This story is dedicated to my older brother Phil who always stood by me even when my actions were questionable.
Also, to the memory of Airman 2nd Class Allen J. Miller and to my younger brother Larry whose accomplishments made our family proud.

This is a story written by a United States Air Force Veteran who served his country during the Korean War.

Selected names have been substituted for the 3380th Squadron Commander and his Sergeant staff member. All other names are as they were then.

September 16, 2012
My Air Force Story

It was December 13, 1951. I had a few personal things packed in my ‘49 Chevy and was ready to go. Mom and I stood at the front door. Dad was sitting in his chair in the corner of the living room at our farm place near Akron, Indiana. Nothing much was being said, but Mom gave me a hug and kiss and told me to take care of myself. She told me she loved me and would continue praying for me as long as she lived. Dad never got up from his chair, but tears were running down his face. The “guys” in our family were never too expressive when it came to sharing our feelings toward each other. I will never forget the sincere warmth that I’m certain we all three felt at that special time. I couldn’t remember of Dad ever saying that he loved me, but he was saying it now without uttering a word or by not drying his tears. I don’t think I ever had told him of my love for him either but I’m sure he could feel it now. This is one of the moments I treasure. Prior to this day, there had been no equal.

I was inducted into the United States Air Force the next day, December 14, 1951 at Indianapolis. It was my Dad’s 44th birthday. I had just turned 20 about three weeks earlier. During the medical examination, I told those in charge about the Legg Perthes disease I had as a child. They did take an x-ray of my hip and I’m certain it showed questionable results, but they needed men and I suppose I resembled one close enough so I was on my way to San Antonio, Texas. Jack Nichols, my friend for most of my childhood life and I were enlisting together. But, we were separated in Indianapolis and even though we both were heading for basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, we didn’t see each other again until we met at our next Base assignment approximately three months later.

When leaving Indianapolis, we were “herded” into what I called a “cattle train.” Our car wasn’t heated, however, we did have beds but snow found its way in to snuggle in around us. It was a cold ride, the train was slow and we didn’t arrive at Lackland until late the next night. Conventional barracks were fully occupied, so they packed us in what was known as the Black Barracks until regular barracks were available. Our temporary home had roofs and sides covered with black tar paper and the whole situation gave us a very dismal start.

The T.I.s (Tactical Instructors) were having their “fun” pushing us around. The first thing they impressed on us was that we no longer had any freedoms of our own because our freedoms were given up when we took the oath. We immediately found they were correct.

Basic Training

The rigid routine and absolute control over every aspect of an airman’s life is the real goal of the basic training program in the Air Force. The purpose of the T.I.s and D.I.s (Drill Instructors) was to adjust each one’s attitude to the military way of thinking or adjust it to the military way of thinking -- there was no option. They do this by applying significant degrees of physical and mental stress, while at the same time teaching the fundamentals.
of military rules, policies, etiquette, and customs of the Air Force. The training programs are scientifically and psychologically designed to tear apart the “civilian” and build from scratch a proud, physically fit, and dedicated member of the armed forces. We found when we cooperated with this new and rigid way, things became a bit easier with each passing day.

In fact, when finished and we competed with other flights in the final parade, I realized that when I was a civilian I had been absent the pride, the discipline, and the organization of my life I now felt. Even the guys that were crying for their mothers in the Black Barracks had become men. Also, I found later that basic training life is many times worse than normal military duty. It was tough, demanding but excellent preparation.

Schooling at Keesler AFB, Biloxi, Mississippi

Some parts of my story in the Air Force cannot be true, at least I don’t want some of it to be. I have laid awake many nights, even recently, still bothered over certain parts. It wasn’t all bad, but some horrific times plagued the entire experience.

General Electronics and Radar Sets

I had completed the comprehensive 22 week electronics fundamentals course at Keesler AFB and was then assigned to a “Radar Sets” course. The Sets’ schools utilized the previous process of learning individual electronic circuitry and their application and eventually focused in on one of three specific radar sets. The three sets in the next 14 week course were: SHORAN (SHort RAnge Navigation); LORAN (LOng RAnge Navigation) and IFF (Identification, Friend or Foe). The operation of these sets were similar in many respects and knowledge of each benefited the set on which each of us was to be assigned. Soon I found I was assigned to the SHORAN system. Not to boast, but I must tell you, the students which were selected for this class had been carefully chosen and would rank extremely high on intelligence evaluation.

A little history on SHORAN

Back in 1938, an RCA engineer named Seeley, was working on an experimental
On the trip home, I found myself on a regular troop transport plane with regular army guys either going home on leave, to be reassigned or to be discharged. We refueled in Hawaii’s Hickam Field which is attached to Pearl Harbor but we were asked not to leave the plane. From the air we could see the sunken battleship Arizona, the burial place of more than half of the 2400 Americans that were killed during the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941, approximately 11½ years earlier. The memorial was not constructed until 1961 and dedicated in 1962, We could also see damaged sides of buildings where Japanese dive bombers had strafed. Patched bomb craters were still in the asphalt tarmac.

Our next stop was Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, California. I then caught a “hop” back to Keesler and landed there on August 24, 1952. At Keesler, my home base, I checked into the 3380th Medical Squadron for combat and medical debriefing. I soon found myself in the hospital (along with all my personal things) in a large ward. I then found I was in the discharge ward with other injured airmen waiting to be released. During this time I was allowed most regular privileges and, living there was nearly the same as living in a barracks -- except the food was better!

During my approximate three weeks stay there, I was examined, x-rayed and finally met with a discharge review board made up of three senior officer doctors. I remember them asking me how I handled gym class in high school. I told them I had performed there as best I could but was limited many times and excused from some of the more extreme calisthenics. They also asked me to “hop” on my left leg, and of course, I couldn't, and I still can't.

During my spare time, I visited my old SHORAN training class facility. The instructors there said they didn't know what had happened to me and AI, but a group photo of the graduates with their signatures on the reverse side was there waiting on our return.

My visit to the 3380th Student Squadron Headquarters disclosed that Colonel Carpenter had been transferred to another base. Those remaining there informed me that no certificate of graduation had been prepared for me (or AI) as the Colonel had promised. I was disappointed since it would have been valuable for credits at most any Engineering College or University. However, I decided not to pursue it.

According to what I could find out, there was no record of my Korean assignment, only that I had left class prior to completion, but no AWOL (Absent With Out Leave) was reported -- so, no disciplinary action was called for. I was paid my regular $119.00 per month salary but no combat duty pay. This kind of made some sense considering the handwritten orders and unofficial air hops all along the way. I considered it organized, but forgotten. What I mean by that is -- the mission was organized effectively and monitored from the top down and carried out to an excellent conclusion but the effort was then deserted. However, I was back in the United States, was nearly 21 years old and on my way to be discharged with valuable, self-accomplished experiences and schooling under my belt. By now, my wounds were healed except for slight damage to the epidermis on my arms and a small amount on my forehead. I did have increased pain in my left hip which

Meanwhile, back to the school house

An Airman named Al Miller from Pasadena and I had graduated at the top of our 22 week class. With a name like Miller you wouldn’t think he would be Jewish, but he was. Sometimes when off duty, in the barracks he would wear one of those little round “bulgie” caps on the top of his head. He was probably the first Jewish person I had ever met, but no matter our religious beliefs, we had become very close friends. We never discussed religion.

Then in June, 1952 at about the 12th week of the 14 week SHORAN school, one morning, just prior to class, Miller and I were ordered to gather our school supplies and notes and report to the 3380th student squadron commander Colonel Carpenter. The Colonel informed us that the U.S. urgently needed to step-up normal and napalm bombing in Korea since hordes of Chinese Communist foot soldiers and mechanized troops were coming down from China through North Korea and were pretty much having their way in prosecuting the war. He informed us that both the Air Force and the Army had received new SHORAN air and ground units and at that time had no available knowledgeable installers, operators or maintenance personnel. Both Miller and I had on-job training in setting up and operating a functioning ground station at Gulf Port, Mississippi during our schooling. This system was utilized for point-landing at Keesler during inclement weather. The Colonel said that according to our school records and recommendations from our instructors, we both exhibited the necessary aptitude and ability for satisfying a
Korean mission and thereby ordered us to undertake this very important task.

Colonel Carpenter said we would forgo our remaining approximate 2 weeks of schooling but would receive full graduation honors. Due to the additional and accurate bombing this effort would introduce, he informed us that this mission would be considered extra sensitive top secret. The assignment would be TDY (Temporary Duty) and the length of the transfer would depend on how fast we could get the new installations operable with trained personal in control. He said we could not disclose the specifics of this operation to anyone, not even our parents, fellow troops or anyone! He told us to visit the dispensary for our overseas shots, get our gear together along with all necessary SHORAN manuals and meet Sgt. Guilford (one of his staff members) at the flight line at 2100 hours (9:00 PM) that night. He said Guilford will have all flight arrangements completed. All of our personal mail would be routed through Keesler as if we were still stationed there.

Until now, I have not mentioned this assignment with its consequences to anyone, neither my wife of 55 years, nor my children or brothers, and of course my deceased parents will never know. The security classification of this mission was declassified many years ago but I had no desire to discuss or disclose the matter for these 60 years, but now, in the twilight years of my life, I feel it could be interesting to my family and possibly those close to me. I also feel it can bring conclusiveveness to my own life. It seems that most everyone would like to know what happens in a combat soldier’s life, but no one wants to ask him and he would rather not talk about it anyway. However, this is one time no one will have to ask me about my experiences and I will live them here again as they are remembered. It doesn’t seem so long ago so as I type it, accuracy will be paramount. However, neither being a writer nor having assistance, it will be impossible for me to convey the intensity of the emotion that was exceedingly high at times.

When we met Sgt. Guilford at the flight line, he handed us our orders which were hand-written but signed by Col. Carpenter. He also issued each of us an M-1 Carbine and a Colt Government issue .45 Cal. Handgun. I remember him saying “try to stay out of situations where you need these,” to which we both concurred. We had learned how to disassemble, clean and fire these weapons during Basic, but we only shot at targets there. My Carbine and the Colt handgun made the round trip with me. The M-1 carbine returned disassembled in my duffle bag, and now hangs on my office wall. The Colt .45 is in my dresser drawer at the time of this writing. A note to my sons, Jeff and Tim -- my M-1 is

For me, the adventure was finished and the excitement was over! With Al gone, all that we had gone through made me wonder if it was all worth it. However, I knew we had made a huge achievement for the war effort. Al had given his life in return for what we had accomplished, and now many more of the enemy would die and more of their assets would be destroyed because of our efforts there. It makes a person wonder, “what’s it all about.” And now, 60 years later, I realize there are people right here within our own country that are promoting Socialism and Communism, the very things we were all fighting (and many dying) to eliminate from advancing, and migrating to other parts of the world. In the three-year war, in excess of 33,000 U.S. troops were killed and more than 100,000 were injured (actual number of dead and wounded has never been accurately reported for the Korean war). Even as I write this, no winner has ever been decided for the Korean war. A demilitarization zone divides North Korea from South Korea with military guards on each side maintaining the peace. The up-side is that South Korea was not taken over by the Communist and to this day remains free.

While in Korea, I had received mail from my mother telling me that three of my high school friends, Jessie Gagnon, Jack Walker and Paul Spice had also been killed in Korea. They were all farm boys, nicer guys you could never know, but as I grow older, they will stay forever young in my mind.

As I was making final arrangements to leave Korea, there were Army guys around there but I had very little desire to have conversation with them. They were all involved with their problems and friends and situations that I’m sure were interesting but, without Al, I felt alone. The solders we had trained were still out there in the struggle. Now, my goal was to get back to the States and put all of this behind me. I vowed that once I left Korea, I would leave it all in Korea. As mentioned before, I had not wanted to discuss these events before now, but now that I have put it to writing, I feel contented and at ease with it all, and with absolutely no desire to discuss it further.

Back to the U.S.A.
I felt I'd been driven to the limit and maybe a little bit more. Only with God's help was I able to remain conscious in that tremendously over-heated oven. I had joined the Air Force to become an airman, not a foot soldier, but I was never angry about the assignment. However, the Gung-Ho feeling of fighting for our country's freedom and liberty that I had when I joined, had disappeared this day -- but only for this day. My only thoughts had been focused on getting Miller and myself back to safety.

It was still extremely hot, the pains of my body burns had been exaggerated by the extreme heat and my left hip was exceedingly painful and it was made worse by attempting to walk on it. I had nearly reached a non-functioning state. My left leg was kind of dangling from my body and of course I couldn't continue placing any weight on it. But under these conditions, I felt I had taken care of Al as best I could. I now felt all right in leaving him there to be picked up by the medics later. I considered just lying down and waiting until the excessive heat subsided but I was afraid I would pass out and might never become conscious again. I must admit leaving Al there made me want to cry but even that was difficult since tears were not available -- my body was so dehydrated. I began hopping and sometimes even crawling while dragging my "club" leg along.

My faith told me I was going to get out of there. I had a terrible feeling not having Al with me now. A buddy is always necessary in the military and Al and I had been an excellent team and together we were very effective in the SHORAN endeavor. This whole episode had been a painful, unreal and heartbreaking experience. I've never been able to understand why that errant plane was so close and on our side of the mountain. I suppose I was able to remain conscious in that tremendously over-heated oven. I had joined the Air Force to become an airman, not a foot soldier, but I was never angry about the assignment. However, the Gung-Ho feeling of fighting for our country's freedom and liberty that I had when I joined, had disappeared this day -- but only for this day. My only thoughts had been focused on getting Miller and myself back to safety.

The Ride

I must admit this was all happening so suddenly, I felt I was not given time to prepare myself for this kind of duty. If it was to take a brave person to carry out this endeavor, I had better make a speedy transformation. However, as time went by I seemed to become more accustomed to the exploits of the mission and I guess I became more relaxed and at ease with myself and each situation.

Miller and I boarded an old C-47 that was warmed-up and ready. It had been used as a cargo plane during WWII but had fold-down metal seats along the inside of the cargo bay. A couple other guys, dressed in civilian clothes had already boarded and were trying to get buckled in. Some line tech came along and threw in 3 parachutes. We examined them and tried to put them on. One of the civilians who was wrestling with his seat strap was late in choosing a chute and since we were one chute short, he said he was not going to fly in this plane without one. I told him he was welcome to mine. I hadn't intended on using it anyway. Without hesitation his buddy helped him put it on. We took off, had a "shaky," uneventful ride and landed safely at Edwards AFB, California approximately 8 hours later. In civilian time it was around 6:00AM on June 23. During the flight, neither Al nor I said anything to the civilians nor they to us. We didn't want them to ask any questions of us and they apparently felt the same. We did talk about things at home. Al said his family never missed the Rose Bowl Parade and had a special spot along the parade route where each year they would arrive early, watch the parade, then the game. I had not seen the parade since Television was not yet available -- for our family anyway.

I think I was able to get an approximate one hour's sleep during the flight, which was the minimum amount required for the Air Force to give. However, if an airman didn't get his one hour, there was no recompense. I don't remember if Miller slept at all but upon landing, we were both wide awake and excited, not knowing what next to expect.

I didn't think about it at the time, but our method of travel was like an Air Force "Hop." Many times an Airman could catch a Hop on an Air Force flight that would be landing near the airman's destination (similar to when he was going home on leave), if a flight was available. The NCOIC (Non Commissioned Officer In Charge) at base headquarters might find a flight to the Airman's advantage. A verbal approval by the Pilot or Flight Officer could save otherwise transportation costs. Records for Hops were never kept.

We grabbed our duffel bags and firearms, disembarked the C-47, and was escorted by an AP (Air Police) to the 5th Air Force Field Office. Here we met with a Lieutenant who informed us we were now TDY to the 5th Air Force, Pacific Operations. Neither of us was aware of the history of the 5th Air Force or where its headquarters was located. We found out later it was not even headquartered in the United States but was in Yokota Air Base,
Japan. The 5th is now the U.S. Air Force's oldest numbered Air Force and was formed in 1941, seventy years ago now, but was only eleven years old at that time. We were just happy to still be in the United States, but that wasn’t to be for long. The Lieutenant presented us with our orders, again handwritten, but signed by a senior officer, and the

AP ushered us outside and led us toward a B-29 bomber that was spitting smoke as they fired up the four huge reciprocating gasoline engines. I couldn’t believe we were actually going to fly in a B-29 bomber which we had heard so much about during the war. In fact, it was the first one I had seen in “person.” It was kind of like a “dynamic, living hero” to me. The unbelievable thrill of flying in a B-29 Bomber made it worth whatever was coming next.

Once Miller and I boarded the aircraft, we were surprised by its huge interior size and all the exposed electrical conduits and unpleasant-looking gun turret positions and the lack of any kind of consideration for human comfort. It had none of the refinements offered by the commercial aircraft of today. Anyway, it seemed we were alone, except the crew, which we soon found was composed only of the pilot and navigator. I went upfront and noticed the Pilot was alone so I asked him where his co-pilot was. He told me he had flown 32 missions in Europe, several in Korea and he was capable of handling this flight without a co-pilot. He told me I could sit in the co-pilot’s seat if I would behave myself. I agreed and we were soon airborne. He said we were heading for Alaska to pick up his full crew that was waiting for him there. It was a smooth ride and we didn’t have to wear oxygen masks since the plane had been recently retrofitted with a cabin pressurization system. Once landed at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Miller and I disembarked and walked around, commenting on how surprised we were at the very comfortable weather. We stayed close as the balance of the crew loaded their gear and themselves onboard.

Our next stop was for refueling at Midway Island. We were reminded that it was only ten years ago (June, 1942) that the Japanese attacked the U.S. forces on Midway. Our forces out-maneuvered, and out-fought the enemy and most think the Japanese defeat in this battle was the turning point of the war in the Pacific. However, the war continued for another approximate three years before the Japanese surrendered without conditions.

Kimpo Air Base in Korea was our planned destination. It was June 24, 1952 and things seemed considerably more serious now as we stepped down on Korean soil. Kimpo is located just NW of Seoul, South Korea’s capital city. Kimpo had fallen to the enemy two times since the war started on June 25, 1950, but had been back in U.S. hands since February, 1951. The base had been recaptured but its safety had not been secured.

Kimpo was a large air base composed of many steel Quonset Huts and regular buildings which were being used as aircraft hangers and maintenance areas. There were many tents for the fighting men. Besides the U.S. Air Force, the South Korean and Australian Air Forces shared Kimpo, making up the major portion of the United Nations air effort in Korea.

The exciting venture of getting to Korea was now over and it was time to get to work.
I don't know how far I ran, but finally, there he was, face down flat on his belly; his arms outstretched pointing away from his sides, like a cross. The heat was so intense it was difficult to breathe. I have no idea what the temperature was but it could have exceeded 180 degrees Fahrenheit. Being terrified and wanting to get back to relative safety, I began hollering at him “come on Miller, let's get out of here.” When he heard me coming, he looked up--his eyes were like slits and his face was all puffy. He moved his arms towards me as to say “pull me out”. I was so hot and sweaty, my arms and forehead were burned and the hotter the air, the greater the pain. Al had his helmet liner on which may or may not have helped protect him. Anyway, I knew I wouldn't be able to carry him far so I wasted no time in grabbing his wrists and leaning backwards I started pulling him along the path. Miller was stalky-built and outweighed me by at least 40 pounds, so in that super-heated environment it was difficult for me to make much headway. However, for a large part it was relatively downhill. I would dig in my heels and pull backwards trying to keep his face from dragging on the ground. As he would move toward me, at times I would fall back on my butt. I thought that the heat should soon be subsiding, but I couldn't feel any relief. The more exertion, the more super-heated air I would draw in which made it feel as if my lungs were on fire. I didn't know if Al was still alive and I wasn't going to concern for Al was strong, I think that is what kept me going. However, the situation made me nauseated and I had already vomited off to the side as I was dragging him.

On my last tug, and as I fell back, my left hip was dislocated as it landed in a real rough stony area. The Legg Perthes decease I had when I was 8, 9 and 10 years old had caused the smooth, rounded femur head (ball) that fits in the hip socket to become softened, then deformed and flattened which apparently made it easy to slip out of the socket under this day's conditions. Not only was the pain from my hip excruciating but at this time a more terrible, unthinkable thing happened. Instinctively my grip tightened as my hands slipped and released from Al's wrists causing the flesh from his hands and fingers to come off in my hands. Al's body made no response so I finally gave in that he was no longer alive. Then I noticed steamy-like smoke emitting from his clothing -- but no flames. He had passed away while I was clutching his hands during the dragging out effort. I thought, “what an cruel and painful way to die--what a tremendous loss.” A loss not only to me but to his country, his family and friends, his potential family and to those he will never meet all along the way. We had been such great and loyal friends--my heart sank.

It was strange, (I guess) but my first thought was to talk to him and tell him I was sorry. But before he finally died, I'm certain he knew I was trying to save him. At least, he didn’t have to die out there all alone. We always relied on each other, protected each other and decided together how to handle each situation. Now it was all up to me. It was difficult to compete with all the roar, the gun-fire, the explosions and death -- all so close.

The tremendous heat and the close proximity to the napalm apparently had “bloat” Al's entire body, and in my opinion, was unlike what the high temperature from a normal fire

Miller and I were met by an army non-com who transported us by jeep to a headquarters site located in the front part of a metal Quonset. The balance of the hut was the base commander's personal quarters. All other G.I.s lived in tents.

We were briefed by a 1st Lieutenant who informed us of the pressure we were now under in preparing SHORAN bases "A" and "B" to be set up, manned and made operable. He said the ground unit equipment had been received and the army was under extreme pressure from General Van Fleet to complete the installations. The exact geographical positions had been established for the ground stations and the army was prepared to supply us with whatever was necessary, including transport vehicles, electronic test equipment, army riggers and technicians to get the job done.

**Our New Home**

We were then escorted to our new home among the many Army occupied tents. Our twenty-man tent structure was constructed of wood and iron pipe, a wood floor and wood door. All this was covered with regular tent canvas. There were two oil heating stoves, but it was summer, and even though many nights were cold, they were never used during our stay. That was good since there was little to no fuel oil anyway. The army guys told us that the only way they could get oil in the winter was to find drums of it and steal it. The only problem was others would then steel the tanks full of oil from them.

Al and I were assigned one back corner of the tent which the army boys soon named the "Core" corner, named after “The Army Air Corps.” However, a few years earlier, the Air Force had separated from the Army and had become a new branch of the armed forces called the United States Air Force which it remains as today. We didn't care what they called our corner, but in case we would have to evacuate, we would be the last ones out. We were issued light weight sleeping bags that we used on top of regular military cots.

One of the most interesting problems at Kimpo was "Bed Check Charlie," as he was called. Sometime after nightfall, North Korean Charlie, in a light, wood frame, canvas-covered plane would pay us a visit. He was very elusive and was so slow, and flew so low, and with all our searchlights and anti-aircraft guns designed and trained on higher altitudes, he was very difficult to combat. There would be only one raid by one of the Charlies each night. He would fly over the base and through out small bombs hoping to hit a parked aircraft, a tent or anything. He was not very destructive but always kept us on guard not knowing where he might attack next. One night I took three shots at him with my carbine. I’m sure I hit him but my small .30 caliber slug went right through his canvas fuselage to really do him no harm. I had a limited supply of ammunition to waste on Charlie so I saved it for future uncertain times and personal protection.

I don't mean for these visits to sound like fun and games because Charlie didn't drop in on us for the thrill of it. His objective was to kill and damage all he could and he did a sufficient amount of that. The only Charlie that was taken down was when one of our
slow flying Navy F4U Corsairs ran into him and they both went down. Both planes were destroyed and both pilots were killed. That didn't stop Charlie because another Charlie was right back the next night throwing out bombs.

Our stay at Kimpo was approximately five weeks. It was our main staging area and where our SHORAN operation and maintenance classes were held. The balance of the time was spent installing and making operable ground station “A” on an island off the west coast of South Korea. This location was chosen to obtain the proper distance (in excess of 100 Miles) from ground station “B” and also to decrease the chances of an enemy take-over. Ground Station “B” was scheduled to be installed on the side of Old Baldy. This location was chosen to obtain proper altitude since this area of South Korea is very rugged and is composed of many small mountains and hills. The Old Baldy location was chosen so as to provide proper positioning with ground station “A” and maximum bombing area coverage. It was chosen at a time military activity was absent, and was not anticipated to again be in the Old Baldy area. However, a fierce battle for Old Baldy was in full force at the approximate time of our arrival at Kimpo. We were uneasy about this since the danger to us would be intensified during installation and then regular operation of the ground station with a battle going on all around us. Even when this situation was discussed with those making the decisions, the SHORAN site was never moved to a safer location.

Once ground station “A” on the island was operational and ready for implementation within the system, our complete operation was transferred to the Old Baldy area. Old Baldy received its name because of the artillery, mortar and rocket fire from previous battles that had destroyed the foliage on its summit. The hill was a rugged, and in my opinion, worthless piece of real estate, but it was strategic to the war effort, we were told. Old Baldy was located approximately one and one-half miles from “Pork Chop Hill” whose battles there later prompted a 1959 movie of the same name starring Gregory Peck.

As in the ground station “A” installation, a day and night struggle was made to get station “B” operational as soon as possible. A blood, mud and guts effort along with several on-job training session to a new group of Army technicians finally brought the station to completion. The army battles on the far side on Old Baldy were always much too close and we were always on our guard. None of our guys were injured but the medics discussed with those making the decisions, the SHORAN site was never moved to a safer location.

Our Final Struggle

While all was relatively quiet, I was conducting a final SHORAN question and answer class to seven army technicians who were chosen to operate and maintain the ground station once Al and I were no longer there. We had coordinated our effort with Headquarters and were planning on leaving in a very few days. Al told me he would go up the trail on Old Baldy and make the final checks on our SHORAN station “B.” The

The ground stations were located relatively close to the front line since SHORAN’s maximum range was only 300 miles. The station was ordered vacated for safety’s sake until a scheduled US air strike was complete. I told him to be careful and he should take a couple army guys with him but none were available since our techs were all in the class.

When the class was finished and the Army Techs had returned to their bunker, I thought I should check on Al so I started walking in the direction of the SHORAN installation. Just then, and ahead of schedule, eight B-24’s loaded with napalm, flying very low, were fast approaching from the NE and were flying parallel to the “split” front lines. The lines were now probably separated by several thousand feet, with the enemy on the other side of Old Baldy and our troops were significantly back from the mountain’s base on our side. The sky was blue, the sun was never brighter, but before the day was over, the blood was never redder. As it has been said, “no one should die on a day like this,” but many of the Chinese communist and North Korean soldiers did.

It was August 15th (war’s 2nd year anniversary plus a couple of months) and our infantry troops were ordered to withdraw down the mountain and fall back a safe distance so our planes could make a “surprise” low level run on the opposite side while “carpet bombing” with napalm, thereby burning the foliage as well as the enemy -- providing them with the most horrible deaths imaginable. With the foliage gone, spotting the enemy would be much easier and this also was one of the purposes of the air mission.

This had my stomach tied in knots, so terrified, I just stood there for an instant, all by myself, instinctively wanting to run away from the plane’s path but I was not going to let Al stranded there. The planes were approaching and it looked to me as if the lead plane was definitely off-course and obviously, way too close to our side. I thought that Miller, on the mountain side, and surrounded by higher trees and thicker undergrowth may not be aware of the coming danger. As the planes continued their approach toward us, I yelled at the top of my voice “Miller, get out of there.” I’m certain he was way too far away to hear plus the plane’s roar drowned out my measly cry. Anyway, I know he didn’t have enough time to fully escape the off-course plane as it soon thundered by.

Five or maybe six planes were involved with the U.S. planned effort while the remainder of the planes continued on to other targets. The heat from the napalm of the off-course plane was like a tremendous wall of heat as it hit me. I was surprised by the intensity of the heat as I raised my arms to protect my face and eyes. I received minor burns to my arms, forehead, and some of my hair was slightly singed. As I composed myself, I was more concerned about Miller since he was much closer to the holocaust than was I, so I took off running as fast as I could toward where I knew he was. As I ran up the trail, the temperature increased to an unbelievable intensity. Then to top it off, the artillery and mortar units began bombarding the remaining Chinese positions and then all hell broke loose. More fighter-bombers from our 5th Air Force began bombing and strafing the Chinese with rocket and machine gun fire. It was all way too close for comfort. I didn’t think anyone was shooting directly at me, but it’s impossible to explain how very scary the situation was for a twenty year old farm boy from Indiana. On the farm, we were accustomed to friendly, wide-open quiet spaces.