

A Journal Late in Life



Golesorkhi

2021

*For my beautiful daughters Denise and
Claire, and grandson Graham, whose
absence would have left my life
unfulfilled.*

DEDICATION

Many many thanks to all that reviewed, corrected, and provided additional information lacking in this endeavor

Special thanks to Denise Ford who inspired my undertaking with a Book of her own beautifully written and edited by her husband and my long-time friend Robert Ford.

Also, Special thanks to Ellen, Shirin, Hossein, Reza, Ali, Banu, Bibi, Roxanne, Claire, Denise, Bob, Michelle, Alisha, Irene, Garnetta, Lynne and Jim who were barraged with multiple copies of this manuscript multiple times as they plowed through the disconnects in my text.

PROLOGUE

The Cover (Rose) - *Depicts the family “crest” for lack of a symbol. Literal translation in Farsi, Gol means flower, the e (pronounced “eh” is a conjunction) and Sorkhi means Red/Redish. Red Rose (pronounced phonetically: Goal-Eh-Sorkhi). My family name from my father’s side Mehdi Golesorkhi, and Lily Missaghi from my Mother’s side have significance in where the two cultural worlds became one and produced the lineage of my story. My last name was changed to McDonald after arriving to the United States in 1956.*

My Quest - *In an attempt to preserve history and the tortuous road map of my and my family’s lives and lineage, I am attempting to piece together events in time. This is much like completing a fractured puzzle, that can be helpful and maybe entertaining for my two daughters and their lineage once I am gone and faded from memory. The events and times that I depict are from memory and may be clouded by youthful impressions at*

times as opposed to reality. Nonetheless, in the absence of a living Journal through time, it is the best that my memory can serve. I had thought about structuring this Journal chronologically. But as it happens with any search for your roots to presence, the many branches lead you in varying directions that challenge chronology.

*So, I have decided to break this Journal up into segments starting with **Preamble**, followed by **Childhood** (Birth – 14), **Adolescence** (Ages 15 – 21), **Adulthood** (Age 22 – 60), and **Sunset Years** (Age 61 - ?).*

I will be truthful to the extent where my defeats, strengths, mistakes, regrets, successes, triumphs and failures are raw and may leave you with impressions both favorable and damning.

PREAMBLE

I was born in Tehran, Iran on the 23rd of March 1944. This is disputed due to the different calendars used by the Persians and the crossing of International dateline. So, either 22nd or 24th are plausible dates, but, since I have been celebrating the 23rd for 77+ years, it's good enough for me. I will start with my grandparents from each side. I never knew my grandfather on my mother's side, but he will be mentioned through stories conveyed and fragments pieced together. He died before my birth. On my mother's side, my grandmother, Elaina Dabravolski Missaghi (fondly remembered as Baboo) was a white Russian, borne in Russia near the Volga River, the exact city I do not remember. She married, at a very young age to my grandfather, who was of Russian/Iranian heritage with trade/import/export as his profession in his era. We are talking about the Russian revolution period of the early 1900's. His first name I was never told, but his last name was Missaghi (which is more of an Armenian heritage than Iranian or Russian). As I

remember my grandmother telling me, that was also not really their real name since when they escaped the Revolution in Russia and trekked down to Tehran, Iran over the Alborz Mountains, the pronunciation of his name was hard for the Iranian border guards to understand or pronounce. So, they offered him a similar name as close as they could pronounce it for their convenience before they would allow him into the country. In short, Missaghi was a given name registered in Iran and not the true name of my grandparents on my mother's side. Baboo was a beautiful tall, blue-eyed blond woman with long hair down to her ankles which she normally wore in a bun that must have been extremely heavy on the neck. My grandfather, as described, was more of a middle eastern complexion.

My grandparents had eight children, five of whom I remember since they came to Iran from Russia and three (all boys and older) remained in Russia to fight in the Revolution and perished. The five that made their escape with my grandparents were born

in Tashkent, currently a province/city in Uzbekistan. My grandmother's long hair was instrumental in her escape from Russia. As she told me many times, she used to roll her hair up containing all the jewelry and monies she could carry woven through her hair so that the thieves expected in their route through the mountains on horseback and mules would not be able to find it. They were robbed twice but not of their most valuable possessions. The five children, in order by age, were/are Taras Missaghi, Nellie Missaghi Hendricks, Lily Missaghi Golesorkhi McDonald (my mother), Shurick Missaghi, and Firooz Missaghi.

At the time of their escape from Russia, my mother was 13 years old and the time between each child was not more than 3 years:

- (1) Taras, the oldest, married an Armenian girl named Nora who gave birth to two children, Janine and Emil Missaghi. Janine married an American James*

Kirkman and gave birth to two children John and Katie Kirkman. Katie married Nathan Hackett. They have two children, one son named Everett one girl who is named after my mother Lily. Emil was childless and passed away in 2020 in NY. Taras was a Railroad/Road Construction Engineer. He was instrumental in building the main roads and tunnels through the Tajrish Mountains to the Caspian Sea.

- (2) *Next, Nellie Missaghi Hendricks was childless and first married a German aviator in Iran, Henri (last name forgotten). They divorced and she married (first name forgotten) Hendrix. Henri, an aviator, died in a plane accident when he flew into some power lines during a landing in Iran. In her later years she lived in Aspen, CO. and Las Vegas as a well-known fortune*

teller (Turkish-Coffee) who supported the Vegas Police and many returning fames the likes of John Denver in particular (Aspen, CO).

- (3) *Next in age-line, Lily (Lucia) Missaghi Golesorkhi McDonald married my father, Mehdi Golesorkhi (an Iranian) at the age of 20 and gave birth to two boys, Kiyarash Golesorkhi (aka Roy McDonald) and Kaypashine Golesorkhi (aka Robert McDonald). The names were derived from two Persian Princes in Iran's history. Both Kiyarash and Kaypashine were naturalized US citizens and changed their names to Roy and Robert McDonald in 1956/7 after my mother had married George McDonald (more on that later) in 1954. Roy married Donna Louise Averitte in 1968 (divorced in 1993) and Martha (AKA Roxanne) Gunter in 1995*

(divorced in 2009). Donna gave birth to Denise Lucia McDonald in 1979 and Martha gave birth to Claire Gunter McDonald in 1999. Denise married Temple Gentry in 2008 and they have a son named Graham (my grandson). Robert, or Bob, later changed his name back to Kaypashine Golesorkhi, married Michelle (maiden name forgotten) and gave birth to two boys, Adrian and Griffin Golesorkhi.

- (4) Next, Shurick Missaghi, passed away unmarried and spent the majority of his life taking care of my grandmother before her death in Iran in early 1980's.*
- (5) Last, Firooz Missaghi was married twice (Minou, his first wife) and has three children. From there I have lost track of his lineage.*



Lake Barcroft Home – Late 1950's
Front Row (L-R): Firooz, Janine, Emil
Back Row (L to R): Shurick, Lily, Grand-Mother Baboo, Aunt Nellie

Now, on my father's side. I do remember my grandfather, Morteza Golesorkhi. He had three

concurrent wives plus my Grandmother Banu's sister, Auttauge, who lived with the family. Banu and Auttauge were alive when I was born. The other two wives had passed away before or shortly after my birth. My grandfather was Iranian and a Professor and Dean of the University of Agriculture in Karadj (a city short distance west of Tehran in the Alborz Province and considered a suburb of Tehran). In Iran it is legal (even to this day, but not fervently practiced) to have up to four wives depending on support capability. My grandfather and grandmother Banu gave birth to four boys. There were other children by the other wives and their offspring are fondly referred to as distant "cousins". The four boys, in age order were Mehdi Golesorkhi (my father), Nasser Golesorkhi, Iraj Golesorkhi, and Esfandiar Golesorkhi. Three were born in Tehran, Iran and the youngest, Esfandiar was born in Karadj. Only a few years separated their age.

My grandfather was a patriarch in the Iranian sense in that he was waited on hand and foot by his wives

and spent a majority of his time in his upstairs room reading and smoking his water-pipe. We were allowed scant visitations as children and always escorted by my grandmother or mother. We answered only when spoken to and the visits were for very short periods of time. My grandfather was a “busy” man if measured by the blood-lines with three concurrent wives. My beautiful cousin Bibi (Amu Nasser’s daughter) researched and found the following lineage of the three branches contributing to the large family. I have met and/or are familiar with many of the names on this list beyond the second generation.

His first wife, Derakhshandeh, had 3 daughters and 2 sons, each are expanded to their individual off-springs:

(1) Daughter Soudabeh Golesorkhi- No off-springs found.

(2) *Daughter Dr. Nosrat ol Malouk Golesorkhi gave birth to 4 daughters:*

Parvaneh Jila, Atousha Jila, Zarioun Jila, and Afshin Jila.

(3) *Daughter Mohtaram Golesorkhi married 1st Cousin Dr. Mansour Golesorkhi gave birth to 1 daughter & 3 sons:*

Farideh Golesorkhi, Faroukh Golesorkhi, Farzin Golesorkhi and Farshid Golesorkhi.

(4) *Son Mostafa Golesorkhi, produced 4 daughters and perished in WWII:*

Jaleh Golesorkhi, Haleh Golesorkhi, Laleh Golesorkhi, and Elahe Golesorkhi.

(5) *Son, a lawyer, Siavash Golesorkh, produced 1 son & 1 daughter:*

Houtan Golesorkhi and Roya Golesorkhi

His second wife, Zinat-Khanoum, had one son:

(1) General Parviz Golesorkhi, General of the Army, had three sons:

Hamid Golesorkhi, Majid Golesorkhi, and Vahid Golesorkhi.

His Third Wife, Banu Golesorkhi had 4 sons:

Mehdi Golesorkhi, Nasser Golesorkhi, Iraj Golesorkhi, and Esfandiar Golesorkhi

My direct lineage starts with his third wife, Banu:



Golesorkhi Extended Family

My Grandfather Morteza center front, Banu (R) First Wife (L)

*The first in line was my father, **Mehdi Golesorkhi** married my mother Lily Missaghi shortly after they met at a swimming pool where my father was practicing for the Olympic trials as a high platform diver. Neither family was overly enthusiastic about the “cross-national” (non-Iranian/non-Russian) marriage. Their love affair and marriage were*

*tumultuous but everlasting despite their eventual divorce. My brother and I were born and witnessed first-hand our father's infidelity too often to list (later discussed in **Childhood**). We were my mother's life in total. Her devotion to both of us surpassed any priorities in her life and endured many sacrifices on her part. We were first in all aspects of her life. My father was a very kind and gentle man in his treatment and relationships with his children and did truly love us, but it was my impression that we were "necessities" of marriage that were at times a distraction. My father gave birth to a girl out of wedlock with his mistress Farkhundeh, named Gollie whom I have never met but understand that she is in the States and married. My father later married Naheed and produced a son, Kambiz Golesorkhi who lives in Malaysia with his wife Svetlana and daughter Maria and two daughters Mina and Lena who live in Vienna, Austria. He communicates with family on a regular basis. My father's profession was as an Army Colonel in the Shah of Iran's Palace as the main*

photographer. He passed away of a heart attack in Chaloos, near his Villa in his mid-70's.



My father and I, Iran late 1940's



My father Mehdi & Mother Lily

*Next, **Nasser Golesorkhi** (or “Amu” for Uncle in Farsi), was a very vibrant, outgoing, social and*

intelligent uncle. He married Mahine Moini and produced two girls and one boy. Bibi and Banu Golesorkhi and Ali Golesorkhi. Bibi married Farhood Malek and gave birth to a son Arman. Banu, named after our grandmother, married Robert who passed away in 2008. She currently lives in Brussels, Belgium. Ali, a spitting image of his father, married Lisa Walker with a daughter named Leana from a previous marriage and lives in San Juan Capistrano, CA. Uncle Nasser became the Minister of Natural Resources in the Iranian Government and had a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from the University of Agriculture in Karadj and a Masters degree from the University of Utah.



Uncle Nasser (Center)



Uncle Nasser's Family (L to R)
Front Row- Mahine, Arman, Leana
Back Row – Bibi, Farhood, Banu, Lisa, Ali



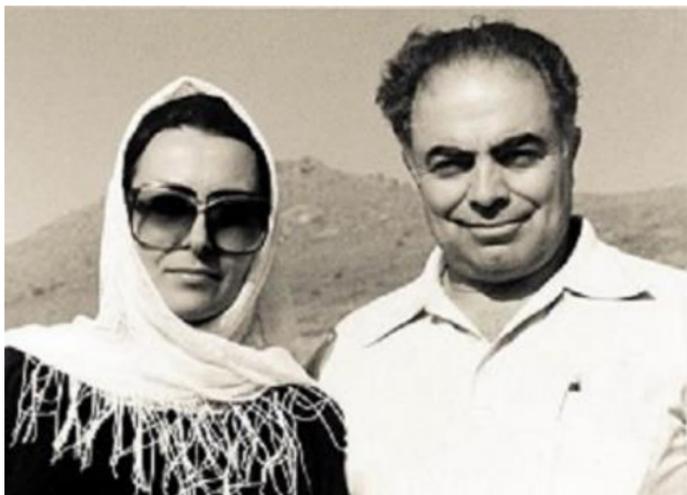
Uncle Nasser second right and Queen Farah Diba (Shah's 3rd wife) and the Shah

Iraj Golesorkhis is next in the age sequence. He was a fervent communist in his early years and married two women: first named Minou and the second Mastaneh. He had a son from each marriage. Anushah, the oldest, is an opera singer who lives in Berlin and Bijou the youngest who is an attorney and lives in California.

Uncle Iraj used to stick a “Yankee Go Home” sign on my stepfather’s car when he drove my mother for a visit while no one was looking. Professionally, he was a concert pianist and served in the National Radio during later part of his professional career. The time I remember most was when Uncle Iraj had left Iran to attend Stalin’s funeral in Russia. My grandmother and the rest of the family were extremely worried about him. I never knew of the date/time of his passing.

*Last is **Esfandiar Golesorkhi** (fondly known as Amu Esfand or Essi by his American friends). He was my favorite uncle whose kindness was boundless and his steadfast devotion to family paramount. He married Shirin Goudarzi and had two boys, Hossein and Reza Golesorkhi. Hossein married, divorced and married a second time to Katherine (Kat) Azima and they have a daughter with her named Darya (meaning Ocean) and a son, named Kamran whom he lovingly calls “Buddy”. Reza married Leila Sarshar and produced three boys: Noah, Nathan,*

Nicolas, and one girl named Noor (meaning Light). He is currently divorced and devoted to caring for his four children. Esfandiar became the Director of Northern Fisheries where he directed and managed Iran's Caviar production process and export from the Caspian Sea. Esfand graduated from Auburn University of AL. He passed away not too long ago.



Shirin & Amu Esfand Golesorkh



Esfand



The Brothers Four
Esfand, Iraj, Nasser, Mehdi

Lily – My mother, her limitless love and caring for us, could not be described as experiencing happiness. She kept a Diary that I found written in a mixture of Russian and Farsi. I asked Shirin-Joon, my Uncle Esfand's wife, who is fluent in both languages, to translate it into English for me. After her and my uncle reading it, they both refused. Stating that there was too much sadness and pain for my eyes or ears to endure and it was best left untranslated. I surmised that it contained the years of her marital time with my father.

She passed away at 76 due to Alzheimer's. A disease worse than any other. Alzheimer's is not a direct cause of death but an indirect cause. She would forget to take a foot forward in walking and fall and break her hips. After a third time, her doctor told me that the wound was not healing, and blood poisoning would set in towards her end. He made her comfortable. I was able to have the joy of her living with us in Oakton, VA before her passing.



My brother and I with my mother-late 40's



My Mother Lily and Father Mehdi

Childhood

From Birth to Age 14

*This and following segments are event driven in that they are highlights etched in my memory of specific events that have not faded over time. They are in no way sequential but grouped in the category of **Childhood**.*

My earliest recollection of “life” or awareness of worldly things was challenged by my Uncle Esfand who insisted that I must have been told about the event versus really remembering it. He admits that the event took place, but it could not be something I would remember from a very young age. Nonetheless, the memories are very vivid and real.

Our family, the two wives, the four sons, my father, mother, my brother and I, and two servants lived in one house in the center of the city of Tehran. Culturally, this was the norm in Iran. Considered “well-to-do” by virtue of a lineage and associations

with Iranian aristocracy or despots, our house was considered upscale despite its tiled or bricked floors covered by Persian carpets, dirt filled yard with a fountain in the center, and a kitchen resembling the Daniel Boone era.

My father and mother were the only married couple other than my grandfather and grandmother(s) who were afforded their own room in the house. My brother and I slept in the same room as my parents until the age of 6. In the evenings during the summer, we all moved to the open yard and slept on the floor encased in mosquito nets to escape the heat and the bugs. There was no air conditioning in those days.

One night, my mother had placed me on the blankets covered by the mosquito net, very close to a step leading into the yard. The whole family had gathered around after dinner. Dinner was always late in night and the main course of the day. With me laying on my back, they were all in deep

conversation when it was interrupted by a roar of airplane engines overhead. We watched the sky as plane after plane passed over our house. Distracted, my mother did not notice that I had rolled on my side trying to watch the planes. Remember, this was towards the end of the WWII. I had managed to fall off the short step and was now crying. For some reason, this memory has been etched as my earliest awareness of life around me. Can you remember anything from age one or two? Maybe, or maybe it is as my uncle said, an image described by others. As mentioned earlier, my brother and I slept in the same room as my parents. Therefore, my curiosity about sexuality was heightened at an early age. Lacking privacy, my parents always waited until both of us were sleep, but I faked sleep many nights at around the age of 4. I didn't understand it but became aware that sex was an act not witnessed but at night and in bed. At that same age, the memory of my grandmother, Banu-Joon is vivid in two areas (Joon means literally "life" but "dear" in intent and is normally attached to the end of a name as a term

of endearment). One, the day she passed away, and two, her incessant and tireless labor in the kitchen with the servants and Auttage-Joon. The main meal of the day was dinner. Its preparation took almost the whole day from early in the morning until about 9:00pm dinner time. The kitchen always had large deep kettles over open fire with activity all around it peeling, chopping, cutting, cleaning of vegetables, meats, and rice.

To keep my brother and I occupied, my grandmother would seat us with one of the servants who was cleaning the rice (separating the rice from pebbles and other objects since the rice did not come in clean plastic bags void of any impurities). Our tiny hands were adept at separating the smallest stones which could cause a break of someone's tooth at dinner time. On the day of her passing, she had cuddled my brother and I in a sleeping position, usually a break in the afternoon from kitchen duties, and we had fallen sleep in her arms only to be awakened by one of the servants and 15-year-old

Amu Esfand. They whisked us away to our parent's room and closed the door. All I could hear was the commotion and crying through the door not knowing what had happened. We did not see her again after that. She had died in her sleep as she held us in her arms.

Amu Esfand was the designated caretaker of my brother and I. As the youngest of the four, he got the bottom-of-the-barrel tasks. He did it lovingly, sternly, and dutifully. He was in charge of making sure we brushed our teeth and washed our face in the mornings and was also responsible for walking us to school and picking us up. I remember our reluctance of brushing our teeth and washing our face was always met with him pinching and holding our ears as he walked us to the bathroom with stern instructions to complete that "unpleasant" chore.

One day, as we waited on the school steps for his usual prompt arrival to pick us up, he did not show up on time. My brother and I sat for what seemed

like hours on the steps while the school doors closed and the school's servant, sweeping the front steps before going home. He was concerned, as we were, about what to do since we dared not walk home alone or with any stranger. Then we saw in the distance a shadow of Amu Esfand running at top speed toward us, panting, out of breath and almost crying. He had forgotten to pick us up. Who can ever blame a 14 year-old for such an elder job? He had remembered that event to the day of his passing and, in his gentle concerned way, re-lived it each time we visited memory lane. His passing in 2015 has us all in deep sorrow.

In most households, children addressing their parents were normally as "Baba" for father and "Ma'mon" for mother. For reasons unknown, both my brother and I addressed my mother by her name Lily-Joon and my father Mehdi-Joon (terms of endearment added). This may be the influence of early separation of my parents and the names used by the rest of the family.

My father's indiscretions and infidelity were blatant and also bold and entitled as he saw them. Much like liberals' motto today, (my politics are showing again), my mother was not a typical Persian wife. She was the only woman who drove a car in Tehran in those days. She got scorned or spat on many occasions while driving. Later after her divorce, she worked as a translator of English, Russian, Persian, and Armenian at the US Embassy. Her reactions to her husband's indiscretions and his open admissions were intolerable and at times violent. I remember her slashing all four of the tires of his car one day when she found him with another woman. It started when she was pregnant with a third child that ended in a miscarriage due to stress and mental suffering during that period.

My father's openness was not limited even to my brother and I. On many occasions, we were carted off on his rendezvous' with his girlfriends. He had a wealthy widowed mistress Farkhoondeh who

bestowed on him various gifts such as cars, watches, money, etc. She had a daughter named Gittie who was around 18 years old.

When my parents eventually divorced in 1953/4 – formal divorces were rare in Iran at that time – the law required that my brother and I stay with my father and not my mother. My mother had no visitation rights except for those granted by the kindness of my grandmother Banu.

My father was rarely ever home. He was a Colonel in the Iranian Army. His field was photography and the assigned photographer of the Pahlavi Court (the Shah of Iran). At an early age, he was a playmate and friend of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. He traveled extensively and joined the playboy status of the Shah, before and during the Shah's marriages. As a result, he was scarcely ever home to monitor or object to my mother's visitations.

My mother's life was incomplete without the two of us. She was liked and adored by my grandmother Banu-Joon, Esfand and Nasser. Iraj is another story. So, we saw a lot of her despite the divorce. She never came for a visit empty handed – gifts of all kinds were presented with tears of joy when she saw us each time. That is not to imply that my father was anything less. When he came home we were the center of his attention, but it was brief as he darted off on another trip with the Shah.

It is during this period that my mother was working at the American Embassy as an interpreter. Her visitation with us did not allow her to take us out of the house, even though all in my father's family had little to fear. When my grandmother (Banu) died, those restrictions were slowly lifted, and we were able to go out and visit with my grandmother Baboo and go on different outings.

It is also in this period that my mother met my stepfather George McDonald at the U.S. Embassy. They were married in 1954/5 and she moved to his Villa in Shemiran, a cool suburb north of Tehran with a swimming pool and a large fruit garden. At this juncture, the relationship between my mother and my father had grown warm and amicable. They never stopped loving each other. That is a fact. With no “lady of the house” at my father’s home, his not being available, my uncle Nasser’s marriage and move from the house and the passing of Auttage-Joon, created a reasonable atmosphere for my mother to convince my father to allow us to live in Shemiran under my mother’s guardianship. My father then was given visitation rights as everyone seemed to be “cum-by-yah” for the time being.



My Stepfather George & My Mother Lily-Shemiran 1950's

My stepfather George was a kind but removed stepfather. Never ruffled. Never a word in anger. Never mean spirited. But rarely warm or affectionate. We had a live-in cook (Agha-Reza), a grounds caretaker, (Mohamad-later augmented with a younger Mohamad-Ali), and a maid that visited weekly. My mother had quit her job and was a full-time Mom as we spent majority of our time in the pool with her. My grandmother Baboo had come to live with us and there were weekly parties and social events.

George's prior life was spent overseas (Romania & Hungary in particular) where he was engaged to a Romanian girl in Budapest named Fulvia. I have many pictures of her and my stepfather together. However, he left Budapest without Fulvia when the Russian's invaded. There were many occasions where my stepfather was on a "trip", where, no one knew. Suspicions that he was a CIA or a clandestine operative became more focused as we read his obituary developed by the State Department that

listed many countries in the Soviet bloc that he had visited that were never mentioned to my mother or us.



***My Mother and Stepfather at a U.S. Embassy Party, Tehran,
Iran – 1951***



Fulvia – Budapest – 1940's



My Mother, my Brother & I in

Shemiran, Early 1950's

In the recesses of one's mind, disjointed flashbacks without continuity of a process occurs when either stimulated or event prompted. Such short flashbacks are mine on occasions:

As a child, I acquired almost every disease known to man. From Diphtheria, to Pleurisy, Chicken Pox, Mumps, etc. My immune system fought them all and I survived. But the flashback of my Uncle Esfand carrying me in his arms, door to door trying to find a doctor who had Penicillin to deal with my high fever is ever entrenched in my mind and confirmed by him.

On occasions where I had stomach pains and/or high fever, I remember my grandmother Banu-Joon cutting a sliver of my grandfather's rolled Opium (legal at that time and a cure-for-all) that he smoked with his water pipe and forcing it down my throat. I was a "junkie" at a young age (lol).

Weekend family outings (Iranian weekends are only one day on Fridays) to a “picnic” site known as Shub-dol-Azim or Karadj outside of the city – was always accompanied by prepared food in large kettles of Sabzi-Polo & Mahi-Doodi (Rice with Dill and Parsley with smoked white fish) or Albalu-Polo (Rice with sour cherries, slivered almonds and chicken) transported by Doroshkeh (horse-drawn carriages like the ones you will find in Central Park in New York City, or New Orleans). This resulted in a festive feast sitting on un-rolled Persian carpets with chatter of exploits or quoting of Hafez (ancient Iranian Poet).

I had heard of my Uncle Nasser’s illness and he had called me to come to California for a visit. I took a flight to LA and drove a car to their Mission Viejo home. Seeing him frail with loss of weight tore my heart as I always remembered him as a strong statuesque individual. He had asked me to come to say goodbye. I remember kissing him and running

instead of walking to my car so he would not see my tears. I am prone to tears easily when emotions engulf my world.

Another trip to California was when Mahine-Joon had passed away. She was my Uncle Nasser's anchor. A classy lady with tolerance and love of her family. Her children had orchestrated a beautiful Celebration of Life event with video full of memories. I again succumbed to tears embarrassingly.

Coming to America.

In 1956 as I was approaching 12 years of age, early in the morning one day, my grandmother Baboo woke us up to get us dressed. She told us that we were going to the United States on a plane and we needed to get ready. On that day we boarded a Pan Am Stratocruiser bound for the US via Rome, Italy. We didn't know it then, but to take us out of Iran required my father's permission, which my mother

did not have. Since my stepfather had one year before his tour of duty in Iran was up as a Foreign Service Officer, my mother had planned, bribed, and cajoled the necessary departments and officers of the Iranian Immigration bureau for Iranian Passports for my brother and I. Knowing that my father would never grant his permission, she in essence kidnapped us on that day. I did not get to see my father for 26 years after that date. Since children are resilient at that age, it had little effect as we saw it more as adventurous – besides, we had our mother and a kind new stepfather. My father made no attempt at retrieving us. My mother encouraged us to write to him often, but that faded over time.

Our stay in Rome was for 9 months as we waited for our stepfather to finalize his departure and join us in Rome for the trip to the States. We stayed at a Pansione on Via Veneto. It was over a Pizzeria where it served us well since the Pansione's meals were always Pasta with Marinara sauce. My mother

would turn us loose to within her sight from the balcony where we explored the nearby puppet shows in the park or watch the only T.V. in a shop with Roy Rogers and Hopalong Cassidy westerns. As time passed and we toured most of the city, boredom set in for a 10 and 11-year-old. We begged our mother to go other places and had seen a brochure of Naples and Capri where beaches and fairs were advertised. My mother conceded and we took a train to Naples and a small boat to Capri. In Capri, I carved my name in Farsi on a tree ... that may still be there. On our last night in Naples, we urged her to take us to the Ferris Wheel Fair close to our hotel. She again yielded and we decided to walk the two miles to the Fair.

In walking those two miles, we were in the heart of the city passing old buildings and townhouses-like structures through narrow alleys. In my stupor (well-deserved since my stepfather would sometimes claim that I “didn’t know enough to get out of the rain” when I misplaced his tools), walking behind

my mother with my brother walking ahead of her in the narrow streets, I managed to continually step on the heel of my mother's feet dislodging her heel strap much to her aggravation. She asked me to move ahead of her and join my brother. That is the last thing I remember. The next thing I know I was laying across my mother's lap in back of an Italian taxi with her crying as well as my brother and the cab driver saying "Bambino Finito". I blacked out again only to feel my chest on a cold metal slab with someone shaving the back of my head. I managed to look to one side as I saw my mother and brother wailing in tears and next to them a Priest with the Bible open reading something in Italian. I blacked out again. The next time I gained consciousness was in bed with clean sheets, a cast on my ankle and pain in my bandaged head. I was both hungry and thirsty as I noticed a young male nurse in white coming towards me. He told me in English, which I had not yet mastered, that I was in a US Naval Hospital in Naples harbor and that I had been struck with a falling piece of a balcony from a house and

was lucky to be alive. A man with his baby in his arms were killed. He asked me if I wanted anything, and I asked for my mother and a glass of milk. He left and I was next greeted with a cold glass of milk. My English was very poor at that time but I complained that I take milk hot with some sugar in it. He did not know that milk in Iran was not pasteurized and you always had to boil it first and add sugar to rid it of the pasture smell and taste it had. I was hospitalized with a concussion and a broken ankle and stayed in the hospital for over a week. From there I was transported to the airport where we boarded another Pan Am Stratocruiser where my mother had arranged for a top-pull-down bed (they had those in those days) to the envy of my brother whom I traded places with when bored so I could look out the window. We made it to the States from Rome and were greeted by a Naval Captain friend of my parents by the name of Joe Paskowski. They had 3 children our age who were our playmates, two of whose names I remember as Joe and Susie. They picked us up from the airport in DC

and had us stay with them at their house awaiting my stepfather's arrival three months later. Driving to their home , they asked us if we were hungry. Both my brother and I wanted an American hot dog. We had never had one and had only seen it in movies.

After my stepfather arrived, we moved into a temporary apartment complex in Seven Corners, Virginia while my stepfather went back to work at the Department of State and searched for a home to purchase. He found one at Lake Barcroft in Virginia which became our home until I was 15. However, during our stay at the Seven Corners apartment complex, both of us attended Wilson Elementary School in grade 6. We were seated in the back due to our language deficiency and through absorption, slowly graduated from “Thank You ... Please pass the butter” to conversant English. It was not however easy. The kids at school made fun of our Farsi names which resulted in many fights during recess. My mother finally asked us if we wanted to change our names to an English one. I didn't

hesitate, since coming home black and blue was getting old. I told her that I wanted to be named "Roy Rogers McDonald". My brother edged in with "Cowboy Bob McDonald" (both TV stars of the day). My mother agreed except she said that the Rogers and the Cowboy part had to go. Thus, my name of Roy McDonald and my brother's name of Bob McDonald. We were naturalized as US citizens in 1959. In this era, being a helicopter-parent was unnecessary. Out-door events occupied our daylight days free of worrisome oversight by our parents, unless expressed differently. The freedom provided a great deal more growth of independence for our young age. Playing with neighborhood friends occupied most of our day. We knew we had to be home when the street lights came on. This freedom was also extended to our time in Saigon, South Vietnam and travel to the Philippines via DC-3 airplanes and local buses. Those days are sadly gone forever.

Adolescence

From Age 15 to 21

These were learning years, rich in exposure to many cultures, and most memorable in my experiences to adulthood. We had settled in at the house in Lake Barcroft which filled most of our summer days with swimming, fishing and boating. We attended middle school which was behind the back fence of our yard and had neighbors our age by the name of David and Henry Brubacker.

My work ethic started early with a job delivering the Washington Star early in the mornings come rain or snow. I would get up at five in the morning and open up the heavy bundles of the paper left by the delivery truck and fill my bicycle's rear baskets to the brim and deliver them to the neighborhood houses. My mother had some pity on me on snowy days and would drive me around for the delivery. I also received lifeguard certification for Lake

Barcroft for weekend jobs and managed to save and buy an old sailing dingy with a cat-sail. The dingy was old and full of rotting planks. I remember one day as my stepfather was coming home and saw me with my first engineering feat of putting tar on the bottom of the boat to seal the open gaps between the planks. He looked at it and with a grin went inside the house saying nothing. The ownership of that sailboat was short-lived. On a hot summer day, I took it out on the lake with hardly any wind and the hot sun started to melt the tar sealing the planks. Shortly I “abandoned ship” and swam to shore. My stepfather later said that he wanted to tell me to put the tar on the outside of the boat but felt that a lessons-learned was in order. In 1959 we started as Freshman at Jeb Stuart High School, again walking distance from our house in Lake Barcroft. We only attended the first semester due to my stepfather getting an assignment to Saigon, South Vietnam. We had history books and lessons in those days that used the term Siam for Vietnam, but we knew our geography far better than our peers in school. One

day, two cute blond twin sisters that lived a couple of blocks from us that I had the craving for, as well as attending our Freshman class, walked back with us from school where I informed them that we were leaving right after first semester for Saigon, South Vietnam. They both looked surprised and asked, in unison, if we were going by bus or by train. I somehow lost my craving after that.

Being uprooted from school and friends and our home in the States was totally painless. We both liked travel and adventure and had no misgivings as most teenagers would in being uprooted. We left for Saigon through the Eastern route. We took the USS Constitution from N.Y through the Atlantic. My stepfather and I were the only ones not seasick. We arrived in Naples where we took a flight to Saigon with a short stay in Rome. Saigon was the Paris of the Orient then (before the US ruined it). We stayed at the Norodom Compound. An enclosed temporary housing for new American arrivals.

The city was heavily populated by the French and the houses and Villas had the Oriental/French charm. The tree covered streets and the French influence, as well as the constant tropical temperature made the adjustment very pleasant. The only unpleasant adjustments we all had were the over-abundance of small Geckos and their habits. At night, they would climb the bedroom walls and with their suction cup feet crawl across the ceiling and eventually drop ... most times on our chests. The American Community School (ACS) was not really manned or operated like a school. Initially, they were Quonset Huts left over from WWII. There were very few teachers and mostly populated with mothers of kids as monitors. We took UCLA courses and tests and filled them out after reading specific sections and would send them off to UCLA and await our grade in the mail. It was not until 1962 before it really became a structured school and was famously used as the helicopter landing/takeoff pad during the evacuation in the '70s so vividly captured on the T.V.

Before leaving for Saigon, the era of my parent's music of "Swing" was being rapidly replaced by the likes of Buddy Holly, Ricky Nelson, Big Bopper, and Elvis Presly's "Jail-House Rock". I yearned for buying a guitar and learning how to play it like them. Some of my family members (Uncle Nasser who played the violin and Uncle Firooz who played the Guitar, and Uncle Iraj who was a Concert Pianist) were perhaps inspirational, but we were too young to appreciate it then. We did take a couple of piano lessons from Uncle Iraj who lived next to our house in Shemiran, but we were too young to pursue it. In those generational days, even though I had saved my paper-route collections, spending it required parental permission. I asked my mother if she would drive me to the Sears Roebuck store and allow me to buy a guitar. She reluctantly relented and we went shopping. I saw a "Spanish" Silvertone Guitar for \$12.95. The only restriction my mother placed on me was that if I was serious in spending "all that money" on a guitar, I would spend the

remaining funds left over for Guitar Lessons. Finding a guitar-teacher in those days was not easy. We finally found a music store in Washington D.C (a half-hour drive) that advertised guitar lessons. We went there, guitar-in-hand, to a store named Sophocles Papas, I believe on Connecticut Avenue. The gentleman behind the counter introduced himself as Charly Bird. The lessons were \$3.00 per hour, once a week. I signed up and found that my “expensive” guitar, judged by my mother, was a factory-made model where the fret-board strings were a good ¼ inch separation that left me with bleeding fingers and a numb hand after each session. Mr. Bird, after some music theory sessions and note reading, introduced me to a song to play called “Old Black Joe”. A far cry from Buddy Holly’s “Peggy Sue”. I hated that song as Mr. Bird insisted on playing it to perfection with my bloody fingers each session. After the sixth session, my stepfather announced that his next State Department tour would be Saigon, South Vietnam. Many years later, when I had taken a year break from my

College adventure, after my sophomore year, I had learned of Charly Bird becoming well known as a Brazilian Bossa-Nova Jazz player but had not had the opportunity to see him since the lessons. Then, in 1965, an advertisement in the papers had him listed at the Cellar Door in Georgetown (a well-known Night Club), over the 13th Street bridge in Washington D.C. I went there and listened to his first session with awe and during the break, I walked up to him. He had his back to me and I tapped him on the shoulder. He turned around, looked at me, lifted his glasses and looked at me again and before I could say anything, he said, "Old Black Joe"! We laughed and I happily saw him on several other occasions.



Mahine-Joon on my left, Donna on my right-1970's



Our home in Saigon, South Vietnam – Picture taken in 2009 visit

I was becoming more proficient in my guitar playing once I had purchased a solid-body Kay guitar and amplifier. I would and could not sing, so my concentration was vested in lead guitar riffs and chord harmony. My favorite at that time in Saigon was The Ventures with their “Walk Don’t Run” and “Bumble-Bee”. I taught my brother how to play

rhythm while I played lead. My parents were put through our loud twangs with little complaint. One day my stepfather surprised us with two new guitars ordered from the States. One, a Fender Jazzmaster for me and a Fender Stratocaster for my brother. I still have the Jazzmaster. He also had ordered a Silvertone Amplifier with a reverb volume (an echo chamber effect) that no one had heard in Saigon. Early playing was for the school dances in our Quonset Hut at school. I had teamed up with fellow student Joe Christensen, singer/guitar player and his brother Paul as the drummer. Joe, Paul and several other students formed a club known as "The Clods" who, to most parents' dismay, "terrorized" the community by riding motorcycles and Lambretta scooters and mimicking James Dean in "Rebel Without a Cause". We were looked down on by some of the students but thought that it was more of a jealousy-to-envy rather than dislike. They still came to our playing at the frequent dances.

Joe was involved in a motorcycle accident that killed an old Vietnamese man crossing a street without looking. The Embassy quickly sent him home and paid reparations to the man's family and our playing came to a halt. Joe passed away at the young age of 28 and Paul currently lives in Vermont, after a Professorship in Texas



**Joe, Paul and I in the “no-name Band” in Saigon – 1960
Joe on a German Hoffner and I with a Kay Guitar in Quonset
Hut**



The Clods

The white pumps on the floor (Clods' Picture) were thought to belong to my friend, Michelle Viroly, but not so, they were Judy Smith's. Michelle is a beautiful French/Vietnamese who frequented Cercle Sportif (Cercle in English, pronounced as Cerc when spelled in French with the "le" more silent) and most of the American parties in Saigon. She currently lives in Montreal, Canada with her husband Robert and son Tatou. She was a News

Anchor on one of the TV channels in Montreal. She always remembers my birthday, when we had promised to forget them.



Michelle & I at someone's Party



Ba-Moi-Bah Beer at the Cerc with a Clod friend Michael Parks

My stepfather had decided that we were not getting the proper education given the UCLA route and we were sent off to Brent School in Baguio Philippines 2nd Semester 1961. It was a private school in the mountains two hours north of Manila. It was run by an Episcopalian ministry utilizing a Japanese hospital left from when they occupied the Philippines. I picked up my playing with my brother

and a schoolmate named Eddy Pay who played the drums where we would hold concerts on special days. But I missed the playing with a singer and had seen a four-piece Filipino band play at the Baguio Country Club with its large golf course off-campus on Sundays. Two guitar players, a steel-guitar (Hawaiian) player and a bass player and they all sang. Many of us would catch a cab and go there on Sundays for Brunch (with notarized permission by the Headmaster, Father Griffiths-with very strict off-campus rules) to escape the peanut-butter sandwiches served for lunch on Sundays. We gorged on the buffet of Lechon (Pork with crisp roasted skin), Lumpia (Filipino Egg-Rolls), and Pancit (Vermicelli noodles w/vegetables and lean pork), and Mangos. Also, bottles of San Miguel Beer hidden at times underneath the tablecloths if we saw a teacher from our school. The name of the Band was "Fidel Valdez and his Latin American Combo". One Sunday I lugged my Silvertone Amp and my Fender Jazzmaster to the club and introduced myself to Fidel Valdes who was friendly and receptive to

my request to sit in. The Latin/Hawaiian songs were straight forward (in those days if you knew four chord progressions in any key, you could play anything). After being able to keep up with them, they asked me to come at nights (Wednesdays and Saturdays) where they played at the club Bar Room. I am not sure if they were impressed with my playing or my Amp with its Reverb/echo which they had not heard before and gave them a new sound.



Fidel on the right with a Gretch and me on the left with the Fender Jazzmaster and Silvertone Amp

The next Sunday I left my amp and a set of good cloths with Fidel and told him I would see him next

Wednesday. Skipping the campus without authorization was an immediate suspension and a trip back home. I was playing with fire. On Wednesday and Saturday nights I would strap my Fender on my back and around 8:30 PM when it was dark, I would crawl through the woods to the gate of the campus avoiding the roaming guards and catch a cab at an intersection and head to the Country Club Bar Room. We played from 9:00 – 11:00 those nights and I would return to campus the same manner in reverse.

My French Teacher and my Math teacher Ein and Lucy were a young American couple that were engaged but would not marry until their two-year contract with Brent was up where they could have the marriage with their families State-Side. One Wednesday night while I was behind the Bar playing, in walks Ein and Lucy. I know I played a wrong cord immediately. They saw me and turned to go to a table in the far side of the Bar. I was done! I knew that the next morning I would have Father

Griffiths' henchmen come and take me to the Headmaster's office and told to pack up for the Airport. I would be suspended.

Next morning, in anticipation, I packed my cloths and told my two room-mates that I will probably not see them again and waited for the pending knock on the door...which didn't come. It didn't the following days either. I could not understand why they had not turned me in.

Many years later I was organizing a Brent School Reunion in Alexandria, VA and had sent invitations (e-mail then) to all the students and faculty of Brent for those years in attendance. I was surprised to



School – Being sworn in by Brent Dr. Rodriguez as Student Council President-1963

*have a note from Lucy that she and Ein would be attending. When I greeted them, I took the opportunity to ask (or thank them) for not turning me in. They both laughed and told me that **THEY** were fearful that I would be turning them in since they were also bound by the same rules as we were for off-campus without authorization.*



Brent School – 2009 Centennial Visit

In mid-1962 there was a transformation of Saigon with the influx of the military (Army, Airforce & Navy) that had turned all the beautiful French stores on tree-lined Tudu Street to Bars and Brothels. But with it came talented musicians. When in Saigon for the summer, I was able to form a band with my brother on rhythm, a drummer (Army), a bass player (Navy), a large African American sax player

(Airforce) and a guitar/singer (more of a Country-style singer-Army) where we played at the Cercle Sportif and restaurants like the Floating River Boat Restaurants, La Cigale French Restaurant and Caravelle Hotel...for only Booze and Food.

Gail Andria York – *I am not exact about the date that I met Gail. It may have been in '61 or '62 but I know I was attending Brent and it was one of those summer or Christmas vacations when I had come home to Saigon. My brother and I had gone to the Bowling Alley and I met her there and shyly introduced myself to her and her sister. Her father then was a Brigadier General, Robert H. York, 82nd Airborne and she had a younger sister named Carol and two other sisters from her mother's prior marriage but they were older and not in Saigon. He was from Birmingham, AL. They lived around the corner from our house in Hai-Ba-Trong (her intersecting road name escapes me but it led to the Cercle Sportif that I will describe later if you went*

south) and attended ACS. She was three years younger than me.

I was somehow above and beyond the “puppy-love” stage with her almost immediately. I was a goner. We almost always double dated with Oz Osmanski who also attended Brent with “home” being Saigon and Jane Anthis, Gail’s friend for many years, during and after Saigon. In Saigon we had a constant problem in finding a place where we could be alone when I visited her from Brent. Even though I would go to her house daily during the summer (and always have pink lemonade made by her maid), we were limited to necking with one eye open. I was so far gone that I didn’t even date anyone at Brent and wrote her letters almost daily when not in Saigon. Our search for privacy was getting desperate to a point where one night after mid-night the four of us snuck out of our houses and walked to the Cerc ... which was closed and dark with no lights. We climbed the Cerc gate and headed to the pool. Took our shoes off and neatly placed them by

the stairs leading to the pool so not to awaken the resident guard. We separated, with me and Gail taking the diving board platform and Oz and Jane the southern end of the pool. Gail lost her virginity that night and as expected, the bond grew more intense to a point where my mother was noticing changes in my mood and personality. About a half an hour after we had gotten situated the lights were turned on suddenly and the guard was yelling and trying to pinpoint where we were. He went back downstairs where we thought he was going to call the Police. We took that opportunity and scrambled to get our clothes and shoes on but found that we each had just one shoe instead of a pair. The guard had taken one shoe from each of us. To make it short, we got out of there hastily and for months my mother wondered what had happened to my other shoe.

I had, that summer, been teaching English and English pronunciation at a Vietnamese school making good money. The head Mistress called me in

one day and asked me if I could tutor a young Vietnamese boy who didn't attend the school but his parents wanted a private tutor. I of course said yes and arranged for twice a week tutoring in the afternoons at our house. The boy was maybe



Cercle Sportif – French Club with Swimming Pool & Tennis Courts-Visit 2009

around 11 or 12, very handsome, well dressed and intelligent. After a couple of weeks of tutoring I got

to where we would have decent conversations and he would always end the session with “Mr. Roy, please leave Vietnam. Go. This is not a safe country. Please go.”. His advice never registered much but our “teacher/tutor friendship” allowed me to ask him if he or his father knew of an apartment I could rent. I told him about Gail so that he understood the nature of the request. In our next session he told me that his father has a small apartment in Cholon (a City south of Saigon) and if I wanted to take a look at it. I could go with him that Saturday. I told him that both Gail and I would meet him at the Cerc gates (he was not a member) to go and look at the apartment. After a ride in his father’s Mercedes to Cholon (his father was not along), we looked at the apartment, vacant and no furniture (but the floor would have done fine with both of us at that stage) and I told him that we would take it and that to thank his father and we would provide a deposit of one month and the first month’s rent at the next tutoring session. His driver took us back as he said that he lived not too far from there and would walk.

On the next session I was prepared with the deposit and the first month rent when our tutoring session began, but he started by saying that his father had decided to rent it to a local family instead and that he would look for another one for us. That never materialized. We became more brazen with our hormones raging and one day her father came home early unannounced and walked in on us (we fortunately had just started the “session”), but he got the limited gist of it. We quickly adjusted our demeanor and, luckily, he took it as just a petting session. He had a grin on his face that I will never forget. From there on I could never look him in the eyes. I remained embarrassed. He actually liked me and once took me on one of his helicopter visits of his troops and we came under VC fire after landing and had to jump into a rice-paddy ditch and he covered me with his body as his troops returned the fire. His marriage must not have been a good one ... his wife, Gail’s mother, a beautiful woman was an alcoholic and I never saw her sober.



Gail Andria York

*I can describe Gail emotionally as “unadjusted”.
She had a very high measured IQ and as with most*

persons of that type, something else goes missing. She was very emotional and I had to walk on eggshells most of the time. A small smirk or an unintended rejection of anything that she liked or said would send her into a depression and doubt about my sincerity. I am again not sure of the timeframe here but it must have been late '62 or early '63. I got a letter from her when I was back at Brent School (Baguio Philippines) that her father was sending her and her sister to live with his brother in Asheville, NC in anticipation that he would be having a change of Command to Ft. Bragg and a second star and wanted the girls to be in the States before he would have to leave suddenly. I was entering my first Senior semester at Brent and was in the process of applying to various colleges and universities. They were all in the vicinity of Fayetteville, NC (Ft. Bragg) since I knew I had to be close to Gail (and should you dear daughters, want to know why I chose High Point Collage instead of Georgetown ... it is now obvious). I got accepted at High Point College, NC and when the summer was

over in '63 I left Saigon for High Point much to my stepfather's dismay since he had forced me to send an application to Georgetown and I had been accepted there. That first weekend after registration and subsequent ones I hitch-hiked my way to Asheville, NC. I stayed, much to her uncle's dismay, at a motel which gave us much more privacy than we had dreamed of. By the time her father left Saigon for Ft. Bragg I had a job at the Fruit of the Loom hosiery factory in High Point after classes and was given my stepfather's Ford Falcon and had plans to move to an apartment instead of the dorm after my Freshman year. My trips to Ft. Bragg and staying at a motel were working out fine and we were making plans to get married once I had the apartment and she would finish High School. She was then almost 18.

One afternoon I got a very nervous call from her. She had missed her period and was worried. I told her not to worry and that I would be there the following afternoon and we can discuss the what ifs.

The idea of abortion never entered into either of our minds. I knew I had to be careful in how I carried on any discussions with her and the only way I knew that I could instill any confidence in her was to tell her not to go for any tests and that we would go to Dillon, SC where one could get married without blood tests (if you ever wondered why I always stopped for gas at Dillon, SC, now you know... even though the Motel is now a Pizza-Hut and the telephone booth dismantled). I convinced her that I didn't care about the pregnancy as a factor because I assumed that she would construe the pregnancy as being the only reason for me to marry her. So, I told her that I would drive down next afternoon and pick her up after school and head to Dillon, SC. On the drive down I started planning on how I could forge/change her ID to where she would be 18 instead of 17. When I picked her up, I crudely made the change by making the ID look worn and not easily readable. We got to Dillon and went straight to the Justice of the Peace at the courthouse. No blood tests were required but they could see the

intent in the smudged ID and refused to grant us a license. The next hurdle was what to do. We decided that we would inform her family that we were in Dillon getting married and that we would be back tomorrow – giving me some time to figure out how to circumvent the license and ID issues. Since I barely knew her mother sober, I told Gail that I would call her father at work from the pay phone outside (no phones in motel rooms in those days) since I knew he worked late into the night. Nervously I dialed General York’s number and after a few minutes of waiting to get through his Aide, he came on-line and asked if everything was OK. He knew I was down from High Point to see Gail. I told him everything was fine and that we were in Dillon and that we are getting married and would be coming home to his house tomorrow. I was shaking like a leaf all the while and freezing cold. There was a long pause and then he asked “Where are you?” Naively, I told him the motel name (there was only one in Dillon anyway) and the line went dead. I told Gail about the conversation and she was getting

depressed and worried about her father hanging up on me. I told her not to worry and that everything would be alright. Approximately 3 hours later, there were three loud knocks on the motel room door, I opened the door and there stood Gen. York and two MPs. He told me to go outside with the MPs while he talked with Gail alone. It was a cold and chilly night and I stood outside with almost no clothes with the young MPs that were restraining their grins but at attention. A solid half hour passed and her father came out and told me that Gail wanted to talk to me. That discussion didn't go well. Her father, knowing that she was underage, had convinced her to come home that night and that he would arrange for tests and that once she graduated from High School she could marry me if she wanted to and if there was a baby involved he would give her permission to marry.

It all sounded logical and sincere ... but I felt betrayed and Gail felt relief. Her father was her idol. She worshiped the ground he walked on. The

MPs took Gail in the General's car and he got in my car heading back to Ft. Bragg. There was a long, long period of silence. He eventually repeated what Gail had told me, but I was so hot under the collar that I refused to say anything and just drove wildly. I was so nervous and mad that one time I mistook the lights for the cigarette lighter and turned them off doing 80 to 90 miles per hour on a two-lane road. He stayed calm as a cucumber. I dropped him off and headed back to High Point. The next morning Gail called early to say that her father has permitted me to visit her on weekends during the day only and that she would be going to go through the tests. I was still steaming and told her that I would see her next weekend.

My visits on weekends became shorter and shorter as I noticed her flirtations with some of the Military at the horse farm she had me visit when I came down. I dared not to bring up the pregnancy but noticed that there were no changes in her physically and she never volunteered her status. I once asked

her about our plans and she said, “I don’t know”. I continued to see her, but the relationship had gotten more and more strained. I had lost her to her father. As the saying goes: “My son is my son until he finds a wife...my daughter is my daughter for the rest of her life!”

When she graduated from High School, her father sent her to Queens College in Georgia (I believe it was Georgia). I kept track of her until one day she called me from San Francisco and told me that she had moved there and began to berate me over the phone for calling it “Frisco”. She was forcing an argument and using it as an excuse for a final separation. I hung up the phone and cried for most of the afternoon.

A few years later, while on a business trip to San Francisco I was able to trace her to Carmel (Pebble Beach area) and decided to call her. The phone rang several times without an answer. Since I was leaving for VA the next morning, I decided to drive to

Carmel to see if I had really found her. I came to a gated community and was allowed to enter after stating the address and Gail's name to the guard who double checked his roster. I drove to a beautiful large house which had double pane windows on each side of the door. I rang the doorbell and briefly saw a movement through the windowpanes and it was her as she crossed the room approaching the door. She got a quick glimpse of me and darted to another room. I rang again several times, but no answer and no one came to the door. I left deflated but time had healed some of the wounds and I decided that it was a dead end I had to realize and come to grips with. Besides, I was married then to someone that looked, walked and acted like Gail ... a rebound marriage that didn't work out. More on that following this segment.

Around 2008, I connected with many Saigon kids through the web. In one e-mail I got connected with Jane Stephenson of Plano, Texas. At first, I didn't connect the dots until she reminded me of her

maiden name of Anthis. Memories came back in torrid waves. I wanted to know if she knew where Gail was. She told me that she had lost contact with Gail a while back but that she had been her Maid of Honor at her wedding. Gail had two sons and was living in San Francisco and had a successful business in Bronze work. She mentioned that Gail had married and was twice divorced. I began a serious search through the web and finally located a phone number and an address in San Francisco for Gail Andrea York St. Germaine, which was her married name as conveyed by Jane. Jane also told me that her younger son had committed suicide recently from an overdose. I called the number and a man answered and I asked for Gail York St. Germaine. I was hyperventilating for sure, but thought that I could rebuke any cold reception by telling her that we were holding a Saigon Kids Reunion and invite her to the event. The man on the phone simply replied that “she is gone”. I asked if he knew when she was coming back, but he repeated “she is gone”. I asked again and he finally said that

she had passed away. Drained of every fluid in my veins, I asked him what had happened. He said he didn't know but she had passed away and he thought it was suicide. I asked him who he was and he told me that he is renting the place from Gail's son. I asked him for her son's name and asked him to pass on my name and phone number to her son when he next saw him and convey that a High School friend had inquired about her, and to pass on my condolences. He said he would. He would not give me her son's phone number when I asked in closing.

I continued my quest to search for any information about Gail through the web and any friends that knew her, her son, or her sister Carol. Jane Anthis Stephenson became a dear friend and had intimate knowledge of my and Gail's love affair. This period of my life was pivotal and the forks in the road that it led to were consequential in both my successes and failures. I was curious, but not exceptionally surprised at her suicide...given her "imbalance" stated before. Jane filled me in a little bit by stating

that her first marriage ended in a trauma of finding her sister Carol's pictures of her husband in compromising positions. Then the death of her younger son due to an overdose. It would have taken her to the edge ...as it did.

I shared my full story with Jane Anthis to gauge a comparison. She said that her parents had demonized me with all her family and friends, but whenever she brought up my name to Gail, she became quiet and non-responsive. That only confirmed my entrenched belief, including Jane, that our love had sustained the demonization forces applied.



Inscription: "This World Was Never Made for One So Beautiful"

This story was never known by my parents. But that does not mean, my dear daughters, that you should

follow that avenue if confronted with any tormenting experiences! Have each other to lessen the burden. Each of you and your mothers are always there for you, and I in spirit when my clock stops ticking.

Adulthood

From Age 22 – 60

Start of a Career – With the rejection by Gail becoming more a distant memory, I focused my efforts on graduating from High Point College (now a University) with my Degree in Mathematics as I worked two jobs. I taught Computer Programming and operating the computer systems at the School of Automation in Greensboro, N.C. – 15 miles north of High Point. I also taught computer languages (Assembler and Fortran) at Greensboro Woman's College. I went to school in-between.

How did I get there with those qualifications? A miracle of sorts with a lot of luck. It started at the end of my Sophomore year in college. First a little more detail on how I got to High Point College (then a small 600 student body school). After graduation from Brent School, and my acceptance at High Point College, I came home from Saigon in the summer of 1963, my stepfather sat down with me and handed

me tickets for High Point, N.C (Air & Bus), cash in \$200.00, and a document showing paid amounts for first semester room & board, books and Freshman first semester courses. He told me that he graduated from N.Y. State University by working and paying his way, and that this first semester payments is all that he would contribute. I should think about how I was going to survive the following semesters. I really think he didn't feel that I had what it takes. Remember the statement, "he doesn't know enough to get out of the rain"? He was partially right. At that moment I didn't care where I went or what I thought of the future as long as it was near Gail. So, I thanked him and took off for High Point College while my parents stayed in Saigon for another year to end their tour. Arriving there and going through orientation and registration, my only thoughts were how am I going to get to Asheville initially and then eventually to Fayetteville, N.C (Fort Bragg) without a car or enough monies for motel, food or bus fare. Getting a job became priority one. Main obstacle: High Point College rules for Freshman dormitory

students was no work for the Freshman year. I found out shortly that a few of my dormitory friends would sneak out after courses that usually ended by 2:00 PM to a job at the Fruit of the Loom Hosiery Company from 3:00 PM to 11:00 PM on weekdays with good pay (I think it was \$3.00 per hour). I made quick friends with one of the dorm members who had a car (an old Volvo) and would carry the 4 or 5 students since he also worked at the Hosiery... for gas money. With a job in hand, I planned my study habits. Working from 3 – 11 PM every weekday night. I got my habit set to where I would get back to the dorm by 11:15 PM, take a quick shower and shave, jump into bed and wake up at 5:00 AM, study my assignments by 7:30 AM, go to Breakfast 7:30 – 8:00 AM, and start my classes at 8:30 AM until 2:00 PM. That daily cycle worked well as far as funds and travel methods needed to get to Asheville, N.C. on weekends. The weekend transportation, however, became a problem. Bus transportation was tortuous in that it made several stops before getting to Asheville, almost losing a weekend day. So, one of

the working friends told me to thumb my way (in those days it was a relatively safe undertaking). He told me that the best way is to hollow out a gas can and put any cloths I needed in it and carry it as if my car had broken down due to shortage of gas and more people would stop to take me as far as I wanted or they were going. It worked. I thumbed my way to Asheville every weekend without expense or loss of day.

By my sophomore year, my parents had returned to the States and had purchased a home in Fairfax, VA. I would see them mostly on Holidays where I proudly paid my way home, (even though my mother always slipped me \$25.00 for my way back). But having a full-time job at the Hosiery Mill was getting old and by then I had an apartment and a roommate (whom I hated). I had tried my hand at working at Belk's Department Store as a shoe salesman, and at a loading dock operating a forklift. So, I had a few things on my resume. I thought that if I went home to VA after my sophomore year I could

save a lot more money with no rent and higher paying jobs in VA/D.C. area. After completing my Sophomore year, I ended my monthly lease, got rid of my roommate and packed up and left High Point.

Finding a job in D.C. was not as easy as I had thought. By that time, I had also gotten my stepfather's hand-me-down Ford Falcon for transportation. My stepfather believed in cars as pure transportation. No AC, no radio, stick-shift transmission, hand cranked windows – no frills. I walked the whole length of Pennsylvania Ave. knocking on every door for any summer job to be had. I was greeted with “You should have put your name on our list last year, we are all full”. Dejected and rejected, I ended up at the Pennsylvania & 18th Street intersection and looked up at a five-story building sign that read “International Bank for Reconstruction & Development”. Thinking that I would be happy with a teller job, or any job at this point, I pulled out my resume and went in. I didn't see any tellers. What kind of a Bank can exist

without tellers? So, I looked up the marque and found Personnel Office on the 2nd floor and took the elevator up. A nice friendly, but foreign, receptionist greeted me and escorted me to the Personnel Officer, also a foreign woman with a better accent, and I handed her my resume as she took her time reading it. She finally looked up and said that “I am sorry, you should ...” I finished her sentence “have put your name on our list last year”. She smiled and I walked out leaving her a copy of my resume. Reaching the door exit, she called to me and said “We do have a permanent position in our Statistical Department if you are interested. I noticed that your major is Mathematics and ... have you already taken Statistics?”. I darted back in and said yes it was my last sophomore semester course. She said that I could start next week, Monday. The salary is \$5,500.00 annual with medical and retirement benefits. I would have to go through with an orientation day on Monday and can be on the job on Tuesday. Wow! I thought, OK, the Civil War and slavery ended in 1865, so what is going to keep me

from leaving and going back to school after 3 months?

When I got home and told my stepfather, he almost fell off the couch. He said the IBRD (acronym for the Company), was part of the World Bank and that is why I didn't see any tellers and that it is a dream job for most because they have a quota of how many employees from different countries they would be able to hire. My quoted salary was in net where IBRD paid my taxes since they were an International entity.

On Monday, after the weekend, I reported to the Orientation given that day. Tuesday, they escorted me to a large room of 17 desks. 16 of which were occupied with young girls my age from different countries with large computer printouts on their desks full of numbers to manipulate statistically. As the only male, I was in a candy store!

After a few weeks of glee, I noticed that an accompanying door to a room was open and three individuals in white robes. One lady who seemed to be in charge, was writing a lot of formulas on a blackboard that I could read and understand mathematically.

A few weeks later I was finishing late and the white robe cadre was still working and the door semi-open. I tapped on the door and said hello and asked what functions did they accomplish with those formulas on the board because I could understand them but could not relate their use? The lady in charge came forward and introduced herself and told me that they were part of the Computer Programming Department and they were writing computer programs in Fortran. She then asked where I came from and I told her I was in the next office in the Statistics Department. She asked me if I was interested in Computer Programming and I told her I didn't know a thing about it. She said if I can

read and interpret the formulas, I am halfway there. She then said, we have a vacancy and if you are interested, we can transfer you to this department. Before I could say anything, she handed me a book titled “McCracken Book of Fortran Programming” along with a piece of paper she had evidently been working on. She said that if I studied that book and applied it to the routine she needed to compute using Fortran written on the paper, and if it would work, I can have the job. Wow Again!

Piece of cake! I studied the book and a week later gave her my program and crossed my fingers. She punched them in the IBM cards (remember the dangling chads during Bush’s run for the Presidency?) via a key-punch machine. Those cards ...no longer used given electronic data streams of today. She handed it to one of the men and asked him to go to the basement and put it in one of the computers (later found it to be an IBM-7094 model) and get the results. She had me wait as I debated internally...16 beautiful girls on one hand vs. an

IBM-7094? I was leaning, but no contest-it was going to be the IBM-7094!

The program worked (though it was not a very sophisticated algorithm) and I was transferred the next week. I had surprised myself and my parents. But I wanted more. I read more books on programing via different languages like Basic and Assembler and COBOL. I decided then that I would take a year off, attend a programming school (only one in D.C. by the name of International Tabulating Institute (ITI) at that time) that I found in the Yellow pages, at night, while foregoing all the dates I had planned with the 16 beautiful girls in the Statistics Department. I am a male. Don't blame me.

After a year and the beginning of my Junior year at High Point, I decided that I needed to finish College and said good-bye to the amount of experience I had gained and pocketed. If I could give up the 16 girls in the Statistics Department, I could easily give up the IBM-7094!

I packed up everything and loaded the Ford Falcon and said goodbye to my parents and headed south to High Point. I was rolling in cash, so I wanted to find an apartment without a roommate and enough to pay for at least a year of college before I would be out of money. Entering the Main street of High Point in mid-afternoon, I decided to stop and get the local paper in search for an apartment. I parked the car next to a newspaper dispenser and dropped the dime in the dispenser and picked up the local paper. Headline: "First IBM-360 Computer Installed at the Fruit of the Loom Factory. Applicants' knowledge of Computer Programming Needed".

Wow again ... and again?

I forgot about the apartment. Turned the Falcon towards the side road that led to the Factory which I knew well, and ran inside before the Personnel Office would close. The Personnel Officer remembered me and after I handed him my resume,

he asked when I could start. I told him as soon as possible but I needed to see my course schedule first. He said. “no problem, we will work around your courses as long as you can put in eight hours of work”.



Wilson, N.C. – Setting up a Company's Computer System

During my Junior year I worked at the Hosiery Mill for about eight months and was loaned out to surrounding companies in need of computer-programming such as in Wilson, N.C. One day I got a call from the owner of the North Carolina School of Automation in Greensboro, N.C., 15 miles North of High Point. I don't know how he got a hold of me, but he offered me a job teaching Computer Programming Course in Assembler at a 50% higher pay, and also manage his Computer Room and a large client of his that had his billing process automated and printed monthly. It was a hospital in Greensboro that had collected all the patient billing information on Computer tape but did not have a computer to process it. I accepted the job and about two weeks later, I got a call from the Dean of the Greensboro Women's College in Greensboro asking if I would be interested in teaching an Assembler class once a week. I said yes after clearing it with my boss at the N.C. School of Automation. The 16

girls of past now became an exponentially greater opportunity. My senior year course schedule was light since I had taken all the necessary classes and credits needed to graduate. Left were “basket-weaving” courses such as golf, etc. to add up to the total.

This long diatribe brings us now to Donna Louise Averitte, and sets the sequence of how I got the job skills that introduced me to Donna and a start of a career that will be woven with my personal events as we go on.

It was during this period that the US Military Draft, due to Vietnam war, was in full swing. I had a “teachers” deferment as well as still being in college. But coming in early one morning the owner of NC School of Automation was in already, and handed me a letter that stated my existing deferment had expired and I was to report to a Greyhound bus in Greensboro on a date and time (don’t remember) leaving for an Army Base (forgotten). I asked my

boss if he had sent in my deferment request and he said he had. On the day before the reporting date, I made arrangements to vacate my apartment and recommended one of my sharper students to take over the remainder of the courses while they searched for new instructor. I went home with the plan to go to work early again, clean out my desk and have the owner drive me to the bus station by 11:30 AM and keep my car to sell. I left a note for my apartment agent to send my deposit to my parents' home since I didn't have an address yet. Arriving at my office early, I noticed a lone letter from the Draft office on my desk. Opening it was my deferment! Obviously the request for the deferment was received the same time as the expiration and I got both letters a day apart. More luck. I should play the lottery! I normalized all my prior arrangements and got back to work and school.

Donna Louise Averitte – Teaching can be instant gratification, if you do it right. Specifically, technical subjects where you have “forehead-

question-marks” that can be replaced by “lightbulbs”. They got it! Satisfaction! My daily class of Assembler programming was composed of mostly recent High School graduates who wanted to learn a trade without spending four years of mostly college dribble to receive a title. I did have some older students, including one lady in her 50’s but averaging ~15 in numbers approaching their 20’s+ in age. The course I set up was for 4 hours to include lab-work (punching cards and operating the computer) and 2 hours of group coding repairs and group discussions). If I remember correctly, it was an eight-week course with the result being to write a successful but rudimentary program in Assembler. I didn’t have an aide or undergraduate to help. I had to develop (home-made syllabus) small problems in need of a solution, but making it interesting enough to keep their attention. With the class gender mixture of male and female, finding fresh problems that kept their attention and focus was a challenge. But, I would come up with problems that they could relate to before we could develop an “App” (today’s term)

as a solution or an answer. The likes of applying Linear Programming rules to farm plantation, or matching the compatibility of the personality traits of the class students (which I wish I had patented), for what is today the computerized Dating companies. That always produced match-made attractions for the class with a lot of levity.

One day a young girl of 20ish walked into class and took a seat. I was beside myself since she looked, walked, and talked like Gail. Throughout the course, my interest must have shown, and she knew it. I was careful in that teacher-student interface were the sanctity of the school's rules and I had to make sure I was within those bounds. I learned that she was from Fayetteville, N.C. (shades of Fort Bragg) and her parents had a farm growing tobacco and soybeans. She had a younger brother Tony and had recently graduated from high school. After the course graduation and her certificate in hand I said goodbye and thought it would be the end of seeing her.

Fortunately, a few weeks later she showed up at the school. I never knew who transported her, but the bounds of teacher-student relationship had been set free since she was no longer a student anymore. We dated several times and trips to Fayetteville and meeting her parents and brother became a weekend routine. Both her parents were hard working down-to-earth people. Her mother would always make pot-roast and fried okra and butter-beans when she knew I was coming down. My clunky Buick convertible with constant overheating got me there and back safely but apprehensively. I had an accident with the Ford Falcon that totaled the car. I don't remember the length of time we dated, but I popped the question and she said yes and a date was set for marriage at her farm with my mother attending as I neared my graduation date from High Point in 1968. My Stepfather had passed away by then. Donna had come with me to VA to meet my mother previously and I got the nod of approval. I traded the Buick for a red Ford Mustang fastback (start of my car fetish) for a less worrisome

*transport and she moved to my apartment (a duplex if I remember it correctly). We had planned to move to VA and rent an apartment in Fairfax after graduation since I already had an offer from a software firm, Taurus Associates before finishing college, (more on that in **Career Path**). During our 24 years of marriage, Donna was a model wife. I was not a model husband. She is interwoven in my following topics as we celebrated those years with our beautiful daughter Denise.*



**My Mother & I
Wedding in Fayetteville, N.C.**

There is nothing more heart-wrenching than a divorce/separation involving children, no matter the age. As my heart battled with my head, emotions vs. reason, the hugging at my legs by Denise, at 9 years of age, not wanting me to leave when I visited her and Donna during the separation, has left an un-erasable memory I would wish on no-one. But again, children are resilient. It's the parents that bear the

scars for a lifetime. I had asked Donna for a divorce which was finalized. In time she met a man that I only had met at a Denise soccer game as he came over to the other side of the field where I was watching the game and introduced himself as Dave Compton. A very amicable man and I was glad he had fallen in love with Donna. Over time we developed a friendship that assisted us in avoiding being played by one side against the other, when it came to Denise. We would share the issues and come up with a common response. So there, Denise! (lol).



Donna Louise Averitte

Career Paths:

***Taurus Associates:** My work experiences during my College years helped launch me into opportunities aplenty. Before graduation in 1968, I started applying to businesses in the VA/DC area with plans to move Donna and I to VA close to my mother. I*

*had foremost in my mind the return to the World Bank (IBRD), since, as a previous employee leaving on good terms, I thought it to be the best selection and also familiar grounds. I made an appointment through the Personnel Office for an interview with the new Director of Information Management at the World Bank on one of my trips home during my second semester of my final year. He was a very young and entertaining man who launched into “holography”, a term I was not familiar with (pre-Star Wars and Princess Leah) as the future technology for the World Bank. After a half-hour interview, he told me that he was interested in my experience and would forward my selection to the Personnel Office who will contact me shortly. In a couple of days later I got a call from the Personnel Office quoting a salary and a starting date should I accept the position. The offer was \$5,000.00 less than I was already offered by a small software firm, Taurus Associates, on Lee Street (address significant in **Deep State**) in Alexandria, VA. I told them that I will let them know the next day. The projects*

identified to me by Taurus Associates and the decrease of the offer by the World Bank was a factor in my decision.

Holography was an unknown but adventurous pull, but the down-to-earth project of Finger-Print identification programming and marrying of an IBM 360-50 with a Mosler410 aperture (imbedded microfiche in IBM cards) storage vault retrieval application seamed down my alley. So, I called the World Bank and declined the offer and accepted the Taurus offer. I let my stepfather know and he was disappointed. When I told him of the lesser financial offer by the Bank, he reminded me that the Bank quotes salaries in net, so, the offer would have been relatively the same. I had forgotten.

My work with Taurus Associates was interesting and after over two years with them, their contracts with the FBI and U.S. Army (the two projects) re-compete were won by SAIC, a large firm in VA underbidding Taurus. My boss, Woody Witt, energetic with

somewhat goofy demeanor left the firm shortly thereafter. When they let the receptionist go, I felt I was going to be next. Offers by SAIC were not attractive. I got a call from Woody when I was contemplating my next move. He had secured a position with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, where he stated that he had a position for me if I was interested. However, I would have to take a Civil Service test to get a rating grade before I could apply. I took the test and was rated as a GS-13. Woody informed me that he was a GS-13 and the position he had vacant was a GS-12. At that point I didn't care and accepted the position and began my career as a Civil Servant.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – *The main project I was put in charge of with a staff of 6 programmers was the development of a Personnel Management System for the Corps of Engineers and its District offices throughout the Country using COBOL programming tools and a hierarchical database management system. The job took me to several*

States and District offices in Vicksburg, Mississippi, Chicago Illinois, and San Francisco, CA.

My marriage to Donna then was becoming strained in the self-acknowledgement that she may have looked, walked and talked like Gail, but she was not Gail. An obvious re-bound mistake taking its toll on both of us. However, I felt that I had made a commitment, and regardless of my feelings, it's a commitment I will keep since Donna, through no fault of her own, was the victim of my mistake.

The friendships I acquired in the five years with the Corps of Engineers remain as vibrant today as in the past. My equivalent "side-kick" that required integration of the Corps' Personnel Management System and the Financial System was the same age male by the name of Jim Johnston. I met him on a trip to the San Francisco District where he was hospitalized in a cast resulting from a motorcycle dirt-bike racing accident that had his arm joined by pins and in a cast. Being a motorcycle/motorbike

enthusiast in my days in Saigon (a Lambretta Scooter and a Moto-Guzzi bike) that I hid from my parents by stationing it at a friend's house, found common ground in our friendship. It went further in our interest in flying where we both took flying lessons in 1973 and eventually got our licenses within weeks of each other.

In that year, our flight instructor, Dick Neff, (a retired Navy Pilot), proposed a flying trip to the Turks & Caicos Islands beyond the Bahamas where he had a business interest and where we could share the aircraft rental and gas fees and gain the flying hours we needed to get our licenses. Dick had a friend's vacant beach house available so that we could avoid additional costs. Once on the beautiful Island of Providenciales, (one of a chain of Islands in the Turks and Caicos and more touristy than others), we spent hours shared PIC flying (Pilot In Command-we had already soloed) while Dick attended his business interests.

One day, as a rest from flying, I noticed a small two-man catamaran sailboat on the beach property and coerced Jim into taking it out for a spin. Given my experienced sailing adventures in Lake Barcroft, I felt confident in handling of the small sailboat with no tar inside it. About a mile or two out, I noticed a very sluggish movement of the boat even though we had full sail and adequate wind to tac properly. Looking around for a reason, we discovered that the boat had a gashing hole in the pontoon and we were taking in water. Shades of going down with the ship and our angst at potentially reaching Cuba by nightfall with the strong current was causing us to debate swimming ashore. As the pristine aquamarine waters turned to dark nefarious waves, we noticed a boat approaching us as we hung on to the sinking boat. It was Dick Neff. He had come home and noticed our absence and the boat and spotted us clinging onto the mast with his binoculars. We were saved from Cuba!



Jim & my Beech A36 on one of our trips

On subsequent trips, I bought an acre of beachfront lot on the island for \$15,000.00 with \$500.00 down and monthly payments. I had hoped to build a retirement home at some point in the future. My contract clause (which I had not read in full-who does?) had a stipulation that I had to build a home

with specific square footage within five years of purchase. When that time came, on a Government salary, I could not afford to even build a one room cabana with the rates of \$120.00 per square foot. I arranged to sell it back to the lender for the remaining balance. It is now part of Beaches Resort on the Providenciales island (sigh).



**Left to right: Denise, Bob Ford & Donna
Providenciales, Turks & Caicos**



**Denise & Donna
Providenciales, 1984**

Jim's wife, Donna and Bob's wife Denise became close friends with my Donna and we socially intertwined our interests and social gatherings – to this day. Jim & Donna's first daughter, Jaime, was the first baby I had ever held in my arms. Daytona

Beach Bikeweek, Rolling Thunder, and many motorcycle trips filled our lives with added friends and associates.



First Bikeweek – Daytona Beach, Jim sitting on first bike from right in blue

Iran Tour (1975 – 1979): *U.S. Government regulations, as a Civil Servant, requires an annual*

review where a form has to be filled out identifying experience and a section where mobility to other States and Countries is listed to be checked if interested. Always interested in having my passport stamped, every year I checked every country on the list. Taking notice that Iran was not on the list. This list was then made available to any Government entity that had a vacancy needed to be filled.



Donna M, Denise, Jill, Jim, Donna J. & Jamie



Denise & Jill Johnston

AVSCOM - In 1975 I had a call from U.S. Army Aviation Systems Command (AVSCOM-now known as AMCOM as it merged with AMCHQ and moved

to Huntsville, AL) in St. Louis, Missouri indicating that I had come up on their selection list and wanted to set up an interview meeting. They provided an airline ticket and a Government per diem for the trip. I asked for some details and they said that it was a Supervisory Computer Specialist position in Tehran, Iran. I contained my surprise but asked how they obtained my name from the mobility list since Iran was not listed? They said that they picked everyone qualified from the ones who checked Mexico as their choice of mobility. I held back my amusement since Mexico is not a comparative country with Iran in any aspects. I accepted the appointment without indicating my background. I went home and called my mother and told her about the offer. She was supportive and said that I should consider it since I could visit my family members that I had not seen since my childhood, (except for my Uncle Nasser who had made several trips to the States in his position as Minister of Natural Resources in Iran).

The interview was with six individuals in a conference room. They gave me the background that the US Army had an FMS (Foreign Military Sales) Case, a contract to sell armaments and support to the Iranian Government where Bell Helicopter sales, training and maintenance were provided and that included a computerized section for support of the administrative and maintenance issues. They needed a Computer Specialist position to review the contractors' efforts. The FMS team would be comprised of various skill sets (Facility Management, Contract Management, Training Specialists, Computer Specialists, etc.), headed by a US Army Colonel. My grade would be a GS-13 Supervisory Computer Specialist and a 25% salary increase for overseas duty. I would be issued an Official Passport requiring a visa, move of family and household effects and monthly rental expense of \$1,000.00.

I asked who would be processing the Visa and they said that they have an Administrative Department

that would handle that. I expressed that I didn't think that the visa process would be smooth and before explaining further my background, they responded that it would be no problem and that they would handle it. I accepted the position on the spot but was not confident since Iranian Law does not accept dual citizenship and once born in Iran, you are always an Iranian. I gave them no further details and decided to let them go through the process. Notice was given to US Army Corps of Engineers pending their process which was estimated to take one month. As days went by, I was gearing up to position of the sale of our Townhouse, in the event everything went smoothly. I then got a call from the interviewer stating that they seem to have a snag with the visa department at the Iranian Embassy in Washington DC and since I was in VA could I make an appointment with their council to resolve whatever issues remained?

Ambassador Zahedi - *I told my mother that evening about the call and she said she knew the*

Ambassador, Ardeshir Zahedi, who is a close friend of my family in Iran and she had gone to several of the parties held at the Iranian Embassy in Washington D.C. She called the next day and got an appointment for her and myself to go to the Embassy. On arrival, Ambassador Zahedi, in Iranian fashion, went through a lot of memory discussions with my mother along with all the Iranian pleasantries such as tea & cookies & Cream-Puffs, finally coming to the issue of my visa. He stated emphatically that there is no problem with the need of any visa for me since my childhood Iranian passport, updated, would be issued without delay. My mother expressed that the position is an American position with a Security Clearance requirement and the Iranian passport would not accommodate that requirement. He stated again, that similar Iranian security status would be provided without a problem. When we left the Embassy, my mother and I both knew that this would not be acceptable to AVSCOM. And it certainly was

not acceptable to me since I didn't consider myself Iranian anymore.

My mother had one more trick up her sleeve to play. That night, given the time difference, she called my Uncle Nasser and explained the problem. Next day, noon-time, I had a call from the Embassy that my US Special passport and visa have been granted and can be picked up at my convenience.

My next dilemma was the speed in organizing the departure and calming Donna's fears of moving to another country, be it for only a two-year tour. She, in her childhood had never ventured beyond 50 miles of her home, and here a strange country with a different language and thousands of miles away, must have been panicking – it would have been for me if the roles were reversed. She was a good sport though and did not give me much grief over it. I decided that maybe I could lessen the impact by going ahead of her for three months. That would give her time to sell the house while she stayed with

my mother, trade the car for a four-wheel drive Chevy Blazer better suited for the Iranian terrain, and oversee move of our household effects. I could then find an apartment in Tehran and getting everything ready so that she would feel somewhat at home when she arrived. But there was no avoiding the culture shock she would experience - I was sure of that.

Arriving in Tehran was an eye-opening event even for me. I was greeted by my Uncle Nasser. So I thought. It was actually my father whom I had not seen for 26 years. The two brothers looked alike and it took me a while to notice the difference. My Farsi at the six-year-old level was not helping either, but we managed to get acquainted enough through the congested traffic ride to his apartment.

In his apartment I was greeted with a beautiful (and obviously younger) lady who was my father's girlfriend. She was amused with my wearing of boots as if she had only seen it in cowboy movies. My

father later took me to the hotel my office had arranged for me and a meeting was scheduled the next morning for a trip to the office located at the airport Helicopter facility. The weekend was coming up and my father said that he would pick me up on Friday morning and we would go to his Villa at the Caspian Sea (a three day weekend-Friday Iranian and Saturday & Sunday American).

A car with an Iranian driver, supplied by the Office, picked me up from the Hotel the next day and drove the 10 miles to the Office. On the way, I practiced my Farsi with the driver but was distracted with his straddling the white lines separating the three-lane autobahn. I asked him in my broken Farsi, “why are you not driving in one of the lanes?” Without hesitation he said, “those lane markings are for you Americans, we know where we are going!”. Holding back my laughter, I managed to get him as my permanent assigned driver as soon as I got to the Office.

Jim Wilkie - *I had not, yet told my boss, Col. Jim Wilkie, (who later became one of my Vice Presidents for our San Diego Office of SESI), of my Farsi knowledge/background and waited until the opportunity was more conducive. However, the game was up. Our office interpreter, a young beautiful girl in her mid-twenties, was more than inquisitive when I took a call from my father in the office and spoke in Farsi. She was in listening distance. She kept looking and looking at me and I decided I better go and tell my boss before it became an issue. He was surprised but welcomed it and saw it as an asset. I decided to still keep it low key and concentrate on the tasks before me...all the time, the interpreter was watching my every move.*

General Fartash - *Things became a bit more complicated as the weeks went by. Meetings with the Facility Iranian Commander, General Fartash, and his staff was getting me worried because in some of the meetings, in Iranian fashion, they would provide a status on helicopter readiness, untrue and in*

Farsi. Among themselves, they would give the true figures in the conversation. On top of that, my boss would quiz me on what they had said in Farsi. So, it was time. I made an appointment to see General Fartash and told my boss of the appointment. He agreed. I walked into his office greeting him in Farsi and apologizing for not speaking previously (I hid with the excuse that my Farsi was too poor-which was). He looked surprised and I told him my family name and he got up from his chair shaking hands with me and saying that he knew my father and uncles well and welcomed me graciously. He was, unfortunately, killed later by the Revolutionary guards shortly after the Revolution.

I then had to make amends with the interpreter. She had a document in Farsi she was interpreting for my boss. She was told to give it to me since it was an automation issue. She handed it to me and I read the English translation and she had made a mistake in a technical statement. So, I spoke to her in Farsi and told her she had made a mistake. But I had made a

graver one. My use of the word “Kharabi”, literally meaning “error” or “mistake” can also mean “defecating in your pants” if an “i” is added to the end of the word in a sentence ... which I did not know. Her surprise and laughter finally amended my cloak-and-dagger position and she became valuable in keeping my Farsi in check. She was married to one of the Bell Helicopter engineers and I found out later through my boss that she had been able to escape Iran during the Revolution.

Donna had done a super job at selling the house, trading the car and shipping the household effects and I in turn had an apartment rented with the furniture installed and ready for her arrival.

Culture Shock - *I picked her up at the airport and driving “home” she felt nervous and wondered out loud why there were walls around all the houses we passed. I explained that it provided security as well as the boundaries of ones’ home. I could feel the culture shock coming on. Her being used to Persian*

food with my mother's cooking, I told her that we can go out for breakfast early tomorrow morning in the Bazar so we would not have to make breakfast. I felt the more I got her exposed early, the faster she could acclimate to her surroundings. In the early dawn the next morning, I got her up and asked her to bring a pot with her for the breakfast at the Bazar. With a question mark on her forehead, she said ok and we drove to the Shemiran Bazar walking past whistling Iranians until we got to a vendor that had two vats full of bubbling broths and asked what I wanted. I told Donna to hold out the pot and told the vender in Farsi what I wanted. He rolled up his sleeve and plunged into one of the vats (I don't know how the boiling liquid did not seem to bother him) and pulled out a lamb's head. I then motioned to him that I wanted the meat (goosht) on the cheeks, the tung (zaboon), the eyeballs (cheshm), some of the broth and the brains (maghz) as well as feet (paucheh). During his process of serving the pieces as he pulled them from the lamb's head, Donna was holding the pot and teetering on the verge passing

out and falling. I held her steady and we walked back to the car after picking up some Barbari bread. I was holding the pot then and Donna kept asking if I expected her to eat that for breakfast. When home, I put the pot on the stove and reduced the broth a bit to give it more substance and asked her to try it. She meekly took some bread and dipped it in the broth, not touching anything else, ate it and had no objections other than getting up and saying that she was going to make some pancakes.

Her adjustment in the coming months exceeded my expectations. She got a job at one of the banks downtown and when I would pick her up after work, there was a street vendor across the street that was barbecuing on skewers, Liver (gigar), kidneys (Gholveh), and “mountain oysters”, serving it as a wrap on Tauftoon bread which she and I both ate as dinner. Trips to the Caspian Sea and Dizin Ski Resort (yes, it snows in Iran) made her more and more comfortable and adjusted.

The Caspian Sea, geographically, is the world's largest saltwater lake. Five countries have a borders at the sea, Iran and four former Soviet republics (until 1991), Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. All three of my uncles and my father had a villa by the sea. During the Shah-years it was modernized (actually, most of Iran, to where the French newspapers were quoting that the mini-skirts of Iranian women were shorter than women's in Paris). It had a casino where my father and Uncle Nasser would frequent, and when I was with them, it provided my introduction to gambling. They both liked the Roulette table (normally the worst odds in any casino, specially US tables that have added double zero to the 37 numbers on the wheel/table). They both had memorized all the numbers and their adjacent numbers on the wheel (example: 11 adjacent to 20 on its left and 30 on its right, etc.) to where they would place their bets consistency on adjacent numbers that would form a piece of "pie" on the Wheel of 10 to 15 numbers at each turn of the

wheel. The hope being that the odds of the ball landing on any of those adjacent numbers, “pie”, would be greater than random number pics. If you are into mathematical probabilities, they had a “System”. The only variables being unlimited “t” (time) and “f” (funds). If those were infinite, you would come out a winner...at some point(lol). One of the problems was that when the Croupier shouted “fete va joue” you scrambled to place your bets before the ball dropped on a number. I have tried that in the U.S. casinos. Once you do that, you will see that the Croupier will speed up the play to avoid you placing all your bets on all your “pie” numbers. Another trick was, if you occupied a seat close to the Roulette Wheel and the Croupier, you could pre-arrange the bets you wanted to place on the “pie” (or at least half of them) in front of you and as soon as the Croupier lifted the crown from the previous number to start another play, shove your bets to him calling out the numbers you selected. That way, by rule, he could not start the play until he had placed all your bets on the numbers you called out. You

gained some time that way. That trick was taught to me by Amu Nasser. Avoid tables with the “00”! Unfortunately, most U.S. casinos have maybe only one table that is European lacking the “00”, but it is usually at a higher minimums to play.

Nearing the end of my two years tour, I was offered the Deputy Program Manager job, a GM-14 position reporting to an incoming new Colonel, Dick Stevenson, and a new two-star General (Tommy Thompson) in St. Louis (AVSCOM) who would be coming every three months for an IPR (In Process Review) – if I signed up for another two years tour. Life was good, and I did.

Richard Stephenson - *Dick was a West Point graduate and a football hero with a whimsical humor and a unique gift. He was a helicopter pilot in the Vietnam War. It became my job to coordinate and update him on all the processes and get him settled in his position as FMS Program Manager. We became quick friends. His wife, Diane, was a*

salty mouth woman, yet amicable. We shared my driver, now with a front-seat Uzi carrying guard, to and from work. His gift was his amazing ability to doze-off immediately upon getting in the car but waking just before the car door was being opened on arrival. I envied that ability and asked him how he was able to do it. He told me that as a cadet at West Point, he had to learn how to deep-sleep for short periods of time while at attention. An art evidently mastered by many cadets.

Tommy Thompson - *Our first challenge came when the new two-star made his first visit. From what we had learned, he was a heavy scotch drinker and with a fire-and-brimstone mannerism. We also knew that he had a photographic mind and depth of memory. We drew straws on who would entertain him on his first night after arrival and I drew the short one. So, I stocked up on Chivas Regal & Black Label Scotch and Donna made some hors-d'oeuvres, in anticipation of his thirst. At 2000 hours sharp (8:00pm) he arrived with Dick & Diane and the*

General's Aide de Camp escorting him to our apartment. After the pleasantries, I asked him if I could get him a drink and he said, "Yes, King George IV Scotch, no ice". I said I was sorry but I have Chivas and Black Label? He said, "That's rotgut, you should get King George IV" but took a glass(es) of Chivas anyway. It was obvious he already had a few drinks if not a bottle before coming. We learned and witnessed him in his drunken stupor on many of his visits. On his planned second visit, I got a call from his aide asking if I have his George IV scotch on hand, I said no, but I will go to the Commissary and stock up. The Commissary had never heard of King George IV Scotch (actually, it was a very good tasting Scotch once I got some). I told Dick about the call and he looked at me funny and said "well, you better catch the next MATS flight to Germany and bring back a case". And that is what I did.

The good general had a role in both Dick's and my life post Iran. However, on this visit, the Iranian

Minister of War (IMW) had planned a dinner party for him to be attended by Dick and I, his aide and numerous Iranian guests. Again, in typical Iranian fashion, the party consisted of at least a hundred-plus people and tables lined up a mile long with every Iranian dish known to man. The IMW sat at the head of the table, Gen. Fartash next to him, on opposing sides Dick Stephenson, next to him the IMW aide (a Harvard educated Civilian aide); our Two-Star opposite to the aide, and I next to our Two-Star. After dinner when everyone had finished their meals and after dinner drinks, our good General, with more than a few belts of Scotch, leaned over to me and asked me to ask IMW how much he had to pay for dinner. I told him that I was sure there was no charge. He leaned over again and after a burp, said that he had to pay for the meal since the Pentagon has employed a strict rule that nothing should be accepted on gratis-not even a Christmas card. He said again for me to go and ask him. I had to do something. So, I got up and went to the head of the table and leaned down to where I

was close to IMW's ear and whispered in Farsi that due to Pentagon's recent regulations, the general would like to thank you for your generous invitation and hospitality but he must pay for dinner. IMW looked straight ahead without acknowledging me and simply said, "Tell the good general that when I visited him at the Pentagon I was served cookies and tea; we can call it even". I got up and went back to my seat and told the general that IMW said to thank you but it is not necessary. Our good general, aggravated, told me to go back and tell him again. No way was I going to do that! IMW's aide across from me (and I wish I could remember his name-he later became the prosecutor at the World Court in Hague and in determining the billions Obama paid in as "reparations" as decided by the Court), had been monitoring the back and forth and I got up, motioned to him that I was coming his way as he got up to meet me. He wanted to know what was going on and I explained it to him, but I told him to stand where he is so the general can see both of us. I then told him I was going to reach in my pocket and

whatever money I have there (it was \$12.00 and change), I would hand it to him and for him to take it and sit down and say nothing. I went back to my seat next to the general, who had seen the exchange, and he asked me how much. I told him that I gave IMW's aide the money for the dinner. He asked how much again and I said \$12.00. He looked at me and said, "THAT Much, ha!?" The "Ugly American" comes to mind. I got my \$12.00 back from the Aide, but Thompson never made an offer to pay me back, even for the King George IV Scotch. It wasn't going to be the last time.

First Embassy Incursion – Not many people are aware that there were two takeovers/incursions of the Embassy in Iran. First was on February 14th 1979 and the last on November. 4th 1979. The first was relatively benign, (Google/Bing it for details). Among the riots and daily shootings months before the first incursion, my Uncle Nasser called and asked to have lunch near his office. Uncle Nasser was a vibrant statuesque and handsome man. His

love of his wife and children were the priority in his life. At lunch he told me that he was going to the States and that he had plans to send his wife and kids to Mission Viejo, California where they have a house. His two daughters (Bibi and Banu) would be attending Utah University and Ali in the local high school in Mission Viejo. I asked him why Utah? (not knowing that he got his Masters there). He said because there are no blacks there. He then asked me what I thought of Carter (the US President). I told him I didn't vote for the peanut farmer. He then told me that Carter will cause the successful revolution of Iran and wanted to know my plans. I told him that I still had a year left on my tour and have plans to send Donna and all the dependents of the 38 (72 – 34) people in my charge home until hopefully things would not get worse. He said don't bank on it. Make plans to leave.

One evening on the local television news, it was reported that some students had taken over the US Embassy and were occupying it. But no report of

injury or death of the Marine Guards defending the Embassy. That night I had a call from Ambassador Sullivan of the US Embassy. Dick and I had some briefings with him in the past and he knew of my background. He wanted to know if I would come to the Embassy and serve as the courier of telexes and messages that were exchanged between the White House and the Embassy. The telex office (or “twixes” as they were called) was stationed at the far end of the Embassy grounds. Since the Marines were disarmed – he paused to say that the students had disarmed them peacefully but are benign and acting much like the Haight-Ashbury crowd with no interest other than waving their flags and yelling down with the Shah –he didn’t want to have the twixes fall into the hands of the hippie-likes and would prefer someone with a Top Security clearance who was fluent in Farsi and not military to be the courier. Reluctantly I said fine, I will be there tomorrow. It didn’t seem to be a safety issue, but I wondered what would happen if I was confronted by one of them and how to finesse my way out of it.

Maybe start a Hari-Krishna dance. It went smoothly and I was carrying the twixes back and forth and reading them without any interference. Daily messages from the Shah through the Embassy to Brezezinski in the Carter cabinet for support and what-if scenarios of US reactions requested. They all went un-answered. Much like the current bumbling President's actions that will cause a revolution or conflict somewhere (referring to President Biden). My politics are showing again.

Evacuation – *I was in touch with my father whenever the phones worked or electricity was on. I had worked the previous months in securing a Green Card for him to go to the States and he only had to go to the Embassy to retrieve it. But he was reluctant. I could understand it. At that time, he was the President of the Mercedes Benz truck manufacturing company in Tehran, had a good military pension and a good salary. At his age of 70ish it was hard to give everything up and leave*

with not much to offer for his independency in the States.

Dick was unable to return from the States, where he was getting his first star and a new assignment. The Commissary was ransacked and closed. Electricity was off more than on, heating oil undeliverable, and the constant crowds and riots filled almost all the streets. I had 38 people under me (and 34 dependents that I had already sent home). Four of the 38 were Division Chiefs in charge of their sub-groups. Of the 38, two were women.

One thing to acknowledge is that recruitment of capable and qualified US citizens to come to Iran was very difficult. Most who accepted it were near retirement and wanted to see the world at the Government's expense before retiring to some nursing home.

One night (before the riots) I had a call from the Provost Marshall asking me to come to their office

and sign for the release of X & Y (forgotten the names). I asked what had happened and he told me that the couple had arrived in Iran the day before with the husband destined for a vacancy in my group. The police were called from the same hotel I had stayed in during my entrance. They picked up the couple due to some altercation and I had to sign for their release. I put on my clothes and went to the Provost Marshall office. Walking in I saw the couple seated and the man with blood and wounds being bandaged. I went to the Provost Marshall thinking that maybe there was some attack or robbery at the hotel where they were staying for the night. He said “no, actually the wife there had an argument with the husband and beat the crap out of him and the police were called”. That did it. I went and told them that they should go back to the hotel, not unpack, and tomorrow I will have a driver with two airline tickets for them to take them back to the airport destined for the States. Adios!

Of the two women, one by the name of Sally (last name forgotten) was a known “air-head”. She reported directly to one of my Division Chiefs (Frank Scariano). I had set up an alert system for each Division Chief to call me (providing phones worked) by 10:00am every morning with a headcount of their staff to make sure everyone was accounted for and safe. With shouting crowds of “Death to the Shah” passing through our street (Saltana-Tabaad), I had my call from the Division Chiefs, except for Frank. He was late. A half-hour later he called to say that we are missing Sally who has not reported in and does not answer her phone. I told him to keep trying and let me know. As soon as I had put down the phone, it rang and it was Sally, hysterically screaming repeatedly, “They are shooting at me, they are shooting at me”! I asked her to calm down and tell me where she is. She said she is at her apartment window looking at the crowd and people shooting. I told her to get away from her window and go to her bathroom or a place more protected. Her apartment was in a Circle that was

also occupied by the infamous Evin Prison and about two miles from my apartment. I decided I better get to her place and see what was going on.

Not wanting to drive the Blazer with diplomatic-like plates through the chanting crowd, I decided to walk the two miles along with them. That was a mistake. As the crowd chanted “Death to the Shah” in Farsi and raised their fists in the air, I was not doing that. Soon it got the attention of the ones near me and I had to chant along to get along. As we neared the Circle (Maydoon) I looked up to see CBS, NBC, and ABC trucks with their camaras atop their vehicles spanning the crowd and their chanting. I kept wondering if Gen. Thompson or Dick were watching the broadcast and seeing me chanting in unison. I was dead meat!

I soon reached her apartment. She lived on the third floor. I walked up the stairs and saw her door open. Went in; no Sally. There was no evidence of any disruption. I went down to the first floor, (it was

customary for apartment owners, more like single townhouses, to live on the first floor and rent the higher floors). I knocked on the door and an elderly gentleman answered. I asked him in Farsi if he knew where Sally was. He said he didn't know. I asked him about the shooting at his apartment. He told me the crowd was shooting at the Evin Prison not at the apartment and had released all the prisoners.

More on that event is covered in the book "On Wings of Eagles". I walked back home chanting as I went against the crowd.

I waited until the phones came back on-line and called Frank to let him know that we have one employee missing. I called all the drivers I could find and asked them if they had taken Sally somewhere. They hadn't. Then I debated in informing the Embassy and AVSCOM vs. waiting and gathering some more information. Perhaps she had gone to one of her friend's/co-workers house for safe-keeping. I called the rest of the Division Chiefs

and asked them to call everyone of their staff or friends of Sally in order to locate her. Four days passed with no luck, I decided to call the Embassy first and then Gen. Thompson. The phones were dead again. I waited and the phone finally came on-line and it rang. It was Sally. I asked her what had happened and where she was. She said her Iranian neighbors on the second floor had heard her screaming and offered to take her with them to their Caspian Villa and she has been having a great time by the sea. “Grrrrr! & double Grrrrr!”

It was time to get serious with the evacuation plan. My communications with Gen Thompson and the AVSCOM staff during this revolution was that every contractor, to include Bell Helicopter, Boing, etc., had evacuated their people, and unless we do something, my folks are going to create a revolution of their own. My request was always met with “stand by the flag, this will be over soon”.

The Shah had left for the Bahamas; Khomeini had arrived from Paris; and most of our Iranian Military counterparts were beheaded with their gory bodies displayed on newspapers and TV. One in particular, was General of the Air Force Manucher Khosrodad, who we used to go skiing with. the Armory had been broken into and every kid from the age of 10 carried a Kalashnikov rifle. The streets were full of riots and shootings, PX closed, offices closed, no heating oil, no gas, electrical and phone outages, and more – “...it will be over soon”???

I finally decided to go to the Embassy and see if there are any evacuation plans in process. I took a cab in lieu of driving the Blazer with its special license tags. Once inside I asked for Ambassador Sullivan, but he was out of the country returning tomorrow. I then asked for the military liaison and was escorted to an office and greeted by a one-star army general (name forgotten). He looked at me as I gave him a brief explanation of why I was there and he said, “Do you work for me?” I said,

“Technically, no sir. I report to Gen. Thompson in St. Louis, AVSCOM”. He then asked why I was still here? He then said that most communications with the States are down more than up, and it would be my decision alone on evacuating my staff. I told him I want to have my staff evacuated as soon as possible. He told me that there are three Pan Am flights, two already evacuated and the third, perhaps the last, is scheduled to leave in two days. He then asked his aide to come in and told him to schedule my 38 people on the next Pan Am flight out.

The plan entailed our group to assemble at the Embassy by 1700 hrs. (5:00 pm) on Friday, February 16th, 1979 –a Muslim one-day weekend. We were to bring only one suitcase, travel by taxi to the Embassy; not to take our own vehicles or the government provided ones. Our official passports held by the Embassy, would be provided to me for distribution. We were to bring no contraband and we would be briefed by the embassy staff as to our initial destination, and driven by bus staffed by

revolutionary guards. This was an arrangement made between the Embassy and the Khomeini committees at 12:00 am (in the safety of midnight) to get us to Mehrabad Airport where we will board a Pan Am flight to our initial destination. It all sounded and felt organized. Leaving behind all household effects and vehicles or pets? Plan? - “undetermined”!

I managed to get a call to my father who was still in Tehran but was planning to leave for his Caspian Villa amidst this revolution. I was worried about him, being the Shah’s playmate and a retired Army officer. I urged him again to pick up his green card at the Embassy and leave on the next available flight. He just said that he will pick me up on Friday at 4:30 pm and drive me to the Embassy.

I called my Division Chiefs and briefed them on the evacuation plan and told them that I would see them and their staff at the Embassy by 5:00 pm. We had a civilian (legal) counsel on our staff that reported to

Dick and I directly. I called him and told him of the evacuation plan. I knew he was already scheduled to leave AVSCOM for Saudi Arabia in three months for his next tour on an FMS project. I had expressed my concerns that he was Jewish and born in Israel and an American citizen in Saudi Arabia would not have been my first choice of a two-year tour. If Iran is comparable to Mexico in the eyes of the St. Louis office, Iran can be comparable to Saudi Arabia? – NOT! He told me that he would be at the embassy and collect everyone's house/dwelling keys and look after them if things change for the better in the next few weeks. He doubted that as I did.

My father picked me up at 4:30 pm as scheduled and drove me to the Embassy. I hugged and kissed him good-bye and urged him again to pick up his green card at the Embassy. I let him have a copy of my apartment keys in the event he wanted to take anything before it would be ransacked. I had already managed to sell my Blazer which was parked at the embassy lot before the buyer could pick it up with

the completed paper-work. It was full of bullet holes from the earlier incursion. I felt sorry for the buyer.

At the gates of the Embassy stood Col. Leland Holland along with two Revolutionary guards with their Kalashnikovs. I learned of his name after the second Embassy takeover. He greeted me while the gates were still closed and asked me to open my suitcase for the guards to inspect it for contraband. I did so and in opening it, the guards discussed in Farsi that if there were any alcohol, cigarettes, or valuable jewelry or gold to take them. I was about to utter in Farsi, "no, not my cigarettes!" but held back. Since the PX (Post Exchange) had been ransacked and closed, my only source to feed my bad habit was the local vendors/stores that were open. I had a full carton of Bastos (French filter-less strong and pungent) cigarettes, which they took but nothing else.

I went inside and was greeted with a few members of my staff that had arrived earlier. A civilian

Embassy liaison handed me a stack of our special status passports to distribute and told me to brief my folks, once all were accounted for, that the Pan Am flight was scheduled to leave by 7:00 am tomorrow. The flight was headed for Rome where Embassy officials would meet us and coordinate our individual plans to our destinations in the U.S. I passed out all the passports to ones who arrived by 5:00 pm and told them of the flight destination and plans forward. There were other unrelated passengers arriving and I would have had a hard time grouping everyone in one space to make any announcements. Our legal staff collected all the house/apartment keys and promised to inform the St. Louis office regularly before they had to leave.

Five o'clock came and went. I was still holding two passports in my hand: my own and Sally's!

Around 7:00 pm I saw Sally sauntering over. I was more than rude and told her that 5:00 pm sharp was her notification, so what happened? She told me, "I

have made so many Iranian friends and they have convinced me to not leave and that everything will be ok. ”. Grrrrr! She held her hand out for her passport and I told her that she has in essence decided to quit her job if she plans not to evacuate. Therefore, the passport, being Special category, will be handed back to the Embassy Liaison, and she can apply for her own personal passport and visa with the new Khomeini Government and do whatever she wants. She stated that the passport/visa office had been closed for weeks since some of her friends had been trying to get visas to the U.S. I wished her luck as she huffed away towards a phone booth. Minutes later she came back full of tears and stated that she will evacuate, even though she had not packed a suitcase. I told her the plan details and I held her passport until ready to board. She only wiped away the tears when I mentioned Rome as the initial destination. She uttered something about having made a lot of good friends in Rome.

During the night there were several shots fired at the Embassy, some going through the windows. We were all told to lay on the floor until it was time to board the buses. At midnight we were herded off to a row of busses each manned by a Revolutionary guard. As the buses cleared the Embassy gate we heard a shot and immediately all the busses put the pedal to the metal and we screeched towards the airport. As we arrived and were being unloaded I asked a few folks/passengers who were not on my team, “What had happened?”. One of the passengers that was involved told me that the Revolutionary guard hanging on the bus door as it pulled out from the Embassy had slipped and his Kalashnikov fired though the bus ceiling causing all the drivers to panic and race to the Airport.

Most of the guards were “children”, ages 12 – 17. Some were not as tall as their Kalashnikovs and looked tired and sleepy.

The Mehrabad Airport was packed to the gills. Everyone in various lines going through the initial entrance to the foyer where your tickets and passports (provided by the Embassy) were checked. A lone young beautiful girl, in tight jeans, with her hair tied in a bun and a Kalashnikov strapped over her shoulder was checking the tickets and the passports. Standing next to her on the right were three people, one of which I recognized as my dentist (an army Officer). The other two were American in appearance. All three were standing and did not appear to be part of the check-in process.

I had most of my folks ahead of me and noticed that some of them were looking back and motioning their passports at me. I couldn't understand and too near to shout and create attention. When it became my turn and I climbed the two steps towards the girl and handed her my passport and ticket. She looked at them and told me to step to the side with the other three, in a perfect Bostonian English accent. I asked

her why and she said “You are CIA and will never leave this country”. She indicated she did not want to argue and tapped her Kalashnikov and motioned me to the side. I asked my dentist what this was all about and he told me that the yellow slip of paper attached to our passports evidently triggered an unacceptable exit from the country. I learned later that the yellow tag simply stated in Farsi: “Please provide any assistance required by the owner of this passport”. It didn’t spell CIA to me, but not everyone had the yellow slip attached to their passports. My dentist told me that a representative from the Embassy has been called to come and investigate this issue. Investigate? The plane is about to board, Investigate!!?

By the time everyone had been processed by our Bostonian revolutionary girl, our “CIA” group had grown to eight people. The girl then motioned eight of the “kid-guards” to accompany each of us independently to a separate room in the airport until further notice. I was taken to what I thought was an

interrogation room, and told to sit in a row of empty waiting-room seats by the guard-that looked no older than 11. He sat in front of me with his rifle. Hours passed and I was not sure if the Pan Am flight had taken off without me. The young guard was getting sleepier and sleepier as I witnessed his head bobbing up and down. Eventually he adjusted his position and took his rifle and placed the end of the barrel under his chin and with his other hand, put his finger on the trigger. I sat silently thinking that any noise or event may cause his trigger-finger to press and blow his head off, (remembering the revolutionary that slipped and shot through ceiling of the bus). I suppressed even a fart hoping for someone to quietly come and get me out of this potential soon-to-happen mess.

It was after 12 noon (and over 19 hours since arriving to the Embassy the evening before), when the door opened and the familiar liaison from the Embassy walked in along with an interpreter. The guard sheepishly looked up and I was handed my

passport and told to board without an explanation and the boy-guard was dismissed by the interpreter.

As I climbed the aircraft stairs, I noticed everyone's suitcases open beside the aircraft with the guards rummaging through them. Again? Once seated, the aircraft intercom came alive with one of two of the guards at the door of the plane asking in English for two passengers by name to come forward of the aircraft. No one moved. The second guard then came through checking everyone's passport. The names were announced again and the passport checking repeated without success. I found out after reading Ken Follett's novel "On Wings of Eagles", that the two names belonged to the two employees of Ross Perot's that were imprisoned at the Evin Prison. They had escaped when the crowd I happened to be chanting with had stormed the prison. The two gentlemen were on the plane but with fake passports provided by Perot with different names.

I looked out the window and saw the suitcases being put into the cargo-hold and the engines being fired up. Take-off was smooth until two Iranian F-4 Phantoms appeared on each wing. Everyone became nervous. They accompanied us until we left Iranian airspace where they peeled off returning to their base. Champaign bottles and glasses were brought out by the Stewardesses and cheers of relief filled the airplane.

It was nighttime when we arrived at the Rome Airport. Embassy personnel met us at the walkway and handed us each our hotel reservations and \$1000 in cash with instructions that Embassy personnel will also be available at the hotel tonight and tomorrow for any other travel plans required. Busses were made available for the groups. On the bus I told all that could hear me that I would get a breakfast room arranged for tomorrow under AVSCOM name/banner, and for everyone to come to breakfast on or before 0900 for any further

news/plans before we depart to our individual home destinations. I further told them that I would notify AVSCOM that everyone is safe and at this phase, awaiting further instructions for travel to home destinations. I then made arrangements with the hotel for one of their ballrooms for breakfast.

By 0900 everyone was seated and having breakfast, except for Sally. Around 0930ish the doors opened and Sally with two Italian men, one on each arm, entered the ballroom and sat at one of the tables. I knew I was going to ignore her for the rest of my life.

With the phones working now, I called Gen. Thompson's Office and told his deputy that all (except maybe Sally), are safe and can be reached at their respective homes they were recruited from for further instruction. I then took the first flight the next day for Washington D.C., having called Donna and my mother the night before.

It is sometimes inexplicable to be amidst a danger but not feel it. I never felt it was any different than an “adventure”, an “experience”, a “learning process”, or “Life”. I decided to take a lot of my use-or-lose accumulated leave and pursue my next workplace. I knew I did not want to go to St. Louis nor return to the Corps of Engineers.

I was almost to the top of my GM-14 steps when I got a call from a John Gilbert’s secretary from the Army Materiel Command (AMC) in Alexandria VA. She informed me that I have come up on the recruitment list as a first-choice mandatory list (which is a Government “forced take-it-or-leave-it recruitment” list if a government employee has been displaced-which I was since the FMS entity no longer existed). She wanted to set up an appointment. She described the position as a Supervisory GM-14 employed by LSSA (Logistics Systems Support Activity) in Letterkenny, Pennsylvania but location at the AMC Headquarters

in Alexandria, VA. AMC was the parent entity of AVSCOM and other sub-ordinand Commands throughout the country and overseas.

Army Materiel Command (AMC): *Denise was born by then, a beautiful healthy girl. Donna and my mother and I moved to a large home in Oakton VA with a mother-in-law suit. I helped Donna get a job at the World Bank which she ended up retiring from. I arrived at AMC and took the elevator to the 4th floor. I found John Gilbert's Office and his secretary greeted me and ushered me into his office. I saw a man with his back to me, sitting at a VT-100 computer display and keyboard, with sandals on his feet, loose pants and a tee-shirt. Ooookay, I thought! Good contrast with my suit, vest & tie. He turned and before any chatter he said, "I do not like being forced taking anyone of off a mandatory list..." , before he could finish, I said "Thank you, so I will not waste your time" and turned to leave. He told me to take a seat.*

I did and found him to be a visionary much like the World Bank Information Manager but more down to earth when it came to practicality and timing. Maybe eccentric, but as a Senior Executive Service-SES (GM-17) equivalent civilian compared with the shiny uniformed three and four-star Generals at AMC Headquarters, he must have had what it takes. He offered me the position managing the AMCHQ Automation initiatives with an office down the hall and a computer room and staff in the basement. My secretary, Garnetta Rizzo Beal would show me around. My immediate boss would be an Arnie Leisher in LSSA (a depot satellite of AMCHQ), but direct tasks would be emanating from John himself. Arnie reported directly to him as well as two other Divisions on the same 4th floor that he would introduce me to, once I get settled in. He said he would call Arnie to come down from LSSA in a couple of days.

I found my way to my office and found Garnetta at her desk outside my empty office. She was a

beautiful girl with everything seemingly orderly and clean. I introduced myself and told her that according to Mr. Gilbert, she knows everything one needs to know about the functions of this office. She didn't blink and professionally told me all of what she knew and I told her I will be in after the weekend and we can start with the computer room functions and introductions and go from there. I noticed a TTY (a teletype) machine next to her desk and thought not to forget to ask her what she used it for on Monday.

I found out quickly that what was called a computer room was nothing other than printing machines and book-binding process. All the computers were in Letterkenny, PA (LSSA) and computer tapes were shipped from Letterkenny where printed copies were bound and distributed to the AMCHQ functional offices by the folks in the "computer room". It had a staff of six men. The offices across from me on the 4th floor had two occupants. Neither of which could

spell “computers” and functioned more as gofers rather than programmers, their government title.

Disillusioned, I then asked Garnetta about the TTY in her office. She told me that it was installed by Mr. Gilbert as a prototype for a messaging system between his office to a California University that had a DEC-10 Mini-Computer. Rudimentary messages could be sent by Mr. Gilbert’s VT-100 - he sent the messages to California via phone lines and then re-routed to her TTY and vice-versa. I asked wouldn’t it be easier for him to just walk down the hall to give you a message instead of routing it through a computer in California? Stupid question.

When Arnie came down from Letterkenny, John Gilbert called a meeting with the two of us, the topic being Electronic Mail. He described what he was working on with DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Project Agency) on the invention of the internet where messages in e-mail form could be transmitted via computer hubs initially throughout

the government (.gov) and eventually the world (.com, .edu, .net, etc.). Current extension terms were not then thought of.

Gilbert had signed up AMC as the prototype agency, meaning me and LSSA. The project entailed the designing, formatting and transfer protocols/interfaces with DARPA for its development. What? Two goffers and six book-binders to develop an e-mail system? John read my thoughts. He said he would be working on increasing LSSA TDA (Table of Distribution & Allowances - an organizational MOS type table for staffing limitations), but it usually takes bureaucratic time. Any opinions or solutions on how to acquire the staffing sooner would be welcomed. I then raised the question about computer resources. LSSA computers were vintage IBM machines and not up to the task as I understood it. Mini-Computers were gaining popularity with low-cost attributes. He said that he had enough funding to procure two DEC-10 mini-computers and

peripherals and for Arnie to do the contracting and I the specifications. And then he looked at me and read my thoughts again. He said the mini-computers were to be located at the AMC Headquarters “Computer Room”. My next angst was qualified staffing: two computers with no one that knew how to write code no less even trusted to power them up properly.

After a couple of months of learning the functions and the “mission”, I felt I had to do something with the book-binding process in the “Computer Room”. I kept asking the supervisor there, and Garnetta, if we have had any complaints from the functional recipients of the bounded reports? None. Any delay in delivery or content? None. So I decided to go to a couple of the functional recipients and see how they used the reports. I walked to one office and saw a pile of those bounded reports in a corner close to a lady’s desk. I went and introduced myself and asked her if those reports were helpful? She said “I don’t know, we never use them”, I asked her why then

request them? She said “We didn’t, they just deliver them”. I tried another two offices with the same result. It was obvious LSSA was just empowering their need to exist at the AMCHQ by the pretense of providing vital reports.

I went to Gilbert knowing that I was starting a war with the hand that was feeding me (LSSA) and needed some proof of wasting all that work of printing and binding for nothing. I told him of my findings and I asked him if he minded if my gathering some proof of the waste through an experiment? He asked if he was going to go to jail for it. I told him what I was going to do. I was going to have those reports delivered to my office before they are carried to the functional offices. I would retain the first 3 pages of the report and fill the rest with blank paper and then deliver them. And if we don’t hear any complaints on a first iteration or the second and third, then we have to have a come-to-Jesus meeting with Arnie. He agreed, but said, “you know this might result in your head on a platter if

your proof flops... ”. I said I was confident. Long story short, my head didn’t make it to the platter and the printing and binding came to an end with only one item of collateral damage, one of Arnie’s Branch chiefs that had sold him that process.

The following years proved to be innovative, challenging and opportunistic technically and managerially. I managed, with John’s support, in increasing my staff ten-fold by putting in place an Upward Mobility Program where it was not under the strictions of the Government TDA. The program allowed for recruiting local GS grades 5, 7 and 9 with training programs that fit the skill levels desired. I had many of the in-house AMC young talented, energetic secretarial staff from various organizations and tenants within the AMC HQ sign up for the program. We did meticulous interviews and sent the selected candidates to computer programming courses that fit the skill categories I needed. Garnetta was one of my selections for that program and she managed to reach the highest Civil

Service GM grade of 15. She is currently retired and lives with her husband in Deland, FL...a stone's throw from where I have retired.

One day John G. called me into his Office and told me that he was sending me a Presidential Management Intern, a government program where talented individuals were recruited and farmed out to high level Government Managers as a means of developing their skills for future-like positions in the government. A few days later as I was waiting for the elevator to arrive to go home for the day, a lanky young man with a motorcycle helmet in hand, joined me in our wait for the elevator. Curious about the helmet since I also rode a motorcycle, I said hello and took the conversation direction to motorcycles as we descended the floors. He told me that he had just arrived from California and was working with John Gilbert as a Presidential Intern. He was amicable, friendly with a dry wit and told me his name was Bob Ford. I put two-and-two together and told him my name and said that I would see him

tomorrow ... that left a question mark on his forehead-I assumed John had not talked to him yet.

*Bob and his wife Denise (see **Dedication**) became close friends of Donna and I and he excelled in all venues of our business and friendship for years to come. There are “friends” and there are “friendships”. Bob and Denise Ford, Jim and Donna Johnston fit the genuine close “friends” category for a lifetime. As we moved through the chapters of our lives, with distance, careers, sadness and happiness, “friends” remain, with memories easily reflected by a smile.*



**“friends” – sans their better halves
at my Denise’s Wedding**

My interface with DARPA and the development of an Army email system was progressing along with the upward mobility intern training program. I had contracted with the University of Delaware after purchasing a copy of the Bell Labs (AT&T) Unix Operating System as the foundation of the email service for our mini-computers. Dr. Farber, Head of the Engineering Department at the University of

Delaware, was a friend of John Gilbert and his graduate students were Unix and C+ programming gurus. The task/contract spelled out a Post-Office like computer distribution system tied to the DARPA internet. The name of that automated distribution system was “MMDF” (Multi-Media Distribution Facility). It became the functional core of our email system. Since it was developed by government funds, it was Public Domain software. Microsoft soon acquired it free as the foundation and backbone of what is now their e-mail system...as well as many other entities. Once implemented on the AMCHQ system, it was proliferated throughout the AMC sub-commands, including its initial warts. Every functional office at the AMCHQ was provided a computer terminal connected to the mini-computers. Email was on its way both in the commercial sector and in the government.



Denise & Bob Ford – Providenciales, Turks & Caicos

Second Embassy Incursion & Ambassador Sullivan– *From our Oakton VA home, I watched the T.V. for news of Iran every instant I could. With the Shah gone and Khomeini arriving from France in the loving arms of the French flight stewardesses, I knew it was over. Iran would not be the same.*

In August of 1979 I got a mid-night/early morning long distance call from the US Embassy in Tehran. It was Ambassador Sullivan. He told me that the

legal liaison, we had left behind, had left for Saudi Arabia and he wondered if I could return as a temporary Embassy employee for a short time to close out some of the remaining FMS cases and other items the Embassy required. I was fond of him and working with him and Dick closely before and after the Embassy courier effort, but he was asking a lot. Experiencing the evacuation “adventure”, I had no stomach for trying it again with likely different results. I explained to him the experience and also told him that I have been put on a “black list” as conveyed by our legal expatriate. The Revolutionaries’ ransacking of our office turned up my passport information and copy of my birth certificate which has made the current Iranian regime angry that I was able to “escape”. He was not aware of that and in saying thank you and good-bye and safe goings I uttered something like “...a herd of camels will not drag me back”. He laughed and the phone went dead. I later accidentally ran into he and his wife having breakfast at a diner in

VA and we greeted each other warmly and with not too much chatter about Iran.

When the Embassy was taken over the second time on November 4th, 1979 The employees were blindfolded, among them Col. Holland who had manned the Embassy gate during our evacuation. I knew I had made the right decision. If I had gone, I would not be here to put clicks to the keyboard today.

Deep State: *I spent a total of 15 years with the government (5 years with the Corps of Engineers and 10 years with the Army Material Command). I regret none of it. and I have always told my young friends and acquaintances that employment with the government provides you avenues to explore new opportunities and establish a career foundation. Private industry provides tunnel-vision opportunities with lesser bureaucracy.*

On my eighth year with AMC, a young African-American man in a business suit, un-announced, barged his way through my secretary into my office. He flipped his badge and introduced himself from CID (Army Criminal Investigative Division). I asked him what I could do for him and he said “it is need-to-know restricted” and that he needs to interview my software employees. I told him that since it was a “need-to-know” basis, I needed to know by what authority, other than a badge you can buy at any flea-market, does he have for his request? I played my bureaucratic card. He mumbled a few reasons and I told him that I have not had any notice from my superiors to grant him any such access and he will have to go through the chain-of-command which is required. I told him that he can get a letter through the command if he can justify his departments’ demands.

He left in a huff and came back two days later with an authorization letter on CID letterhead signed off

by the 8th floor. It spelled out that someone on the 7th floor of the building was using his computer terminal and his account on our mini-computers in the basement for personal gain and it was a criminal offense to use Government equipment for private gain. I asked him if I would be subject to criminal offense if I made out a grocery list before I left for home today using the pen on my desk, the note-pad, the desk and chair, my name-plate and title, or other items so supplied by the Government? He answered in the affirmative. I told him I believed it would be challenged in court. However, since my staff only develops and installs the hardware and software for the AMCHQ offices, and the individual under scrutiny is not in my Department, he will have to develop a schedule that can meet my Software Manager's, Bob Ford's staff availability.

Several weeks later, Christine Zuest, Switzerland/German heritage, a software upward mobility intern under Bob, came to my office in tears stating that the CID representative has threatened

her with jail time and other criminal charges because he found a recipe for a strudel cake in her account on the system. Her parents were Holocaust survivors and she saw the shades of Gestapo in the interview. I calmed her down and asked Garnetta to let Bob know that no further interviews to the CID would be granted and the CID guy can come to me if any issues. My understanding was that the individual on the 7th floor was exonerated and the CID case was closed, so, why was this guy hanging around?

It was not too long before the CID and an FBI agent were in my office. I explained to them that the scope of their authorized letter was limited to the 7th floor investigation and that I was told that the individual was exonerated and that they were out of bounds with their interview threats to my staff. They handed me another letter indicating expansion of their investigation to the whole building and they would be starting with my Department. I knew I had created a target on my back but refused to cooperate

fully with these numb-nuts. They scheduled several meetings with me at their office in Ft. Belvoir, always playing the good-cop/bad-cop routine and taping of the conversations and made me wait for hours outside their offices before interviewing me with lots of printouts that I was able to explain with their “grrrouns” of acceptance.

I was getting tired of it. One day, true to their routine, they handed me a government form letter that in essence stated that the investigation may result in charges levied against me and a sentence that stated that in the event of such charges, the Government would provide a defense counsel on my behalf. But it was crossed out with a pen and they wanted me to initial the change and sign the letter. I refused because of the change. They were frustrated.

On another occasion, as I was waiting in the outer room, their usual tactic, I got up and picked up my briefcase as if it weighed a ton. I got no reaction. Once in the interrogation room, I again lifted the

briefcase to open it and one of the FBI agents asked what I had in there that was so heavy. I said "a tape-recorder". They all turned white. They told me that I could not record the conversations and I told them they could not record mine without providing me an unedited copy or a transcript. I knew they had nothing to pin on me and I finally told them that I have had enough and if they want to charge me, go ahead since I had work to do. I got up and left. The calls to go to Ft. Belvoir ceased.

One evening I was home and got a call from Bob Ford from the computer room, working late. He said that there was an FBI Agent and the CID guy in the computer room demanding that we provide them the four system disc drives. In those days they were huge) for their investigation. I told Bob to tell them to produce their authorization letter if they had any and that we cannot give it to them since we had no backup drives (which we did). A few minutes passed, Bob called again, and in his usual wit, said "I now have two FBI Agents, the CID guy and the Chief of

Staff from the 8th floor”. If I had to do battle with the 8th floor, tonight was not the night for it. I told Bob to bring the system down, give them the discs, and then get a receipt but don’t load the backups until they are gone.

A week later I had a call from the FBI agent who always escorted me to the meetings stating that they had done a raw dump of the discs on paper and they would like us to interpret it for them. I told them it was in Hexadecimal code and I would be glad to interpret them once I received a Government payment voucher in the amount estimated time of my staff. The phone went dead. The discs were returned a week later and the last I heard from them would be two years later.

In the early days of purchasing the computers for the AMCHQ, I knew that our basement computer room facility was cold and damp, and needed a raised floor for the wiring. We also needed dedicated air conditioning since it used the normal building a/c

which was inadequate for the heat generated by the computers. I discussed it with John Gilbert and he told me to make an appointment with General Moore (a two-star) since he was in charge of facility management, and request his support. Since the building was a GSA (General Services Administration) owned property, they had a LTC (Light Colonel- "light" is my emphasis) who was the liaison between AMCHQ and GSA. General Moore assigned him to coordinate our request with GSA and get it done. I had the specifications done and the LTC indicated that GSA needs to do a survey first. Three months later at my constant badgering of the LTC, the survey was done, the Dec-10s arrived and powered up, but no raised floor or a/c. Three more or so months past and finally the raised floor system arrived and was installed. Yet still no a/c. I raised the delay issue again with the LTC. He told me another survey by GSA is needed. I showed him that it was already done based on the diagrams. He insisted that one was needed. The computer boards were beginning to fuse together due to the heat

generated and I had to continually order more boards and parts to keep the systems up. In frustration, I went to John Cianflone, Gilbert's Division Chief and budget director and purse-holder (and my future business partner) for help. I asked him for \$37,000.00, no questions asked. He looked at me and asked again for the purpose. I told him I would rather he not know at this time. He asked me if he was going to go to jail for it? I said no, that I can justify it if it need be after the fact. My secrecy will become obvious. Annually, before the end of the Government fiscal year in August, John would come to my office and other Division Chiefs with a barrel of left-over un-obligated funds, (the barrel being a euphemism), that had to be spent by the end of the fiscal year. If not, the government would lessen his overall budget submission for the next year. Much like our government operates today, only with more zeros in front. Anything remotely related to our mission we could purchase or contract for. John authorized my request. I contacted my LSSA procurement office and gave our procurement POC

the authorization and the specs for a portable air conditioning system to be installed at the AMCHQ computer room. Whenever the GSA survey and a/c installation was completed, if ever, I could dismantle it. Just the costs of the replacement boards were surpassing the cost of the a/c unit. I did not want the LTC to get a whiff of it since he could stop it and I would have another battle on my hands. I continued my badgering of the LTC until finally I arranged a meeting with General Thompson – the same general when in AVSCOM as a two star who was promoted to a four star of AMC after a short stint at the Pentagon as a three star. The general, sober on this occasion, smiled, said hello using my first name, asked his aide to place a call to the GSA Administrator while the LTC sat nervously next to me. General Thompson got on the line and stated the reason for the call and there were some harsh words back and forth (typical Thompson fire & Brimstone approach). Then we heard “Hello, Hello”? and Thompson looked up said “That son-of-a-bitch hung up on me!”.

Nothing gained there, I expedited the temporary a/c purchase and when the contractor arrived, I told him I wanted it installed after working hours. Specifically, after midnight and I would have my staff there to provide rear building entrance. He acknowledged with a “will do”. When all the work was done and he was ready to power it up later in the day, he called and wanted to know which wall or ceiling to break down for the a/c exhaust. I had totally missed that side of the a/c issue. I told him he could not damage any of the walls or ceilings since it was a GSA building and I would come down to what-if the problem. In walking through the door of the computer room, I noticed something I had not paid much attention to. It was a grated screen at the bottom of the entrance door. I asked the contractor if he could extend and install the flexible exhaust tube from the unit to the door screen and still be able to open and close the door? He looked at me kind of weird and said “will do”. In the months to come two advantages came from that decision. One,

the computers were running fine without fusing their boards, and the occupants of the basement were walking around with short-sleeves and comments of how nice and warm the basement had become.

Things were fine until the day I had caught the elevator to go to the basement and the computer room. I had pushed the basement button. It stopped at the second floor and the LTC got in. He asked me where I was going and seeing the basement button lit, I told him the computer room. He said, "Good, I have not gone there for a while, I will go there with you". As soon as he saw the a/c unit he went into a tirade and told me that it was not authorized and he would go to General Moore and recommend Article-15 punishment. I told him to do whatever he wants but get the hell out of my computer room. The next morning General Moore's secretary called and said that General Moore would like to see me at 10:00AM this morning. I gathered my supportive data and caught the elevator to the 6th floor. In it already was the LTC and another officer which I

assumed to be a military judge-advocate. The LTC kept muttering on Article-15. I knew a little about the military law and Article-15, but it applied to military and not civilians. So, I finally asked him if he sees any green on me and that puzzled him.

I followed him into the General's office. After his charges, the General asked me for my response and I reminded the General that a year and a half ago, he had given authorization for the a/c and raised flooring for the computer room and the LTC was the liaison to coordinate that with the GSA. Further, General Thompson had tried to expedite the process, the GSA Administrator had hung up on him, and I showed him the costs in excess of \$100,000.00 for replacement boards, disc drives and other components that outweighed a temporary solution and cost of a portable a/c. I also told him that the LTC has been more of an obstructionist than a cooperative. The LTC then recommended Article-15 as a charge to the General. The General looked at me and asked if I was military, I said "No sir, civil

service”. He then turned to the LTC and said “What are you talking about? He is a civilian, not military and I would not accept that even if he was. He found a solution”. With that he looked at me and said “Next time you have to do something like this, let me know beforehand. Dismissed”.

I had avoided General Thompson when I had gone to St. Louis a couple of times after my evacuation for out-processing. I also avoided him when any trips made to the Pentagon when he had received his third star. When I was made aware that he had received his fourth star and coming to AMCHQ, I felt wiser to arrange to see him and congratulate him instead of running into him on the AMCHQ elevator. I called his aide at the Pentagon and requested a short acquaintance visit. The aide called me back and said that the General will see me tomorrow early morning while he does his exercises in the Pentagon gym. I went there on time and he was on the exercise bike. He climbed down and greeted me with a strong handshake and I told him

that he was invading my turf at AMCHQ. He laughed and asked about Donna and filled 15 minutes with pleasantries. When he took the helm of AMCHQ, I was responsible in developing on-line charts as well as paper copies for whatever his Aide would send to me. One night as I was working late in my office he walked in and asked for the charts that were to be presented tomorrow to the "Under" (Undersecretary of the Army at the Pentagon). I had already sent them to his aide both in hard copy and e-mail attachments. Before I could say that out loud, he said he cannot make that meeting tomorrow and I will have to do the presentation. I asked if his aide or any of the sub-Generals in the building do that? He said, no, you know more in preparing the charts than they do and my aide will go with you. I said yes sir, but if I can't have any honest answers to questions, I will have to defer. He said, don't worry about it, that is why I am here to go over it with you. My luck for working late!

Sync vs. SESI — *As my 15th year of Government service approached, my perfect supportive boss, John Gilbert, had left for the White Sands Missile Range, Arizona. He left amidst a conflict the **Deep State** had created for him because Gilbert had many close friends in the industry that they felt could pose a conflict of interest. John Cianflone and Arnie Leisher had retired, the new replacement for John Gilbert was a beauracrat milk-toast, most of my upward-mobility recruits had reached to grades GS-11 & GS-12 and gone to other agencies. And Bob & Denise had gone back to California to be close to their parents. My itch to get back into the civilian industry with higher pay was an incentive and my conflict being five more years until government retirement status age ... an argumentative dilemma. I rationalized that in five years I may not be as competitive for the industry as now. I handed in my resignation and took out my retirement funds and tried one Company for a year. It was a disappointments.*

One night I had a party at my house with some of the ex-coworkers that induced heavy drinking filled with memories. One in the group suggested I form a company instead of working for someone. I had thought of it, and I had made some contacts with the Department of Agriculture that had possibilities of a contract. I warmed up to that suggestion and in my now drunken stupor, I posed a company name as "SYNC". They all wanted to know what the acronym, if there was one, stood for? I said "Serious Yet Not Coherent"-that was actually my status for the moment. They all laughed, but one objected. He said SYNC with Inc. (for incorporated) would be sunk before it started. More laughs.

When sobered up, I gave serious thoughts to starting a Company and in the coming days I pursued the Department of Agriculture opportunity and finally got an agreement, with a condition. They had procurement difficulties and could only go with an 8a (sub-chapter S minority contract) which my Company (now named Systems Engineering

Solutions, Inc. (SESI)) was not. Solution: find a Minority 8a registered Company and pass the contract through it. What that meant was that based on Government regulations, the 8a Company would have to be 51% owned by the Minority. In record time I found a Chinese individual who had just been certified as an 8a Company and in search of Government contracts. During lunch with this individual at a Chinese restaurant, as he gobbled up a dish of shrimp with their heads intact, crunching the whole shrimp and shell (I could not complain since I could have devoured a goat's head at that moment), we reached an agreement that he would sub 49% of the contract revenue to SESI and he retain the 51%. He knew nothing about computers.

The effort entailed a database development using Informix, a Relational Data Base Management Systems (RDBMS) which I was familiar with and had some of my interns trained in it. It would only be a one-year contract. I decided that I would have to focus on getting additional contracts during the year

and needed someone else to actually write the code. I remembered one intern at AMC that worked for Bob and was a super expert in Informix but still worked at AMC. I gave her a call and offered the job to her and she accepted. Her name was then Lynne Howell (re-married name now: Lynne Kovacic) of Hawaiian descent. I then had to rely on Donna's income from the World Bank more than I wanted to while I looked for potential contracts.

*It was during that time period that I got a call from the FBI. New voice. New name. The **Deep State** was back. The caller confirmed my name again and said that they would like to meet with me to close out my case. It had been over two years since the last briefing. I said fine and the caller gave me his name and the address of 300 N. Lee Street, Alexandria, VA. As I was writing down the address, I kept thinking why does that address sound familiar? We agreed on a date and time. As I drove to the address on the date scheduled, it hit me. It was the address of Taurus Associates where I worked after graduation.*

I thought this might be a joke. Then I thought this might be some psychological ploy. I wouldn't put it past them. I parked and walked to the 2nd floor. Same floor as my previous floor. A receptionist greeted me. Nothing had changed except for cheaper government desks and chairs. This was too much. I thought of whistling the Twilight Zone theme or pinching myself to reality.

She escorted me to "my" room, where I worked on coding of the finger-print recognition application for the FBI. Sitting there was a young man in a suit in his early twenties. I was about to say "OK, what is this? Some kind of a joke?" but he got up, introduced himself and thanked me for coming and asked me to take a chair opposite him. I must have looked like a deer in the headlights. He said that they were closing my case. I never knew I had a "case" since no charges were filed. He then pulled out a computer printout which was a core dump and said that they just needed to clarify some items. He then asked me what the print-out was. I looked at it

and told him “It’s a core dump”. He asked me if I could interpret it, I said “Just look at the right side, it is the English version of the code for that left Hexadecimal line!?”. He said thank you and put the core dump back in his drawer. He then pulled out a document that was titled “Denise Ford, Dissertation on The Pathophysiology of Cancer Cachexia”. He wanted to know if I knew what it was. I had to think quick and said “Did that come out of my computer account at AMC?”. He said “No”, I said “Then how would I know anything about it?”. He put that back in his drawer and pushed a document for me to sign which in essence absolved me of any malfeasance and the closing of the investigatory case. I read each line closely to make sure there were no hidden traps and signed it and asked for a copy. I was still in a daze. When I got home, I called the Ft. Belvoir FBI prior number I had and told the receptionist my name and asked her if they had an office on 300 North Lee Street in Alexandria? She confirmed that they have a small office there and would I like their number? I said no, thank you and hung up. So, they

were legit, but the coincidence was hair-raising. I knew that Denise used to come to the office at nights to type her Masters Dissertation on Bob's account. Bob had told me about it. I had just forgotten.

John Cianflone - *I had not heard from John since his retirement. He had called but it was on my voicemail. I called him back and he wanted to know what I was doing, and I filled him in on my latest status. He told me I should go to Huntsville, AL, AMC sub-command for potential contracts. I told him that I was aware of the government two-year restriction on the "revolving-door" and in a couple of months the two-year restriction would be lifted. I was waiting until then to take a trip down there to talk to the newly appointed DOIM (Director of Information Management), Bob Payne, who we both knew well and was instrumental in serving as our beta site during the development of the Army e-mail system. I then asked him what he was doing and he said, "just watching the grass grow". John was a very shrewd and capable Financial Manager but*

lacked computer skills. He had helped me over the years at AMC on many occasions with total trust, confidence and friendship. I asked him if he wanted to join my Company as a 50% partnership. He said we should talk. We did. And we became equal owners of SESI. One of John's wisdoms was his reminding me often that "It's not what you know, but who you know".

The partnership of John C. and I excelled not only in our successes but in a long-standing friendship. John's strengths in family (three daughters and one son plus 12+ grandkids) and purity of heart was always the anchor I needed to reflect on my own conflicts. At lunch one day (at his favorite Chinese restaurant close to his home) I asked him the magic of his successful marriage to Ann for over 50 years. He paused as I expected a lengthy response but he then said "Don't think it's easy, we both had to work at it".



John C. and Ann at the Lakehouse, VA

Financially strapped, we decided to visit Huntsville by car. John wanted to use his car for the trip. I believe it was an Oldsmobile (more Old than mobile). We had a flat tire in TN and John and I jacked up the car and replaced it with the spare in the trunk that looked in worse shape than the flat tire. I noticed John jumping up and down on the T-wrench tightening the nuts on the bolts on the tire hub. I told him not to tighten it too much. He didn't

hear me. Getting back on the road, I told John we should stop at a gas station or repair shop to get the flat fixed since the spare didn't have much life in it. He agreed and we stopped at the next exit and asked them to repair the flat tire and replace the spare. Long story short, they could not get the spare nuts off the bolts since it was overtightened and had to be burned off with a torch, costing us three more hours in our trip.

In the morning we met with Bob Payne and he said that he needed help but lacked recruitment power (TDA). He had \$50 million in funds to contract for support. Only hitch was it had to be contracted to an 8a Minority local Contractor, which in essence excluded us (same issue as Department of Agriculture). I told him that during my search for the Agriculture contract I came across an 8a Company called World Computers in Dothen, AL and can make an arrangement with them. With everyone breathing a sigh of relief we went out and made the deal with World Computers (51/49

arrangement) with the caveat that we would program manage the contract since we knew the customer.

I spent the next two months after contract award (a three-year contract) in Huntsville, AL recruiting and opening an office while John managed the office in VA. Once I had found a Program Manager (recommended by one of Bob Payne's Division Chiefs, Tom Moore), I came back home not feeling poor anymore.

Our future contracts with Huntsville (then MICOM - Missile Command) and other government and commercial Companies grew to a \$14 million dollar annual revenue base and we were written up in the Fortune 500 Magazine-be it we were the last Company on the list. With it, many headaches, trips and time away from home.

Martha (Roxanne) Inez Gunter - *The song "How Do You Keep the Music Playing" lyrics sung by*

Tony Bennett & George Michaels best describes my love affair with Roxanne. A phrase in that song “...in her eyes I may not see forever ...” best exemplifies what I felt when I met her but ignored it since “forever” is never for everything or everyone. My love for her to this day is unyielding.

In my frequent trips to Huntsville, our biggest contract (\$250M, 5 years), I carried a few of my VPs/Managers with me that were subject matter specialist. I had bought a plane (Beechcraft A36 later traded for a twin Aerostar), where my flying license was put to use. We stayed at a hotel near the Missile base and often had dinner at a restaurant named Fogcutter (burned down and gone now). One night we met at the Fogcutter Bar for some drinks before dinner. A beautiful vivacious girl was the bartender. I had only one drink before I got a call from Bob Payne to meet him at our office for a short meeting. I told my folks that I would be back and to start dinner without me if I am late. An hour later I returned, and my folks had started dinner and I

decided to get another drink and join them. The same bartender, named Roxanne, gave me another Scotch & Soda as before and I paid her plus 20% tip and joined my group for dinner. To this day Roxanne blames me for being a poor tipper. What had happened was that I had assumed that my group had paid their drinks plus tips as well as the one I had while I was gone, my current drink tip only amounted to just one drink, being 20% of it! That wasn't the case. They had left without tipping since I would normally pick up the tab separate between drinks and food (financial accounts containing alcohol were audited by the Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA) and were considered unallowable). I was not aware that they had not paid the tip (usually in cash) for their drinks. Roxanne became a familiar face on every opportunity I had for lunch or dinner during my trips. On one planned trip I asked Larry Layten, one of my managers who had warmed up to Roxanne, if he had her phone number, which he did and gave it to me. I called her before flying

down to Huntsville and asked her to dinner on a night she was off.

That started a romance that had all the roadblocks imaginable. I was married. She was single. I was 20 years older than her. She was 27 young. I lived 900 miles away, she has a wondering eye. I was hum-drum. She was vivacious. I had a nine-year old daughter. She wanted a baby. I wanted the toilet paper rolled upward. She wanted it downward. She was a Democrat. I was a Republican. But...we were in love ... much like drifting in a sailboat without any wind or oars.

Roxanne and I eventually married in 1995 and settled down in Oakton, VA after my divorce. We have a beautiful daughter, Claire, born in 1999. Our marriage took place in Las Vegas in one of those “herd-thru”, as opposed to “drive thru”, church-look-alikes. When we got to that “church”, I noticed that almost all the pews were occupied by people we didn’t know. I thought we had the wrong address

and asked the priest-look-alike if we had the right address. He said we did. I then asked him who all these people were in the pews? He said “Oh, they are folks we hire to attend so that your memorable pictures would show a herd of people attending your wedding”. I don’t know how much he (or we) paid them, but they were all dressed in their Sunday best. Not the homeless. That is the industry in Vegas other than gambling. We later had a post wedding party at the Hilton Hotel in Fairfax, Virginia with all the non-herd friends and family in attendance. I took some time off and we traveled through Europe and visited my Stepbrother Kambiz in Vienna, Austria whose kindness was much appreciated.



Roxanne & Claire-Home in Oakton, VA



Claire's first flight lesson

Sunset Years

From Age 61 - ?

In 1998 John Cianflone and I purchased two homes in Bethune, New Smyrna Beach, FL. These were SESI Corporate owned retreats offered to our employees free of charge if they chose it as their vacation site and our use for Corporate retreat/meetings schedules.

Our government contract terms allowed expense qualification under “Employee Welfare and Moral” clause as a cost deduction incurred for the two homes. In 2002, that clause was withdrawn from all Government contracts. Since we had an office in Opa-Locka, FL, Huntsville, AL and VA, it was a central location for stop-off visits when travel was required.

Also, it served as my annual trips with friends to Daytona Beach Bikeweek , in March of each year, and Biketoberfest in October of each year. Shortly after the clause extraction, John and I each purchased the houses personally from SESI at the appraisal prices as a potential retirement/vacation home.

Roxanne, Claire and I moved to the New Smyrna Beach, FL home after I decided it was time to seriously plan for retirement. In the interim, using my plane as transport (back and forth to VA, AL, Opa Locka & San Diego Offices), I made my base in FL.

I induced a lot of angst in Roxanne since at times, when she and Claire accompanied me on my trips, I would put the plane on autopilot and take a nap during long flights. Having filed Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) with the FAA (who kept radio/radar contact tabs on my flight route), and TCAS, a precursor instrument to todays' ADS-B (traffic alert)

installed, I was not worried about any mishaps. She was.



Roxanne and Claire on many of our flights

Roxanne and I divorced in 2009 after 15 years of marriage. Our differences in small and large issues became intolerable. We collectively decided on

Claire living with me in New Smyrna Beach since Roxanne had procured a job in South Miami (not an ideal place to bring up a nine-year-old). Her job eventually transferred her to Huntsville, AL, her home, and she is currently taking care of her parents who have a horse farm nearby and she is working at AMCOM. Claire moved in with her shortly thereafter her move from FL to attend College and work in AL. We communicate/visit often, and the relationship can be judged as harmonious, loving, and respectful.

Denise, Temple, and Graham live in the suburbs of Richmond, VA and are constantly annoyed at my plea for them to move to Florida.

In 2017, I sold my house in Bethune, New Smyrna Beach, FL and moved 13 miles west of the beach. The destruction and re-build of my home by the four hurricanes I survived through, the higher insurance costs and beach property taxes, and foremost, the 32 steps of climbing into the house was proving painful

for more than one reason. I purchased a home in a non-gated development with a one-level access and the four bedrooms I needed. I now reside with Claire's two dogs and one cat that she left with me when she moved to AL (Grrrrr).

I never made a bucket list. Life made it for me without asking. After 32 years of working at SESI, with the help of John Cianflone, I hung up the spurs and gave the keys to Alisha Williams, a long-time employee and friend who was instrumental in keeping the Company going until our last contract. As to our "Who you know vs. What you know", it slowly drifted to "No-one to know & What you did know, didn't matter", as our friends and business contacts retired or passed away.

New Generation – *New members of the family, most residing in the U.S. and Europe will hopefully put pen to paper (or clicks to keyboard, or hologram their way to the past in the future) and continue and record their lineage for generations to come:*



Family Reunion in New Smyrna Beach, FL



Bibi & Arman



Temple, Claire & Denise



Hossein, Darya, Kamran & Kat



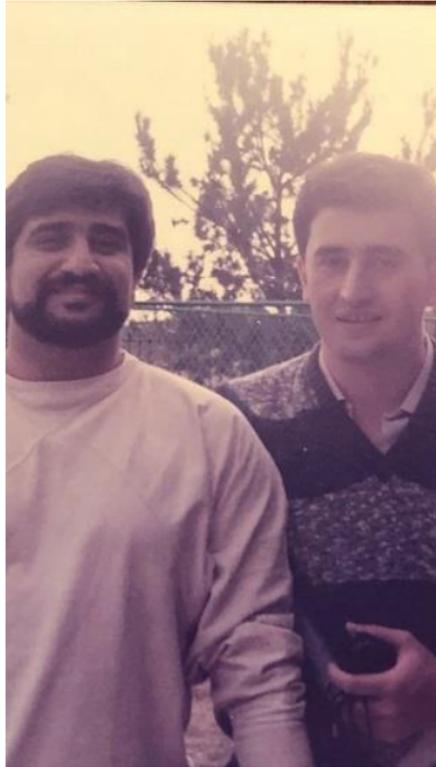
Robert & Banu



Ali & Esfand



Temple, Denise & Graham



Anusha & Bijou



Kambiz & His Beautiful Girls



Kambiz & Svetlana

Retirement – *When I was 40 years of age, I thought reaching the age of 60 as old. Very old. As the skin shriveled, stamina plummeted, energy drained, and my fear of finding my car keys in the refrigerator became an obsession, I have had the good fortune of leaving 60 behind. With many who retire and want to see the world, I cherish watching my direct and extended family and friends grow and hope that their lives are interesting and challenging as mine was. I have been to every State of the Union, and a good part of the world, and have survived the ups and downs of this journey.*

*I leave to my dear daughters and family and friends,
the fortunes of good health, the choice of good forks-
in-the-road, and the ability to look back in time
without regrets.*

