**It’s a Good Life**

**Autobiography of Douglas L. Dill**

I’m seventy five, going on seventy six years. A while back our daughter Jan visited and suggested that I write my autobiography. At first I pooh-poohed it. But little did she know that it has been in the back of mind for some time. Partly because I feel I have had a profession more dramatic than some, plus my personal life includes stimulating, or at least interesting activities. My retirement has also included some exciting pursuits. So……

I was born in Twin Falls, Idaho on March 10, 1938. I don’t recall much until I was about four. That’s when I remember when my father, Uland ( Dick) Stuart Dill would take me into the country and let me shoot his .22 long rifle. He also took me and my mother, Marion Ester Winmill, to the airport and we watched the planes fly in and out. But my life really began when our family moved to Sisters, Oregon, a small sawmill town of about 600 population in the central part of the state. The town had one sawmill, the streets were mostly unpaved, and there was a logging truck on every street corner.

While I didn’t appreciate it at the time, we could stand on the front doorstep of our house and look directly up to the Three Sisters Mountains, a beautiful part of the Cascade Range. My first remembrance of our little town was when all the sirens in town went off together, announcing the end of World War Two. Every person was in the street yelling and screaming! Our first house was a huge older home at the edge of town, behind a service station. We lived there for only one year.

In the wintertime the milk was delivered to our front door, and by the time we brought it in, the cream at the top of the bottle had expanded and was sticking several inches above the bottle cap. One time there was fruit for sale at the service station and I stole a couple of prunes. My mom saw me with them and asked where I had gotten them. I told her at the service station. She realized that I hadn’t paid for them and marched me to the service attendant and made me fess up and apologize.

Dad became a logger in Sisters, a new adventure for him after leaving his job as service manager at the Chevrolet dealership in Twin Falls. At age six he would let ride with him in the company ‘crummy’ as he went to work in the woods cutting down the beautiful pine trees. My job was to bump off the smaller dead limbs with a sledge hammer while he cut the larger ones with his axe, or saw. I was too small to wonder what his logging partners thought of my being there. OSHA didn’t exist at the time. One day Dad came home with some spent bullets and told about the P-38 army plane that had crashed in the woods and burned. He and the other loggers had to hide behind the trees to keep from being hit with ammo from the plane’s machine guns that were going off after the crash.

After the first year in Sisters we moved into a smaller house that Dad had purchased in another part of town. It had no indoor plumbing so Dad converted one of the three bedrooms into a bathroom with a sink, shower, and toilet. But at first those long walks to the one-holer located at the edge of the lot during the winter was something to remember.

Dad ended his job as a logger and soon built his own little sawmill, close to town. He let me play around his sawmill while he continued building it. That mill soon closed and he decided to build a larger operation in our back yard, and then move it to a location about 25 miles out of Sisters. That mill actually began to cut lumber. It was so far away that he built bunk houses and a cook shack for him and his employees. He let me play around the mill and stay in the bunk house for a week at a time while he ran the operation. The mill operated only in the summertime because the road to it was inaccessible in bad weather.

Dad’s millworkers liked to kid me. One time they asked me to go down a path to a small creek to get some water. Along the way I happened onto a huge rattlesnake lying across the path. I was scared to death and when I went running back to the guys they were laughing their heads off. I realized then it was already dead and they had put it there for me to find.

Most days at the mill I spent my time building a fort from small pine trees that I cut down in a thicket at the edge of the clearing. It was a huge project that took what seemed like years. Again, I was too young and innocent to think about what the US Forest Service would have said about all those young trees being cut. Dad also didn’t say anything. When I wasn’t playing in the forest I was helping my Dad by clearing sawdust along the conveyer belt, or skidding logs into the mill. I even stacked some of the smaller lumber on the green chain. That’s where I got my nickname ‘four-quarter.’ The green chain is the part of the mill where the wet or ‘green’ lumber is stacked, ready for the trucks to haul away. ‘Four-quarter’ is one inch thick boards, the thinnest lumber cut at a lumber mill.

When I was at home with my friends in town I was sometimes called ‘Dill Pickles’ or just ‘Pickle.’ It’s obvious where that name came from. Somehow that didn’t set as well with me as my nickname at Dad’s mill.

One Saturday morning at the mill Dad asked me if I wanted to drive his Caterpillar. Wow! Of course I would. He needed to move it to the bunkhouse, about a mile down the road. As I was driving the cat I heard a honk. I woke up from a daydream just in time to see that I was about to run of the road at a curve. I barely managed to turn the tractor onto the road again. There were no more bad instances after that. I began calling my dad ‘Dick’ at the mill, just like the other employees. He pulled me aside and told me in no uncertain terms that I was to call him ‘Dad.’

One weekend while Dad did maintenance at the mill, my grandfather, who was visiting from Idaho, and I went to the mill with a small trailer to load up with mill-ends for firewood. I thought I heard a rattler, but Grandfather ignored my warning. We kept loading the trailer when again I heard a rattle. He still discounted me. Then, all of a sudden he picked up a mill-end and quickly slammed it down. Then he picked up the mill-end with a rattlesnake on the end of it and threw it at me. You’ve never seen a kid move so quickly into the trailer. I disliked Grandfather from that time on.

Dad and I returned home late from the mill one evening, and found Mother standing on a chair crying. She had apparently been on that chair all day long, scared to death. When we asked her what was wrong she said: “There’s a mouse in the kitchen!” Mother has been terribly afraid of mice all her life, even though she had been raised on an Idaho farm.

Lumber from the mill was hauled to Bend or Redmond, Oregon by a couple of brothers who lived in Sisters and owned lumber trucks. Dad let me ride with them occasionally. I loved riding in those big trucks. One day I was supposed to stay at the mill after my truck ride but as we came down the long grade above the sawmill we could see that something was wrong. The sawmill was shut down and the workers were just standing around. As we neared the mill site Dad met us and said that there had been an accident. The truck driver, who was also our friend and Dad’s employee, neglected to fasten the safety cable as he was unloading his logs and one fell on him, crushing him. Dad made me go back to town with the lumber truck.

I also had chores at home. They consisted mostly of cutting the wood for our two wood stoves. Dad hauled huge logs to our yard that had to be cut into rounds long enough to fit into the stoves. We would do that with a two-man chain saw. Dad operated the saw and I operated the back end which meant keeping that end straight as it cut the rounds. My daily job was to split the rounds with wedges and a sledge hammer, then split the wood into small pieces with an axe. We had a large wood shed that I had to fill in the fall, then split more wood daily and carry it into the house to fill the wood box. One Christmas I asked for a lumber truck. A real lumber truck, even though I knew in my heart that I was too young to drive. On Christmas morning I cried when I looked out the window and didn’t see the truck.

My exciting times in Sisters were not all rosy. Dad had a temper. If I made him angry the result was the proverbial whooping in the woodshed, which I’ll never forget. Worse, there were times when he would slap me in the face unexpectedly and I would never know why, except that I had made him mad. Those are times when I would find myself on the floor in the corner of the room crying. Those times have stayed in my memory to this day.

I started the first grade with my teacher Mrs. Keen. My first and only school spanking was when Mrs. Keen caught me standing on the deck railing, a no-no, that I didn’t realize. I attended school through the fifth grade at Sisters Grade School, a two-story wood framed building with a ramp to the second floor, until I was twelve years old. I was about the largest kid in my class. Recess was great because when we played sports the teacher chose me and another large boy as the team leaders and I got to pick who was on our team. I regularly hit the home runs, made the outs, or ran the fastest.

When I wasn’t at the sawmill, my friends and I spent a lot of time in the wooded areas at the edge of town. We built forts, chased each other through the forest, and did what kids generally do in a woody, mostly rural area. I remember one time when we went swimming in a little muddy pond in the woods. It was only three feet or less deep. We dared each other to take off our swimming trunks. I was the only one stupid enough to take the dare. When I did they grabbed my trunks and wouldn’t give them back. I was worried that I would have to walk home naked. But eventually they gave my trunks back. It was common for us to play kick-the-can, or anti-over at one of our homes.

One time I climbed one of the two tall pine trees in our yard and realized that from the top of the tree I could see for some distance. I asked Dad if I could build a lookout tower in the tree. He approved but evidently didn’t understand my vision of the project. He came home one evening and saw my lookout. “What happened to the tree,” he asked. I told him that is my lookout tower that he said I could build. I had cut every limb off the tree about a foot from the trunk, except for the very top, fifty feet up, where I made a small platform. I didn’t realize that I had killed the tree by cutting off all the limbs. He had to cut the tree down and we made firewood out of it.

At age nine the Sisters Theater announced in advance that they were going to show ‘Lassie Come Home’ over the weekend. I was planning to go until Mom caught me smoking a cigarette in the woodshed. She scolded me and said I couldn’t see Lassie. I pleaded with her and promised that I would never smoke again. She trusted me and allowed me to go to the show. I’ve kept that promise except one time, at Fresno State, which you will read about later.

The winters were harsh in Sisters. We regularly had below zero weather. One winter a house across town (about six blocks away) caught fire, and it was so cold the pipes were frozen, including the town’s water lines. The volunteer firemen couldn’t extinguish the fire because the hydrants were frozen, too. All they could do was carry out as many belongings as possible from the house before the house burned to the ground. The townsfolk had to dig up the city water pipes all over town, put wood slabs from the mills in the trenches and burn them to thaw the water pipes. That’s how cold it was.

In their Idaho days my parents were skiers. In Sisters Dad took me skiing at Hoodoo Bowl in the Cascades at times. A ski organization heard about dad’s interest in skiing and as a mechanic. They approached him and offered him a job on weekends to run a small rope tow a short distance from Bend, Oregon. My parents operated that tow for several years while we lived in Sisters. At times we had to follow a snowplow into the site. Dad ran the tow while Mom sold tickets to the skiers. We generally spent Saturday mornings with the skiers, side-stepping the hill to groom it, then Sunday, skiing.

After a few years of this, Dad was told about a large company that had plans for expanding the ski hill and was offered a position to join the group. He turned them down, saying he thought it would never get off the ground. It is now Mount Bachelor Winter Resort.

My sister, Marilyn, was born during our last year in Sisters, when I was eleven. Because of our age difference, we didn’t do much together and it was only in my later years that we actually got to know each other.

The next summer we moved to Le Grande, Oregon from Sisters for a job that Dad had been promised. We moved to a farmhouse with a refrigerator filled with beer. Dad didn’t drink alcohol, or if he did I never knew it. He opened a beer and offered it to me. I was twelve. I took one drink and spit it out. The taste was horrible to me. To this day I have never consumed alcohol of any kind. The only other event of interest in this area was the fourth of July. I had pleaded with Dad to let me have some fireworks including some cherry bombs. He agreed but only if I would set them off in the nearby Grande Ronde River. We were standing on a bridge high above the river, Dad was holding Marilyn in his arms. I lit the first cherry bomb and threw it over the bridge railing. We watched it hit the water and float down the current. Just when we thought it wasn’t going to go off, way down the river, it exploded. The blast was so loud Marilyn almost jumped out of Dad’s arms.

Before long Dad became disenchanted with the Le Grande job and by the end of summer, we moved again, to Baker, (now Baker City) Oregon. I started school in sixth grade, junior high school, in Baker and continued there through the eighth grade.

I remember that I always wanted to be older than I really was. I think that started as a teenager. I don’t think I really enjoyed being a child. I couldn’t wait to be sixteen and get my driver’s license. Then twenty one, as an adult. Then twenty five, out of college and my first job.

Then there was a point in my adult life that I began to wonder if was going to die very young.

My mother grew up in the LDS church. There was a ward in Baker. This was my first experience with the church and I was soon baptized and became a Deacon. Many of my friends were members of the church and also the Boy Scouts of America, which I also joined. I became very active in the Scouts and was soon a patrol leader. We had a great Scoutmaster, who I think was not LDS but had held that position for a long time. While Dad was not a church member, he sometimes helped with the scouts. One year he and some of the scouts took his pickup into the mountains to get a load of Christmas trees for the scouts to sell and make extra money for the troop.

The troop went to summer camp every year, either to Lake Melaukwa in the Cascades, or to Wallowa Lake in the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. Summer camps always had an overnight hike out of camp and I enjoyed hiking. When we were loading our packs I would hold my pack open and showed them that I had more room for food and stuff. They agreed to fill it up to the top. For some reason I was always the last one to reach camp at the end of the hike.

My scout friends were also our neighbors. We played together but the thing I remember most was sledding near our house. We were on the edge of town and a mountain was nearby. There was a great sledding hill a block away. I didn’t have a sled of my own and usually used a friend’s. One day friends suggested that I borrow another kid’s sled from down the block, which I did. I took one run and literally flew down the bumpy hill. The landing was hard and I broke one of the runners. I’m ashamed to say I took the sled back, placed it on his front porch and left. I never heard from him about the broken sled.

Winters were for sledding and summers were for hiking and camping in the mountains. But even in winter we hiked the mountains, often in snow, where we would take a lunch and eat it under a huge cornice, where the wind would blow the snow over the crest of the hill.

One day my parents went on a day-trip out of town and left me home. They were late getting back and when they did show up someone had dropped them off. I learned that Dad had swerved to miss a cow on the highway and turned the car over. He had come home to get oil to replace the oil that had drained out of the engine when the car overturned, and to get me to help get the car home. Mom didn’t drive and never has. Dad and I went back to the accident in his pick-up, put oil in the engine, and we started home, me driving the pick-up. Before long an Oregon State Police officer stopped us, saw that the roof of the car was bent down to seat level, and realized that a thirteen year-old was driving the pick-up. Dad was about to get a ticket for allowing an underage driver when he told the officer that he had waited a long time at the accident scene for him to come by and wondered why he hadn’t shown up. At that point the officer thought it would be okay if I continued to drive home.

I got my first paying job in Baker, delivering papers for the *Baker Democrat Herald*. I earned about a hundred dollars a month. My closest friends also had paper routes, near mine, and after we finished our routes we would get together and blow our money on treats. One winter day, it had snowed at least a foot and we could not deliver our papers on our bikes. We had to walk. About 9 p.m. Dad came looking for me and found me trudging through the snow. He said I looked like a statue in the snow.

Baker was where I had my first date. Junior High was several blocks from the football field where our team played ball. A girl, not a Mormon, asked me if I wanted to walk to the game with her. We did and stopped at her house along the way where I met her mother and had a snack. The game was almost over by the time we got there. She wanted to get together more but I was afraid of how my father would react so I declined.

After finishing the eighth grade our family moved again, this time to Coos Bay, Oregon in 1952, on the coast. Dad took a job as a millwright at an experimental hardboard plant and I started my freshman year at Marshfield High School in Coos Bay.

School was boring for me, except for my woodshop class, in which I decided to major.

My first two years I landed on the honor roll. After my freshman year I got a job at our Boy Scout camp on Siltcoos Lake, named Camp Chiltcoos, near Florence, Oregon. I started as a dish washer in the cafeteria. The camp was brand new and I didn’t do well as a dish washer. I spent too much time washing the pots and pans, making sure they were clean. My fellow crew members complained because the camp policy was that when we all completed our tasks we were free until the next meal. They all had to stay until I was finished. The camp director tried to find something else for me. Because I spent most of my free time in field sports, the field sports director said he could use me. I ended up teaching archery, fishing, and moskeet (a .22 gauge shotgun). I loved it and ended the summer in field sports.

It was during these years that I got my orientation to sex education. My mother caught me masturbating in bed one evening. So she got her first aid book out and showed me the photos depicting sex diseases. Her comment was: “this is what happens to boys who play with themselves.” That was the extent of my sex education at home.

We were also supposed to have a unit on sex education during health class. It consisted of a film. But the guys began giggling each time the teacher started the projector, so he turned it off and that ended our sex education at school.

Dad and I didn’t see eye-to-eye on several topics, including black folks. He didn’t think they were equal to whites. We argued and once we even got into a fist fight over it. Of course he won, partly because he was much stronger than me, but also I didn’t think it was right to hit my Dad.

My junior year I decided to join the school rifle team. We met after school in the school rifle range. I spent the entire school year on the team. At the end of the year our team went to Portland to a statewide tournament. Our team came back as state champions. I won first place in three categories; prone, prone and sitting, and sitting; as well as being a member of the championship team.

My senior year was horrible. At the beginning of the semester Dad had discovered that I was majoring in woodshop and that I had already finished my major by my junior year. I was going to have an easy senior year. I wasn’t interested in going to college. But Dad had other ideas. He made me major in math. (Dad had left school in the sixth grade, after his mother died.) When I told him that was a four year course he went to the school principal and demanded that I graduate with a math major. The principal said I couldn’t because it would take all four years of high school. Dad insisted and the principal gave in.

I was taking three math courses my senior year, plus chemistry, physics, and the required social studies class. I also got a job after school at the local Western Auto store delivering furniture. I was up until after midnight trying to do my homework, most of which I didn’t understand. Dad, who worked the swing shift, would come home from work at midnight to find me up doing homework. He made me go to bed, even though I tried to tell him my homework was not finished.

At hunting season Dad wanted me to take a week off from school to go deer hunting with him. I told him I would have to take a permission slip to all my classes and get permission in advance. But my teachers wouldn’t approve my absence. We went hunting anyway. I almost flunked my senior year. No honor roll for me!

At age seventeen Dad sold me his 1950 black torpedo-back Chevrolet sedan for $200. It had beautiful custom upholstery that he made himself. I don’t remember if I ever totally paid him back. I installed a radio and turn signals in it. He bought a new 1955 Chevrolet sedan for himself.

Dad noticed that I was dragging my right foot slightly. I wasn’t aware of it. He took me to the doctor who said that a Dr. Marxer in Portland was a pioneer in back surgery so I drove Mom and me to Portland. On the way I hit some black ice and spun around a couple of times, breaking a steering bracket on my car. We were able to drive on to Portland where we met Dr. Marxer. I was in the hospital for ten days for back surgery and had to lay on my back the entire time. A condition of discharge was to have a successful bowel movement. The nurses put me on a bedpan but I was unsuccessful. They gave me an enema. No success. Another enema. Still no success. They called the doctor who said to bring in a portable commode and lift me out of bed, onto the commode. Wow! That did the trick! At the end of my hospital stay, Dad rode the bus to Portland and drove us home in my car. He also fixed the broken steering bracket. The day after we arrived home was my eighteenth birthday.

At the end of my senior year in 1956, I continued my job at Western Auto. Midway through the summer the company changed managers. The new manager was a union supporter and made all employees join the union. Union dues would have been more than my salary. I asked my dad what to do. He said the store was required to have a union contract on the premises and to make him show it to me before joining. The new manager said he didn’t have to and to go to the union headquarters to see it. I kept holding out for him to show it to me.

Then, one Saturday he took me into the back room and showed me some pennants on the floor. I said I hadn’t seen them before and he said “Yes, you have. I told you to put them up a week ago; you’re fired!” He told the secretary to put in the record that I was fired for insubordination. When she refused he told her to do it or he’ll fire her too. I went across the street to a furniture store to see if they needed a delivery person. They hired me at $1.25 an hour, twenty-five cents more than I was making at Western Auto.

Dad had decided that we would move to Eugene, Oregon so I could go to the University of Oregon. I wanted to leave home, so I made a deal with him: If I could go to any college I wanted, would he still pay my way? He agreed! So I announced that I wanted to go to Brigham Young University, 1,000 miles away. That surprised him, and I knew that he would not move to Provo, Utah, so the answer was yes. A couple other students said they were planning to go to BYU as well and could we drive there together? We did, and I was the only one with a car, so we took it. The trunk was full and the back seat was loaded with luggage to the roof, except for one guy sitting in the back seat. We just arrived in Provo, Utah when the timing gear broke. That was an expensive fix for Dad.

I had not communicated with the college before I arrived. I didn’t even know what ‘college’ was. Previously I had no intention of ever going to college. Upon arriving on the campus the registrar asked if I had made arrangements with them for admittance. No, I had not. So I was admitted on probation in September, 1956, and declared math as my major, per my dad’s instruction. The cost of enrolling was $150 per quarter, plus room and board. They assigned me to a dormitory that was an old army Quonset hut that was falling down. Cheap!

My roommate was JK Berry, also a freshman. I couldn’t understand college math. Needless to say, I failed my first freshman quarter. I came back after the Christmas holiday on academic probation. JK suggested that I enroll in the same major that he was in, ‘Youth Leadership,’ a fancy name for ‘Scouting Education,’ the easiest major at BYU. He was right. I developed poor study habits, which I continued throughout college and graduated with a ‘C’ average.

Except for the classes, I really enjoyed college, especially my extracurricular activities. I was elected (railroaded) president of the campus Oregon Club and occasionally dated the same girl I had dated in high school. (I lost track of her until recently when I learned that she later became the national Mrs. America, twice, and later her daughter also became Mrs. America.)

I left BYU for the summer and got a job teaching Field Sports at Camp Chiltcoos, the same camp I worked at after my freshman year in high school. The BSA sent me to a Field Sports school at Camp Merriweather, near Portland, for a week. I could use that experience in my college major. While at camp, Dad decided to move to Salem, Oregon. I took a couple days off from camp to help move my parents. We rented a U-Haul truck in Eugene; I drove it to Coos Bay, we loaded the truck, went to Salem, unloaded, and Dad stayed in Salem while I drove the truck back to Eugene. I ran out of gas a few miles out of Eugene, and tried to thumb a ride to the gas station in pouring down rain. I saw an Oregon State Trooper pass me without even slowing down. It is, after all, illegal to hitchhike in Oregon.

At the end of the summer, I returned to BYU as a sophomore and my new roommate was Ron Evans, an accounting major. I felt sorry for him because he literally burned the midnight oil every night to keep up with his studies. Everyone was asking where JK was. He didn’t return to BYU. I finally learned that he and his family were recent converts to the church, and through the summer his Mom and Dad were asked to leave the church. (Long story.) JK enrolled at Pacific University as an optometry major and later became an eye doctor.

I became a student volunteer photographer for the college daily newspaper, *The Daily Universe*. I also became friends with Julie Pingree, a student reporter. During spring term, I got a letter from Mother saying that Dad became ill, but not to worry, he was alright. But upon going home at the end of my sophomore year, I saw my dad with totally gray hair, thin, and unable to work. He announced that he could not afford to send me to college anymore. That summer I worked at the YMCA summer camp as a counselor. Then during fall term I worked as a desk clerk at the Salem YMCA.

During that fall term I got a letter from the student editor of the school newspaper saying that they wanted me at BYU, and they could pay me as their chief photographer. And besides, he wrote, Julie was looking forward to seeing me again. I agreed, not knowing how I was going to get through the college year financially. I left my car in Salem and rode to school with BYU students from the Salem area.

At BYU I wrote a proposal to combine the student newspaper with the student yearbook photography program. It was accepted and I became chief photographer of student publications. My finances took a slight increase. Julie and I spent time together again although we never really dated or even so much as held hands. After all, what would my father say if he ever heard that we were intimate?

I spent an inordinate amount of time as a student photographer, took every photography class the school offered, and skipped classes, especially those in my major subject to practice my love of my hobby. My advisor called me into his office the end of the spring term to tell me that it appeared that I was losing interest in the classes of my major. My comment: “I think you’re right.” My ‘A’s in my major subject became ‘B’s after that.

This was a period of time when sky diving was just taking off as a sport. A couple students asked me if I would photograph them as they jumped out of the plane with their parachutes on. I did. They took the door off, removed the foot peddles from the right side of the Cessna and had me sit on the floor in place of the peddles. From there I could photograph the jumpers in the plane and lean out to photograph them jumping out of the door. Exciting! But I wasn’t strapped in! Fortunately I didn’t fallout. I took some great photos for the BYU *Daily Universe*. The jumpers wanted some prints so I made some for them. Before the *Universe* could run them I saw them in the Provo newspaper. We were scooped with our own photos! I learned a lot from that experience.

Every building on the BYU campus is connected by an underground tunnel. While on a photographic assignment I learned how to get into them without being caught. After the workmen went home one night I took Julie and we explored the tunnels. We sat in them and talked late into the night. Even with that opportunity we still never touched or held hands. I’ve always felt sorry about that, as she was a truly nice woman, and looking back, I realized she made many hints to me about being closer. Dumb me!

I can count on one hand the number of women I dated while at BYU. Toward the end of my junior year I met Leona Wayment, who was working in the AV Department as a switchboard operator. I talked, or flirted with her off and on. The church holds its annual conference every spring and the editor of the *Daily Universe*, Larry Day, invited Leona and I to go to the conference with him and his wife. We sat in their back seat and on the way back a phenomenon happened.

Leona and I actually held hands! I even put my arm around her. That was the start of a romance that eventually culminated in marriage during Christmas of my senior year. We got married in the Nephi Temple. I moved into her apartment after we got married and finished my senior year while she worked. Our agreement was that she would work until after I graduated, then she would get her degree at a later date when we could afford it. In June of that year I still needed six units to graduate. I spent that summer working on a special six-unit class, writing a paper on the differences between Boy Scout camp and the YMCA outdoor program. I graduated in August, 1960, and was offered jobs both in photography and in my major field. I decided that I should go into my major field, and was hired as a District Scout Executive in Idaho Falls, Idaho, on the condition that I completed a six-week executive training course near Hoboken, New Jersey. We moved to Idaho Falls in the fall of 1960.

I vowed never to take another college class as long as I lived. My formal education was over!

I took a Greyhound bus to New York and was supposed to transfer to a train to Hoboken, and the BSA training center. I got off the bus about 6am and walked to the subway stairs where I was supposed to catch the train. Just as I reached the top of the stairs a mass of humanity, the first daily commuters off the subway trains flooded the stairs. I was standing there wondering how I was going to get down the stairs to the train. Just then another person, obviously a New Yorker, grabbed my suitcase and said: “Here, I’ll show you how to get to the trains.” He put my suitcase up in front of him and said: “Follow me!” Everyone scrambled to get out of his way as he charged down the stairs. From that moment forward I’ve disputed any comments about New Yorkers being unfriendly or unhelpful.

Leona and I enjoyed the beautiful areas around BYU and Utah. We climbed nearby Mount Tipanogos, in the Wasatch Range, twice, while we lived there. That was a community tradition every Fourth of July, when there were thousands of people on the mountain, and hundreds at the top. I also went with some of the *Daily Universe* editors on a week-long hike and camping trip into the High Uinta Wilderness Area in Northern Utah. As usual, while dividing up the food, I opened my pack for as much stuff as it would hold. (I never learn!) And, of course, I was hiking last, up the trail. At dusk we all stopped to rest, and when the group started hiking again I said I wasn’t ready to go. They said the camp was just around the corner of the trail and I could find it easily. When I had rested enough I hiked around the corner, and continued until I thought I must have gone too far, so I turned back to where we were last together. By then it was dark, and because of my Boy Scout training, I just sat and waited. Sure enough one of the guys came back and found me. The camp ended up being off the trail several hundred yards.

My scouting duties included servicing districts in Arco and Salmon, Idaho where I traveled once a month. I learned that being a scout executive entailed raising money as much as becoming involved in camping or outdoor activities. The summer months included summer camp but our chief executive set up his own tent, a wigwam, dressed up as an Indian chief and invited each young camper to come into his tent and be alone with the chief. That broke every policy of the BSA let alone the local district. That year I was the assistant camp director. We hid the chief’s wigwam so he couldn’t find it. The chief scout executive also turned the local BSA program over to the LDS church. There was no scouting program available to boys or leaders who weren’t members of the church, unless they wanted to attend an LDS church unit.

There was turmoil in the council. I was not happy but trapped in a miserable profession. My only happy event: Wayne was born in Idaho Falls. I decided to quit professional Scouting after my first year, as it wasn’t the outdoor camping life that I had imagined. Leona, Wayne, and I moved to Portland and lived with my parents for a couple of weeks until I got a job with WP Fuller Co. as an inside paint salesman in 1961.

In the meantime Leona was pregnant with Jan. I missed photography. Every time a fire engine screamed by the paint store I wanted to follow them. I sent applications to every paper I could around the country. I went to visit the photographers at the *Oregonian* in Portland. One photographer said he knew the chief photographer in Eureka, California who was down a photographer. I sent a resume to him and he called me saying he was interested, would be in Portland soon, and we could get together. Several weeks later, about 9:30 pm, we heard a knock at the door. It was Neil Hulbert, the chief photographer for *Eureka Newspapers*. He saw my portfolio, we talked, and I was hired on the spot. Two weeks notice at the paint company and we would move to Eureka. But during those two weeks, Jan decided to come very early so I moved to Eureka in 1962 and came back to Portland for my family once I found a place to live.

I worked in Eureka for three years. Neil was the best boss I have ever had. The biggest event I covered was labeled “The Thousand Year Flood,” by the media. It rained hard for several days and a Coast Guard helicopter crashed in our circulation area holding seven rescuees and three crew. All died. I covered that incident. It took a week to find the copter and in the meantime I asked the commanding officer if it was alright to photograph it once it was found. He said yes, but when it was found and I started photographing, the sergeant in charge confiscated my cameras. I waited for the commander to arrive and told him what had happened. He said “I’ve been hoping you were here. Our photographer’s equipment isn’t working and I need photos of the inside of the plane. Can you take them for me?” I said “Yes!” He ordered the sergeant to give my cameras back; helped me into the craft, and saw that I didn’t hurt myself. Chalk one up for me! Hee, Hee! (It is against the law to confiscate personal belongings, including cameras.)

I was the only photographer on the staff that could penetrate the flood. I called the National Guard, who I had photographed earlier for a feature, and asked if they had been activated. They were an amphibian unit and could travel just about anywhere to rescue flood victims. The AP and UPI wire services each sent a photographer and an editor. Their editors both asked if their photographer could join me as I went with the National Guard. Each day when we returned to the darkroom we all developed our film. The wire editors looked at their staffers film, then asked to see my film. They chose several photos from my rolls to transmit to their member newspapers. As the flood diminished both editors asked me if I wanted to go to work for them. The pay would have been great but I would have had to live in the Los Angeles area and fly to most assignments. As a family man I did not want to go to LA or be away from home and live out of a suitcase. I made enough extra money from that flood to pay for new 35mm camera equipment.

After three years both Neil and I knew it was time for me to move on, even though neither of us said anything. One day Neil told me about an opening in Redding, CA. I knew the chief photographer there so I called him. He said to come visit with him, and, after reviewing my portfolio, he hired me in early 1965. I went from one of the wettest communities in the country to one of the warmest. The Redding paper liked features and didn’t follow spot news unless the event was significant. The Eureka paper was basically a spot news publication but ran features if they got them. I did both equally well. Like Eureka, I had prize-winning photos that were published regularly around the world.

Barry Hennings, the chief photographer, was not well liked. Another staffer knew he was allergic to horses. She was a horse person and one day, while Barry was at lunch she brought her horse blanket in and wiped the desk with it. When Barry came back he started sneezing so badly he had to go home. He never figured out our secret. I worked at the *Redding Record Searchlight* for almost two years.

One day the newspaper’s publisher came back to the photo department with the news that Neil Hulbert had died in a plane crash. Neil’s dream was to be a war photographer, and his publisher (who was also his uncle) approved his going to Viet Nam to photograph local soldiers. On the way a plane crashed on the side of Mount Fuji in Japan. Neil was supposed to be on that plane but he missed it. He wired home that he was okay. The next day he boarded another plane, but coincidentally that plane also crashed into Mount Fuji.

In Redding we ended up buying a house because there was nothing to rent. Monthly house payments turned out to be cheaper than rent. We were in a new housing development and became best friends with our new neighbors, Dick and Carolyn Miller and family. We spent a lot of time together, helping each other put in yards, hiking in Lassen Volcanic Park and just playing games. One morning they invited us over for breakfast. Carolyn was a fantastic Italian cook and protected her kitchen, not even allowing Dick to cook there. I knew that and when we arrived I kiddingly said I would be glad to make breakfast. To everyone’s surprise she said okay. I cooked the flapjacks and she prepared everything else.

Five years as a photographer (plus three at BYU) and I knew I was in a dead end job. I wanted more. One day I saw an ad in *Editor and Publisher Magazine,* a magazine targeting professional journalists,for a person to join the Journalism department at Marshall University in West Virginia as a graduate student. The job included photographing for the daily student newspaper, and overseeing their beautiful new student darkroom. It was also an opportunity to earn a Master of Journalism degree, paid for by the department. Leona and I were westerners at heart, but what an opportunity! I sent a resume on a fluke. I got an immediate response asking for a portfolio. I didn’t want to risk sending my portfolio across the U.S. and not getting it back. So I went into the darkroom and selected a dozen cull prints from the darkroom’s throw-away box and sent them. I got a phone call saying one of their professors was going to be attending a conference in California and would set up an interview while he was there.

A few weeks later I got a call from Professor Page Pitt. He called from his conference in San Diego. “How far am I from where you are,” he asked. My reply was “about 900 miles.” There was a long pause and he finally said, “Maybe we can have a telephone interview.” A couple weeks later I got a job offer to go to Marshall University. I told the chairman that I would take the job if he would also let me teach their photojournalism class. The answer was yes, so Leona and I discussed it in depth. We decided it would be an adventure to go there. We arrived in Huntington, WVA in time to start the winter semester in 1966.

Indeed it was! Even the move was an adventure! We rented a large U-Haul trailer, put our family into the car, and headed east with a full tank of gas, out of Redding in December. It had snowed hard the night before. Highway 44 to Susanville had not been plowed. We were chained up and pushing snow with the front bumper. We ran out of gas at the top of the grade, just before Susanville. I thumbed a ride into town and the gas station attendant brought me back with a can of gas. He followed us as we went down the hill toward Susanville. The trailer started fishtailing and at one point was actually beside the car. I managed to get us straightened out, and at the gas station the attendant said “You must have angels riding in that car with you!”

Marshall is a West Virginia state university of about 16,000 students. We were in Huntington for four good years. I was the busiest ever in my job photographing for the student newspaper, *The Parthenon,* that had just became a daily as I started there, caring for a marvelous new darkroom and studio facility in a new building, and teaching their one photojournalism class. All of that, plus working toward an MAJ degree. I had to take eighteen make-up credits because my BS was not in a major subject. This is the first time in my life that I enjoyed taking classes. The students were a pleasure to work with because they seemed to want to learn. My family took advantage of our eastern location during vacations and time off because it is central to many places in the eastern US. I continued taking quality news photos and received many compliments. But I also challenged their policy of a professional photographer taking photos for a student publication while students were the reporters. I started a program of students also taking the photos, and supervised their activities. Upon receiving my Master’s degree in 1969, I could have stayed there as a professor but Leona and I were getting homesick for the west. I started putting out feelers for a job ‘back home.’ Professor Pitt was totally blind, which gave me an additional communications challenge.

Fred Haberle and I hooked up and were great buddies at Marshall. Fred, a recent graduate of the journalism department, was working as a photographer for Marshall’s publicity and marketing department, and the faculty advisor for the yearbook. The basketball team was invited to a tournament at Madison Square Garden in New York. I was asked to photograph the event, as was Fred. Fred and I went together to New York to photograph the games. We flew, and had to change planes in Washington, DC. The plane from DC to New York was at a different airport from where we landed, so we walked from the first airport, over the Potomac River, and across the steps of the Nation’s Capital, to the second airport. We stayed in New York and spent much of our free time exploring downtown Manhattan. Marshall didn’t win the tournament but their performance was so outstanding they were invited back to the newly built Madison Square Garden to play an exhibition game. They played the first basketball game in the new Garden. Fred and I went to New York again to photograph that game.

Fred later joined the Air Force and flew the SAC B-52s. His base was at Merced, California, and later when we moved to Fresno, he took my family on a tour through one of those giant planes. Years later when Fred left the Air Force he moved to Fresno. When he looked out the window of his new house he saw Wayne, who was working for a landscaping company, landscaping his yard. Fred tried to call me but just missed me, as Sheila and I had just moved to Reno.

On another out-of-town trip I drove a WVA state vehicle to Cincinnati, Ohio to photograph the very first game played by the newly organized Bengals. On the way I was stopped by an Ohio State Patrol officer. When he asked for my driver’s license I took it out of my wallet and handed it to him. But he noticed another card next to my license and asked what it was. I showed him a working press photographer’s credential issued by the California Highway Patrol and told him I used to work in California. He looked at it and said I must be a very good driver with a card like that. He let me go and said to just try to hold my speed down.

It should be obvious by now that I don’t let any grass grow under my feet. I could have stayed at Marshall as an assistant professor but we were ready to move on. The opportunity came at Fresno State College, now California State University at Fresno. They offered me an assistant professor position, as a photojournalism professor. Actually, at that time a person with over five years of hands-on photojournalism experience and a Master’s degree was unique. Any university in need of an instructor would take a close look at those credentials. Fresno State hired me from my resume, without a personal interview.

We bought a new ¾ ton pickup, put a camper on it, and pulled a huge U-Haul trailer to Fresno. On the way we had two flats. Both times service station attendants said the flats were caused by defective tubes. When we arrived in Fresno we went to the Chevrolet garage and asked them to check the tubes in all the tires. They refused. So I wrote a letter to GMC telling them what happened and threatening them with a suit if we were ever in an accident caused by defective tubes and were injured. A week later the Chevrolet dealership called to say they understood we would like to have our tires checked. The check showed that every tube was defective, including the spare.

We arrived in Fresno in 1969, just in time for fall term registration. My two sections of beginning photojournalism filled up the first day with a waiting list. I went to the department chairman and offered to open a third section. He sat up straight in his chair and said: “The hell you will. And make the rest of us look bad?” So my entire load, with a graduate assistant to help me, was thirty students total in two sections plus serving as an advisor to the annual yearbook. That wasn’t a fraction of my load at Marshall. My job continued downhill from there.

One evening I became so depressed I smoked an entire pack of cigarettes in one of the classrooms. The next day my throat, lungs, and eyes felt dreadful. The classroom probably stank also. My first year’s salary was not enough to live on. We couldn’t even afford a Christmas tree. On Christmas Eve I heard that the owners of a local Christmas tree lot had put their unsold trees into the trash. I pulled one out and brought it home. The following years I taught extension classes for additional funds.

That year is when the entire Marshall University football team and their coaches were killed in a plane crash as it was landing at the Huntington airport. They were coming home after losing to East Carolina State. I knew most of the team and coaches as I had photographed them as individuals in earlier years, plus all of their home football games.

We renewed our friendships with the Millers. We visited them and they visited us occasionally. Dick wanted to buy a used Timberline camping trailer and I knew a professor at Fresno State who was trying to sell one. Dick came to Fresno to see it and bought it. Dick also taught me how to fish. From then on we fished and camped together in both the Redding and the Fresno areas. One time Dick and I went to the Hoover Wilderness Area to fish. It includes many small lakes behind Saddlebag Lake and near the east side of Yosemite. Many of the lakes still had snow around them. At one lake Dick climbed in the snow up behind a lake, lost his footing, and slid into the lake, floundering. I knew he couldn’t swim so I hurried in his direction, and held out my pole for him to grab. He took the end of it and I pulled him to the rock where I was standing. He rested for a few minutes, then pulled himself out of the water. I fished for his pole at the bottom of the lake, and was lucky enough to hook it.

For the next ten nine years at Fresno State I was constantly searching for a new job. My third year there I convinced the faculty to insert a photojournalism major into the program. It was the second program of its kind west of the Mississippi. The first was started at San Jose State by Joe Swan. His program was very popular and he sent some of his extra students to me. Many colleges in the west claim to have a photojournalism program, but their classes were mostly photography classes. In the meantime Leona and I started bickering, to the point that we finally separated after five years in Fresno. Leona had become more entrenched in the LDS church, while I had moved away from its strict demands. I wanted to spend weekends camping with our family and she felt the church expected us to attend their meetings. We asked Wayne and Jan if they thought we should separate. Their comments were: “We don’t want to see you separate unless you’re going to continue to fight and yell at each other.” When Leona and I were married we agreed that she would finish her BS degree when we could afford it. We lived so close to Fresno State that she could walk or bike to the campus. But she said she had changed her mind and didn’t want to finish her degree. I said “Then find a volunteer position in the community to keep yourself busy.” She said, “I have a volunteer position. I’m teaching a class at Sunday School.”

A student at Fresno State, Don LeBaron, worked for the student newspaper when I arrived in Fresno. While he was close to graduation and wasn’t in a position to take classes from me, he was constantly asking me questions about photojournalism, and in general was picking my brain. Upon graduation he went to work as a photojournalist at the Tulare newspaper, *The Advance-Register*. I think he influenced me more than I helped him.

Whenever I took our pickup into the Chevrolet garage for a tune-up, or oil change, it came back running the same, but the charge was always $90. I suspected that they simply put the vehicle on the back lot with no service. I finally asked Don if he would come over and show me how to tune up the vehicle and change the oil. So one Saturday morning he showed up sort of buzzed, and gave me a lesson. He broke two spark plugs trying to get them out, but he was a good teacher. From then on, I did my own tune-ups and oil changes, and it made a difference in the way my vehicles performed.

Our family was craft-oriented and talked about trying to make sand candles. But Jan wanted to know why we couldn’t make snow candles using the same process as sand candles. We went into the mountains where there was snow and tried it. The candles were beautiful and very delicate. So I took pictures of them and sent them, along with an article, to *Popular Mechanics* magazine. They ran it in one of their next issues. I told Jan I would buy her a new dress with some of the money from the article, but she said no. I wish I had tried harder to have her let me buy the dress.

I moved into an apartment a block away. I could see our house from my back patio fence and was miserable. As much as I wanted to live with my family, it didn’t happen. Leona came over occasionally to swim and fondle, but even that didn’t work out. She suggested counseling, and I agreed to see a person outside the church, but she insisted on an LDS counselor. She finally went without me but told me what he recommended. According to her, the counselor (the Bishop) said that she was right in following the teachings of the church, but foremost, she was obligated to follow her husband’s wishes. That made our relationship further estranged. I don’t want my wife to live that way. I believe couples should be equal. I don’t believe a wife should be subservient to her husband. After fifteen years of marriage we finally ended our relationship. When Dad heard of our separation he drove to Fresno with his trailer parked on our front lawn, and tried to talk me into staying together. He admitted that Mom had threatened him with divorce if he didn’t stop smoking and to join the church. He agreed but I’ve never known whether he had actually accepted the church.

Our dentist and good friend, Bill Jensen, came to my apartment with a companion one evening announcing that they were my ‘home teachers’ from the church. I said: “Bill, as a friend you are more than welcome at my place anytime, but if you are representing the church you are not welcome.” He said “We are assigned by the Bishop to visit you and make sure our ‘brethren’ are doing well.” I asked him not to come representing the church. He said: “they had to, it’s the Bishop’s orders. You’ll have to talk to the Bishop if you don’t want us to come.” I called the Bishop the next day and told him I don’t want home teachers or anyone else from the church to visit my apartment. He said: “That’s the churches responsibility to check up on our members.” I asked: “What do I have to do to have them not come?” His answer was: “The only way is to take your name off of the church roles.” “Okay,” I said, “take my name off the roles.” He replied: “He can’t. The only way your name can be removed is to be excommunicated.” I said: “Okay, excommunicate me!” “Brother Dill, do you know what you’re saying?” “Yes, excommunicate me!” He said: “If you’re serious you have to write a letter to the Stake President with that request.” I wrote the letter. I got a letter back saying they had set up a meeting and required me to be there so they could ‘judge’ whether or not I was worthy of excommunication. I wrote a letter back saying: “Your church preaches that there is only one person who can judge me, and it isn’t you. I’ll not be attending your damned meeting.” But those aren’t the exact words I used. I won’t repeat them here. Much later I got a letter from the Stake President saying that the meeting was held and that I had been excommunicated.

Leona began dating Gordon Larsen within a couple of years after we were separated. When they decided to get married the church required that she get a letter from me giving her permission to marry. I was truly embarrassed for her. Imagine having to ask a former spouse for permission to marry!

A highlight of my life was an opportunity to go on a ten-day fishing trip to the Black Cap Mountain area, deep in the Sierra Nevada Mountains on horseback. It was sponsored by the Sierra Club and the California State Fish and Game Commission. All we did was fish the many lakes in the region. Wranglers took care of the horses, and cooked all the meals. After ten days at the 8,000 to 10,000 foot elevation in the summer sun, and being sunburned on top of sunburn, I came home with the brownest face ever. During that trip we saw a cougar watching us from a craggy mountain top.

I started seeing other women after a few months. I really didn’t meet other women that I liked. That is until I started dating this divorced, older woman taking my class; an ‘A’ student with platinum blonde hair, who had returned to school to finish her degree in Journalism. But she soon told me she couldn’t see me anymore. After a couple weeks I called her and she agreed to go out again. And again she soon broke off our relationship. I was hurt but let her go for another couple of weeks. Then we started seeing each other again, but, for the third time, she dropped me and said: “this is final.” I couldn’t handle it and had to seek counseling from the college counselor, who also happened to know Sheila. She said Sheila was determined to finish her degree, and felt threatened with any relationship. Her advice to me was if I ever wanted to go out with her again, I would have to wait until she finished her degree. So I waited. Sheila was raising three school-aged sons, Bret, Andrew, and Corbett, was working at three part-time jobs, and was determined to finish her BA in Journalism.

Spring term ended and Sheila had her degree. I had heard of a job that I thought might interest her, so I called and asked if she wanted to have a picnic up in the Sierras so we could talk about the job. She agreed and we had the picnic. I don’t think she was interested in the job but she was interested in going out again.

I got a call from another staff person at Fresno State asking if I knew someone that could produce a slide-tape for them, gratis. She knew I taught an AV production class. I thought of Sheila, and asked her if she wanted to produce one together. She agreed. We produced the slide-tape, then started a business producing slide-tapes for profit. I would photograph them, Sheila would provide the scriptwriting, and we would produce them together.

Sheila and I experienced a miracle the first date we went on with my two kids, Wayne and Jan. We hiked about three miles into Twin Lakes in the Sierras, above Huntington Lake. We ate lunch on a huge monolith at the edge of the lake, and afterwards, Jan and I went fishing while Wayne stayed on the rock with Sheila. Suddenly Jan said that Wayne might have fallen off the rock. I looked up and saw him just above the water line laying on another rock. We rushed around the lake to him. There was also a Boy Scout Troop on the scene that wanted to carry him off the rock. I yelled, “don’t move him,” and had them ferry me across the water on their raft to Wayne. Sure enough, he hurt all over and we thought there was a possibility of a broken leg or back. We got him off the rock and to shore where he waited. Then the scoutmaster and I ran the three miles to a phone and help. We waved down a passing Forest Service truck, as the phone didn’t work. He contacted the Sheriff’s office who in turn contacted California Emergency Management for a helicopter. None was available so the Forest Service started organizing a crew to carry Wayne out on a gurney. But it was getting late in the afternoon and they decided he couldn’t be carried out till morning.

Now for the miracle!

Just as it seemed there was no way Wayne could be rescued until the next day, a voice from above came across the Forest Service radio: “This is fire helicopter 367 returning home from a wildland fire and passing through your district. We’ve been monitoring your radio. Can we be of assistance?” Within five minutes they landed at our location, threw out all their fire gear except a gurney, put me and the scoutmaster on board, and we were on our way to Wayne. We landed, prepared Wayne for flight, put Sheila onto the helicopter as they needed an adult to go along, and headed for the hospital in Fresno. I told Jan to take the lead walking out, go as fast as she could along the trail, but not to hurt herself, as we went to the car. After an hour she finally stopped and said: “Dad, I have to rest; I’m too tired to go further.” It was getting dusk. I said “Jan, look through the trees, you can see the car there!”

The event turned out alright. Wayne was fine except for bruises. He had to walk on crutches for a few days until his bruises healed. We learned many years later that Wayne was trying to climb down the side of the rock when he slipped and fell. Leona and I had tried to encourage Wayne to participate in the local sports activities such as little league baseball but he wasn’t interested. As we learned later, Wayne’s sport was and still is hiking in the back country, an activity that he is very passionate about. Like his Dad, he loves out-of-doors sports such as skiing, camping, and of course hiking the Sierras. This holds true of Jan also, plus she likes to fish.

Now for a bit of information that seems trivial but later you will understand the significance of this event. Fresno State sent me to a photojournalism conference in San Diego. I took some students along, and met some other photographers, which is par at a conference. Some of my students and I sat at a table at lunchtime with some other folks. One photographer was a very beautiful lady of Hawaiian ancestry, from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, who worked as their campus AV photographer and as a lab assistant for Jimmy Bedford, the long-time photojournalism professor there. During lunch she asked if I could drive her to the airport later, as she couldn’t stay for the next day’s program. I agreed. I can’t remember her name so for now, let’s just call her ‘Leah.’ It will become clear later why this bit if trivia is important to me. During my career at Fresno State I had a student in my classes, Paul Kuroda, who eventually received a Pulitzer Prize for his photos.

Eventually Sheila and I started talking about marriage. She said her brother from England was coming to the states for a visit and if we got married she would like him to be there. So we got married in Fresno’s newly opened Woodward Park on June 4, 1977 with a small group of friends and relatives. We lived in her house for a couple of years until I finally got a job offer and moved to Walnut Creek to start a job as the first ever photo editor on the *Oakland CA Tribune.*

But the job was short lived. The publisher was a despot with over 250 grievances filed against him by the paper’s union shop, all in the six months he had been there. One of them included me, and whether or not I needed to join the union. After two weeks the publisher called me into his office to see how I was doing. I said, “I’m learning the ropes, starting to become friends with the photographers…” He stopped me and said “Hold it. You can’t become friends with someone you supervise.” My reply was “You haven’t established the parameters for my job with the union, and we disagree on how I should treat the photographers. I’m seriously thinking of quitting.” His jaw dropped. He said it’s about time for lunch. Go to lunch and we’ll talk again this afternoon. After lunch he called me into his office again and asked if I had thought more about it. I said: “Yes, I quit.”

A week later I got a phone call from Larry Nylund, a graduate of my photojournalism program at Fresno State, and current Director of Photography and Graphics at *Reno, NV Newspapers*. “I hear things didn’t go well in Oakland. I have an opening in Reno if you’re interested.” So I went to Reno as a photographer in 1979 and told Sheila, “We will probably not be here in this ‘God Forsaken Country’ for more than six months.” Ha!

Reno started out as a good newspaper to work for. Larry was an excellent supervisor and the assignments were legitimate. The newspaper was in the process of constructing a new building and Larry brought me in on the new darkroom design. He also asked me to write a photo editing policy for the paper, although any photo policy would not be popular with the editors.

Sheila continued to live in Fresno and sell her house. She also continued to get orders for slide-tapes in Fresno. She hired photographer Joe Herkle, who was a graduate assistant for me one year at Fresno State. Joe took the photos for our slide-tapes, then Sheila would come to Reno on weekends and together we would complete the production together. Sheila sold the Fresno house six months later. We bought a house and moved our belongings to Reno that summer.

One year later Larry moved to the marketing department, and the editor-in-chief, Bob Ritter, asked me to take his place as Director of Photography and Graphics. I told him that I would if we could put the photo editing policy into use and if I could answer directly to him. He agreed. Unfortunately he didn’t share the new photo editing policy with any of the editors. And surprisingly, in Larry’s new position, he didn’t follow it as it pertained to Marketing. A year later Larry was promoted to Director of Photography and Graphics at *USA Today*, a paper with nationwide circulation, located in New York. Gannett owns both newspapers, plus, at the time, the *Oakland Tribune.*

I was at *Reno Newspapers* for a total of four years. In my early years I convinced them to install a two-way radio system. They did, with radios for both the Photography and Advertising departments. With the radios we didn’t have to sit in the darkroom and wait for assignments. We could roam the community looking for interesting feature photos and still be available when an assignment came along. There were many good assignments, especially feature articles. The two standout news events were Harvey’s Casino blowing up at Stateline, NV, on the shore of Lake Tahoe, and a river rescue on the Truckee River. In the first, a disgruntled gambler placed a large bomb in the bottom floor of Harvey’s, then called the sheriff’s office and told them about it. The entire casino area of Stateline, NV was vacated and the FBI worked for several days trying to disarm the bomb with a robot. Occasionally a siren would go off and loud speakers would announce “explosion eminent, explosion eminent.” Then nothing would happen. One time I was standing beside a deputy sheriff listening to his radio. I heard: “Move a little to the left; now up slightly; now a little…. Oh, SHIT!” We looked up and saw the entire building coming apart.

In the second, a raft went over a weir dam and got caught in the undertow. Three of us photographers from the paper arrived in time to photograph a woman being hoisted up a retaining wall, out of the river nude, an illustration of what the force of the water can do. What made it significant was the intensive editorial discussions on whether to use it. It appeared on page one of the evening edition. The paper got a lot of flack from subscribers but it also prompted the city to blow out the dangerous dam so no one else would get hurt or killed in the future. One of my photographers lent her his coat, and the next day took her to breakfast where he asked how she felt about her nude photo being in the paper. She said: “I wish it hadn’t been published but I understand why it was and I don’t feel upset or bitter about it.” A great example of the power of the press, and why I felt my job was more than just as a photographer.

In 1982 nineteen-year-old Wayne wanted to hike the John Muir Trail, a significant 300 mile trail from the top of Mt. McKinley to Yosemite Valley in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, but he needed a hiking companion. Wayne was already an experienced hiker. I mentioned the possibility of andy going with him. After much thought, Sheila agreed. He was sixteen at the time. To get into shape for the month-long hike, Andy would climb Rattlesnake Mountain, near our house, daily with a backpack filled with one gallon milk bottles filled with water.

The day the hike began we drove Wayne and Andy to Lone Pine, CA., their jumping off point. The John Muir trail begins at the top of 14,494 foot high Mount Whitney, and ends in Yosemite Valley. Jan met them at Edison Lake, the halfway point, with a food-drop and hiked the rest of the way with them. During the month they were gone Sheila kicked herself daily for agreeing to let her young son go on such a long hike. We finally met the proud hikers, along with Leona and her husband Gordon, in Yosemite Valley at the end of their fantastic accomplishment. By that time, they had run out of food and had been living on a little candy and ice cream purchased in Yosemite Valley their final couple of days. They were very happy to see the huge picnic dinner we had brought them.

My sister called while I was working at *Reno Newspapers* saying that my Mother was covered with bruises. She said that Dad, while caring at home for Mom, who had developed dementia, claimed that she fell going down stairs. Her opinion was that dad was hitting her. I told her that I’d take care of it. I called dad, talked for a while, then said: “I understand mom has bruises from ‘falling down the stairs.’” There was a long pause and his reply was “Yes.” My reply back was: “I tell you what. You have chosen to take care of her rather than putting her in a rest home where she belongs. That means that your care of her includes seeing that she doesn’t ‘fall down the stairs!’ If I hear about any more bruises, I’ll call the cops. Do you understand?” Mom didn’t get any more bruises.

While at *Reno Newspapers* I got a letter from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks inviting me to join their faculty to replace their retiring photojournalism professor, Jimmy Bedford. I was curious how they heard of me and thought of Leah, the woman at the photojournalism conference in San Diego. They needed someone who could totally revamp and upgrade their photojournalism program. I declined saying I was having too much fun in Reno. They said they would hire a one year replacement and get back to me the next year.

They did! By then the job at *Reno Newspapers* had gone sour. Sheila and I talked about it in depth and decided that I would go for a year, check it out, and make a decision whether to live there permanently. Sheila stayed in Reno that year to work on her Master’s degree at University of Nevada, Reno; and to continue her position at St. Mary’s Hospital, while Andrew finished his senior year at Reed High School.

The next adventure in my life!

My daughter Jan lived with me, and her tuition was free because I was on the faculty. Her college education became much less expensive. She later graduated from there with a degree in biology.

Sheila drove to Fairbanks with me along British Columbia’s route 16, the Cassiar Highway. She stayed a couple weeks in Fairbanks with Jan and I, then flew back to Reno. Alaska is beautiful, Fairbanks is very isolated, but the Alaskan winters are very cold. The Northern lights are beautiful, and the landscape is pastel in winter. Jan and I lived in campus housing.

On our trip to Alaska, in August, 1982, we made a short stop in Portland to visit with my parents and sister. I discovered that Dad had required my sister to care for Mom, who was now totally bed ridden and helpless. She was in Marilyn’s small, crowded house along with her own eight children. Mom was in bed, and appeared gaunt, without teeth, any hair, and couldn’t talk. Obviously she should have been in a rest home with professional care. But when I walked into her room, she gave me a big smile. That is the image of her that has stayed in my mind all these years. But Dad wasn’t trusting of anyone, especially healthcare professionals.

Students in Alaska seem hungry for information. Leah asked if she could continue as a lab assistant. I said yes. But after a couple of weeks she complained to me saying that Jimmy let his lab assistants grade the student’s assignments. She thought it should continue. But I felt differently and was grading all assignments myself. I pointed out that I was asked to revamp the program and felt strong that as their professor I should grade all of the students work. So she resigned and I replaced her with another assistant. We only saw each other occasionally after that. I went to Reno for the Christmas holidays and came back a few days early to do some needed work on the darkroom. One day Leah came into the darkroom while I was standing on a countertop fixing a safelight. After some conversation she asked me a question: “Are you in love?” I said: “Yes, I am.” Leah said: “that’s all I wanted to know!” She turned and walked out of the darkroom.

The problem with the job: the chairman was an ass, and talked constantly about me becoming chairman, but another faculty member wanted to be chairman. Politics in the department raged. At the end of the school year the chairman took me to lunch at the school cafeteria, and said I probably wouldn’t like my first year’s critique. He told me he was going to give me a ‘D minus‘ on my faculty critique for my first year there. He said his style is to never give anyone a higher grade than what he feels he, himself, should deserve. He left the important part of his critique for me to read later. When I finally got it, the first part read that “…while there are charges that Mr. Dill was sexually harassing the women students, but I’m sure that will change when his wife joins him here.” I didn’t wait to read the rest of the critique. I went directly to the dean’s office, Dean Mary Elizabeth Shutler, for an explanation. She investigated then demanded that the chairman write a new evaluation.

Mom died in June, 1983, during finals week of the spring semester in Alaska. Dad said to come home for the funeral but I couldn’t. I had finals to give and a deadline for grades to be submitted. Plus I was packing for the trip back to the lower 48. I knew I would see him in a couple of weeks so I didn’t see the need to go to the funeral and was hoping he would understand. I had just seen Mom a few months earlier. Dad was furious, and if our relationship was poor earlier it didn’t improve after that.

Sheila visited me during the Thanksgiving holidays, which turned out to be the worst weather of the winter. From then on, she didn’t want to move to Fairbanks, and with the disgusting actions of the current chairman, neither did I. I returned to Reno at the end of the school year. Saint Mary’s Hospital in Reno offered me a job as AV director in their education department once I returned to Reno. But the day I arrived, the hospital laid off 250 employees, including my position. They were able to give me some freelance jobs but that soon came to an end. I continued searching for a real job.

While at BYU I had taken a class in handball and another in skiing. Up to now those were my sports, plus I have a great love for the out-of doors. The west has the best climate for camping, hiking and fishing, and Dick Miller had taught me how to enjoy fishing. Anything to get me into the wilderness, or into the high mountains. Sheila also enjoyed camping and hiking.

About twenty five years ago I had an event that has seriously affected my activities ever since. Sheila and I went camping one weekend after coming home to Reno from Alaska. While driving home from the camping trip my back became very sore, and Sheila had to take over the driving. The next morning when I woke up I discovered I had ‘drop-foot.’ My right ankle didn’t hold my foot up. It drooped. We went to an orthopedic surgeon in Reno who diagnosed it as a muscle. He said to come back in six weeks if it didn’t get better. Six weeks later it was the same so we went back to the doctor. He decided to examine me and discovered that I had a ruptured disk in my back and the fluid from the disk was pinching a nerve that went to my foot. He operated, but the operation wasn’t a success. A different doctor operated a month later and removed the fluid. But by that time the nerve had died and to this day I have drop-foot. That event ended handball, skiing, and other active sports. We continued hiking for a while but serious hiking also eventually ended. I have continued to fish until recently but now even that has stopped. I still love the out-of-doors and we find ourselves driving to wilderness mountains and lakes whenever we can but the serious hiking is behind us.

A friend told me about a job designing publications at a printing company. I took it but that job ended a year later. While there were other job openings, no one looked twice at me or my resume.

Sheila was getting tired of her job and heard about a job in Lexington KY. She sent a resume and was accepted for the position in April, 1986. Another ‘adventure!’ I drove a large U-Haul truck with Sheila following, to Kentucky. I immediately got a job as publications director at The Council of State Governments. We were in Kentucky for four years. While Sheila’s supervisor quit shortly after our arrival in Lexington, her job became a drag for her, but my job turned out to be one of the most satisfying jobs I’ve had as a manager and supervisor. But we eventually became homesick for the west again.

While socializing in the Lexington area, folks we met would ask about us. First they generally would ask where we came from. When we said ‘California’, that didn’t impress them. Second they would ask what church we attended. Our reply was we don’t go to church. Kentucky is a southern state, and a somewhat religious community, so we still haven’t impressed anyone. Their last question was what we do in our spare time. We say we enjoy relaxing in our hot tub. With that, we obviously didn’t make friends. They just turned and walked away. We spent a lot of our weekends exploring Kentucky and the east. We discovered that we were unusual Kentuckians in that we traveled so much. It didn’t take long to become authorities on places to go, and folks would ask us for suggestions on where to go for the weekend. We discovered that living is more formal in Kentucky than in the west.

While in Kentucky I got a phone call from my old Fresno friend, Don LeBaron. He was in a motor home touring the country. He said he was on a personal mission to visit everyone who had made a significant difference in his life. He had been trying to locate me and said I was on his list to see, and was the last person to find because we lived so far from California. He arrived at our house in his motorhome with his dog Denim. He explained that his brother had died unexpectedly and it affected him so much that he felt he had to visit those folks while he could, and personally thank them, because ‘you never know what the future might bring.’ While visiting, he came down with the flu, and ended up staying over a week while he recovered.

With all the competition in both of our professions it became obvious that one of us had to be in the west if there was any hope for a job. I moved to Portland, OR, in the spring of 1990 while Sheila stayed in KY. While job hunting I didn’t tell Dad that I was living in Portland. After six months in Portland I finally secured a job as a publications director in September, 1990, for a farm magazine based in Eugene. I hired a staff and saved $100,000 in printing costs the first year for them. I had to fly to Kansas for every issue to assure its quality at the printing company.

After our Kentucky house sold Sheila hired a mover to transport our belongings to Eugene in December, and we bought a house in the Eugene hills. She had secured a job at The Eugene Clinic while visiting me over the Thanksgiving holidays. It turned out to be one of her best jobs. We went to Portland occasionally to visit Dad and Marilyn. Dad looked very thin and pale. He died December 15, 1990. The day he died he was in the hospital and we had gone to Portland, had lunch with Marilyn and Mike and were planning to visit Dad in the hospital when she got a call from the hospital saying that Dad had expired. So we went to his house to see what we had to do to sell the house and dispose of his stuff. The thing that stood out in my mind was that there was not a tear shed that afternoon.

I was fired after three years for no given reason. But I suspect that one of my employees convinced the boss that he could do my job better than me. His salary was far less than mine and in fact he couldn’t even complete his responsibilities without consulting others in Eugene. The company folded the next year. I’ve learned over the years that the boss makes a great difference in whether you enjoy your job, or are successful.

I discovered that age discrimination was alive and well.

I have practiced woodworking ever since my classes in high school. But in Eugene it blossomed as a hobby. I was able to set up a shop in our garage, plus wood was inexpensive in Eugene, and many species were available. I tried to find wood with beautiful grain. Myrtlewood was my favorite wood, even though it was very hard to work because of its unpredictable grain. I’ve made every piece of wood furniture in our house. I’ve also made tables, lamps and other items for all of our kids plus some of our neighbors and friends. In Gardnerville wood is expensive, plus I’ve lost my interest in the hobby.

Sheila and I took a stained glass class in Reno and really enjoyed it. I still make a stained glass piece occasionally and have also made some stained glass pieces for all of our kids. We had a neighbor in Eugene who designed and crafted stained glass professionally. All of his work was in a gallery in San Fernando, CA when the Northridge earthquake hit that community, destroying all his work. It also broke his heart and he never created another piece after that. He gave all his glass to Sheila and I because he knew we had an interest in it. We, in turn, gave a lot of the glass to a Springfield high school but we will still never use all that we kept.

It took 1 ½ years to find employment, and that was for the daily *Herald and News* in Klamath Falls, OR as their marketing director. I started in February, 1995 and commuted the three hours each way from Eugene, coming home weekends. The publisher, Dwight Tracy, was forced to hire a marketing person by the newspaper group that owned the paper, Scripts League. He didn’t understand marketing and thought a marketing director’s job should be to sell advertising. We didn’t get along and I resigned in November, less than a year later.

In 1996 Sheila suggested that we have a family conclave that included our combined family of five children and their spouses, and children. I said it would never get off the ground. We organized it anyway, called it Camp Kith and Kin, and asked Wayne to reserve three cabins at Camp Fresno, close to Dinky Creek. Seventeen family members attended. It was such a big hit that the family voted to continue it every two years. It finally ended in 2012 with twenty-one present. Two of our grandkids couldn’t make that one. Over the years families changed. We met at a house in Mendocino, Lake Siskiyou Campground near Mount Shasta, CA, at Lake Tahoe several times, in a house at Alpine Meadows, and finally in a house in gold country near highway 49. We had a total of nine Kith and Kins until we decided to end them in 2012.

I soon landed a job as Executive Director of Lane Leaders, a non-profit ‘leads organization.’ Its members consisted of business leaders in the community who met once a week at breakfast to furnish each other with opportunities to gain additional clients, or ‘leads’ that members might follow up for increasing their businesses.

The president of Lane Leaders, Kristy Glass, learned that I played cribbage, a game that Sheila has taught to every member of our combined family, so she showed up in my office one noon-time with a cribbage board. Cribbage became a regular noon pastime, either in my office, in a park, or eatery. Kristy and I soon became best of friends. She was going through a tough divorce, because she still loved her husband but she felt he was not treating her three girls appropriately, and needed someone to talk to. I could relate to his strictness when she would describe his relationship with her girls so she picked my brain a lot. She also liked to fish, so we would go fishing together, especially on weekends. Sheila would go along sometimes, and so would Alisa, Kristy’s youngest daughter. Sheila didn’t fish but would hike the trail along the upper McKenzie River, our favorite fishing spot, and walk through some of the most breathtaking beauty that Oregon has to offer. We always came home to my place with a limit of fish, cleaned and cooked them, and finished the day with a grand fish dinner.

A year or so after Kristy and I met, Sheila and I decided that maybe Kristy was ready to date. We also had a neighbor, Gary Carpenter, who had just gone through a divorce and wondered if they would make a good pair. We had a Halloween party at our house and invited them both. It wasn’t long before they were a couple and eventually got married. We still hear from them but it’s hard to maintain a friendship when you live 600 miles away.

I retired from Lane Leaders in 1999 at age 60.

In Eugene we were fortunate to have two newsletters fall into our laps. We produced them for awhile, for extra income. I was also active as a volunteer in the community. I taught ‘55 Alive,’ an AARP driving class for older drivers, and became a local administrator for the program, and was Co-Chair of our homeowners association. I also joined the Eugene Police Department as a volunteer. Among my duties were as a photographer, child seat installer, oversight of their Neighborhood Watch program, and member of their volunteer patrol. I also produced some promotional material. Sheila and I also became volunteers at Zephyr Point Presbyterian Conference Center, at Lake Tahoe NV. We were given housing for the month of December each year to produce all of their annual publications, even after we moved to Gardnerville. Six weeks before moving I had a quadruple by-pass surgery. As luck would have it, my recuperation was six weeks, just in time to move to Northern Nevada. We fell in love with Gardnerville, the plum area of Northern Nevada, five years after retirement. To date we have lived here for ten years. We feel this will be our last home.

So much for that ‘God Forsaken Country.’

In Gardnerville, I was elected President of the photography club for a year, and Sheila and I lived at Malheur bird refuge in Oregon for two months volunteering, Sheila as a writer and me as a wildlife photographer and docent. But the volunteer organization I grew to love was Douglas County Search and Rescue, a part of the sheriff’s office. They did most of their work in the back country, searching for lost folks or who otherwise get into trouble in the wilds. I have two ‘finds’ under my belt, but in most instances searching is a team effort. Extensive training is involved. I took it upon myself to see that the radios were programmed and working right for the volunteers as well as the permanent radios installed in their vehicles. I had to fight county politics to convince the county radio shop to install a hilltop repeater for SAR. It greatly extended our radio communications. But we had to supply the funds for our radios and repeaters, including a portable repeater complete with radio frequencies dedicated to SAR. I raised the monies necessary to purchase our communications system. I was named ‘Member of the Year’ in 2008, and in a management position I became ‘Vice President of Development.’ I collected over $250,000 for the group and purchased snow machines, ATVs, and vehicles, plus needed search equipment such as winches, portable lights, computers, GPS’s and satellite phones. After eight years, I had to resign from that organization because my ‘foot-drop’ was worsening and preventing me from continuing my important search duties.

As I look back on my life I ask myself some questions:

*What is my desire?* I have always wanted to save a life. I’m not sure the Dick Miller incident counts, as he could have probably saved himself.

*What is my best achievement?* Probably my duties as a Search and Rescue Volunteer.

*What is my lowest point in life?* The Fresno State experience. I worked there for nine years, barely received tenure, and was never promoted, although the department chairman recommended me for early promotion the first year there. But if I hadn’t gone to Fresno State I wouldn’t have met the love of my life, Sheila-la, the person I have held in the highest esteem for the past 35 years.

*What is the most distressing thing in my life?* My health that includes two knee replacements, rotator cuff surgery, seven back surgeries, two foot surgeries, quadruple heart surgery, and drop-foot, which followed one back injury and should never have happened if I had gone to a competent surgeon. My drop-foot has been a problem ever since it happened. Not only do I have a noticeable limp, but nerves along the inside of my foot often ache, especially in bed. A podiatrist prescribed an ointment from a compounding pharmacist, which calmed the nerves. But when I went back for a refill the pharmacist couldn’t refill it because the base compound was no longer available. Nothing I have found can calm the nerves. I have to just lay in bed, sometimes for hours, until the nerves calm themselves.

*What was your best/worst workplace?* Many were decent. But maybe The Council of State Governments tops the list as a responsible position. The worst position was undoubtedly Reno Newspapers. The person I was supposed to answer to was an alcoholic and the person that wanted to be the boss was a despot. When I left I was required to have an exit evaluation with the personnel director, Pat Rose. She asked how my evaluations went during my stay. I responded that I had never had an evaluation. She said that I had to have had them, they are company policy. They are right here in your file. I said, look at them. Do you see my signature on any of them? She pulled them out and sure enough I hadn’t signed any of them. She was flabbergasted.

*What was the most memorable highlight in your life?* I’ve had many great times but probably the one that stands out was the Black Cap fishing trip. It wasn’t the fishing but the experience of being in the back country of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

*Is there anything you wish you could have done better?* Growing up I never heard the word ‘love’ spoken. When my kids were growing up I never verbalized my ‘love’ for them. I just assumed they knew I loved them. It has only been the past few years that I have come to realize the importance of telling someone you love them. You can’t just assume.

*Is there anything that you are especially thankful for?* When we look around we see folks who have had catastrophes or illnesses that change their lives greatly, or cause them great suffering. I am grateful that my immediate families and I have not had such events. To date we are pretty much healthy and free from debilitating or serious illnesses. I’m also grateful that at age forty Sheila and I attended a seminar that emphasized the importance of planning for retirement. We wouldn’t have the quality retirement today without the funds to support our style of living. I also feel good that Wayne and Jan both have high character and a comfortable life style, which includes their love of the out-of-doors.

*If there is something you regret, what would it be?* I’m sorry that I didn’t spent more time with Wayne and Jan after my separation from Leona! Also, with Sheila’s kids, Bret, Andy, and Corbett, while we lived together. I regret that Dad’s attitude including his complete distrust of people made him very hard to live with. I know he had a rough life growing up. He had to leave school, when his mother died of pneumonia during the ‘20s, while in the sixth grade to take care of his siblings. He didn’t get along with his father, but neither did I. I consciously lived away from him from age 18 on. But I know that Mother and Marilyn have suffered as a result of Dad. On the other hand he was wise in forcing me to attend college. My education has made a huge difference in my life.

*Have you lived a truly contented or fulfilling life?* I have to say, that as I look back on my life, I have few regrets, and my life as a whole has been truly wonderful. While I feel I haven’t had total control of my life’s journey, and destiny certainly played a part at times, I am thankful for the opportunities that have

come my way.



Photo at left was taken of our combined family in Reno about 1980. Top row from left is Sheila, Bret, Corbett, and Andrew. Bottom Row is Doug, Jan and Wayne.

Bottom photo was taken just before we left Sisters. I was eleven years old and my sister Marilyn was less than one year old.

