

United States Navy

I wrote during my nursing school days my experience, or lack of it with the US Army. As I look back on my life, when one door is closed another opens. That is so true and how lucky I feel now about it. As I wrote about my nursing student days I had hoped to have joined the US Army. Only because they had a program that would pay for my schooling and give me E5 pay as I recall. But, alas I was quoted out and felt so bad about that. The Army did send me a letter telling me that it had nothing to do with my qualifications; it was that they had gotten their numbers. I felt better but disappointed on losing the financial support.

So, it was 1968 and the Viet Nam war was in the news. Also there was the draft. I had signed up for the draft as all 18 year old males had to do. Since I was in school I wasn't called. In fact I really never heard anything about my number, called or not. I assume that I had been automatically deferred as my selection board knew I was in nursing school. I was coming close to graduation and figured I would be called sooner or later. I felt if the Army was not going to take me, I would be damn to let them take me once I was out of school. So, I went to the US Navy. The military branches came to the school as I recall enlisting any of us to join. I went with the Navy and started speaking with the recruiter, LCDR Catherine Wilhelmey. She was and is a very energetic, open and enticing young woman in her 30's. I knew I had to go into one of the services and really did not know much about any of them. Of course I knew the differences of land, sea and air but that was about it.

I agreed to join but had to jump the hoops of getting a physical. I was told that the Navy would pay my way and house me to come to Minneapolis for a physical at the Federal Building in Minneapolis. I went sometime shortly after graduation in June I think. I really have no memory of the exact date. Guess I would have to look at the record. I went by bus and stayed at a large old hotel on Hennepin Ave. in Minneapolis called the Andrews. The rooms were large, high ceilings and I learned later was on its way out. It was taking those on welfare by the county that had no place to live. But, it really wasn't something I noticed at



the time.

Andrews Hotel, Minneapolis

I went to the Old Federal Building which is on 212 3rd Ave. So., on the corner across the street from the Old Milwaukee RR Station. I went to the Navy Recruiter's office and 'Kay' was there. I had to fill out some papers and she escorted me up to the next floor and handed me off to the medical team. So, there I was going through what each and every recruit does. Walk here, go there, stand in line, bend over, cough etc etc. I even had a psychiatrist do the usual general psyche exam. I got the full tamale. I was up there like hours. I forget the exact amount, whether it was close to noon or afterwards. Anyway when done I

returned to Kay's office and she was surprised it took so long. I did not know different and told her what I went through. She started smiling and said.....oh no. Something to the effect that it was her mistake in not making it explicit that I was an officer. Here, I had gone through the enlisted procedure for bringing folks into the Navy. I really did not know what the difference would be or why. But, whatever, that was my



first experience of the military.

'Old Federal Bldg.'

Kay and I have been friends throughout the years. She told me upfront what to expect, how I would be treated, the hoops to jump, what not to do and that I would meet others that would be 'dicks.' I listened and not really knowing what I would expect.

I went back to Faulkton to work at the Faulkton Memorial Hospital as a 'graduate nurse.' I had taken the nursing exam but had to wait for the results. State law allowed us to work until results were back as graduate nurses.



Building now razed in late 1990's

So, I lived at my parent's home going to work every day like everyone else. I had no car thanks to my little escapade wrecking Dad's. I would ride to work with Dad or walk from the house. To think now at my age I would complain, but in reality it was only like 8 blocks from the house. Absolutely no big deal. Oh those days. I had to wait on being accepted physically and then have the swearing in ceremony. So, I worked and gave my money to my father to pay for the car repair. That summer my whole salary went to pay for the car repair. Both my parents said to me that they felt bad that I had to pay but they just could not do it. I fully understood and really did not expect them to. I told them that it was my fault, I was driving, I had been drinking and it was my obligation to pay. I was just happy they let me stay at the house without

having to pay rent and food. It really was not all that long of a time in that it was from the middle of June to the end of July.

Kay called me and wanted to do my swearing in at the hospital. She would come to Faulkton and we would make it an event. The Navy likes doing such things to advertise their existence, as if we didn't know. But it was a publicity event. So, the day of it they had the mayor of Faulkton, Walt Thares, photographer, the administration folks of the hospital and the staff in the lobby where I gave my oath to Kay, all dressed up in her Service Dress Whites. One of my family members took my Super 8 movie camera and filmed it all. The Faulkton Record, the local paper was there writing the story. I actually made it to the front page. LOL, Not much going on in a small town. My grandmother was there and on the front page was a photo of her and me kissing in congratulations. I remember that I was wearing my nursing school clothes. Those rags were as thin as Kleenex. But, I wasn't going to buy new since I was soon going into the Navy and didn't want to waste money. Wouldn't you know, only about an hour or so before the ceremony I ripped the back of my trousers. Dang!! Luckily my top jacket hung low enough to cover it, but I was very self-conscious of it and just knew everyone would see. But, no one said a word.



I had photos taken with the mayor, my grandmother, the administrator and the head nurses. Then we went to the hospital cafeteria to sign my papers.



This is a photo of my father

on the left, half cut off, my mother, Mary, Uncle Delmar who was married to my father's sister, Evelyn.....then someone who may have been on the hospital board and then my grandmother, Ida. What was funny was that I really had no idea still what my position in the Navy was. I did not know the difference between officers and enlisted. Sometime on signing papers I saw that I was an Ensign which I didn't know what it was. I was told and I remember thinking 'oh, I thought I would be enlisted.' That is how naive I was. Even then I did not realize the status that I had joined. Ah, the naivety of youth.

As it turned out, I was a 'direct commission officer.' Civilians who have special skills that are critical to sustaining military operations, supporting troops, health and scientific study may receive what are called "direct commissions." These officers usually occupy leadership positions in the following areas: law, science, medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, nurse corps, intelligence, supply-logistics-transportation, engineering, public affairs, chaplain corps, oceanography, merchant marine affairs, and others.

So, I came into the US Navy privileged to be like a junior member of the 'royal family,' so to speak. I really didn't know what that all meant.

I was to report to Newport, Rhode Island in late July for Officer's Indoctrination. It would be a one month course of being in the Navy. I was flown from Aberdeen, SD by way of Mpls., New York City and from there to Providence. The short flight to Providence was during the late afternoon and it was the first time I saw so many trees. I couldn't believe it. It felt as if I was flying over the Amazon compared to the plains of South Dakota. We flew low and I could see homes peeking through the trees or cars along a road. From Providence I had to take a bus to the Newport Navy Base. Then I got a taxi who once on the base did not know where to go. It was dark and directions were shallow, but I finally made it to the main building of the school. I was in! Dorothy, you are not in Kansas anymore.

As I write this it has been 47 years! I remember being there, and I remember the comrades', the friends made, the classes and the military craziness of getting us in an officer's mode. We had classes' everyday on protocol, officer behavior, uniforms, responsibilities, ranks, and being in formation. For me formation was a

breeze having been in the high school marching band. I could keep in line, keep time, stay straight in a line etc. The others, well, there were some strange folks. I was lucky in one respect. I did not have to stand all night fire watch. What a silly deal that was. There were a selected few chosen to stay up all night to make sure the dormitory building did not catch fire. Never mind the regular guards, the fire & smoke detectors etc. Then there was the room and uniform inspection. Some of the folks actually slept on the floor as not to wrinkle their sheets for morning inspections. Bounce a quarter off the sheets was no joke.

I had three roommates. One was a pharmacist and I forget what the other guy was. No doubt he also was an MSC officer. I was nurse corps and they were medical service corps officers. My designator number was 2905 which is nurse corps reserves. A regular navy nurse corps would have been 2900. How I was brought in as a reserve rather than regular had more to do with quotas I guess. It became an administrative thing that I later learned meant retirement issues and getting into Navy schools. I think most enlisted went in as regular and many officers were reserve. Probably also had to do with monies, wouldn't you know.

I remember the pharmacist was big into pornography. He actually brought a box of his collections into our room. I couldn't believe it. What an addiction. He brought them out and showed us guys so proud of it also. Here I was, just turned 21 and being exposed to pornography like that. I was underage in nursing school if you remember.

We all went to the uniform shop and got our 'sea bag' of uniforms. We needed Service dress blues, Kakai's, and Service dress whites, shoes, hats and our Navy sword. The tailors were there to make them fit



correctly. Then we had our photograph taken for our service record.

I was told if I did not pass my nursing boards I would be busted to an enlisted guy and boy that would be a drop from an officer. I really did not know what it all meant, but knew it wouldn't be good compared to what I had. Luckily I found out I had passed my boards and I was in.....as a Navy Ensign. I would have to see my school photograph taken of us because I don't remember exact numbers. But most of us were nurses, thus they were women. As I recall there were only like 6 or 9 males in my class. All nurses, pharmacists, or physical therapists.



We had our inspections of uniforms, rooms and formations. This photo is of the actual indoctrination class but we were already commissioned. If you notice, these were ROTC or others who had not been commissioned before school. This shows uniform inspections.

I remember we were outside, as our time was in August. We were in formation for a uniform inspection in our dress blues. If you notice the ribbons on the left side of the jacket, they are to be parallel to the deck/floor. However, my roommate, the one who liked porno would stand slumped shoulder. When the inspecting officer came by she wanted to demerit him because his ribbons were not level to the ground. He then brought his shoulder up and the ribbons leveled out. I, of course was right beside him and I discretely



chuckled.....more at his reaction than anything.

Needless to say we only had the one ribbon, not as many as this example. The one ribbon was the National Defense Ribbon or we called it the 'gedunk ribbon' meaning we were in the service and alive. 'Gedunk' is a navy term meaning like a snack shop. " I am going to the gedunk for some chips or a soda."

This was 1968 and the Navy still had many of the old charm or rules. Officers really had it nice, whether it is on sea or land. The officer's mess was either open or closed. What does that mean?

The first time I was awe struck at the offering of food. It was a long buffet style with beer, a wine fountain, a large variety of entree's and side dishes. This was all for like \$2.00. I found out later if you didn't want to

eat off the buffet bar you could go further back where there was a sit down dining room complete with Filipino waiters to serve off a menu, all for the same price. What a deal. Those were the days my friend, we thought they would never end. Now due to DOD cut-backs many have merged, Filipino waiters are gone and depending on the base it may be an all hands type cafeteria.



An example with waiters in waiting

We learned some Navy traditions while there. One was when in a bar if someone walks in and doesn't take off their cover [cap] before coming to the bar they have to buy them all a round. That same bar I got drunk on Black Russians. Now, I certainly had over imbibed in the past, but this time I stayed away from Black Russians for years, and I like them.

I made 2 good friends while there. Well as much as one can in 1 month. One was Gary Shelatz from Pennsylvania who we later became roommates at our duty station in Pensacola Naval Air Station. The other was a guy from Ohio. Sadly, for the life of me as I write this I can not remember his name. He was from Ohio and I actually flew there to visit him. He was quite the active guy doing motorcross racing while there. He brought his Corvette to Newport and we actually took a day trip to Boston in it, the three of us. Luckily I was younger, more limber and adventurous then. I had to sit in the middle and share a seat with Gary. I still remember that drive, hugging the seat, seeing the landscape of New England and stopping to see Plymouth Rock. I was not all that impressed with it by the way. But, it was a big ole rock on the beach. Whether it was the real one, who knows, but it was labeled as such. Then going into Boston and walking around the paved streets, seeing the old row houses, going into the North Church and seeing where some of our fore fathers worship. Then we wandered around Boston Commons and looked at what tombstones that were there. It was a beginning to my Navy career of which I had planned on making it a life long experience.

I do remember some of the guys really complaining about their recruiters. They had several swear words on how they lied and mis-lead them. I was somewhat stunned on what they were saying. I told them my recruiter was very open and honest and all that she said came to pass. I had no illusions. I just wonder if they listened. I was never a recruiter, but find it difficult to believe that they would out right lie to officer candidates. But, who knows. Even recruiters have quotas to fill and their own fitness reports to be mindful.

Before we left we actually had warnings from the Navy for those of us going south. They were making us aware of speed traps and certain towns that were notorize for doing it and to watch out. I remember

Georgia in particular. But, I was going to fly back to South Dakota and take a different route to my new duty station. We had what is called a 'dream sheet' which we write down our top 3 places we prefer to be assigned. Believe it but my #1 choice was Naval Hospital Saigon. #2 was Naval Hospital Pensacola, Florida, and #3 I just don't recall. I've been saying all these years that I am the only person I know of who volunteered to go to Viet Nam and never went. For sure, my guardian angel was watching.

My return to Faulkton was an event. I was to fly from Providence to Washington, DC. Then to Minneapolis and then hopefully Aberdeen. My folks would pick me up from there. It was late August of 1968 and the rules then we had to fly in uniform. So, I was dressed in whites and flew to Washington. To save money standby was the way most of us flew. I got a first class seat on a United flight to Minneapolis. They called me, I entered the plane and sat in my seat. They handed me a menu for my dinner and I thought I was good to go. Not more than 5 minutes later the stewardess came to me and said I was being bumped. What was that? I learned quickly that they had a paying customer for the first class cost and I was out. I thought how rude and crappy that the airline couldn't do a better job than that. I hope she felt sheepish seeing a uniformed military guy give up his seat for her, but I doubt it.

The gate attendant told myself and 2 others if we ran we could catch another flight leaving in several minutes. Boy, thank gawd I was young, in shape and had the endurance of a horse. We 3 took off running through the terminal to the gate that had to be at the other end. What luck did I have but another first class seat on a Northwest Airline flight to Minneapolis. I never flew first class again till 1997 when I returned to Washington, DC doing locum tenens anesthesia coverage. As I recall, the United ambiance was better.

They gave us leave of 1 month I think. But, I don't recall being in Faulkton that long. It has been so long ago I forget exactly. What I do remember is buying my first car. I had a job.....the United States Navy, which is a



guaranteed income. I wanted a Mercury cougar.

My father thought that it was not a good buy for the buck. He said buying a good size car with strength and capabilities was better. So, 'father knows best' I followed his advice. Thus, my dad and his brother, Kenny and I went to Aberdeen to buy a new car. Why we picked the brand we did I have no idea. Dad always had Cheverolets, not that he was particularly in love with them. That is just what he had and I obviously grew up in.

I ended up with a maroon 1968 4 door Dodge Polara. Certainly not the car for a 21 year old guy just going into the Navy, but it was new with only 8 miles on it. I called United Services Automobile Association which is an insurance company then for military officers. No hassles and over the phone. So, my Dad and uncle took off to return home and I took my new car to visit a high school friend of mine, Wolfgang Kitzler.



I still remember the time when I left home. Of course everyone came out to the car and we said our good-byes. It was early in the morning as I was going to drive all the way to Florida. Of course I was on my own when in nursing school but this time I was going half the country away and would really be on my own. Even though I was excited to begin my new life's adventure it was a feeling of ambivalence in knowing that nothing would be the same.

Off I went driving down the road in my brand new car with a new adventure and life on the horizon. I drove and drove. I stopped only for gas. I remember that it was before the freeways were built as this was in 1968. I had my map and took the roads that were as close to as the crows flew. My route took me through South Dakota, Nebraska, & Kansas. Around 9pm that night I got out of my car and my legs were wobbly. I was in some small town just a few miles north of the Kansas/Oklahoma border. Only when you are young do you do these things or even have the capability. Now, I have trouble staying alert after only a few hours of driving. I've had to get out of the car, walk around or just stop and go into a restaurant to eat. So, I decided it would be better to spend the night in a motel. If I remember correctly the room rate was like \$8 for the night. Quite the difference from today. Raise wages and they just raise the price.

The next morning it was bright and sunny and it was like 0700 or so. Driving through Oklahoma I think I passed through Oklahoma City. Further south I ran into road construction. Back-up of traffic, paths being cut through the large hills, detours around here and there. I just wanted to get through it. Now, I realize it was the construction for what we know now as 35W.

Driving through Texas I thought would never end. I had gone as far as Dallas to turn east, which is really not all that deep into Texas. Getting into Louisiana it was becoming dusk. I wanted to go further so kept trudging on till I just got sleepy. I was too far away from any town being on just a two lane highway. So, I pulled over to the shoulder and in that large car I could stretch out. Sometime in the middle of the night a light shown on me and it was a policeman. I think I had my navy cover in the back window well so he didn't give me much guff. I told him what I was doing and in my recollection he didn't even ask for my identification. I did have So. Dak., plates on the car as I recall. I don't believe they were the paper ones from the dealer.

Anyway, the next day I pulled into Pensacola. My memory fails me on exactly how that first day went. Whether I took a motel first and went in the next day or what. Of course I couldn't just drive onto the base. I must of stopped at the gate office to get permission to drive on base. I have no recollection of reporting into the hospital. I do remember it is like a 5 mile drive or thereabouts from the front gate to the Naval

Hospital. I had to pass the National Cemetery which we would later say that is where we buried our mistakes. Not very kind, but heck, we were 20 something kids, professional or not.



This is the hospital when I worked there. It faces south, towards the Gulf of Mexico and was only a few blocks from the water. The 4 wings you see in the photograph were hospital wards, medical, orthopedic, intensive care and overflow. The building in the upper right corner was the enlisted or corpsman's barracks. When I was there, there was a chapel built in what appears to be vacant land in front of the barracks. Naval Air Station, Naval Hospital, Pensacola, Florida. [NAS, USNH PNCLAFLA] in military speak. This is where I would be for the next 2 years of my naval career.

I reported in with another Navy Nurse, a LCDR Dorothy Effner. She was a career Navy Regular nurse who just came from the Naval Hospital in Saigon, Viet Nam. She appeared to be in her late 30's or early 40's. Not an attractive woman but she was pleasant and kind to me. Because we were new to the command, we were indoctrinated together. Course, she being much senior to me she did not need much. We were given quarters at a different base called Corry Field. The Navy had built new BOQ's as they called them. [Bachelor officer quarters] They reminded me of brand new Holiday Inn styled buildings with a bedroom and living room area. They may of had a kitchenette in them, but I don't recall specifically. Dorothy Effner's quarters were close to mine if not next door.

I do remember that I needed to have a paper signed for my car for some reason. I think it may have been on the insurance or something. It just needed another party. I did not know anyone so I asked her if she would sign it. I remember her being gracious and kind. Concerned only in if there was some legal obligation she was agreeing to. I said no, it was just that they needed a witness signature or something. So she did and I thought we would be friends. She told me that she was up for Commander in the Navy but she didn't think she would get it because she did not have a degree in nursing. She had a diploma in nursing just like I had. Of course, I did not know the politics of the Navy Nurse Corps and didn't pretend. I smiled and gave her my best of luck that she would be awarded it.

Once through the orientation I was assigned as a ward nurse under one of the other nurses. I was very junior being an Ensign so other than other 'butterballs' everyone except the enlisted was senior to me.

[Butterball is a term given to all Ensigns as our collar insignia was a gold colored bar]



We always wore whites while on duty. That was our command uniform. We would sometimes be challenged on base by other officers who did not realize that the hospital command was different from the Naval Air Station command when we left to go to the commissary or elsewhere. Depending on the season the uniform would change from white to Khaki's. I was also of the 'nurse corps' which had a different insignia on the collar. In explanation we were 'staff officers' which means support to the sea navy. The line officers wore stars on their collars or shoulder boards if male. While in the Navy our uniform regulations changed several times depending on the whim's of the Chief of Naval Operations. But, mostly I wore my



whites with shoulder boards.

Now depending on the corps one was in



you had a different insignia from your rank. The Navy Nurse Corps is an oak leaf.

Staff Corps comprises Medical, Dental, Nursing, Medical Service, Supply, Chaplain, Civil Engineer and Judge Advocate General's Corps. So, when walking down the street if you knew your insignia's you can tell the rank and corps the officer is a member. The enlisted have the same with their specific insignia's or patches



on the upper arm of their sleeves. The Navy Corpsman's insignia is this.....

One of my Newport Officer's Indoctrination classmates also was assigned, Gary Shelatz. We became friends and later roommates renting an apartment off base. Our landlord was a retired Navy Chief so we were in good hands.

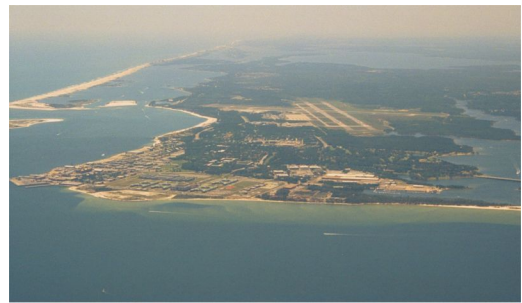
Through the months life became interesting. Male nurses in the Navy Nurse Corps were new and many of the older nurses were not all that accepting. Though, they had not much to say about it, but that didn't change the way they treated us. As I recall there were only 4 male nurses in the hospital command. I coming from South Dakota was not raised to think I was better than anyone else. But, I was an officer and it was not kosher to 'fraternize' with the enlisted. Yet, I was younger than some of the corpsman under me. I would go home and there was no one to socialize with. The nursing supervisors would always put Gary and I on opposite shifts so we rarely saw each other. I was trying to keep my Navy officer bearing and was not interested in dating girls. Of course the only people I saw were the Navy corpsmen. I was 21 years old and they would be 18 to 25 years old. Many of the officers were older than I or out of my league being doctors or dentists. I had nothing in common with them. I began fraternizing, going to the bars or being invited to

their parties. I would go. I would have fun and enjoy it all. I kept it as discreet as I could. But, the senior nurses could see by my demeanor around them that something was up.

I was once brought into the chief nurse's office and 'counseled' on military protocol of fraternizing. I told her who am I to socialize with? My roommate and I are always on opposite shifts. She said to go to the Officer's Cub which I had gone. I told her, and what on earth do you think I have in common with Navy pilots? Being only 21 years old I had neither the confidence nor wherewithal to even strike up a reasonable conversation that could last. It just went right over her head. I was not impressed.

So, I continued on with my discretion. In actuality I became quite wild. When I had evening shifts we got off work at 11pm. Who is ready when you are 21 to go home? We would either go to the bars or sometimes come to my apartment with a case of beer. Just playing records and visiting was too much for the neighbors.

The landlord was nice. He invited Gary and I to go with him up in a small plane. Thinking back, I think he and Gary had more of a social respect then with me. But, I was invited to come along and fly the plane over Pensacola Beach and by the base. I did bring my movie camera and when Gary flew the plane I took movies. It is much harder than one thinks. When I had the controls all I did was look at the wing and back



and I had dropped like 4-500 feet!! Yikes! I didn't feel a thing.

The landlord did warn me to simmer it down as he was getting complaints from his other tenants. They were duplex buildings side by side in a complex and I was just too young to understand the distress. Anyway, when our lease was up I was told that he wasn't going to renew it. I understood and went my separate way and rented a small house in another location. I later found out that Gary was allowed to stay as he was quieter. I didn't mind. It was true. Gary was different and more quiet then I. He was soft spoken with a quiet laugh. We remained friends; we just went in different circles.

The house was a small, small house. I continued my partying inviting the corpsmen to come over for beers and listen to music. I remember one time I noticed wasps coming out from under the sink. There was a wasp's nest that was under the eve and they were migrating through the walls somehow. That was an adventure.

I was invited to a group of corpsmen living on the brackish side of the bay. It was when the fresh water mixed with the ocean water on the other side of the land strip that paralleled Pensacola. What I didn't do in high school I was doing now. I would work nights, go home and sleep about 2 or 3 hours then meet up somewhere, whether on Pensacola Beach for the afternoon or at one of the corpsmen's hang out. You have to be young to do that for very long.

I have many memories of partying, the people, adventures, and movies taken.

I was there during the high casualties from the Viet Nam war. The corpsmen would come through on rotation from corps school out of Great Lakes. They would be with us for 3 to 6 months before getting orders, most of them to Viet Nam. I intellectually knew it but naive as to what these guys were facing. We got many Marines who were shot up or had amputations, most of them in their 20's or 30's.

I was friends with a corpsman from Massachusetts, Thomas Cobry. He was in the circle of friends I had. I was enamored with him because he had met Jacki Kennedy. I was fascinated on what he knew, how she spoke and acted. He said he and some friends were hired to paint one of the houses on the Kennedy Compound and she came out with a tray of lemonade. Plus he had that Bostonian accent that is so familiar.

He was also very open. In our group there was a young corpsman that was very effeminate. I still remember what he looks like, kind of like the way Macaulay Culkin looks now, only not so emaciated. He certainly had a story to go with him. Anyway, Thomas had neither biases nor fear of speaking. He freely admitted that he enjoyed sleeping with a warm body and would cuddle with this other corpsman. I thought it was odd that he would say that to me, an officer. But, I really didn't care and was not running to blab to my superiors. Besides, the military is hypocritical on those issues. They, when pushed will reject but in reality it was war and we use to say 'cannon fodder' was more important. They would use you up and when done kick you out.

Dorothy Effner made Commander. I congratulated her and she smiled. But she changed oh so terribly. To this day she remains the worse supervisor I have ever had. She was mean. She was rude. She was crude. She was the total opposite of an officer's behavior that I had learned from Newport. She reprimanded my senior officers in front of me and others. I remember one time going to the officer's mess and there was a large circle table that perhaps 8 people could sit around. Normally it was a time to relax and converse with the other nurses. At that time only the Chief Nurse had the rank of Capt. The Assistant was a Commander and then Ms. Effner who was the military supervisor and her power went to her head. She became a terror. Junior officers were sitting having lunch and one of our supervisors, a Lt. Commander sat down to join us. Then Commander Effner came to join the table. Shortly thereafter she began belittling LCDR Reid in front of us for some issue she was not happy about. We junior officers were stunned. We just sat there while this poor lady, whom we all liked, was being castigated in front of us. I couldn't believe it and that is when I lost all respect for her, rank or not.

She would come onto the wards with her clipboard riding on her hips with this scowl on her face. The corpsmen would tell us grab your scissors as she wants to use them to cut off our 'nuts' because she didn't have any!

She did have a very poor reputation around the hospital that even the doctors were not all that pleased with her. Her power was in her rank in that she even out ranked many of the doctors. She would find anything to criticize you. I remember on inspection day which was every Friday. I was the charge nurse on the medical ward which had like 40 something patients. Many were walkers, meaning they could get out of bed, but there were like 15 who were bedridden. I as the charge nurse had to follow the doctor and give report on each patient, the diagnosis, care, treatments etc. She came along with the doctor and would trail behind. I did a fantastic job of knowing all the details on the patients. The doctor was impressed as I recall

and her parting remarks were criticizing me because either the ward log out book wasn't current or something was out of place. You just could not satisfy that woman.

It had been reported by one of the corpsman and the rumor went around that she was a lesbian. I was just beginning to learn of such things. This corpsman had witnessed her and the Assistant Chief Nurse kiss on the golf course. I was neither surprised nor shocked. I kept thinking how she was when we first came on board to the command and the change when she made rank was just distinctive.

My lifestyle was really wilder than I had thought. My landlord, a man in his late 30's or 40's told me if he had known what a party animal I was he wouldn't have rented to me. I really was stunned. I didn't think I was out of ordinary for a 21 year old single guy. I did not have frat styled parties. I had many 3 or 4 guys over and we would drink beers, play records, laugh and joke around. The house was a good 100 feet if not more from the main house. We weren't partying into the middle of the night. I was baffled.

I broke the cardinal rule of an officer. I fraternized. My only friends were enlisted people because they were the only ones available, my age, and of interest. When Gary and I no longer were roommates we rarely saw each other being on different shifts. We grew apart. I just wasn't interested in any others even if we could have seen each other. The chief nurse and I had a conversation on this topic and she actually told me to go to the officers club. I told her and what do I have in common with jet pilots?

A corpsman came to me from the physical therapy department by the name of Thomas Blackman. He was from North Carolina as I recall. He asked me if I would be interested in sharing a house with him. He didn't give a hoot about the fraternization rules and said his superior was aware and she didn't care. Besides, we didn't work together. So, I consented. It was a nice 2 bedroom house, large living room, kitchen and back paneled sun room. The house was on a dead end street, with a duplex beside it and two vacant lots on the other side. It was a no brainer. So, I moved to this house on Waycross Ave.

Tom and I got along just fine. He had friends who came over and so did I. Sometimes we had a combination party. Our landlady was older and really didn't bother us all that much. We weren't destructive to the property and we paid the rent on time. I think one time the neighbors next door in the duplex made a comment about parties to her. But, she just mentioned it once and that was it. I think the key here is to invite them to the party and they won't complain. But, didn't know that then.

We lived in the house about a year. Tom got out of the Navy shortly before I did. So, all in all it went well. He did not want to keep in contact after our Navy days were done. So, I have lost touch with him. But do have some great home movies.

I became friends with a corpsman by the name of Jerry Caulkins. He was from Lake Elmo, Minn., and we just struck up a friendship. We clicked. He was married and had a baby but they were in Minnesota. I remember a conversation that his wife kept bugging him about moving down here. He was enjoying his single years as he was like only 19 or thereabouts. We went to the beach, partied, visited and just hung out. He asked me what he should do. I said to him that he had committed to her by the marriage and now has a child. I said all women want to be with their husbands for as much as they can. He agreed and arranged to have her come down with the baby.

So, his wife Rosie and baby son came down to Pensacola. He got housing someplace, I forget. Probably off base. Jerry went into AVT school which is aeronautical corpsman training and escaped having to go to Viet Nam. He did end up in Camden, New Jersey which he said was the armpit of America at the time. I was invited to his parent's home in Lake Elmo and knew his family. His father was a Minnesota Highway Patrolman and allowed me to join him on one of his shifts. To this day we remain friends and Jerry spoke highly of me to all his kids, 6 boys and 1 girl. When I visit one of the boys will say that they had heard so much about me. Jerry and Rosie did well with him just retiring last year, 2014.

I became what I thought was good friends with another corpsman by the name of Gary Blaine Jacobs. He was 6 foot 8." We hung around a lot with each other, but in looking back I think he was just happy to have some place to go other than the barracks and drive my car. He got a kick out of going through the gate and being saluted because my car had an officer's sticker on the bumper. He told me once that he was going to be a doctor which would out do me. Course at our age, I now being 22 and he a year or so younger, it was like a poke. I never thought he would but I said sure, good luck with that. He was from Storm Lake, Iowa and it seemed we had the same values. We actually had a Ménage à trois with one of the corpswives.

I really did enjoy his company as we got along swell. But, he was one of those guys who live in the moment. He had a girlfriend that kept writing him and would laugh when she complained about him not writing her back. He just was a psychopath on things like that. He really didn't give a damn on how people felt. I use to jack him up and say he better not do that to me. Well, he did. I did call when I had a contact number. I would call him when he went to school. Yes, he went to osteopathic school. "Osteopathic medicine provides all of the benefits of modern medicine including prescription drugs, surgery, and the use of technology to diagnose disease and evaluate injury. It also offers the added benefit of hands-on diagnosis and treatment through a system of therapy known as osteopathic manipulative medicine." It is different from medical school but next to it.

He was always shocked when I would reach him. He just couldn't figure it out and I never told him. Actually all I did was call his mother and ask her saying I was an old Navy friend, which I was. But, I soon learned that he was a shallow person. I called him one time and he didn't want to speak with me because he was watching this movie on television. I was bummed and depressed about it. I just don't do that to friends. I thought we were friends. I still have difficulty with people whom I believe we are good friends just drop me for weak or no reason. Other friends in discussion seem to say it is a part of life and get over it. I remain offended and hurt when it happens.

Gary has gone through some wives from what I knew way back then in the middle 80's. It really doesn't surprise me I guess. I allowed a dirty trick to be pulled on him. I have a friend who worked at the Red Door, a medical clinic for STD's. He was the kind of person who didn't let people push him around. I still had Gary's number and so one night when drinking some Dom Peron Champagne he called the number and asked to speak to his wife. He told her that her name came up as possibly being infected with an STD and should be checked. I forget how he worded it but it was set up to give her pause on what her husband, Gary was doing. Then he just hung up the phone. I was ambivalent on allowing it, but then again I wasn't. He was a shit and what goes around comes around.

My Navy years were a time when I was facing the issue of my sexuality. I really did not know what was going on or what was happening. I will write about that in a separate chapter.

Cdr. Effner was on my back about seemingly everything. I just could not do anything good enough for her. She found fault from my spelling to handling of some issue. She would scowl at me. Why was she so? But, as I wrote before, she was not liked by many. I had even gone to the Chief Nurse and made a complaint on how she treated me. I got nowhere. She gave me platitudes of her trying to guide me, blah blah blah. Somewhere I remember being in the Commanding Officer's office regarding this, but I can't be sure. I did try

My mother became ill on Friday. The specifics on that will be written in a different chapter. I will say that the night before my Dad called I had another of my parties. So when Dad called on that Saturday morning I had a hangover. Dad said that Mom was in the hospital and for me to come home. Luckily the personal officer kept a fund for us on emergencies to cover expenses on returning that I borrowed and flew to South Dakota that afternoon. Suffice it to say; when I came back to duty I returned into the fire. Though, as I recall Effner was leaving me alone. I still had my strong faith and remember going to Mass almost everyday for 2-4 weeks before tapering off. It just gave me solace in my grief.

My mother's brother was high up in the DOD and he worked with Generals. I remember I got a message a month or so after my mother's death to come to the Chief Nurse's office. Low and behold, my Uncle Red Bauhs had called to speak with me. I don't know the protocol on these things, but these senior nurses did not give me any guff on getting a personal phone call during duty hours in the Chief's office of all things. We spoke for like 20 minutes before we finished. They said nothing and I went back to the ward.

I returned to Faulkton over the New Year's holidays. My father had made friends with one of the staff folks from the hospital. She and Dad would visit and lament over their coffee and enjoyed each other's company. I learned later that her husband was an abusive drinker and she had called Dad one evening and he went to the farm and rescued her. She got a divorce and soon after she married my father. Mom had boxes of photos crammed in a box, all snapshots from her growing up, high school paraphernalia and memories. Dad let me take them when I returned to Florida and I made a project of making a two volume scrapbook of her life. It was another method for me to grieve her loss. I went all out with ply board covers; wood burned her name and dates in it, sheet paper and sturdy hinges. I really lived her life going through her past.

My friends Jerry and Rosie had their first born son, Chris, so I also made a blank scrapbook with his name on the cover. Rosie told me later I really got her into many projects. As her children were born she had to do the same for each of her 7 children. To this day I still have not met him as he grew. He just wasn't there when I visited. I've met all the others. As I write this he is now about 46 years old.

As nurses we take different shifts. This command really wasn't all that bad on keeping continuity of our hours. It was a reasonable rotation. Anyway, during one night rotation I had the LCDR Reid as the hospital supervisor while I had the whole first floor. It was summer and it was night, hot and no air conditioning. I never did wear undershirts, even in the winters of South Dakota. I would for inspections etc, but not normally. We got along fine, but I sometimes I would meet Cdr. Effner in the hallway when she came in the mornings. Scowling of course, even with my cheery 'good morning' greeting. She was just one unhappy woman. Anyway, she would bark at Lcdr Reid on me not wearing a T-shirt under my uniform. I always

thought how on earth can she tell, as officer's shirts were not to be seen as the enlisted. Ms. Reid would tell me about Effner's rant and I would just smile. She told me that she really did not care one way or the other. Well, Effner caught me too many times. So, she ragged on Ms. Reid again. When I was approached I knew this would be a reflection on her leadership capabilities. I liked her. She said how about you just put one on a couple of hours before the shift is over and then she would be satisfied. That is what I did. It worked out fine. Now that was a good officer.

My active duty days went day to day at the hospital. The friendships that I made were like many. They come and they go. I went to New Orleans a couple of times with 3 other friends. In fact, Jerry Caulkins went with me on one journey. I recall we stopped at Bellingrath Gardens



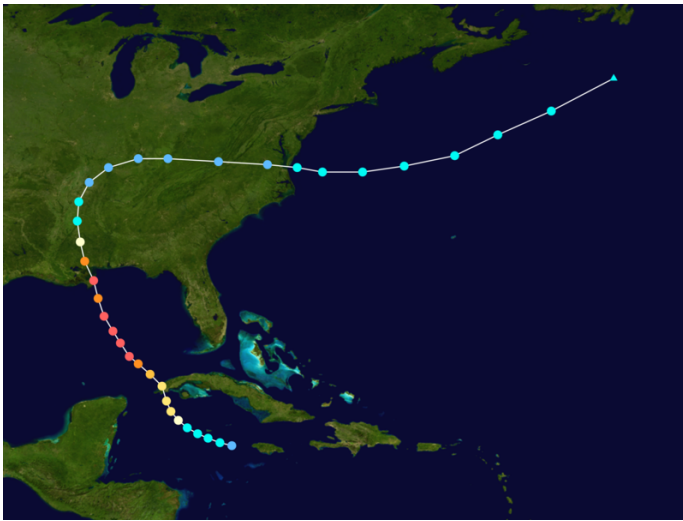
which is a 65 acre southern estate near Mobile, Alabama. I did take movies and recall two of the guys prancing through this footpath with daffodils in bloom like the munchkins from the Wizard of Oz. The estate is a fantasy of flowers, ponds, paths and fountains.

My first visit to New Orleans is my favorite. Jerry and I went to the French Quarter alone. The other two guys said they wanted to strike out on their own. So, we went to Pat O'Brien's, Al Hurt's, and many other bars along Bourbon Street. Jerry and I just socialized well with each other and I remember a very good time primed with some cocktails. I recall sitting in one bar and the doors closed and the sweeper went around us and then opened the doors again. A new day had begun! The French Quarter just never closes.

It was Saturday morning and we decided to go back to our hotel and get some sleep for the next night. We woke up in the afternoon and called the other guys to invite them to join us. They refused. They wanted to hang around at the hotel. What!! Why??? We couldn't talk them into join us. So, Jerry and I struck out again on our own to enjoy the city. On Sunday we had to head back to Pensacola which was about a 6 hour drive. So, that afternoon we took off. Come to find out that the reason the other guys didn't join us was that they lost their money. They were robbed by some hookers they went with on that first night. Jerry and I chastised them on why they didn't say something. I could have lent them money to at least enjoy something of New Orleans. Ah, the mis-adventures of 'some' male youths.

I experienced my first hurricane while in the Navy. We were told that it was coming straight towards Pensacola so the Navy went into their disaster mode. Windows were taped, buildings were secured and staff was told to stay home except for necessary personnel. I was at my home on Waycross expecting just a lot of rain and wind. I remember standing in front of our large living room window seeing foliage, branches and the wind blowing. How stupid was I? The house didn't rock or creak. I didn't see a flood of water down my street. So, to me it was just a big ole summer storm on steroids. August 14th, 1969 became

infamous for Hurricane Camille. It raised havoc to the west destroying property and lives lost in Mississippi



and Alabama. In Pensacola, trees lost branches, foliage was blown around and there was some street flooding. My memory says there was no structural damage.

I do recall on my second trip to New Orleans the damage along the coastal highway was obvious. Mostly I recall a significant hotel/restaurant on piers along the way. Idiots decided to party and not leave this hotel and it was totally blown away. I saw only the posts rising from the water left. I forget how many perished. The coastal areas from Alabama and Mississippi were devastated for about a mile back from the water line.....or as far as the eye could see from the car.

The Naval Hospital had a Saturday party planned for the staff. I do not recall the reason, whether it be some Navy anniversary or just a command appreciation to the staff. But, a BBQ and pot luck lunch was available plus keg beer. Then some members of the staff were going to have a skit play to present. Boy, I remember laughing so hard. They nailed it so well on the personalities of the staff. They really bashed Cdr. Effner and her treatment of all. From the lowly seaman recruit up to the junior staff doctors, it was apparent she was not liked and do I dare say respected. As the 'Peter Principle' states.....she made advanced rank to that of a Navy Captain. She was the worse of the worse for Navy prestige. Don't tell me there isn't politics in the Navy Nurse Corps. She certainly had friends high up.

The Blue Angels, the Navy's crack jet unit was stationed at the Air Station. They would practice their routines in the skies over Pensacola. I remember going outside my house on Waycross and they were doing a routine. I ran and got my Super 8 movie camera and got some footage of them stream straight up in a group of four and then coming down branching off in different directions. I felt fortunate to have them so



frequently in my sights.

I had wanted to go to the Navy Nurse Anesthesia School and make the Navy my career. Of course I really wasn't counseled all that much to understand, but the Navy is great on wanting experienced nurses in those schools. I had usually gotten schooling if asked, so I was taken back by being denied. Then with the

treatment given to me by my military nursing supervisor, Cmdr. Dorothy Jane Effner, I really wasn't all that enthused. I heard she made Navy Captain! Doesn't that beat all, Peter Principle at its finest? Little did I know I could have requested some counseling and later when out I was told that if I had changed duty changes I would have found that different commands were so different? As my life progressed I think I ended up with the best of both worlds. I may have enjoyed it but one really never knows.

I was released from active duty in August of 1970. After a 45 day visit at home and deciding where to live I moved to Minneapolis in September of 1970. I worked at Station 44 [Surgical Intensive Care] at the University of Minnesota Hospital. I contacted my navy recruiter, Kay Bauer just to visit. She told me of the Navy Reserve program which I had not heard about. She encouraged me to check it out and that I did. Even with my traveling around I would connect with reserve centers. In the end I served 26 good years with 2 bad years for retirement points totaling 28 years. I retired at the rank of Commander enjoying almost every moment with the traveling, comrades & adventures. I went to most in country naval hospitals, and foreign bases of NH Subic Bay, Philippines, Rota, Spain, USS Midway and NH Yokosuka, Japan. My favorite memory was the landing on the aircraft carrier USS Midway flying out of Atsuki Naval Air Facility. When landing I soon experience the sea life of being in the Navy. Having been a surface staff officer through my whole career I had a very limited understanding of the Navy life. My years of being a member of the Navy family is something I continue to remember in thanks. One has to have been through it to know. I had it



good in spite of my earlier years thanks to being an officer.

John, Bagio City, Philippines 1982

