

PERSONAL ACCOUNT

The Life of Rudolph Emil Nelson

Nelson, Rudolph E., S/Sgt., 37473839. 882nd. Radio, 2756. Sgt to S/Sgt, SO 57-5 (500th). AM, GO 57-II (XXI BC); AM (OLC), GO 67-I (XXI BC); AM, GO 69-I (XXI BC); AM (OLC), GO 98-I (XXI BC); AM, (OLC) GO 130-I (XXI BC); DFC, GO 36-XXVII (20th AF); BS, GO 33-I (500th); AM (OLC), GO 45-XI (20th AF). Z Square 27, Sasser. Photo, 882nd, Air Crews, Holdridge; Photo, 882nd, Air Crews, Sasser. Add. '46: c/o Tuthill Lbr Co, Canton, SD. Add.'09: 3600 Lewis Ct., Sioux Falls, SD, 57103-4630. (Yancey). No Record. SSDI. 2012.

Ed. Note. The writing is somewhat uneven in a few places. Some of the pages may seem out of order.

The Life of Rudolph E. Nelson

Rudolph E Nelson was born one mile North and one and one half West of Corson, SD on January 13, 1923. I lived there until 1933 when we moved to a Farm 3 miles North and 5 miles West of Colton, SD.

The Corson location was a pleasant and well laid out farmstead. Running water in the barn hog house and chicken house and in the house by a pump at the sink. There was apple grove to the South of the house, we had some cherry trees East of the garage. We had a good grove to the West, mostly ash trees. The shelter belt to the North was mostly Russian olive trees with other bushes mixed in to make it a very good windbreak. Further to the North there was a little creek fed by a spring where the ground was always moist and Dad took some short stems of willow branches and stuck them in the ground and they soon grew into big trees. Since they were in the pasture it was a good place for our milk cows to spend time in the shade.

This farm consisted of three 40 acre plots so Dad had to rent extra land to make it work. He rented some pasture land known as (No-Mans-Land) it was located a half mile West and about a mile and half South of our farm. This land lies just North of where interstate 90 now is and about 2 miles West of the Corson-Brandon exit, of course the interstate wasn't there then the land was hidden by the bluffs and was very hilly and only good for pasture. The land was landlocked, in other words we had to take our cattle over someone else's land to get them the separator room. The bowl had to be taken apart exposing all the discs. These discs had to be individually washed. They also had a wire brush that they would run through the spouts and then wash the bowl and strainer and hang them all up to dry. Later on we sold whole milk which eliminated the separating process but then there was no milk for the pigs.

Our Dog Tutsie

The first dog I remember was a three legged dog name Bob. He was white and I don't think a good cattle dog. That is all I remember about him. Our next dog was a brown and white dog named Tutsie. A small dog about the size of a healer. She was a wonderful cattle dog. In the summer we could tell her to go get the cows about a quarter mile away and it wouldn't be long and the cows would be coming up the lane at a slow walk. All the neighbors wanted one of her pups because of her genes in handling cattle. She was very productive. Generally had 11 puppies to a litter. It seemed she was always having puppies. She slept under the South porch. She had a little spot dug out for herself and we gave her some straw and a few gunny sacks which was all she wanted. She could have slept in the warm barn but preferred the spot under the porch it had to be 30 degrees below before we would let her in the basement.

Filling Silo

In the fall of the year, shortly after the first frost, when the corn stalks had dried a little and still had a certain amount of moisture in them we would get the corn binder out and hitch three horses to it and take it out to the corn field and head it down the corn row. It would cut the stalks off about six inches above the ground, turn the stalks into a bundle and tie a piece of twine around it and drop it on the

ground to be picked up a little later. Generally the same day, we would take one side off the hay rack and hitch a team of horses to it and head for the field where the corn bundles were waiting. We would stand the bundles up starting in the front of the rack and work our way back until the whole rack was filled. We would walk along side of the rack until we got to the silo where the cutter and blower were hooked up to a tractor or stationary gas engine of some kind. There was a series of pipes that went from the cutter to the top of the silo. The cutter would chop the corn into silage; pieces about one inch long and the blower would blow the corn to the top of the silo and let it fall in. It took a lot of loads of bundles to fill a silo. The more ears of corn that were on the corn the better the feed value of the silage would be. In those days 50 or 60 bushels per acre was pretty good. Now days hybrid corn yields are much more. This was another job that took cooperation between the neighbors. It worked best to have one person on the rack stacking the bundles one end and one on the ground handing the corn bundles up to him. Mother did the cooking for the crew.

Putting up Hay

Dad had what at that time was modern haying equipment. A mower, straight rake, side delivery rake, Hay rack, Hay loader and stacker. We used the stacker after the barn had been filled. First we would take the horse drawn mower into the hay field, cut the alfalfa hay which would fall behind the sickle. Round after round until the whole field lay flat. It would lay there until dried just the right amount. If it My life, it has a lot of history for me as this is where my grandma Mathilda, Grandfather Jonas Nordstrom, my Mother and Dad and brother Melvin and many Uncles and Aunts are buried. Rev Emil Berggren was the preacher that baptized me. When we moved to Colton we joined St. Jacobs Lutheran Church rural Colton and this is where I was confirmed. It was 2 miles South and 1 mile West of our farm. Both of these churches are used today and in good shape. It was a three mile walk for me to go to confirmation classes. (They called it reading for the preacher) our preacher was Rev Vaaler, a stern, strict man that smoked cigars. No foolishness around this guy. The next church that was important in our lives is Clark Center Lutheran near Clark. This is where Catherine and I were married. This is where many of Catherine's relatives are buried. Her grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles and many other relatives. Next we joined Grace Lutheran in Watertown. Next Lutheran church of our Redeemer, first Lutheran in Sioux City, our Saviors Lutheran in Sioux Falls where we belong today. Church has always been important to our family. Some of the preachers that touched our lives are Emil Berggren, Rev. Vaalar who confirmed me, J. O. Vold who married us, Conrad Thompson, Carrol Hinderle, Virgil Johnson, Paul Hanson, Dave Johnson, Erik Saxvik and Marvin Kormann. Many others but these are just a few.

Open Air Theater

In the summer, in the thirties, a store on Main Street in Chester burned down leaving a vacant lot with a large wall available to project pictures on. The city of Chester decided to bring movies to town and project them on the wall of the remaining building. They painted the wall white and we had a perfect place to project the movies. Chester had free movies. Quality was pretty good considering the price. It was a great attraction and brought a lot of people to town—young and old--. The movie was free but had to buy the popcorn. Later we got real outdoor theaters where we could drive in and sit in our

car and eat popcorn and watch the movies and maybe smooch a little. Steam up the windows. Why they eliminated the outdoor theater I'll never know. Those were the good old days. They had a price for two people and a price for a car load. Once in a while we had to hide someone on the floor of the back seat to get the two people price.

Fall

In the fall we hunted pheasants. I was on our family farm near Colton and mother told me to go out and get a couple of pheasants for supper. She gave me dad's 4-10- and I went to the corn field across the road east from the house. It was my first hunting experience. I hadn't gone but a couple blocks and a rooster flew up and I nailed him. It took a little longer to get the second one (A hen) in those days you could shoot hens. I was so proud to bring them home and tell mother "Here is your supper for tonight". We used to do some trapping in the 30's. Pocket gophers were worth 10 cents each at the court house. We had to produce two front feet to get the dime. Skunks were the next easy but smelly catch. In the winter we would find a skunk hole. You could see steam coming out of a hole and knew there were skunks in there. We would stick a barb wire in the hole and make a crank handle on the end. We would then crank the wire until it caught onto the skunk's tail. Once it was wound up tight we would pull it out and hit it on the head with a bat as it was pulled out. If you waited too long it was bad. We took them home and skinned them out and stretched them out on a wood shingle. How mother put up with this smell, I'll never understand. It produced a little money. Our whole farm stunk. In those days we would get \$2.50 for a skunk and sometimes we would get 6 skunks out of one den.

Winter Hunts

In the 30's the jack rabbits were thick. They thrived on dry weather, we would schedule rabbit hunts. It would take about 20 people to make a good rabbit hunt. We would take a section of land (one square mile) put 5 people on each side with 12 gauge shot guns. Each side would march forward toward the center. Once we got close together the rabbits were running everywhere. There were rabbits everywhere and people were shooting and rabbits were falling. At days end we would have a pick up load of rabbits. You talk about fun we had it.

Auctions

My Dad and oldest Brother Melvin loved to go to auctions. There were many farm auctions and also the weekly livestock actions and also the weekly auctions in Madison and Sioux Falls. They would go and if a deal came about they would buy it, most of the time they would take it home and fatten it up and take it back to the auction.

My Pony Spot

Our neighbor, Ivan McCoy loaned me his Shetland pony. His boy was too large and had out grown the pony. His name was Spot, in those days "1933s" the pasture was short and the most grass available was in the ditches alongside of the roads. I herded the cows, on Spot my pony, for a mile North of out

farm place. I could start the cows North and both the sides of the road were fenced so they had a mile to go before they could get into trouble, (come ones corn field). My job was to be at the North end and turn the herd around. Spot and I made that trip many times. Spot was the best friend I had. He would buck me off and then wait for me to get on again. I can't thank Ivan McCoy enough for letting me use Spot for the many years I had him.

Making Soap

The fat or lard as it was called was cut off the pigs and later cut into 1 inch squares and placed into a large kettle and boiled. This was called rendering the lard. This was the last thing to do in the butchering operation.

Lye was mixed with the lard, probably with some other ingredients. This was cooked on the basement cook stove until the lard was liquid. When it was solid it was pure white solid lard and ready to make good soap.

Homemade Soap

1 can of Lye – 1 ½ quarts of water – 5 lbs ... of fat (melted tallow is best) – ½ cup ammonia – 3 teaspoons of borax.

Dissolve the lye in 1 ½ quarts of water – use a stone crock. Melt the tallow --- cool lye water and tallow to lukewarm the pour fat slowly into the lye mixture stirring constantly. This will start to thicken; add the ammonia and borax. When it gets quite heavy to stir pour into a shallow wooden box or porcelain pan. When set, cut into bars. It makes good soap – the soap was cut into cubes and stored on a shelf in the basement. It turned brown as it aged, but this didn't spoil its effectiveness. It was a powerful cleanser. It's main use was for washing dishes, clothes, or anything else. It was hard on the hands and we didn't have rubber gloves in those days.

Following the Grain Harvest

One year when I was about 16 years old the harvest in our area was early and we were done before time so three of us decided we should go North to work the harvest. We had a model a Ford. When we got to Wheaton MN, we found the harvest was also early there and there was no work for us. We had a tent and went to a lake and pitched our tent. We lived there for a week on fish, bread and butter. It was good time. We went to Fargo looking for work. We found work in a restaurant washing dishes, enough to pay for room and board. After a couple of weeks I wired Dad and said "need money for gas to get home". He sent it and we headed for home hungry.

Threshing Grain

We always had a threshing run. Farmers would go together and hire the man who had a threshing machine. They would go from farm to farm and thresh the grain that had been cut with a binder, put into bundles and shocks. The farmers would come with their hay racks and teams of horses and load the bundles into the rack and haul them to the threshing machine and pitch the bundles into the

feeder that would take the bundles into the cylinder that would pound the grain out of the straw. They had sieves that kept the straw on top but allowed the grain to fall through; the straw went to the back end and was blown out the blower into a straw pile. The grain was elevated into a hopper and was weighed and dumped into a wagon standing nearby. When the wagon was full it was taken to the granary for storage.

It was a wonderful experience of cooperation and a social event. When the machine was at a farm the wife would cook for the men. Generally just the noon meal. It normally would take two or three days at a farm. That is if it didn't rain. The straw had to be dry for threshing. Mother always set up a wash basin out on the front lawn for the men to clean up prior to coming in the house to eat. A wash basin, a pail of water, soap and towels and wash clothes. There would be a crew of about 15 men so it was a pretty good job to feed them all. We had a grain elevator that took the grain from the wagon and put it in a hole in the roof of the granary and a spout would direct it to the proper bin.

My College Years

I graduated from Franklin High School in the Spring of 1940. In the Fall I went to South Dakota State University. It was a sad day the day I left for College. I knew I would be on my own from that day on. Dad said he would pay the tuition and room but the rest was up to me. Since I had worked at home all summer on the farm I hadn't saved any money. When I got to Brookings the first thing I had to do was look for a job. I had books, spending money and meals to worry about. I went down to the Coop Lumber Yard and got a job unloading coal. The hardest and dirtiest job in the world but it paid well. I could do it at night and the only thing that suffered was my sleep and some of my studies. I could unload a carload of coal (40 ton) in a night. I don't remember how much a ton but better wages than other places were offering. There was always coal to unload and I could work as much as I wanted to. I later found out that you had to study too. I made it through my first year, kind of hard and not much fun but I made it. No F's and no A's either if my memory is correct. When I went back for my second year, they said they wouldn't recommend to go as I would most surely be drafted and they didn't want to see me lose my payment. As it turned out I could have completed the second year. I always wished I would have taken my second year. I wanted to be a veterinarian but that never happened because when I got out of the service all the schools were full and with my grade point where it was there wasn't a chance (don't feel sorry for me it hasn't been too bad).

While waiting to be drafted I worked at John Morrell Co. in Sioux Falls. It was a good job. Paid 77 ½ cents an hour. I stayed with my sister and her husband Louie Belfrage for \$6.00 per week for room and board. We had a wonderful time as I worked nights and had a lot of time to spend with Evelyn and later Patty. My job at Morrells was on the night roustabout gang. We did all kinds of jobs. For a while I shot rats. When I was drafted I was a straw boss over about 25 employees. A big job for a 20 year old.

The Tornado of 1933 or 1934

I can't remember the exact year but I do remember the details. We were on the Colton farm. Dad, Melvin, Clarence and I were out cultivating corn on the North quarter. Dad, Melvin and Clarence with a two row cultivator and 4 horses each and I had a single row cultivator and two horses. It was in the afternoon, at the far end of the field we would be one mile from home and at the close end ½ mile from home. The clouds were looking bad and Dad waved for us to head for home. Clarence, Dad and I were on the South end and close to home. Melvin was on the far end. Dad, Clarence and I unhitched our horses and Dad turned his horses loose and started on the dead run for home. Clarence did the same. I did the same except I had a trusty old mare that was broke to ride and I jumped on her and turned old Grant loose. I was the first to get to the barn with Dad and Clarence close behind. I think Clarence also rode one of his horses home. The storm was coming from the South West and we could see Melvin wasn't going to make it. He had a couple wild broncos on his hitch so needed to unharness them prior to turning them loose. It was the thing that was going to save his life. He was about 3/8 mile from home when the wind was so strong he could no longer stand upright. He lay down in the ditch. The same ditch I had been herding cows in. He had the two harness sets with him that he had taken off the broncos. Lucky it was that the harness had a sweat pad that went under the collar so the horse would not get sores on their shoulders. It was a cloth pad about 1 to 1 ½ inches thick and formed the shape of the inside of the collar. It soon started to hail, hail the size of base balls. Melvin laid in the ditch with sweat pads on his head and body. It was all he could to hold them in place; the wind would almost lift him out of the ditch when a strong gust would come along. It was the sweat pads that saved him from the large hailstones. The rest of us were standing in the barn. The horses all made it to the barn. We had the horse barn door open and were watching the raging storm in front of our eyes. The windmill was about 40 ft. from the barn and it could no longer stand up to the wind and slowly went down to the east. We were luck as we had the hay mow full of buffalo lake slew grass so there was a lot of weight there to hold the barn in place. Had it not been for that I'm sure the barn would have blown down. As the storm went we would see chickens and pigs go rolling by the open barn door. The barn began to move and shifted off the foundation about 6 inches. We thought it was going to go but it didn't. It finally started to let up and we could see Melvin coming from the North on foot. Soaking wet but no real bad bruises, a few black and blue marks and welts soon showed up. He soon reached the barn and joined the rest of us.

Mother, Evelyn and Eleanor were in the house. Evelyn had gone down to the basement and when she tried to go up where mother and Eleanor were the pressure in the house was so great that she couldn't open the basement door. She rode the storm out in the basement. That is where she should have been anyway. Eleanor and mother were on the main floor and saw some of the windows blow in. No one on our farm was hurt except Melvin who had minor bruises.

Most of our neighbors lost their barns. I don't remember any houses destroyed. The crops were lost because of wind and hail which didn't help the depression we were going through. Grass hoppers were a big problem to. We bought grass hopper poison and put it in the fields but the hoppers were so thick you could hardly see the corn because the stocks were covered with hoppers. How Mom and

Dad stood up under all the problems I'll never understand. They made it and seemed to enjoy life in spite of the problems. Must have been a strong faith in God.

The Beginning of World War II

On sept.1, 1939 Germany invaded Poland. I don't remember where I was that day but I do remember the radio announcement. It didn't mean much to me as I was only 13 years old and it looked like I wouldn't be involved, how wrong I was. War really got heated up in Europe. Hitler was invading all the countries as his army came to them, taking them over one by one. No one could stop the mad man. Most of the countries around Germany had been lax on their defense and could not defend them self. Easy for Hitler to take over.

Most of the countries had badly outdated military practices and equipment. Poland had horse drawn cannons and a horse cavalry. The Germans were mechanized units, Tanks, motorized vehicles for machine guns and cannons plus trucks to haul the infantry. The Germans also had a large Air Force and Navy. Hitler was so strong, he just ran over his enemies.

MY HIGH SCHOOL DAYS AT FRANKLIN

My first year I walked one mile north to meet the bus at the lake county border. That was the south border for the franklin school district. It was ok in the warm weather but cold waiting for the bus when the weather was bad. The worse the weather the later the bus. If I was late the bus didn't wait so I had to be on time. This was 1936 and money was short. I was fortunate to get on N.Y.A. (National Youth Association). It was a federal program for students who couldn't go to high school without some financial help. I had to do about 10 hours of work a week at the school. When other kids went out to play at noon I went to see the janitor who put me to work. We dusted, painted walls and ceilings, swept floors and cleaned windows. There wasn't much time for sports so I didn't go out for basketball or baseball the first two years. Our school wasn't large enough to field a football team. We did have track. The second year was different, it was 1937 and there were 5 kids who lived outside of the school district who needed transportation. I bought a 1929 model A Ford and would pick these kids up and take them to school and home again. I was paid for this service. This income plus the NYA made it possible for me to go to high school. You should also understand that my dad wasn't big on education (he would rather have had us at home working on the farm). The third and fourth years were the same but NYA was not available so I went out for sports. I played a lot of basketball but had a lot of catching up to do to get to the level of the other players that had grown up with the game. My senior year I was captain of the basketball team. One time they had a track meet and I ran the mile without any training and I have to say I almost died.

When I went to college they wanted me to go out for football even though I had never played the game. I soon found out they needed somebody for the varsity to practice on. After many black and blue marks and a few spike holes in my legs I gave the game up and spent more time unloading coal. College was hard for me because Franklin hadn't offered some of the subjects that I really needed in college. One was 2nd year Algebra and some other math courses. They would go through that 2nd year

high school in about a week and I had a hard time catching up. With the help of my roommate I made it.

Pearl Harbor

On Sunday Dec. 7, 1941, the day the Japs pulled a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, I was at my Colton home. We had company, Mr. and Mrs. Holger Anderson and their three daughters. Holgers first wife was my cousin. I was as surprised as the rest of the world. I thought since I was born in 1923 and this was 1941 that I wasn't involved. Again I was wrong. Time went on and the draft age was 20. I felt secure, as the war got worse and time went on I realized I was in trouble. I thought about enlisting but then decided to wait to be drafted. On Jan. 1, 1943 two things happened. The draft age was dropped to 18 and on Jan. 13th I became 20. They call this a double wammey. On my birthday I got a letter from the President of the United States that started out (Greetings). I was instructed to go to Sioux Falls and from there on to Ft. Leavenworth, KS for the induction into the service. Sure enough I passed the test and they sent me home to get ready (10 days I think). I reported back on schedule and I was in the Army. Didn't know what branch. Kind of had a good hunch but didn't want to think about it. In a few days we were on a troop train west. We were hoping it was the Navy or Air Force. Anything but the infantry.

The War

As we went west, the secret of our destination was well kept. It took a few days and nights and every town we stopped in the civilians came out to meet us with cookies and cakes and the people were wonderful. When the train starting backing into Ft. Lewis, Washington, we knew we were a part of the new division being newly formed, the 44th infantry division.

The day we arrived I went in and applied for a transfer to the Air Corp. They took it but never got to the next level. Training started – close order drill – one – two – three – four --- back and forth – about face – at ease – right shoulder arms, left shoulder arms. Attn. at ease and many more commands. It was pure hell. They wanted us to get to the point we didn't care if lived or not and then we would be good soldiers. We went through the basic training and then got to the more serious stuff. Maneuvers – it was like play war. We divided our unit in to two groups. One was enemy and the other was our guys. We went out into the woods in the State of Washington and stayed there a week at a time. Colder than heck. We were always on the alert, we had to dig fox holes to sleep-in in case of a night raid. The ground was all rocks and almost impossible to dig in. We were supposed to dig a hole 6 ft. long 1 ½ ft. wide and 2 ft. deep. As I look back it was the most miserable time of my life.

After a year we got a furlough – two weeks. It was wonderful. Got to go home and see my parents, brother, sister and many friends. It went by so fast I couldn't believe it was over.

When we returned there was a Colonel from the Air Force waiting for us and said I understand there are some of you that want to transfer to the Air Corp. That was me – he said all who want to transfer to fall out to the left. Almost everyone did and then he said there were some restrictions. #1 you

have to be under 21 years old. #2 you have to have an IQ of 24 or better. #3 you have to have all your teeth. #4 you have to be willing to take two days of mental tests and two days of physical tests.

When we got through there were 20 that qualified. After the mental and physical tests there were 5 of us that qualified. I will never understand how I made it. The Lord had to be with me. Five got on a troop train and headed for a Air Force Base in Texas. This is where we were to take our pilot training. First we had to take more coordination and altitude type tests. I passed them all. The next thing that happened was word came down from Washington that they had plenty pilots and would not be training anymore. It was a sad day for me, as I wanted to learn to fly. We were given four options, 1 go back to our old infantry unit, 2 train to be a gunner, 3 trained to be a radio operator mechanic, 4 train to be a radar man. Since there were only two radio schools in the United States, one in Scott Field, IL., and one in Sioux Falls, SD., I signed up for radio training thinking I might get stationed in Sioux Falls, close to home for a while. Sure enough they sent me Scott Field, IL. Just East of St. Louis.

I had to learn all about radios. Had to build a radio from scratch. Had to learn how to service various kinds of receivers and transmitters. The big thing was to learn the Morse code. We had to be able to receive a certain amount of words per minute and also send them with the key. We didn't know at that time what kind of a plane we would be assigned to, so our training was general in nature. This was a pleasant experience. The Air Corp was great compared to the Infantry. It was like going to College. We drew K.P. (Kitchen Police). Once a year when we did it was a 24 hour stint. In the Air Corp the mess hall served meals 24 hours a day as there were different shifts, lots of soldiers and only one mess hall. Breakfast started about midnight and ran for about 8 hours. Dinner would start about nine and go till four and then supper again till eleven. A hour in between meals for cleanup and change over. We were not allowed to sit down. There was a constant flow of food and people. The food was great. We prepared the food with close watch by the cooks who worked 8 hour shifts. We also pulled dish washing duty and cleanup after each session. Compared to the Infantry it was like heave. We soon learn the code · · · - - - · · · SOS.

Once we were well into training we knew we would be assigned to a B-29 and our training became more detail. The B-29 was the big one and we knew we would end up in the Pacific. When our skills were developed we were told that we would be moved into flight training. Our 11 man crew would be formed so we could train together. Pilot, Co Pilot, Navigator, Bombardier, Flight Engineer, Radar Man, Radio Man and 4 Gunners. We were sent to Pyote, Texas. It is directly west of El Paso, Texas, East of Pecos, Texas. Right in the heart of the desert. If we wanted to go to a town of any size it was a long trip. Sometimes if we got a three day pass, we would go to Ft. Worth. The free train went by our front gate and it would stop to let us on. It was a 12 hour bumpy ride. No sleeping on that train. We would arrive in Ft. Worth early in the morning, find a USO club and line up lodging. Then out on the town for fun and relaxation. We had to head back early as the trip home was also a 12 hour stint. Sometimes we would hitch hike but the train was more dependable. I will say the civilians were good about picking us up.

Our training was in a B-17 a smaller 4 engine bomber. The whole crew was learning their individual jobs. The pilot was perfecting his flying skills. We would take off and circle the field two times and

land for hours at a time. I would get so air sick, I would vomit for hours at a time. All of a sudden I was over it never to be air sick again. The rest of the crew didn't have the problem like I did but never got over it like I did and after we got in combat some would get sick. The location where I was sitting had a lot to do with it, there were no windows so I couldn't see the horizon to help me keep my balance. We would fly from Pyote, Texas to Cuba so the navigator could get experience finding a small island out in the ocean. We would drop bombs in the desert so the bombardier would get experience. Gunners got practice shooting at moving targets. Radio operators would send and receive coded messages and had to know how to decode them. The winter months in Pyote were cold, raw and windy. Pyote was a city of 50,000 people and then they ran out of oil and everyone moved out taking their houses with them. They left a city of 50,000 foundations plus a big school house and a big post office and a bar and an airfield that was about it. I doubt there were 25 people living in town.

End of Training and the Real Thing

We were told to get ready to go overseas. Do the things prior to going into combat. Call your mom and dad or girl friend or wife or friend, make a will, buy insurance, the government had a \$10,000 policy available. Private insurance companies were not interested. I couldn't afford it anyhow. I don't remember what my wages were at this time. My wages as a Private when I was inducted was \$21.00 per month. It increased from this point because of rank and normal increases. Most of my combat experience was as a Staff Sergeant. 3 stripes on top and one below. This was my rank at time of discharge. Had the war lasted a few more days I would have gotten one more stripe on the bottom, I was told.

We were assigned to a B-29 and we all had to handle the change. It certainly was a big change. Especially for the Pilot. This was a big plane. Pressurized and can carry a full gas load plus 10 tons of bombs. Radio equipment was much the same. I had a receiver, transmitter and a radio compass I was responsible for. The radio compass, it was a navigation tool. It would give you direction to fly, to reach a signal that was being sent out. It was especially important when flying home from a mission and trying to locate a small island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. If we flew over the island, the compass would make a 180 degree turn. Radio silence would mean there would be no signal so it was not effective then. They didn't want the enemy to come on their signal, so sometimes would not send out the signal.

The Assignment

Word came out that it was time to go. We were given orders to fly to Sacramento, CA. and pick up our orders. Once we were in the air we were allowed to open them and told what our destination would be --- Saipan--- we would fly to Hawaii then on to Kwajalein from there to Saipan. Three days— crossing the International Date Line so one way we lost a day and the other way we gained a day. In Hawaii I saw the destruction the Japs made to Pearl Harbor. I also saw my first airplane crash. We were standing near the runway and a plane landed right in front of us. It was a training mission. As it pulled in front of us it exploded and the people inside couldn't get to the exit because of the location

of the fire. The people were screaming. One brave fellow went to the rear of the plane with a big ax and cut a hole and a couple of people jumped out. The rest perished. That was our introduction to war and suffering and loss of life.

The following morning we took off in our new B-29. It even smelled new. In the radio operations drawer there was a note from a young girl that helped build the plane she wished me well and left me her address and asked that I write to her. She was SGL and from Omaha. We communicated for a while but soon lost contact.

It was a long flight to Kwajalein. The island hadn't been in our hands long and the result of the evasion was certainly visible. The palm trees had been mowed off at about the 8 ft. level by Navy shelling (no tops on the trees). The runway was a strip of steel instead of the usual concrete. Seemed to work OK. We stayed overnight and took off the next morning for Saipan. Again a long trip. When we landed in Saipan we were both happy and sad. We were issued a pistol and ammunition. They also gave us new flight clothes and we went through a briefing and were assigned to our Quonset hut. Unlisted men in one and officers in another. As we walked in our new home we were greeted by the people living there that we had hot beds. The two previous crews that had them had been shot down and lost in combat. As it turned out the ones doing all the talking had the hot beds and ours were lucky. We learned early not to get close with the people in our midst because it was too hard when they didn't return from a mission.

We did play a little poker once in a while but mostly we played pinochle with our crew. It didn't take long and we were scheduled for our first mission. The new plane that we took over was taken away and we were given an older one (no more new smell).

We were told to go to briefing in the briefing room and were told everything about the mission. The take-off time, the target, the rendezvous point etc., the first mission was a day mission so we flew to the rendezvous point on our own and then got into formation for the bomb run. On night missions we went to the target all on our own and bombed by radar. On night missions we generally had a plane go in ahead of the rest and drop flares and the other planes would drop their bombs on specific areas in relation to the flares. Since we were soon one of the most experienced crews we carried a lot of flares. May be more flares than bombs. I hated it because we were all alone over the target and all the enemy fire could be directed on us. My memory of this first mission is poor. I do remember seeing some of our planes shot down so there was no doubt about the danger we were in. I was so scared, I prayed a lot. My prayers were sincere, no foolishness.

When we returned to Saipan the Salvation Army was in hand to hand out cookies and coffee. The Government gave us a couple big shots of whisky and after flying for around 12 hours it took hold like about 6 shots ---wow--- we then went to a briefing where we would tell everything we knew about the mission. Our success or failure. How many planes were shot down, whether we had any trouble from Jap fighter planes or not and how bad the flack was. Flack was the fragments from the anti-aircraft guns on the mainland. Following that we went to the mess hall where we were served a breakfast of ham and fresh eggs. Fresh eggs were a real treat and reserved for flight crews returning

from a mission. They were the best. Then we went to our Quonset hut and went to bed. Twelve hours flying under that pressure would sap every bit of energy right out of you. We always took a lunch along but rarely did we eat it. We had flack curtains that we sat on to help divert flack if it came our way. My navigator never used his so I had a little extra protection. We never had a direct hit on a curtain so never knew if they were effective or not. Out plane was hit by flack about one time in three missions. Sometime more serious than other times. Twice they knocked out two engines. The plane was designed to fly on two engines but it took more gas that way so the problem was always if we could make it back on the gas we had. The Radio man was the first aid man on the plane so I had a lot of training in first aid. No one on our crew was injured, so never had to us the training. I did use it a few times after the war. It was just plain luck that no one ever got hit.

Rather than go through each mission I'll list the mission I flew and a little detail on each one.

No	Date Alt.	Target Type	Flying Time
1	March 4, 1945 27500 ft.	Tokyo Day	Day 14 H-58 min
2	March 9, 1945 7600 ft.	Tokyo Night	Night 15 H-15 min
3	March 11, 1945 7800 ft.	Tokyo Night	Night 16 H-25 min
4	March 13, 1945 6300 ft.	Osaka Night	Night 15 H-12 min
5	March 18, 1945 5300 ft.	Nagoya Night	Night 15 H-0 min
6	March 27, 1945 15000 ft.	Oita Naval STA Day	Day 15 H- 15 min
7	April 1, 1945 6600 ft.	Tokyo Aircraft Factory Night	Night 14 H-30 min
8	April 8, 1945 19000 ft.	Kanoya Arabs Day	Day 14 H-40 min
9	April 12, 1945 15000 ft.	Tokyo Aircraft Factory Day	Day 15 H-10 min
10	April 15, 1945 9300 ft.	Kowasaki Chem. Night	Night 13 H-45 min

11	April 27, 1945 17000 ft.	Kyushu Airfield Day	Day 14 H-20 min
12	May 5, 1945 18000 ft.	Kure Naval Arsenal Day	Day 14 H-30 min
13	May 10, 1945 18500 ft.	Tokuyama Oil Storage Day	Day 15 H-05 min
14	May 14, 1945 18500 ft.	City of Nagoya Day	Day 15 H-10 min
15	May 17, 1945 9000 ft.	Tokuyama Oil Storage Night	_____
16	May 18, 1945 16000 ft.	Nagoya Weather Day	Day 13 H-35 min
17	May 23, 1945 10500 ft.	Tokyo City Night	Night 15 H-55 min
18	May 25, 1945 18800 ft.	Tokyo City Night	Day 14 H-40 min
19	May 29, 1945 19000 ft.	Yokohama City Day	Day 14 H-00 min
20	June 1, 1945 19000 ft.	Osaka City Day	Day 14 H-10 min
21	June 7, 1945 20000 ft.	Osaja City Day	Day 14 H-35 min
	June 15, 1945 18500 ft.	Crash Landed No one hurt, bad day	
22	June 17, 1945 8500 ft.	Hamamatsu City Night	Night 12 H-40 min
23	June 23, 1945 8500 ft.	Kure Naval Arsenal Day	Day 13 H-25 min
24	June 1, 1945 10600 ft.	Komamoto City Night	Night 14 H-15 min
25	July 3, 1945 10800 ft.	Kochi City on Shikoku Night	Night 12 H-25 min

26	July 6, 1945 7000 ft.	Akaski on Honshu-City Night	Night 13 H-30 min
27	July 10, 1945 10500 ft.	Sakai on Honshu-City Night	Night 13 H-35 min
28	July 24, 1945 22000 ft.	Osaka --- Arsenal Day	Day 15 H-00 min
29	July 28, 1945 15600 ft.	Hichinomiya-City Night	Day 14 H-05 min
30	Aug 1, 1945 12000 ft.	Toyama City Night	Night 14 H-15 min
31	Aug 2, 1945 15800 ft.	Nishinomiya Night	Night 14 H-00 min
32	Aug 8, 1945 22800 ft.	Yawata Day	Day 15 H-15 min
33	Aug 14, 1945 23000 ft.	Osaka Day	Day 13 H-40 min

August 4, 1945 Truk Island 190000 ft. Day 7 hours 00 min --- no credit received on this mission but there was plenty flack.

The Crash Landing

On the 15th of June 1945 we took off on a mission to Japan and on takeoff we lifted off and shortly after hit the ground again tearing out the lights at the end of the runway. The runway ran up to the edge of a cliff and we bounced off the end using the drop to gain altitude and air speed to allow us to fly. All went well and we were airborne. When the pilot tried to raise the landing gear he found it was not working. It would not go up or lock down. We tried to do it manually but that didn't work either. After many attempts we decided to abort the mission. We had radio silence so we couldn't talk to the tower about our problem. The pilot, Captain Sasser, decided to drop the bombs in the ocean and fly around until daylight. Our take off was about 1 a.m. so we had about 4 hours to go until daylight. We flew around and around. We were all scared as we knew the problem ahead. The pilot, who was about 22 years old, said he would fly over Saipan and we could bail out or we could fly in for a crash landing since he and the co-pilot were going to bring the plane in. All 11 of us decided to fly the plane in with the pilot. When the other planes on that mission reached their target radio silence no longer was in effect and we could talk to the tower. We informed them of our problem and they said they would clear the runway for us and make sure the meat wagon (Ambulance) would be out there and advise us when they were ready for us to come in. The pilot told us to take our crash landing positions. Mine was facing forward with my back up against the Bombay wall. Right next to where I normally sat. From this position I could see out the front windshield so I knew exactly what was going

on. The co-pilot was calling off the air speed and the pilot had both hands on the controls. We all knew when we hit the wheels would just go up into the wheel wells and the props would hit the ground. Those of us in the front of the plane normally went out down through the front wheel well and we knew that would no longer be a way out for us. There was a window next to the flight engineer that would be our emergency exit. It was a window about 12x 18 inches and about 15 ft off the ground. I think the flight engineer went first and I was second. I went in that little hole head first and landed on my feet running as fast as I could as I thought the plane was on fire and ready to blow. You see as we were sliding down the runway on the belly of the plane the aluminum rubbing on the runway created a terrible amount of smoke. The whole plane was filled with smoke. I thought the plane was on fire and expected it to blow up. I wasn't alone it seemed it took forever for us to stop. It just kept sliding down the runway and going off to the left where some of the ground crew were sleeping in tents. We slid up to them and stopped not hurting anyone. The guys in the back could go out their normal exit door but everyone in the front had to go out the little exit window. Not all landed on their feet running but no one was hurt and the plane didn't blow. The plane was restored and general took it to Guam on business and no one knows what happened but the plane went down in the ocean and this was the end of our plane and the General and our crew flew a couple trips to Guam to take generals or officers down to the headquarters of the 20th Air Force --- 73 Bomb Wing--- 500 Bomb group--- 882ND Bomb squadron.

Details about the B-29

Wingspan 141 ft. 2 inches --- length 99 ft. --- height 27 ft. 9 inches at the tail fin --- wings 1736 sq. ft. --- weight empty 70,140 lbs. --- weight loaded with 12,000 bomb load 135,000 lbs. We normally carried 10 tons --- engines four wright R 3350-23 cyclone 18 cylinder radials each with a pair of G.E. B11 superchargers to give 2200 break horse power at take-off. We would go to the end of the runway. The pilot would hold the break and run the engines up to full speed and release the break and the overloaded plane would just creep away. The propellers had 4 blades – 16 ft. 7 inches in diameter with constant speed governors and hydraulic operation for pitch change and feathering. When the engine was at 2800 rpm's the prop was turning at 980 rpm's maximum range was 3250 miles with full fuel and 5000 lb. bomb load. This was raised to 4100 miles when auxiliary fuel tanks were put in the bomb bay. Max speed was 375 miles per hour but speeds of 450 miles per hour were recorded in the jet stream over Japan. Normal was 200 to 275 mph. Fuel capacity varied but 9548 gallons was normal with bomb bay tanks. Rate of climb 38 min. to reach 25,000 ft. at 110,000 gross weight. Service ceiling 31,850 ft. Bomb load 10 tons. Guns --- 10 0.5 in machine guns and one 20mm cannon.

Medals and Campaigns

Air offensive Japan GO HQ 500 bomb group Aug 1945 --- Eastern mandated GO 43 HDQ. 500 Bomb Group GP Sept. 1945 --- American Theater Medal --- Air Medal with 5 clusters --- Good Conduct Medal --- Asiatic Pacific Theater Ribbon with 2 Bronze stars --- Victory Medal --- Distinguished Flying Cross ---

My army days started 29 Feb. 1943 and ended Nov. 5, 1945. If you have a question give me a call. I didn't give you much detail on my year in the infantry. It wasn't much fun.

The Trip Home and Discharge

We received points for action and time served to determine who would get to go home first. I had a lot of points but for some reason our crew was one of the last crews to leave Saipan. The trip home was a 4 day trip. One to Kwajalain – one to Hawaii – the third to Sacramento and the fourth to Lowry Field Colorado. When we arrived in the USA the Air Corp was just great to us. Treated us like kings. They said the war was over and no more B.S. They fed us like every day was Thanksgiving. We could even order special things that we had craving for. We could go to town any time we wanted to. Just needed to check the bulletin once in a while and the mail box so we didn't miss a meeting where separation from the service was involved. If we did miss one it didn't matter there would be another soon. Upon separation they gave us money for the bus ride home. I decided to pocket the money and hitch hike home. It was faster than the bus when I arrived in Sioux Falls. I called Dad and Mom and they came down to pick me up. They had moved to a different farm since I was home, so everything was new to me. I have to say I needed a rest. My nerves were on edge and I wasn't myself. In a few weeks it was over and I was back to normal. I didn't have a job. I wanted to go to Vet school but couldn't find one that had an opening for a guy with my grade point. Needed a 4 point and I didn't have it. I just kind of sat back and tried to figure it out. Three years had made a lot of changes.

There was a lumber yard in Colton who handled coal and lumber, and they had two cars of coal on the track and were paying demurrage for not getting them unloaded and returned to service. The manager called and wanted me to help him out and unload the coal. I told him I wasn't ready to go to work yet, especially unloading coal. He knew I had done it in College and kept calling. A couple of days later he called again and begged so I agreed to do it for a favor. It took me a couple days but got it done and returned the cars to service. He then wanted to hire me full time to work in the lumber yard as a learner. The yard was owned by Tuthill LBR Co. in Sioux Falls SD and they had a lot of lumber yards around the area. They decided they wanted me in Canton, SD, being single and fancy free I agreed and worked there for a few months mostly unloading coal and learning very little about the lumber industry. Then they called me in one day and wanted me to go to Clark SD as the Manager there was leaving and they didn't have a proper replacement. Again being single and fancy free I went to Clark SD. I was instructed to be in Clark at the lumber yard on Monday morning and the auditor would be there soon.

What I didn't know was the manager had gone crooked and pocketed money that customers had paid on their accounts. When a new batch of statements had been sent out from the general office the problem came to light. When I walked in the office in Clark on Monday morning the manager was there and he said he was going to be gone for a while and if I could run the yard. I said yes and he wanted to give me the key to the cash drawer. I decided not to take the key and said we would make that decision when the Auditor arrived. I said that when customers came in I would charge the customers instead of taking cash.

This is when the trouble started. The customers were coming in mad. I would go to the ledger and it would show they owed the money and they had cancelled checks to prove they had paid it. Some of

the checks had been changed over to the manager's name. I knew then there was a problem. About 11 o'clock the auditor came in and he took over. If a customer came in and said they had paid the bill he ruled it off. About this time the crook manager came in all flushed and nervous. We would ask him on each account --- where is the money? --- Has this customer paid this account --- he would say yes and we would say where is the money? He would say I don't know. About noon the auditor sent him home asking that he stay there as we may need him. From this point on if a customer said they had paid their bill we ruled it off. No questions asked. I'm sure there were a few that took advantage of us. By Wed night the auditor said he needed to go back to Sioux Falls and I would run the show. I continued as we had in the past, writing off anything the customer said he had paid. A week later he came back and said they hadn't found a permanent manager and wanted to know if I wanted the job. He laid out a deal all verbal, of course. At the end of the year I found out my deal wasn't for real and the verbal contract didn't hold. --- I quit --- told him I didn't want to be a part of a deal that was not honest --- he seemed to agree with me.

The Night Life in Clark

One day I went in the Brekke café in Clark and a cute little blond came to wait on me. I had heard she was famous for her malted milk shakes. I asked her if she could make me a good thick one and she said the very best. When I got it, it filled the big shake glass and had enough left over in the canister to fill it again and it was the best ever.

There was a dance every Sat. night at the round Clark play house and I decided to go. On the very first one I saw a cute little blue eyed blond milk shake maker. We danced a few times and I asked to take her home. So this is the beginning of a life with Catherine. On April 19th, 1947 we were married at the Clark Center Lutheran Church North and West of Clark.

I was unemployed and wondering what I should do as I would soon be married and needed a full time job of some kind. Catherine's brothers, Alvin and Lester had rented 7 quarters of land and needed help with both machinery and labor. They wanted to know if I wanted to join them on a three way partnership. I joined them for one year. Catherine was not very happy as she didn't want to be a farmer's wife. She wanted to be a city gal. After a year we split up and I rented a farm N.E. of Clark. It was owned by Union Central Insurance Co. It had been repossessed from someone during the 1930's. It was during this year they decided to dispose of all their farm property and our farm was put on the market. It wasn't long and it was sold with the new owner taking possession on March 1, 1949. We looked around for another farm to rent with little luck. We found some but the buildings were poor and the land was poor. After some deliberation and understanding there wasn't a real bright future in farming and with the debt we had decided it best to sell out and look for a new adventure. Catherine was happy. I should mention that we didn't have any money and when we started farming I went to the bank and borrowed the money for the machinery we needed. Also the livestock etc. Dad borrowed us some sows so we could get into the pig business. We were to get the pigs and return the sows to Dad when the pigs were weaned. Catherine's Dad loaned us the seed we needed to plant our crops and we were to pay him back in the fall when the new crop came in. I went to the coop gas station and they agreed to charge the gas until the crop came in. I'll never understand

how the bank and the gas station were able to make those loans to us with no collateral. All we had were parent's that had a good reputation. The first year our three way partnership went good. As farming goes we had some problems, some of our land got some hail. It was late Spring so we had to work long hours to get the crop in. Alvin, Lester and I all had tractors and each of us had other equipment to give us everything we needed. In the fall the three of us plus Abel, Catherine's Dad bought a threshing machine together and had our own little threshing run. It was early fall and we got a big snow storm before we had all our corn picked. We ended up picking a lot of it by hand because we couldn't get a corn picker in the fields. Before years end we paid Dad for his sow, Abel got his seed back, the gas was paid for and the bank got the interest and principle. It wasn't all bad but it was a tough year --- no money --- barely enough for groceries. One night Catherine and Sandy and I went to Clark and all the money we had was enough to split a milk shake, and we did. We had a bank account but no money in it. Our credit was stretched to the limit but we had fun. We had a milk cow or two so we had cream to make homemade ice cream --- vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and I'm sure other flavors as well. We popped a lot of popcorn at night. We had a special kind of a oil burning space heater that had a beautiful glow to it and we used that for our fire place. We had gas lights so it was not dark in the Nelson house. We had a wash house near our kitchen door so we had our washing out there. It was a two story house so the bedrooms were up stairs. The stairs were very steep and when we went to bed at night Catherine would take one end of the bassinet, with Sandy in it and head up the stairs and I would have the other end trying to hold it high enough to keep it level. Sandy never seemed to mind as she was almost always sleeping when we made that trip. The year went fast again we had a few problems but generally had a good crop and were able to pay our bills and started to have a few bucks to spend. Eleanor was teaching school nearby so she used to come and visit often. After she and Don were married they continued to come and visit us and we went to Lester, IA. to visit them. When we sold out we paid off our loans and had a good little bit left over to start a new life in town.

I interviewed for a job with Watertown Sash and Door Co as a salesman. I was given the job and took a quick one week course. Mostly product and figuring out prices. Then had to find a car as they were hard to get yet in those days. My new boss went to work for me and found a 1949 almost new Ford. He gave the dealer, a friend of his, a listing of my military history and he gave me the best car deal of my life. I was on the road calling on lumber dealers, away from home much, much too much, but was successful in the selling game. I worked on a straight commission so if I sold a lot I made a lot. A year later we built a new house. Two years later we built a bigger nicer home. Pam and Rex had come along so we needed a bigger house. Other than being away from home to much it was a happy time. I travelled for 9 years this way and then was brought into management as the owner was getting older and wanted to spend time in Florida in the winter.

Under his direction I kind of took over. In 1962 he decided to retire and was going to sell the business. By this time his son had come into the business. He and I talked and decided to try to buy the business. We talked to the banker and he gave us the go ahead but we would need the financial help from the owner. He gave us a quick-no-said he wanted his money and wanted completely out. The son and I had talked about buying insurance policies on each other so if something happened to either

of us the survivor could handle the business. Two years later this 35 year old guy died of heart failure so if that deal would have gone through I could have paid off his dad and had the company almost debt free, but it didn't happen.

In 1962 the Watertown Sash and Door Co. was sold to the Jordon Millwork Co. in Sioux Falls a competitor of ours. The business sold with the understanding that the son of the owner would be the manager which left me wondering what I would do. The Jordon management informed me that I could stay on but would need to take a cut in pay and would be answering to the owner's son who I had trained in the business. It left me in a bad spot and I was sure a change would have to be made. I informed Jordans that I was not satisfied with the deal but also was not ready to make a immediate move and they understood. I was offered a few jobs, really some pretty attractive ones but they required moves to places out east. Chicago was one of them but we didn't want to move to Chicago. A few months went by and one day Jin Jordan came to Watertown and said they had bought the Millwork plant in Sioux City and wondered if I wanted to manage that plant. It seemed to fit and it brought my wage back to where we thought it should be. By the fall of 1962 we were in Sioux City. The business they had bought was about nothing. Most of their business was in cabinets and we were not going to handle cabinets. It was like starting a new business. It went well and a little more than a year later, May of 1964 the young manager in Watertown died of a heart attack. He was 35 years old. Again Jim Jordan came to visit with me and wondered if I would move back to Watertown and manage that plant. We had began to get used to Sioux City and like it but the change was a promotion and we decided to move back to Watertown. It was kind of like old home week but it was strange. It seemed like many of our old friends were gone or had made new relationships and we had to make new friends. Some of the old friends that we left were still there and it wasn't long and we were back in the same but different rut. I knew the customers and the business and it was easy for me. A strike by the union gave me some hurt but in the end I was a better manager because of it.

A New Job

In 1973 the Jordan Millwork Co. bought the three Dakota Sash and Door Companies. One branch in Huron, SD – one in Aberdeen, SD. – one in Fargo, ND. I was manager of the plant in Watertown and it was decided that they would put a manager in there and make me over the four North branches, Watertown, Huron, Aberdeen and Fargo. I lived in Watertown and travelled to the branches. I reported to the President in Sioux Falls. In 1975 the companies were pretty well established and the two Jordan brothers were going to retire. I was asked to move to Sioux Falls and take over the job of General Sales Manager and was promoted to executive V.P. We had branches in Omaha, Sioux City, Huron, Fargo, Aberdeen, Watertown and the main office in Sioux Falls. It required a move to Sioux Falls in the Spring of 1975. We waited until school was out to make it easier on Tom and Jody. We rented an apartment and started building a new house. This is the house we live in now in 1998. In 1986 I was made President and C.E.O and remained in that position until I retired in 1988.

Retirement

On Feb. 1st, 1988, the first of the month following my 65th birthday I retired. The company had a big retirement party for me with many of my coworkers attending. It was held in the town house party room which has since been torn down and turned into a parking lot. Retirement has been good for us for the most part. There were a few ups and downs but for the most part it has been good. A lot of family tree work and memoirs. We play golf in the summer and pool in the winter. We go to church and I got to Rotary once a week. Catherine has her clubs and various functions she goes to. We normally go south for a few weeks in the winter. We go where ever we find accommodations. We have been to Florida, Texas, Arizona, California and Hawaii. During my lifetime I have been in every State in the Union plus many of the islands in the Pacific. Also Norway, Sweden and Denmark. We have always had a big family Christmas party. When the kids were small and Catherine and my parents were alive we always made it to both places for Christmas plus our own little time together with just our family at home. When our parents passed on we started to have the big affair at our house for our kids, their spouses and the grandchildren. We continue to do that to this day. We are making plans now for 1998. We normally have the big event on Christmas Eve but not everyone can always come then. They come and go as fits their schedule and we do our best to accommodate them. This year there are two grandchildren married so that adds two to the party. I have had some good days and some bad ones. The good ones are many but here are a few #1 the day I transferred out of the infantry. #2 The day we crash landed and lived. #3 The day that I got out of the service all in one piece and alive. #4 The day I married Catherine. #5 The five days our children were born. #6 The day each of them graduated from College. #7 The days each of them married. #8 The days our grandchildren were born. #9 The day I woke up after both heart bypass operations and found out I was alive. The bad days were #1 The day they said no more pilots. #2 The day my Dad died. #3 The day my Mother died. #4 The day my brother Melvin was killed by a bull. #5 The day my sister Evelyn and brother Clarence died. #6 The day my father-in-law, Abel, died. #7 The day my mother-in-law, Clara, died. I have written my obituary but no one wants to read it. This is the end of my memoirs.

Rudy Nelson

December 18, 1998