

# Johnny T Autobiography

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## Family Tree

The Thomson family is of Scottish, Irish and English decent with grandfather arriving in the United States at age 12. He sold papers on the docks of New York City as a young boy and slowly migrated his way through New York State to Buffalo. The oldest of 13 children, he was a self made man and ended up being the Chief Engineer for General Railway Signal Company. My Grandmother Thomson was a fiery independent red headed Irish woman who, according to my father, didn't take much to my grandfathers partying. Grandfather was a member of the Shrine and my father told me it was nothing for grandfather to go out partying all night come home take off his tuxedo, put on his business suit and go to work.

Naturally, from what I can gather, the marriage wasn't a happy one and one day grandfather came home and told grandmother he had been offered a great job in Rochester, 60 miles distant but in those days, a train ride away and he wanted to move the family to Rochester. Grandmother said no way, he told her this was the opportunity of a life time and he was going to take the job with her or without her. He became the Chief Engineer of General Railway Signal Company in Rochester, New York and they never saw or talked to each other again. Grandfather paid for all of grandmothers needs but both were so stubborn that ended that. Grandfather loved to work and party and in those days companies didn't have retirement plans so at the age of 88 General Railway Signal Company created a retirement plan for him and he was forced into retirement. I can't remember how old grandmother was when she past on but she was a strong willed lady bearing three children. Aunt Katherine was the oldest, Uncle Baird and my Father, John Weston Thomson. Alex Thomson Jr. past on at 96

I never met my mother's parents since they all pass on in there 50's but the Harding's were all lawyers. There use to be portraits of my mothers father in my parents home after they retired to West Palm Beach. That portrait was of a stern man and who ever painted the portrait, painted the eyes so where ever you walked in the room those eyes would be looking at you. This in contrast to a book written by Arch Merrill Entitled " Southern Tier " who describe him as a legend in the hill country around Hume, New York.

The Hume lawyer had a flashing wit and a flair for a biting phase. He was a master of court room strategy. Harding cared not a fig for the convention. In winter he would pin up his overcoat with a huge horse –blanket pin. He chewed tobacco incessantly and his spitting precision was remarkable. He would remove his shoes in the court room, even appearing before the August Appellate Division. He was a short man, slightly built and he didn't fear judge, rival barrister, man or the devil. Once he upset a rather stuffy dinner of a bar society in the Olean House by bellowing: "Where is the water closet?"

Whenever he tried a case or presided over one, for he was a piece justice, crowds flocked from all over the countryside. And he always gave them a show. Once, a judge fined Harding \$5 for contempt of court. The lawyer had spoken most

disrespectful of the jurist. Harding forked over a \$10 bill. I said \$ 5, Lawyer Harding” said the judge. Keep it retorted Harding. “I shall probably utter another \$5 worth of contempt before this case is over”. Again when another jurist slapped a \$ 5 fine on Harding for contempt, the Hume lawyer merely said:” I will apply it on account.” It seemed the judge owed him money.””

My mother told me he ended up as the commissioner of Indian affairs for Western New York. A job, one of my mother’s cousins eventually had. We called him Uncle Harry and he called my brother and me the two Indians. Like all the Harding relatives they died early in life, all victims of heart failure. I seem to follow the Thomson side of the family. They all live very long lives and the Harding all live short lives. The men on the Harding side went bald early and the Thomson’s’ are all blessed with full heads of hair.

My father John W Thomson and my mother Myrtle Harding were both born in Buffalo and graduated from Alfred University on the Southern tier of New York State. They didn’t know each other at Alfred since my father graduated more than 4 years before my mother. A ceramic engineer by schooling, he took any job he could get when he graduated. It was the great depression years and jobs were hard to find. My mother graduated as a teacher and found employment teaching high school chemistry when they met at an Alfred University Alumni affair. They fell in love but held off marrying because if mother got married she would have to quit her job. During the depression only one person in the family could have a job. Dad finally took a job in Rochester at \$25 a week managing a bunch of gas stations and a gasoline tank farm. They got married and moved to Rochester. On March 7, 1938 John Alexander Thomson was born in Strong Memorial hospital and 2 years later on December 17, 1941 my brother Frank Harding Thomson was born into this world.

## The Early Years



Johnny T at 4 years

My earliest recollection was the house we lived in until I was 5 years old. Located on Winton Road in Rochester, there was a trolley which ran down Winton Road. The house had an old fashion Ice box and the ice man would bring ice to keep my mothers groceries cold. We had a dog named Lucky and it would follow me every where I would go. I guess I was pretty adventurous in those early years because my mother really scolded me when the street car conductor dragged me home for playing in the street on the street car tracks. Maybe it was the start of my risk taking adventures that would follow me through the years. Any way that scolding hurt since my mother and father were not parents that spared the rod and spoiled the child! My dad managed gasoline stations and the tank farm so I would go with him as he made his rounds. In the summer, gasoline was shipped in on the barge canal but in the winter the water is drained from the canal so gasoline came by tanker truck to the tank farm. Many a night, my father would bring home a stranded tanker truck driver for a hot meal and a night's sleep. Of course, I would end up sharing my bed with the truck driver. None of us would think of doing that today but that's the way it was back then. World War II was going on and most everything was rationed. I remember my mother planning her shopping using the ration books and coloring margarine for butter. We didn't have to worry about gasoline because Dad was in the business. Dad was too old for the draft so eventually he got a job with General Motors developing and making aircraft magnetos for high altitude airplanes. My father would go on to work for General Motors Delco Appliance Division until he retired.





50 Buffard Dr. - 2002

My mom and dad bought a house in a suburb of Rochester at 50 Buffard Drive and we moved in just before I turned 5. They bought 50 Buffard Drive for about \$6000 and it became the Thomson house until both Dad and Mom retired. It was great neighborhood to grow up in and is still known as the Thomson house today. In 1945 I started kindergarten at Allen Creek School. Allen Creek grade school was kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. And, along with my family, formed basis for what I have done in life and the person I came to be. Our neighbors raised there families on Buffard Drive and most sold there homes to there kids to raise there families and its still going on. The house looks better today than it ever did but I can remember helping my dad tear out the coal furnace and put in oil heat and hot water. In fact, about every 5 years we would do it again since now Dad was in charge of the home heating laboratory for Delco. He would use our house for long term testing of new furnace designs the company was working on. My brother and I were expected to pitch in and help. About the time I was in the first or second grade I fell sick with some disease that landed me in the hospital. Doctors in that day didn't know what I had but everybody was scared of Polio. I stayed in the hospital a long time and eventually got well. My fathers boss got a whole bunch of airplane pictures and had them sent to me. I was hooked and aviation would become my life for many years to come.

Now Allen Creek School was about a half mile from the house by road but if you took the old trolley tracks and followed the creek you could shorten that distance significantly. Of course, in the winter the creek would freeze and we would play a version of hockey with home sticks and a can on the frozen ice but every once in a while you would break the ice and fall in. My mother would be very unhappy with me when that happened but it didn't stop us from doing it or taking the short cut to school. One day my mother fell on

the stairs and hurt her back. In those days the doctor ordered her to bed, I use to walk home to make her lunch then I'd walk back for afternoon classes. I think this was the beginning of my like for cooking.



Johnny T visits Allen Creek School - 2002



Allen Creek School – circa 1952

We didn't have school busses or organized sports. We walked or bicycled and made up teams to play baseball in the field. In the winter, we would go sledding on the hill leading

to the creek and as I grew older, catch a neighbor's rear car bumper and slide on our feet over the snow packed Buffard Drive. Cars really had bumpers then and although it was dangerous, we were oblivious to the danger. In the summer we would make the manhole cover in front of our house as home plate and the two sewer drains up the street on either side 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base. We would find some thing to use as 2<sup>nd</sup> base and my dad would pitch the soft ball. He would do it from after dinner until we couldn't see any more. All the kids in the neighborhood would come every night and we would play work up. That is the way we started playing football but more on the later.

In the forth grade my mother started to substitute teach at several local schools. At first it was a day a week but as time went by it got more frequent. I was a poor speller and a lousy English student. She would tutor me and although I hated it was something I needed. Math, science, history and sports were my strong suits. Around the 6<sup>th</sup> grade I started to take saxophone lessons and my mother thought I was going to be a music prodigy. So instead of just playing just the Sax, Mom sent me to the Eastman School of music for Clarinet lessons. I was never any good but she thought I was. The older I got the more sports played in my life and eventually I talked my mother into giving up the clarinet. I really had no talent. I was a much better football player and swimmer. I did the Cub and Boy Scout thing. At 11 I went to Boy Scout camp and learned how to swim well. At 12, I was in Algonquin Park in Canada, canoeing, portaging, swimming and living in the wild. After canoeing all day we would swim a mile just for fun. At 13, I was in Timagami Lake 40 miles out in the outback of northern Canada canoeing, portaging and swimming. My brother, I and 6 other 13 year olds along with a senior in high school as guide, learned how to live off the land and survive. It was a great experience. What we lived on was what we could catch and carry with us. It was great.

My seventh grade year was a disaster, I didn't do well and worse, I got my mother for a substitute teacher. She was tough and all the kids new it was my mother. Did she ever pick on me but in hind site, I deserved it. I was surprised when I got promoted to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, even if it was conditionally. At least I was able to recover in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and did really well. I passed all my State regents exams. Life was good. And best of all freshman high school football was coming up.

Before I head to High school let me digress to football and how I and my classmates got started. One of my classmates father by the named of Mr. Halaby got it going. His oldest son was a star for Brighton High School. His next youngest son, Sam Halaby, was in my class. We only had 25 in our class and half were girls so Mr. Halaby started helping us organize sandlot football games. We would play in the school field. Now nobody had a full uniform. Sam had a helmet, shoulder pads and cleats, I had a helmet, but the star was a guy named Kenney Stewart. Sam's father got Kenny a pair of cleats and Kenny made himself some shoulder pads out of cardboard. We would play tackle football and then we got a game with the junior Varsity at the private high school not very far from where Allen Creek was. We 7<sup>th</sup> graders played there junior varsity and we won. The next year the school was so embarrassed they let us play the Varsity. As 8<sup>th</sup> graders we beat their Varsity 55 to 0. We had no equipment to speak of but no one got hurt and we thought of



ourselves as good athletes and looked forward to high school football.

## Brighton High



Brighton High was about 3 miles from the house on 50 Buffard Drive and there was a school bus that would take you from the old fire house to school and back. At 14 we couldn't drive so most days we would hitch hike up Elmwood Avenue to school and back again after football practice. I was a small guy by today's standards but I was growing about 4 inches and adding 20 pounds a year. I played center on offense and line backer on defense. My dad would come to the games and critique my play. Needless to say you were never a hero in my house. I loved to play and during one game someone came to me and told me one of the cheer leaders wanted to meet me. I really didn't know about girls and was embarrassed but went along with meeting her. She introduced me to her friends and I became a part of the sports oriented society of Brighton High. I was no star but I was good enough to stay on with the varsity after freshman football season was over. I think I was used as target practice for the varsity during scrimmages. The freshman that stayed with the varsity would become the nucleus for the best football team to ever play for Brighton High.

Academics were still a problem for me and I struggled to stay eligible for sports. Once again English was my problem. I made my letter in swimming that first year and the swimming team was undefeated, as it was all 4 years. Never the star, I did manage to make the county championship swim meet every year. I made it through that freshman year and the academics started becoming easier. I did really well in the math and sciences had a girl friend during football season and Brighton became the center of my life. Most of all it was football that made me click.

Sophomore year brought a new football coach. He was tough and he made us work. I

was lucky to become the starting Center. We were 5 and 3 that year followed by 6 and 2 the next year. I played defense end my junior year and when we became seniors coach moved me to starting right tackle and starting defensive end. Our senior year we went 8 and 0 and became the only undefeated untied team to ever play for Brighton High. There were some great athletes on that team and I was proud to be among them. Somehow my grades improved each year and though I was never going to be Valedictorian. I was doing well. I bought my first car at 17. It was a 1949 Mercury that an old lady had owned. I lowered it and put fender skirts on it. It looked like the James Dean car in "Rebel with out a Cause". It was a great car except I kept dropping the transmission second gear. So I got very use to getting used transmissions from the junk yard and installing them. My whole senior year was great and so I graduated with way over the Regents credits required by the State of New York.

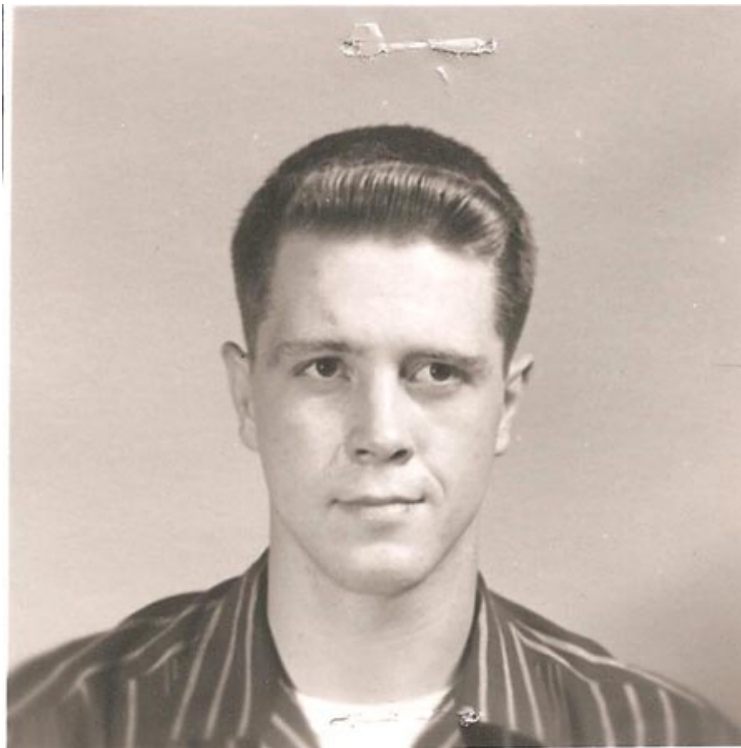
## College

I really hadn't thought much about college and my parents didn't have a lot of money to send me. I was too small to play football in college although Ithaca College showed and interest. I knew that if I was going to go to college it would have to be on my own. As I have mentioned before, I wasn't a great student but was very good in the math and sciences. So I took an entrance exam to General Motors Institute (GMI). GMI was a co-op plan where you would go to Flint, Michigan and attend classes in mechanical engineering followed by 8 weeks working in your sponsoring plant. To this day I don't know how I did it but I aced the entrance exam. My sponsoring plant became Delco, where my father worked and what an experience it would be.

My first summer out of high school, I worked for a master tool and die maker. He would take the engineering drawings and build the dies so that the punch presses would stamp exactly what the designing engineer had drawn. He was a true artist in shaping metal. He was a craftsman and a pleasure to work for. He had several apprentice working for him and I was his go for. Summer was over so it was off to Flint, Michigan for 8 weeks of classes and laboratory studies. We were all working toward a Bachelor of Science, Mechanical Engineering. Before you new it, you were back in the plant then off again to Flint. The next summer I worked on a production line. I had the only male job on the line. There were 20 women on one side of me and 20 on the other. My job was to put 3 self tapping machine screws in the cover plate of the 1958 Chevrolet electric windshield wiper. For the first twenty minutes it was hard to keep up with the line as 7 and ½ wipers came down the assembly line every minute. Then I got the hang of it and the ladies of the line accepted the new kid. I was 19 years old and prime meat for the ladies of the line. What an education! I promised myself that I would never work another production type job ever. I always liked going to the production plant but never would I work a line and do the same thing over an over day after day. Two years went by and then the recession of 1958 hit full force. Delco went from 5,500 employees to under 1,500 and the unions were demanding that students were taking union jobs. The company decided some students should go. Unfortunately or maybe fortunately, I was let go. The problem was no job equaled no school which translated to unemployed and out of college. The good side was Delco paid me good money while I was in the plant and I had saved as much as

I could. My mother and father were very upset. My Dad was so upset he wrote me a letter telling me how I had disgraced the family. I didn't see it that way so I went on with my life and proceeded to get accepted at Parks School of Aviation Technology, St Louis University. I also got a job designing tools and dies while awaiting the New Year at Parks to begin. When the time came, I quit my design job and drove to St Louis.

I was able to transfer a lot of credits from GMI to Parks and I melded into the Parks routine with ease. A lot of my friends at Parks were Veterans of Korea using their GI Bill benefits. College was their future and we studied hard. My grades went up and up. I was in aviation and happy. Two and a half years later, I graduated with my Bachelors of Science in Aeronautics. Along the way, I met a lady from Tullahoma, Tennessee by the name of Maxie Charlene Spencer. She was a registered nurse and moved to St Louis so we could be close. I was interviewing for jobs but since I had not served my country, companies would not hire me. In addition my draft board in Rochester told me not to make plans after March 1961. This meant I was draft bait. One day walking down the campus toward the student Union, the Navy had signs out saying come fly in the Navy. So begins a new chapter of my life. I took their flight test and I was on a flight to Naval Air Station Olathe Kansas for a flight physical and swearing in ceremony.



Dec 1960 – Joined the Navy

I graduated from college in December 1960, took 2 weeks off and reported for active duty at Pensacola Naval Air Station in the Aviation Officers Candidate Program. Now I don't know if anyone reading this has seen the movie "An Officer and Gentleman" but the truth is the real story takes place in Pensacola and the girls come from the box factory in Mobile and my drill sergeant name was Montilione. The training was a shock. Having

studied aviation the academics were easy for me but the physical and military education was hard. I can swim like a fish and had to help my classmates through the Academics and swimming but the running and obstacle course were hard for a guy with short legs. We all worked together and in April 1961, I was commissioned at Ensign in the United States Naval Reserve One week after commissioning Maxie Charlene Spencer became Mrs. John A Thomson in a formal military marriage ceremony in Pensacola Florida.

## **Navy Years**

First I was station at the Basic Naval Flight Officers School at the air field aboard Naval Air Station Pensacola.



Newly commissioned  
Ensign Johnny T

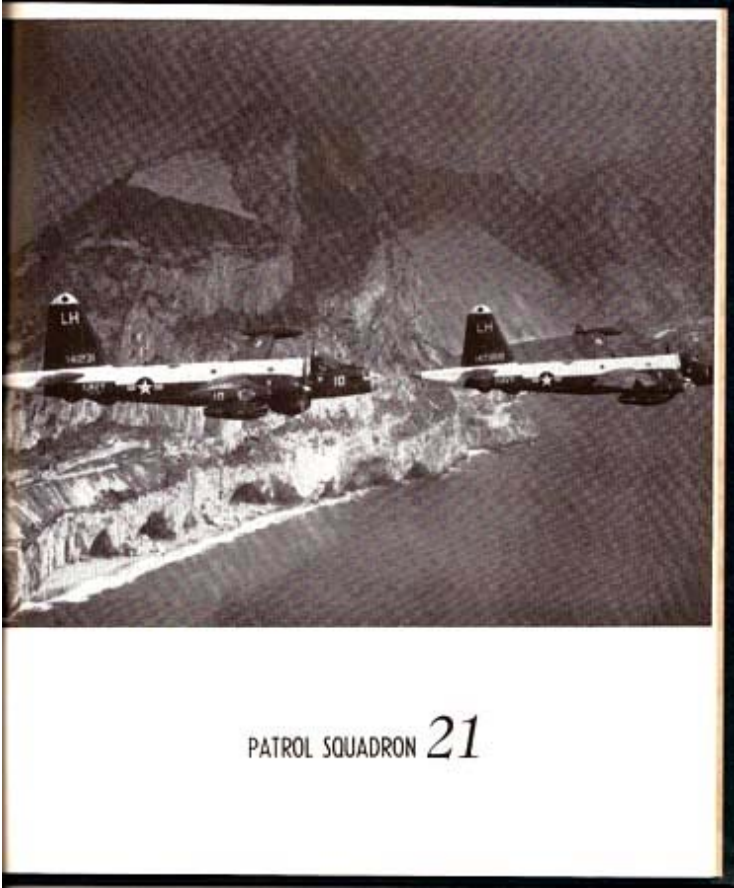
We learned engines and airplanes and the rudimentary basics of instruments and navigation. We would take day flights in all sorts of airplanes from a small twin engine Piper to a T-34 to a T-28 to T-33 jet trainer. All of this was to weed out who had the ability and what airplane type you would end up in. I ranked number 3 in my class so I got my first choice. I had always wanted to fly multi engine patrol airplanes while most guys wanted to go jets. I figured that the jets landed and took off from aircraft carriers and they were always gone overseas. Being a newly married man, I thought the patrol planes were land based so I would be home more often. What a wrong assumption that was! Navy stands for haze gray and underway and the Navy had patrol Planes stationed

in such places as Bermuda, Hawaii, Japan and other exotic places. Certainly I would look good on the beaches of Hawaii. All I had to do was be number one in all the schools and I would get my choice, right.

Next was Corpus Christi Texas for advanced Navigation Training. It was back to ground school learning instrument flying and celestial navigation. At one time I knew the names and how to find 58 navigational stars all over the world. We would fly the R4D at night all over the United States navigating by the stars. Corpus to Tampa to Minneapolis to San Francisco. We had a ball. One time in Alameda, outside of San Francisco, a hurricane came close to Corpus Christi so we had to stay in California. So we six officers went into San Francisco and saw the Smothers brothers, comedian Bill Cosby and several other acts in little clubs. They were all just beginning their careers and so were we. Of course, long distance phone calls were very expensive so we had to rely on the Navy wives to take care of themselves. None of us made any money and most of what we made went in allotments to the wives. I made \$222 per month plus \$100 Flight pay. I did get a subsistence allowance and a housing allowance but that was about an extra \$100 a month. I kept \$5 of my salary plus my flight pay. The rest went to the wife. Charley as Maxie Charlene was known was a pretty dependent lady in those days so it was a big shock to all of a sudden becoming the bill payer and managing the family funds. Still the wives banded together and made it through.

With navigation training completed, it was off to Glynco Georgia for what was called CIC School. We learned about Operation orders, radar intercepts and how the Navy carried out operations at sea. We lived on St Simons Island and one week we had a terrific ice storm come through. Our little 2 bedroom duplex had gas heat and all the other Navy Officer families had electric. Of course all electric lines were down so everybody came to our house and we survived. That's what kept everybody together. The Navy was a family and we all sank or swam together. One day, my orders came and they said Patrol Squadron 21 in Brunswick Maine. Charley cried like a baby. She was a woman from Tennessee and Maine was cold and snow. What ever happened to those sunny beach days in Hawaii, Bermuda, etc? Funny, how the Navy always placed its needs first. Before you can go the Brunswick, there were two more stops to make. First was to Norfolk to learn about Antisubmarine warfare on the ground and in the simulator, that was about 8 weeks and then on to Jacksonville Florida for replacement air group training. Charley was good at getting things packed and unpacked and she learned how to cope with our budget and living conditions. We always seemed to find a small apartment that did the job. Some were nicer than others but we made do. I finally got to a real P2V-7 and we went back to ground school but this time we were actually out flying the airplane and forming a crew. I guess we were in Jacksonville for about 12 weeks before I graduated and started our trek to Brunswick Maine. Charley had broken her arm in an officers/wives softball game. She was a trooper and we stopped to see her folks in Tullahoma and mine in Rochester before reporting to VP-21.





**VP 21 Crew 11**

Let me take a second to explain what a P2V-7 was. The P stood for Patrol 2 was the second model Lockheed Aircraft had supplied to the Navy. V stood for Lockheed

Aircraft and the 7 was the seventh version of the model. The P2 was called the Neptune and she was born just after World War II. Originally designed with 2 3350 cubic inch reciprocating engines she held the long distance record for propeller planes up until the 70's. As the airplane got heavier and heavier because all the antisubmarine equipment that was added, the Navy added 2 J-35 Westinghouse jet engines to the wings so that the airplane had enough power to get airborne and to meet single engine requirements. She was a collection of add-ons but she was a great bird with an excellent radar and antisubmarine detection equipment. Those reciprocating engines put out 3350 horsepower which equates to 1 horsepower per cubic inch. A full load of fuel could last up to 18 hours of flight time which gave the plane long legs for patrol work.

It was a balmy July day in 1962 when I reported to VP-21 or at least by Brunswick standards it was balmy. There was one job in the squadron I was afraid of. It was called Registered Publication Custodian. These were the code books and to misplace one would send you to jail in a heart beat. The first thing I found out was that I was the most junior officer in the squadron. I met the Executive Officer and you guessed it, I was going to be the squadrons new Registered Publications Officer and to make matters worse, I was going to escape and evasion school. Well shortly after getting our apartment settled, I was off for a week in Newport Rhode Island for RPS school and then 10 days of being chased by the Marines at escape and evasion school in the Rangeley Mountains. You only had to go through escape and evasion school once and I made sure the letter of graduation never left my personal record. Once again it was pass or lose your wings and several officers did lose theirs. I lost 17 pounds in those 10 days but all those years of canoeing and living in the outback of Canada saved my butt. I really didn't know how tough I was until that experience. Finally I was in the squadron for good and I was flying regular patrols and chasing submarines. We would work with U.S. submarines to practice our skills. My crew was doing well and we were confident. Around September, the squadron Commanding Officer held quarters with all hands present in told us to get our affairs in order and to have a bagged packed. No one knew what was up but we all complied.

Some where along the line Charley announced she was pregnant and was do in January. Also the squadron announced we would be deploying to Sigonella Sicily in January. A house on base opened up and we moved on base. Moving on base was great for us since it meant Charley would have neighbors that were part of the Navy family in Brunswick and she wouldn't have to worry about the heat or hot water not working. Our neighbors were all in squadrons, some deployed and some not. Everybody looked out for each other and that was a big load off our minds. She had a local doctor who must have delivered 90 % of the babies born in Brunswick. One day in October, I flew down to Norfolk to pick up a newly modified P2V-7 that had just come out of the Norfolk overhaul and repair facility. That night we walked into the Bachelor Officer Quarters at Naval Air Station Norfolk and President Kennedy was just starting a speech to the nation. We watched in amazement as he spoke about the missiles in Cuba. We immediately went over to Headquarters, Patrol Wings Atlantic, to see where we should take the new P2V-7. We were told to take it to Brunswick even though we knew the squadron had deployed somewhere. The next morning we flew the airplane back to Brunswick only to find one crew and one airplane in Brunswick. I quickly went home got my gear and was off to

Argentina Newfoundland. The Cuban Missile Crisis was on and we were right in the middle of it.

The Navy had formed an antisubmarine barrier that stretched from Newfoundland to the Azores. We were part of the Navy Quarantine the President had ordered. Defense Condition 3 (DEFCON 3) had been set and our airplanes were armed and ready. We were patrolling for the Russian surface ships and submarines that maybe headed south to test the Quarantine the president had set. When the Soviet Union backed down and the missiles were removed we stayed in Argentina to follow those ships carrying the missiles and the submarines back to Russia. Not a shot was fired and the world returned to peace and we reduced readiness to DECON 5. Around December 6<sup>th</sup> the squadron returned to Brunswick to prepare for deployment in early January. I was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade and as I remember, my parents came to Brunswick for Christmas. As scheduled, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, we left for Sigonella Sicily. To get to Sigonella was a 4 day trip. First to Argentina, then to the Azores, then Rota Spain and on to Sigonella.

We worked with the sixth Fleet in Mediterranean and spent time in Sardinia, Crete, Morocco, and Libya. Three events were note worthy on that deployment. On January 24, 1963, I received a telegram that Diane Spencer Thomson was born. Communications in those days were almost impossible and we all depended on letters. There was an ability to call but the cost was \$20 a minute through the Italian phone system but 90% of the time the call was unintelligible. Or in case of emergency, the Navy's Class E telegram system. We stayed in touch with letters and the wives at home took care of each other. The second note worthy event was I got a chance to spend a few days in Rome, great city. I walked every where. If you can talk with your hands you don't need to know Italian. Third was a short 2 week trip to Nurasur Morocco in support of Project Mercury. We were the primary location platform if the Mercury capsule had to abort on take off or over shot during reentry. Fortunately neither happened so we got to spend a day in Casablanca and another day sipping sherry in a bodega outside Rota Spain. Finally on June 4 we returned to Brunswick. The reunion with Charley was great and Diane was beautiful in mind, attitude and looks. Charley and I got away to Quebec City for a little one on one time.

We flew out of Brunswick until December 1963 when we sent a 3 aircraft detachment to Key West for patrols around Cuba. Everyday a crew would launch to recon all the shipping lanes leading to the Northern side of Cuba. We would take pictures down low of every Soviet ship. We weren't supposed to go inside the 3 mile limit but we did on occasions. Those patrols were always guarded by an alert F4 fighter squadron out of Key West. One day you would fly a patrol, the next would be a ground duty day and the next you would stand the ready duty. Normally you could figure launching the ready duty and logging about 20 Hours flight time every 2 days. I think the highest month I ever flew was around 150 Hrs. You are one tired animal when you do that for a couple of months. The P2V-7 was not pressurized nor air conditioned. Temperatures would run about 100+ degrees every day inside the airplane. I spent Christmas day in Key West that year. Finally, we were relieved of the Key West detachment and returned to Brunswick.

Squadron life went on with exercises in Puerto Rico, Keflavik, Iceland and another 6 month 6 plane detachment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Keflavik exercise lasted a month and I got into Baillie Kelly Northern Ireland. Tensions were high among the IRA and the protestants but we stayed as far removed as we could. We had fun but always were professional. I was the Communications officer in the Squadron now and one day came back from a flight to find some Commander had called me from Washington. I called him and he told me he was getting ready to write my orders out of the Navy. I had forgotten about my Navy Reserve contract and he was correct. He told me I had a wonderful record and didn't want to lose me. It sounded like another recruiter line to me but I told him I would discuss it with the bride and let him know real soon. I had the option to get out and start a civilian career or extent on active duty indefinitely and apply for augmentation into the regular Navy. Charley and I discussed it and we knew our second child was due March 1965. She had grown to love Brunswick and was now a pretty independent woman.

I really liked what I was doing so I extended indefinitely and applied for augmentation to the regular Navy. I was selected for Navy Postgraduate School in Monterey California so we knew what our future was. The patrols and exercises went on and I was promoted to full Lieutenant. While on an exercises in Puerto Rico in March 1965, Charley brought Lori Lynn Thomson into the world. I had talked to her, on the phone, the night before and she said she felt fine. I told her we were scheduled to fly home the next day but Lori wouldn't wait. When I landed the next day from our final flight in Puerto Rico the duty officer told me I was a father again. He told me that my crew was released to fly back to Maine just as soon as we got some crew rest. Naturally, it was free Rum night at the officers club, so I sent the crew to bed and proceeded to the club for a little celebration. I arrived in Brunswick with a bad hang over and went immediately to the hospital to see Charley and Lori. I arrived in my sweaty, stinking flight suit and in need of a shave. Charley said she didn't know had a tougher time me or her!

The final couple of months in the squadron were anti climatic and so we packed our belongings and headed for California. It must have been some site. Charley changing Loris' diapers, as we were going down the road, to Diane throwing her shoes out the rear window. No air conditioning so we drove while it was cool in the early morning and stopped early so we all could get a swim. We went to Yellowstone and enjoyed our trip.

VP-21 was a great squadron and there were some really smart people in it. Four of my squadron mates would go on to make Admiral. Usually the whole Patrol Aviation community may have one officer get selected to Admiral but for one squadron have 4 make Admiral was unheard of.

The Naval Postgraduate Scholl Monterey is a beautiful place and is suppose to be a respite from the operational requirements of the at sea forces. In Navy terms it's called short duty. Unfortunately no one told the professors. They thought we were the next PHDs. I remember going to my first Calculus class and the book was the same one I had used at Parks. The professor started on about page 400 which is where we stopped in undergraduate school. It had been 5 years since I saw that Calculus book and it certainly wasn't on my mine for the past 5 years. I was in the Aeronautical Engineering program

and that was pretty much the theory side. I struggled for grades, but found time to improve my golf game and take the family camping in the redwoods of California. I was into rocket propulsion systems. Finally after 2 years I got another Aeronautical engineering degree and orders to VP-44 in Patuxent River Maryland. We packed up and headed east.

Once again it was back to Norfolk for fleet replacement training and then to Patuxent River for fleet replacement air group training and on to VP-44. We bought our first house in Lexington Park just outside of Naval Air Station Patuxent River. This time I was flying the P3 Orion. This airplane was pressurized, air conditioned and cruised at 330 knots. Normal operations were to go out to on station at 22,000 feet. When the airplane got light enough we would shut down number 4 engine and do are high altitude search on 3 engines. When we burned off fuel to 2 engine weight we would shut down the number 1 engine and fly around on 2 engines. If we got contact and started to localize the target we would descend and under 5000 feet we would start number 1 and 4 engines so we had all four on the line as we localized. The P3 is a wonderful airplane with speed, endurance and the sensor equipment to locate, track and kill submarines if needed.







#### VP-44 1968

VP-44 was the leading squadron for tactics development in the Atlantic fleet when I joined it. We deployed to Iceland in September and spent the winter there. Keflavik is a strange place in the winter. It's dark all the time and that plays strange tricks on your mind. Everybody walks around like they need to go get some sleep. The last time I had been in Keflavik, it was summer and the sun never set. You had to put on your sun glasses when leaving the Officers club at midnight. In the winter, you never needed sun glasses. In the same club, the Icelandic band played "Hey Jude" by the Beatles. They played it so often that we called it the Icelandic national anthem. In Iceland we used to say there was a girl behind every tree. In fact, Keflavik was built on a lava field and there were no trees. However, Ríkefjavík, the Nations capitol had lots of trees. But there was a curfew for American service man in Iceland so we didn't get much time to go partying. We flew and as far as chasing Soviet submarines was concern, it was the mother lode. One day above the arctic circle, one of my acoustic operators called contact on a Soviet Yankee class submarine. He said the Yankee was surfacing. We immediately homed in on the buoy, losing altitude as fast as we could. We broke out of the overcast just in time to catch the submarine on the surface. As soon as he saw us he crashed dived and the chase was on. We made our contact reports and tracked him until we were running low on fuel then diverted to Bodø Norway. Keflavik launched the ready duty airplane and the squadron tracked that submarine for days. The Yankee was the Soviet equivalent to our Polaris Missile boats so keeping tabs on the Yankee were of primary national importance. My crew tracked many Soviet submarines during this deployment. One day we started tracking what became the first Soviet task group, made up of surface ships and submarines, to go to the Persian Gulf. We didn't know where they were going at first but we made contact north of Iceland and stayed with them until we could not go out on

station and have enough fuel to return to Iceland. So we would go out on station and recover at Lajes in the Azores. Then it was out of Lajes to the Canary Islands and the Canary Islands to Ascension Island in the South Atlantic and finally to Kinchasa in the Congo. We were preparing to fly across Africa and pick them up as they rounded Cape Horn when we were relieved on station by a South African Shackelton patrol plane. We found out later that the Navy deployed another P3 squadron to the Middle East to finish the job we started. This was fun and I will never forget a couple of experiences.

The first was when we landed in the Canary Islands. The Canary Islands were Portuguese and the Portuguese soldiers met our P3 with guns drawn. They rushed aboard the P3 and immediately ran to the back of the airplane. We weren't armed and didn't speak Portuguese but we did have a second flight engineer who was from Puerto Rico and did speak Spanish. Finally we figured out what they wanted. It turned out that, the government of Portugal had sent the tons of canned goods but no can openers. We had kitchen facilities on board and cooked regularly but on this flight we had box lunches prepared in Lajes. Each box lunch has a John Wayne can opener in it. The can openers were about 2 inches long and so the name John Wayne from the effort required to open a can with it. We rounded up just about all the can openers on board and gave them to the Portuguese troops. The guns went away and we got all the fuel we needed. Need less to say we got on the radio and told the next crew to bring can openers!

The second experience was coming off station and flying to Kinchasa Congo. We had been brief to pick out a low frequency radio beacon at the mouth of the Congo river and due not fly on the north side of the river because it was a different Nation and they would try to shoot us down. Naturally, the radio beacon wasn't working, so using our sensors on board the P3 we navigated our selves to Kinchasa. When we landed, we were met by our Military attaché and he was pissed. I gathered that our military in Washington had not informed the State department that we were coming and we had embarrassed our ambassador. This was a National incident that required me to do a lot of talking but eventually everybody relaxed and we had a nice night in Kinchasa.

Finally, we had been flying our P3 every day for a week and were getting desperate for some parts, mostly relating to navigation equipment. It wasn't like today where we have GPS and very good inertial systems. The early P3 inertial systems gave you a great heading reference but were poor in determining position. We used a Doppler system to determine wind at altitude and as we left Kinchasa for Ascension Island the Doppler system broke. The next thing we received a message that our relief airplane was broke in Ascension and we had to go back out on station and visit our Soviet task force. All we had for navigation was the sextant and dead reckoning. We found the Soviets and radioed there position and the turned for Ascension. Using the sextant we shot the sun which gave us course lines so we knew we were headed toward Ascension. Problem was we had no idea of where we were on that course line. Our Estimated time of arrival (ETA) came and went with no sign of how far Ascension Island was. We locked onto the low frequency radio beacon out of Ascension which confirmed our course and searched with our radar. Finally one and a half hours after our ETA we landed in Ascension. We were pretty shook and had to revise our position of the Soviets to the Navy. This drew the

Admirals attention. After review of our navigation logs by our superiors we were congratulated for doing well with what we had.

We retraced our steps back to Iceland and went back on patrol for Soviet submarines. Late on a night patrol my non acoustic operator informed me he had intercepted a Soviet submarine radar signal and gave us a bearing. We tri-angled the signal and went low to identify. We had just found six soviet submarines going north. They had been a part of the Soviet force in the Mediterranean and were on the way home. We painted 11 soviet submarine decals on our nose wheel door that deployment and gained a reputation as the best antisubmarine crew in the squadron. We came home to Patuxent River, took some leave with the family and started working up for the next deployment to Sigonella Sicily.

After operational and administrative inspections and several exercises we prepared to make the first P3 deployment to Sigonella. I was on the advanced party so I went over on an Air Force C-141 a week ahead of the squadron's deployment date. It was the fall of 1969 and my tour with VP-44 was supposed to be up in January 1970. We got everything ready for the squadron including flight operations with the Italians. Sigonella had always had the P2V Neptune's deployed there but all the P2V Squadrons were transitioning to the P3 so we had to invent new operations procedures and work them out with the Italians and their air space. Late one Sunday afternoon my crew got launched with the Captain of the squadron on board. We were off to find the first Soviet helicopter carrier entering the Mediterranean from the black sea through the Dardanelle Straits. It was dark when we arrived on station and we were flying low among the islands between Greece and Turkey coast. It was hair raising but we found our target and waited for the sun to rise so we could photograph the ship. Once we got our pictures another squadron P3 relieved us and we landed in Athens for fuel and rest. Now I knew why the Captain had come along. I enjoyed Athens and had my first Matakka sour and bought my first Flakati rug. Then it was back to Sigonella. One night I was standing the Command Duty Officer watch in the Operation Control Center (OPCON) when the telephone rang. It was my counterpart in Naples informing me I had just been promoted to Lieutenant Commander. The next week my orders came in assigning me to Commander Patrol Wings Atlantic as the Anti Submarine Warfare (ASW) Training Officer. This meant I was to be responsible for training all the crews in the Atlantic Fleet. At that time there were 12 squadrons with 12 crews each to train. I had my ideas on how to improve training ranging from required exercises to a new tactics manual to a new readiness system to overhauling how the operational exercise was conducted. I kept my ideas to myself because I knew change is not generally accepted at first.

I caught a 707 out of Rome and landed in New York. I was in uniform and as I went through customs I remember the customs agent saying welcome home. I caught the flight to Washington where Charley and the kids met me. It was a great home coming. We sold the house, took some leave and arrived in Norfolk to start another assignment. This was supposed to be a 2 year tour so we bought a new house in Virginia Beach and I reported for duty. The Operations Readiness Officer was a crusty old Captain who took a liking to me. He would tutor me on how the Admiral wanted his messages written and I would tell him about my ideas on how to modernize our training program. Finally one day he told

me to go ahead and start developing my thoughts with solid concrete proposals. I now wondered if I had put my foot in my mouth. I developed my thoughts and he got the squadrons to critique my ideas. Soon we had a new system to measure Squadron readiness, a new series of exercises that each crew had to perform efficiency in, a Standardized Tactics manual and a new method of conducting a total squadron operational readiness inspection. Captain Kolda, My crusty Captain, retired and Captain Mulloy took his place. Years before, I had flown with Captain Mulloy and observed his crew on one of the older exercises. It was my first experience in a P3 and I was impressed with his crew. He was a forward thinker and he indorsed my efforts. One day while flying up to some affair in Patuxent River, the Admiral told me the Staff was being transferred to Brunswick Maine and he asked me if I would like to go with him. It would be a one year assignment. I said yes. Once again we sold the house and I rented a house in South Harpswell Maine. It was over looking Casco Bay and the lobster fisherman would wake us up as they tended there traps early in the morning. Diane and Lori went to a 4 room school house and it wasn't unusual to see dear and moose in the front yard. It was great year but then one day I received quick orders to become the Communications Officer, USS Franklin D Roosevelt (CVA-42). Once again we packed and moved. This time Charley did all of it on her own. The ship was home ported in Mayport Florida but aircraft carriers do not spend much time in home port. After a quick course in carrier communications, I drove my Volkswagen to Mayport. I got a few days to get Charley and the family on base housing; I was off to the ship. Charley was starting to get tired of all the moving and she didn't have the aviation support structure to help her. I told her this was going to be our roughest assignment.

I flew into Philadelphia to catch a TWA charter to Rota Spain. On the flight to Spain, I was sitting next to a Lieutenant who introduced him self as LT. Blank. I asked him where he was headed and he informed me he was going to the USS Franklin D Roosevelt as the Assistant Communications Officer. I said, "Shake hands with your new boss and what have we inherited". I explained by background and how I had received immediate orders to FDR.



The Franklin D. Roosevelt - 1972

He informed me that he had 29 years communications experience in the Navy and was going to be with me for a year and then retire. All his experience made me feel better but I still wondered what had happened aboard ship to create this situation. It wouldn't take me long to find out.

As we landed in Rota Spain we found a Navy C-2-A waiting for Lt Blank and myself. With no rest or a shave we flew out to the carrier and landed aboard. I was met by the Executive Officer who welcomed me aboard and promptly said I needed to get down to Main Communications and get started. I told Lt Blank to get cleaned up and I would meet him in Main Comm. One of my radioman took my gear to my new stateroom and I was off to work. It turned out Roosevelt had a Flag Admiral aboard and the flag communicator was trying to run the show. I met my Master Chief and he gave me the story of what had happened. It turned out that the former Communications Officer had a break down and his assistant retired on the spot. This created a power vacuum and the flag communicator saw an opportunity to run the ships Communications department without having to work with the other ships department heads. What a mess and the big question was how to get the flag confidence back with out getting caught up in the politics. I met with Lt Blank, my other officers and the Chiefs. They all had problems and some had suggestions.



USS FDR Communications Officers and CPOs.

We developed a plan and implemented it. It was my job to protect the troops from outside influence. This meant both Ships Company and the Flag. Lt Blank and the Master Chief fixed the internal operations of the Communications Department. I was the junior department head on board so it was easy to tell where I ate in the Officers mess. Department Heads eat in a special section of the Ward room with the Executive Officer



(XO). After dinner, there was a Department heads meeting where each department briefs the XO on what was going on. The XO sat at the head of the table and Department heads seated by seniority. Being the junior department head, I was at the end of the line which usually equated to the other end of this long table directly facing the XO. At first, the senior department heads tried to place as much blame on the communication department as they could. Normally that would come from the Chief Engineer, Supply officer and the Operations Officer and in some ways it was there way of testing me. I held my own with both the flag and the department heads and the department started to really perform. I became a Command Duty Officer (in-port) and the XO started to take notice of me. One day he came to me and asked why I wasn't on the bridge at night, learning how to conn the ship along side the oilers and supply ships. I informed him, I had approached the Navigation Officer on the subject and was told the he had to get all the squadron Commanding Officers qualified first and because I was so junior, it probably wouldn't happen. The Next night, I was on the watch bill to conn along side. The Captain sat behind me and explained to me it was just like flying in formation and a matter of small corrections to keep the ship 90 to 110 feet abreast of the oiler and on speed. In other words, it was a relative motion problem and I had natural ability. Because I was the junior I always got the last watch which meant I got to practice the emergency break away maneuver. Later I got to make approaches to the oilers and Supply ships and the captain qualified me as a Command Duty Officer (Underway).



### **Conning USS FDR alongside**

My work day at sea consisted of 18 hour work days with two 3 hour naps. Usually 3-6 PM and 3-6 AM. We returned to Mayport, did some ship maintenance and started work ups for our next deployment In September 1973 we departed again for the Mediterranean. We relieved the USS John F Kennedy in Rota and started working with the Sixth Fleet. We stopped in Barcelona Spain for liberty and I and a fellow officer went to a little town south of Barcelona for 2 days liberty. The next morning the local Spanish papers showed pictures of tanks and airplanes burning and from my limited Spanish I recognized it was

Israel and Egypt going at it. Thus began the Yon Kipper War. We grabbed the next train back to Barcelona and caught the last liberty boat back to the ship. We were underway for 43 days. We took on many A-4s in addition to our normal air wing. These airplanes were destined for the Israeli Air Force. Flown by qualified US Navy pilots, they would land, spend the night and our F-4s would escort them toward Israel or until the Israeli F-4s picked up the escort duties and safely got them to Israel. The pilots would get aboard an empty US Air Force C-5 or C-141 and return to the States for another airplane. Slowly Israel started to get the advantage. Once again we were head to head with the Soviets and the DEFCON went from 5 to 3. My communications department processed over 100,000 messages and we were tired. Finally the war was over and DEFCON was eased to 4. The ship went to Athens for some rest and recreation or so we thought. Arriving in Athens, we had a couple of great days but then the Greeks decided to overthrow their government. Tear gas was flying in downtown Athens so we gathered our crewmates and went to sea again. We had a port visit in Naples and in late December went To Barcelona to spend the holidays. Charley flew over but it was not a happy reunion. She had had enough and tried to tell me but I would hear of it. After she left, the letters stopped arriving. I knew where my marriage was headed and so did my friend, the XO. I kept doing my job as I knew the ship was scheduled to return to Mayport in March. Then one day I got a telegram from some woman I didn't know saying her husband and Charley were playing house. I was devastated so I conferred with the XO and he sent me home on emergency leave to find Charley and more important, the kids. I arrived in Mayport to find everything gone from the house except my old Volkswagen. I got a hold of a Navy friend and he took me in while I found Charley, the kids and a good lawyer. We went through some marriage counseling but it was over. I took over as Officer in Charge of newly reporting personal and became the Command Duty Officer as the ship steamed into Mayport. I will never forget standing at attention, saluting the Admiral as he walked up to welcome the ship home. While I was standing there with the ships Commanding Officer, he said to me "John its nice to have you back, the XO and I both missed you."

We stayed in Mayport for 4 weeks and the left for Philadelphia and long needed yard period. We carried our cars onboard and it was a new beginning for me. The divorce was final but at least Charley and I saw to it that the children would not be a problem. My new assistant had some ideas for modernizing our old communications facilities. We couldn't get funding for the have the ship yard do the work so we did it ourselves. We got permission to get modern equipment off the recently moth balled communication ship Annapolis and tore out main Comm. Then we built new racks, rewired the entire place and installed the new equipment. When we needed a welder we would trade some of our coffee supplies with the ship yard workers. My troops were experts at getting things done for nothing. When it was all done and the ship had new balance propellers and bottom paint plus a new coat of paint topside we looked good. The 3 star Admiral from Commander Naval Air Forces Atlantic (COMNAVAIRLANT) came for a visit and he made it a point to come see my department's new spaces. He said some good words for all my men to hear. Finally we left Philadelphia and headed back to Mayport. Along the way, we conducted sea trials and found out the ship could do 33 knots on six boilers which is about what it would do on all 12 boilers before our yard period. The first time

we went along side an oiler we found we had to rewrite our procedures because the ship would not slow down as fast as it use to. One night the Admirals promotion list came in and I went to the bridge to tell the Captain he had just been selected for promotion to Rear Admiral.



Diane and Lori - 1974

Later I would get orders to Air Test and Evaluation Squadron One (VX-1) in Patuxent River. Professionally, it was a great tour. I wish I could have kept the marriage together but you have to play the hand your dealt. Diane Lori and I stayed close no matter where my tours would take me. They would remain a big part of my life for ever.

VX-1 was responsible for doing all the operational Test and Evaluation for Antisubmarine Warfare airplanes in the Navy and recommending if a system, whether it be a whole airplane or a new system, be put in production. It was back to flying and after some quick refresher training it was back to new P3s and S3s. The squadron had helicopters; Sea Based anti submarine and land based aircraft. I started in the P3 section of the ASW Prosecution Department. All the Officers were very smart and most had advanced degrees. Unfortunately, I was the new guy on the block so the Captain gave me an average fitness report and ranked many other Lieutenant Commanders above me. I was in the zone for Commander and it bothered me that the Fitness report would hurt my chances for promotion. I spoke with him about it and he didn't even do his research to find out what the zone would be. I remember me telling him that my ship board tour would make me a Commander and not his initial fitness report. I don't think he was very happy with me but then neither was I with him. One Friday night, while I was making dinner, my telephone rang and it was the Captains secretary. She told me the Commanders list was out and my name was on it. She made me promise that I wouldn't

tell the Captain she had told me. Then the XO of the squadron called to tell me the same news and that I was the only one in the squadron to get selected. Again I couldn't tell the Captain who told me. I was scheduled to take an airplane to Point Mugu California the next day, and I never did hear from the Captain. We flew to Point Mugu to shoot Harpoon Missiles and return Friday. The Captain met us as we taxied in. He said, "I guess you know you are being promoted". Not congratulations. Internally I was pleased and he knew he had been wrong. The Captain got orders and we had change of Command. I got promoted and now it was Commander Thomson, Project Prosecution Officer, VX-1. I had about 22 Officers working on over 50 Projects. It was a great squadron and I met some special friends in Patuxent River whom I still close to today. I was in Recife Brazil, Santiago Chile, Michigan, and the Azores doing testing. Every time I got an airplane close to Jacksonville, I would land and spend the night with Diane and Lori. They were growing and we always had a good time. If you will remember, I wrote about my father writing to me when and how I had let down the family when I had to leave General Motors Institute (GMI). Shortly after being promoted, my father wrote me his second letter. This one was about how proud he was of me. I guess I had finally proved to him that I was a success. I took him 17 years.



Mom





Mom and Dad

I lived on a point of land on the Patuxent River, had a boat and was enjoying life. I rented the lower floor of a duplex and a local native, Scottie, rented the top floor. He knew all about crab catching and oysters.

Patuxent River – 1974/75





We never lacked for either and he would take care of my cat when I was away. Scottie would become a great friend so I always invited him to the parties that I hosted. The place was like a Holiday Inn, there was always friends of mine dropping by. Ron Stoker, XO VX-1, and I met Johnnie and her gang from Washington DC. She used to bring 30 people down on weekends and we would cook out and water ski. Somehow, we would find a place for those who stayed over. Some week ends all the squadron officers who



had boats. Would take a couple others officers and there wives and we would meet some place on the Chesapeake. It was in VX-1 that I started sailing. One of my officers had a sail boat and I got hooked on sailing. Some great friendships were formed at Patuxent



River. There were BJ, Liz, Ron, and Don. BJ and Liz still remember my birthday and are



SEP 75



quick with the cards and letters. We use to have Thanksgiving together and probably still would be if our lives and careers hadn't taken us in different directions. We had a great time and the squadron asked me to extend. I did but then The XO got sick and I became the XO. I wasn't too long in the job of XO when that friendly Bureau against Naval Personal called and said they were writing orders for me to attend the Senior Officers Course, Naval War College, in Newport, Rhode Island. I asked if any one had asked my commanding Officer if he would let me go and they said no but they would. When I asked when I had to report, they said I was a bachelor and should be able to report in Rhode Island in 2 weeks. I informed them that Bachelors had lives just like married people and that I had a boat and a house full of furniture like most people. The Commanding Officer came and told me it was a great opportunity so I hustled and got my affairs in order. I checked into Newport on time.

The first thing I did in Newport was to rent a house on the water and get another new checking account. Most everybody at the war college was married so it was up to me to find new friends. That isn't as easy in Newport as it is other places but I succeeded. The first thing they do at the war college is issue you a stack of books that stand about 6 feet high. The first Tri-mester is the history of warfare and its effect on nations. You start by reading and discussing Theausiditise in the year 550 BC and you end up in the present day 12 weeks later. You average about 150 pages of reading per day. You write some papers and discuss issues but basically, it is a lecture and reading course. The second Tri-mester is more Operations Analysis oriented and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Trimester is all about war gaming. It was a great year and my parents along with Diane and Lori came to my graduation. My mother told me "who would ever thought my son would get this far. He could not spell or write and now he has actually published a book and graduated from the Navy War College". Once again it was time to move. This time it would be to the Far East as Officer in Charge, Patrol Wing One, U. S. Pacific Fleet Detachment Kadena Japan on the Island of Okinawa.

I arrived on Okinawa and conducted all the change of command inventories and got to know operations. The Change of Command ceremony was wiped out do to a typhoon that blew through Okinawa on that day in August 1978. We relieved in the command center and then beat a path for my quarters to ride out the storm. All I could imagine was the ASW Operations Center (ASWOC) would have severe damage on my first day of command. What a start that would have been. Fortunately, the base was built sturdy and no damage was done. In fact, typhoons were a normal occurrence and we survived seven during my year and a half on Okinawa. The Admiral I worked for was headquartered on the main Island at Atsugi Naval base. That was a 3 hour flight in a P3 so I didn't get to see the Admiral except if he was passing through or at an occasional staff meeting in Atsugi. Patrol Wing One had detachments in Guam, Cubi Point Philippines, Masawa Japan and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. This was another 24/7 operation and it seemed the Soviets always sent the submarines south on Thursday or Friday. We would always get contact on a Friday so flying around the clock on week ends were a normal occurrence. We had P3s everywhere in the Pacific and we sent crews to where ever they were needed.



Patrol Wing 1 – Detachment Kadena



The squadron deployed to Kadena maintained the detachment at Diego Garcia. It was pretty primitive in those days with the crews living in hooch's and flying in and out of Middle East countries. That all changed and it is now a major staging base for operations in the Middle East.

I was the bachelor Commanding Officer and my operations Officer, LCDR Gary "Dutch" Van Horn doubled as Executive Officer. Fortunately he was married to a wonderful lady named Mary and she took care of the wives problems. We worked and played hard. I had a minimum of disciplinary problems and the organization accomplished some unprecedented anti submarine warfare milestones. My social life revolved around the school teachers that taught school in the Department of Defense school system and the Air Force Officers that flew the SR-71 Blackbird. There was always a party somewhere. I remember going to several dinners where the host cooked dinner for 10 or 12 using a microwave and toaster oven. The men would bring the wine and the school teachers

would cook. When school was not in session, all the school teachers would travel to all sorts of places and my social life would slow to a crawl. That first summer, Diane and Lori flew from Jacksonville to Okinawa. Diane was now 16 and Lori 14. I got them both summer jobs working for the Navy. Diane learned to drive on the left side and was always driving my little Toyota. We had fun that summer and they made a few dollars also. The highlight of my summer was, when I took them to Hong Kong for several days. We had a lot of fun and I hope they will remember their summer in the Far East. We landed back on Okinawa in a typhoon. All the people aboard our Japanese airline clapped when the pilot successfully got the airplane on the ground. Summer was over and the kids flew back to Jacksonville and the school teachers returned. I named a small group of teachers who I was around most as Johns Angels. One day Mary, my XO's wife came to me and asked me to play Santa Claus for the kids at Christmas. She was giving a Christmas Day party for all the Officers kids and they needed a Santa Claus that none of the kids knew. I decided to put the Santa Claus suit to double use.



Christmas as Johnny T Santa (Okinawa – 1979)



Christmas as Johnny T Santa (Okinawa – 1979)



I went and bought presents for the school teachers and proceeded to get dress up. I gathered up one of my angles and we proceed to go delivering presents. We had a ball and finally ended up at the Habue bar that was maintained by the SR-71 Officers. It was across the street from my quarters so we were not driving by that time of night. It was a late night and so Santa was a little hung over when he arrived for the kids Christmas party. Every body had a great time but I was happy to get some sleep when it was over.

1980 brought with it more anti submarine operations and an opportunity assist the Japanese with there new acquisition of the P3. I spent a lot of time hosting and being hosted by the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force. I made some wonderful friends and when it came time to be relieved, both the Japanese Officers along with US Air Force Officers and the school teachers came to the Change of Command ceremony.



Change of Command – May 1980





Johnny T's Angels



JMSDF P3C Transition

The Admiral came down from Atsugi for the event. The night before the ceremony, the Admiral and I went out to dinner. He told me that he was against me coming to Okinawa because I wasn't married. He thought I wouldn't be able to handle the wife problems that come up when families are stationed over seas. He told me he lost the battle with Washington and was glad he had. He praised me for my command tour and as it turned out; my relief was also a bachelor. We had our Change of Command ceremony and I caught a civilian North West flight for Hawaii and the States. I was headed for my first tour in Washington DC at the Pentagon. Once again I would be involved with Command control and communications in a job entitled Navy Architect for Command Control and

communications. What that meant I had no idea but I was sure going to learn fast. But first, I was going to take some leave to visit the kids, my parents and some friends along the line.

The transition back to the states was great, although it took a few days for my body to adjust to the time zone changes, the water and driving on the right side of the road. It was fun. Diane and Lori were doing well and my parents were getting older. I stopped by Pensacola to see Dutch and Mary Van Horn and then on to Washington.



I stayed with some friends from Brunswick until I could find a place. I ended up buying a town house in Springfield Virginia and reported to the Pentagon. Washington can be a lonely place until you meet a few people. Every body walks around like there inside an egg shell. Once you crack the shell there is usually a nice person in there but it's hard to crack that shell first. I couldn't spell architecture and now I was the architect for Navy Command, Control and Communications. The Officer I relieved was a Navy submarine Captain and he explained that Congress had questioned the Navy on its program to unify its Command Control and Communications systems so they could understand where all the money was going. He had been working on a plan and had a series of contractors doing most of the work. I read the Army and Air Force versions of a plan and the Navy had taken the Army approach. It was volumes and volumes of writing but had little meat in it. My first impression was the contractors got paid by the pound. My new Admiral boss liked it and I decided to keep my mouth shut and see what happened. One day I was to brief the 3 Star, Admiral Nagler, on the plan along with all the other 2 stars in Navy Command, Control and Communications. I was not confident but there I was. My 2 star and I brought this ungodly stack of paper that was over six feet tall into Admiral Naglers office. The executive summary was the size of a yellow pages book. My 2 Star opened the brief and introduced me. Before I could open my mouth, Admiral Nagler asked me to leave and requested the other 2 stars to stay. I left and found out later that he was in no mood to send that plan to congress. He said nobody would read it, which was probably true. Need less to say, he was not a happy camper. The next day, my 2 star was transferred to San Diego and the civilian Super GS ranking took over. I worked on

several other projects and then one day I was sent to the Applied Physics Laboratory (APL), John Hopkins University and was told to not come back until I had a Command and Control plan written in less than 100 pages and an executive summary of 20 pages or less. The plan was to have a description of requirements, what was in existence, an architecture that showed how to take what the Navy had and modify it into a system of the future and finally identify those programs, if they existed, or set the requirements for new systems for the next 10 years. To help, several APL scientist and experts would assist. It was a tall order but I had my marching orders. I became a veteran of the Washington beltway. At least I was getting reimbursed for miles and every morning I would drive from Springfield Virginia to Columbia Maryland and back.

We had a great team at APL and I did most of the writing while the scientist brought together the technology and existing systems for the new architecture. I was even beginning to understand the meaning of architecture. From the technology came the requirements for new systems. I was a busy boy and didn't have much time for socializing. Yet I found time to meet some new friends and once that happened there were parties every night if you could handle it. My friend Liz lived in Washington and BJ would come to visit her. Ron Stoker came back from his tour in Japan and took my spare bedroom. He worked in the Navy Command Center on a rotating shift so some times he was home days some others, nights. I had a nice core of friends and the job was beginning to come together and then I met Nydia Ballesteros Frederick. She was from Columbia South America and was divorced with two very young children. She worked for the World Bank and I got hooked.

She was a Virgo and I, Pieces. She was fun to be with and loved to dance she was never on time and of course my Navy career demanded to be on time. There were many differences but initially we were a great team. I always told myself that if you were going to fall in love with a lady with kids you better fall in love with her kids also. I did and the kids and I have been closer over the years than I ever was with Nydia. Don't get me wrong I loved that woman. The problem was that there were several Nydia's', you never knew from one minute to the next which Nydia was going to show up. When she was happy there was no greater person to be around. In Washington, we were very happy.

The Command, Control and Communications plan came together. I even had an editor hired to fine tune the English and punctuation. It was 100 pages and the executive summary about 18. We presented to Admiral Naygler and he loved it. It was precise and to the point. He presented it to congress and even they liked it. I came back to the Pentagon and worked several other problems but the Pentagon is a slow bureaucratic process. I learned never to throw my first draft away. On several occasions I would write the first draft to my best ability and send it up the line. I had 2 Captains senior to me so they had to sign off on my draft. Then it went to the senior civilian and then on to the two star. After that it went through Admiral Naygler's chief of staff and finally on to Admiral Nagler for signature. You can imagine what my draft looked like when it got to the Admiral for signature. You were lucky if you could recognize one word or even a thought that you wrote. God forbid there was anything controversial for it was milk toast when the Admiral got it. Some times I couldn't even remember what I wrote since so much

time had passed. Needless to say, One day I would get a call from Admiral Naglers office and I would grab my initial draft and head. to his office. I would usually get chewed out by the Admiral for not saying what he wanted. He would then show me what he had been sent and his notes. Then I would show him my draft and more than once he would read my draft, make a few notations and tell the Chief of staff to have it typed up and sign it out. He knew and hated the bureaucracy but even he couldn't change it.

One day I got a call from my brother. He told me mother had passed away so I jumped on a plane and flew to West Palm. My brother and I made all the arrangements and had a small service. Once Mom was taken care of my father told me he was broke so I started digging into there finances. Mother took care of the finances in the family and I knew my mother was very smart with money. They were both depression children and neither really trusted a bank. FDIC insurance was \$20,000 in those days, so I figured she had more than one bank account. The problem was, which banks did she do business with? She also loved to play the stock market so there had to be one or more brokerage houses involved. I got a bunch of death certificates and sat down at here desk and started to compile a list of bank statements and envelopes that indicated she may have been there.

Then I would go to the banks and ask if my mother had an account there. Sure enough, in most of the banks, I found she had a certificate of deposit for \$20,000 and she owned stocks that range from 200 shares of Ford to 10 shares of a gold mining company. After totaling it all up, she was fairly well off. I told my Dad that he wasn't broke and he wouldn't have to worry about finances. He was relieved, so I turned all this information over to the lawyer in the family, my brother, who was executor of her, will. Then I turned my attention to Dad. He said he was going to live by himself and would do his own cooking. I knew that wasn't going to work but he told me to go home. I did and six weeks later he was in the hospital for malnutrition. After he got out of the hospital, he hired a housekeeper. The first one was a drunk and the second tried to steal from him. Finally on the 3<sup>rd</sup> try he found a woman that really good to and for him.

My tour was coming to an end so I took an evening course called the "Strategy of Career Transition". About that same time, Congress passed the defense officer personal act. That act said basically if you got promoted, you had to give the Navy 4 years at your next rank in order to retire at your next rank. I was going to be in the zone for Captain and if I made it, I would have to wait a year for promotion and then 4 more years before I could retire as a Captain. During my course, I learned that industry wanted people 44 years old and younger. I might have stayed in the Navy if I could find a way out of Washington. I went to the Bureau of Naval Personnel to talk to my detailer. He told me that 75% of all Captains and Commanders jobs were in the Washington area. I asked him what my chances were to get out of a Washington and he told me, I would be the second person to get orders out of Washington. He was going to be the first. When I asked him if he had a chance, he said he didn't have a chance. That convinced me it was time to retire. I started interviewing and one day a friend of mine called and asked me what my intensions were. He said he knew a person that was looking for someone with my experience and would

set up an interview. The job was in Melbourne, Florida which is half way between Jacksonville where Diane and Lori were and West Palm where my father was. I interviewed with one of the Washington field marketers for Harris Corporation and he told me he didn't think I was technical enough for the job but he didn't make the decision. The man doing the hiring would be in Washington in two days. Two days went by and I showed up at Harris Washington offices on time. My first meeting with Roland Mosely was like we had known each other for our whole lives. He invited me to Melbourne for more interviews. I got Nydia to take a few days off and we flew to Jacksonville to meet Diane and Lori and then on to Melbourne.



Diane and Lori 1982

My interviews went great and felt I would get an offer. After the interviews we drove south to meet my father. After returning to Washington, I received an offer from Harris and wrote that letter to the Secretary of the Navy asking to be retired.

Nydia and I had talked about getting married and we set a date. I rode the bus to the Pentagon with an Army Chaplain so he arranged for the Chapel at Fort Meyers and I got with the Ft Meyers Officers club to arrange for a reception. The Nydia said no and then she changed her mind again. Finally we got married in a formal military ceremony including the arch of swords.





The Big Day – 1982



The Wedding Party – 1982

We took a short honeymoon cruise and before long it was time for a retirement ceremony and moving to Melbourne. On July 1, 1982 my retirement ceremony was held in the Pentagon and to my surprise the Navy awarded me the Navy Commendation Medal. After the ceremony, it was time for a party, packing of two houses full of furniture and



the trip to Melbourne. For a Navy tour that was supposed to last 4 years, it didn't work out that way. I spent 22 and one half years on active duty and logged more than 6500 hours in the air. It was a great career and I would do it again if I had the chance.

## **Civilian Careers**

Nydia, Cindy and I drove two cars to Melbourne and started looking for a house.



Cindy

Nydia found a very nice house in Satellite Beach. Jeffery was living with his father which bothered Nydia very much. It wasn't long before we won custody of Jeff and he came to live with us also. We met new friends and joined the Melbourne Yacht club and we bought a 33 foot Hunter sailboat and named it "Princess" for Cindy. We would spend weekends on the boat sailing the Indian River and life was good. One weekend Nydia's father came to visit. He spoke almost no English but we took him sailing and he and I had a great conversation over a bottle of Scotch one night. We all went to Columbia for about a week. I got to meet all her sisters and brothers. Every body was nice to me but there was competition between Nydia, her mother and her sisters. I never understood that but it was there. The schools in Satellite Beach were great and both kids were doing well. Cindy was taking gifted classes and Jeff was beginning to show he was smart. Diane got married and Lori was thinking about it.



My job at Harris was going better than I expected and I was traveling all over the country finding new opportunities for the division. I keep getting above average pay raises and my boss Roland Mosley was happy with my work. About 2 years into the job Roland informed me that I would need to find a new position in the company because his budget was being reduced. The Washington field marketing group in Washington wanted me to return to Washington but fortunately my real sponsor who was the Vice President for Marketing, Bill Marks, wanted me even more. So for a big pay raise, I went to work for Bill Marks. I won several jobs that put me on the Harris fast track. I was sent up to the University of Florida where I took several courses as part of what Harris called Harris University. Then a business down turn happened. We had one customer and that was the United States Government and the defense budget had been cut. When that happened I had 3 marketers working for me and we were bringing in about 80 million dollars a year. One of the directors of marketing left to become a field marketing guy in Washington but before he left he showed me the ropes of Ft Monmouth New Jersey. One day, they fired Bill Marks, my Vice President of Marketing, and Harris decided to put marketing under the Vice President of Programs. My group now supported the RF Department and I became the Acting Director for Marketing. We were still maintaining our numbers but opportunities were drying up. I knew it was time to put out some feelers and discreetly I did.

The kids were doing well and Nydia had started selling real estate. We had sailed to the Bahamas with the Melbourne Yacht Club but 3 weeks on a 33 foot boat had pinned Nydia in for to long.



Princess - 1984

On the way back, she got mad at me as only a Latin woman can get. She refused to help so I and Jeff did it all. I think Jeff was about 9 then but he was a big help. We got back safely and all my family couldn't wait to get to our slip. Me, I wanted to keep going. Nydia was doing well in Real Estate but she was showing more anger. When she got angry it would last for days or maybe a week. Sleep was becoming a problem for me because when she was mad she would clean the house all night. There was a lot of pressure from my job and my family I was trying to keep all the balls in the air.

One Monday, Harris announced a new General Manager was going to take over our Division. He was an old Harris type and strictly an engineering type. I had a feeling that the few retired military people would be in trouble and I was. I got laid off on a Friday and had to clear everything from my office that day. I was given 60 days separation pay and all my assets in the Harris retirement system. I had been with Harris 7 years, just enough to be fully vested in the company. I rolled over my Harris assets to an IRA account with Merrill Lynch and let it grow. I contacted the people I had sent feelers and within 12 days had a new job with E-Systems in St Petersburg Florida.

Nydia did not take the lay off well. She blamed me. When I got the job with E-Systems she relaxed a bit. She was worried about the kids, their schooling and her life style. I understood that and the move to Melbourne was a traumatic event so I told her to take her time to sell the house. She was a Realtor and once she had the Satellite Beach home sold, we would find a place in St Petersburg. I would commute on week ends. It took almost a year to sell the Satellite Beach house. I would arrive home around 8 PM on Friday and depart for St Petersburg on Sunday about 8 PM. One of my fellow marketers at E-Systems commuted like I did and I drove the 2 of us every weekend. Some Fridays

coming home was a pleasure but then there were there others when something would happen to her and she would be mad at the world. One time it may be Jeff or Cindy or the dog. Who knew? One night I came home to world war three so I just said I must be in the wrong house. I got my sailing gear and went sailing for the weekend by myself. Finally we sold the house and bought a 3 bedroom 2 bath house in St Petersburg. We then started a major renovation to make the home into a 4 bedroom 3 bath home. It was on a canal and had a boat slip. I found a small apartment on Clearwater beach for us and proceeded to get a friend and went to get the boat. It took 5 days and it was a great trip to St Petersburg. I docked the boat at the house and the contractor began work renovating the house. Dealing with contractors was not a strong suit of Nydia's. Her life was not settled but finally the house was finished and we moved in. She had left her Real Estate business and she blamed me for everything. Cindy made new friends and was in gifted classes. Jeff began high school at Northeast but wasn't happy with the school.

My new job at E-Systems was almost over before it started. I was to be marketing for the Director of RF systems and that first week I prepared a brief for my new boss on opportunities we could pursue. The brief was scheduled for Friday and at the appointed time I started my brief. I was just getting started when the Vice President of programs came into my boss's office and told me to leave. I had no idea what was going on but I told his secretary that I was prepared to resume my brief when he was through. She never called me so at five o'clock I left for the weekend. When I returned on Monday and approached the secretary about resuming the brief, she told me that both my director and he Vice President had been let go. I was told I now worked for another director. I gave him my brief but I censed he was to busy to pursue any of the programs I briefed on. One day not long after my brief, Dick Lenhold approached me and asked if I would be available to help him find new business. He was program manager for the space side of E-Systems. I jumped at the chance and he cleared it with the higher ups. Together, with the help of many people, we won several contracts that would put us in a new business area. I was on a roll.

One day, my father past away, so I headed for West Palm. My Brother and his wife flew into West Palm and we took care of Dad. This time my brother knew where everything was and he took care of Dads affairs. I brought Dads Buick back to St Petersburg and gave it to Jeff. It was a big four door and certainly not a kid's car but then it was free. He hated driving it so I ended up driving it most of the time. Finally Nydia asked for a divorce and of course she wanted me out of the house. I knew that leaving the house was abandonment so my response was to say she could have the divorce but the property settlement would have to be agreed to before I moved out. I moved into the den/spare bed room and stared cooking for myself. I wrote the property settlement which I thought was fair but of course her Lawyer didn't. Her lawyer wanted a lot more so I had to hire an attorney to represent me at common meetings. My lawyer reviewed my property agreement and remarked that he didn't think I would get agreement but would defend it. I knew I was playing on Nydia's emotions and one day she signed the property agreement I had written. I won't go into the details but I took a short term problem for a long term gain.

## Tierra Verde

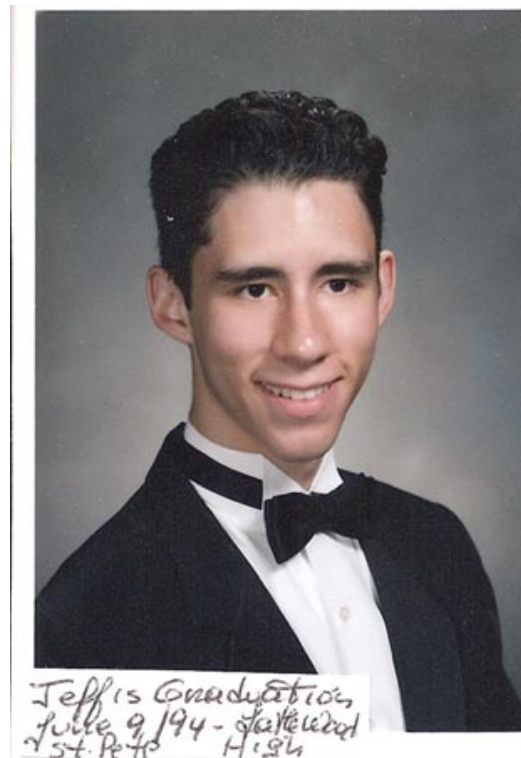
I rented a place on the water in Tierra Verde and started another life. Nydia and the kids stayed in the house until it was sold. Nydia went back into the Real Estate business and the kids and I remained close. Jeff got his mother to trade in my Dads Buick for a Honda and he really wasn't into Northeast High School. So he came to me and during the summer and I got him registered at Lakewood High for his junior year. Cindy decided to go to Columbia and study. She did for a while but soon she was back. She entered St Petersburg High in the International Baccalaureate program. Both Cindy and Jeff got jobs working at Publix and Cindy said she was saving her money to buy a car when she turned 16.



After Jeff completed his junior year he came to me and said he was going to college. He had been working with the career councilor at Lakewood High and he thought he could



get accepted at Emory University. I didn't think he could but said go for it. He drove to Atlanta and sure enough he did. He completed his senior year of high school and his freshman year of college in the same year. He returned to Lakewood to graduate with his high school class. Cindy called me on her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and said she was ready for us to go find her a car. I asked how much money she had saved and was surprised. She had saved a lot, so I told her to save enough for insurance and a few more dollars for repairs etc and we went shopping. We found a nice Mazda and bought it. She used that car for the remaining years in high school. Nydia finally sold the house and bought another house for her and Cindy. Something was going on between Cindy and her mother and one day Cindy showed up in my condo. I called her mother and told her she was with me. Nydia got a court order giving me custody of both Jeff and Cindy. That's how Cindy came to live with me. I got them both dependent Military Identification cards and there health insurance was provided for by the Military as was mine. Cindy and I traveled to many colleges looking for the right place for her. In her senior year Cindy was recruited more than most star high school quarterbacks. She applied for and received an appointment to the United States Naval Academy. She had a choice of colleges and she broke down here choices to two. The finalists were Dartmouth and the Naval Academy. I wasn't sure whether she would withstand the rigors of Plebe year at the Academy so she flew to Annapolis and spent a week doing what the Plebes do. When I went to pick her up in Tampa I was sure she would come back and say no way to the Naval Academy. I was totally surprised when she told me she loved it and she needed the discipline. In July 1995 she entered the Naval Academy.



Four years later she graduated and took her commission as a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in the United



States Marine Corp. I got to swear Cindy in.



Jeff finish at Emory with a degree in economics. I am very proud of all four children. Each has chosen a different path but all are great citizens.

The roll at E-Systems started coming a part when Raytheon announced that they had bought E-Systems. I had seen the play before! The first to go with new management is the marketing staff and it would take a while but one day the new management told us. Once again, I had been looking into my future and figured I had had enough of this marketing for a big company. I was again fully vested and would get a retirement along with all the money I had invested in there 401K program, this would make my third retirement and I was 58 years old. On that December day in 1995, I left Raytheon along with all the marketers except for two and with my program manager and his top systems engineer. I wouldn't start collecting the E-systems retirement until I was 60 but I was OK. I didn't owe anybody, the kids were on there own. It was time for me.

Diane had Jessica and soon Spenser would show up. Diane is a super mom.



How she raises those two kids buy herself is truly an amazing sight to watch. Jessica and Spenser are great kids and are truly brilliant. As I write this Jessica has just been accepted into the International Baccalaureate Program and Spenser seems to be as smart as Jessica. Lori is married to a Navy Petty Officer and while they were stationed in Japan she completed the requirements for a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Maryland.



**Lori and Brian**

I love Tierra Verde and the people that live there. Dominic Martino, Calvin Markum, Tommy Ryan and Jim Daly were part of my sailing crew and we had great times sailing the Hunter and Tierra Verde regattas with a group of gals. Dominic was my first mate until a lady friend of mine was aboard. Then Dominic would become first bartender. Jim called himself the first oilier, Tommy was just a crowd pleaser and Calvin was a great friend. We had a lot of fun sailing and going across the street to the Tierra Verde Resort to dance and raise hell.





Two highlights that stand out in racing sailboats was our win at the Hunter Regatta and the Tierra Verde regatta in 1994 aboard Stu and Trish Davis Hunter 450 in 1999.





My social life has always been full but I have had only one real serious relationship since Nydia and I parted ways.







After I retired from E-Systems I started looking for that opportunity where I could turn my hobby into a full time job. Little did I know it was right in front of me. One day, I read where Sailors Wharf was looking for a Yacht Broker. I knew Jopie Helson who owned Sailors Wharf from the Hunter regattas so I sent him my resume and went for an interview. He hired me on a commission only basis and I started selling new Hunter and Jeanneau sailboats and used brokerage boats. I was an independent contractor and I went to all the boat shows. That first month I sold my first new Jeanneau and at the Annapolis

boat show I made contact with two couples that would buy Jeanneau sailboats also. When I went to Annapolis I would get to spend time with Cindy. In 1997 she became a 2<sup>nd</sup> class midshipman and could have a car. I gave her my Mazda Rx-7. She came home for summer leave and when her time was up, we drove the RX-7 back to Annapolis together. The sailboat business provided me an income and some adventures I had missed in civilian industry. Jopie and his wife Sandy were very good to me. Finally, one day I applied for Social Security but didn't stop selling boats.



I met and dated many ladies while home based in Tierra Verde Then I met Bett who I really liked. We got along great and had the ability to communicate about anything. We were together for over 6 years. We traveled to China and up and down the east coast. Unfortunately she got sick with Alzheimer's disease and is now in an assisted living facility and doesn't remember me. Alzheimer's is a terrible disease for the care giver. There is nothing you can do and being a man from Mars it's doubly difficult. It left a big hole in my life but I'm a survivor and have made a good recovery. Jeff and Amy got married and in September 2006 Grace made her appearance into the world.



Jopie came to me and told me he was no longer going to be the Hunter dealer. He had previously given up the Jeanneau dealership so it was brokerage boats only. It didn't

matter to me because brokerage is the meat and potatoes of the business. New boats are the desert. After the hurricanes of 2005, Murray Yacht Sales out of New Orleans made an offer to lease Jopies spaces and bring the Beneteau and J boat dealership to St Petersburg. I stayed on for 15 months but it was obvious, I wasn't in there long term plans. In May 31, 2007 I retired one more time. I've been selling boats for 11 years and I'm 69 years old. The business was good to me but its time for a break. Although I have traveled a lot, I still have places I want to see. I don't know whether there will be additions to this autobiography but I feel I need to get this on paper so there is a written record of it for all the children and grand children who may want to know who Johnny T is.

One thing for sure, Tierra Verde will be home base for a while.

On July 4, 2007 I put my uniform on once again to participate in Tierra Verde's annual parade. Diane, Jessie and Spencer came to visit. It was a great time and we expect to do it again for many years.

