

## Chapter Five

We bought a forty foot enclosed freight trailer van. We had it moved to the Presidents Home driveway and began to methodically fill it to overflowing. I took great care in dismantling and packing the ultralights, as well as all of the furniture. I was told to pack those three tons, or more of books up to the front of the trailer with the lighter materials and garden tools to the rear. There was no rush in vacating the Presidents Home.

Mary and I had been discussing a retirement area for several weeks. I wanted to retire to the mountains and she preferred the Gulf Coast. We even thought of buying two houses and making a six months home in each area. We agreed to settle on the coast first and consider the mountains at a later date; one move would be traumatic enough for a few months. We took a map and discussed all of the towns and cities along the Gulf Coast from Brownsville, Texas to Key West, Florida. We decided to investigate the Ft. Myers and Sanibel Island, Florida area, far to the warm south on the Gulf Coast of Florida.

It was not really a planned stop and shop for houses in Panama City, as we were actually en route to Fort Myers to shop for houses. We decided to visit Panama City and spend the night at the Tyndall AFB Visiting Officers Quarters. It was about nine pm when we arrived in Panama City. About half a mile before we crossed the Intercoastal Waterways Bridge into Tyndall AFB, we saw the Neubauer Realty office sign with a light on in one of their offices. We stopped and I rapped on the big glass doors several times before I saw this head only, peering from around the corner of a hallway. Finally he came to the door barefooted, in beach shorts and a loud gaudy Hawaiian shirt, apologizing that he was concerned for his safety because of recent trouble in the area. We considered leaving at that information, if the neighborhood was that troublesome. He explained that he was one of the realtors and was working late. He showed us an album of his multiple listings of houses for sale. Nothing was excitingly appealing or they were out of our price range. He suggested we meet early at "John Boy's" for breakfast and get a head start on house hunting. Sounded good. We did. Tyndall facilities were very comfortable and pleasant.

The first house he showed us was a laugh. It had been vacant for some time with cobwebs and long legged spiders everywhere, and the blue was screaming. It was a huge, one story brick veneer rectangular house with almost three thousand square feet of heated and cooled living space. There were three bedrooms, three baths, dining, kitchen, family room, a Florida room and a very large room called 'whatever.' A former military couple had owned the house with 13 children. Maybe the huge 'whatever' room was the boys bunkhouse as it had a full bath. He deserted or abandoned her and she sued seven years later on the basis of his assumed death, to get his retirement money and benefits. He was found working a bar in California. She settled for a divorce and got half of his retired money, retroactive for seven years and the house. She was so angry with men; she couldn't sell the house, so she turned it over to this realty agency for a quick sale. The large yard was unkempt. The 18x36 foot swimming pool water was absolutely jet-black. The interior of the ten years old house was the joke. The interior was blue. I am talking blue, blue, blue -- everything was blue except the ceiling and the windowpanes. The carpet, tile, drapes, curtains, ceramics, bathrooms, appliances, I mean everything was

blue, some...screaming royal blue. We looked at dozens of homes; some were just a drive by rejection. We were so busy looking at houses and discussing them, we forgot to eat lunch until about four o'clock. I almost choked on my tuna sandwich when Mary shocked Jerry and me, asking that we return to that first house to look at that blue interior. The walls still had that fuzzy flower designed blue wall paper with every thing else as blue as ever. She looked again very thoroughly at every aspect of the interior, measuring and sizing, while Jerry and I checked the outside very seriously and critically.

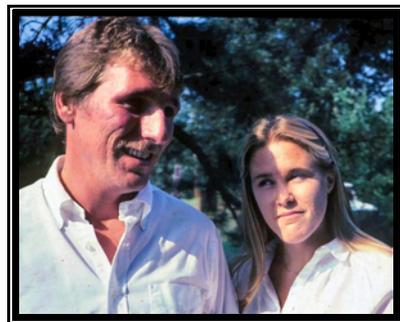


Mary shook that left hand of hers like this, saying that she could make this place into a home. We signed the papers and paid for the house in full, that afternoon. It took more than a week to close the sale and receive the deed and the key. Oh well, we were going to be in

Port Gibson for a week anyway, finishing packing and saying goodbyes to our many friends there. We had thoroughly enjoyed all of our three years at Port Gibson.

I made arrangements with Randy Hyrum to drag that 40-foot van, loaded from floor to ceiling and wall to wall with 38,000 pounds of furniture to Panama City, Florida. He had a big Mack truck, as he was into the trucking business also. It seemed that he was into everything in Port Gibson except the jail. We were waiting when he arrived the next day. It was October 1984. He carefully parked the trailer on the lawn, such as it was, for fear the weight might break the driveway and walk ways. We paid him for the moving and hosted him for a night on the beach. He and his family came back several times to go deep-sea fishing when I got a 32-foot cabin cruiser. He also had the dealership for GMC vehicles in Port Gibson. He is the one that told me, "God don't hold it agin' no-body for lyin' to a used car salesman." We considered the Hyrum family as dear friends.

It took us more than a month to strip that blue fuzzy wallpaper, tear out all the carpet, rebuild the sunken living room to a level with the entry foyer and dining room, paint all the walls beige with three coats to cover that blue, that blue, redo the drapes and curtains, build bookshelves for about three thousand books and recarpet all floors. Tom and Margaret came over from Tallahassee when we were ready to unload that van in the yard. We all unloaded the 38,000 pounds of furniture in one long, long day. Margaret and Tom



shocked me with their hard work and tenacity to just keep working. Mary was right. The house had finally taken shape and it was now our home with pride. The police and Sheriffs Officers came twice looking for the teenage son of the lady with 13 children. We found several little stashes of marijuana taped under cabinet drawers, shelves, nooks and crannies. I've never heard anything complimentary about that very dysfunctional family.

While Mary busied herself with the interior, I worked on the exterior. The first priority was to clean up that black water swimming pool. Oh, what a mess. The plastic pool liner had dozens of patched holes near the surface all around the top of the pool as though a dog had scratched those holes trying to get out of the pool. It had to be replaced. At last the pool was clean and clear with all of those expensive chemicals to balance the Ph. Wessie often came over to use the pool when she was in Panama City Beach to visit Lee, and



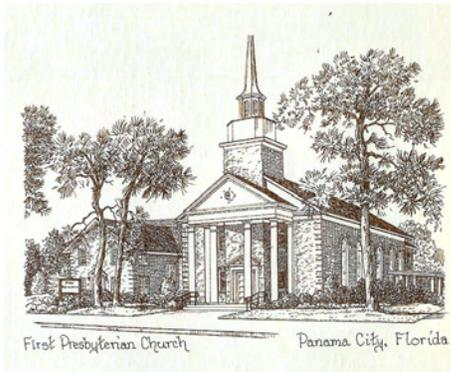
Pappy Frog, who had a lovely cottage on the Beach Lagoon. Our yard was void of grass, shrubbery and flowers. The supposedly sandy soil was like a brick. It took years to fix. Planting flowers and shrubs has been a pleasant ongoing project for many years.

We attended worship services at the Tyndall AFB Chapel for about a year until a new Commanding General cancelled all the Chapel activities except the eleven o'clock Sunday services. We had enjoyed helping to develop a ministry among the young Air Force personnel. We visited the local churches and were very warmly welcomed by the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Panama City. We seemed to be instantly bonded to the warm welcoming by Joe and Martial Bonner in their genuine sincerity and friendship. Now this was a most fascinating couple. She had been a WW II army nurse, right up on the battle lines in the North African Campaigns. With the Allied victory there, she moved into the battle for Sicily, then into Italy, also caring for the Italian POWs.

She met Joe, who was a combat infantryman that had been wounded and reassigned as a POW guard. Their friendship blossomed into romance in the war-zone. They petitioned and received permission to marry from none other than their commander, General George S. Patton. The Germans had looted the country of everything gold, so rings for the couple were not available until.....one of Joe's Italian POW charges, a prisoner who was a professional silversmith, happily agreed to make them rings. Joe had a US silver quarter and Martial had a US silver half-dollar. He and she told Mary and me that the silversmith POW hammered almost day and night for two days to make their rings to be a perfect fit. He had a small Italian silver coin, which he added to Joe's quarter to help in sizing her ring. He and she wore those rings to their death, having never taken them off.

Joe Bonner was a very proud Louisiana Cajun. He had a career as a county agent working with the agriculture industry in Baton Rouge, but he was quick to add that when he retired he owned and operated a first class Cajun foods restaurant in Panama City. Therefore I should now call him "Joe the Restaurateur". He asked that I help him in the church kitchen in preparing mid-weekly church suppers. We had great fun together preparing those meals, according to his Cajun recipes which he had in his head, without any measuring of portions whatsoever. He wrote a big Cajun Cooking recipe book, and it is a good one for catering to large groups. He was a character indeed. He used a lot of "file", by the boxes. He wanted every plate to be served with a colorful arrangement of foods. Where color was lacking, he added sprigs of Parsley or slivers of bell peppers or pimento. He took his shoulder towel and wiped runs, spills from the edge of every plate.

We decided to ask the session to admit us as members and join into the activities wherever we could. I was assigned to duties of teaching an adult Sunday School class and helping Joe cook church suppers. Mary became a Bible teacher to one of the ladies Bible Circle groups. For the first time in a long time we felt grateful to be able to integrate into



the loving labors and fellowship with a group of like believing Christians. Presbyterians have long been known for branching away from large congregations and starting a new smaller congregation. They are sometimes referred to as split pea soup Christians. This church had just experienced that sort of split. As one of the two elected Ruling Elders remaining with the now severely divided church, I was instrumental in keeping the Worship Services intact with qualified speakers for about four months

until a permanent pastor could be called. The congregation was very tolerant and patient with me, encouraging me to do the best I could do under some very trying circumstances. I have enjoyed a good brotherly relationship with the pastor. Dr. Richard G. Watson. He has been a confidant, counselor, pastor and most of all, just a genuinely sincere friend. Acquaintances are a product of society, a good friend such as he is, is a gift from God. I have looked forward to a weekly “Breaking Bread” lunch with him. We have sometimes prepared picnic lunches and sat on the beach or shared home kitchen fixings. It is a pleasure to work with him on special projects or programs for the church. He is a blessing to this entire church body..



When we first got to Panama City, it was a popular saying that one must buy a boat to fish the Gulf and a motor home to take vacations to the mountains. We bought a 32-foot cruiser. A former high school classmate of Mary had a successful GMC dealership in Greenville, Alabama. He sold us his personal 1976 classic, collectors model, GMC motor home. We made a trip to Fellsmere, Florida to visit Eddy and family. The thing had air ride suspension, like a Greyhound Bus and rode like a charm, unless the wind was blowing, striking the side and causing it to rock and roll down the highway. Mary refused to drive because of the sway. She was seasick or motion sick by the time we arrived that night. We parked on the Atlantic Coast sandy beach. The roar of the ocean was normally a soothing sound, but not this night to Mary in her motion sickness state. Oh My Little baby Phoebe slept on the big carpeted engine cover, which was too warm for her over the engine. She became really sick. We were all up for one reason or another most of the night. One night of that trial run was enough for everyone. On our way home we had a flat tire. I left Mary locked in the thing, on the side of Interstate 10, and walked about two miles to a roadside solar powered telephone and called for help. It took about two hours to get the tire changed and get us underway. Mary made a profound verbal declaration that she would never and she emphasized never twice, would she ever take another trip in that thing. I made one camping trip alone up to the Little



River State Park. Not even the steak and baked potato tasted good. I kept it about a year trying to sell it. I placed a for sale ad in the Atlanta Sunday newspaper. A young couple from Huntsville responded saying they would be there Monday, the next day, with cash to buy the motor home. I was somewhat surprised when they showed up, but they did. They took a quick look at the outside, did not look inside, went to their car and brought in two big carry out paper bags from MacDonald's. He dumped the contents of the two bags onto the carpet by the coffee table. We counted money for almost an hour, making stacks of ones, fives, tens and \$20 bills. \$17,000. I signed over the title. The sale was faster than swapping pocketknives. I never saw or heard from them again. I had difficulty getting the bank to accept the cash. They called in the police sniffer dog to check the money. I held my breath during that little exercise for the money to be clean.

Well-now, that was one down and one to go. Now to dispose of that boat which we had had loads of fun with, even entertaining friends from Port Gibson, and Tennessee who



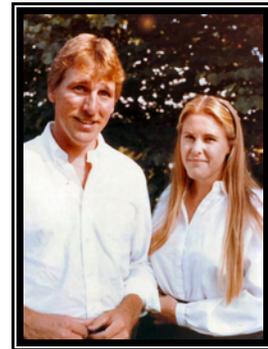
would come to visit us, and of course our family and other visiting friends. I kept it at the Tyndall AFB Yacht Club Marina. I stuck a for sale sign on the windshield, \$6,500, half price bargain. I got three telephone calls that same evening. I told the callers that I would be at the boat at about

10AM the next morning. When I arrived at about 9:30, one of the callers was waiting, declaring that he wanted the boat but would have to make payments as he had maxed out at the bank. That didn't sound good to me. The next man and his wife showed up with price haggling written all over them. They said they had been over the boat already and began to 'bad mouth' the boat. A rather poorly dressed man wearing shorts and a flowery shirt was standing a short distance away listening to the couple tell me all the costly things they would have to correct and that I should drop the price. Finally, the fellow in rough dress came up and introduced himself as Master Sergeant Hernandez. He pulled one of those big truck driver wallets with a silver chain from the waistband of his shorts and asked if the price was still \$6,500. I told him yes. He started counting \$100 bills, 65 of them. The couple and the poor over drafted man were about to leave. I handed him \$500 back, telling him to spend it fixing all the faults the whiney couple had pointed out. I signed over the title and we went for a ride as I showed him the features of the craft.

Dr. Tyree, President of the local Gulf Coast community College called me one day to come have lunch with him. He said he had read a nice feature story about me retiring to Panama City. He told me that he had met me when I had delivered what he called 'the stirring and encouraging speech in Miami' about the phenomenal growth of Thomas County Community College. He offered me a position with the college as Director of Development. I was honored. I told him that I was actually going to retire. He was persistent; to tell me that he just could not let me do that, as he urgently needed me to help, at least as a professor in the Social Science Department. He was trying to develop night classes in the beach town of Port St. Joe and had no one to go down there, about 35 miles east, along the Emerald Coast. I agreed to do that for him for perhaps a year as an adjunct professor only. I adamantly declined the Professorship position because I did not need the money and I wanted to do other things besides being obligated to a full time job and the allied responsibilities of it. He understood that I really meant it about retirement.

We developed a plan to have four night classes each week of four hours each, teaching Western Civilization I and II, Religions of the world, Sociology, and Geography, adding Economics and Government later. He wrote all of this on a paper napkin. I was to begin in August 1985 teaching all classes. Several lady Students were oyster shuckers and often brought me quarts of fresh oysters and invited Mary and me to their homes for meals and celebrations. I pressed Dr. Tyree at every opportunity to buy land and build an extension center there to also serve the town of Apalachicola. I even developed and submitted the educational specifications for a four-classroom facility. I harped on the notion that the college was losing prestige pride by using a fourth grade classroom for college studies. I think this got the Directors and Trustees attention more than anything else. I made a nuisance of myself pleading for the center, explaining that some of the adult ladies were overweight and simply could not be comfortably seated in those same chairs they occupied in the sixth grade. After Tyree went to Dallas Community College, President McSpadden was sympathetic and made the extension-learning center a priority. Approval and funding became available the year I left the college. They now have a beautiful, efficient education center using the Educational Specifications I had developed.

It was really nice to be nearer Tom and Margaret. They had been close friends since their Junior High School days in Auburn. The more they progressed through their educational years, the closer their wholesome and loving relationship became. When Tom secured a position with the city of Tallahassee as Director of the Water and Sewage facilities, we were very proud of his achievement. One day they announced to Mary and me that they wanted us to come to their wedding, 20 September 1986, at a beautiful little country Methodist Church near Tallahassee. It reminded me of the Church in the Wildwood. Mary and I were thrilled that their beautiful relationship was being solemnized with Christian vows in matrimony. They celebrated their wedding by inviting all of us to their party at Wakulla Springs Lodge to a bubbly and dinner, and it was a festive time enjoyed by all.



Bob Neubauer, the realtor who handled the purchase of our house, was a spare time pilot flying for the state of Florida in a DC-3, or old military C-47, outfitted for spraying a very toxic spray on the beach areas for mosquito and biting flies. He asked me to come fly with him as copilot. I flew with him until he gave his realty business to his son and left the area. I continued to fly the aircraft until 1999. The state entomologist credited us with stemming a strong possibility of an Egyptian Nile encephalitis epidemic with our thorough spraying efforts. The insecticide spray di-brome, had to come into contact with the mosquito to be effective. They hide in daylight and come out to forage at twilight and just after sundown. These were also the most difficult times of the day to spot towering antennas, as we flew at 150 feet. I flew about 400 hours each



year in the spraying operation, sometimes in South and Central Florida. I also flew the

thing out of the area to avoid hurricanes. I felt as though I was flying a bit of history, enjoying every minute in that old 55 year old aircraft that was known all over the world. Some of them are still flying as commercial airliners in Third World countries because of their historical safety record and the economy of operation, maintenance and versatility.

Tom and I enjoyed reassembling the two ultralights and flying the things for about two years. He would fly his Grumman Traveler from Tallahassee to the grass airstrip called Sandy Creek, hop out of his plush four passenger aircraft and strap himself onto one of the two Ultralights, strap on a brain bucket and off we would go. We would fly over the areas' sod grass fields, having hours of fun with those little mosquito like planes. They were little more than



nylon stretched over aluminum rods, held together with Velcro and wires, powered by a 40 horsepower Kawasaki Snowmobile air cooled engine. As we were taking one of the ultralights to Sandy Creek airstrip in the back of his pickup truck; we thought we had it tied down securely, but a gust of wind lifted the thing out of the truck and onto the road. Those things flew at 20 miles an hour. Margaret held up the wing as we crossed a little bridge and we put it back into the pickup truck, patched it up,

and were flying within the hour. Oh they were easy to tear up but they were equally easy to fix up and fly again. Our little flying get-togethers ended rather abruptly when a hurricane disrupted our fun. A Hurricane came about fifty miles south of Panama City coming from the west into an easterly direction. I had thoroughly secured the two ultralights. I went out to Sandy Creek, and found the aircraft to be safe, secured and undamaged after the hurricane passed and winds



calmed. This very unpredictable hurricane went as far East as Cedar Keys and made a complete reversal. The locals called it a "die-doe". It was back upon us again before the



weather advisories could be announced. After the winds subsided somewhat, I went out to Sandy Creek and found two tightly bound heaps of broken and bent aluminum rods, fabric, wires and Velcro. I was instantly out of the ultralight flying pleasures. I threw the wing covers, a light fabric cover, into the back of the car and left the mess for another day. About a week later Mary got into the car, fastened her safety belt and looked down to the passenger floor and saw a snake slithering along. She set a

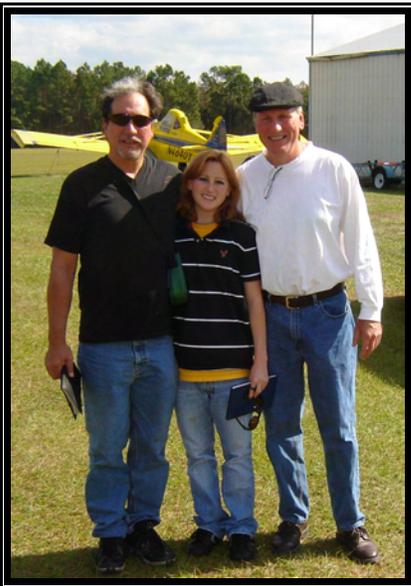
record getting out of that car. A neighbor dispatched the snake, which he said was harmless..... if she recovered from her fright. She didn't drive it for a week.

I was able to recover one propeller. I brought it home and have asked my friends who have soloed to sign the propeller with their date of solo flight. It hangs with great pride on



the wall of my study. One of my friends who signed, Mr. Bubba Nelson, is now 96 years old. He soloed in a Jenny aircraft in 1932. He is reputed to be the wealthiest man in all of Northwest Florida. I know he is one of the most benevolent persons I have ever known personally. He comes to church smiling every Sunday, and goes to his office every weekday morning to work for four hours; quite a gentleman. He and I were discussing benevolences once when he looked at me, with his head cocked aside, and said; "Now Charlie, let's not ever mess with Santa Claus." Very Sage, This Gentleman.

Mr. Nelson is the most senior pilot I know. Our grandchildren, Tom and Margaret's two children, Amelia and Charles Thomas are the youngest, having soloed when they were each sixteen years old and have signed the propeller. We recently got a call from Eddy asking me to solve the riddle, "I've made 24 "dead



*Soaring Eagle Brothers with Eaglet*

Stick" landings. On the last dead stick landing, I was alone in the aircraft. What did I just do? What is the answer to the riddle?" My mind was concentrating on this poor fellow who is either accident-prone or should have that airplane overhauled before something serious happens. After a long pause, Eddy yells into the telephone, "Dad, I just soloed in a glider." I was overwhelmed with pride and joy at his achievement, which requires great skill in airmanship. I want Eddy to sign that propeller with pride and my utmost congratulations as soon as we can get together. He got Tom interested in glider flying and invited him to come down and try it at the glider school where he had taken his lessons. Tom and his friend Bruce Thigpen went down and spent the weekend flying gliders. They went back the next weekend and bought one of the things,

which had been stored for years in its custom covered trailer. They replaced the rotted tires and towed it to Tallahassee. Tom and Bruce have completely disassembled and rebuilt and painted it. Now they have Amelia to tow them aloft in her Tomahawk. Eddy bought a High Performance aerobatic glider, the ultimate in soaring aviation.

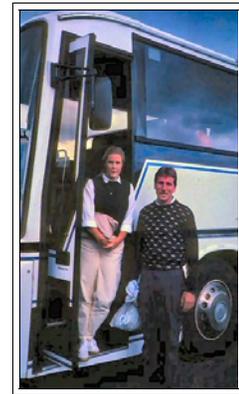


*Eddy's Solo Flight*



Mary and I had always wanted to visit Dear Old England but had never had the opportunity. We discussed it with Tom and Margaret and decided we would all go in the summer of 1987. They shocked us one day when they called and said they had four tickets in hand to go to England. They paid for one of the most wonderful vacations we ever had. Margaret had been there on her senior's trip and remembered many of the tourist attractions, especially to drive on the wrong side of the road. Her Mother had gone to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1947. We all began to really dig in and research for a two weeks vacation in England. Tom and Margaret developed a very good itinerary for the grand tour from Edinburgh Scotland to Lands End, on the southernmost part of England. I had expected England to be very modernistic and well advanced over American systems in almost everything. I was surprised to see plumbing and sewage lines on the outside of buildings, the lack of ice for beverages, and the general overall feeling that everything was antique. The people were wonderfully friendly and pleasant.

We flew in the huge jumbo jet, Boeing 747 over there and found that in that huge alum aircraft, the seats were even more cramped than the old-fashioned 1930s DC 3. From Lakenheath Airport we took that fast train to Edinburgh Scotland, traveling sometimes more than 100 mph, we were told. Mary did not get to visit one of her ancestral home areas of Yorkshire, West Riding, Kirk Deighton where she had wanted to go and just sit on a park bench. We went wherever the



tour bus went. Surely the company was getting a commission from the dozen or so little shops where we stopped. Everyone would jump off the bus, charge into these little country stores, buy bags of fabrics, apparel, souvenirs and whatever, and everybody hopped back on the bus and off we would go to the next little country shop and repeat the process. They had scheduled stops at two whiskey factories along the way. What they call whiskey, we call Scotch. No samples. We had a most



enjoyable and full two-day bus tour of Northern Scotland and the island of Skye. Mary was able to fulfill a lifetime hope of touring the Castle of Edinburgh with a guide, to explain it all to her. She reveled in the tour.

When we got back to London we secured a rental car for two weeks. Tom was unanimously elected as the official designated driver. He was taken aside and given a ten-minute briefing on driving in England and maneuvering in those funny little "roundabouts" as they were called.



Tom issued an edict that the first person that criticized his driving would be the next

driver, immediately. We all bragged on his driving abilities, even before we got into the car. No one ever dared to criticize his driving. He was a good driver and never even came close to a ding or dent in that car, or any other driver's car. We went to Canterbury Cathedral and the White Cliffs of Dover. We all got on the big airboat that took the tightly scheduled trip to France in about a thirty-minute flight. We did not even get off the boat. Tom was fascinated with the cockpit and the pilot, as he was called, because Tom said it was configured very similar to an aircraft.



England has utterly dozens of small air museums dotted throughout the country and in wheat fields. I think we stopped at almost every one we saw. We delighted in the English bed and breakfast concept. We thoroughly enjoyed their breakfasts. We looked forward to their ham and fried tomatoes every morning. It was a wonderful vacation for us but I felt sorry for Margaret that she was cooped up with her in-laws for two weeks, missing her babies. Thank you Tom and Margaret for that wonderful experience of being in Dear Old England with you two for a most memorable two weeks. Perhaps we will never return, but we can honestly say that we crammed so many touring experiences, sights and learning into two weeks, we will cherish that time together forever. Thank you for providing that experience of a lifetime.



Mary and I decided to take perhaps a month and go on a Sentimental Journey. For weeks we planned the trip so as not to go and linger imposingly on past friends. We planned to visit those places we felt were important and had significance in our lives. We also just wanted the sheer pleasure of being a tourist. It was a great trip of 20 days in June and July of 1991. Our plans were to visit all of the places we had been assigned, except Maine and California. We planned for a later date to visit Maine. We traveled 6,200 miles visiting 11 states, 5 national parks and 4 national monuments, as well as all of the homes where we had lived. It was truly exciting. The only family of old friends we visited was Marshall and Ruth Glisson in High Rolls, New Mexico. We had been friends for forty years. Their home bordered the Mescalera Reservation.



Our sentimental trip back to Bangor was too short to thoroughly savor the scenery and fellowship of being with our only remaining friend there, Eleanor Canders. She took us on a tour of our little world around Bangor, Orono and Old Town, and of course to the Arcadia National Park. A forest fire had decimated the park about ten years before we

were there in 1953-56 and it has never recovered. The burned trees are still standing as a mute testimony of the ravages of a forest fire. The rugged, rocky coast does not make for a spectacular or impressive scene for Arcadia National park. They now recognize the fabled, mythical woodchopper Daniel Bunyon and Blue Ox as being from Bangor. While we were there someone had stolen his massive ax from the gigantic statue prominently displayed at a park and the whole town was upside down looking for the culprit. We decided to go through New Hampshire to return to Boston for the flight back home. I had eaten lobster the night before and became sick, oh so sick. Mary was speeding along to get me to a hospital and was going down a long, long straight stretch of highway down a gentle mountainside. The little rental car had an auto-drive but it did not retard the speed. She was probably going about seventy in the usual 55 zone. The blue-light special appeared from thin air I suppose, as we simply did not see him, nor would it have made any difference perhaps. When the very professional young State Trooper saw how sick I was, after I flashed my lobster on the roadside, he gave Mary back her license and told her that he just couldn't give her a ticket because it would be like ticketing his grandmother. "Please drive carefully, enjoy New Hampshire," a salute and he was gone.



*Flying Aunts - Rosa, Wessie, Lee*

My mamma had four sisters, three of whom were much younger than she. Our Aunt Dora was several years older than Rosa, Wessie and Lee. Wessie and Lee had become considerably wealthy in the carpet industry with diligent labor, frugality and ingenuity. Lee had invented a method of applying a rubber backing to carpet and she was awarded several patents for the process. It became an international rage as scatter rugs and entry rugs in high pedestrian traffic areas. The three, Aunts Rosa,

Wessie, and Lee, were retired and loved to travel together, worldwide. Sonny had taken them on a trip or so and they loved it. They were dubbed as our "Flying Aunts."

Shortly after we settled in at Panama City, Lee asked me to find her an airplane that they could "go places" together, IF I would fly them. That was an exciting offer. Mary wanted no part of flying in anything smaller than a Boeing 707. I located an airplane in Bartlesville, Oklahoma that I thought might fit their needs. It belonged to T. Boone Pickens, the oil tycoon. It was a 1968 twin engine Cessna 421, pressurized, air-conditioned, seven seating, modesty potty and was well equipped for all weather flying with a thousand mile range. It had been well maintained and I felt that the outstanding maintenance would last at least a year or more without expensive maintenance. She bought the aircraft. Asa Randall of Bainbridge, Georgia, a friend of Tom, and I went out to get it. He wanted to fly it back and I was to fly his twin engine Cessna Blue Canoe back. I had made arrangements that Asa would maintain the aircraft at Bainbridge.



One of the first trips Lee wanted me to fly the three flying aunts and three of their friends, was to a field of Texas Blue Bonnets somewhere in Texas. After a few phone calls, I was assured that Blue Bonnets were in full bloom and I could find great fields of the Texas State flower near Crockett, Texas. Off we went one morning to a little country airport near Crockett. Immediately after take-off, those little toddy heads had breakfast—Orange Juice and vodka. Then came brunch—Tomato Juice and Gin with lemon and salt. They inhaled two bags of their recipe for toasted and butter treated cereal mix. It was good. We landed and the airport manager loaned us his stationwagon, telling us how to get to the field of Blue Bonnets I had spotted from the air. They ate several soggy tomato sandwiches, with their brunch before we left. When we got there to a rather isolated field of the flowers, they stripped off their clothes down to underclothing, ran into the field and rolled and rolled, kicking and leaping in those Blue Bonnets, giggling, laughing and squealing like the drunks they were. When they tired of this folly, they put on their clothes and we returned to the airport and loaded aboard to go back to La Grange. They took their afternoon sipping seriously as they broke out and consumed two, two liter bottles of Jack Daniels whiskey. They giggled all the way home back there in the cabin, telling jokes. When we landed at La Grange, I actually believe they were all sober. I never had a trip like that again. Lee wanted to go somewhere all the time. The flying Aunts loved flying to unusual places and I enjoyed the flying and their company.



Asa kept the aircraft in excellent mechanical condition. He was flying from Tampa to Bainbridge about 9 pm with his wife and daughter in the Blue Canoe when it turned into a fireball after takeoff and the family perished. I believe they serviced his aircraft with JP-4 instead of Aviation Fuel but the investigation was inconclusive as there was not enough of the burned aircraft to examine. About two years after this tragic accident, I suggested to Lee that she sell the airplane, as the maintenance labor was rising to be cost prohibitive. It took about a year for me to sell the airplane, for more than she paid.



Tom and I flew the aircraft from Macon, Georgia, where we had some maintenance done. It had been a long day and we were departing well after dark into some unknown weather enroute and at destination, Thomasville. The aircraft engines on runup checked OK. Tom was in the pilots left seat. I was his copilot. Immediately as we took off, all of the instruments indicating speed, altitude, attitude, pitch, and the pitot system went out. Tom took it to a safe estimated altitude, all the time heading to Thomasville. We checked and found an air tube line was



*Cessna 421 Cockpit*

broken and not repairable in-flight. He shrugged and kept flying the aircraft. We knew there was a low ceiling at Thomasville and we needed those instruments, particularly to know our altitude and airspeed, which was critical. He was an experienced pilot with confidence in his capabilities and he had a confidently, reasonably good knowledge of this aircraft. He asked me to take the aircraft controls but I declined, telling him he could do it and I had confidence in him. We had flown his little Grumman airplane from Iowa and encountered severe turbulence enroute home, several years earlier. He got himself in the middle of a thunderstorm with updrafts sweeping us to 11,000 feet and just as rapidly pitching us to 3,000 feet. That is typical of those Summer afternoon type thunderstorms, called "Widow Makers." I was glad he was getting a good lesson about thunderstorm flying. He kept the wings level, hands off the throttle, the airspeed safe with pitch control and went along for the roller coaster ride. He maintained calm positive actions throughout the flight. I was very impressed with his pilot abilities, judgment and control of emotions during flight.

I sat back and watched him bring that big twin engine Cessna 421 down the final approach into Thomasville, listening to the wind and the feel of the controls to regulate his speed. It was perfection flying under the circumstances of no pitot instruments in marginal weather conditions. He made a squeaker landing, half way down the runway. I commended him. He graduated into a full-fledged pilot that night with more than 1,000 hours pilot time, but this was his ultimate test and we both knew it. Thank you Lee for the wonderful pleasures I enjoyed, flying your airplane. I know your wings fit well up there.

Mary and I decided that we could best learn the community and our neighbors if we signed up to work as census takers in 1990. We were discouraged to work as a team, so we went our rounds as individuals. We enjoyed the experiences very much as we learned the outlying areas and made new friends. Mary says that she was having a really good time, until she met a possessive Pit Bulldog that nipped her slacks. The people were so nice to us. It was July and almost everyone was offering a glass of water, a piece of cake, flowers, cuttings, potted plants and one lady gave me a small bag of onion sets to plant.

During my census taking visits in the rural areas, I noticed great piles of aluminum in yards about the county such as outboard motors, transmissions and other so called junk metal. I was told by the owners of these piles of scrap metals that the junkers, as they are called, would visit the owners of those aluminum piles and grossly underbid the value of the aluminum as a lot, never willing to pay by the pound, and the owners didn't trust anyone for the sale of their metal. When any aluminum engines, outboards and other aluminum pieces have steel in them, the price drops to that of steel which was a penny a pound and smelted aluminum bars were fifty to sixty cents a pound. I computed that if I could melt their aluminum objects with steel gears and parts within, while they watched, pour out the beautiful shiny aluminum into those bars, weigh it and pay them cash on the spot I would have a very profitable business. I would pull out the bare steel gears and gave them back. I wanted aluminum only. If I paid between twelve and twenty cents per pound and sold it for fifty to sixty cents per pound and the cost of smelting it was about three cents per pound I would have a good business. I knew it would be a dirty and hot job, sometimes lifting a hundred pound engine into the hot box. I thought it would be fun

and according to my calculations, it would be a very profitable business venture. I believed I could be an example to the skeptical metal owners that I was an honest dealer. I located an industry that made "Hot Boxes" for incinerating hospital refuse, near Ozark, Alabama. I visited the plant and they made me a smelter box that would use propane and get hot enough to melt aluminum. The big brick lined steel hot box was pivoted with a long handle to put outboard motors, transmissions and even aluminum engines in the top, close the lid and pour the molten aluminum from the bottom into metal forms to make twenty five pound triangular bars, for easy stacking. We developed a good plan. I bought a two-axle watermelon trailer, which is low slung for easy access to step up onto or off the trailer. I mounted the hot box, its turntable easy dumping triangular bar pans and a 250-gallon propane tank on the trailer. I then bought a junky looking old Ford pickup, but it ran good. I was now ready to smelt the piles of aluminum I had seen in the country.

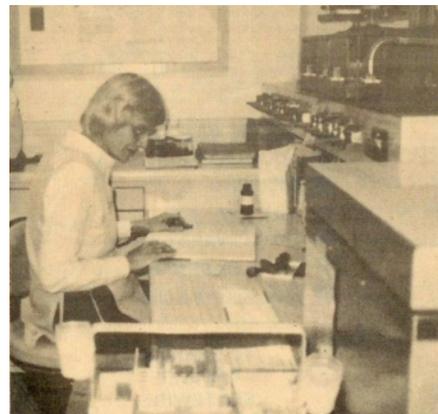
I had a booming business with this aluminum smelting notion, throughout the entire Florida Panhandle. I was melting as hard as I could go, five days a week and having loads of fun. When I accumulated about 50,000 pounds, I would ship it over to Jacksonville, Florida for auction. I don't remember the figures but it was in the area of 300,000 pounds that I had processed and sold in about four months. I was told that breathing the fumes from the melting aluminum could bring on an early onset of Alzheimer's. I checked with the Alcoa Aluminum Corp. and they confirmed that if I was not using proper breathing apparatuses, I could anticipate possible detrimental physical conditions. I couldn't sell that thing fast enough. Within a week it was gone and so was all of my processed aluminum. I had conducted a very honest operation. I was glad to be out of that dirty, smelly and hard working business. Every day was a new challenge and opportunity. I liked that.



*After A Days Work*

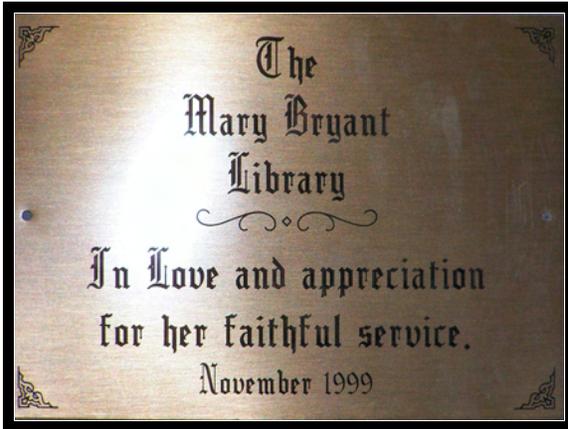
After Mary felt that she had the house under control, she decided to be a Red Cross volunteer at the Base hospital. She truly enjoyed he weekly volunteer services for more than six years. She worked most of that time in the medical records section of the Tyndall AFB hospital. She learned that she had

Mary Bryant volunteers 30 hours of her time monthly to the hospital's lab shipping department and to out patient records management. The fact that in her undergraduate college years Mrs. Bryant majored in chemistry and minored in biology -- then received a masters degree in library science -- makes her an invaluable Red Cross volunteer. About her work she says, "I truly enjoy getting to know the people who come into the hospital."



Mary Bryant, checks a receipt against the shipping log

cancer the weekend of our 41st wedding anniversary. We cried the whole weekend. She was very courageous and determined to have the surgery as quickly as possible. Trauma in our family has always drawn us closer together. The surgery was successful. We have always been mindful and grateful to the skills and professional abilities of that senior Air Force surgeon. Bless you Col., wherever you are. We have always had confidence in Military Medicines and Physicians.

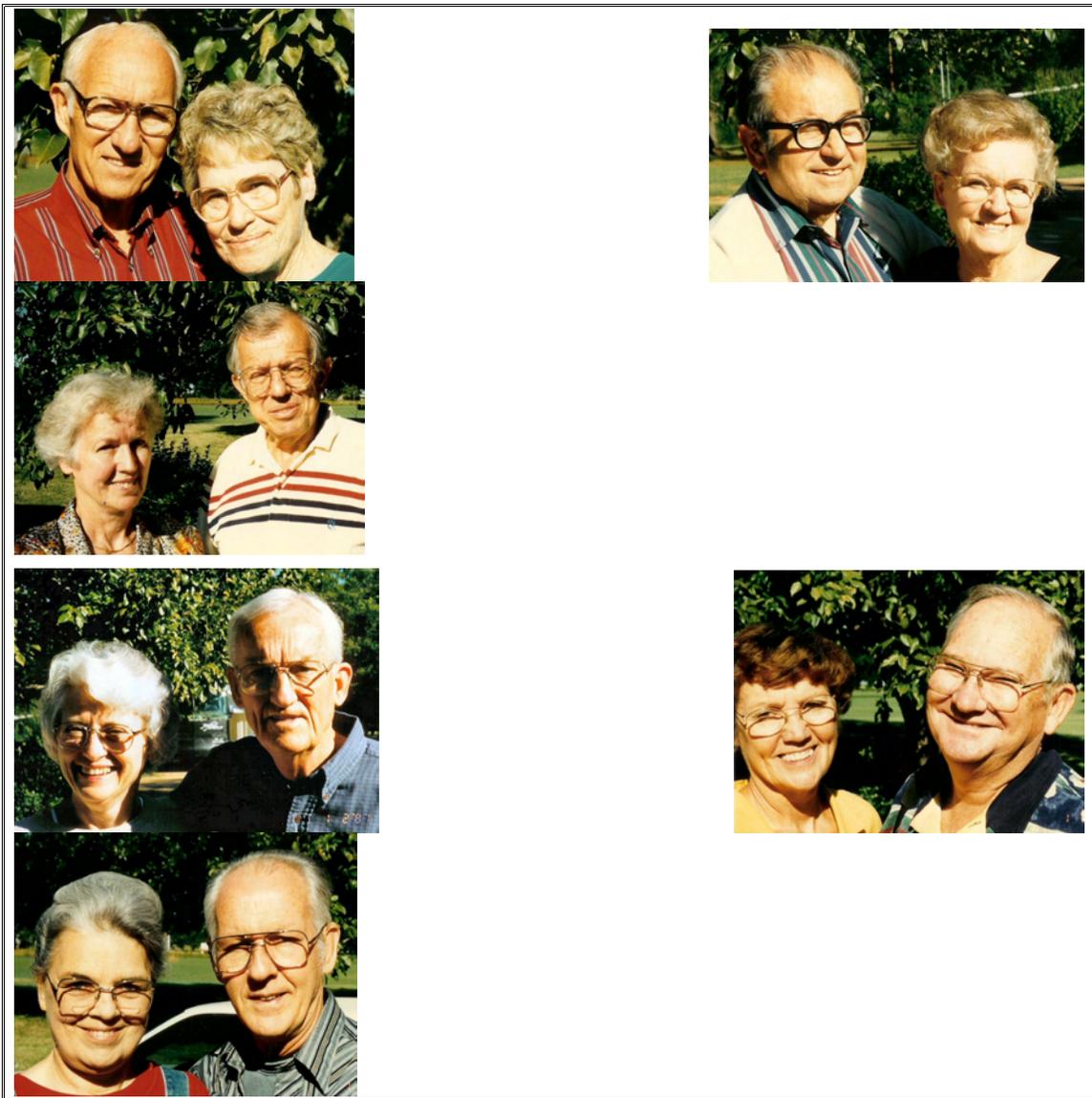


For the past many years, Mary has devoted her attention to starting or organizing a church library. She has been very successful in gleaning several thousand books for the library. She has probably rejected and given away many times more than that to 'Friends of the Library'. I was honored, but I don't think she paid much attention to it; the church placed a nice brass plaque on the library door with the words, "Mary Bryant Library."

For years the four brothers had talked of going on a fishing trip to the wilds of the backwaters where we fished as children back in the 1930s. I think it may have been Donald or John who declared that let's stop talking and do some fishing. Sonny made arrangements for the cabin on poles far back in the Tensaw swamp, John borrowed John Earle Steadham's little boat and motor, Sonny drug his son-in-law Bill Tillman's boat and motor from Birmingham behind his motor home. I was appointed cook and to bring the food. The four of us had a wonderful two days together, staying awake, talking most of the nights and fighting the mosquitoes, big one too. The second day, Donald and I were paired off in John Earle's boat and we had a good catch. We were on our way back to the cabin when we saw a huge alligator, belly up, caught in some overhanging brush in the Tensaw River. We took the anchor line and drug that monster to the cabin dock walkway. We had heard shots a little after midnight that morning, so this huge thing was probably their target. We managed to roll the 'gator onto the board walkway that was almost level with the river level. We estimated it to be 17 feet in length. We went up into the cabin on stilts and waited for them in hiding. We soon heard Sonny and John coming down the river, wide open....until they got close enough to see that big Gator lying up on that board walkway sunning itself. We thought John had stripped the gears as he put the boat into reverse. They began to talk softly and eased the boat back and forth as to pass in review of the Gator. Finally, Sonny took his cane fishing pole, as John eased the boat into range for Sonny to poke the Gator as he kept saying, "Shoo, Shoo, Go Away." Donald and I couldn't stand it any longer; we practically rolled down the stairs splitting our sides laughing at the both of them. They really believed it was alive until Donald pushed it with his shoe. John measured it to be 17 and a half feet in length. I believe this Gator was bigger than the famed "Old Joe" in the Okefenokee Swamp Headquarters. For some reason, none of us had cameras on this fishing trip. Oh what a loss to not have a picture.

Sonny and Jo, Jane and Bruce, and Barbara and Dan, all had Motor Homes and dearly loved to caravan to campgrounds wherever they could be together and enjoy a few days

of recreation and touring. Mary and Henry often went with them. They treasured those opportunities of being together trips. Mary and I were always invited but that was not our thing. They understood. Life for two months in a 35 X 8 foot mobile home in Merced, California satisfied my curiosity for a lifetime. They planned a three vehicle convoy of their mobile homes to go to Key West. They were all going in different directions after a few days together in Key West. They let me tag along behind in my car, as I brought up the rear or 'watched the back door.' Barbara could really drive their RV... and back that thing like a professional. I really enjoyed that trip they shared with me. I brought back sea shells glued to look like turtles to give to my students. I brought Mary seashells as a holder for guest toothbrushes. Our family has always enjoyed being together. This is one of those occasions at the home of John and Martha in Louisiana. Cock of the Walk!



In order to maintain my Airline Transport Pilot rating, I was required to take a flight physical examination every six months. During one of those examinations, the flight surgeon somewhat casually brought it to my attention that I was a borderline diabetic. He was a certified Reserve Air Force Flight Surgeon but in his professional career practice, he was a gynecologist. Several times I sat in his waiting room full of pregnant women as they stared at me, wondering what I was doing there. One time, a rather pregnant woman asked me what I was doing there. I told her there would be no miracle she could talk about; assuring her I was a male, there for a flight physical exam. She said, Oh. In 1998, the flight surgeon examiner declared that I was a Type II diabetic. I was permitted to continue flying on the lesser Commercial Pilot flight rating, which was no change for me.

That same year I experienced a heart attack. I had been visiting Forrest, Cammy and family in Birmingham and was in route home. Cammy had fixed me a biscuit with sausage for my traveling snack. It was so good but I was choking or a feeling that it was stuck in my throat. I stopped to get coffee to help wash it down. It did not want to go down. I went to a nearby drugstore to get an Alka-Seltzer. My hand didn't function for me to open the door. I used both hands. I wrote our home phone number on the palm of my hand with a ballpoint pen. I began to consider that I was in trouble. My feet didn't want to get out of the car. I used both hands under each leg to get out and stand by the car. I couldn't walk. I crawled on the sidewalk to the door of the drug store. I remember telling the lady at the door that I wanted an Alka-Seltzer or Bro-mo Seltzer. She told me to stay right there and don't go anywhere, as if I would or could. The next thing I knew, I was in an ambulance being taken to the hospital in Pelham, Alabama, about 25 miles away. I was in increasingly intense pain, but I do remember the attendant telling Roy to slow down on those mountain curves because "he's not going to make it." Everything began to slowly fade and get quiet. Then, I felt no pain and was thoroughly relaxed. My existence was peaceful and serene. I saw no forms or shapes, just an illuminating soft white light everywhere, without shadows, even as I looked at my hands bathed in this light. I had no emotions. I was conscious only of that soft penetrating white light that was everywhere about me. I enjoyed the serenity of this existence. I had no sense of time or space. I slowly felt pain again in my chest and on my chest, as though someone was pounding on my chest. I felt pain renewed in my arms and soft feelings on my lips and face. It was an effort as I slowly and forcefully opened an eye to see a beautiful purple or perhaps ultraviolet color about my face. I ever so slowly realized that it was the attendant giving me CPR. Yes, Black is beautiful. She entered on her records that I had a cardiac arrest with no breathing, pulse or life signs for four minutes and 35 seconds. Several times I thought I would fall off the narrow bench in that ambulance, but I didn't really care, I hurt so much. I remember people unloading me, all seeming to be yelling stat, stat, and stat as I went to sleep again. I remember nothing else until I was in the recovery.

Hospital personnel had called the telephone number on my hand, Mary gave them permission to do surgery, and she immediately called Tom. He was Director of Utilities for the City of Tallahassee and was at work in The City Hall. He immediately raced to Thomasville, 25 miles north, where he kept his airplanes. He hopped into his Beechcraft twin-tail airplane, flew from Tallahassee to Panama City, picked up Mary waiting at the airport and they were at my bedside within three hours. I learned later that the weather

was sour with low ceilings and his flight was all under instrument conditions with a FAA controlled flight. When he made his instrument conditions approach to the Alabaster, Ala airport, he was advised that he would have radio signal blockage for two minutes because of the mountain interference. Pilots get nervous when this happens and they are flying in the clouds, in a mountainous area, about to descend for an approach to a strange airport. Nervous? Not Tom, as I am sure he kept his confidence, as he had precious cargo aboard. He told me about it some time later and said it was just routine, non-eventful with a big grin, but I knew better. Tom has always been an outstanding, safe, no-risk pilot.

It seems that in the early surgical procedures of performing cardiac arterial angioplasty, hospitals kept their cardiac patients longer than they do now. I was there for a week. It was a miracle coincidence that the chief surgeon for the UAB cardiac unit was visiting and did the emergency surgery. The little hospital at Pelham had no cardiac unit at that time. He came back later during the week, and told me that I was a very fortunate person. He took my hand and he prayed a beautiful prayer for my wellness and that I might recover to help in the spiritual lives that I might encounter. I followed his prayer with my prayer of thanking to the Lord for giving this physician exacting skills in the art and science of healing, for his being there for me, and for his continued practice and ministry. As he left, he grinned with a thumbs up signal, "God ain't done yet Charlie."

I returned to the classroom in about two weeks with considerable difficulty in stamina to conduct a four-hour class session, four nights each week. One night in 1998, a student came running in excitedly telling me that Professor Prentiss Melder, who was teaching History of Music next door, had fallen on the floor and they did not know what to do. I told one of the students to pull his car to the side entry and I dismissed the class. They scampered away. We loaded him into the minivan and two students rushed him to the hospital. Another student called the hospital and alerted them to the condition of the incoming patient. His physician told me that the quick access to the hospital probably saved his life. Prof. Melder called me daily, sometimes several times daily, he sent gifts and did all sorts of things until I told him No, No, No...there is no repayment, just live your life as though it was to be your last day. He never taught again. The following year I resigned after 15 years with Gulf Coast Community College. It had been a most pleasant and fruitful experience for me. I declined an honorary recognition luncheon.

The wheels seemed to be rapidly falling off my little red wagon. In one year I was cursed with diabetes Type II, and a near fatal Cardiac Arrest. What more could happen? In the Air force, we believed that aircraft accidents happen in threes, and it seemed to happen that way. Well now, it seemed sometimes that other omens of misfortune visited in threes. In 1999 I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. It was increasing in intensity and size more rapidly than the urologist felt comfortable about. Mary and I visited three other urologists with the same diagnosis. Now, I had two options, radiation seeding or radical removal surgery, or perhaps a third option to do nothing and die a miserable death as King Hussein of Jordan had done a few months earlier. Now, now, that is no option. I went for the surgery and have wished many times that I had opted for radiation seeding, as the surgery was not complete. A year after surgery it became evident that the cancer removal was not successful and it was now rapidly growing in intensity, somewhere in my body. I

underwent massive radiation, 43 treatments, then chemo and I am still being treated with the cancer present, but it is well under control with medication and shots. That same year, 1999, I had quadruple bypass cardiac surgery. Six years later a defibrillating device was inserted and has been successful. I have full confidence in it.

There was no time or room in my life for a “Pity Party.” I resigned as pilot for the State of Florida with the spray plane operation after sixteen years of just having a blast during the season of mosquitoes and biting Dog Flies, named after the celestial Dog Days. I felt that I had just too much medical baggage to continue safely in my comfortable little position. The FAA agreed. A replacement was found, I checked him out and he is it now.

The only other medical situation I have experienced was that I had swelling in my legs with considerable pain. I kept rubbing my legs for two days. The pain and swelling did not subside. I later learned that what I was doing was rubbing massive blood clotting loose in both of my legs. The clots settled in my lungs and severely impeded breathing to the extent that I was only able to breathe 15% of capacity. When I went to the hospital, the Pulmonary Surgeon immediately put me on a gurney and headed me to surgery. Using radioactive isotope injections and video screens, surgeon Dr. Matao was able to pinpoint the exact location of the massive clogging sediment area to be in my lungs at a critical juncture. Most of the blood clots were vacuumed out over a two-day period. I was in intensive care for ten days. The Pulmonary Surgeon, Dr. Dent, told Mary if had I waited a few more hours, he would not have been able to help me. He installed an umbrella like filter in the main vein, with assurances that I would be protected from future blood clots coming from the lower extremities. I never had any pain in the chest, only anxiety in gasping for every breath, like breathing through a straw, after exercising. I have no problems now. Bless you Dr. Dent. Your skilled hands are beautiful.



We became good friends with Lee and Lois Danley. Lee is a most remarkable man with talents in almost every vocation. Lois has unlimited talents and energy as a great grandmother. It was through her ceramic shop that we met them. She was an avid genealogist and has been of immense assistance to us in the search of genealogical records. Lois is from an orphanage in New York City and Lee is from Clarke Co. Ala. He took us on a trip of his youth area. The things to be found of historical significance in his area fascinated me. He showed me the site



he believed to be the historical Maubilia where the Indians defeated Desoto. I had been interested in a group of people who lived a unique cultural life style in that area. They are of African descent. They practiced the art of making a death mask of some unusual mixture and this became their tombstone. Thieves have stolen these tombstones until there are only three death mask tombstones in the cemetery, which is in

a very remote area. Lee took me to see them. He showed me the historical little red schoolhouse that was active in the 1800's until recently. Lee built an airplane, and taught himself to fly it from the dirt road to his home. He is absolutely a remarkable gentleman.

I had talked with Ruth Reynolds about restoring care for the old historic cemetery on her 1200 acre property. We agreed that we would fund the restoration. I built a sign and posted it along the State Hwy. 59. The next project was to clear the debris from the area to be designated as cemetery. While I did this she researched the families and individuals who were known to be buried there. She was very aciculate in authenticating the names.

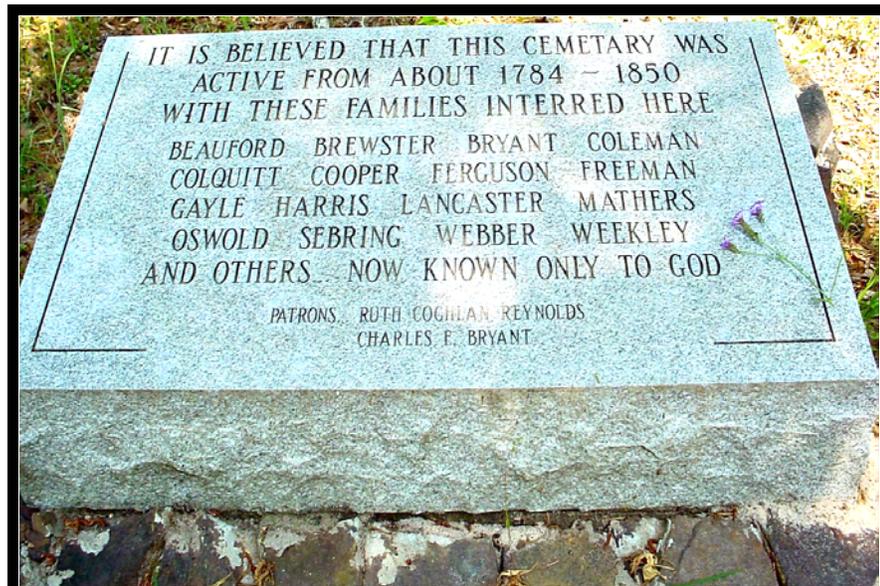


I built and posted a sign along State Hwy 59 indicating the cemetery was a mile into the forested 1,200 acres she owned. My ancestors were buried there in unmarked gravesites. There was only one marble monument, in memory of a man who had died of yellow fever while working the booming timber industry in 1784. My g, g, Grandfather William Pender Bryant owned the land

from about 1828 until he died in 1839, having come into ownership of it through his wife, Martha Weekley, daughter of George P. Weekley, who was a surveyor and owned thousands of acres of the Tensaw Country land, including this Spanish Land Grant. This was commonly known as the High Ground burial site.

Early records indicate this was the earliest cemetery in Alabama except the Catholic Cemetery in Mobile. Ruth gave me permission to rent a ditch witch and dig three-foot deep trenches, three feet apart and 150 feet long. This gave me a very good opportunity to

detect previously disturbed earth and establish a burial site without penetrating to the bodily remains. I then took a steel probing rod and was able to positively pin-point or determine the exact locations of the remains of a body burial site. I found thirty-nine burial sites in three



days, working a site of 150' x 150'. I placed granite markers at each site with a cypress celtic cross I had constructed. I also erected a chain link fence about the site. The Weekley families collected donations and I planted fifty rose bushes about the perimeter. The deer also liked rose bushes and vines I found out, thorns and all. Margaret's old roses survived.

Margaret Bryant worked as a Master Gardener with the Tallahassee Garden Club and gave me fifteen Primitive Rose plants that had been propagated for many decades from hearty roses. Ruth set two concrete benches inside the fence. The monument worker showed me how to do it and I engraved a large, 3' x 4' granite monument, misspelling "cemetery." I got help to set this upon the native rock foundation I had made earlier, listing the family names of persons believed to be buried there. Ruth placed a large cypress timber inscribed with a router, "High Ground Burial" set onto two cedar log posts near the entrance to the cemetery. I have enjoyed my visits to this place of serenity and silence, except for the lulling sounds of the forest, whispering to the winds. I don't pretend to commune with the dead, I simply know when I am standing on Holy Ground. I have had this same feeling when I walked the cobblestone roads where Paul, Silas, Timothy and others walked and the places where Jesus had walked, was buried and rose again. This is, I believe to be, a divine sensation which I wish everyone could experience.

Mary and I had worked for several years on the project of doing family genealogy. The pursuit of tombstones, church records, courthouse records, tax rolls, census records and everything else we could consider, provided us many days and even weeks of travel and adventure, throughout the Southeast. We were forever on the unquenchable thirst for information that would lead us to just one more ancestor. We have amassed quite a collection of ancestral records for both of our ancestral lineages dating many years back onto the European continent. We have enjoyed this hobby in common as we work at it together or individually as the mood strikes us. Our stamp-collecting hobby is also rather sporadic now days. We were once very active collectors, enjoying the stamps for their beauty and history, not their value. None of our children or grandchildren seem to be interested in stamps. A Tragedy



We visited Eddy and family in Fellsmere, Florida and I experienced the thrill of riding and driving an airboat in the Everglades. This may not have been the true Everglades but it was the headwaters of the St. Johns River, a very large lake with tall reeds. The



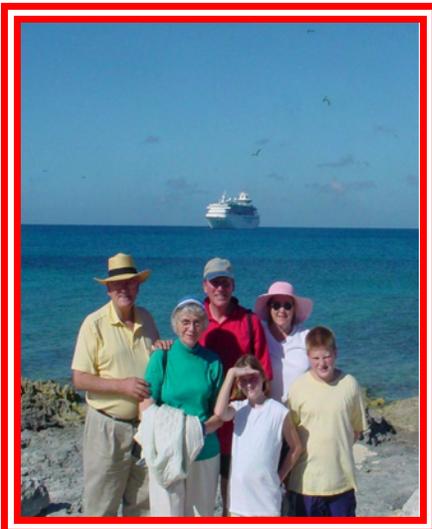
airboaters had made trails through the reeds just wide enough for one airboat. Each airboat had a tall antennae with a flag so that other airboat drivers could see them approaching. The 'glade' was filled with literally thousands of huge alligators sunning along the airboat trails. We saw many forms of life that inhabit the 'glade'. We went to an island and had a picnic lunch. We saw alligators that were much too friendly for my comfort. Eddy let me drive the airboat and it was a thrill, which I had longed to experience. They are a very squirrely craft. After our excursion, I asked Eddy to show off a bit. And he did. I ran out of film just before he put on a real dare-devil show with water sprays.

Tom and Margaret gave Mary and me a Caribbean Cruise trip with them. We had never been on such a luxurious ship, or any ship except that working freighter ferry ship in Greece. It was grungy and they put us in bad quarters for sleeping. We really lived it up for the four days we were aboard this luxury liner of the Carnival Cruises. I think I ate the whole time. They had a chocolate breakfast at midnight one night. It seemed they were

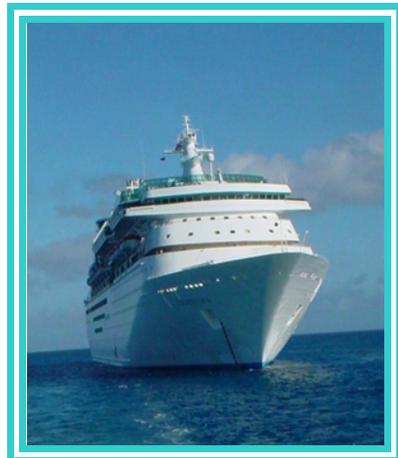


serving food 24/7 and it was all free. I am glad I did not weigh before and after as some said they were doing. We enjoyed the Bahamas with their quaint markets, native foods and taxi tours of the Island. Entertainment was continuous and really

good with the nightly comedians. Amelia and Charles Thomas were a lot of fun for me on that trip. Except one night, after the evening meal, they got to acting silly and were turning their upper eyelids so as to expose their inner lids...gross, but they giggled and



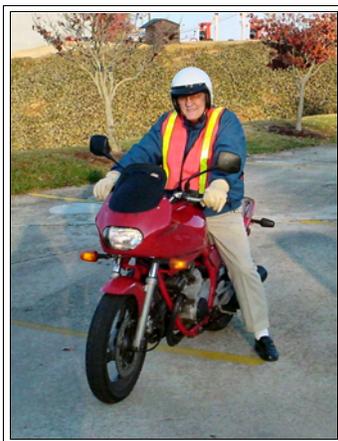
laughed at each other so much I couldn't help but laugh with them. They had that big ship all checked out in about two hours. They were most fascinated with the slot machines and were winning until the floor manager came over and told them they were



underage. They wanted me to feed the slots for them, but I did not have the charm on those bandit machines they had. I lost their winnings.

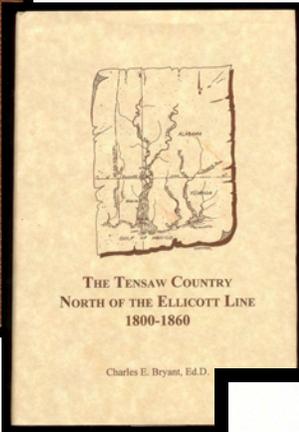
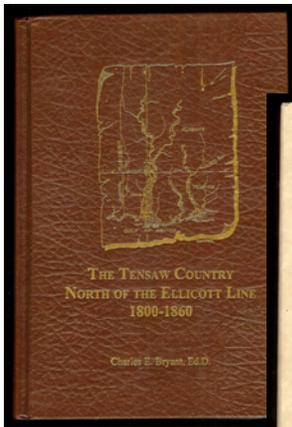
Each Thanksgiving we invite the families that are able to travel, to gather here for a Thanksgiving meal with us. We enjoy the meal prepared at the Officers Club at Tyndall AFB. They do an excellent job. We sometimes eat at the Enlisted dining hall, which is rated as the finest in the Air Force. We have done that every year since we have been here and always look forward to Tom, Margaret and family coming over from Tallahassee and for the others to come if they are able to do so. We end up by gathering bags of pinecones for starting fires in the fireplaces. Since we no longer use our fireplace, Margaret has oodles of bags of pinecones each year. These are the longleaf pine, with tar.

I have enjoyed several hobbies, which I sometimes took too seriously. The thrill of riding motorcycles with Eddy and Tom in the mountains of North Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina, provided me many exhilarating hours of pleasure with their companionship. After the prostate surgery I sold both of my motorcycles, but Tom always had a spare for me



when it came time to go to the mountains and ride again. For our last ride, Eddy had a new BMW 1500cc motorcycle and Tom had his older BMW that he had rebuild at least twice and ran like a purring kitten, with no windscreen. He also had one of those sooped-up, lying on the fuel tank Italian Ducotti motorcycles for me. I couldn't handle it. It seemed that if I looked at the throttle, it would instantly be at 60 mph. I rode that terrifying machine one year, and the next year, I let it get away from me and it fell on me. Only my pride was hurt. That did it. We got it back to the motel and I climbed behind the thrills but no spills, Eddy, and away we went for two days of sensational rides. Tom seemed to know of every road in that tri-state area that had curvy mountain roads which are a bikers thrill. There was one place called 'Deal's Gap'. It had something like 312 curves, three miles up to the gap. What a thrill! Fellow bikers up there always ask, "Have you pulled Deal's Gap yet?" Yep..... Then the bragging begins.

I became interested in a historical site in North Baldwin County when I was a child and heard the stories of the massacre of Ft. Mims that occurred in 1813. Our great, great grandfather, Edward Steadham, had escaped the bloody massacre of more than 500 frontier settlers and perhaps 300 Creek Indians on the afternoon of 30 August 1813. Historians record as many as eighteen persons survived that savage massacre, considered being the worst ever massacre on American soil. There was an irony of that massacre in that there were Steadham cousins among the Creek Indian warriors attacking their



Stedham frontier settler relatives within the fort. Since my third grade days with my Grandmama Bryant in Stockton, I have avidly collected snippets of information about that event and filed them away. When I was a student at Auburn University I had access to the University Library archives records and enjoyed researching available information about the tragedy that occurred there. I also became interested in the settlement of the Tensaw Frontier Country Pioneers who were generally English Tories or Loyalists. I

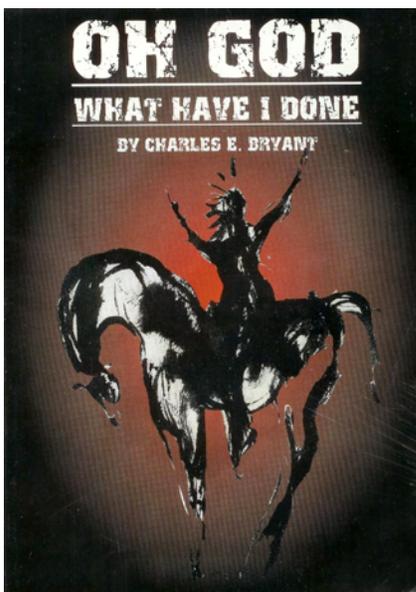
was interested in their culture and began interviewing many, many of the senior residents of the area, Whites, Blacks and Indians. I was encouraged to put this information into a book form. Everybody wanted a copy, if it didn't cost very much. Some wanted a copy of the book if they told me of a recipe, an ancient joke or anything they thought I might print. Many of these persons, particularly the Mestizo families of the North Baldwin County swamps, live in an "Arrested Culture" lifestyle of the early 1800s. It was sheer fascination for me to interview and visit with these people who lived a distinct life culture. They cure meats, make biscuits, dress, make shoes, have superstitions, speak and live their lives very similarly as it was done in the early 1800s. The more I researched and interviewed, the broader my

interests became. I had enough factual material about superstitions, medicine, predicting weather, recipes, and about 20 other topics that each subject would make a chapter in a book. Without realizing it, I had amassed several boxes of information. I was into research and writing this book for more than 15 years, having difficulty as to when to stop relating to the fascinating lives of these inhabitants of this frontier settlement. I did not get any professional help in writing it and was forced to learn to use the computer for typing and printing. Now, this was some chore for this old man to learn the new

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technology of the new age of information. Our children and friend Lois Danley taught me what I needed to know of the computer. It was sufficient to put together a hardback book of 1048 pages. It had been a challenging labor of love, emotions, expense, and many hours of solitude in writing. Mary and the family were very patient and tolerant during those times when I isolated myself, sometimes for long periods of time. I became obsessive to complete the project. I felt a great burden was lifted when I presented the finalized manuscript to the agent who merely sent it on to a printer in Michigan. Writers, be wary of “publishers.” The next day I was admitted to the hospital and underwent a cardiology four-bypass surgery. I was weary of that book and extremely tired but I did not need that kind of rest. During my recovery at the hospital the major stock we had invested in for the last several years crashed, but we were able to recover somewhat more than that what we had invested. So...was it a loss if I never had the money? Shrug it off.



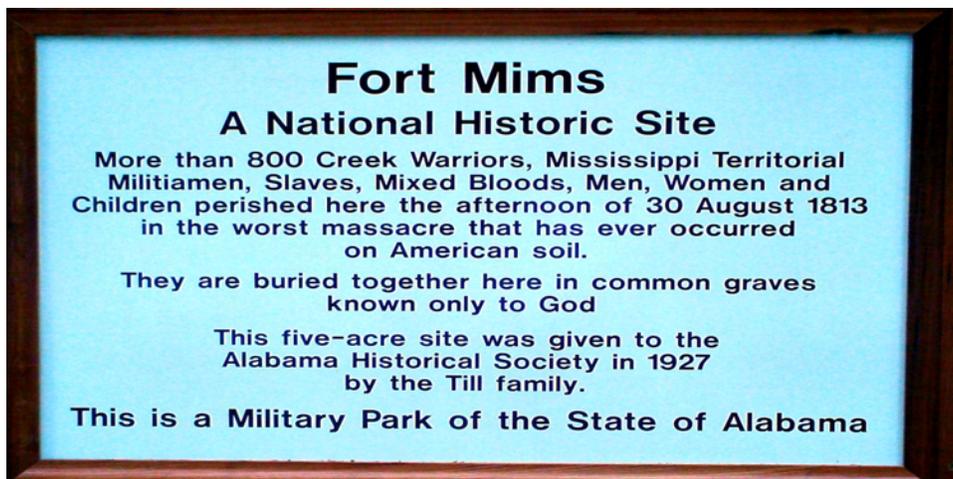
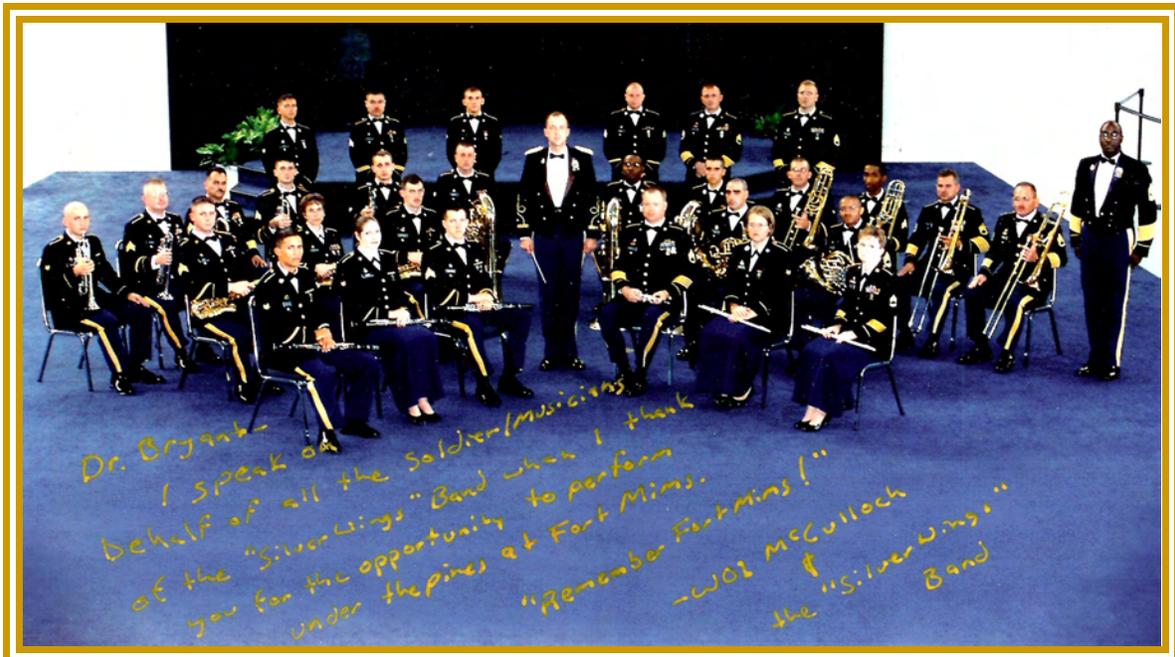
I had enough information material from research about Ft. Mims that I decided for Mary and me to go to the Military Archives in Jackson, Miss. for a week to research the militiamen who were lost in that terrible tragedy, as the soldiers guarding it were from West Mississippi. I found many fascinating stories and events in the lives of these men. I decided to write a historical book on the circumstances and events of the tragedy, emphasizing the major characters of the tragedy. A man named William (Billy) Weatherford was identified as the leader of the Creek Indian attackers and became the “Bad Boy” of the raid and massacre resulting in the demise of the Creek Indians in Alabama. He was only one-fourth Creek. The title of the book is, “Oh GOD, What Have I Done.” It’s an easy reading 148-page paperback. It was fun to write.

In 1985 I joined with a group of local citizens of the Tensaw Country of North Baldwin County who had formed an organization the year before, calling themselves, “The Ft. Mims Restoration Association, Inc.” They had plans to have a reenactment every year, the last weekend of August. The organization was quite successful in attracting several hundred spectators for the weekend event. I was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1991. The organization fell on hard times and was reconstituted in 1997. Amid my medical problems of those two years, I took a very active interest and was instrumental in leading a revitalization of the founding concepts of the organization. I made arrangements for the Army Band to bring their thirty-nine piece orchestra to Ft. Mims to conduct an open-air concert “Americana Under The Pines.” The band members expressed that this performance was one of their finest events to remember. It was a great success, but I did hear comments to the effect that “Blue Grass” was the music most appreciated in the Tensaw Country. I have enjoyed the Quarterly Board meetings, the annual October party under the pines and all the annual weekend commemorations of “Remember Ft. Mims.” I have a warm kindred fellowship with all of the residents of the Tensaw Country and particularly those who have joined in unity to promote the history of Ft. Mims. A cousin, Davida Richerson Hastie stood alone at times in planning and urging participation

and attendance to the annual commemoration. She was the highly respected president and esteemed leader of the organization for thirteen years. Thank you Davida.

It has been a great joy for me to see the Tensaw Community develop a community wide sense of civic pride and focus upon an objective for all of its citizens to participate in to the fullest of their ability and desire. It has been one of the most successful organizations I have ever worked with, excepting the annual Syrup Sopping Day at Loachapoka, which is a roaring weekend affair, attracting more than 20,000 visitors for the annual weekend affair. I am proud to have been instrumental in its genesis. I am equally proud to have been instrumental in the leadership reorganization of the Ft. Mims Restoration Assn. The success of such an endeavors always and must require community support and labor, and FMRA has met that challenge with unity. Congratulations to all of you of the Tensaw Country, may your labors be fruitful that generations may "Remember Ft. Mims."

*The US Army 'Silver Wings' Band*





As our Mother was soon to be 100 years old on 25 November 2004, the daughters Barbara, Mary and Jane took her out for an oyster luncheon as her pre birthday meal. Fried oysters were her favorite food. They planned a festive 100<sup>th</sup> birthday for her. President and Mrs. Bush sent her a congratulatory



letter. Friends, too many to mention, came from far and near to help celebrate her long and wonderful life. Mother knew and welcomed every visitor by name. She smiled during the entire afternoon festivities. I think she had a covenant with the Lord. With my sometimes-vivid imagination, the Lord did a kindly thing for our family, as perhaps it went something like this. The Lord said, .....“Macey, I have needed you for a long time and I need you now to play that piano like you have never played it before. I need you to lead the heavenly choir in raising their hands in praise and glory and I need you to



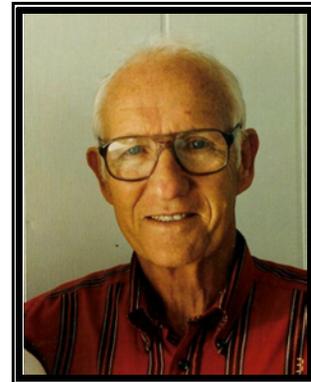
throw your head back like you used to do and sing praises in that beautiful alto voice of yours. Yes Macey, I have needed you but your family also needed you. I am going to let you and your family and friends enjoy your 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of life, but I need you for the Christmas Musical here” .....Now that was all imagination but..... She went to sleep in her big soft bed two weeks later and woke up in the waiting arms of her Lord and Savior at her eternal home. Her life had such a positive, profound effect upon so many lives, of all that knew her. The burial service in the Richerson Cemetery in Stockton was impressive and emotional. The funeral director was a friend of Mary and Jane and she choreographed the memorial service in Foley and the burial service in Stockton with professional and personal care, which pleased the entire family.

Dan, Barbara's husband of fifty-seven years was visibly moved with both services. She said they drove home to Montgomery in silence. He retired early that evening after lovingly massaging Barbara's feet and legs.



He went to sleep in his favorite recliner chair. Dan passed through that mysterious veil of life into eternity that night. His passing was a shock to all of us. He was a WW II veteran who had served his country with honor and dignity. He had been a loving and faithful husband, father and friend to all. He had founded a successful company, Hawk Brokerage Inc., which carried certain foods with his label and logo, "We only want a Hawks share". He provided well for his family, as he suffered from multiple medical and physical limitations and situations.

Our family was stunned in April 2006 when Sonny went to a Birmingham hospital for what was to be a routine but serious cardiac by-pass surgical procedure. That technique had been vastly improved since the days when I had a four by-pass surgery, so we were prayerful but not overly concerned for his successful recovery because he was in excellent health and had such a pleasant disposition that he was going to set a record for recovery. He developed Staph infection and died within hours of diagnosis. He was 79 years old; was still very active as a flight instructor and evaluator, was an avid Civil Air Patrol Lt.Col. photographer and had retired with a successful career as a chemist and instrument calibration technician. Sonny was one of those persons who remembered names, trivia, facts and information, and had an instant recall ability. All seven of us siblings were then in our seventies. His burial and memorial services were most memorable, with the CAP formation flyover and the missing airman pull away, simultaneously with the release of white doves. I miss you my brother. I have a lifetime of wonderful visions of you and praises for your influences on me.



Bruce and Jane bought some property along the banks of the Intracoastal Waterway near Orange Beach, Alabama when he was heavily involved with the marine barge operations. They were offered a very attractive sale option on the property. Bruce and Jane, in their benevolent manner and love for their families, shared the sale of their now valuable property with their families. Mary and I were shocked to receive checks for considerable sums of money, which we were told to spend on something that would bring us pleasure and the tax had been paid. I had always

wanted a greenhouse, but with the many, many moves of yesteryears, I was never able to have that wish. I used a portion of those funds they had given me to finally build a greenhouse. I have thoroughly enjoyed that greenhouse attached to our home, which now provides benches for propagating, seeding and storing winter plants as well as a shelter

for the water well pump and the pool filter. Thank you Bruce and Jane for the greenhouse and for the funds to underwrite this personal and family work of a biography.

I have had several hobbies of intense interest since my medical situations of 1998-99. One of the first was that I got interested in lapidary, the art and skill of polishing gems and stones. I was fascinated as stones took brilliant and beautiful forms in cutting and polishing. I made jewelry day and night almost. Everyone in the neighborhood wore a piece of the jewelry stones that I had polished and mounted. I learned wire wrap but it did not fascinate me as much as the stone cutting and polishing did. Mary and I made a trip out west to collect and ship back boxes and boxes of geodes and gem quality stones. I developed a twenty-minute object talk presentation of keeping ones priorities in order. I used a glass jar to be filled with geodes as first or most important priorities. I would then fill in with smaller stones as lesser important matters, then gravel and sand to represent trivia things to do. I then shook the jar to settle things, indicating trauma and tumult always makes room for other things and finally I would pour it full of water, as the sweet, sweet spirit of love and compassion and this would fill the jar again. I would then point



out that the jar, representing our life, could not be filled if the priorities were reversed or altered. If the jar was first filled with sand, the mundane routine things of life, there would be no room for the geodes or really important priority things in life. It made a good object lesson for the many times I was called to various clubs, groups and church suppers to present the large ornate board filled with the Gems and Minerals of the Bible I had made and mounted with gems and stones. People liked to touch the stones, particularly the section for the jewels in the Breastplate. Pappy Frog had given me his rock, gem and mineral collection as well as his equipment, some of which I could use. After about four years of this fascinating hobby and fellowship with members of the Panama City Gem and Mineral Society, I sold all of the equipment and goodies.

I frequented the Tyndall AFB hobby shop just browsing and tinkering with little building projects such as a magazine rack, a teak book case to hold a set of encyclopedias and such shop projects. I built large pine toy boxes for all the grandchildren one Christmas and bookcases the next year. I enjoyed learning the art and craft of woodworking. I enjoyed the fellowship of Joe and L. Moore. There was always something going on when they were around. Claude Bouchard was the director of the wood working shop and gave me many hours of his expertise knowledge and skills from a career of woodworking.

Safety was his primary concern. We became good friends and I enjoyed and appreciated his tutelage. One day he suggested I try the wood lathe, which I was terrified of. He stood with me as I tried turning a spindle on the wood lathe and Alas! I had found a new hobby. I started turning every kind of wood into every object I could think of. I bought four sears professional wood turning lathes, one each for the children and one for me. I began making what is called a segmented bowl. Wood would be cut into narrow strips with a precise angle on the edges then cut into something like two-inch sections. These are assembled into a circle, glued and bound tightly and precisely. Once all of the glue was dry cured, a bottom is then installed when the circle of segments with glue. This would take several days, because the bowl is held securely by glue only. I used tight-Bond II and Gorilla Glue.



A steel plate was screw fastened onto the wooden bottom, which serves as a mounting onto the lathe spindle. The different designs and patterns would come to life, as the material is spun at varying speeds and shaved to shape. Utterly Fascinating I would make my weekly rounds to the dumpsters of the various cabinet and wood shops selecting usable strips of discarded exotic expensive woods. I was a scrap-



wood dumpster diver. It is amazing as to how many unmade bowls are thrown into the dumpsters, as I have made hundreds of segmented bowls from these expensive wood scraps over a four year span of the fascination of this hobby. A finished bowl has been known to have inordinately high price tags because it is impossible, or should I say impractical to mass produce a segmented bowl, which takes me 40-60 hours of hands-on craftsmanship to build one. It is not a dangerous hobby, but it does require caution and safety procedures with dust control. The children and our grandchildren have been excelling in turning wood on the lathe, producing beautiful art works. I am proud of their artistic creativity.

Mary and I enjoyed shopping the “Roadside Furniture Piles” in the more affluent areas of town the night before the trash truck made it’s rounds, selecting discarded but repairable furniture and toys. We would bring these home to repair, paint, restore and take these to the Family Services to distribute to the needy. Our neighbor gave me his Red Mazda truck, which wouldn’t run. He had grounded his son and in retaliation, he put the garden hose to the fuel tank and filled it with water. I removed, cleaned and replaced the tank, rebuilt the carburetor, purged the lines and installed a huge fuel filter to trap the rust. It ran good until the filter would clog with rust flakes and then the truck chugged along at idle speed. I was going up the long steep four-lane bridge over the Intercoastal Waterways and into Tyndall AFB when it started chugging. Speed dropped from 55 to 15mph as I was halfway up the bridge. “Oh Dear Lord, Help me get over this bridge and coast to the other side.” I turned on the flashers. The sound of a crash is awful. A young girl driving her father’s big Dodge Ram truck, speeding, talking on her cell phone, rear-ended the poor little Mazda sending it uncontrollably upon the bridge rail. My thoughts were: Dear Gussie, how am I going to get out of this thing after the 20-foot plunge into the deep bay waters, swim to the surface and shore? It teetered atop the rail and flopped back onto the highway. A nurse was following the big Dodge Ram truck and saw it all, she parked in front of the Mazda and rushed to my aide. She quickly pulled off her “T” shirt and stopped the bleeding from the severed artery in my temple. She was very professional. She said, “Honey, I don’t know who you are because I saw angels pull this truck back onto the roadway. You were headed over the rail. I think I just saw a miracle.” With that, she kissed my left cheek, said she needed to get modest, gave me her address and left. I never saw her again. This had been the second time a beautiful Black Woman had been at my side to render life saving assistance. The first was in the ambulance with a heart attack and now this time. Yes Indeed, Black is beautiful. I sent her a thank you note and fifty dollars to buy herself a new “T” shirt. The ER nurses dug more than half a cup of little glass cubes from my face and neck. My head had snapped back and broken the rear window and my body had made a curve of the upright seat back. I was in therapy for about three months. This was a rough way to get out of the furniture hauling.

One afternoon several years ago, a young man called to make an appointment to come to our home and interview me for a feature article for the local daily newspaper. He had heard of me through an association with Dr. Tryee, President of the college. I was very skeptical of him, his intent, and whether I wanted to be interviewed by anyone for any reason. When I retired I accepted the role that my life had been filled with excitement, pleasures, and with a feeling of having participated in fringes of historical events and actions here and there. I felt neither colossal achievements nor dramatic successes, except being loved by my family. I considered my life now to be as a sort of has-been. My life was a closed chapter to others as the gigantic wheels of destiny rolls onward through cultures, giants and midgets, as we are all consumed and soon forgotten, just as flowers fade and are blown away like thistle in the winds of time. So my time had come to fade.

I granted him an appointment time and he was punctual. He gasped at some of the artifacts about the living room and wanted to touch and feel the 2,000+ yearold artifacts. He was affable and very interested in the old coins and everything he saw and touched. I offered him adult beverages and he gustily accepted. When I saw his appreciation for that

brand and mix, I prepared a tray for him and he imbibed heartily. I thought he would probably leave before any interview, but he stayed, asking a question or so occasionally about an object, a painting or a piece of furniture. I didn't feel that I was very responsive.

He read some of my papers and journals and visited for more than four hours. I did not desire to be rude. When the bottle was empty, he decided the interview was terminated. I was very surprised about two weeks later to be called by a friend and told to look in the newspaper for this spread about me. I did, and I was embarrassed. Nevertheless he got almost all of the story correct. I had been interviewed by news reporters, TV and radio reporters and so often I would be misquoted or flatteringly made to be more important than I was in reality. It was most often embarrassing to read reports about me. This is one very pleasant and non invasive reporter's view of a segment of my life, as told through strong drink by a good listener. Here is his story.

**Neighbors** PANAMA CITY NEWS-HERALD 4/27/85

## Ex-Air Force pilot collects memories, antiques

**ART SURBER**  
Staff Writer

Charlie Bryant opened the antique cabinet and showed off a centuries-old oil lamp, then picked up the glass vial professional mourners used to measure their tears after ancient funerals.

He had been at the work bench where he and wife Mary refinish antique furniture, one of the pastimes that keep them busy in retirement. Although they moved to Callaway in October, they still hadn't found time to assemble and fly their two ultralight aircraft.

"I think I have done everything I've ever wanted to do in life, except see the Northwest United States," Bryant said, lounging on the couch in the living room. Nearby, a 2,200-year-old urn-like vessel from the wreck of a Phoenician trading ship sits next to a 75-year-old hall tree.

Bryant spent 20 years in the Air Force, flying bombers in Korea and indulging in an interest in ancient artifacts while stationed in the eastern Mediterranean.

Bryant has done serious things in his life, but talks about the past with humor. He and Mrs. Bryant laugh frequently.

A "mountain man," Bryant was born in Walker County, Ala., the second of seven children. His father was a vocational agriculture teacher in Walker County until Bryant's mother died when he was 7. The family moved to Foley, Ala., where his father continued to teach until he died. Bryant was 18.

Not entirely sure what he wanted to do, Bryant thought he would go to law school but needed money. He wasn't able to sign



News-Herald: Art Surber

### Out of the past

Charlie Bryant sits on a 75-year-old hall tree next to an amphora, a vessel used to transport oils, taken from a Phoenician ship that sank in the Mediterranean in 232 B.C. Bryant and his wife, Mary, refinish antique furniture at their Callaway home.

➔ See Pilot, 2A

on aboard a merchant ship without joining a union and he didn't like unions.

So he ended up in the Air Force. In 1948, Bryant was an enlisted man going to weather school, living in barracks at the end of the runway at Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois.

One night, a Sunday, Bryant was up late playing cards when he heard an explosion "just like the building had torn up."

A pilot ferrying a group from St. Louis to Washington had come in too low on his approach and crashed into an empty barracks.

Bryant, an enlisted man at the time, grabbed pillows and blankets and ran to the crash. The first to arrive, Bryant put out a fire on a wing and began pulling people out of the wreck.

"One was a colonel and I was afraid to touch him," Bryant said, recalling that he carried the officer out of the plane anyway.

Once others arrived to help with the rescue, Bryant returned to the barracks, an anonymous hero.

The base newspaper looked for him because the base commander wanted to present the Soldier's Medal to the airman who saved the lives of those aboard the crashed plane.

But Bryant's buddies told him not to go forward "because that wouldn't be a hero," Bryant said.

He remained anonymous. With an Air Force paycheck coming in, "I thought any year I would have enough money to go to law school. Then came love."

Bryant met his wife in 1949. "We actually met on a Greyhound bus ... on April Fool's Day," Mrs. Bryant said.

She was going to visit her family in Montgomery and Bryant was on his way to Foley, where his father had taught school.

She sat in the only empty seat on the bus, next to Bryant, and they began talking. When the bus stopped in Thorsby, Ala., she asked him to buy her coffee because she had no money.

He promised to call her after the trip.

For their first date, he said, "Would you like to go to the wrestling matches?" she remembered.

It took him two hours to find her house, riding the bus and getting off at every stop. He called every 30 minutes.

They were married on Valentine's Day 1951.

**NAME:** Charlie Bryant.

**AGE:** 56.

**BACKGROUND:** Born in northern Alabama, Bryant was an Air Force bomber pilot during the Korean conflict and was responsible for all Americans in the eastern Mediterranean during the late 1960s.

**QUOTE:** "My philosophy is that I enjoy life and all aspects of it, my family and friends."

Bryant already had been through pilot training. One night, Bryant, taking advanced training in Oklahoma, was flying cross-country in a T-28, a new trainer that hadn't been fully tested.

The plane's engine began running rough, then the prop suddenly froze and the trainer began falling.

Bryant's instructor, flying with a student in another plane, ordered him to bail out.

Uncertain exactly how to jump from the new plane, Bryant slid open the cockpit canopy and sat on the back of the seat, intending to just spring out of the aircraft. He had no idea where he was.

Then he saw the runway lights of an airport below him. Ignoring the instructor, he decided to try to land the plane.

He could see moonlight on the trees and water of what he later learned was a Missouri swamp — not a good place to parachute from a crippled plane.

"I thought they had turned on the runway lights for me," he said. They hadn't.

Bryant managed to land. The plane sort of fell onto the end of the runway.

"All of a sudden, whoosh! A big old jet liner went right over me," he said, laughing.

His instructor and a colonel, who had been flying nearby and also ordered him to bail out, took his disobedience seriously. An order was filed saying he had failed to obey a direct order.

Bryant said his flying safety officer came to his rescue, writing a glowing article about the landing for a flying safety magazine.

Bryant was commissioned a second lieutenant in time for the Korean conflict.

He flew B-29 bombers on missions over Korea. Once again, odd things happened — "We got a commendation for being stupid," he said.

At that time, the crews of planes took care of the bombers themselves. The crew of No. 826 was no different.

"We had carpets and whitewalls on that thing," said Bryant, a co-pilot at the time.

But one day No. 826 "broke," he said. As other planes of the squadron took off for a night mission, the bomber's crew raced to the standby plane — "for people like us who broke them" — taking off at the tail end of the formation.

Then the trouble started. The bombardier couldn't find the switch he needed to throw to release the plane's load of bombs. Someone had moved it. The B-29 made the bombing run with the rest of the group, but no bombs fell from it.

The plane was in a dangerous position. Being the last plane in formation it was the target for most of the anti-aircraft fire.

So the crew decided to make the run a second time, even though the B-29 was shot up by shrapnel from enemy airbursts. One engine was gone and it was losing altitude.

As the plane headed home, still loaded with bombs, someone noticed a string of lights below — an enemy convoy moving south.

The bombardier refused to give up. He went to the bomb bay and gave directions to the pilot, watching the convoy through the open bomb bay doors.

Hanging by one arm over open space, the bombardier used a screwdriver to flip shackles off the bombs, dropping them onto the trucks below.

When the films of the bombing runs were developed, the crew realized what they had done.

"The convoy that had started out from the north was obliterated, and it set them back three or four months on their big push," Bryant said.

That big offensive, which almost pushed American soldiers and their allies into the sea, ended

when Gen. Douglas MacArthur engineered the landing at Inchon, cutting off the communist forces.

During his career, Bryant flew 57 types of aircraft and spent 15 years in the Strategic Air Command.

Between 1965 until he retired in 1968, Bryant, now a major, was chief of plans and programs for the Air Force in the eastern Mediterranean area.

Bryant, his wife and their three children lived in Turkey and indulged in collecting artifacts. Bryant met Pope Paul on the pontiff's historic visit to Ephesus in 1967, and found himself taking part in trying to settle problems between the Turks and the Greeks.

The Turkish air force had a mountainside they used for target practice. The Greek air force also used the mountainside, despite Turkish demands to stop.

Since both sides were using U.S. airplanes, the U.S. Air Force interceded and set up a meeting in Greece to settle the dispute.

Bryant was pilot of the C-47 transport picking up Greek officers and flying them to Athens. The Americans wanted only to settle the dispute with the Turks.

The American officers were staying at the King George Hotel in Athens one night when they heard tanks rumbling in the streets. Suddenly, a radio announcement in English warned the Americans "that anyone caught on the streets after dark would be shot like a dog," Bryant said.

The Greek officers had taken over the country "and we flew them in," he said.

After he returned to the United States and retired, Bryant went to Auburn University with the intention of becoming a seventh-grade teacher.

Because he was over-qualified for the job, he became an education consultant, pulling a small Georgia college and a Mississippi military academy out of financial trouble.

When the Bryants decided to settle down, they picked Bay County. They already were familiar with the area because Bryant had been stationed in Fort Walton Beach.

"I wanted to live in the mountains and Mary wanted to live on the coast and guess where we are," he smiled.

I am amused when Presidents of the United States, labor so diligently and intensely in the closing months of their presidency to leave the legacy they would want historians to write favorably about them. Some persons make great benevolent gifts in the closing days of their life or in their last will and testament, in faith that their legacy will reflect favorably for them. Others have had professional writers to write favorable biographies that have rewritten their history to leave a favorable legacy. None of these examples fit the story of my life you have read in this work. I write because my family often did not know of the things I did in my Air Force career and have often prodded me to write of events and

actions in order that they could better understand why we lived in so many places about the United States and overseas assignments. I think they deserve that explanation. It has been my pleasure to recall so many of the experiences and joys of the family in growing as well as activities of my twenty-year career in the Air Force. All of the events told in this story of my life are true and factual to the best of my recollection and through documentation by Military Special Orders that have been preserved.

Surely there comes a time in every senior adults life when it becomes obvious that their so called legacy was written many years previously, in their productive years. Some personalities of historical note go on speaking tours, touting their achievements to bolster their legacy. The world soon forgets and the once prominent personality of note is limited to the park-bench audience. Surely there comes a time as aging seniors, that we reflect with pride about our various occupations, achievements and stations in life We must conclude that the applause dies, awards tarnish, achievements are forgotten, certificates and accolades fade and crumble. Time will eventually erase all of us from the roster of life and then it is history that will nurture selected ones of us as long as there is an interest. It has been said that we are not remembered for what we amass, but for what we have given away and imparted to the society. As I face that reality, I cling to memories, memories that shall sustain me all the sane days of my life. I am grateful for so many things, people, events, opportunities, with the love and encouragement of my family and friends. Yes, I am growing older, maybe a wee bit wiser, but my dash is not yet complete.

Mary and I have pondered in recent years as to where we would like for our final remains to rest. We have concluded that the soil of Alabama should be the home of our bones. We decided that one place is foremost with us to sleep 'neath the sod of Alabama, at a place that was the interment site for prehistoric inhabitants of Native Americans for centuries, was the point of origin for "The Trail of Tears" and now claims many of the gallant and courageous heroes of Alabama in recent wars from World War I to the current conflicts. The place is Ft. Mitchell, Russell County, Alabama. It is well with my soul. Amen



**Peace**

## **The end of the ride on the slide down the banister of life**

The following thoughts are of a personal note of family bragging.

I had not intentionally intended to burden the reader with this tome of material of my life. Somewhere in the writing I realized that my life was my family, so I just kept writing away in order that you may know them, perhaps not as I do, but to know of their love that has provided me buoyancy and encouragement whenever I was in need. I have told you of my parents, Mamma who gave us life and Mother who nurtured and guided our lives always, and my father who was truly a wise and caring father to us. I have briefly introduced Mary's parents, Professor and Mrs. Eidson and family with the love they shrouded about me to welcome me as their son. My childhood and youthful days were times of joy and my courtship days with Mary were mostly via al-la US Mail service. We waited three years after marriage for God to prepare us to be parents.

Our first child was Charles Eidson "Eddy" Bryant and he was a joyful child, precocious, intelligent, talented and always so honest. He had a beautiful Mediterranean olive complexion and was a very distinguished and handsome child and now as an adult. He excelled in the science fields, as did his mother. He has a full wall and packed boxes of plaques for outstanding service of 24 years research in the scientific fields of laser and silica optics with The Harris Corp. Among those accolades are certificates from the US Patent Office for seven patents. His work is in the highly classified Dept. of Defense fields of sensitivity and the highly competitive industrial research aspects, so he never talks of his work except to comment that is always challenging and intriguing. I do know that he holds an undisputed, unchallenged ten-year world record in the development of an unequalled optical amplifier, which revolutionized the communications industry. He enjoys his challenging work, as all of us are very proud of him and his achievements.

He and Ruby Gail Brock Bryant have given us three very wonderful **grandchildren**, Phoebe Christine "PC" Bryant, Caleb Allen Bryant and Priscilla Gayle "Missy" Bryant. They have grown up on a five-acre country estate with citrus abounding, near Fellesmere, Fla. The family designed and built their lovely home. The kitchen was designed and built around a huge commercial cook stove. PC opted scholarships to work in the service industries, enjoying her automobile and personal freedom. Caleb enjoyed sports and selected academics in his high school. He was good at the game of golf. He recently graduated with highest honors in a nationally recognized Marine Diesel Academy in Orlando. Missy became an accomplished percussion musician for her school band and is seriously contemplating an academic pursuit or enlistment in the Armed Forces. She has been involved in the 4H club projects for three years. She has elected to feed and care for a pig as her project. She always names her pig and becomes affectionately attached, with daily grooming and a 'shampoo' not just a garden hose bath. She always names her pig some catchy name as her last pig was Oscar. She always cries when the pigs are judged, auctioned and then led away out of the arena. Eddy is always there to console her. She was a lovely senior at the ball in her formal red gown and beautiful hair styled just right for her. She has always had a strong penchant for stylish clothing and wear.

On 25 April 2007, PC presented to us the blessed news of our first **great grandchild**, handsome and lively Ashton Tyler Laberento. He is such a happy and smiling baby at all times. They brought him to the annual family reunion, as the newest child to our family clan. PC is a very caring and doting mother. She keeps her camera very handy to capture his every expression. He was loved and adored by all seventy-two members of our family of Bryants. She has sent worlds of pictures of his progress. She and Ryan, with Ashley and pet reside in Jacksonville, FL. Her devoted career now is being a good homemaker and operating an on-line Ebay store



Our second child gift from the Lord was Thomas Allen Bryant, who came into this world laughing, not crying. People were always amazed at his eternally, happy disposition. His childhood and teen years were a reflection of his permanent cheerful and optimistic persona. Everyone has always loved and respected Tom for his honesty, mechanical aptitudes, good citizenship, talents and acumen for successfully managing Engineering Businesses. He has developed three very successful engineering corporations. After full development with viable contracts, the firms are attractive to large corporate engineering firms which buy them from him. He has been most successful in these ventures. He has been a pilot for 34 years, accident free. Tom has always loved life, Motorcycles, Sports cars, Power boats, Sailboats, Aircraft and now Gliders or Soaring planes and the shops and equipment to support his hobbies. He has passed this love of life on to their children.

Margaret is perhaps the hardest working and most diligent to her tasks person I have ever known. Her hobbies are often labors, which she methodically works at until she has achieved her measure of success. She is a brilliant person with an acute “nose for business” inner sense for investment opportunities. She is as comfortable hosting a luncheon for the Governors wife and party as she is in digging in her garden or planting roses at the ante-bellum homes of Tallahassee. She says dirt and sweat will wash away, plantings live on to be cherished for generations yet to come. She has proven her gardening and horticultural skills earning recognition as a Master Gardener. She volunteers much of her time to worthwhile services and civic projects about Tallahassee. She is a master housekeeper of the Southern Tradition and is a Super Mom in the kitchen.

Tom and Margaret Ann Webster Bryant have honored us with **grandchildren**, Margaret Amelia Bryant and Charles Thomas Bryant. Amelia has worn her namesake well as she soloed her Tomahawk aircraft at her sixteenth birthday. The whole airport gang and friends at Thomasville gathered to see her do this and congratulate her. It is very inordinate for a petite sixteen year old girl to solo her own aircraft, particularly after she had dismantled, repaired, replaced, rebuilt parts and reassembled the aircraft. The mechanics use the term R & R for remove and replace. She did a “R & R & R & R job on her Tomahawk. She did not take her Tomahawk to Auburn for fear it would distract her. Amelia is a Junior at Auburn University in the School of Engineering and doing well.

Not to be outdone, Charles Thomas, "Chase" soloed the Tomahawk at age sixteen. He is also adept at flying his dad's Mooney aircraft. He has excelled in academics and mechanical aptitudes and abilities. For years Chase has kept the neighborhood's lawn mowers and equipment running. I think it is extremely inordinate that he could be so talented in mechanical aptitudes and problem solving and yet have the vast talent that he has in playing the classical guitar and various arrangements. Speaking as a proud grandfather, I wish Chet Atkins were alive to play the duet guitar music with Chase, which they both enjoy so much. Chase is quite accomplished in guitar and is much sought after as a tutor for a fee, to beginners and advanced guitarists. He enjoys walking about their spacious garden walkways and strumming his assortment of several guitars.

Every mother desires a daughter and our prayers were answered with beautiful baby Camilla Jean Bryant. She has brought such a blessed joy to our home. Oh, she was definitely a tomboy with her two older brothers. She blossomed to be a well-liked and lovely girl in her schooldays. The only boy she ever dated throughout her school days was Forrest Arnold Tidwell who was to become her husband and the father of their three tall, handsome and talented sons. Forrest was a graduate of Ala Aviation College and was an Aircraft mechanic for twenty four years with AT&T. Cammy graduated with honors at Thomas County Community College. She has many talents and abilities, all requiring manual labor for success. She keeps bees to sell honey, operates a ceramic shop, loves gardening and most of all, she has the love of family in her heart. She home schooled her sons. She founded a Charter School. It is unusual that they named the boys, Joshua, Benjamin and Luke, all scriptural names and their cousin Caleb Bryant.

Joshua Bryant Tidwell was a professional photographer, later deciding to become a security alert technician and has been successful in this challenging occupation. He is also very proficient with the computer in design and personal artwork. He rebuilt a Feisty little Red Fiero Sports Car with superchargers. He diligently earned the Eagle Scout Award. Josh is engaged to be married to his friend of three years, Anna Miller.

Benjamin Forrest Tidwell is an accomplished artist and program design engineer. He has a penchant for computer operations and is not offended when he is called a "Geek" He has a wall of trophies of his achievements in scouting, athletics and academics. He too has a penchant for mechanical repairs and innovations to keep his sports car, motorbike and equipment in excellent mechanical condition. He too is rebuilding a sports car.

Luke Eidson Tidwell was home schooled through the sixth grade by his mother and competed very well with his peers in the public school. As the youngest child, he has taken a few knocks, teasing, and taken the blame for things gone wrong. He always laughs it off and jumps back in to mix it up with his playful brothers. Luke is a very compassionate, honest and fun loving boy. He loves his big Labradors and animals in general. He is quite accomplished with the piano and eagerly does his daily practice sessions. He recently had a piano recital and did very well. He plays at level four.

The Bryant genealogical record is well documented back to Reddick Pender Bryant who lived in the Scotland Neck area of North Carolina in the late 1700s. His son William Pender Bryant was the emigrant to Baldwin County, Alabama in 1823 and through marriage acquired vast land holdings. His only son, Ausphera Walton Bryant had a large family with five sons. His son William Edward Bryant had six sons and a daughter. His son Morton Hodgson Bryant had three daughters and four sons. I, Charles of the sixth generation, being one of those four sons, had two sons and a daughter.

In 2005 I wrote a genealogical record of the Bryant descendants of Reddick Pender Bryant and computed that there were more than 780 souls descended from him through 57 Bryant males.

**It is interesting to note that only Caleb Allen Bryant and Charles Thomas Bryant are now capable to carry the Bryant lineage surname into the seventh generation.**

**God Bless**