all the water leaked out. My mom was so upset!

Scientific American magazine was on the forefront in its writings about scientific discoveries. It had a monthly column called the Amateur Scientist, written by C. L. Stong. Stong's articles were fantastic, each showing in detail how to build a science apparatus of one sort or another. The development and commercialization of the laser had just gotten into full swing and Stong had several articles on making them from scratch. I attempted to build a liquid dye laser. It was a somewhat tricky with mirror alignment etc., and I never finished it. I finally purchased a helium neon laser tube and constructed a power supply for it, so I had my own laser in 1968. Having a laser allowed me to get into holography and I made some fine holograms of chess pieces and other things.

I ran into a gentleman that was interested in alternative medical devices. He seemed to know a lot and had connections. One day we took a trip to UCLA and visited Thelma Moss's bio-electricity lab. She showed me around including the experiments they were doing with Kirlian photography.

Alpine

In the middle of my junior year of high school our parents bought a home in Alpine California. The home was located to the east of the northern most section of East Victoria Road. We moved in sometime in the late fall of 1968. It was an uncharacteristically cold winter. Snow, which seldom falls that low, was falling in Alpine. I think we all liked the property. It was 2 acres, and nearly behind us

was national forest land all the way up the mountain. Situated on the bottom skirt of the mountain, with few neighbors, we had a tremendous feeling of space and a beautiful view. I'm sure our parents bought it partly for this. Alpine was a great little town. It had a population of roughly 3,000 and was situated about 2,500 feet above sea level. It's approximately 30 miles east of San Diego, which became easily accessible with the new freeway built in 1970. It had little shops, a grocery store and lumberyard, and was a nearly ideal retirement setting.

Ours was a single level ranch style home. Much of the surrounding area had granite boulders protruding from the ground. Our front yard had two large boulders that provided a nice setting for the house. Although the house had been there a few years the lane that we were on was yet unnamed. My mother named it Rockhyll.

To the east, between the house and the mountain, was a small ravine with a normally dry creek bed in it. It was faced on the east with huge granite boulders. I quickly adopted this area as my place of solitude because it was both in touch with nature and removed from people. Not since the Big Bear days did I have an outdoor place to go to, a place where I could find solitude.

To the south of us was a small building owned by Harry Bishop. This building wasn't a home, although Harry lived there, but mostly a shop. Harry was a single older man who loved the desert. His constant companion was a small tan chihuahua named Pauncho. Harry drove around in a converted Volkswagen dune buggy, with Pauncho following. If Paunch lagged behind Harry would say: "pick um up, put um down Pauncho." It was cute to watch. Harry's big project during the time that we lived there was construction of his own motor home. Harry had been a riveter in the aircraft industry and knew how to apply and fasten sheet metal. He bought a new truck chassis and the motor home he built on it turned out nicely. He and Pauncho then started taking trips. I liked Harry.

High School

I attended El Capitan High School, about 15 miles to the west in Lakeside, California. School was interesting. I immediately noticed the difference between city kids and country kids. Not only were my new acquaintances country kids, but many of them on the bus were Indians. This made our one hour each way bus trip quite an experience, as some were of a course nature. Even so, I liked the rural atmosphere. I was still the mediocre student in High School. I generally got B's, with some A's and a very occasional C or D. It was in my English class that my eyes were first opened to the world. My teacher, Mrs. Luby asked me to write a paper on the tobacco industry. In researching for it I found that the federal government subsidizes tobacco growers while at the same time warning people not to use tobacco. I just couldn't believe the government would do something that seemed so contradictory. For the first time, I questioned the wisdom of those who lead us. Questioning, as it turns out, that has become a habit.

Chemistry Class

In my junior year I was privileged to be in Dale LaBlonds Chemistry class. He was a superb teacher. Mr. LaBlond had worked in industry before going into teaching. He knew chemistry inside and out. He also had very high expectations for students in his class. He taught us something that I've used over and over again through college and in practical life. This simple procedure allows you to work through difficult physical or chemical equations in a systematic manner. It requires that labels be attached to all quantities and relationships. Then, when the equation is solved, everything properly falls into place and all labels appropriately cancel leaving the result in the proper form. Mastering this technique in high school chemistry allowed me to fly through high school physics the next year and through college chemistry and engineering several years later. I did all high school math calculations with a slide rule, a

now antiquated analog computer made out of aluminum or bamboo that I fit in my shirt pocket.

I did well in chemistry class. Mr. LaBlond liked me, so much in fact, that he asked me to be one of his lab assistants during my senior year. I really enjoyed that. We three lab assistants, Robert Jarecki, Dorothy Plaisted, and myself, had the run of the chemical store. We could play with whatever we wanted, and oft times did including white phosphorus and sodium. I had by this time made a hobby of learning how to make different chemical concoctions. One time I tried to dissociate molten salt into its components, sodium and chlorine. I made up a little contraption using a crucible and a couple of graphite electrodes. I think it worked to a certain extent, but the elements recombined about as fast as they were being separated. I didn't wind up with any sodium, but the experiment was fun. I also fell back into old habits and made more nitrogen triiodide. Unfortunately, late in my senior year I overstepped my bounds a bit too much and put some of this explosive under the chair legs of my beloved teacher. He was visibly shaken, and I wasn't his favorite afterward. Of course, it was he who instructed me on the finer nuances of making the stuff in the first place! And it was he, as a college student, who made nitroglycerin and dropped drops of it out his 2nd floor dorm room to the sidewalk below.

I was never at a loss for fun and interesting things to do. For a while I took small corks that we had in the lab and pushed needles through the center of them. I then put these in the end of a 5/8" or so diameter glass tube, for the purposes of making a blowgun. This went on for a long time, with my aim getting better and better. One day, a college student teachers assistant was walking out the door at the far end of the chemistry lab. I'm sorry to report that my aim was excellent that day.

Electronics Class

Another great was Paul Palmer, my junior class electronics teacher. Since I had electronics as a hobby for so long I suppose I did okay in his class, I don't really remember. Beyond the class however, I found that Paul and I got along very well. Though separated by many years we were kindred spirits, and quickly became good friends. We communicated either by phone or letter for at least 15 years after I'd moved to Utah and he'd eventually moved to northern Arizona. Paul was a tinkerer. He always had one project or another going either at home or at school. During my senior year I spent a lot of time visiting him at his home. He became one of my few confidants and a loyal longtime friend. Paul had contacts, many of whom former students, all over the San Diego area. Mr. Mouser founder of Mouser Electronics Corporation was one of them.

Paul arranged for me to go to a military airport downtown and pick up an old transmitter so I could tear it apart and use it for parts. I did just that. It had a very nice high voltage power supply and high power tube type amplifier. I used the contraption to make what could be called a "flame speaker." I got the idea out of a magazine article. I set it up in the back room of the chemistry lab. It consisted of two electrodes positioned one above the other about 4 inches apart. A Bunsen burner flame was placed under them so that it flowed up through both electrodes. The flame contributed charged particles, so the path between the two electrodes became partly conducting. I then modulated the high voltage of the transmitter by feeding music into it and applied it to the electrodes. The current fluctuation through the flame caused the flame envelope to expand and contract along with the music. This in turn coupled to the air so the music was heard in the flame. People who saw it were quite amazed.

Red Phosphorus

My "experiments" were more for fun than for science. Even though I earlier went to the hospital because of contact explosives I continued somewhat while in Alpine. I also made a Kirlian photography apparatus and dabbled with Kirlian photography. My last big home chemical experiment involved

converting red phosphorus to white phosphorus. Red phosphorous is a very strong oxidizer and is useful for making explosives, but it isn't quite as fun to play with as white phosphorus. If you heat red phosphorus to its boiling point, you can then condense the vapor to the white phosphorus form of the element. I made an apparatus to do this in my fathers shop and was in the process of converting when the accident occurred. The condensing test tube broke and molten, burning white phosphorus went all over the work area. During the breakage and while trying t put out the fire I got white phosphorus on my hands. I ran up to the house and put my hands under water to put the fire out. But, every time I took my hands out of the water the phosphorus caught on fire again. I finally had to go to a doctor who scraped the phosphorus out of me. My hands still smoldered for a while. I was finally cured of my fascination with dangerous chemistry, especially after my uncle Karl MD scolded me horribly over the phone for this latest experiment!

Telephone Poles

I had a friend whose name was Larry Keyes. Larry had his good points, otherwise I wouldn't have associated with him. But, like many including apparently me, his sense of morals wasn't well developed. He told me that old telephone insulators, if turned purple by the sun, were valuable, and he cooked up a scheme to get some. Older telephone systems had many individual wires running running between poles, attached to the wooden cross arms with glass insulators. These wire systems were problematic and eventually the individual wires were replaced by cables containing multiple wires. Larry felt that since the insulators weren't being used anymore, that it would be okay for us to go up and get them. He had all the climbing gear so we could get up the poles, and so we did, but climbing up and down each pole was hard and time consuming.

The area had deep canyons filled with heavy brush. The poles were on top of each ridge, so to climb a pole, climb down, traverse the deep canyon, come back out of it and climb another pole, cried for a better solution. And Larry had it! The cables that replaced the wires were up at the same height as the cross arms near the top of the poles. They were about 1 ½ inches in diameter and the two of them were spaced perhaps 6 feet vertically. Larry's ingenious idea was for us to walk from pole to pole on the lower cable, while holding on to the top one! I'm not making this up. It really happened. I did it. So, there I was, probably 70 feet above each ravine, walking from telephone pole to telephone pole.

We finally quit after Larry acted like a monkey, jumping up and down wildly in the middle of a span. I think he sensed something was wrong and suggested we get going. The next day the place had several phone company repair trucks and a few disgruntled workers. Larry kept all the insulators and we never did anything like that again.

Sign Making

Shortly after my folks moved to Alpine my father was laid off at age 63. Work was hard to come by in that time period and I doubt they had much money put away. My father tried to earn money by sign painting for local businesses. He had one notable contract to paint a huge highway sign for the new freeway being built east of Alpine. The sign told all about the project including federal funding sources and amounts. He made signs by taking a good quality piece of plywood, putting several coats of gloss white paint on it, then carefully hand lettering every word with black paint and a brush. He was very good at lettering, perfected after many years hand lettering drawings in the aircraft industry.

First Job

My first job at 17 was at Alpine TV, owned by Howard Range and his wife, a young couple. I earned 65 cents per hour minding the store and repairing tube type radios, which I also earned a small commission on. I enjoyed doing this. There was a older gentleman employed there who serviced the

large tube type color televisions. He taught me a lot about how to service electronics. In those days (1969) a company called Sams Photofacts produced complete schematics, with in circuit check voltages for pretty much every radio and TV manufactured. Parts lists were also provided, enabling efficient repair. I liked the older fellow, however he would generally come in drunk, and smoking heavily. I'm sure he had a story. Howard Range would go on service calls but I never went. It was possible to fix a lot of the problems either in the shop or at the customers home simply by finding and replacing defective tubes. Tubes were checked with a portable tube tester, and it was easy to carry a small stock of normal tubes. I remember all of this fondly, and enjoyed repairing electronics until things got to the point a few decades later, where they were designed to be un-repairable. Tube type radios are really neat. The warm glow emitted by the filaments is so distinctly different than anything found in solid state electronics.

Howard mentioned that he needed a sign painted to go over the the front of the building. I asked if I could do it and he agreed. It was quite a sign. I made it with my fathers' help, out of a sheet of 3/4" plywood painted glossy white. The letters ALPINE TV were each cut out of solid wood and were about 24" tall, stood out from the sign, and were painted with red gloss enamel. The sign was impressive and was there many years after I'd finished it.

A Car?

Sometime during my junior year of high school I happened on a wreck of a dune buggy in the back country behind Alpine. To call it a dune buggy actually maligned the term, as this "car" was basically just the chassis, engine, transmission and seats of some old relic regular car. It had no body, but it ran! So I paid the fellow \$50 then drove it home on the dirt road, even though I didn't have a drivers license. My parents were amazed.

Towards the end of my senior year I obtained a drivers license and my parents let me have their Ford Fairlane station wagon. It ran fine, however the tires were bare with the steel strands showing through. I drove it back and forth to San Diego like that until I could afford to replace the tires.

I later acquired an International Scout, which Brandon also owned at one point, then a VW bug and a Plymouth Barracuda. One Christmas I was so into the holidays that I decorated the Scout with Christmas lights. Stopped by the police I was informed that I shouldn't have any red lights shining toward the front. It looked festive though.

Cars of that period had carbureted instead of fuel injected engines. Carburetors were always causing problems. If the float or valve stuck the engine would immediately stall. The carburetor needs to be adjusted for just the right amount of fuel flow, if too rich or lean it could also cause the engine to stall, and this often happened while accelerating going into an intersection. "Pumping" the gas pedal along with adjusting the choke was typically required just to start the engine. On the other hand, all of these cars were straight forward and easy to work on.

I learned a lot about working on vehicles in the early days and was generally able to rebuild anything in a car or truck including the engine, manual transmission, or clutch assembly. I realized early on that it's better to have car problems than health problems because cars can be fixed or replaced.

Toys R Us

I had a short stint between October and December one year working for Toy R Us in La Mesa California. The store was just being opened and I was asked to do a lot of finish up construction work to start. I guess I bleed easily, or at least I have over the years. I was up on some scaffolding, scraped

something, and left some of my blood on the ceiling of that store.

I was warned that things get crazy on the first day of opening. Sure enough, the customers didn't resemble people, but an angry herd of cattle breaking down the doors, then stampeding down the isles. You could almost hear the mooing. All was good however, because I was selected to work the Science Isle! I recommended telescopes, microscopes, and science kits to loving moms and grandparents. I came into work the day after Christmas, and just like so many, was told not to clock in.

Raking Sand

I also had a very short job raking sand. A rich family put in a small resort just to the south of Alpine. They had a small lake, with a building, a lot of grass, and a sandy beach where they'd hauled in the sand and groomed it nicely. During days of high east wind the sand blew off the beach and onto the grass, and my job was to rake it out of the grass and back onto the beach. I don't think I've ever had a more hopeless job, as the wind kept blowing the sand back to where I'd raked it out of. I got tired and bored and sat down momentarily to read a book, something about philosophy. I didn't intend to charge the owner for my reading time, but he didn't know that, and when caught reading I was advised to get another job.

Almost Joining the Army

The economy was bad, and jobs hard to come by. Things were so desperate that at one point I thought about joining the army. I drove all the way down to the army recruiting station in San Diego, parked the car in front, but just couldn't bring myself to do it. I'm very sure that Army life wouldn't have agreed with me. I did however apply for, and got a job at a restaurant up in the mountains (quite a drive) to clean pots, pans, and dishes. I worked the first night, but never went back.

Service Station

While still working at Alpine TV I began working at the local Arco service station at the intersection of Tavern Road and Interstate 8. The station was owned by Grant Hildebrand, an older gentleman with a lot of experience in the business. Grant was a stickler for cleanliness. He made sure the station was meticulously clean at all times. Mike the mechanic taught me to do mechanic work while hardly getting greasy or dirty. It was a good lesson. Every night we mopped all the floors and island concrete areas with a very strong detergent solution, using a squeegee to finish the job. You could safely eat off the floors of that service station.

Working there became one of my major sources of income. I generally worked 3 days a week over the weekend. It was a full service station, like most in the day. Cars coming in over the mountains from the desert needed gassed up, and most windshields were covered with bugs to be cleaned by eager station attendants. In addition to cleaning the windshield on the outside I usually put cleaner on the blue paper towels and thoroughly cleaned the inside of the glass. Checking fluids and belts under the hood was also part of the job, and at the end of every fill-up I'd offer the customer some S&H green stamps. Green Stamps could be collected, then mailed into the Green Stamp company to be exchanged for merchandise shown in their catalog. In the service area I repaired tires and did minor repairs on vehicles. One thing we discovered was that an empty service station brought no customers. If the lot was full of cars more would come. At one point we parked a few extra cars to ensure a steady flow of customers.

Tire Thief Makes His Getaway

Grant did not like to lose money, especially when an employee made a mistake. People were starting to use credit cards and transactions were conducted by placing the credit card in a device with a roller on

it and placing the sales slip with carbon paper on top of it. Once rolled the credit card info from the card would be on both copies of the slip, one for the customer and one for the station. On large purchases we were supposed to call the credit card company for approval. It was in the evening and the station was very busy, when a guy came in and bought roughly \$300 worth of tires. The tires were all mounted and on his vehicle when I asked for his card. When I went inside and called the credit card company they declined the sale and told me to retain the card. At the same moment the customer took off down the freeway with his brand new \$300 set of tires. Since it was (sort of) my error, the station owner made me to pay the entire \$300 back out of my earnings. On my wages of about \$2 per hour (minimum wage), that took a long time.

Health Problem and A Promise Made

I enjoyed very good health during my teenage years, with the exception of somewhat strange episode as I approached 19. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, a very dense fog settled in over my thinking and perception. I could hardly function. I remember that it substantially affected my daily activities. When I turned my head to look to the left or right it was as though my vision caught up with the motion only very slowly. As I've mentioned earlier, I never took drugs, nor did I have any other bad habits which would have led to this. This whole woozy feeling was very disturbing. I didn't know what was happening to me and in fact I was very afraid. I ran quite a bit in track while in High School, and I also used to run around our two acres for exercise. During this health crises I tried to get more exercise, hoping it would help me to regain clarity of mind.

On one of those runs, while on the back side of the property I was overcome with fear about my condition. I stopped, and did something that I had never before done. I kneeled down and prayed. I prayed to a God that I didn't know. I prayed to God, in the hopes that if He was there, that He would heal me. I promised to dedicate my life to his service. This had a profound impact on the path of my life, undoubtedly for the good. I soon got better, but the commitment remained. Sometime later I had made contact with a nice Christian church and started reading the bible. I felt the words of Jesus deep in my heart, I knew they were true. I've never known anything as surely spiritually. I have on occasion been asked by Christians about my conversion experience and I always cite the belief I obtained in Jesus at that time when I first read the bible.

The Laguna Wild Fire

Started by downed power lines the Laguna Fire began in the mountains east of Alpine. It was huge, comprising 175,425 acres, and burned for 12 days starting on September 26, 1970, shortly after my high school graduation. The fire was magnificent, beautiful in it's deadly course westward just south of the freeway. We could see burning telephone poles across the freeway, very pretty if the tragedy could be ignored. Burning animals crossing the freeway started small fires on our side but they were extinguished. Because the fire was so close to the freeway our family evacuated using the Anderson truck trail, a dirt road more to the north and then westward. We spent the night in an evacuation center. I'm pretty sure that the Anderson's had either built or owned the Alpine house before us. When the area became more populated the Andersons moved down the truck trail, which I think he built as his business was heavy equipment.

Leaving Home

I was a fairly typical kid. I didn't help my folks very much. I remember my mother arriving home after buying lots of groceries. She somehow hoped that I would help her bring the bags into the house. I usually disappeared and disappointed her. I wasn't getting along with my mother at that time. She was still drinking and it was getting old as far as I was concerned. She would often be drunk. During these times, while I was away, she would come into my room and go through everything I had, emptying

drawers, tearing my bed apart, destroying my room. In her drunken state she thought I was taking drugs, so she set out to find them. Almost every one of my friends were on drugs of one sort or another. Nevertheless, I have never taken drugs, and told her so, but that didn't matter. Once, after arriving home and finding my room in disarray, I argued with my drunken mother and physically threw her out of my room. In the scuffle her wrist was broken, and police were called. Things finally got to the point where I had to leave, sometime during 1971.

I should address my mothers alcohol problem. I obviously didn't agree with drinking. I once tasted a beer, and that was it for me. So why did she drink? I'm sure it started with her early years in show business and relationships associated with that. The whole Broadway and Hollywood culture was built around alcohol and worse. One need not go any further than to watch movies of that era. Having a drink was the answer to every situation and problem, or so it was portrayed.

Living with the Svensons

I had a friend whose name was Barbara Svenson. She lived with her brother and sisters in a home a few miles east of Alpine, and her mother JoEllen offered to take me in, as she was used to taking care of strays and I fit right in. There were often lots of kids around. Though I owe my existence to my parents, I owe a lot to Jo Ellen. Since her kids were teens, and frequently had friends over, she was used to teenagers and teenage problems. She became a very good friend, a mom figure that I could really talk with. She eventually got remarried and moved to Missouri to start an antique business with her husband.

Eric was my age, followed closely by Barb, then Elsie. Marta was probably 10. Most of my high school friends were on drugs of one type or another, usually marijuana or LSD. Eric was pretty sensible about it, but Barb frequently overdosed. I was with the family on an outing to the mountains when it became apparent that Barb had OD'd and we had to make an emergency trip to have her stomach pumped. Just the way things were.

I was always around people who were actively doing drugs. On one occasion I visited a small cabin, where the table in the center of the room was stacked high with bricks of marijuana to be divided up and bagged. I left quickly. My friends, for whatever reason, cared about me enough to purposely keep drugs away from me, not that I had any desire.

Bigfoot

Barb and I were fairly good friends. One time we took a hike down the canyon to the south of their house. We were looking for Bigfoot. At one point we were at a location with a small waterfall and stream. Barb was down below near the outgoing stream while I was up perhaps 30 feet higher on the overlook. Typical of those areas were large boulders, and I was squatting with one behind and to the right of me, while looking down at Barb. At that moment the hair on the back of my neck stood up and I felt there was something behind me. Barb looked up at me instantly. She later told me that she thought that I had stood up. We'll never know, but it's quite likely that I had a very close brush with Sasquatch.

During the same period of time there was a lot of Bigfoot interest. A fellow who lived near the Svensons had a sighting, including smelling the characteristic buttermilk. A family I knew well, the Brandt's seemed pestered by Bigfoot. The Brandts lived several miles down Anderson Truck trail to the north of our Alpine house. They ran middle of the night paper car routes for the San Diego Union newspaper. I also did this for a while, putting rubber bands around and throwing papers out the window of my International Scout all while driving with my knee. The Brandts home was nestled near the dirt road just as it goes down over a hill. As you drive over and down the hill, the car headlights hit the

house, and one time when coming in they saw two iridescent red eyes showing over the top of the roof line of their house. Another time their chickens were going wild over something in the yard. Finally April Brandt, my age, heard a loud slow deep breathing outside her window, along with the smell of buttermilk. The next morning they found large footprints which I also saw.

Since we lived in a rural area our mother was concerned about burglars and had the rather good idea to spread gravel on the pathway clear around the house in a swath about 8' wide. It worked well and we could hear anyone walking outside.

One afternoon I heard something walking outside my window. Always curious, and thinking it was my father, I jumped up and ran out the back door to see what he was doing. Just then my father ran up from the garage area yelling "get the gun!" Well, we didn't have a gun, but he was yelling it anyway as he dashed past where my bedroom window was, chasing who knows what.

After the excitement passed he told us that he saw something running past the house that was taller than the roof line. It took off around the house then through the large stand of manzanita trees to the west. These trees were about 8 feet tall, and much too thick for a man, yet the creature went right through.

Vietnam War

Relatively few people living have a recollection of the Vietnam war. We watched war footage every night on television, as it was the first war with live television coverage. Substantial anti war sentiment developed to the point that even returning soldiers were criticized. I watched the draft lottery with dread, but with a number of 187 in the August 1971 lottery I was fortunate to miss being conscripted into the war. Brandon was happy that I received a high number, and fortunately the draft ended before he would have been called. I knew men who served in Vietnam, and most had significant emotional scars. I sometimes think of how shallow modern society is and compare it the somber public mood during that very troubling time.

My First Big Trip

In the summer of 1971 Eric Svenson and I decided to take a trip to see the country. We wanted to make it to Canada and back. Our vehicle was Eric's old Volkswagen beetle. Starting from Alpine, just 50 miles or so from the Mexico border, we started our trip northeastward, up through Las Vegas, and into southern Utah. These were the old days, before I-15 had been developed to any extent. The freeway had just barely made it east of San Diego to Alpine. There were segments between San Diego and Vegas that were freeway, but most was still two lane divided highway. The main road went right through the Las Vegas strip, where I think we stopped and had a really good meal at a very inexpensive price. The freeway didn't exist between Las Vegas and Central Utah so we took the old highway, sometimes known as the Nephi death strip because of the frequent head on crashes on that two lane road. People we met in the St. George area were very warm and friendly.

After we arrived in Provo we headed eastward, enjoying the beauty of Bridal Veil falls and all the mountains. I was disappointed that we wouldn't be going as far north as Salt Lake City, where all the Mormons lived. The Mormons, I thought at the time, all wore black clothes and tall black hats (no doubt to cover the horn I'd read about in books). The trip eastward was through tremendously beautiful scenery. We found a place to camp near Aspen Colorado that night. The next morning we awoke to find our sleeping bags covered with frost, a chilling departure from our accustomed Southern California climate. We descended into central Colorado and drove into Denver with some sort of car problem. I remember that the people in Denver seemed very cold to me, not helpful at all. Perhaps it was my long haired friend, perhaps it was just the city atmosphere, but we didn't receive a very warm reception.

After getting our car problem fixed, we headed north, hitting camping spots along the way. I believe we went through Cheyenne before heading westward to Jackson Hole. I don't remember much of this leg of the trip except that our clutch went out, and we learned how to change gears without using it by manipulating the engine's RPM before shifting. A little bit messy and hard on the transmission. We traveled through Yellowstone then north into Montana. I had a friend, my former high school math teacher, Jerry Davidson, who worked in Northern Idaho during the summers. Jerry worked as a fire lookout in the very densely forested Bitterroot Mountains straddling Idaho and Montana. Jerry met us in the small Montana town of Superior, then guided us south up the back roads to where his lookout tower was located. This was big tree country, with a rugged climate. The tower was about 80 feet high, built on top of a mountain. Just climbing the tower was an experience and the view unbelievable. The fire spotters' job is to note any lightning caused fires during the frequent summer lightning storms. Jerry had a turntable like device that he looked through to determine the direction of the fire. Using triangulation with spotters in other towers they determined where each fire was.

Canada

Eric and I camped at the fire lookout one night then said goodbye to Jerry and departed along the long road towards Canada. Sometime later we lost one of the 4 cylinders so we were running on 75% power and became a little anxious about getting home. Nevertheless we continued our trip into and across beautiful Canada. We traveled westward and visited Banff National Park. I was very surprised at how sparsely populated western Canada was. I recall that the people seemed a bit on the cold side. Perhaps they didn't appreciate my long haired friend, as I didn't feel that way in a more recent trip.

Stopped at the Border

We drove on to Vancouver, and toward the U.S. border in Washington. As we were driving south just a few miles before the border we spotted a hitchhiker and offered him a ride. This was probably a mistake, as he was fairly unkempt and apparently on drugs. When we arrived at the border the guards questioned us. They asked if we were in possession of any drugs. My friend Eric jokingly said that he had some in his watch. They didn't appreciate the joke and hauled him and the other fellow into the office to be searched. I stayed with the car while the agents took everything out of it and spread all our possessions out on the ground, carefully searching everything we had. After a very long wait Eric returned from the office and we departed without further problems. The other fellow was detained.

On our trip down the coast we took the ferry over to Bremerton, where Eric lived as a child. That was fine, but I didn't like the Seattle side, its infrastructure seemed old and I didn't appreciate the maritime / shipping aspect of things.

The Washington and Oregon coasts are very beautiful. I don't remember too much about the final leg of the trip, except that we were worried about the car making it back and so just tried to keep moving. As we went through Los Angeles we lost a second cylinder. Since a Volkswagen is a four banger we were now running on only two of four cylinders. We limped down from Los Angeles to San Diego and then eastward to home using the emergency lane of the freeways. Not a very triumphant return but we did make it safe and sound. It was a great trip all in all.

Sometime afterward I started looking for a more permanent place to live. Cost was a factor and I found a small detached cabin right in Alpine. It was okay, had a little kitchen and shower, but the toilet was out in a little building about 50 feet away. I stayed there until I moved to Utah.

First Engineering Job

My former electronics teacher Paul Palmer helped me to get my first engineering related job. He had a former student, Richard Moyer, who started a cable television and audio visual company. Paul gave me a very good reference, with one small caveat. He told Richard that I would be an excellent employee, as long as I was doing something that I wanted to be doing! In years since, I have convinced myself to do things I don't really want to do. But Paul was essentially right. It has been far easier, and much more rewarding, to pursue those things professionally that I enjoy doing. The company that I worked for was Electronic Systems Engineering a division of Fischbach and Moore Electric. There were 3 of us in the office, Rick, Carole the secretary (a pisces and very nice, but married), and Joe Maxwell. I probably did most of my work with Joe who was an engineer in his 30's who drove a cool El Camino. I liked Joe a lot, he had good values, as did Rick and Carole.

I took drafting in high school so they immediately put me to work doing hand drawings of cable systems. I later went with Rick to prime contractors offices and helped with "take offs", where we'd take all of the information off of the master plans necessary for us to form a proposal and bid. Sometimes we did the takeoffs on site but usually we picked up a set of blue line prints and did the takeoffs at our office. These prints had an electrical and communications section which we went over, identifying all necessary components, cable types, and lengths. We then put a bid together and submitted it. The bidding process was always exciting for Richard as it meant the life or death of the company. Unfortunately, we were right in the middle of a big recession at the time and he often had to bid low to get the job so his employees would have work.

Rick Moyer was a good man, probably 6 years older than me. He'd been married to a woman who was a speed plane racing fanatic but when I knew him was dating, and soon got married again. The father of his first wife, Herk, also worked at ESE. It was kind of a tight little ship. The crew would often go out to Mexican restaurants, which I enjoyed immensely.

Richard and I became good friends. He let me tag along with him on many of his personal errands. I attended his marriage. He sold me his favorite car, an old style brown Plymouth Barracuda with a 4 speed on the floor. He rebuilt the engine sometime before selling it to me. Something went wrong however and I had to redo the job, re-boring the block, and putting oversize pistons in. After that it ran just fine, and I happily drove it for several years including a trip back to New Hampshire.

I worked at Electronic Systems Engineering Monday through Thursday of each week. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday I worked at the Texaco station. I worked this schedule for about a year and a half. I remember waking up in the morning and realizing that I had to go to work, not even knowing which day it was because they all blended together. I seldom had a day off. It was hard to do after a while. The experience made it easy, in the following years, to appreciate not working on Sunday. Nevertheless, these were very happy days for me.

The Mob

I was interested in the young main office receptionist (not Carole), and was about to go out to a social gathering that her father (one of the owners) was putting on. A friend caught on and told me not to do it. He told me the whole family and Fischbach and Moore (not ESE) was MAFIA! And that if I was ever introduced to it, I would never get out! So I narrowly missed my opportunity to be part of the mob.

A Fateful Introduction

Through my teens I was more interested in science and technology than anything serious with girls. Of course I liked girls well enough, but I was socially kind of backward and few things developed during High School. Although I do have a nice friend with whom I corresponded for a while, who eventually

moved to Spokane and has a good husband and family.

I guess I intuitively knew that I should find a girl with wholesome values. There were a couple that I liked a lot but apparently I wasn't really ready for a serious relationship at 19. By 20 though I was starting to think more maturely. A coworker at the ARCO service station told me he knew of a family with a nice daughter. Wholesome young women were hard to come by in Southern California, so I was interested. Her father had been down in San Diego doing parking lot striping, but the work was ending so the family planned to move back to Utah. She and I dated quite a bit and we got along well. In late summer, her parents made the decision to move back to Utah, after which we talked on via long distance phone calls for several weeks.

Prayer under the Stars

I have previously mentioned my experience with being ill, and promising God that I would follow whatever path he set out for me. It was in this spiritual framework one night outside my cabin, that I said a prayer asking if I should move to Utah. I still remember looking up at the stars that night, when I received the definite assurance that my future would be in Utah, so I quit both jobs and prepared to leave.

I made a trip to Logan to visit my girlfriend in November, in a little VW bug, not a lot of room for my things. I didn't have a place to go to, or a job waiting, but I took it all in faith, as I'd gotten jobs and housing before. On the trip I would "draft" behind semi trailers, getting so close that the trailer would suck me along. I saved some gas that way. The speed limit was 55 but I managed to make the 850 mile drive in one day, and came up and over Sardine Canyon in the late evening hours. Entering from the south at night, Cache Valley was, and is, simply majestic, especially with the Logan Temple glowing in the background. I can still remember the scene. I arrived at my girlfriends families house and spent the night. I had always wanted to visit Yellowstone Park and I asked her brother if he'd join me on the trip, which he did.

Upon return and few days later I asked my girlfriend to marry me, and she accepted. There was an outdoor public phone booth at a corner in town and I joyfully called my parents to tell them I was engaged. They were both shocked and excited.

There were some bad things happening in that house not involving me, and it wasn't more than a few days before the father asked me find another place to live. I learned later that he was abusing my fiances siblings. I found a place situated at the Y at the south end of town where several people were sharing an apartment. They weren't the highest caliber people. Electronic calculators were just coming out, and a fellow there sold me one for \$75. The police came a day or two later, and they determined that he'd stolen it, so I returned the calculator, and was out the \$75. I didn't stay there long, and found a nice little apartment near the LDS temple.

Crane and Forklift Driver

At the same time I was literally hounding Job Service for any kind of job. I was there one morning when a representative of Heston Farm Equipment came in asking for temporary laborers. Before he posted the job I told him I wanted it, and immediately began work. My first job was to help do some clean up in front of their building. It wasn't long before I was hired as a full time employee. Heston made large farm machinery using a lot of steel rod, tubing, and sheet metal. In my short stay I learned how to operate the forklift and a large mobile crane. I worked as part of a team that brought metal from outdoor storage into the plant for fabrication. January and February in Cache Valley are often brutally cold, and that was my working condition as I was mostly outdoors. Working outside taught me that despite the extremely cold winter and a wet spring that year, I never caught cold. It seems that being

inside with people who are sick is a greater threat to ones health than the elements. I enjoyed working at Heston's and my first stay in Logan.

I also learned a hard lesson while I was there, and that's to know the difference between diesel and hydraulic fluid. When putting what I thought was diesel in the tank, I inadvertently put in hydraulic oil, which ruined the engine. Neither 55 gallon drum was marked, and the company wrote it off as bad procedure / instructions on their part. I really liked operating the equipment. It was my first experience doing much with steel.