

Autobiography of Glenn S. Davis

(As current to 2004)

I was born on Thursday, November 25, 1948 in my parent's house in the East End of Oak Hill, West Virginia. My father was William Dallas Davis and my mother was Virginia E. Hyden Davis. My Grandparents were Rilla Donna Arizona Terry and William Hobart Davis on my father's side, and William Crockett Hyden and Lula Jane Armstrong on my mother's side.

I know it was Thursday because it was Thanksgiving morning. My mother says that she was making the meal when her water broke. My father went for the doctor and shortly after 7 AM, I was born. My father told me that the nurse cleaned me up and laid me in a chair. It was a matter of humor, for my father always told the story of how "gassy" I was lying there. Needless to say, I don't remember much about my infancy, but the story was that I could follow the zigzag pattern of Christmas lights with my eyes as we traveled through town. I even think I have a fuzzy memory of that in my mind. More than likely, the memory is from a later time.

The first couple of years of my life were not very notable, but later stories tell of how poor we were. My father, a coal miner, was out of work due to sickness and my mother stayed at home to take care of my brother and I as well as my father. Learning to walk was a chore because I probably wanted to run before I could walk. This is a tendency I continue to this day, because I walk fast wherever I go. I believe I must have fallen down a lot. Our next-door neighbor, Mr. Bush, used to sit on his porch saying, "Ooh! Ooh! Ooh! He made it!" as I was walking from object to object.

Mr. Bush and Mr. Harris enjoyed talking to each other as Mr. Bush worked in his garden. I would sit in the furrow between them as they would talk and listen to their conversation. I don't know what we talked about, but I would sit for hours with them. I do remember of being afraid of earthworms. Mr. Bush picked one up and placed it in my hand to show me earthworms would not hurt me. I only remember a little about when Mr. Bush died. My memory is fuzzy and confused, but I remember the funeral/wake of Mr. Bush, his daughter, Winnie, or her husband, Fred, who all died at about the same time in the house next door.

Mr. Harris, a close neighbor, was bald and always wore a porkpie straw hat. His wife was not a pleasant person. She would yell at him and curse telling him to get home. She died while we were still living there. Afterwards, he had several different ladies living with him. The more I think about it, he probably had quite a harem. I do know he enjoyed himself for the last years of his life. I vaguely remember him dying, but I don't remember when.

One Halloween before I was old enough to go Trick or Treating, our first family pet, that I remember, came to us. He was a little kitten that followed my

brother, Gary, home. My dad did not want to keep him, but the kitten crawled up into my father's lap and went to sleep. Dad said we could keep him until we found his owners. Later we found out that he was one of the kittens from another neighbor called, Duncans. Honeybee was a mostly gray longhaired Persian type of kitten. He was more fluff than meat. What a character he was. He definitely had his territory because he roamed the neighborhood a lot. The reason we named him, Honeybee, was because we thought he was a female. I believe my love for cats was a result of this pet's influence on me. His disappearance was my fault. I was teasing him and he scratched my face at which point I opened the door and let him out. My mother did not like that at all. After several days, it became apparent that something had happened to him. We never found out what happened to him, but we believe a car must have hit him. One of the kittens he fathered was our next cat.

"Baby" was not the cat his father was. Baby was a kitten that was fathered by Honeybee. The reason we thought this to be true was that he looked just like him with a few minor exceptions. Again, the name Baby was chosen on our mistaken belief that he was a female. Wrong again! Where Honeybee would be careful about scooting his food onto the floor, Baby would grab bites and take them from the plate to the floor. He also did not care that much for little kids, but I didn't know that.

The life of a coalminer is not one of steady employment. My dad would work a while and then be laid off for a while. In 1953, Dad tried his luck at getting a new start. We moved to Barberton, Ohio and he got a job at the B & W Boiler Works as a crane operator. I was five at this time. Several memorable events happened while living in Barberton. First, I had a shiny, new tricycle. I rode it a lot on the sidewalks close to our house. I rode it so much that I wore out the front tire. The tricycle had a solid rubber tire. When it would wear out, it would come off the rim. My first major fright took place at the same time. I saw my first Goodyear Blimp. I thought it was an atom bomb. I still don't have a clue how I knew about atom bombs. Anyway, I was scared to death and the tricycle would not go fast enough to get me home. Then the tire came off the rim. It was just too much for me to take and I stayed in the house for a few days.

I also learned to whistle. Only problem was that my music sounded like a wolf whistle. I got my dad in trouble with it one day. He was sitting on the porch reading a newspaper and I was in the front yard. Two high school girls came along. I wolf whistled at them and then jumped behind a tree. I think they gave my dad a few dirty looks. Today, they would have probably hauled him off to jail for sexual harassment. I still have vivid memories of doing that.

Television was still a new invention in 1953, but it had been around long enough that a few used sets were available to purchase. I don't remember where we got our set, but it was only a 10-inch screen model in a standup cabinet. I know we watched all those classic shows, but the only one I remember is Captain

Video and his Video Rangers. It must have made an impression on me about Science Fiction because I still read and watch Sci-Fi every chance I get.

We moved back to West Virginia because of the housing shortage in Akron. When we returned to our house, we discovered that the renters had let the house go into a very bad state of cleanliness. My mother was very upset and started cleaning the moment we arrived back. It took some time to get things rearranged and back in order.

I did not attend Kindergarten. They didn't have such a thing back in those days. I attended Oak Hill Elementary on the hill just up from the present day police department. I started out in First grade with Mrs. Oliver as my teacher. I can remember sitting in the room on first day. A lot of the kids were crying, but I wasn't. I was looking forward to the new adventure. I really liked going to school, which is something that continues with me today. I know I was ready for anything the teacher was ready to show me. The only trouble was that I got sick early in the year. I had Bronchial Pneumonia and was out of school for six weeks or so. My mother tells me that her conference with the teacher indicated that I was advanced enough in my studies that she, the teacher, could not hold me back.

The only other significant event of the year took place at Halloween. I can still remember that we were to have a dress-up. Money was pretty scarce, but I didn't know that. All I knew was that I wanted to dress up as Howdy Doody. I had it all planned out on how I was going to look and pretend to have my arms suspended from strings. I guess you would have had to see the show to know what I am talking about. Anyway, the day arrived and my mother shows up at the school with a different set of costume pieces. She had an Indian wig and a mask. Looking back, it must have been all we could afford at the time, but I was disappointed.

Second grade did not make an impact on my memory. I don't remember anything out of the way that happened. Third Grade, however, made quite an impression. My teacher was Miss Bundy. I can still see her now. She was a typical Old Maid schoolteacher with a dried up prune looking face with a perpetual frown. The kids in the class were scared to death of her because she did not put up with any funny business. Her tongue was as sharp and painful as her use of the yardstick, which she used to apply to our backsides when we needed an attitude adjustment. I don't recall that she ever hit me though. I respected her and she taught us to read and write. My penmanship was terrible. I am just not artful enough when it comes to fine motor skills. My hands will not do what my brain tells them to do. Anyway, Miss Bundy worked hard at teaching us what we needed to know. I did very well in her class and if there had been an honor roll, I would have been on it. Even so, I kept a low profile and away from her quick use of the yardstick.

Fourth grade brought about a big change. Children living in our end of town would be attending a new school closer to our home. It was a brand new

school called Rosedale Elementary. It was within walking distance for me of just under one mile. In the really cold weather, it was a chore just getting bundled up with several layers of clothes and boots. My teacher was Mrs. Bragg and she taught two grade levels. There were 5 rows of five seats. Three rows were devoted to Fourth grade and two rows of Fifth Grade. Mrs. Bragg was a good teacher and she made learning interesting. She didn't play games or put up with any foolishness either. I did get hit by her one time. I got caught throwing a paper wad at another student. She called me up to the front of the room and let me have one good whack where it would do the most good. Then she continued the lesson as if nothing had happened. She was also my Fifth Grade teacher. I did not mind because she was well liked by all the kids.

Sixth Grade saw us move up to Mrs. Caldwell's room. She was another teacher who taught two grades. She had 2 rows of Fifth Grade and 3 rows of Sixth Grade. The most memorable events of my time at Rosedale Elementary were the recesses. We didn't have any play equipment, but there was something of a ball diamond with a backstop. In good weather, we always had a game going. Any unfinished game was completed at the next recess or lunchtime. I was so small that I seldom did very well. I learned at an early age that I was not very athletic even though I liked the game of baseball. I always seemed to be the smallest person on the team and the last one picked when choosing sides.

I also joined the Boy Scouts at this time and enjoyed our outings very much. The Scoutmaster was Jim Gannon, the owner of the ESSO gas station in the East End of town. He had taken over for Mr. Hubarker who had just died. A lot of happy time was spent at meetings, camping trips and the annual trip we made to his cabins on the Little Kanawha River. He taught all of the scouts some valuable lessons about growing up and taking responsibility. I never will forget one camping trip to the Little Kanawha. It was my job to clean up after breakfast. I didn't do a particularly good job of getting the grease out of the skillet. On my second try, I didn't rinse well enough and left soap residue. Jim Gannon said how I had to get the item clean or give diarrhea to all the rest of the fellows. That has stayed with me throughout the years. The highlight of my time spent in the Scouts was when we were the honor guard for the opening ceremony of Plum Orchard Lake. This was well attended by local and state politicians. The Governor of West Virginia, W.W. "Wally" Baron made a speech and Robert Byrd, the Senator, was there. Our troop even made the front page of the local newspaper. I think my mother may still have the clipping somewhere.

While in Sixth Grade, I was deemed old enough to go to the local skating rink by myself. Every Friday night was a time to look forward to in my social life. I met many friends and had a lot of fun. When I was promoted to Seventh Grade, the skating rink was still the place to be. Many hours were spent skating around the hard oak floor and talking with my friends. On Saturdays, I rode the bus into town and took in the Saturday Matinee at the Oak Hill Theatre. It cost 40 cents

for kids under 11, but kids 12 and older had to pay 50 cents. I was small enough to be 11 for 3 years. The extra dime was spent at the G.C. Murphy Department store. They sold candy by the pound. That store had a smell that was out of this world. The new smell of the articles for sale mingled with the smell of the chocolate. I always bought 10 cents worth of chocolate covered peanuts or chocolate covered raisins until I discovered Maple Nut Goodies. Not only did they taste great, but also they were cheaper than the chocolate and I got more candy for my money. After being 11 for 3 years, I had to start paying full price for the matinee. Mother always gave me 10 cents to ride the bus into town on Saturday morning. What she didn't know was that if the bus were slow, I would stick out my thumb and hitchhike. The 10 cents saved would be used to purchase the candy for the show. It was a good thing that the world was a lot safer back in those days. You can't do something like that now.

Those were great days, but for every good thing there is something not so good. In my case it was several "not so goods." First, my smallness made me the target of every schoolyard bully for 500 miles. I became very adept at staying away from trouble. I never liked the feeling of being in trouble. That feeling has kept me out of situations that others find themselves in. I learned quickly to think before I acted. I also discovered that my mouth could get me into trouble. As a grownup, I find that I have more fight in me because I got tired of being bullied so much.

One of the most significant historical events of my Sixth Grade year was listening to the radio during the first manned space flight by Alan Shepherd. Mrs. Caldwell had brought a radio into class for us to listen. It was very exciting to listen in on the countdown and hear the announcer's description of the event. As well as I remember it was Walter Cronkite doing the announcing.

The second event that took place was the presidential election of 1960. West Virginia was a swing state for the election. People vying for the nomination spent considerable time traveling around the state. I remember watching the motorcade with Hubert H. Humphrey passing through on their way to a speaking engagement in Oak Hill. My parents had already made up their minds to vote for Jack Kennedy. My mother took me to hear him speak at the High School Gym. We stood in line outside the door as he came into the building. My mother shook his hand and if I had just put my hand out, I would have shook hands with him also. Nonetheless, I was less than 3 feet from him. I had a chance to see him up close. Along with him was another famous person, Eleanor Roosevelt, who was helping him with his campaign. I did not get close to her, but I did hear her speak.

The year, 1961, started out as a very bad year. My dad was laid off from the coalmines most of the year. We were lucky that he had taken the time to raise a garden. That and the meager unemployment checks almost allowed us to live. Dad had to frequently borrow money from my Grandmother, Rilla or Muh as the grandchildren called her, and he was constantly juggling money to keep things

going. I believe it was 1961 when John Kennedy made life for poor people a little better by allowing commodities, foodstuff that the government subsidized, to be distributed to the needy. We received several boxes of things like cheese, canned meats, powdered milk, flour, etc. Mother made good use of these items and got very creative at making them taste good. One usually doesn't like the taste of powdered milk, but if you add Hershey's chocolate syrup to it, it comes out pretty good. We always had a jug in the refrigerator. The years at this point all run together, but I think I also started a new hobby at about this time. Money was tight, but Dad and Mom always could find 35 cents for me to go to the roller skating rink. Friday nights were a lot more interesting. The rink was only a short walk of a mile or just over from our house. From 6:30 to 10:00 PM, I was able to forget all the other things going on and enjoy time with friends. I couldn't afford skates, so my Dad took my brother's size 9 skates and made foam inserts to make my foot fit inside the boot. I had blisters on the inside of both my feet every week, but it didn't stop me. Christmas compared to today's standards would have been very bleak, but it was not. We had candy, baked goods, and under the tree on Christmas morning was fairly well stocked. I didn't know that most of the stuff was hand-me-downs from my cousins. All I knew was that I had my first pair of pegged pants. Pegged pants were ones that had the cuff at the bottom very tightly shaped to the leg. I also received a Mattel Shootin' Shell lever action rifle. I had fun playing with that. I wish I still had it, since it would be worth quite a bit as a collector's item.

Nothing of interest happened during 1962 that I can recall. I think I spent most of the time doing what I had been doing for the past year or so. Roller-skating, going to the matinee movies on Saturday mornings and just hanging around were the extent of my interests. At the end of the school year for 1963, things started to change. Dad was working only sporadically and money was tight as usual. My brother, Gary, had moved to Akron after he graduated from high school and was working in the machine shop industry. Dad had spent some time in Akron, actually Cuyahoga Falls by this time, looking for work in some of the plants there. Gary wanted to show Dad where he worked and the machine shop. While there, Dad talked with the supervisor, Dick Appleton, who must have been impressed with Dad's sincerity about looking for work. After an unsuccessful two weeks of looking for work, Dad came back to West Virginia, most likely discouraged at his inability to find work. A very short time after, Gary called and said if he wanted a job, he could start Monday morning at Ace Machine Company. Interestingly enough, Dad's first day was one to remember. He always liked to tell about his introduction to the machine tools trade. Dick Appleton took him over to a turret lathe on the first day he worked and said, "This is the machine you're going to run." Dad said, "Great! What is it?"

After the end of the 1962-63 school year, we moved to Cuyahoga Falls. My brother's first child was due in June, so we lived with them for a short period of time. After the birth of my nephew, Keith, we needed to go back to West Virginia

to take care of the house and make arrangements to sell and transport our goods to Cuyahoga Falls. Mother and I took a Greyhound Bus back to Oak Hill to do just that. While there, I was horseplaying with my cousins, PeeWee, Donna, and J.R. in the back yard of my Grandfather, William Hyden, and broke my leg. When I got to the hospital, they said I had broken the leg in three places. Two breaks were in the large bone (tibia) down by my ankle, and the third break was up by the knee in my small bone (fibia). I was required to be in a cast up to my hip and needed crutches to walk upon. I spent the summer pretty well cooped up in the house. I had been lucky enough to make a few friends and they came by to visit and play board games, etc. When school started, I should have attended Cuyahoga Falls High School, but was not able to go up and down the stairs. So, they gave me a tutor and I stayed at home during the first semester.

Two significant events happened during that period of time. During my convalescent period, I had started to develop an interest in World War II fighter planes. I purchased plastic models and spent a good deal of time working on them. Aviation had been an interest of mine since long before we moved to Cuyahoga Falls, but living in West Virginia did not give me much chance to see aircraft up close. That summer, Gary took us to an airshow in Shelby, Ohio. It was my first chance to see aircraft doing what I had never dreamed they could do. But the most striking aircraft there was a P-51 Mustang. It was a World War II fighter. I was impressed and began what has become a lifelong study of World War II fighters and the men who flew them.

The second event was the assassination of President Kennedy. Since I was still being tutored at home and still in a cast with crutches, I spent a good deal of time in front of the TV. The morning of November 22, 1963 found me watching a game show which I was forced to watch since there was nothing else on but game shows. I vividly recall Walter Cronkite coming on with a News Bulletin that reported that John Kennedy had been shot in Dallas, Texas. There were few details, but my mother and I stayed riveted to the screen when a few minutes later he came on to say that the report was unconfirmed, but likely that President Kennedy had been assassinated. For three days, there was nothing on but the details and pictures of a national tragedy. He was buried on my birthday on November 25, 1963. I missed the live shooting of Oswald on TV because I was in my room working on a plastic model. I never seemed to be in the right place at the right time.

After Christmas, I began attending Cuyahoga Falls High School. I would really like a "do over" on the time spent there. I was most probably one of the least liked students by my teachers since I was a major goof-off. I really did not know where I wanted to go or how to get there if I did. I was still concerned with aviation and learning to fly, but there was never enough money to pursue that goal. I worked part time during the school year and full time in the summer, but upkeep on a car, going out, etc., ate up all my discretionary funds. I did spend some enjoyable times during the summer at the Waterworks swimming pool. At

least I had a group of friends to hang out with. The best part of my teen years was the fact that I learned very early how to stay out of trouble. Some of my friends would get “ideas” about things to do. I was pretty good at recognizing situations that could get me more than a good time. I would just say, “You guys go ahead. I told my folks I would be home about now.” You’d be surprised at how often my group would get themselves in hot water after I left.

I did attention-getting activities in high school. I definitely talked when I should have been listening. I did, however, figure out that I had enough brains to be able to do what ever I wanted. I just didn’t know what that was. I did enjoy German and Speech classes the most. My love of History was not really developed since many of the classes after Tenth grade were not so much about History as about Economics, etc. In Speech class, I found I had the ability to talk in front of groups. That skill has been used over and over since I became an adult. Talking in front of people does not bother me. I just ignore the fact that there is any one in the audience. I’ve actually had the chance to use my German several times since high school. Most notably, at the 2003 Oshkosh airshow, some German tourists camped very close to our area. They did not speak much English. I talked to them several times. I even understood about every 5th or 6th word that was spoken. It was at least enough to be able to communicate. I wish I had more time to practice.

High School graduation found me in the unenviable position of knowing I needed more education, but still not having found a goal to work toward. I enrolled at Kent State University for the fall of 1966. What an experience! It would be an understatement to say it was more than I could handle. I was not mature enough to be able to do more than be overwhelmed with adult situations with a still juvenile mind. Needless to say, I failed my first year even though I made it through the first three quarters. Unfortunately, I needed my student status to stay out of making myself eligible for the draft. Since I was 18, I had until November of 1967 to breathe before becoming eligible to be drafted at 19 years of age. The Vietnam War was raging and all the news was spent bringing the conflict into everyone’s homes on the nightly news. I did manage to get a job working at the Akron Municipal Airport, now called Fulton Airport. I was a gas boy on the field working for B. F. Goodrich Flight operations. They were the fuel fixed base operator for the airport. I had some interesting experiences, but only stayed on the job for a year. Notably, I can say that I gassed the Goodyear blimp many times in 1967 and early 1968, and it wasn’t even there. What they would do was bring a truck around with 5-gallon Jerry cans. I would fill each can from the truck’s tank and they would haul the fuel to Wingfoot Lake where the dirigible was hangared.

In 1968, the draft was hot on my trail. Being interested in self-preservation and not wishing to become a tunnel rat, since I was so small, I naturally wanted something other than the infantry. I tried the Air Force, but they could not get me in before the Draft would call me to service. So, I enlisted in the Army which was

considerably less picky about their recruits. My job was to be a Movements Control Specialist. That is a fancy name for a transportation documents clerk. It sounded interesting, but proved to be one of my less thought out decisions.

September 1968 found me on a bus headed to Cleveland to be inducted into the U S Army for a period of 3 years. I was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky. After inprocessing, I was assigned to B-6-3. That stands for Bravo Company of the 6th Battalion of the 3rd Training Brigade. We trained on the usual things such as physical training, map reading, lectures on hygiene, how to salute and report to an officer, how to challenge while on guard duty, etc. My drill sergeant was Sergeant Hepler at first. He was a hard-nose who went too far with our training one day. We must have upset him over something, because he made us low-crawl on the asphalt in front of our company barracks. The low-crawl is a simulated maneuver of crawling while on the battlefield. The First Sergeant saw the toes of our new combat boots and really chewed him out. He was relieved of our company and Sergeant Rigdon took over and finished our training. He was a better drill instructor. He treated us fair and did not find any of the Mickey Mouse ways of making life miserable for us. Graduation day was very enjoyable since we knew we were headed to another Fort. Fort Knox was not one of my favorite places to stay. There is nothing there except the Army base and Gold Repository. We did get a few weekend passes to Louisville. That was my first experience at staying in a hotel. Really, I had numerous first experiences in the army at doing things, which I had never thought about.

November of 1968 saw my assignment to Advanced Individual Training at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Fort Eustis is just outside Newport News, Virginia and not too far from Richmond, Virginia. We were trained in how to work with controlling shipments of men, material, and other things the army needed. AIT was unremarkable except for the holidays of 1968. I didn't make it home for Thanksgiving, but was able to get a leave for Christmas. The only trouble with that was that the army, in its wisdom, failed to let us know in enough time to book flights home. Luckily, my cousin, Dick Gray, was working on his instrument flight program and came down to get us. Otherwise, we would not have had any time to spend at home. Finishing up at Fort Eustis, we were allowed a short leave before being sent overseas to Vietnam. Almost my entire company of trainees was sent to Vietnam. Just a couple were shipped to Germany. I saw many of those when they were later sent to Vietnam before their enlistment was over.

February 1969 saw me on my way to Fort Dix, New Jersey for the flight to Vietnam. My friend, Ed Peteya, who was from Akron, and I spent a night in New York City before reporting to Fort Dix. I quickly saw that I was not thrilled with that city and have no desire to go back. The place was just too unfriendly.

We spent a short period of time processing for Vietnam. We fired weapons for familiarization, were issued jungle fatigues and boots, received inoculations for various Asiatic diseases, and were run through a mock

Vietnamese village full of booby traps. Then, we were given all the information we would need for the trip to Vietnam. We left Ft. Dix in the evening shortly after dark. The temperature was 23 degrees. That may not seem significant, but when the flight arrived in Fairbanks, Alaska, it was 34 degrees. I always thought Alaska was super cold. We only spent a short time there, which as I recall was about one hour and a half. From there we made the long flight to Yakota, Japan. I didn't get to see any part of Japan other than the terminal area, which we were not allowed to leave. We arrived in Vietnam the next morning. My first look at the place from the air would not give any hint there was a war except for the columns of smoke rising in the air. Later I found out that the columns of smoke were mostly from papa-san burning crap from the outhouses. The first smell of Vietnam was enough to knock you over. I cannot describe the smell other than to say it was like 10,000 noxious odors trying to compete with each to see which could smell the worst. Gasoline fumes, burning crap, decaying vegetation, and every other imaginable thing were there. Several years ago, I was doing something and a smell similar to the one in Saigon popped into my nose. My memory took me back immediately to Saigon.

Riding a bus with wire mesh over the windows so a Vietnamese "cowboy" could not throw a grenade in the window was a new experience. We were driven up Highway 1 to Bien Hoa and delivered to the 90th Replacement Depot. My first experience with Vietnam did not bode well if the conditions there were going to be repeated at my final assignment. I was heartsick, to say the least, and wondered what I had got myself into. I grew up pretty fast. Even



though I was in what you would call a rear area, there were still people shooting at you and the possibility of finding a live grenade in your lap when you least expected it was something to get your attention. I just recalled while writing this that I believe I ran into _____

_____, a fellow who was in my graduating class who was killed in Vietnam. I can't remember his name, but

do have his picture in my yearbook and the clipping my mother cut from the newspaper reporting his death. At least I think it was he. I know I ran across one of my classmates in the 90th Replacement Center, but cannot remember for sure

his name.

I was assigned first to the 154th Transportation Company at Camp Camelot, Long Binh, RVN. Their workstation was the LST (Landing Ship Tank) and fuel, petroleum, and lubricant off-loading area at the shipping port



outside Saigon called Newport. I was put on the midnight shift. This time ran from 5:00PM to 7:00 AM. We would load up on the Deuce-and-a-half trucks and drive down Highway 1 in convoy. The trip lasted about 40 minutes. We'd get to Newport at about 6:00 PM and begin work unloading barrels of whatever that came off the LST. I should have read the labels on the barrels, because I believe they were filled with Agent Orange. The barrels I helped to off-load sure looked like the pictures of Agent Orange I have seen. One night I made the mistake of taking a nap with my sleeves rolled up. I awoke with about 200 hundred mosquito bites on both arms. It was worse than a bad case of poison ivy. This job lasted two weeks. One day I was called to the headquarters of the 71st Transportation Battalion by the First Sergeant. He told me that I had been assigned to the 154th by mistake. I should be with the 4TC, TDAUGM (4th Transportation Corps, Transportation Detachment Augmented) unit attached to the 71st. I had to repack all my clothes, turn in my bedding, and all the gear I received and move over to the group of hooches (Quonset hut type buildings with sandbags around them) that were next to the Battalion headquarters. I was still working at Newport, but now I went to work at the Retrograde Yard and New Vehicle processing facility. I was the documentation clerk for the new vehicles as they came off the ships. In turn, when a vehicle was damaged, it was sent to various facilities around the world for rebuilding unless it was beyond the abilities of the various places to fix the damage. I shipped vehicles to Yokohama, Japan and Naha, Okinawa mostly, and a few certain types of vehicles to the Philippines. Working with the vehicles gave me a unique opportunity to drive everything the Army had in its inventory. I drove tanks, jeeps, APCs (Armored Personnel Carriers, my favorites), M-88 Tank Retrievers, cargo carriers, trucks, you name it. The only problem with this was the mud, especially during the monsoon season. It would rain every day at about 4:00 PM. You could count on it just like clockwork. Notice in the pictures of the APCs that there is mud in the foreground, this photo was probably taken during Monsoon. I wish I could remember the names of all the guys that were with me in Vietnam, but the few I remember are John Fay, Chris Coombes, Fitz Fitzhugh, and Ira Theriac.

One incident sticks in my mind. On the day that the first men landed on the moon, I had placed a call into my brother from the local MARS (Military Affiliated Radio System) radio relay station. This was a network of ham radio operators who would relay phone calls to the person of choice from wherever they might be in the U.S. If your relay person was in Alaska, you paid long distance charges from Alaska to the final destination. If you were lucky enough to get someone close, you could call for a very small charge. As luck would have it, I had trouble getting through. Just as I succeeded in getting Gary on the phone, a couple of rockets landed close to our position. Here I am diving under the desk, grabbing the phone as I go, reaching for my helmet and weapon and trying to let him know I was OK, all at the same time. Talking to him later, he said they were so close, he could hear the rounds go off.

The army provided me with quite a variety of experiences. Another of these was my Rest and Recuperation Leave to Sydney, Australia. What a great place to visit. I had a great time and regretted having to go back to Vietnam. It was a waste of one year in my life. Stepping off the plane in Saigon, the same old nasty smell greeted the nostrils. If the impression is given of not liking Vietnam, it is purely intentional.

Bob Hope's Christmas Show at Long Binh was another memorable event, but I was so far away, the people on the stage looked like ants. I see a replay of the movie they made every now and then. I usually say, "Look close! There I am standing next to the telephone pole on the top of the hill."

I left Vietnam with 15 months still left to serve in my enlistment. Our aircraft took us a different route back home. We went from Bien Hoa to Guam, Guam to Wake Island, Wake Island to Honolulu, and then to San Francisco. We processed back into the States at Oakland Army Terminal and boarded a flight to Los Angeles, where we caught a connecting flight to Cleveland. Ed Peteya and I arrived back to the States on a snowy, February morning in 1970. I couldn't wait to get out of the uniform and check out my old stomping grounds. Was I disappointed! It is said that after you leave home, you can never go back again. That is a true statement. You might go home, but it is not the same and never will be. The people I knew had moved on. The places I frequented had changed so much as to hardly be recognizable. In other words, I had changed so much that I didn't fit anymore.

After my 30-day leave for returning from a combat zone, I was assigned to Fort Devens in Ayer, Massachusetts. I enjoyed my stay there. It was as close to a normal life situation as I was going to get in the Army. I worked first at completing the U. S. Census for 1970. All the military personnel had to complete their forms and we were there to help them fill them out and collect them. After that was done, the group of us was sent to the Central Inprocessing and Outprocessing facility. We handled all of the paperwork for the incoming and outgoing personnel. Instead of doing Movements Control, I was a Personnel clerk. What a waste of time and effort. In all, I spent about 15 months at Fort Devens. One good thing came of it though.

I met Barbara Butler at the local entertainment establishment in Ayer, the Mohawk Club, which was just outside the post gates. I was a regular at attending the club and listening to the music and making my feeble attempts at dancing. I never was comfortable on the dance floor. Could it be the lack of coordination I seem to suffer with from time to time? She was living in Gardner, Massachusetts with a Lebanese family, Louis and Mae Asmar. They were working together at Foster Grant Sunglasses in Leominster and took her in when she lost her place to stay.

I had only known Barb for about 3 weeks when I was ordered to Fort Knox, Kentucky to attend the Non-Commissioned Officers Academy. Needless to say, I was not pleased with being away for, what I considered, eight weeks of

school BS. I was not likely to re-enlist, and would not be using the information. Unfortunately, my commanding officer, Capt. Legowitz, was ordered to provide a warm body fitting the qualifications to attend the class. I had no choice.

Every dark cloud has a silver lining if you look for it. I was not about to cooperate at the school. I did everything I could think of to get shipped out of there. They were determined I was going to stay. Guess who won! It certainly wasn't me. Looking back now, I wonder if I was suffering from some form of the Post Traumatic Shock Syndrome that all the doctors were talking about in the late '70's and '80's. I was certainly defiant and took great pains to not get along with pressure situations. As far as I know, I have never suffered from the affliction however.

Getting back to the silver lining, though, I did meet a fellow soldier that took me home with him one weekend to Signal Mountain, Georgia. He was interested in the Civil War and we got to talking about it. He mentioned the Battle of Chickamauga and offered to show me around. When we passed Murfreesboro, Tennessee, he pointed to the direction of the Battle of Stones River. I had never heard of Stones River, but it stuck in my mind. I think fate has a way of showing you the direction you are supposed to go. I even think he took me to the monument which I now know to be dedicated to the 18th Ohio Volunteers. If so, I think it must have been fate nudging me to look into the subject more. I didn't however, because my mind was in Massachusetts.

Upon my return, I found that I was in love with Barbara Butler and hoped she would marry me. Amazingly, she said yes. She must have been desperate or hard up. She told me later she married me for my money. I was known as a big spender at that time. When we picked out our wedding rings, her ring cost about \$4.00 and mine was about \$2.00. I know it was extravagant, but I figured she was worth splurging upon. We went to a Justice of the Peace in Winchendon, Massachusetts and were married on October 9, 1970. We lived in an old converted Hotel on the main street in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. It wasn't much, but it was only costing us \$100 a month and I was allotted \$104 from the army. I made out on that deal by a whole \$4.00. With just the two of us and the cat, Charlie Brown, we made out alright.

I applied for an early-out discharge to attend college. Basically, you could get up to 3 months taken off your enlistment if the school started within the time frame. I was approved and separated from the service on June 9, 1971. Looking back, I sometimes wish I had stayed in, but I think that may have something to do with the fact that time heals all wounds. At the time, I did not want anything to do with the army and probably would have felt the same way had I re-enlisted. The experiences I had during my time in the army are invaluable. I would not trade them for anything, yet at the same time I wish I had taken steps to refrain from having to do them at all.

My biggest problem throughout most of my life was that I didn't know what I wanted to do and had no idea how to get there if I did. I don't know if

that means I am a slow starter or just too hard-headed to figure out the best way to get what I want. I have had plenty of wants, just didn't have the savvy to be able to make them happen. College was one of these things. Returning from the army was a drastic change from the routine I had been used to maintaining. Looking back, I think I just didn't fit into that society. Or perhaps I just didn't have the right goal to work toward. I think my dad was disappointed that I didn't complete my college degree at that time. For some reason I felt I needed to go in a different direction. Yeah, I know that I created a tremendous number of new problems.

My first semester back at Kent State University felt very similar to the last semester I attended before going into the army. I enjoyed the classes, but my motivation was clearly not there. I didn't fit in anymore. I was unprepared for the change and mentally confused as to my purpose and goals. Of course, all of that was enough, but it was at about this time that we learned that Barb was pregnant with our first child. Barb had gotten a job working for Alside Aluminum as a keypunch operator. I know she was not satisfied with this job, but it was bringing in money which we needed while I attended school. She has always been a great help and I fear she doesn't get enough recognition for her contributions. The problem clearly lies in my direction. Knowing that we needed more money to support our new family addition, I felt I needed to go to work where my dad was working. I had worked at Ace Machine while in high school and was never really satisfied with that environment, but you have to do something, and this was the best I could come up with, or so I thought. After returning from the army and starting college, I had talked the owners of Ace Machine into hiring me for a few hours after school on a part time basis to earn some extra money. With the advent of our soon to be daughter, I went to work for them full time. It wasn't much money but Barb and I were still living with Mom and Dad.

In the early morning hours of May 17, 1972, Barb woke me up about 5:00 and told me it was time to go to the hospital. Being our first, I don't really think she knew what to expect. She also didn't want to get to the hospital too early and she wasn't sure how close the baby was. She wanted me to drive around the hospital a couple of times before going in. I quickly put a stop to that idea and took her straight to the emergency room entrance. They put her in a wheelchair and took her upstairs. I stayed down below and went through the paperwork of getting her admitted, etc. It took maybe all of forty-five minutes to get all this done. I made sure I had brought a good book as I figured to be sitting in the father's area for a while. Back in those days, fathers were not allowed in the delivery room. I don't think Barb wanted me in there anyway.

I had just taken my book out of my hip pocket and began to read when the doctor came to the doorway and asked for "Mr. Davis." I stepped up and he said, "Congratulations, you have a healthy daughter." So much for reading my

book! That long walk to the newborn area was filled with emotion. Once again I did not know what to expect.

Names had been chosen ahead of time for each eventuality. Since we had a daughter, her name was going to be Wendy Andrea Davis. I think I had the most input as I wanted to name her after the song by The Association, a sixties rock group. Some people may know that the name of the song is really "Windy," but I wanted to spell it with an "E." I will never forget the expression on her face and look in her eyes as she peered out at me through the thick glass window. She wasn't crying at all and had a look of curiosity on her face and cute little bright blue eyes.

OK, I won't go into the details of how badly I did as a new father. I'm not much at changing diapers and I certainly didn't know the first thing about taking care of a baby. Good thing I had Barb, who didn't complain about my efforts at helping her. I'm sure she didn't like it but put up with me probably far more than I deserved.

Taking Wendy home was almost an unreal experience. I still have a hard time reliving the first few days of fatherhood. I was proud, scared, apprehensive,