

Mitchell Marvin “Mitch” Williams

My name is Mitchell Marvin Williams. I am a native of Moab, Utah. My father was Moab's first doctor in the 1890s. My father met my mother here in Moab, they were married May 19, 1900, and had 5 children, 3 boys and 2 girls. My father brought all of his children into the world. I am the youngest and my father was 62 years old when I was born in 1916.

Growing up in Moab was great with wonderful cliffs to climb and sloughs to raft. My friends and I built rafts before we were even old enough to raft the river and we used them to fish for catfish in the sloughs.

When we were in high school, the river was beckoning. I built a boat with 2 or 3 friends. Someone found an old car engine, someone else found the drive line and I scrounged up some of Dad's lumber. Everyone brought what they found and we put it all together. We got the car engine running and we sought a lot of advice from the older people around who knew the river and how to build a boat.

We launched the boat in Mill Creek. The river was high, so Mill Creek made a good place to launch the boat for our first few trial runs. We finally launched the boat on the river. We went farther and farther with each trip until we got experience.

On one trip, there was a lot of slush and ice on the river. The water ran through a funnel on one end of a pipe, through the engine to cool it and then was dumped back out over the side of the boat. We didn't know it at the time, but the slushy water was much too cold, but the engine ran anyway. Several times the funnel had ice jammed in it. We had to put our hands in the freezing cold water and use old rusty nails to clean it out.

My first time on the river was with my father. Father was very good on the river. He had 2 ranches and one of them was difficult to reach by land, so he usually accessed it via the river. On land it took 2 days on horseback over the red rocks and over the top. The trail came off of the red rocks and down to the river. Once you reached the river, you were actually below the ranch, so you had to follow the river bottoms back up to the ranch. (The river bottoms were dry.)

I went to the ranch on horseback with a cowboy friend of mine, Swanny Kerby, to check on his cows. I had been there with Dad and lots of other people by boat. Mother's brother, Uncle Roy, and Papa wanted to take a bull from the Moab valley to Williams Bottom Ranch by boat.

Papa told Roy he wanted to take the bull to the lower ranch and that he wanted Roy to come and help him. They had the bull swim behind the boat. Papa told Roy to row the boat while Papa took care of the bull. The problem was that the bull wanted to be in the boat! The bull kept swimming closer and closer to the boat. Papa stood up in the boat with the halter rope in one hand and a willow switch in the other. Papa whipped the bull on the nose when it got too close and the bull would back off. Roy was scared to death because he just knew the bull was going to get in the boat, but it never did. They got to the ranch with no trouble whatsoever.

The ranch at Williams Bottom had an adobe house, a nice spring and a rock cellar. It was a way for Papa to make money besides his medical work. He didn't live on the ranch, though. He lived in town to be available to his patients.

The way they got the irrigation water to the ranch was with a paddle wheel. The river current turned the wheel and the wheel brought the water up to where it could run into the ditch and be used to water the crops.

Every ranch in those days was also a farm. They had to raise hay and corn to feed the livestock in the wintertime; that's what ranching was in those days...raise crops in the summer to feed livestock in winter. During the summer, the livestock would graze on the open range.

My father was born in 1853 in Missouri. He grew up on a farm near Vandalia and Curreyville in Pike County. In 1874, Father was riding a horse away from the farm and ran across a herd of cattle heading west. He talked to the owners, Tom and Ed Stark, of the now famous Stark Nurseries, from Louisiana, Missouri. They were driving their cattle west. Father hired on with them as a cow hand to drive the cattle to Elbert County in the Colorado Territory. He raced home and told his mother he was going to Colorado Territory. He grabbed a few clothes in a flour sack, raced back to where the herd was and went to work. They carried guns in those days in case they had to shoot a cow and to hunt buffalo, antelope and rabbits to eat. They did whatever they had to do to survive. Dad had an old cap and ball muzzleloader gun, a pre-civil war Henry Rifle. He remembered the Civil War. He was just a kid, but he recalled the raiders camping in their woods.

On the drive West, Dad got the measles and had to ride in the chuck wagon for a couple of days. They put a bandana over his face to keep the sun out of his eyes because they knew sunlight would damage the eyes when a person had measles. It was hard to keep the bandana over his eyes the whole time. It slipped off now and then, so his eyes did get damaged somewhat.

When they arrived in Elbert County, everyone wanted to see Denver. The owners wanted to sell some cattle to cover expenses. They took a couple of cowhands and camped on Capital Hill in Denver. Colorado wasn't a state yet and there was no Capital building on that hill yet. In 1876, Colorado became a state and eventually the Capital building was built.

Dad punched cows out there for a number of years. He was known as "Rawhide" John on the range because he made rawhide quirts, which he also sold to the cowboys.

Someone reported that the Indians were bothering people. The Indian wars were over, but sometimes there were incidents. The Army came around to the cow camps and issued guns and ammunition to the men. The men were sworn into the Army, but were to go about their regular duties. Many years later, when Dad was in his 80s or 90s, he told me this story. I asked Dad if he was ever discharged from the Army. Dad said, "No, they just gathered up the rifles." I said, "Dad, do you realize you may have a tremendous amount of back pay coming?" We had a good laugh about it, but that was the end of it. Dad would never dream of taking money in those circumstances!

Once when they were out on the plains in eastern Colorado, Dad told the cowboys to make sure they rolled up their bedrolls really tight. They rode many miles during the day to graze the cattle. At night, if a cowboy hadn't rolled up his bedroll tightly, he would find that his bedroll was left at the last campsite. The chuck wagon cook wouldn't load it; he just let it lay. When this happened, the cowboy just saddled up and went after it. Sometimes it took most of the night, but it sure taught them a lesson; they were really good about tying up the bedrolls after that! Navigating on the range was difficult at night, trying to find that last camp site.

The owner of the cattle company needed a chuck wagon cook, so Papa took the job. He cooked for 1 year and when the boss came around to pay everybody off, the owner said, "Well, John, I promised you \$30/month to cook for me. You cost me less money and the men are happier with the food than they've ever been, so I'll give you \$40/month and I want you back next spring!" Dad said, "If I'm worth \$40 to you, I'm worth \$40 to myself..." and Dad never worked for anyone else the rest of his life.

He drifted into Hugo, Colorado in 1880. Papa probably knew something about Hugo and had probably been there many times before he decided to go there and set up his drugstore. He was probably well-known before he moved there, too. He must have rented a place to live when he first got there. He brought medicines with him and started a drugstore and ran the drugstore for quite a few years.

Within the first year, he was elected the Justice of the Peace. Here's a cowboy just off the range and he's elected to a public office!

Hugo became the county seat of Lincoln County. Father was appointed to be the first County Judge by the Governor of Colorado. The County Clerk was Addison K. La Due. Addison was Dad's best friend in Hugo and named his second son La Due after Addison. I named my son John La Due Williams, so the name has carried on.

Hugo was part of Elbert County of which Denver was the county seat. Lincoln County was created in 1889 by taking parts of surrounding counties and was named after Honest Abe. Hugo was a big division point for the railroad and it had a rail yard, repair shops, etc. In 1880s, the main cattle trail between West Texas and Montana ran through Hugo along Sandy Creek.

Papa's brother, Jake, came from Missouri to help run the drugstore. I still have a picture of John in a buggy out in front of the drugstore with Jake standing in the drug store door and I still have letters from Jake, too. John had a little dog up on the buggy seat with him.

In 1889 Lincoln County was created. The Governor of Colorado appointed Rawhide John to be the first County Judge of Lincoln County. After the first term, the position came up for election and he was elected to that position.

In 1892 Dad moved to Denver to go to Gross Medical College. He graduated in 1895. I still have his class graduation picture and a medical book that has his address and brand.

John hadn't seen his parents in Missouri for 21 years so he wanted to make a trip back to see everyone. The problem was that he didn't have any money. He worked in a pharmacy during school and slept there part of the time to save on rent, but all of his money went to pay for his college education. Dad made arrangements with a medical book company to sell medical books on his way back to Missouri to pay his way.

Dad went to Russell, Kansas on his way back from Missouri and opened his practice in Russell and Hays. He travelled between the two towns to visit his patients. His practice wasn't doing too well, but he heard about a practice that was for sale in Ordway, Colorado. Dad bought the practice, but found out that it wasn't doing any better than the one he had before.

Justus Noyes Corbin, who was called J.N., in Moab found out about Dr. Williams and wrote some letters to him to come to Moab, Utah. (I still have a couple of those letters). J.N. was quite the entrepreneur; he owned the Grand Valley Times, which was the first newspaper in the area. The Times Independent is the current newspaper and is a direct descendant of the Grand Valley Times.

J .N. was also a lawyer and built the first phone company in the area. He started the line in Dad's drugstore and ran the line to Thompson out on the Railroad. Dr. Williams was the first subscriber.

Dad was a cowboy, so travelling on horseback didn't bother him. When he would go to Paradox from Moab to visit patients, he went right up through South Pass in the La Sal Mountains, which is very steep. He travelled to see patients in Paradox Valley , Monticello, Hanksville, Thompson and Cisco and many ranches, cow camps, mines, etc.

Papa had special saddlebags made to go on the saddle to hold the medicine bottles on each side. They are now in the Moab museum.

J.N. Corbin asked Dr. Williams to come over to Moab to "look the place over". He caught the train to Thompson and found out that the stagecoach only ran from Thompson to Moab 3 days per week and Dad was there on the wrong day, naturally. Dr. Williams ran into a salesman who also wanted to go to Moab. They hired Arthur Ballinger (Ballard?) and his light spring wagon to take them in. It was 35 miles, so they could make it in one day. Heavy freight wagons took two days to go from Thompson Springs to Moab. They had to stop at the halfway house at Courthouse Wash to feed and water the horses. They ate dinner there, too.

When Dad got to the river on November 30, 1896, the river was low because of the time of the year .There was a ferry on a cable that was used to cross the river, but a sand bar had formed under the cable making the ferry unusable. They had to ford the river instead (ride their horses across). It was a very cold time of year to be fording the river, but they had a lot of experience fording rivers and streams since there were very few bridges in those days.

At the time, there were 400 -500 inhabitants in the Moab valley. There were many ranches further out and there was mining in the mountains and surrounding areas. J .N .Corbin was one of the first people Dad met in Moab. There are still many descendants of J .N .in Moab.

Dad was told about a sick baby that he needed to see immediately. The baby's name was Helen Marie Taylor. She turned out to be my English teacher and she was a very good teacher. A school is named after her and she lived a long life.

Utah had just become a state in January 1896. The County Commissioners met with Dad almost every day during his first trip to Moab. Many people wanted a doctor, but many people didn't. They figured they hadn't had one, so they didn't need one. Dad travelled all over the valley and talked to as many people as he could. He wasn't sure he could make a living in Moab.

The County Commissioners held many meetings among themselves and decided to create

the position of County Health Officer to keep Dad in Moab and help him through the rough spots financially. They offered Dad \$150/year. Dad couldn't turn down big money like that, so he took the job !

The railroad had only been in Thompson for a few years. In 1883 the narrow gauge was finished. It was converted into a wide gauge (standard gauge) in 1892. On November 30, 1896, Dr. Williams arrived in Moab with a suitcase full of medicine. He dated his drugstore and practice from 1896. After he had been in Moab for a week, he returned to Ordway, Colorado to dispose of his business there. He sold his equipment to another doctor "on time" for payments of \$12 per month. I still have the list of equipment he sold.

Dad returned to Thompson by train, then by stage to Moab. He rented a tiny house. The house was made out of boulders from the creek beds. It stood for many years, but was finally tom down. Papa's sister, Lily, came out from Missouri to keep house for Dad. She stayed 2 or 3 years or so before she went back home to Missouri. After Lily left, Papa started taking his meals at the hotel. There was no such thing as "short order" cooking in those days. The food was served in big bowls and everyone sat at the same table and ate together. This was called the "American plan" of eating.

My mother was born in Ephraim, Utah. Her parents both came from Norway when they were very young, but they never met until they came to Utah. My grandfather bought a wagon from "Johnson's Army" (or from someone who purchased it from "Johnson's Army") at Camp Floyd. The Army sold all of their equipment because they were called back to help the Union Army fight the Civil War. The wagon was a war surplus wagon and it was a great big thing!

Brigham Young called on people to settle the East Wasatch Mountains. My grandparents got married so they could go help settle that part of the world. One of the things they took with them in their wagon was dried cherries. They saved the day on the way there! I have a list of the other things they took with them in their wagon. Two other wagons went, also.

They left Ephraim and went to Salina Canyon. There was no road and they turned the wagon over several times. They had to make their own road. Then they went to Ferron Creek in 1876, which was named after a surveyor. I firmly believe that my grandmother and Caroline Petersen were the first white women to settle east of the Wasatch Mountains.

The A.G. Wilson family has always been given credit for being among the first settlers in the area and they were the first white family to settle in Moab on a permanent basis.

Grandma became pregnant and spent the winter in some caves in Ferron. She wanted to

get back to Ephraim to have the child (my mother). She returned to Ferron and then the family moved 6 miles or so down Ferron Creek to Molen. There's nothing in Molen anymore, except for a cemetery. I visit the cemetery whenever I go over there. The area was not good for farming. The watering makes the alkali come out of the ground after a few years.

Two of mother's brothers (age 18 to 20 years old) left Molen, came to Moab and then moved on to La Sal. They worked in La Sal raising cattle. The third brother came out a little later as did a man named Albert Beach.

They found out that the hotel needed women to cook and help with the hotel. My mother's brothers brought their sisters over from Molen to get jobs. Mother came to Moab in 1899 and first met John Williams at the Maxwell House Hotel. They were married on May 19, 1900.

The life expectancy of a man in 1900 was 46 years. Dad was 46 when they married. Dad's birth date was August 3, 1853 and Mom's birth date was August 3, 1878. Dad lived 10 days past his 103rd birthday and never went to the hospital. As I write this on July 16, 2003, I note that on my mother and father's birthday, which is on August 3rd, only about 2 weeks away, my father and I together, will have covered 150 years of observing our world's history. Also on that date, my mother and I will have covered 125 years of history.

Before Dad was married, he bought a piece of land from the County and made some stables to keep his horses in. Dad used horses in his practice for transportation to see his clients. Occasionally, Butch Cassidy and "Wild Bunch" would come through town and had horse races on Main Street. Dad opened his barn as a place for people to keep their race horses. Dad's race horse was named Fly. I rode her, but Fly was too old and I was too young to race on Main Street. I sure could beat my friends in races with Fly, though!

Mom and Dad rented a house when they were first married. Dad had some land and bought a big, one-room house up by the old Mormon Church. Dad had the house moved to his property and set it up. He had carpenters add rooms. Dad rented a double log cabin on another lot close to his property to keep track of the work on the house. The cabin had an open shed between the two enclosed cabins. The shed served as a front porch as well as a place to store saddles, etc.

My sister Ramona was born in the cabin. My brother, La Due, and I were born in the new house. The house is still standing and my son, John, owns it. A man named Gary works on the house in his spare time and lives there rent-free in exchange. Gary works for John full-time in the expedition business. Gary, his dad and step-mother worked on the house and painted it yellow,

the original color.

When I was in grade school, some of the other kids who lived in La Sal and other outlying areas had to stay in Moab with other families so that they could attend school. Lots of young people stayed with us over the years. The kids helped us and vice versa. We knew the parents of some of the kids, but we also took in kids whose parents we didn't know. Some of those kids stayed in Moab for good.

One of my friends, Ludell "Doodle" Wilcox, stayed in town with his Aunt Hattie. Hattie ran the hotel, the back of which was across the street from our house. When Doodle came to stay with his Aunt Hattie, he and I became fast and good friends. Doodle was over at my house a lot and we liked to repair bicycles. We got so good at it, we started taking care of other kids' bikes, too. We would repair tires, put new tires on, etc. -we'd fix' em up like new- a complete overhaul!

One day, Doodle and I saw a Model T Ford across the fence belonging to Mr. Neal Ray. It just sat there and no one used it. It was called a "bug". The body was taken off and a homemade body ("bug") was put on it. It also had a pickup box on the back. We asked Mr .Ray if he would sell it to us and he said, "Yes." We asked him, "How much?" Mr. Ray said, "\$5." That was a lot of money back then, but we said we would try to raise the money. My parents gave me the \$2.50 for my half and Doodle came up with his \$2.50 in a day or two and we bought the car.

We pumped up the tires, put the harness on an old buggy horse we called Colonel and hooked a chain around the front axle of the car. One of us rode Colonel and one of us drove the car over to my house. We didn't know beans about cars - we were 13 years old and didn't have driver's licenses, but licenses weren't required in those days.

We knew an old fellow from Montrose called "Old Frank". He rented my father's ranch raising corn and all kinds of things. Frank had been a mechanic in Montrose and had lots of tools. We asked Frank if he would help us get the Ford running. He wouldn't, but we kept after him. He finally took a look at it and told us it needed a valve job.

Frank took the spark plug out and put his thumb over the spark plug hole and had someone turn the crank. That is how he tested the valves. We absorbed all of the information we could while Frank worked on the car and we became the best Model T mechanics around!

We worked on Frank's fence at the ranch stringing wire and replacing some of the posts in exchange for the valve job. We had to string the barbed wire through the slough. The water was chin level and we had to string the wire underwater! We finished the job in 2 or 3 days, but

it was a big job! We went all the way around 80 acres.

Frank took the head off, ground the valves and valve seats and explained everything as he worked so we learned to do it ourselves. We put some gas in it and it started right up -we were the happiest kids! ! I yelled, "Papa, Papa, she's a runnin', she's a runnin'!" (I never heard the end of that) !

We learned how to drive it (they are difficult to run) and we were so happy! We didn't have any license plates on it, though, and Dad was strict about obeying the law, after all, he had been a judge. Dad made us get the car licensed. I don't know how we got the money, but we did. We only had a Sheriff back then and he didn't care about license plates because he didn't care if the state got the money or not. Dad took a different view... HE cared, so WE cared! We had so much fun with that car!

Whenever we saw old Model T Fords, we asked if we could have them and people gave them to us. In those days, people didn't trade them in, they just parked 'em. Some descendants of J.N. Corbin gave us an engine they had in their corral. We rebuilt the engine as good as new. People would pay us \$0.50, or something, to fix their Model Ts. If the cars didn't run, we just hitched Colonel up to them and dragged them in to be fixed. We still repaired bikes, too.

One winter we went up to the "Hole in the Rock" to get an engine Doodle wanted. It was a 12 or 13 mile trip and it was quite cold. The car had a windshield and we built a cardboard cab with bailing wire to keep the cold out. We also built a heater for it by putting tin around the exhaust manifold and let the fan blow the air. It wasn't great, but it put a little warm air in the cab.

Lifting Model T engines was very hard because they are quite heavy. We brought the engines back to the house. Mom and Dad never said a word or complained about all "junk" in the yard! To most people, the back yard probably looked awful, but to us, it looked wonderful!

Other kids would come around wanting to help. We let them help if they did exactly what we told them to. We put them all to work so they could learn something, too.

The Science Teacher at school was H.B. Evans. He took the body off of his Model T and made a saw mill out of the engine and chassis. He used it to make stove wood out of limbs and trees. He told me I could have the body. Doodle was gone by that time and he took a lot of things with him - he needed a running car.

Doodle became an airplane mechanic and went to work in an aircraft manufacturing company building planes for World War II. His co-workers said that he was the best! Even the

engineers asked his advice on various matters.

Doodle's dad still had a dry farm in La Sal. His mother died quite young and his father re-married. Every time Doodle came back to visit, he had a new addition (child). Suddenly, he didn't come through town any more. ..he must have died.

Dad had come from Missouri and every other kid of his went back to Missouri to go to college. My oldest brother, John, was born in 1901. He attended Wentworth Military Academy in Missouri. He got an appointment to West Point and graduated in 1924. John wanted to get into aviation and was sent to Brooks Field where he first flew solo. Brooks was a beginning school for aviation. He was transferred to Kelley Field for advanced training and was so good, they made him the leader of the "3 Musketeers" stunt group. They were like the Thunder Birds of today.

John knew many of the people who became Generals in WWII. He was stationed at Selfrieg Field and transferred to Rockwell Field in San Diego, California (it's a Navy field now). Rockwell Field is located in the middle of San Diego Bay where the battleships are.

During the 1920s, air races became a popular thing to do and John was involved in many of them. He took 3rd place in one race and I still have the trophy pocket watch he won.

When John was at Rockwell Field, Dad caught a train and went by himself to visit. They had a good time. ..a wonderful time! Dad was so pleased to meet all of John's friends. Shortly after Dad came home, John was flying in an air show after an air race at Mines Field, now known as L.A. International. John was killed in 1928 when his plane crashed during the show in front of 30,000 spectators; I was 12 years old. Charles Lindburgh took John's place and led the 2 remaining Musketeers for the remainder of the show. John would surely have been a General in WWII, but it just didn't work out that way.

My family borrowed my uncle's slow 1927 4-cylinder, 4-door Chevy to drive from Moab to Santa Anna, California to attend the funeral. My brother, La Due, had to drive the whole way with no relief because no one else could drive and the roads were terrible. My father had a sister, Aunt Sue, in Santa Anna and we stayed with her. John had bought into a car with a fellow Musketeer named Cornelius. Cornelius came up to Santa Anna to visit us and bought John's interest in the car from my father. Cornelius was killed the next day! The 3rd Musketeer, Woodring, was killed about 10 years later. The planes they flew were unreliable in many ways.

I ran a gas station for 2 years, or so, in Thompson, Utah. Thompson was the shipping point for everything since everything came in by rail. Trains don't even stop there now. I had a

customer named Lloyd who had a carnotite mine (uranium and vanadium). Before the atomic bomb, there was no use for uranium. It was just a byproduct at the time. It was used for watch dials and cute odds and ends. Orientals dipped their pens into a liquid made out of uranium ore and put the pens in their mouths to make the pointy tip for writing the small characters. The uranium slowly poisoned them.

Lloyd was doing pretty darn good with the mine. I had a truck and hauled vanadium for many of the mine owners. Vanadium was used for hardening steel and the ore was sold to different mills. There was one mill in Uravan, Colorado, which was the largest mill. They paid for vanadium, but not for uranium, even though they saved it. When the Manhattan project came along, they used the stashed uranium.

I would ask people to watch the gas station for me while I hauled the ore. It was a tough job now that I look back on it, but at the time, I would help shovel the ore onto the truck, and then shovel it off the truck by myself at the mill without stopping. Each truck load weighed around 6 to 7 tons! I would drive the truck for 24 hours between loading, unloading and getting back.

Lloyd wanted me to be his partner in the mine. It sounded better than the gas station, so I sold my interest in the gas station and went to work with Lloyd. I mainly drove the truck to Uravan and back. It was a 24 hour trip with no sleep or rest. There weren't many places to get gas, so I carried a barrel of gas in the bed of the truck. I drove until the tank was empty, and then siphoned gas from the drum to fill it up again. I used the back roads and they were pretty bad.

In the fall of 1940, the weekly newspaper in Moab had stories about the war in different places around the world (we weren't in it yet). The U.S. was building up the railroads in preparation for the war. During the Great Depression, everything got run down. The paper also talked about getting the draft started. The numbers were posted, but I didn't know then and I still don't know now, what those numbers meant.

In November, we were sleeping in a tent. It was very cold! I told Lloyd, "If there's a war, I sure don't want to miss it. My brother was a fighter pilot and I want to be one, too." I went to the Post Office building in Grand Junction, Colorado to sign up. The recruiting offices were upstairs. They told me they couldn't send me to flying school because it was too full. The U.S. expanded the schools tremendously and I eventually got in.

At first I went from one station to another. In Glendale, California, I learned about airplanes, but wasn't in flying school yet. I asked for another physical to be sure I was qualified

and passed with flying colors! I got my paperwork together, but I had to show proof that I had 2 years of college education to get in (after the war started, no college was required). I attended 2 years at a 4 year college, but they didn't give diplomas for 2 years at a 4 year college and I needed a diploma.

In Glendale, California, I went to the Glendale Junior College and asked to see the Dean or President. The President came out to see me and I explained the problem. The President said, "It is a good cause. I'll see what I can do. Come back tomorrow." The next day he presented me with a 2 year diploma!

Before anything happened, they shipped me to Borinquen Field in Puerto Rico (it is now called Ramey Air Force Base). I was there about 30 days, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. A lot of people didn't know where Pearl Harbor was, but they won't admit it now. I had just gotten off duty and was crossing the field when a man coming the other way said, "The Japs have attacked at Pearl Harbor!" I told him I had heard of Pearl Harbor, but didn't know where it was. He said, "Everyone's heard of it now!"

A few months after the war started, they put me through as an aviation cadet. I was to report to Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas. I got on the narrow gauge train from Borinquen Field to San Juan through cane fields and little towns. It was an interesting ride. Then I got into a C-47 airplane and flew to Port au Prince at Haiti, then on to Miami and finally on a train to San Antonio, Texas. I took pre-flight training at Kelley Field then to Chickasha, Oklahoma (primary school) where I soloed, then to Goodfellow Field, San Angelo, Texas. I got about 50 hours of flying time in and was sent to Brooks Field, San Antonio, Texas (for advanced flying school) where I flew something a little more powerful.

When I was at San Angelo, I met the light of my life. I went to the Walgreen's Drug Store and saw the prettiest girl I had ever seen! I couldn't take my eyes off her! I heard someone call her "Mary". I couldn't keep my mind on flying after that!

Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday nights we got to go off base and I went to see Mary. She was with friends and was going to college there. I talked her into marrying me before I got out of San Angelo, you can bet on that! Mary and I were married on December 5, 1942 in San Antonio, almost 1 year after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

I flew single engine planes and advanced to a T6, a famous trainer plane built by North American Aviation. It was probably the greatest trainer ever built! The base had link trainers that simulated flying with instruments on the ground. I had a busy schedule and was up early and

working late into the evenings.

I was in advanced flying school at Brooks Field, San Antonio, TX and was waiting my turn one night as an aviation cadet (between enlisted man and officer) when a bird Colonel walked in the door. He walked by and turned really quick and asked, "Is your name Williams?" I didn't know what I had done, but I knew it must have been bad! I hit a brace (came to attention) and I replied, "Yes, sir!" He asked, "Did you have a brother named John?" I replied, "Yes, sir!" He said, "We were good friends. Come over to the house and I'll show you some pictures." He had pictures of himself with John and their planes and things they did at Selfrieg Field. I was so pleased to see the pictures and he was pleased to show them to me! His name was Colonel Standon T. Smith and he was Commandant of cadets.

I earned my brass bars (2nd Lieutenant) and silver wings and Colonel Smith pinned the wings on me at graduation on January 14, 1943. (Colonel Smith later became a General). Mary was sitting in the audience watching. I looked out of the corner of my eye to make sure Mary was there. We had only been married for a couple of weeks. I had to get permission to get married because I was a cadet, but I was granted permission since I was so close to graduation.

I stayed for a month or two after graduation and trained non-flying officers in the art of navigation. I don't know why, unless it was to give them a better idea of navigating on the ground.

I was transferred to Biggs Field in El Paso, Texas. Mary found us a place to live, which was difficult because Fort Bliss and Biggs Field and some smaller satellite bases were there. You couldn't find a civilian in that town, there were so many uniforms walking down the streets!

Production of pilots outpaced the production of airplanes at the time, but airplane production caught up very quickly! Right after the war started, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that 50,000 planes per year were to be built. They produced so many planes that they shut down production before the war ended. It was great to have so many planes; it really helped us win the war.

When we were transferred to Alexandria Field in Louisiana, we flew P-39s and P40s. In the winter, we were transferred to Thermal Field in California near the Salton Sea, which was below sea level. It was a good thing it was wintertime because the liquid-cooled engines heated up quickly in the hot weather. We had to get off the ground as quickly as possible to keep from overheating. The P-39 was a great plane to fly, but there were too many things we didn't need that were hung in and on it. They were equipped with a 37 mm gun that fired through the

propeller hub; it was a large gun on a small fighter plane.

We finally got word again that we would be going overseas. This time we were supposed to be going to England. We scurried to get ready and gathered up our dog tags, clothing, etc. There were many requirements for an outfit going overseas. We ended up going to Lakeland, Florida instead. Lakeland had P-51s and we were glad to see them. ..the famous P-51 Mustang (built by North American Aircraft Company)! We had P-51Bs and Cs in the states. The P-51D was the hot shot model, but we didn't get to fly them until we went overseas.

I was assigned to lead a flight and do some maneuvers, kind of a dog fight situation. They got so good you couldn't get away from 'em! We flew aerial gunnery over the Gulf of Mexico and flew west from Lakeland to our target. P-40s were there to tow the target and we would take turns flying the P-40s with the tow target. The other planes would then fire at the target in turn.

Each of us had different colored ammunition (the tip was dipped in paint). That way when we fired at the target, our bullets went through the sheer cloth and left paint so we knew who hit the target.

The aerial gunnery range was just north of Tampa and over the Gulf and was a restricted area. Every afternoon there were many thunderstorms. One tow plane was destroyed in one of the thunderstorms and we lost a good pilot. We had accidents in the states and they never had a chance to get into the war. Some of my close buddies died in P-51s and I think about them a lot.

We got orders to go on the troop train in Tampa. We were going to the Pacific. I am a train "nut" anyway and was in the last car. There was a caboose on the back of the train for safety reasons. It had brake operation capability for the whole train. I kept looking at the caboose and finally stepped over to it. I climbed up in the cupola, the view house on top where I could see out. I rode there nearly all the time across the U.S. It was a great experience for me!

We went through a famous loop called the Tehachapi in California. It loops and goes under its own track. Then we went to Camp Stoneman on the Sacramento River. When the tide came in, it backed up that far and farther. We were processed out from there. We had to get shots and everything before we could go.

We were going to fly over in a B-24 bomber that had been converted into a passenger plane called a C-87 with wicker seats. There weren't any commercial passenger planes then. We took off from Hamilton Field in California to Hawaii, which took 12 hours. We had 2 hours on land to clean up and get some breakfast, while they gassed up the plane and switched crews. We flew another 12 hours to Canton Island way out in the Pacific Ocean, then on to Guadalcanal.

Then we flew westerly to a little tiny island called Biak, which is south of the equator. We had flown four 12-hour (on average) flights and we were worn out! We hadn't been able to sleep much because those wicker seats weren't the most comfortable things we ever sat in!

We had a few days to lie around and recuperate. Then we loaded on to C-47s and flew from Biak, to the central part of New Guinea to Nadzab, which is as far out in "the sticks" as you can get, I believe. The people were very colorful and of great interest to us. They helped us get coconuts out of the trees. We had been trying to get the coconuts with a .45 automatic pistol, but it was hard to do.

At Nadzab, we had no planes and no squadron, just pilots and 4 master sergeants, who were highly experienced mechanics. A C-47 flew in to the coast to a place called Finschhafen and airplanes were brought in by cargo ships. An experienced crew put the planes together and did a fine job! Once they were assembled, we would take them for a test run to check for any problems. If they checked out ok, we just took them over to Nadzab.

At Nadzab, New Guinea one day we had about 20 planes in the air. We had been flying in small groups testing the world's greatest fighter plane, the P51D. It was rated thus at that time and is still rated as such. We were doing aerobatics of every kind and enjoying every minute of it. Many of us did our show in formation such as two or more planes in a loop.

When we tired of having fun, a few of us headed for Lae on the coast; a very short distance. When we left, I had latched onto our C.O., Steve Wilherson's wing and was flying as his wing man. He took off in a southerly direction over the mountains. We soon arrived at the southern coast and Steve turned and headed up the coast.

I was becoming a little concerned so I called him, "Steve, where are you going?" He answered, "Why, I am going to follow the coast to Lae and turn up to Nadzab." Well, I'll say this, Steve was one of the best navigators I ever saw, but he was heading the wrong way and on the wrong coast and disaster was what we faced. I said, "Steve, you are heading the wrong way and the worst wilderness I ever heard of is all we have ahead of us." He looked at me like I was crazy and in a pretty huffy manner said, "Well, pal, which way would you go? Which heading would you take from here back to base?" I said I would take a heading of 31 degrees. He said, "Why that's the other way!" I said, "Well, pal, you're not kidding, it sure as hell is the other way and we've got just about enough fuel to get there!" He said, "Ok, turn them around and you lead, but buddy, you sure as hell had better be right!"

Well, I led us back over the mountains and soon I could see the Washam Valley covered

with broken clouds. When we dipped down through the clouds there was our airfield about 10 miles ahead of us. Steve said, "Willie, you were right and you just saved my life and I'll never forget it!" Well, I was going to keep my mouth shut about what happened, but after we landed, Steve told everyone in the squadron about it. Actually, I was very embarrassed to hear him say I had saved his life. What's strange about this episode is the fact that I have remembered the heading as being 31 degrees all of these sixty years!

We had 35 planes and pilots in the squadron. There were a lot fewer planes early in the game in New Guinea. We flew to Wewak on the Northern coast of New Guinea, which was a Jap hold-out. There were other places around us that were enemy-held, but we had better planes and pilots than they did. The first landing in the invasion of the Philippines was on an island named Leyte in the Philippines. Troops secured the beaches and part of the land area so we could come in and land. They put out landing panels on the beach all hooked together to make a good landing area for us. The panels were about 6 feet wide and 20 feet long, made out of metal and hooked together. The airstrips were narrow and short, but we were able to take off, 2 planes at a time in formation, until we had a 16 plane configuration. The beach sloped to one side, but that didn't bother us in our take-offs.

We were bombed every night by a single Jap plane. He was called Washing Machine Charlie by our guys. He didn't do much damage, but all our AA guns began firing and kept us all awake half the night!

My first mission from Leyte was clear to the Northern tip of the Philippines escorting a P-38 Lightning built by Lockheed. The P-38 had no guns in this case, but had cameras built into it to photograph Aparri and vicinity. Then we headed back to Leyte -it was a very long flight. The P-38 had been the most advanced fighter until the P-51 came along.

My next mission was to attack an airfield on Mindanao Island, which is the largest island in the Philippines. The Japs had a lot of airstrips out in the jungles. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, they also invaded the Philippines. We attacked the ends of their airfields and the jungle to get their planes. They attacked us at night. This is where we started our "March to Tokyo".

We were flying P-51D Mustangs, which were the latest model. They were the most outstanding fighter planes during WWII anywhere in the world. They were probably the most versatile aircraft ever used in warfare. They can perform so many different types of missions.

The Japanese would not attack the P-51s. The enemy fire came from the ground, not the

air. The only tracer fire that came from the enemy came from ships we attacked. Land-based enemy guns did not use tracers because they would give away their position.

We flew from New Guinea, south of the Equator, to the lands of Japan and Korea. My last mission was to Korea during WWII (not the Korean War). I had flown 89 combat missions and 252 combat hours.

Our surroundings at Leyte were very primitive, including the airstrip. The camp was a crude looking place with tents pitched under palm trees. We flew lots of missions to the other islands in the area. We flew many short missions to Negros Island, Panay and many others. There were many invasions of islands. One in particular was Mindoro island. They bulldozed the jungle and built bomber bases. This protected the heavy bombers because the Japs couldn't come out of the jungle and attack the planes. The island was small, but plenty big enough for several heavy bomber strips.

We flew attack missions against Formosa, now known as Taiwan. Bombers came from bases all around. We had light, medium and heavy bombers. There was a big task force that went through the Suragao Strait. We were sent to fly cover for an invasion fleet that landed troops in Lingayen Gulf. We would fly for a few hours and then another crew would take over while my group went back to base. The invasion fleet was big and consisted of battle ships, heavy cruisers, destroyers, oilers, troop ships and many other types - you name it! We covered them every day for at least part of the day.

This big invasion went around the west side of the Philippines to Lingayen Gulf. They landed a large invasion force there (approx. 300,000 men) and were opposed by 350,000 Japs. This was the second place General McArthur waded ashore (the first place was Leyte).

We took off and moved up there. We landed in a large dry rice paddy that could be used for airstrips. We had everything we needed to support the squadron with cargo planes hauling our supplies. Four planes could take off at a time in formation. It only took a few minutes to get the squadron airborne and on its way to the target. We flew to the China coast across the South China Sea -that was a long flight!

We flew many missions to all sorts of targets in the Philippines; many on the island of Luzon. We were ordered to attack Ipo Dam many times, but it was tough; we just couldn't break that heavy concrete. Of course it was tough, it was built by Americans!

We would fly up the valley toward the dam, sometimes 32 of us, and hit that dam with 1,000 lb. bombs, but it stood firm. The Japs had caves on each side of the dam and they would

pour heavy gunfire into us. But we fixed them, we started attacking the caves by firing our machine guns into the caves then at the last minute we would pull the nose up and go over the hill. We had to time this just right or it would be bad for us. But this didn't get the Japs out of the caves, so we started bombing them. Not an easy thing to do as they were in a solid vertical wall, but we got good enough to put a bomb right into the cave, pull up over the dam and hear it go off. This was pretty hazardous work, but we cleaned them out.

One thing almost cleaned me out. ..three or four of us left the dam and flew down the valley. We spotted some trucks parked under some tall palm trees. The only way we could fire on them was from above the trees in a shallow dive.

On about my third pass I was hit, probably by machine gun fire from the ground. I felt the hit and pulled up at once. I had lots of speed so I climbed up high enough so I could see ahead and headed for friendly territory. The trouble was, I didn't know exactly where the front lines were. I couldn't tell either if I looked straight down at the lines because there was too much brush and trees. I managed to keep a little power in my engine. This plane had a toggle switch for the primer. Most P-51Ds had a push-pull way of pushing fuel into the engine to prime it manually for starting. But I found out if I held this toggle switch up for a few seconds, I would get a burst of power out of the engine for a few seconds. I probably gained a few miles this way, but I was losing altitude pretty fast and I knew I had to do something quick! Frankly I was looking for a bigger rice paddy, but I was already in the tops of the bamboo, so I rolled to the right for a quick turn. I leveled off at ground level and forced the nose down, gear up, flaps down, canopy on for protection from the bamboo. I had too much speed to belly it in, so I forced it onto the ground to slow it down, but this was a small rice paddy. The paddies were dry, no water, and had mud walls about 3 or 4 feet high all around them. These were dry and hard and really gave me a jolt when I hit them. Next came a grove of bamboo trees which I mowed down at pretty high speed and talk about a racket! Then another wall, rice paddy, wall, bamboo, etc. I think I went through three rice paddies and three bamboo groves. The airplane was a wreck by now, but I was still going! The plane went up on its nose and I thought sure I was going over on my back, but it didn't happen. Somehow it turned and landed right-side-up.

The dust was so thick I couldn't see anything. I was trying to get the canopy off so I could get out of the airplane, but it was wedged in. Some way it finally came loose, but when I tried to get out I found everything was covered with blood and so slick I had trouble climbing out of the cockpit. When I was out I stood by the plane and saw a band of Guerrilla fighters all running

toward me. I thought, "Good God, what next?" I didn't know whether they were Japs or what. They each had some sort of weapon, such as rifles, pistols, swords, bayonets and some carried the big long sword called a Kris. The blade is very crooked and sharp on both sides. I had a 45 cal automatic pistol in a shoulder holster and thought how useless it would be to try to stop such a well armed band of men.

When they got a bit closer I saw that they were all wearing G.I. under shorts and nothing else. I breathed a sigh of relief as I knew I was among friends. They said, "Come on, sir, we take care of you." My head was bleeding quite a bit and I was holding my right hand on it. We were walking along and they were trying to be helpful, so one on each side held an arm. The trouble was, the one on the right was sort of pulling on the arm that I was using to hold by head. Oh well, I couldn't complain, so I endured it.

We went into a grove of trees and they had a car in there. Was I surprised - civilian cars were something we just didn't see over there. Anyway, they drove me to an artillery observation post, which was the 2nd story of a Flip house. A Filipino doctor was there and the first thing he did was hand me a water glass of rum, which I proceeded to drink right down. He then went to work sewing me up and, needless to say, I didn't feel a thing!

They drove me in a jeep to a cleared field where an L-5 airplane and pilot were waiting for me. He flew me to an Infantry Division headquarters where I stayed a couple of days. While I was there, their commanding General was killed by enemy artillery while he was in the field with his troops. Another L-5 flew me up to Lingayen Gulf area to the 5th Fighter Command. I made a short verbal report on what happened and was driven back to my squadron where they had a brand new P-51D aircraft waiting for me. I was soon flying again. Such is the life of a fighter pilot on a bad day.

If we weren't going too far, sometimes we carried a 1,000 pound bomb under one wing and a heavy fuel tank under the other. We were very heavy at takeoff, but became very light after we dropped our bombs.

Once when we went up the Philippines to Formosa, the cloud ceiling was getting lower and lower. We were afraid we would lose visibility, but we didn't, we still had about 50 feet of ceiling. Here was a Jap submarine in Takao harbor on the surface and were we surprised- WOW! We caught him right in the mouth of the harbor. We were low, but we attacked him. We had armor piercing shells, which were very good. Apparently the armor piercing shells went through because they beached the sub and rolled over. We also attacked Jap ships whenever we found

them.

We were returning from Formosa after another fighter sweep. I was leading the squadron that day and one of the flight leaders named Curdes gave me a call. He wanted to strafe Batan Island. I wasn't too enthused about the idea because we had already been in the air for a long time and I, for one, was a little pooped. Also, Batan Island was off our direct course which we were flying so, I said "no, not today."

He came back with another proposal. He asked, "How about me and my flight breaking off and going over to Batan?" I said, "Ok, go ahead, but nothing ever happens over there." How wrong I was! On this day, everything happened! While they were strafing, one of our group, La Croix, got hit! He got his plane over the ocean and bailed out. Curdes sent one plane to altitude at once to call in for rescue of a downed pilot, he sent another plane to cover La Croix so we wouldn't lose track of him. One person in a dinghy in a choppy ocean is almost impossible to see so we kept an eye on them whenever possible.

While Curdes and his one remaining plane were staying out of reach of the Jap guns, Curdes saw an almost unbelievable sight- an American cargo plane, a C47 appeared out of nowhere and was making an approach to land on the Jap runway! Curdes wondered what the heck was going on. Is this a plane that the Japs stole from us? Was it American? If American, they had no business landing here! He dove on the plane and shot out one engine. This threw the C47 pilot off to where he also landed the plane in the ocean. Everybody got out ok wearing life jackets. It turned out to be a plane load of American nurses, believe it or not.

It was late afternoon and rescue planes couldn't get there before dark. La Croix spent the night paddling away from the C47 people because he knew they could be Japs. He was far enough away to be unable to tell before it got dark. Curdes and his 3 remaining planes had to head for home before dark due to low fuel. In the morning daylight, Navy PBY5s picked everyone out of the water and no one had been killed or hurt. Weird things do happen!

We finally moved from Lingayen Gulf to a Jap field 150 to 200 miles behind enemy lines. ..that's an experience for you! ! The Philippine Guerillas attacked the Jap air strip at the upper end of Luzon and made it safe for us to land. Cargo planes brought in all of the needed supplies. They unloaded quickly and went back to get more. The gas was stored in barrels, but somehow the gas got mixed up and I got some 80 octane jeep gas in my airplane. P-51Ds like to drink 100 octane fuel and I took off with 80 octane fuel! I checked the magnetos and everything to make sure everything was ok on the ground. I barely got airborne and the engine started

cutting out. I had to get it down! I had to belly it in wherever I could! With the throttle half way back, it ran just as smooth as could be! I dumped the bombs on safety, so I wouldn't blow up any Filipino friends, and then I circled out to sea and came back to the airstrip and landed ok. The mechanics ran it up to the highest rpms they could and it sounded fine to them, so they released it for flight. They gassed it up again -gas is for jeeps, not planes!

A friend of mine, Spence, took my plane out and had the same problems. He ditched his bombs safely, but they went through a Filipino village. Amazingly, no one was hurt! I was really mad and upset that they let the plane go out again without finding the cause of the problems. All of the gasolines had different color coding and the gas they put in my plane was the wrong color! They tested the gas and found out, sure enough, it was 80 octane! Two of us flew it and lived to tell the tale! Once they put 100 octane fuel in, it ran like a new watch!

Many years later, I was in the uranium business and had a mine in Colorado. I got acquainted with Don Andrews who lived in Nucla, Colorado at the time. He flew his plane to Grand Junction when he needed to. We compared notes and found that we were both in the same part of the world -Loaog! He flew C-46s, which were twin engine cargo planes. He was involved in bringing supplies to Loaog. He asked me if I had heard about the bad gas story. I said, "Hell! I flew the plane!"

The runway was 1300 feet long, which is short by any standard, and had big chuck holes in it. It took every bit of runway to get airborne and our airstrip ended at the Loaog River. We had to miss a hill near stalling speed, so we had to be careful. The hill wasn't big, but it felt like the Alps because of the conditions we were flying under. It took everything we had to get airborne, but we did it.

When we came back from a mission, the planes were very light. We came in at 400 mph, made a loop over the airstrip and landed at the end of the loop. We came in with gear down, flaps down and practically upside down and then set it down on the strip. ..typical fighter pilot landing -one right after the other 32 planes, 4 at a time or, on some fields, 2 at a time and sometimes 1 at a time. An air show at the end of every mission.

Our control tower was a shack on top of 3 palm tree trunks stacked side by side up and down. The requirement was to have a pilot with the enlisted men in the tower when fighter planes were landing. It was quite a show!

One time, Flight Officer Lee hit the end of the strip during his loop. His wing tip hit the strip when he was Y2 way rolled over and the plane cart wheeled down the runway. The tail was

gone, the prop was gone, the canopy was gone, the wings were ragged stubs and it was upside down spinning like a top. The cockpit was buried in the dirt, so the men tied a chain from a crane around what was left of the fuselage to try to get the remains out of the cockpit. I told the guys to slow down and not work so hard in the heat. They were digging in the coral to try to get him out (many runways were made from crushed coral). I said, "Slow down, he's dead, anyway ." Then we heard a voice say, "Like hell! Get me outta here! !" Lee released his seat belt and landed on his head! He hadn't been injured at all until he fell on his head!

The Japanese had a giant rice bowl that was 12 to 14 feet across and it looked like a WWI helmet. It was a monstrous thing! They used it to cook rice in. We had a hose running to it and used it for a bathtub. We would get cleaned up after a flight and go to the mess hall.

We had been flying to Formosa, now called Taiwan, and other far away points. It was much better to be at the northern end of Luzon because we were much closer. One day we were at "Honey Strip" in Lingayen Gulf, which was near the town of Dagupan. We heard that ground forces were stalled at Villa Verde mountain pass, which was close to our unit. We flew a lot of missions up there for ground troop support. They were bogged down with Japs, jungle and high passes. They had trouble with friendly fire, so they wanted to meet with our C.O., our Operations Officer and flight leaders. We met with the officers in charge of the ground operation and came up with a good plan. We began executing the plan the next day and never hit even one of our people. It was the cooperative effort that made it work!

We got 16 planes off Honey Strip and went to Villa Verde pass. We had one of our pilots up there operating the radio and communicating with us. Pilots and ground troops speak different languages, so we needed one of our guys on the ground working the radio. Different artillery shells had different colors -red, orange, green, etc. The ground troops would fire a shell onto the target they wanted the pilots to hit and tell the pilots what color it would be. Then the pilots bombed on that position. We made 2 or 3 passes and only fired going away from our troops. Each mission might only last 30 minutes. We used 50 caliber Browning machine guns -they were the best! Some German said that the outcome of the war might have been a lot different if the Germans had had the Browning guns -that's how good the enemy thought they were!

We flew to Clark Field, which was the #1 American Field before the Japs took it over. The old adjoining fort was Fort Stotsenberg. We helped re-take the field. While the Japs held Clark Field, we made many fighter sweeps across the field right on the deck and fired our six .50 caliber machine guns at targets of opportunity. We had to put the nose down, fire fast and pull up

or we would run into the ground. If we didn't get the nose down, we wouldn't hit anything.

We dropped napalm in the hills. The hills were like California, covered with grass with trees in the gulleys. I guess we really did some good judging from the pictures the ground officers showed us. The pictures were gruesome to us because we didn't see much ground activity, but it really helped the ground troops!

The Army Engineers went to work on Clark Field and re-built it into a really good Army field. It later became an Air Force base. It was abandoned when Mt. Pinatubo erupted and covered it with ash. Everything was moved to Guam. The Philippines kept demanding higher and higher rent from the U.S. to use the field, so when Mt. Pinatubo erupted, it gave us a good reason to move to Guam. The U.S. took the Philippines away from the Spanish during the Spanish-American War. It was the last war where we took real estate and kept it.

Ferdinand Marcos was a guerrilla fighter against the Japs. During WWII, we liberated the Philippines and many Americans, too. These people lived in the jungles and knew how to survive. Marcos was a real tough nut. I talked to an American, who had been a pilot, to get the intelligence. He said, "Don't discount that little Marcos, I fought shoulder to shoulder with that little guy for nearly 4 years and he's a really tough nut!" Once in power, Marcos turned really bad!

There were a lot of small islands (all Jap occupied) between Luzon, P. I. and Formosa, most of them near to the P. I. After a fighter sweep on Formosa, we always had some of our ammo left, just in case we needed it. We usually strafed one of the Jap air strips on the way home. Fuga Island was the closest one to Luzon.

My good friend Casey Bowers and his flight were working over Fuga. Casey made a strafing run on the airstrip. Well, he didn't pull up quite soon enough and his good old P51D smacked the airstrip pretty hard. His radiator was torn off the belly of the plane and all four prop blades were bent back, but he had lots of speed. He pulled up and firewalled everything (meaning he pushed throttle, mixture control and prop pitch control full forward). He pointed the nose toward Loag, used his best rate of climb and climbed until his engine froze (no coolant, you know). He then maintained his best rate of descent and made it to Luzon where he bellied it in and climbed out unhurt!

He was surrounded very quickly by Filipinos who were really glad to see him. They took him under their wing, protected and took really good care of him. He was the first American they had seen so far in this war and they treated him like a king. This was all Jap held at this time. Our

base was 200 miles or so to the south in the Lingayen Gulf area.

When we were at Lingayen, we got a call that there were some Jap destroyers off the northern coast of Luzon. We jumped in our planes and went! We carried one 1000 pound bomb and one external gas tank. We had to search around and found the destroyers running 1 behind the other. We had sixteen planes, so we put eight on one ship and eight on the other. We were flying at 7,000 feet, so we put the nose down, picked up lots of speed and headed for the lead destroyer. Our C.O. was leading the flight and I was his wing man.

The ships turned and headed into our fire, so we had a narrow target. I could see the top mast and the bottom of the bow cutting the water. They fired at us and it was just a ball of fire! We dropped bombs on the water and they skipped toward the ships while we pulled up. Our bombs ended up right on the deck and since there was no armor on destroyers, they probably went clear through to the keel when they exploded. We lost 2 pilots during the mission and we searched, but never found anything. They were probably killed. We were short on fuel and had to go back, but the Navy had sent some PBY5 amphibious aircraft and ships to the area soon after we left and they informed us that we sunk both destroyers. They only saw 1 ship go down, but the other must have gone down before they got there because it wouldn't have had enough time to get out of the area before the Navy got there, especially considering how badly it was hit.

There was very little enemy aircraft after we got to the Philippines and we didn't know why. Then we got word that Japanese aircraft was being withheld to guard the homeland because they thought we would be coming there. ..and we sure did!!

Our B-29s destroyed most of their aircraft on the ground. I never got close enough to a Jap aircraft to shoot at it and vice versa. I saw most of them as they were flying away from me. The Japs attacked our pilots and aircraft at night and we got bombed every night.

At every new camp, each man was supposed to dig his own fox hole, but here at Honey Strip, near Dagupan on Lingayan Gulf, I managed to get my fox hole down about a foot because there was hard coral rocks in there. I said the heck with it! We weren't getting in our fox holes, anyway, we were all looking to see what was going on.

It was a moonlit night and the Japs were bombing us again (they never came in the day time). They lucked out and got a bomb into our ammo dump. Wow- talk about fireworks -we really had them! I saw, heard and felt some of the heaviest explosions ever come from that ammo dump! It kept popping off for about a week!

I wanted a better view, so in a day or two I found a great spot to watch. It was a dirt pile

that looked like a bulldozer had pushed it up. It was perfect to watch the action. In a few nights, here they came trying to destroy our planes and the pilots who flew them. They never had much luck with either .

I was on my hill and I saw a Jap plane heading right toward me. He flew right over me not more than 20 or 30 feet above my head! What a great chance to shoot him down- trouble was, I had no weapon, nothing, not even my 30 caliber carbine or my 45 automatic pistol. I watched him go so low that he had to pull up to go over some palm trees. Dam! Just my luck! That chance will never come again!

A few nights later, here they came again, bombing everything in sight! Who said that chance would never come again -Me! I couldn't believe it -here comes a Jap plane following exactly the route used before. I was on my hill, he went over my head, raised up enough to clear the palm trees, and I'm standing there kicking myself because, well, no weapons! They both got away. ..or was it the same plane? I am positive it was the same plane. It had a big round radial engine, single engine plane. All the features of an Oscar, a Jap Navy plane. Every time I think of missing 2 chances at the same plane I just feel disgusted. Oh well, no point in that, but it was a great chance that I missed.

Our P51D Mustangs were day fighters, we never flew at night overseas. The Northrop P61 Black Widow was the night fighter and here they came at full speed flying low on the tail of the Japs. The P61 had the best radar available at the time and I'm sure they got plenty of enemy planes.

We were at Loag when the battle of Okinawa started. We were too far away to engage in that battle because we couldn't carry enough fuel to fly that far and back. That battle was mostly fought with carriers and heavy Army bombers from land bases in the Philippines.

We went up to Okinawa as soon as they got their airstrips done at Ie Shima, which is a 1 by 5 mile island in the Okinawa group. The Army engineers built air strips crossways on Ie Shima. We occupied one strip along with other squadrons. They started bringing in many aircraft and pilots. Our little island was really packed with aircraft ready for the invasion of Japan. Other airstrips were built on the big island of Okinawa and other islands. We got the word that they had dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. ..we were tickled to death! It is estimated that over one million American lives were anticipated to have been lost if we hadn't used the atomic bombs to end the war. This saved Japanese lives, too. When the Japs decided to surrender, the Emperor of Japan sent one Jap aircraft from Japan to Ie Shima and on to the Philippines to see

General McArthur at his penthouse in the hotel. They had defeated looks on their faces and looked like whipped boys before they even got to see The Great McArthur. That was the beginning of the end. From then on, it was just patrol runs for us. We still patrolled because no one trusted the Japs.

My last flight was to Korea, but I had engine trouble when I got to the islands at the southern end of Korea. I was leading the squadron and had to turn back, so I turned the squadron over to another person, took my wing man and headed back. The engine kept missing and I kept losing altitude at a slow rate of approximately 200 feet per minute. Then I saw the tops of the big mountains on Okinawa and knew I was getting closer. I had just enough altitude to get into the first airfield and just barely made it! I decided to rest for a few days after that. In fact, that was my last mission, the 89th.

Finally my orders came that I was going home and I was ready! ! A lot of us had been through most of the war in the South and Western Pacific. We went home and turned it over to the new guys who were "rearing to go"! As I left Ie Shima in a Navy PBY5, my thoughts were, "Well, I was overseas when this shindig started and I was overseas when it ended."

We hitched rides with the Army and Navy to Manila where there was a HUGE, well-organized camp for USA-bound people; the streets even had names and numbers. We went to a Chinese theater in Manila and we couldn't understand what they were talking about, but it was interesting.

It took 3 weeks to get to San Francisco Harbor in a troop ship. We ended up back at Camp Stoneman, the same base we processed out from. I walked past a guy and he asked, "Didja get yer steak?" He said that every guy at the mess hall was getting T -bone steaks! It tasted so good after eating Spam out of a can for so many meals!

I went to El Paso by train, back to Mary and then out of the service. I wouldn't have missed this war for the world, but I wouldn't want to go through it again!

When I got back, Mary met me at Biggs Field in El Paso, TX. We went to Wickett, Texas to visit Mary's folks. We loaded up the car and drove to my home in Moab. We stayed in Moab a few weeks and then drove out to California. I got a job at the gas company, which was a tough transition from being a pilot. I stuck it out for a while there then I went back into the Army Air Corps (which became the U.S. Air Force in 1947), but things were different and I didn't like it too well. I should have stayed in my old fighter unit!

I stayed in the Air Force for a few years. When I got out of the military, I brought Mary

and our new son, John, back to Moab. It seems like I'd never been satisfied with anyplace we had lived before. When we got back to Moab I knew I was home and I never wanted to live anywhere else.

My last station while in the Air Force was at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, TX. I got leave, so my wife and our new son, John, and I came back to Moab for a short visit. When it was time for us to go back to Austin, Mary was walking around the house putting our things together so she could pack them. Dad was sitting in a chair and Mary was going back and forth in front of his chair.

Mary said, "Well, Dad, I think you should come back to Texas with us." After a couple more trips past his chair, to Mary's surprise, Dad said, "I haven't been to Texas for a long time and I think I'd like to go." So Mom and Dad came back with us.

John was a little kid (fussy), but that didn't bother my dad at all. He knew kids and understood them like no one I ever saw! Dad didn't care how early we started or how hard we drove as long as he could stop for dinner at 6:00 p.m. and then go to bed. He was always up before us in the morning.

We were living in a house trailer that was big enough for all of us. Dad was looking at his shoes and told me he needed a new pair of Army shoes. Dad had old Army garrison shoes that were 42 years old and cost him \$1. I went to the clothing store on the base. The enlisted got their clothes issued, but the officers bought their own. A PFC said, "Sir, what can I do for you?" I said, "I need a size 12 pair of G.I. shoes for my dad who is 100 years old." The kid looked at me and looked like someone had hit him with a board! He said, "Talk about an optimist -a 100 year old guy buying a new pair of G.I. shoes!"

Dad would not let people help him. He carried a cane, but only because it was the style, not to lean on. Mom and Dad flew back to Grand Junction, which was a big deal. It even made the newspapers -"100 year old man flies". I got out of the service shortly after that.

I bought a little jeep and luggage trailer where everything was packed up. The car pulled the house trailer and the jeep pulled the luggage trailer. I was going to use the jeep for prospecting.

Dad and I built the Williams Trailer Village trailer court next to his house, which was the first trailer court in Moab. We hired plumbers and electricians, but there wasn't any machinery to dig ditches, so the plumbers and I did it. A whole bunch of guys were digging, even little 7 year old John with his little shovel. My parents loved having people to visit with them in the trailer

court. People always came in to talk to Dad and one day a little boy gave Dad a quarter because he wanted to make sure "Grandpa" had some money. Dad got a big kick out of it and he kept the quarter separately so he could show it to people.

Prospecting trips were rough with no roads. I had a pack horse and pack saddle. I loaded the horse and pickup and the rest of us followed in cars and trucks; there were 7 of us. We had to go a long way around the airport then west and then south. We ended up way down river from Moab. We had to go down a steep and dangerous trail called the Lathrop Trail to get on the "White Rim" level below. We set up camp there because it had a good spring. We prospected and staked about 35 claims, all of which had uranium. Some of the claims weren't too good, but one was very good. Many other people had claims down there, too. There were no roads, so we had to build one. It wasn't easy to build a road on the steep trails, but there was a cattle trail called Schaffer Trail with a nice spring. The cattle watered there and then spread out over the Rim. We worked out a way to build a road.

The Air Force pay didn't allow me to put much into it, but I did what I could until we got the road built --\$100 here and \$200 there. The bulldozers kept going even when we couldn't pay them. It was a scary thing to drive down one switchback and back down the next one. The County was interested in what we were doing. We spent \$7,000 and put in free labor. The County put in \$200,000 improving the road so people could turn at the end of the switchbacks.

The uranium days were exciting, but I liked the jeep part as much as anything. When the uranium business fell off, Mary and I were taking care of the trailer court and my folks, too.

The fellow who owned the airport wanted me to fly for him, but I wanted to find the big uranium claim and get rich, of course. He told me to come back when I was done. I went back a year later and flew chartered flights for him. I like to fly and jeep (I was never good with paperwork). Mary did the tax returns and took care of that end of things.

Some people owned Pack Creek Ranch and had a jeep permit from the Public Service Commission of Utah. They wanted me to run some jeep trips for them and Dad instilled the idea of a good tourist business in Moab. Major Mikesell, from the Pack Creek Ranch showed me where they took the tourists and what we showed them and talked about. Mikesell was a retired Major from the Army and was the nicest guy you ever met! I went out on jeep trips with him and learned the ropes.

I flew part of the time and took tours out part of the time for Pack Creek Ranch and I also took care of our trailer court. I liked jeeping around Moab so well that when I realized I wasn't

going to get rich with uranium, I decided to go into the tourism business.

The owner of the Pack Creek Ranch decided to sell out and go back to California. I thought maybe he would sell his Public Service Commission permit and he agreed. He was leaving and figured he might as well get something out of it. He said he wanted \$500 for it. Mary asked if we could buy it "on time". He said, "No, ma' am, you can not." We had a couple thousand dollars in the bank, so we bought it for \$500. We had to go to Salt Lake and have a hearing before the Public Service Commission in order to change the permit from his name to ours. We had a hearing in the mezzanine of the Capitol Building in a kind of storage area. We re-arranged that old furniture and that was our hearing room.

We didn't know what we were doing, so the officers of the PSC very graciously told us what to say and we would say it and that went into the record. We got the name changed on the permit which allowed us to haul people who hired us. Mr .Young told me I should hire a lawyer to help with things that came along. I pushed him to give me the name of a good attorney and he told me, "There's a young man looking for clients and his name is William "Bill" Richards." Mr. Young was a nice old gentleman (one of Brigham's descendants). I'll always remember what a nice man he was.

We were some of Bill Richards' very first clients. He was about to starve to death and was tickled to have us as clients, even though we didn't have any money, either. Bill was our lawyer until the day he died (about 40 years). He would still be going strong if it hadn't been for his incurable illness. Bill liked to come to Moab and we found that we had to have several PSC meetings to keep other people from encroaching on what we had going.

Our permit covered parts of Grand and San Juan Counties, but not The Needles country. Bill arranged a hearing in Moab where we were given rights to that area, too. We went to battle before the Commission on several occasions. One time Bill came down and we added Emery, Wayne, Garfield and Kane Counties (on the west side of Green and Colorado). This made us legal to go into the Land of Standing Rocks across the river from The Needles. They are so intricate, people can easily get lost out there.

The Union Pacific Railroad had a spur line that ran into Cedar City and they operated busses from there north to the rim of the Grand Canyon, Bryce and Zions National Parks. They applied to the PSC for a permit for the whole state. I contested that because UP was huge and I couldn't compete with their resources. They had a hearing over in Cedar City that I attended and I took a friend with me, Cal Black from Blanding. Cal had a plane and flew us over there to

Cedar City.

UP had a hot shot lawyer and they were going to wipe us up real quick. But they had never come up against as tough a nut as me before. Everything they came up with, I made fools out of them --we won. Cal said, "You are one tough S.O.B.!" I was fighting for my life! Bill was there and we went out and had a great dinner, patted each other on the back and had a good time.

There were many of these kinds of confrontations in front of the PSC. That's where I learned for the first time that permits were everything! We had to have them to operate our business.

I had a jeep station wagon I used on tours. People liked to go and I loved to take them out to see this beautiful country! Before the war, there were no roads or jeeps. The war gave us jeeps and uranium prospecting gave us the roads. The two things made a jeep tour company possible, along with Dad's interest in and promotion of the tourist business. Dad was a real booster of this country. The plains of Colorado and cow country of Missouri gave him an appreciation of Moab's scenery.

When Dad was trying to quit practicing medicine in 1919 (when I was 3 years old), people still wanted him to treat them. Dad didn't like to send his patients to someone else and his patients didn't like it either, but he had to do it. After he sold the drugstore, he built a general store on his own property next to his home. He built it with his own hands at age 65. We ran the general store and everyone in the family clerked in the store. Dad was very interested in Indian artifacts and had many in the store.

Dad had many Indian friends and tried to learn the language, but wasn't very good at it. Ute Indians migrated in the spring and fall to a reservation near Roosevelt and back to the southern reservation. There were men on horseback and long caravans of wagons -it was quite a sight to see!

People came to the store to see the Indian artifacts collection when they came to town. The building was _ store and _ museum, pretty much. A Commanding General came by to see Dad when we had the last Indian war in 1920, or so.

It was slim pickins when I started in the tour business. We mailed black and white brochures out to a lot of people from mailing lists. We advertised in magazines, which we found out was very expensive. With word of mouth, we got the business going bit by bit.

Before Lake Powell existed, we had a ferry crossing at Hite on the Colorado River. Woody was a character and he'd ferry us across the river powered by a model A Ford engine.

Cable stretched across the river with wheels on it and the engine turned the wheels. He had a nice trading post with a lawn and shade trees. The lawn was a great place to sit, cool off and rest a bit. Woody was so glad to see some company. It was always his birthday and he was looking for someone to help him celebrate. He'd bring out a bottle of whiskey and start passing it around.

Woody could be abrasive at times, especially when he went to tell the Governor how to run the state. Woody went to see Governor Clyde and was smoking in the Governor's office and blowing smoke in the Governor's face. The Governor told him to put it out. Woody told the Governor that he was taking our freedom away. The Governor asked where exactly Woody lived. Woody told him he lived 87 miles west of Blanding and plum the hell out of Utah! Woody went back to Hite and never went back to see the Governor. The Governor was about to put him in front of the firing squad!

When entering Moab Valley in 1854, the first settlers' wagons had to be taken apart and taken down the cliffs piece by piece while the animals were taken around a couple of hills to get them down -this is called "The Jumping Off Place". The lower valley was good farm land, but is covered with houses now. The Billings party tried to settle Moab, but went back home after Indians killed 2 of them. They built a fort here, but had to abandon it when they left. It was later taken over by two mountain men. It was run by a black man called "Nigger Bill", which was later changed to "Negro Bill" on the maps, and a Frenchman called "Frenchie". They were mountain men and weren't very sociable and they lived in opposite ends of the fort.

When settlers came in, Frenchie loaded up his canoe and paddled off down the river because it was getting too overpopulated. He couldn't stand all the people. There is no further record of Frenchie after he left the fort. There is an inscription on a rock on the ground in Negro Bill Canyon that says "Nigger Bill" with a carving of a face. It is very old and weathered and had been covered with sand. Nobody knew it was there until June 2003.

A.G. Wilson settled in Moab in 1879 and was the first permanent settler . They donated land to make a Main Street for Moab. I knew A.G.'s boys and girl, but he and his wife died before I was born. None of A.G.'s boys married. Of course, they were old and I was just a kid.

The "tourism" business is now the "expedition" business. My son, John, owns NAVTEC Expeditions. The name of my old company was Tag Along Tours, now called Tag Along Expeditions. I sold the business 22 years ago.

Mary became as enthusiastic about living in Moab as I was. She became a true

"Moabite". The first thing I did was visit the local airport. The airport operator wanted to hire me immediately to fly his planes, but I wanted to go uranium prospecting and get rich! A year later, I came back from prospecting and took the job flying the airplanes for the local operator .

In the 1950s, I had a little yellow jeep called the Yellow Peril. It had an aluminum cab on it that somebody had built and it rattled worse than anything I ever heard in my life! I sold that jeep and bought a eep station wagon -boy, would it climb the rocks! I named it The Old Green Lizard. My father had been such a great promoter of tourism for this area that it was a natural thing for me to start in the tour business.

I worked for the M4 Ranch, now known as the Pack Creek Ranch (which was the original name of the ranch). I started running tours for the ranch, flying airplanes in between tours and taking care of the trailer court Dad and I had built while I was in the service. So, I had 3 things to take care of, but that's what it takes sometimes to make a living!

I took prominent group to a special place called Chesler Park. Chesler Park was named after a man named Chesler by the cowboys. It was circular with an island. (An open area was called a park in those days.) We cooked a special meal for them. Dr. Mayberry loved to cook and go on trips, so he was my cook on that trip. It was the National Park Advisory Board -very prominent citizens from all over the country. The publisher of the National Geographic, Mr. Grosvenor, was there. I got to know many of those people. Senator Ted Moss from Utah was there, as well.

All of these people were very much in favor of making the area a National Park (now Canyonlands) and this trip helped push it over. I took some travel agents down to camp there. Someone flew down and dropped a note from his plane that we were now camping in a National Park. That was his way of letting us know that the bill had passed!

My father was called "Father of the Arches" because of his promotion of the area. The Lions Club helped him get Arches declared a national monument. They asked Dad to join, but he declined. A couple of months later, he told them he would join if they would help get Arches declared a national monument. That happened long before Canyonlands.

At every meeting, no matter what they talked about, Dr. Williams would bring up the subject of Arches. Dad was a huge promoter and often guided people through Arches and he wouldn't let them pay him.

The editor of the paper, Mr. Taylor, called Dad "Moab's Grand Old Man". Mr. Taylor took over the job of writing all the letters to promote Arches. He was very inspired and

supportive of Arches himself and he was also a member of the Lions Club. They were representing the Lions Club's views to show that a lot of people were behind it, but my dad was "the man".

Dad took up rock hunting when he was my age (87) and he would bring them back, cut them with a rock saw and polish them. It gave him something to do when I was out driving truck. He'd stay out all day and walked all the way from the highway to Arches, and then he carried rocks back. He never wanted me to pick him up. All he had was a lunch and some water .

Dad had a walking stick and he'd use it to stop people to get a ride back to town. People were so proud that they gave Dad a lift and they'd tell me stories. They said it was like they were the first people to fly to the moon! They were proud of that --and I was, too!

When I was operating my tour business, it was slim pickins. We had a trailer court and I was doing some flying and got some clients to take on jeep trips, so we did ok. Mary went into the dress business with another woman and they called it Mary & Lucille's.

I wasn't good at marketing, but I got some good ideas from Harry Goulding. Harry was an old-timer in Monument Valley and friend of my father and me. His age was between ours and he was a good friend to both of us. Harry said, " A good way to get business is to get writers to come in and write about what you're doing and take pictures." I followed Harry's advice and it worked.

Mary started a travel agency and we got acquainted with other travel agents through the American Society of Travel Agents -Rocky Mountain Division. We invited them to come on river trips and jeep trips and they would advertise to their customers for us, which really helped our business. Mary went on long "fam trips" (familiarization trips). Everyone there marketed themselves and their businesses to other travel agents. We brought them in here so they could see what they were selling. Mary found that many of them went to Europe to sell, so Mary went there, too. I went on some of the trips, but most of the time Mary went by herself or with other travel agents. We have been to Africa 5 times, to Argentina, Chile, Rio de Janeiro, Hong Kong, Japan and many other places around the world.

We got lots of Frenchies, Germans and Belgians, but very few from England. We never understood why we didn't get many English. The Spanish didn't have money to travel because they were re-building their country after their dictator . There was a girl from France named Sophie who came to visit with her father, Jean Pierre Pecon. They came to see our area and they called to make trip reservations. They ran an office in Paris and were scouting the area as a place

to send their own customers. When we found that out, we didn't charge them for the trips. They were the first big group to come and Sophie stayed with us at our home for one summer. We had a group that came on a regular basis that her dad sent and Sophie went out on tours with them. Sophie interpreted for the guide and tourists. We became so close to Sophie and Jean Pierre that they became our French family. Jean Pierre would visit interesting places at his own expense then go home and print brochures in his own language describing the trip. Then he distributed the brochures to other retail travel agencies to get people to go on expeditions. They charged a commission of 15 -25% for the trips they booked. Sophie got married and had children. She came to visit last spring with her husband and children. We had visited them in France at their home, too and they cooked French food for us, which is great. We had escargot one night, but I didn't care for it too much.

When we took groups down Cataract Canyon, we chartered the airport people to go pick them up. I flew down with my plane and brought Sophie and Jean Pierre back and took them over The Needles and Cataract Canyon so they could see it from the air. They were very impressed! They had never seen anything like this area before. We made arrangements right then and there for them to advertise our tours all over France. We set up certain dates so they could sign up for any of those particular dates. The tourists flew from Paris to New York to Grand Junction then on to Moab. We took them from the airport to the hotel. We picked them up early the next morning and took them to the put in point for a 120 mile river trip - wonderful! We took them to Hite and flew them back to town from there.

Some people didn't like flying in small planes, so they came back with the truck. We had a big bus with a trailer on the back for 30 foot boats and gear when we started out.

We became quite well-known in Europe. Mary went to Europe one or two times a year. One year she went to Munich, Germany and got in contact with a man from Austria who was good at getting groups together. There was a meeting of all tour agencies in Berlin. Each company had different booths so they could see what each had to offer. Mary went every year and met so many different people. She met the Ambassador to Finland who became a good friend of ours.

He invited us to Finland, but we didn't end up going. We got offers from all over and took most of them. Mary was so very good at selling the company. The man from Munich said, "Nobody over here knows about Utah or Moab, but they all know about Tag Along Tours."

I liked to train people to be good at jeep trips and boat tours, too. It took at least a year to

train a top-notch guide. All of my guides were very good and I was very proud of our personnel. We had 8 people in the office during the tourist season and 52 guides. Most of my guides could do any tour, but some preferred to only do jeep tours or only do river tours. I charged much more than any other tour company and I had many more clients than anyone else!!

All of our guides were top cooks. We baked bread and cakes, especially for birthdays, dutch ovens, etc. We fed our guests better than any other company I know of. Everyone had a sleeping bag with a tarp around it tied with a rope. Most people slept well, but some had a hard time the first night. By the second night, everyone slept well and comfortably.

The superintendent of Canyonlands National Park came down and I took him down a side canyon. It looked like it was going to rain, so we got under some rocks that jutted out. He said, "Boy, I tell you, you are in big, big trouble!" Above his bed someone had carved "Tag Along" in the rock. Vandalism in a national park is a bad thing! He knew that I didn't do it and that it was probably a customer ...what a relief! We laughed our heads off about it back at camp.

We had a J rig raft with a 20 horsepower engine. The motor exhaust was under the water, so it ran very quiet. We went along with the current and saw the Indian ruins and Petrified Forest. We took hikes up the canyon and showed clients the ruins. The French didn't care about the Indian ruins and Sophie explained to us that France had better ruins, even if they weren't Indian ruins. I said, "Yes, but you don't have any Indian ruins at all."

We camped at the mouth of Lathram Canyon. We just barely got stopped there and heard someone yell, "Help! Help!" We jumped in the boat and found a man and a boy in the water. They were stuck in the current and were headed straight for the center of the river. Boy, we put the power to that 20 horsepower motor! We pulled the boy in and held the father up to where he could relax. He was 1/2 in the water and 1/2 out. We had a strap under his arms, but we couldn't get him all the way in the boat. We got them both back to shore and saved their lives.

We saved another life when we were going up the river in a jet boat and passed a guy who was about to drown. He wouldn't have lasted another 5 minutes, I don't believe. People think that they can swim in high water, but it's very dangerous. We'd get 'em back to shore and tell them not to go back in. When they got their breath back, they would say, "Yes, sir ."

It is very scenic and nice on the upper part of the river and we would go under Dead Horse Point. By the second night, we would be near the rapids --they can really be something! You have to know what you're doing to get people through safely, that's why we had so much training.

Our boatmen's assistants worked with the top boatmen. They checked the boats for leaks etc. and could run the first rapid. The top boatmen and I would add to the training and by the next year, the assistants would become boatmen and would help train the new assistants.

We had the most attractive boats in the business; we painted ours every year. Some other companies just let theirs go. We'd pass them on the river and the other companies' clients would see the difference in their boats and ours.

Our company was the first on the stretch of river above Moab to provide a day tour with lunch included. We called it "The Daily". Some companies still do this today. We made coffee over a campfire, provided sandwich fixins and laid a board covered with a tablecloth over some rocks for a table. After we went over the rapids and got to smooth water, we cranked up the motor and went to the Moab boat dock just above the bridge. Everyone does this now.

When we ran our jeep tours, we used thirteen 4-wheel drive Toyotas, one International and one 4-wheel drive Ford van. We had a total of 35 vehicles including busses trucks, etc.; sixty-five outboard motors and twenty-one flatbed trailers for rafts and a jillion other things. Many of the employees became experts in repair and maintenance. We had a repair shop and mechanic and sometimes an assistant for the mechanic. It was a good-sized operation for the "little guy in a little burg".

We were always very fair with our clients. When a refund was due, it was made with no questions asked. If we didn't get to our destination for some reason, we offered a refund. Many didn't even want their money back because they still had such a good time! If a refund wasn't due, however, I wouldn't give them a penny (very few asked for their money back, though).

An old codger named "Buck" was working for me. Buck used to be a cowboy and was a good guy when he stayed out of the beer joints. We had a 3-seater that Buck took out to the Dinosaur Tracks. One guy had been raising hell all the way down because he didn't like his seat and wanted to switch places. Buck told him to shut up and act like a decent human being or he was going to take him right back to town. After that, the guy shut up and acted really nice.

One time when I took a tour out, I dropped something and said, without even thinking, "Mine Got en Himmlle!" (my God in Heaven). I said it in German and the group I happened to be taking on the tour was German! They didn't think anything of it, but it was strange that it just came out of my mouth spontaneously since I don't speak German.

We ran a trip from Sand Wash down the Green River to the town of Green River, Utah. The rapids on the upper Green River were big, but not as big as the ones in Cataract Canyon!

The Green River cut a course through the Book Mountains almost as deep as the Grand Canyon! This was a wonderful trip; one of my favorites!

I still flew my Cessna Skylane when I had people from Moab who were going up to Sand Wash. I did that myself and took my dog, Poncho Villa, with me. Poncho loved it, even the turns! He flew in the right seat. On the way back, I dropped off from the mesa to the river level. I'd skim the water and then when we came to a sharp corner, I'd bank it and pull back on the stick to make the sharp turns. I loved to fly over the country down there -it's so beautiful!

One time we put a trip in the river at Sand Wash, and then Poncho and I flew about 30 miles down the river and caught up with another tour of mine from the day before. We had to turn a sharp corner. The tour group heard a loud roar and saw the wingtip close over their heads! They looked in the cockpit and could only see Poncho, so I told them that Poncho was flying the plane and I was just along for the ride. That story spread all over town!

On one trip, we had a lady come in a silk dress, high heels and mink coat. I told her that she was dressed beautifully, but that she might want to put on some jeans or something more appropriate for the trip. She said that she would be fine. The road was very dusty and there were lots of rocks to climb up to see Angel Arch. She made it up, high heels and all!

One night, I had taken two women out and it had rained very heavily. We headed back, but the floods had started. We couldn't get out and didn't have supplies to stay overnight. We didn't have any cell phones or radios in those days. I thought the ladies would really be upset. Actually, they thought it was great for them. They said their pictures and stories would go over great back home.

Mary was fit to be tied and had called The Park Service to search for us. They found us and we were ok, but we had to wait for the water to go down before we could cross.

The business grew and grew and over 20 years, we became quite successful. We had some property on Main Street and I wanted Mary to quit the dress shop and come to work for me. Mary didn't want to, but I finally convinced her that it was the thing to do. I made a nice office for Mary and put a deck on it with a nice western look. The office was soon bursting at the seams! We had an extra room and we were the bus station, too. The bus company brought freight and people even early in the morning. The bus company locked the freight in and we'd parcel it out.

I had to build a ramp for people who couldn't walk up on that porch. The only thing we had in the beginning was a second driver to go with me. Mary held down the office. At first Mary made

lunches for them with things like home canned peaches, home done pickles and home baked cakes. People always came in and thanked Mary for sharing the food with them.

After a while, the bus, airlines and Western Union wanted us to parcel out freight, sell tickets and be a Western Union office. We just grew and grew!

We decided to tap the European market to attract European tourists. I went to Germany to attend the fair of tour companies from allover the world -it was huge!

We were invited as a western rep, which was a very prestigious invitation! Eventually we got other to participate (not from Moab, but up North). They wanted us to promote the travel council. Mary didn't speak German, but they spoke a little English. If she spoke very, very slowly, they could understand her. I never could go, but John went when he got older. There were people from all over -Italy, Ireland, etc. They all knew who Tag Along Tours was. It increased sales like we had hoped it would.

A guy from Japan was trying to get to Moab. He got to Phoenix, but couldn't get from Phoenix to Moab, so we had to find a route to get him to Moab on a bus. If people were stranded in Grand Junction, we'd get them raced down to catch up with the trip. There were always lots of challenges!

Mary and I finally got old and I got sick. I had already had cancer and surgery in Grand Junction. I didn't like my voice, but it eventually came back and I worked in the office. Then the cancer came back and I couldn't work. Mary had to run it all herself, but it was too big a job, so we decided to sell it. It sold very fast to an American Mary met over in Germany.

We lived in Salt Lake City when we had to during my illness, then back to Moab -back and forth. The doctors were trying to save my vocal chords and larynx, but the cancer got too bad and I had to have them removed.

I had a friend named Earl Schaffer who became a fire fighter on a big steam engine called the "Challenger". They had 2 drivers, one on each side of the engine. Those engines were huge! The front wheels would slide out enough to follow the tracks and make the sharp mountain curves. Then they went to diesels. Earl called me up and said, "If you're going to drive this train, you better get here as quick as you can!" Mary was at the office and I had the housekeeper drive me down. The train was moving slowly, but I climbed up and jumped on. They sat me in the engineer seat and told me to hold it at 30 mph through the tunnel, which was 1 1/2 miles long. The pot ash railroad ran from the main line to the pot ash plant. I ran it clear up to the yard 7 miles! I had great pictures, but couldn't find them. Earl was a really good guy and we liked each

other very much. One of the greatest experiences of my life was running that train!

"Swanny" Kerby was a classmate of mine. He got the nickname "Swanny" because he sang "Swanny River Moon" so much. Swanny was a cowboy all his life and his family was very poor. His dad had also been a cowboy and didn't have much money, but somehow they made it through. He bought a piece of property in Moab. One end was swampy, but they used the other end for cowboy stuff. He donated the land and they built seats so people could watch the cowboys practice their rodeo stuff. Swanny got into the business of bucking broncos and bulls. He bought more land up north to put the horses and cattle on. He had prize Brahma bulls (rough buckers) and he could demand premium price for their use in rodeos. His wife grew up on a cattle ranch. He's probably a rich man now. The City renamed the park from City Park to Swanny Park. I was tickled to death that they renamed it because Swanny had donated the land.

We started a school newspaper when I was a freshman. There was a contest to name it. A girl put in the name "The Sage". It had a double meaning 1) wise man and 2) sagebrush. I was made the joke editor. I didn't know if I was the joke or if I was supposed to put jokes in. I'd find jokes to fit the local scene and put 'em in. I put in one story about how Swanny Kerby ran seven head of cattle down the river and back again. People laughed their heads off. Swanny wanted to know how I knew he had seven head of cattle. I told him that I just picked a number .

Swanny and I went down to brand his yearling calves. We rode on trails where the highway now goes to the potash plant. It was very remote back then. We went up on the rim of Bootleg Ridge and saw Corona Arch. I took pictures. Swanny stood in the entrance to a cave we found and I took a picture. I still have it and it turned out really good.

We went to Williams' Bottom where Dad had a ranch between 1900 and 1910. Michael Kelsey (a writer) wrote guide books and didn't know how to write about Williams' Bottom. He put a wonderful picture of my father in one of his books and ended up writing a wonderful book about the area. My father because an excellent boatman navigating through Williams' Bottom.

When Swanny and I came back, we went over the top of what is now called Poison Spider Mesa. The trail we used to get up there is just about the place where the Colorado River leaves Moab valley (The Portal) at the beginning of the Grand Canyon. It was called the "Narrow Trail" and it is narrow! It would scare you to death! We got off our horses and led them along. It was too dangerous and scary to ride with the cliffs. We traveled quite a few miles to get back to the river bottom and then, only less than a mile from Williams' Bottom, we followed the river to the bridge and crossed the bridge into Moab. It was very wild country and I admire those old

time cowboys so much! I had uncles and other relatives who were cowboys. I used to spend time at Uncle Lee Larsen's place (my mother's brother) and Uncle Roy Larsen who also went up to La Sal. Uncle Lee was there before Uncle Roy came over to Moab in about 1897 -1898 and they brought Albert Beech with them. They came from Molen, Utah six miles east of Ferron, Utah. Many of Mom's relatives lived in Ferron, Utah.

Uncle Lee lost his left leg between the knee and the hip before he came to Moab. He still had to make a living though. His leg had to be amputated because he had tuberculosis of the bone. That's what they called it in those days, but it was probably cancer or something else.

Most people were in the agricultural business and Uncle Lee, Uncle Roy and Albert Beech came over from Molen to Moab together and found out that the Maxwell House Hotel needed help. Mrs. Maxwell Aunt Ad also owned the millinery shop.

My mother's name was Alvina Larsen. She and Millie Beech came over in 1899 and got jobs working at the hotel cooking. That's how Dad met Mom. I have their marriage license dated May 19, 1900 on my desk.

My background is Norwegian and German. In 1760, Branstetter came over. He was a captain in the Royal Guard and asked permission from the Emperor in Germany to leave. His request was denied, so he got a group together and left on a ship anyway. They left a few minutes late because a kid had gotten lost and had to be found before they could leave. Branstetter found the boy and then the ship left. As the ship left the dock, the Royal Guard came after Branstetter, but they were too late because they had missed the tide and couldn't follow the ship.

The Japs ruled Formosa (named by the Portuguese) for 50 years. The Chinese got it back after the war and gave it back its original name, Taiwan. J.J. Wang is from Taiwan and comes from a leading family there. His father owned and ran a newspaper on mainland China until communism got too bad. He got his family and then himself out to Taiwan.

J.J. bought a little motel off on a side street, the bought a bigger motel down on Main Street. He made it a point to visit with us every week. He was very courteous and wanted the Europeans to stay at his 2 motels while they were in Moab on trips with us. J.J. never missed a week. Some motel owners called occasionally, but J.J. never missed a week, so we gave him the majority of the business.

When I started my tour business, I started with a 1950-something model jeep. I had worked on the river before and wanted to get some rubber boats. Georgie White was a great

boatman and ran trips down Cataract Canyon and I would fly them back. There were no lakes in those days and they'd land on a dirt strip near the river bottoms. Her husband, Whitey, liked to booze. He might be there and might be somewhere else, drunk. He was there one time and I asked where Georgie was. He pointed on the jeep --she had on a skimpy bra and panties with 2 holes in the seat and was bending over doing something. I'll never forget that! She came down and we met. I told her that I would fly her clients as long as she wanted me to. She inspired me to get into the river business. If she could do it, I could, too! I'll never forget Georgie, especially the view! Oh, my!

I knew a guy running trips on the upper Green River. He lived in a little town near Vernal, Utah.

I bought 3 ten man rafts. They were Army surplus rafts. I had never rafted Cataract Canyon before, but we had some experience from our younger days, so we just did it! Lee Herron was my employee. They had just started to build Lake Powell, but it was way down from where it is now, so we still had lots of rapids to run.

We figured the best way to go down the river. Brown Betty is the first rapid, which was pretty easy. After that, we'd pull up close to the lip of the rapids and row. If we thought we'd have to be on the other side, we'd row upstream. We never had a bit of trouble with the really difficult rapids. We look 'em over and figure the best way to get over them. The biggest rapid is called "The Big Drop". It's a series of three rapids. The first is the most fun of all with the mightiest waves I have ever seen when the water is running really fast. # 1 is so much fun, #2 had to get through the Eddie and #3 is "The Biggie", or "Big Drop 3".

Every run is different depending on the flow of the water. The river can rise or fall and change the rapids. In the old days before we started running it, we sometimes got 100,000 feet per second of water flow. Now it's 60,000 feet per second, if you're lucky! The Green River and Colorado join together 4- 5 miles above Brown Betty.

I never tipped a raft over, fell out or had anyone fall out, either. We'd use the motor to get across the lake because it would have been a long way to row, especially if there was a wind. It was spectacular! We ran the upper Green, too, which was a 100 mile trip!

I had a friend from the Army who had been a B-17 bomber pilot in Europe. His name was Art Swap and his wife was Jackie. Art and I traded stories about the war. Art flew one mission over Germany with a large number of bombers. They hit their target and swung south over France, which was occupied by the Germans. They flew over some broken clouds and he

was "Tail End Charlie" -he was flying in the clouds and he called the leader to tell him that they were headed for a German fighter base, Foche Fowlf.

The Germans scrambled the fighters to come after them. The Germans flew straight up and shot them in the belly. The Germans really cleaned up and Art's plane was shot down. Art landed, gathered his parachute and hid in the bushes and trees by a road. They had been told that if they contacted anyone on the ground, they had to make sure it was only one person; otherwise their companion might turn you in. A German truck came by loaded with soldiers. A little girl was walking home from school and one of the German soldiers picked up his gun and shot her dead! Art couldn't believe his eyes!

Art had to stay there for about 3 days without any water. A boy age 12 -14 years old came along on a bike and Art stopped him. He told Art to stay there and he would go get his father. The boy returned with his father and helped Art get in the underground pipeline to England. They saved his life! They brought him food and wine, but couldn't take him to their home. Then they put him in the 2nd story of a house. He heard the Germans talking, so he peeked out the window and saw the SS marching outside.

They moved Art quite a few times and then put him in the basement of Notre Dame Cathedral with some other guys. The French couldn't come back because they were being watched. Art and the guys had to tough it out for several days with no food or water. Someone finally came with food and water and got them out and over to England. The young man on the bicycle that found him was named Andre. He grew up and went to work for the gas company in Marseilles. Andre married a pretty girl and took her to Great Falls to visit Art. Art brought them to Moab and I have pictures of myself with them. Art and I became very good friends with Andre and his wife. We always wanted to go to Marseilles with Andre, but we never got around to making that trip.

