

LIFE IS GOOD

My Memoirs and Autobiography

Bob Silos

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to....

The Silos, the Greathouse, the Schwiesow and the Kanji Families.

They are my Family.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
1 THE NAME SILOS	1
THE SILOS FAMILY CREST	3
2 THE SPANISH AND JAPANESE OCCUPATIONS	4
3 THE FAMILY	6
4 THE MOVE SOUTH	10
5 BACK TO SCHOOL	13
6 ANCHORS AWEIGH	17
7 THE START OF IMMIGRATION	24
8 LIFE AND WORK IN THE UNITED STATES	26
9 LIVING IN EUROPE	35
HOLLAND (THE NETHERLANDS)	35
BELGIUM	40
GERMANY, FRANCE, AND THE UK	45
SPAIN	47
10 BACK TO THE STATES	57
11 BACK TO BELGIUM	61
12 LIFE IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE	69

ATHENS, GREECE	73
FRANKFURT, GERMANY	81
CHENNAI, INDIA	85
TIRANA, ALBANIA	90
THE WAE PROGRAM	96
BAMAKO, MALI	97
HARARE, ZIMBABWE	99
OSAKA, JAPAN	101
13 MY LIFE IN THE WORLD OF AVIATION	104
14 THE MARTIAL ARTS IN MY LIFE	120
15 IN RETIREMENT	126
16 CONCLUSION	130
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	133

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the longest time, I had been contemplating writing a book on my Memoirs and my Autobiography. I had done so many things in my lifetime which I thought; “I better start putting it down on paper before I forget everything”. Every time someone asks me for details of something I had done or were discussing, I found it hard to come up with details. So, this book was born. Now I could refer to it when I need accuracy and details.

I will attempt to document my memoirs and my life in this autobiography. I will talk about the many things I have learned, accomplished, or experienced during my many travels around the world, my career in Aviation, my career with the Foreign Service, and my business ventures or maybe misadventures. I truly had a very interesting life and I want to share it with you.

I trust this book will serve as a family memento and inspire family and readers on one important aspect of life... when everything goes to hell in a basket, don't give up, pick up the pieces and start all over again. You are now wiser, stronger and more determined than ever before not to fail again. You will succeed!

I actually had a very difficult time writing this book. At first, I just could not remember dates and timelines especially with my early years, not to mention more recent times and events, but I kept on trying. Interestingly enough I found out, the more you thought about your past, the more you will recall. With the help of family and friends, writing would become easy.

This book would not become a reality without the help and support of my family and some friends. First of all, I have to thank my cousin Cristy Recto for coming up with the idea of writing my autobiography. I never thought of it until she insisted I had a lot to write about. I want to thank our first cousin Nadya Silos-Cruz from Australia who put in a lot of her time helping me edit the book. Likewise, many thanks to my ex-wife, Siggi

Schwiesow from France who set me straight on dates and timelines which I had forgotten or got all mixed up. “Vielen dank Meine Liebe Kind!”. To Agapi Silos who also got me straightened out on details of our travels through the Balkans. And of course thanks to my sister Meldy, a "Punctuation Freak", who meticulously found so many punctuation errors. Last but not least, I thank my family and my friends who supported my endeavors in writing this book without whose help and “memory-jogging” tips, this autobiography would be incomplete.

Enjoy reading!

1 THE NAME SILOS

To start writing about myself, I must first give the reader a brief history of my roots. I have done quite a lot of extensive research on the Silos family name and to be honest with you, I just could not come up with links to our past. Nevertheless, I subsequently published the Silos Family Website. The website has been online and active since 1996. Feel free to visit it on: <http://www.silosfamily.com>

Don Rodrigo De Silos was the first recorded existence of the family name Silos in the 11th century, although my research discovered the existence of the name Silos long before Don Rodrigo. Don Rodrigo came from Reinosa, Santander, Spain. I have a Coat of Arms with details on the website. There is simply no possible way I can link my name nor existence to Don Rodrigo. I just know from research, there were no others with the Silos surname recorded before him at that time.

Santo Domingo de Silos Abbey (Spanish: Monasterio de Santo Domingo de Silos) is a Benedictine Monastery in the village of Santo Domingo de Silos in the southern part of Burgos Province south of northern Spain. The monastery dates back to the 7th century. In the 10th century, the abbey was called San Sebastián de Silos. It was later renamed Santo Domingo De Silos in the 11th century in honor of Abbot Domingo who renovated the Monastery. Abbot Domingo was later canonized Santo Domingo (Saint Dominic). The Monastery is a very famous tourist attraction to this day. I do not claim any links to Dominic of Silos, I only mention this to show the name Silos existed long before Don Rodrigo.

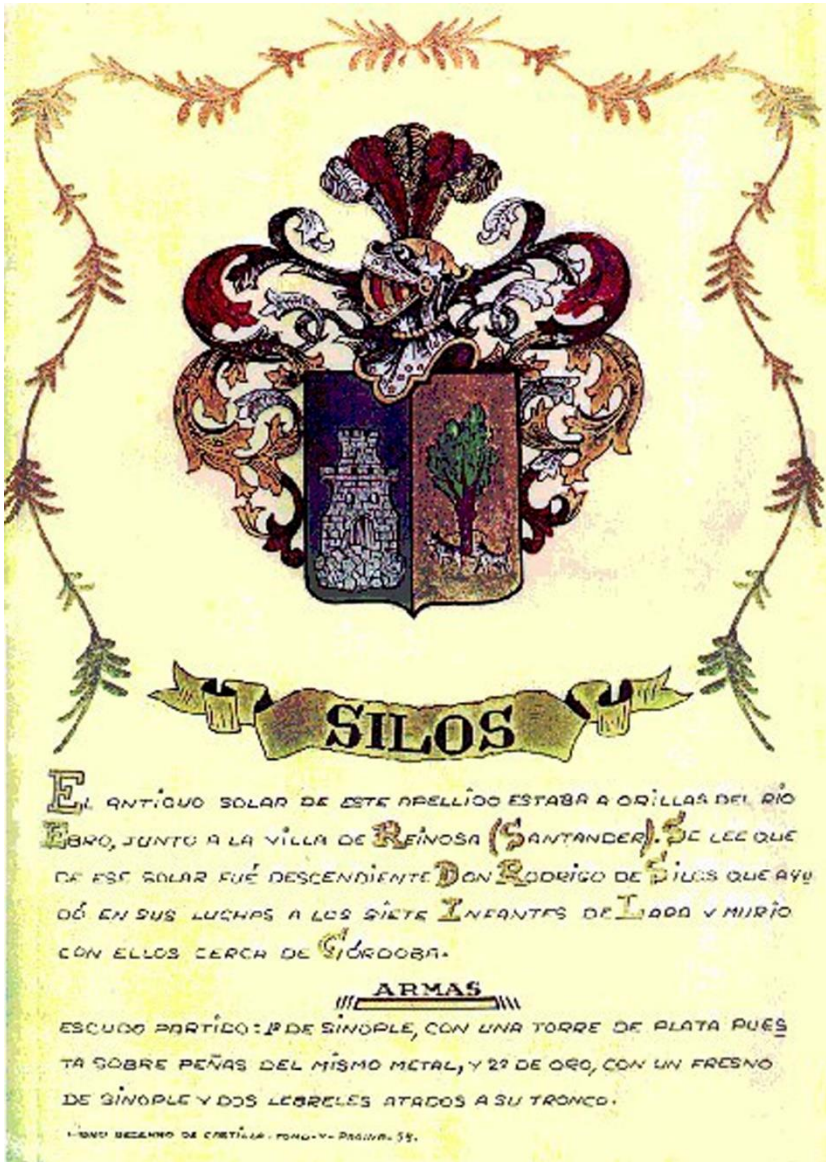
Los Silos is a municipality and town in the northwestern part of the island Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. It is located on the north coast, 57 km west of the capital Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Its name first appeared in 1509. I understand there are a lot of Silos families there. I made contact with a number of Silos families in Spain via the internet, but none of them could trace their roots past their grandparents.

One summer, I believe it was in 1996, Sigg and I went to Rhodos, Greece for a vacation. By chance, we ran into a shop called Silos Supermarket. We didn't manage to meet the owners but I made it a point to come back one day and meet this family. I did, years later when I was assigned by my employers, the Department of State to Athens.

The Greeks will argue that the name Silos is an ancient Greek name brought by the Greeks to Spain. I went to Rhodos shortly after I got to Greece. I met Kyriakos Silos an elderly head of a large Silos family. They were very happy to meet me. We became close friends. Through him, I met a lot of Siloses and we spent hours talking about our ancestors. It was so interesting to hear of their roots and ancestry. I wish I had put it down on paper then. Here again, I failed to link my family to the Silos families of Greece.

I made contact via the internet with more Silos families in Latin and South America and, Suriname, but again, ran into a dead end. None of them could go back more than a hundred years. For some reason, the link to the old centuries and our ancestors could not be established. Records just plainly disappeared

THE SILOS FAMILY CREST



Translation: The ancient site of this name was on the **River Ebro** near the town of **Reinosa (Santander)**. A descendant from this ancient site was a **Don Rodrigo De Silos**. He helped and fought in the struggles of the **Seven Infants of Lara** and died with them near **Cordoba**.

The Shield: A divided shield, the first vertical section has a silver tower built on similar silver rocks, and the second vertical section is gold with an ash tree and two hounds tied to its trunk..

2 THE SPANISH AND JAPANESE OCCUPATIONS

The first recorded visit by Europeans to the Philippines was the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan on March 16, 1521. Magellan was a Portuguese by birth, but later became a subject of Spain. Magellan is credited with discovering what is now known as the Philippines, named after King Phillip of Spain. Spanish colonization of the Philippines began with the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi's expedition on February 13, 1565. For the next 333 years, from 1565 when Spain first established a colony in the country, the Philippines became a Spanish colony. Hundreds of voyages, expeditions, and conflicts occurred during these 300 some years as the Spanish spread their culture and Christianity all over the islands. A regular trade route between Spain and the Far East was firmly in place, but there was never a lasting peace. Spanish rule was harsh and oppressive to the Filipino people. It ended in 1898 with Spain's defeat in the Spanish–American War. The Philippines then became a colony of the United States.

Fast forward to circa the 1800's. It is fair to assume that on board one of the ships that came to the Philippines, was a “conquistador” named Silos. I have no idea what his full name would have been, but most certainly, he planted his seed(s) while he was in the Philippines. So started the Silos Clan which has proliferated over the centuries. I am part of this heritage.

The invasion of the Philippines by the Empire of Japan started on 8 December 1941, ten hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The occupation occurred between 1942 and 1945, just before the World War II ended. The Japanese Imperial General Staff decided to make the Philippines their final line of defense to stop the American advance toward Japan. They sent every available soldier, airplane, and naval vessel to the defense of the Philippines. The Kamikaze corps was created specifically to defend the Philippines. The Battle of Leyte Gulf ended in disaster for the Japanese and was the biggest naval battle of World War II. The campaign to re-take the Philippines was the bloodiest campaign of the Pacific War.

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I was born in 1944, just before the end of the war. This period was the height of some of the bloodiest and gruesome conflicts between all the occupiers and the defenders. Dad fought with the U.S. Rangers; he survived. An estimated one million Filipinos were killed from all causes; U.S. casualties were 10,380 dead and 36,550 wounded; Japanese dead were 255,795. My family was lucky to survive the war. Dr. Eduardo Silos, my Dad's youngest brother was killed in the Battle of Manila, and my grandfather's brother, Rosalio Silos, was executed in 1898 on suspicion of being a revolutionary. We lost a lot of relatives. It was a senseless war. Everyone lost.

3 THE FAMILY

I have four siblings; Sonny (1946), Meldy (1947), Eddie (1948), and Vincent (1950). Eddie passed away in 1996 at a young age of 48. I also have two older sisters from my dad's first wife, Mercedes "Ted" Esancha (1906-1987). My half-sisters are Elvie (1929) and Hermie (1930). "Tita Ted", as I called her and Sis Elvie played an important role later in my life which I will detail at a later chapter. And, I do have another half-sister born many years later, after all of us. Her name was Bonnie (1973). Her mom was Gli Biera (1947). So there you go... my family!

I really do not remember very much about my childhood years. It was still chaos after the war ended. The general population was still reeling and recovering from the effects of the war. People were searching for lost relatives, and those who could were rebuilding their homes. There were long lines of people seeking food, shelter and help. It would be years before normalcy would come to the Philippines.

The Clan of Silos Families belonged to the middle class and some of the upper class of Philippine society. The Silos families were a much-diversified group of relatives. My Dad's branch of the family were all adventurers. Two of them were Merchant Marine ship Captains, and Port Captains. They traveled all over the world. They lived overseas for the most part of their lives, and so did a sister of Dad who lived for the most part of her life, in Japan. Other Silos branches were very well-known producers and directors in the movie industries, while others were well known producers, directors, conductors and composers in the music industries. They produced some of the most famous movies, musical hits, and musicians of their time. The Filipino nation knew the name Silos and associated them with the movie and music industries.

Dad's older sister Angeles was married to one of the biggest politicians in Philippine political history. His name was Claro M. Recto. Recto was a

foremost statesman, jurist, and poet, and was considered the "finest mind of his generation". Through his speeches and writings, he was able to mold the mind of his Filipino contemporaries and succeeding generations. The consensus among many political scholars of today judges the 1935 Commonwealth Constitution as the best-written Philippine charter ever. Its author was mainly Claro M. Recto. This branch of the family belonged to the upper class of Philippine Society and produced some big names most Filipinos will still remember.

My Dad was a businessman, although he hanged around some well-known politicians and dignitaries like the Laurels, the Abads, the Paredes, and the Aranetas. He traveled to the States with them a couple of times for business, and to see what it was like "on the other side of the pond". He didn't like it and decided to stay home.

Our home was a non-descript three bedroom house in Pasay City a suburb of Manila. We were not wealthy, but Dad provided us with all the comforts of a good life. We had maids like most middle-class families did. We went to good private Catholic schools. We had good friends and family was all around. Mom and Dad raised us the "old-fashioned" way. Dad more than Mom, especially was very strict, very proper, and instilled in us kids manners and respect. We spoke mostly Spanish at home. Dad was adamant we carried on our Spanish culture he and his parents learned from the Spanish. It was a privileged class of people who maintained this tradition and he did not want us to lose it... although later in life, because times change we sort of lost it.

To this date, I still remember most of the parts of a poem Dad made us kids learn by heart. I found it on the internet. It is a beautiful poem, I am sure you will agree...

"IF" by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,

But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream, and not make dreams your master;
If you can think, and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'them up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute

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With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Mom was very outgoing and socialized with many people. On the other hand, Dad very rarely socialized or kept close contact with his part of the family. He only did so on special occasions or birthdays of close family. He had a small circle of close friends and that was it. I could count them on one hand. Dad was not happy living in the big city and always talked about buying a farm and exploring the wilderness of Mindanao.

4 THE MOVE SOUTH

It happened in 1952. I was 8 years old. Dad decided to move to Lebak, a remote town located south of the city of Cotabato in Mindanao. Mindanao is the biggest set of islands south of the Philippines. For the first time in my life, I was on a plane! It was such a memorable experience. Philippine Airlines was just developing into a major carrier and they had old equipment, but I didn't know that. We were on a "modern 30-passenger DC-3" as far as I was concerned. I'll never forget that flight, it was so exciting.

When we landed in Cotabato, I had the privilege of talking to the pilots. I was a very curious young boy then and asked many questions. The pilots went out of their way to show me everything they could about the aircraft and talked a lot about a flying career. Sitting in the pilot's seat looking at the large array of gauges, lights, switches and controls left a lasting impression on me. This brief experience was the start of my desire to one day fly airplanes and would eventually drive me to pursue a career in aviation as I got older. My flying career is detailed on Chapter Thirteen.

Mindanao is the southernmost island of the Philippines. Dad was going to buy a plantation and develop it. Lebak at that time was a small town and mostly jungle outside of town. No kidding, it was so undeveloped, the jungle so dense, no roads, no infrastructure, no utilities, and no luxuries of any kind. It was a small developing town. Lebak was populated by mostly natives of Mindanao who were predominantly Muslim.

Our family was one of a couple of dozens of "big-city" outsiders who came to exploit this wilderness. I finished elementary education at a Catholic school in Lebak town. Life was not easy for the family and my Dad knew it. There were no high schools in Lebak after I graduated, and my Mom who had a degree in Education, could not find a job. So Dad decided the right thing to do for the family was move.

We moved further south to a town called Dadiangas then. It is now known as General Santos City. It was the end of the school year, the perfect time to move. Dadiangas was a town a far cry different from Lebak. It was a big town albeit still a remote and undeveloped part of southern Mindanao. This is where “home” was going to be for the next few years for our family.

Dad bought a 100-hectare undeveloped property southeast of Dadiangas called Buayan. As it was with all areas in this region, we were in jungle country. Buayan was across the Buayan River that led out to Sarangani Bay into the open Celebes seas. Here again, there were no roads, just horseback and horse buggy (calesa) trails to and from the property. There were no infrastructure, no utilities. As soon as you crossed the Buayan River by a raft, we traveled on horseback into the jungle!

As part of the plan to develop our property into a plantation, Dad went into the logging business. They cleared huge areas of dense brush, cut down trees and prepared the land for farming. The logs were floated down the river into the Celebes Sea and loaded on to Japanese ships destined for Japan. Land preparation was for coconuts, coffee, corn, and fruit. He also started a poultry farm. It was looking good. Dad was very happy.

With the abundance of bamboo growing everywhere, it took very little time for the local natives to help build us a bamboo hut. “Hut” is an understatement. It was a big beautiful hut similar to what you see in many paradise island movies, or like Gilligan’s Island. As kids we played a lot in the jungle, swinging on vines like Tarzan did. We went swimming and fishing at the nearby Buayan River. We learned how to use the native’s spears, bow and arrows and blowguns and soon became adept at using them to hunt wild animals. Dad taught us survival in the jungle. He had learned that skill from serving with the U.S. Rangers during the war. That was a good summer I will never forget, but...

Life in the jungle in Buayan did not provide us kids and Mom, a comfortable life. First and foremost, we all needed to go back to school and my Mom wanted to teach. Dad understood this so he promptly moved us all to the big town of Dadiangas. He bought a plot of land and started building us a home. It was built with hollow blocks and bricks. The

construction went very fast. Seemed like a thousand locals were there, just building day and night led by Dad. The home was completed in no time, and it turned out to be a beautiful bungalow. Now everyone was happy. We had very nice and friendly neighbors, and they were always there ready to help or advise. I did not realize it at the time, but as big a town as Dadiangas was, they did not have an advanced infrastructure in place. Like running water; we had to pump water up to a high holding tank and let gravity supply the home with running water. Electricity was also sporadic, so Dad got a gas-powered generator for times when electricity was not available. This was all normal in those days, and one did not think much about the inconvenience... it was the way of life then.

5 BACK TO SCHOOL

It was August 1955, the start of the school year. We all enrolled at the Notre Dame of Dadiangas. Notre Dame is a very prestigious private Catholic educational institution. It is known worldwide and has a very high standard of education and academics. The only sibling who did not come with us to Mindanao was my sister Meldy. She was the only girl in our family and Mom and Dad decided the best place for her would be in Manila. She lived with my Mom's sister Tita Metring (Demetria Joven), and went to a very good private school, St. Joseph's College.

I loved Notre Dame. I did well, participated in lots of school activities, made good grades and was always at the top of the class. I was a very popular student from my freshman to senior years. Our family name became well known at school, and the town of Dadiangas. We had lots of friends. In my second year of high school, I will never forget a cute girl I really liked. I guess for the first time in my life I actually had a crush on a beautiful classmate of mine. I will never forget Vivian Ramas. I knew she liked me too, but in those days, kids just simply did not get into relationships like kids do today. We were good friends. I wished for more, but oh well... We are still in contact occasionally these days.

My Mom got a teaching job at the local public school and in no time she worked herself up to school principal. Like us kids, she was well-known and well-liked by the general community. Dad spent most of his time at the farm but visited us very often. We also went back to the farm often and spent long weekends or short vacations still enjoying the jungle.

I graduated from High School in June of 1959. Now it was time to make a decision about what college to go to, where, and what career to pursue. I always wanted to study aviation. It was always in my mind. I dreamt of flying. My Dad would not have any of that. He wanted me to take up Agriculture with the intentions of taking over the farm and turn it into a

modern, profitable enterprise. He had big plans for us kids to become big “hacenderos” (land barons) like many of the Silos sugar barons in the Visayan regions.

Time ran out for me. The school year had started and I still was totally undecided. Since all freshmen college degrees had the same basic subjects and courses at all universities, I enrolled at Notre Dame College (now Notre Dame University) and started with the Associate Degree course with the intention of completing one year while making up my mind before my sophomore year.

The following year, August 1960, I flew back to Manila. I enrolled at the Araneta University located outside of Manila. Araneta was later renamed La Salle University. My goal: to pursue a Bachelor’s Degree in Agriculture and major in Animal Husbandry. Can you imagine the joy and the pride my Dad was having? I did. Araneta specialized in the fields of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Farm Management. It was no surprise to me to find the majority of students came from very big well-known families whose parents had huge plantations all over the Philippine Islands.

I lived in a dormitory outside of campus for a while and enjoyed the life of a college kid. College life was fun. In fact, I did start enjoying the courses I took. I did academically well and always stayed at the top third of my class through the years. I became a member of the biggest fraternity on campus; the Alpha Sigma Phi. The Alpha Sigma Phi was an old and well- established fraternity and produced some of the big political names during my time. They were all “brothers” and they were there to help all their brothers later in life.

The university had a lot of sports. The one that interested me the most was the University Judo Team. When we were kids Dad introduced us to boxing and jujitsu. He learned jujitsu while serving with the U. S. Rangers during WWII. He was good at jujitsu and combat self-defense. We learned self-defense at a very early age. So it was only natural that judo became my favorite sport. I excelled in judo and won many intercollegiate matches and tournaments. By the time I graduated I had earned my 1st Degree Black Belt

in Judo. More on my martial arts life and training for the next 50 years are on Chapter Twelve.

I completed my degree in Agriculture three and a half years later in January 1964. (I already had 1 year at Notre Dame). But always in the back of my mind, I wanted to fly. I promised myself, I would one day.

My college education could not have been completed without the help of relatives. It was a big financial strain on my parents sending me to the big city and have to fully pay for school and associated living costs. Enter my older half-sister Elvie. Remember earlier in this book I mentioned she and her family would play an important role in my life. They did.

Elvie was working as a high-level manager for a shipping company, The Blue Lines. She was married to an American, Ben George. Sis Elvie had three kids; Linda (1944), Elvylou (1956) and Marie (1951). Linda was my age, she was going to college too, as well as the other two. They were very well off. Elvie offered my Dad help to defray some of my college expenses. Dad reluctantly accepted and Elvie started to help me in many ways, financially and more. She and her Mom, “Tita Ted” accepted me as part of the family and treated me as a long lost brother/son. We became very close and still are today. Tita Ted passed away on March 17, 1987

Another relative from my Mom’s side, a very prominent lawyer by the name of Cristeto Angala also provided me with a lot of financial assistance. They were very well off and didn’t think twice about helping out. Cristeto was a nephew of my Mom, and like my sister Elvie, he and his family considered me close family. A number of other Aunts and Uncles wanted to help me as well, although they did not need to. But, families in the Philippines are traditionally close to each other, and one can expect help from family at any time.

So I graduated... the honeymoon and good times were over. It was time to face the real world. It was time to get a job. It was time to work for a living. Ugh!! Most of my closest college friends and fraternity brothers went back to their respective provinces or islands after graduation to apply the knowledge they acquired from school. Many are doing very well today.

I still maintain close contact with a number of them. I, on the other hand, did not really want to go back home to Mindanao. I wanted to take some time off, I wanted to go somewhere, somewhere far, somewhere new. It was the “adventure blood” flowing in my veins. Dad understood and told me; “take time off, do what you want to do, I’ll be here when you are ready to come home”.

I had many long talks with my sister Elvie. Remember, she was my mentor, my advisor, and my hero. She asked me; “would you be interested in sailing on one of our company ships?” I didn’t think this was possible since I had zero merchant marine experience, zero maritime education, and, I was not a member of the powerful Maritime Union. Every sailor had to meet these requirements. I didn’t meet any requirements but told her I would love to try it. Elvie assured me; “both your uncles, Tito Pipo, and Tito Ramon are very well known Silos Captains in the Maritime Industry”. Elvie is, after all a Silos running a shipping company. And, I am a Silos. I had everything going for me.

I asked Mom and Dad, they said; “go for it, and good luck”. Sis Elvie said; “you are on the next ship that sails”. I was shocked with both answers. I knew I deeply hurt my Dad for not coming home, but he did not stop me, he wished me luck. I knew Sis Elvie was serious, but I did not know if she had the power to really get me on board.

6 ANCHORS AWEIGH

Sometime in February 1964 the flagship of the Blue Lines Maritime Company, the Blue Dolphin came to port in Manila. Sis Elvie tells me; “pack your bags, you are sailing out of here on board the Blue Dolphin”. My God, suddenly, things are happening, I had asked for it, but I didn’t expect it to happen so soon!! Suddenly I was going to be a merchant marine sailor. Wow!!

The SS Blue Dolphin was a medium-sized vintage 8,000-ton steam ship. It was a cargo “tramp” ship registered and sailed under the Panamanian Flag. It was crewed by 18 seamen; a Polish Captain, Filipino 1st and 2nd Officers, also serving as Navigators, a Swedish Chief and 2nd engineer, a Filipino Boatswain or “Bos’n” in charge of the deck crew, and a Chief Steward in charge of ship supplies, kitchen and general administration. A “tramp” ship is one that does not have a fixed route rather, it goes to whatever worldwide port headquarters tells them to go to. It had the possibility of sailing the seven seas! The ship had 11 passenger cabins for guests and VIPs. The crew had their cabins, most often shared by like crew members. It was a small “family”, everyone trusting and dependent on one another.

I was assigned as the Assistant Chief Steward. It was the most appropriate position for me at the time since I had administrative, accounting and management training in college. I also doubled as the Captain’s Boy, actually a low-level sounding title, but really a very important position since I had complete access to the upper deck and all the officers. The Chief Steward was a very old man, and he needed help. That was my main task to assist him. The only thing I could not do was prepare menus and cooking for the crew. That was the Chief Steward’s forte; he was good at that; he was the chef.

It was “anchors aweigh” about the end of February. I did not know what our cargo was, but our first port was Kaohsiung, in South Taiwan. That was a short and enjoyable voyage. We were only there for two days – just like it would be with most of the ports we visited. The crew had enough time

to visit, explore, and exploit only nearby areas. In most cases, the ports were very close to the center of the city, so this was not too bad. Then off we went to Keelung, North Taiwan. Same experience here... but bear in mind, for me, this was the first time to visit foreign countries. Needless to say, it was a fantastic experience and I loved every minute of it.



On board the Blue Dolphin

I heard the next port was going to be Nagoya, Japan. I was ecstatic! I was finally going to meet my uncles, Tito Pipo and/or Tito Ramon, for the first time in my life. I was quickly disappointed shortly after we docked. Both were out on trips and were not expected back for months. I still had a great time in Nagoya. I met a beautiful young lady by the name of Sachiko Segawa who worked as a bartender in one of the bars in town. We were instantly attracted to each other. Needless to say, I was at the Midori Bar every single night we were at port. We

left Nagoya on the fourth day. I could not wait to come back soon to meet my uncles, but now more than ever, to see Sachiko. We made one more stop to the north in Busan, South Korea, stayed a couple of days and off we went.

Our next voyage took us across the Indian Ocean to Port Elizabeth, South Africa. This for me was a long trip across the Indian Ocean. It was a very dangerous and rough ocean. The weather and the ocean currents were unpredictable. I never saw waves so high in my life. The waves were three to five stories high. Our ship was pummeled and tossed around and I thought, Oh God, are we going to get past this ocean alive. I had never been so seasick in my life. I was dying every day!

At last, "Land Ahoy!" The sea was calm as we approached the harbor at Port Elizabeth, South Africa. What a great feeling to be on land again after that harrowing voyage across the Indian Ocean. I loved Port Elizabeth. This part of the world was all new to me. We stayed here about five days and that

gave me the opportunity to explore a good part of the city and outlying areas. Great Experience!

After that, it was back out to sea. Meantime, I became good friends with the Swedish Chief Engineer and his crew. The engine room fascinated me just as I was awed by my first encounter with the DC-3 aircraft when I was eight years old. I asked Chief if I could work below deck explaining I did not have the foggiest idea about anything in that room. He said I could work as an “apprentice engineer” and just do what I was instructed to do. We got the blessings of the Captain but the Chief Steward (my boss) did not like me leaving him on his own. I explained it was only temporary.

I was glad it was temporary. I spent almost 3 months in the engine room. It was hot, hot, and hot below deck. I was covered in grease, oil, soot and dirt not to mention it didn’t smell good down there. I did not do much heavy work, although the work I did was very interesting. Being very mechanically inquisitive, I learned a lot from the crew. It was not very long after, I was actually doing a lot of work assigned to regular engine room crew members. I loved it in the beginning, but as time went by, I started missing the upper deck. You saw everything up there. There was day, there was night, wind and waves. One did not see anything below deck, but engines, pipes, and ancillary equipment. I longed to revert to my previous assignment. Thankfully, I did not need to ask to go back upstairs, the Captain and Steward wanted me back up by the next port, explaining we were later going to have passengers on board. That meant busy times ahead and they needed me more than the engine room did. Thank God!

The Blue Dolphin set its course westward from Port Elizabeth, through the Cape of Good Hope passing Cape Town. Now we were on the Atlantic Ocean and headed north/northwest to Cartagena, Columbia. This was quite a long voyage. For the most part, the Atlantic was not too rough, although at times it was bad, but never as bad as the Indian Ocean. Working below deck, I could not really tell the difference till I went back upstairs again.

We got to Cartagena, unloaded cargo, and took on different cargo. I guess we were transporting coffee this time. I could smell it all over the ship. We also picked up three passengers. They were all well-known Colombian

Boxing Champions, contracted to fight matches in Manila. They were impressive as I watched them train on the ship's deck. At first, they had trouble just simply standing on deck as the waves tossed the ship around, but they later got good with their balance and footing as they trained while the ship was rolling and tossing out at sea. I never saw any of the matches in Manila, but I heard one of them beat the reigning Filipino Champion, another lost his match, and the third tied his match. I can't remember any of their names, but they were very nice and kind people.

Our next destination was New Orleans, Louisiana. I don't remember where in New Orleans we docked, but it was a big port compared to the previous ports I had seen before. We were in America. This was my first time to set foot on American soil. The crew had a great time in New Orleans. We stayed ten days, more than enough time to visit all the attractions of New Orleans. The reason we stayed so long was to wait for Headquarters in Manila to tell us where to go next and to wait for our special guests



Our stop in New Orleans changed my life forever. It started when a family of eight boarded our ship as special guests of the owner of the Company. They were the

Believe it or not, I am working!

Greathouse family from Owensboro, Kentucky. Head of the family was James Greathouse, his wife Rosie Sanchez of Filipino-Spanish origins and their children ages 17 to 7. Rosie's family in Manila were close friends of the owner of The Blue Lines, so arrangements were made for them to come on board as special guests, all expenses paid. We now had a full complement of passengers together with the Columbians on board.

We departed New Orleans fully loaded with cargo and passengers. Our route back home to Manila was going to take us from the Atlantic Ocean to

the Pacific Ocean. To get there from New Orleans we had to cross the Panama Canal. It was a remarkable crossing. The Panamá Canal is a man-made 48-mile waterway in Panama that connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean over mountains. The canal is made of “locks”. As the ship enters a lock, the water rises to the level of the next lock... and on and on till you get to the top. From there, the same procedure is applied as you travel down the locks till you get to sea level at the Pacific Ocean side of Panama. It was a beautiful sight and an amazing man-made wonder.

So what was this about “New Orleans changed my life forever”? It’s simple; when the Greathouse family first boarded the Blue Dolphin I met Fay Greathouse. She was 17, the oldest daughter of James and Rosie Greathouse. It was love at first sight. Fay and I were instantly attracted to each other and that set off a shipboard romantic relationship across the Pacific on the way home to our final destination, Manila.

One of the rules of the ship was, crew members were strictly forbidden to have any personal relationships with any passenger. Passengers were off limits, period. As days passed it became very obvious to the casual observer that Fay and I had something going on. The Captain admonished my behavior and told me to stop it. Fay’s parents liked me. They talked to the Captain and told him they did not mind if Bob and Fay saw each other, as long as they behaved appropriately in public. The Captain did not agree with them. But nothing could stop us seeing each other at this stage. I kept on sneaking up to the upper guest deck and saw Fay whenever I could. Well, one late evening, I got caught sneaking out of her cabin porthole. I was fired instantly. The Captain was going to throw me off his ship as soon as we got home and was going to file a disobedience case against me. Disobedience was a mild term for “Mutiny”. Mutiny at sea was a serious offense and carried a harsh punishment. In turn, I told him I was going to get him fired by the company. He was Polish working for a Philippine company, and he didn’t realize who I really was - a Silos. I knew my threat did not carry any weight, but I also felt he was not about ready to test a confrontation. He was, after all, a foreigner.

Being a rebel by nature, I did not wait to get off in Manila in disgrace or find out if I were really guilty of mutiny or not. We made a stop in Nagoya,

Japan prior to Manila. I was restricted to my quarters in Japan. That evening, somehow while we were docked, I was able to “jump ship”, meaning I got off the ship and left it, and was now in the country illegally, as in “illegal alien”. I was able to get past the local guards with my bags and get down to the docks, without them knowing anything about me. Their job was to make sure no one got on board, but not off. Down at the docks, I ran. I ran so hard lest any of the crew would spot me and get me arrested. In a short while, I got myself lost in the maze of little streets of Nagoya.

I slept on a park bench that evening not knowing where I was nor what to do next. I knew I had to find either of my Uncles and find Sachiko Segawa. But it was too late to do any of that. The following day, I went back to the docks and saw the Blue Dolphin had left and had set sail for Manila. I walked all over the Nagoya harbor asking if anyone knew where I could find Captains Ramon Silos or Jose Silos. The Philippine shipping companies there knew them both but told me Captain Jose Silos moved, and was now stationed in Macau. Captain Ramon Silos moved and was either stationed in Kobe or moved back to Manila. So now I was kind of in a “lost” situation, not really knowing what to do. As I walked into the harbor area I ran into the headquarters of the International Seafarers Shelter. This organization provided temporary shelter for any seaman who was passing through Nagoya. They gladly welcomed me in, provided me a bed, and meals for free. What luck!

I next looked for Sachiko, hoping she would still be at the Midori. I found her and were we both so happy to see each other! She admitted to thinking so much about our first encounter and could not wait for me to be back. I explained to her my situation, I told her I was stranded and didn’t really have much money. She understood my predicament and told me not to worry about anything. She offered me a place to stay at her apartment while I was there. I was dead tired, totally stressed and confused. But Sachiko took care of me. She took me to a public Hot Tub (similar to today’s sauna). The Japanese hot tub is made out of wood, filled with very hot aromatic water, and can accommodate up to 4 persons. It is so relaxing as you sit and soak your body till you just about pass out or fall asleep. Then Sachiko took me to a Shiatsu massage parlor. I just about died from the pressure and

pleasure of being massaged with the Shiatsu pressure system. We were off to a late dinner and lots of Sake feeling so weak but feeling so good. I was in heaven, drunk and dead to the world. Sachiko and I hit it off well and I promised if I left, I would come back. I could've stayed with Sachiko for as long as I wanted. She wanted me to be with her, but I kept thinking of Fay. I had to get back to the Philippines.

I was at the docks one day and I noticed a ship that belonged to the Araneta Lines. I met the Captain of the ship, Captain Ebro and asked him if I could hitch a ride back to Manila. I explained to him I missed my ship and wanted to join it again in Manila. My dad was a close friend of Don Vicente Araneta who owned Araneta Lines. Of course, Captain Ebro knew Don Vicente and welcomed me on board. I was lucky once again. I was on my way to Manila. I said "Sayonara". In tears, Sachiko bade me a safe journey and prayed I would come back again.

It was wonderful living in Japan, but I could not continue to do so without a job. I did not want to depend on anyone to survive even if I started to meet friends who were more than willing to put me up. Sachiko introduced me to a lot of locals. The Japanese were so warm and friendly to me. I will never forget that. Jumping ship ended any hopes of me ever getting on board another ship again.

7 THE START OF IMMIGRATION

When I got back to Manila, I was homeless, broke, and in despair. I was thinking of going back home to Dadiangas where Dad and Mom would surely want me to be, but I was also thinking about Fay. She was in Manila waiting for me to come back. But in the situation I was in, I could not imagine facing her, her parents and her relatives. I had to get a job. I had to get my dignity back. I stayed with Sis Elvie who was glad to see me back.

A fraternity brother of mine got me my first job. It was a lowly, measly job, but it was a job and I at least started to earn money. I worked as a Messenger Boy for Amon Trading, a large trading company. Many top executives made their way up fast in that company, and a lot of them started as Messenger Boys! So I had hope.

In the meantime I started seeing Fay almost every day. I met a lot of her Mom's family who were themselves prominent and well off. I was received warmly by half the family since my last name was quite well known. They were happy for Fay about that. The other half didn't really care too much about me pointing out I was about four years older than her. Fay's parents, James, and Rosie were getting very disgruntled and unhappy with life in the Philippines. They did not feel at home. They wanted to go back to the States.

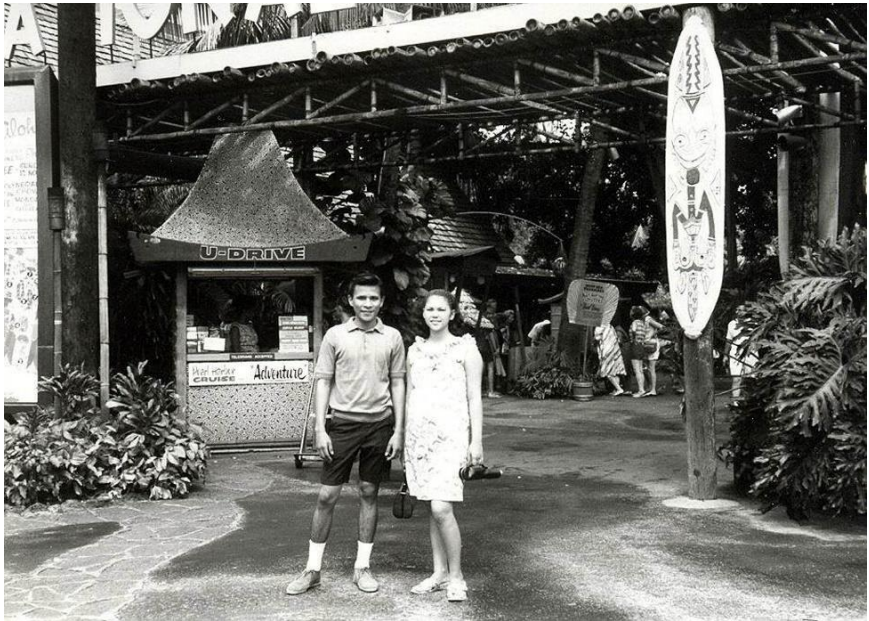
Fay and I got married on April 22, 1965 in Manila. She was about two months pregnant. It happened so fast my parents didn't get a chance to come to the wedding. It was sort of a secret private church wedding, few people were invited, many did not even know about it.

Fay's parents left Manila sometime in June 1965 and left Fay and me to follow later. I decided, it was time for us to go as well since I really did not want to live in the Philippines. As soon as I got my immigration papers in November, we left. I really broke my Mom and Dad's hearts. I left without

LIFE IS GOOD

ever going back to the farm, without seeing them again since I graduated from college. I felt very bad.

We sailed out of the Philippines on board a huge passenger liner, the SS President Roosevelt, one of the largest ships of the American President Lines. It was a beautiful passenger ship, a far cry from the puny Blue Dolphin. It was a very enjoyable voyage across the Pacific.



With Fay in Honolulu, Hawaii 1965

We had a nice cabin, ate as much as we wanted all day long, and I drank as much as I wanted. Fay was pregnant and preferred not to drink. The voyage took less than three weeks with a short stopover in Honolulu, Hawaii.

As the ship entered the San Francisco Bay, I will never forget the most beautiful sight I ever saw. In front of us was the Golden Gate Bridge. We sailed under the bridge and lo and behold, the city of San Francisco lay before our eyes. What a spectacular sight to see! Welcome to America!

8 LIFE AND WORK IN THE UNITED STATES

Fay's parents were on the piers waiting for us when the President Roosevelt docked. It was a nice reunion. She had never been separated from her parents before. Her parents lived on 24th Street in the Mission District of San Francisco. It was an old house, but big enough to accommodate all of us. We stayed with them.

Now more than ever, I needed a job. I was on my own, no family or friends to help me get started. I walked up and down the streets of San Francisco every day looking for work. I answered many ads and talked to many companies. I was lucky on my third day, walking down Market Street in downtown San Francisco, I saw a Help Wanted sign. It was a big Electrical Warehouse Distributorship. I walked in to apply and was interviewed as soon as I told them I was looking for work. The owner, Mr. Caldwell liked me and hired me right on the spot. My job was a Stock and Inventory Control Clerk. I knew stock and inventory from my Steward days on the Blue Dolphin, I just did not know a thing about electrical parts and equipment. I learned very fast. I learned about electrical parts, systems, and small equipment repairs. I was happy, I had a job even if it paid only \$2.50 an hour. It was not a bad wage at that time. I even managed to save some money.

Fay gave birth to DeAnna Fay on December 21, 1965, in San Francisco. Now I was a father! A couple of my first priorities were to get a Driver's License and buy a car. I read the California Driver's Manual then took the written test. I passed. After I got my Driver's Permit I bought a car so I could start driving and prepare for the driving test. The first car in my life was a 1952 Chevrolet. It was similar to one of those old Al Capone cars you saw in movies. I was proud of it. The car was nice and clean and ran great. I used it for my driving test and passed.

Meanwhile, I actively looked for another job – a job that would pay more money, and one that would provide me with a different skill, and a better future. That opportunity came when I met one of our neighbors. He

was a Norwegian by the name of Gunnar Kaurstadlokken. We became good friends. He knew I was looking for another job. He worked as a Heavy Duty Diesel Mechanic for a Detroit Diesel Distributor in South San Francisco. One day he told me I had a job where he worked at if I were interested. I had a heart attack! A new and a different job? I interviewed for the job, got hired and was offered a position as an Apprentice Diesel Mechanic, with a starting salary of \$3.50 an hour, with double pay for overtime and full company benefits. You can bet your butt I jumped at the offer. I resigned from Caldwell only after just a few months working for them.

In the meantime, Fay and I had moved at least twice from 24th Street. We moved to an apartment in the Golden Gate Park area of San Francisco, a beautiful neighborhood. Then we moved to Daly City a suburb of San Francisco. We had a better and a more modern apartment this time. Daly City was a lot closer to my new job in South San Francisco.

Shoreline Diesel Company specialized in the maintenance and repair of heavy duty marine and industrial diesel engines and equipment. Was I ever so glad that I learned a lot about engines working at the engine room of the Blue Dolphin. I was familiar with a lot of the parts, components, systems and terminology used in engines. I did very well at Shoreline. I learned the trade fast and moved up to the ranks of Journeyman Diesel Mechanic in a short period of time.

Shoreline also sent me to a Technical Institute mandated by the State of California as part of the Apprenticeship Program. I went to school one full day a week and studied Mechanical Engineering and Processes. It was a fully paid day off from work.

I actually started to save a lot of money with all the overtime I put in. In 1967, two years after getting hired, Fay and I bought our first home. We paid \$18,000! It was a house in Newark, south and across the bay area called the South East Bay. It was a long but not a very bad commute to South San Francisco. I was starting to move ahead in life.

San Carlos Airport is a small private airport I discovered while I drove by to and from work every day. I saw lots of small aircraft every time I drove

passed the airport. One weekend I decided to see what was going on there. To my delight, I discovered there were a number of flying schools and flying clubs based in San Carlos! I made up my mind to start taking flying lessons as soon as I could. This would be the start of my future career in aviation. .

I was doing well at Shoreline. I was now making \$5.00 an hour, or \$10.00 when I worked overtime. It was considered high wages at that time, and, I was a senior Heavy Duty Diesel Mechanic. We were a special breed of mechanics as opposed to regular automotive mechanics. Shoreline had lots of contracts with the U.S Navy, so I was beginning to get a lot of experience in heavy Marine applications. However, I was always on the lookout for a better job, more money and a brighter future. I was at the top of the ranks as Field Supervisor at Shoreline with no other place to go.

I had heard of another Detroit Diesel Distributor in Fremont, California for some time. Fremont was just the next city north of Newark. This was close to home. May Diesel Company specialized in heavy off-highway construction equipment unlike Shoreline, who specialized in heavy marine applications. I decided to pay May a visit just for the heck of it. I met Mel May the owner of the company. He was very impressed with my background and experience in diesel engine repairs and maintenance, not to mention the fact I had a college degree which put me a notch or two above all his mechanics. I would make a good lead supervisor for his operations. I walked out of his shop with an offer of a job and could start immediately. I did not expect this. Somehow we hit it off on that first meeting. He needed me. What made me decide to move to May? First, starting salary would be \$7.00 an hour, double that for overtime. That was a high wage for the industry. Then he would get me membership on one of the most powerful unions on the West Coast – The Operating Engineers Union, Local Three! This union controlled every trade in the construction industry all the way to Hawaii! My position would be the lead Foreman of the company. How could I say no? Two weeks later to the disappointment of Shoreline, I started work at May Diesel. It was winter 1968.

This was a great job for me. I ended up managing engine quality control operations at two of the largest truck manufacturing companies in California, the International Harvester Company in San Leandro, CA, and the Mack

Truck Company in Hayward, CA. I managed a team of mechanics at these two locations plus a number of road service operations at construction companies. I was overworked! I made May Diesel a lot of money and brought more new customers to the company. Mel May in return rewarded me with an increase in salary to \$9.00 an hour, again, a figure unheard of in our line of business at that time. I was overpaid!

I have to backtrack a bit before I go on. On August 31, 1968, I was still with Shoreline then when we had our second daughter(s), Denise Sheri and Denise Marie. They were twins. They were born in Daly City. Denise Marie did not make it. She died at birth, Denise Sheri made it. Now we had two daughters!

Another significant event around this period was not good news. It was going to prove to be one of the low points in my life. I received news my Mom and Dad had decided to separate and go their own ways due to irreconcilable differences. I knew they were no longer living together since all of us kids left home for college but I did not foresee a separation. Dad wrote me many times explaining what was going on back home. I could read between the lines he was very unhappy, disillusioned and on the verge of despair. No kids to lean on, and now, no wife to stand by him. It was a sad situation. On one of his later mails, he had indicated that he was going to sell the farm and leave Dadiangas. I didn't believe that was going to happen. The farm was his life. He dreamed of owning one all his life. The farm was doing fairly well. But the inevitable happened. I can't remember when, but Dad later wrote and said he sold the farm. I cried for many days. I blamed myself for not being there to take over as Dad had dreamed of. I blamed myself for letting him down when he most needed me or even any one of my siblings. He was a destroyed man. As I cried I began to realize that is how life went. I could only comfort him with words which even to me were meaningless. I let Dad down. He left Dadiangas a broken man, leaving the house to my mom. We did not hear from him for a few years. No one knew where he went, nor what he was doing. We were very worried about Dad. Mom took care of herself. She was strong, she had a house, she had a job, and she had many friends to comfort her in her moments of need. I was

happy for Mom. She did not write much, but we heard from friends and neighbors. She was coping with her crisis better than Dad.

It was in 1969 when Fay and I decided it was time to move up to a better, newer and more modern home. We were doing very well and knew we could afford it. The Newark home was getting too small for our growing family. We found an almost new four bedroom home in Union City. It was beautiful and very modern. We loved it at first sight. We bought the home for \$24,000. Our mortgage payments rose from \$260.00 a month to less than \$400.00 a month, a very modest increase for what we were getting. We were able to afford and own two cars as well. Fay preferred a Ford Station wagon as the family car. I bought a “toy”, it was a Corvette. We sold all the other cars we had previously owned. The cars were all junk by now.

For the longest time I was wondering to myself why was I working so many long hours for other people for “very little money”. Mind you, I was making good money, but I knew I could make more. I was in a situation where I knew so many customers now with heavy diesel equipment who I could rely on if I ever went into business for myself. I knew I could run a business. I was not going to compete with either the business operations of May Diesel or Shoreline Diesel. I was going to specialize only on certain components of the diesel engine, namely; the fuel injection and turbocharger systems. At the risk of losing everything I worked so hard for, I decided to go into business for myself. Mind you, at this point in time, I was also flying part time building flight time. I’ll get to that later in this book.

I started building the foundation for my business plans while I was still working at May’s. I leased a shop in Union City, building it up to my specifications and needs, bought a lot of special tools and equipment to service and repair diesel fuel injection systems. It was progressing very well and in fact, I already started doing business on a part-time basis at the new shop for at least three months before I made the decision to quit my job.

I resigned my position at May’s. Mel May was totally devastated by my decision. I couldn’t blame him. He really did not have someone to replace me. But then I did him a big favor. When I knew I was going to leave, I personally took my favorite assistant and groomed him and trained him with

everything I could possibly pass on for him to carry on my duties and responsibilities. He turned out to be a good choice. He did take over from me on my recommendations and since I was in close contact with Mel, I heard he was indeed doing well. Nevertheless, I also know the company missed me badly. Mel and I remained close friends.

Spring 1970, Union City Injector Service (UCIS) was born. Business boomed overnight. I was overwhelmed with work and customers. I had more work than I could handle. Perfect timing, help came at the right time; my younger brother Sonny became available and joined me. By the way, Sonny followed my footsteps working on ships as well. Sis Elvie got him the job. He did better than I; for one, he spent more time as a seaman. Secondly, he worked below deck in the engine room. It did not take long for him to learn my fuel injection business. Business continued to expand. I had to get more help. Larry Wilderman came to the rescue. Larry was also a diesel fuel injection specialist, except he specialized in Cummins Diesel engine systems. This knowledge and skill were a complement to my business because the predominant Diesel engines were the Detroit Diesel and the Cummins Diesel. Now we had all bases covered. Life was good. We all worked long hours, no weekends, no vacations, no time off, no time to get sick. But we all made good money. And, I was also putting in a lot of part time hours pursuing my flight training and instructing.

Then came a troublesome period in my private family life. As I said, I worked a lot of long hours to the point where I virtually neglected my family. I failed to realize I did not spend any time at home with Fay and the kids. Our marriage was getting very rocky. By now, I had three kids. Robert “Bobsy” Silos, IV was born on May 23, 1972.

I must add, in the eleven years Fay and I were married, we did manage to see a lot of California and Nevada. On many weekends and holidays, we traveled up and down the California Coast from the Redwoods in the north, down south to Disneyland and Universal Studios in Los Angeles, onto San Diego where we enjoyed SeaWorld and the renowned San Diego Zoo. Once, we even spent a day across the Mexican border to tour Tijuana. To the East, we went on skiing trips a number of times on the slopes of beautiful Lake

Tahoe and Reno. We went on hunting and fishing trips with my father-in-law and Fay's siblings who were very avid outdoors enthusiasts.

If my memory serves me right, it was October of 1973 when the family and I decided to take a vacation to the Philippines just to get away from it all and have a good time together. I also wanted to go back home to renew family ties. I was worried about Dad and I wanted to know what was happening to him and my Mom. I can't remember the dates, but we flew back home. It was a one month vacation, we stayed with various relatives in Manila.

One highlight of this trip was very memorable. I made contact with an old friend of mine, Ariston "Tony" Bautista. He was the brother of a famous movie actress, Perla Bautista. Ariston played a lot of supporting roles in many movies. It just so happened that a movie was being shot. It starred one of the best and most famous comedians in the Philippines, Dolphy. They were shooting a movie titled "Fung Ku". It was a story of a goofy Kung Fu master played by Dolphy. Ariston was a supporting actor in this film. He introduced me to Dolphy and Dolphy agreed to get me a supporting actor role as a villain Samurai warrior. Remember, I am a Silos, and Dolphy knew the Silos family in the music and film industry. It was a great experience being in the movies. Fung Ku became a big hit in Philippine cinema, and once again, a Silos was part of it, albeit just a short role.

My Dad came to Manila when he found out I was there. It was a very emotional reunion. I was so happy to see Dad. He had aged, but he looked good. We spent a lot of quality time catching up with years gone by. I'm glad we did because I didn't know it at the time, but this visit and reunion were going to be the last time I was going to see Dad alive. He had moved to a town called Tacurong, northeast of Dadiangas, bought some land, built a house, and opened up a small supermarket, but he sold a lot of small farm equipment as well. I never did get to see the place but I got some photos from Dad. It was a nice place. We said our goodbyes and everyone had tears and the feeling was that of sadness.

The family and I had a nice time in Manila. We visited a lot of places in and around Manila and suburbs. Manila had changed a lot in just eight years.

I looked up and met a lot of old friends, met with lots of relatives, and all had a great time. We left Manila after thirty days and now it was back to the hectic and busy routine of everyday living in the United States.

I would've thought a nice vacation like we just had would revive our marriage. On the contrary, I felt our marriage was going downhill every day. Fay and I didn't talk much, if we did, we were arguing. We were slowly drifting apart. I was working very long hours, I was flying when I was not working, and I was hardly home. What did I expect? This was all my fault. Fay was a good mother and a good wife. She took care of her responsibilities, I dropped mine.

In October 1975 Fay filed for separation and a dissolution of marriage. I did not contest the action. In November 1, 1975, a Dissolution of Marriage was granted and finalized by the Alameda County District Court. In a way, I too probably wanted to end the marriage. We made the necessary arrangements and agreements to split or sell all our properties including the house, the cars and the business. Fay and I further agreed that I pay her half of what the business was worth so I could continue to make a living. I gave her everything else except the shirt off my back.

It was not long after the divorce, I made a decision to close Union City Injector Service for good. I no longer had the desire nor the incentives to continue the business. I wanted to get away from it all. I wanted to run away from this life.

I gave the business to my brother Sonny and he agreed to take Larry on as a partner. They later moved the business to Honolulu, Hawaii where Sonny had lived for many years. He wanted to go "home" too. Larry felt the same way. He wanted to move to Hawaii where he had vacationed once before and always dreamt of living there. It was a rough start in Hawaii for them, but they made it and did very well. They were the only Diesel fuel injection shop on the islands so they had a monopoly of the service. I was happy for them. I was happy my legacy would go on.

With the money I got from the sale of the house, I provided the down payment to buy my Mom a three-bedroom home in Union City. I gave her

title to the house and a car. Now Mom was all set, she had a place to live. My sister Meldy and younger brother Vince were going to watch out for her.

Just like my father before me, I gave everything up. Must be in our genes. For some reason, I just could not get my shattered world back together. Or maybe I just did not have the desire to do so. What did I do next? It was going to turn out to be the beginning of the biggest adventure of my life. First I decided I had to leave the United States. I considered going to a number of countries. Finally, I made up my mind... it was going to be Hello Europe! This decision was going to be the start of a new saga in my life.

9 LIVING IN EUROPE

HOLLAND (THE NETHERLANDS)

It was summer 1976. I packed a suitcase, a carry-on bag and with \$500.00 in my pocket I left the United States for Holland (The Netherlands). I knew a good friend living in The Hague. I met him in Union City when he brought in a company truck for fuel injection repairs. We became good friends ever since and he invited me to come visit him in Holland. His name was Han Verhage. He had recently left the States also because of a failed marriage.

When I arrived, Han picked me up from Schiphol International Airport and brought me to his apartment in Valkenboslaan, not too far away from the city center of Den Haag (The Hague). It was an old three story building, a typical Dutch building like all the other buildings in the neighborhood. My room was tiny. Everything in an Old Dutch home is tiny. But I had a place to stay, I was grateful.

I had just unpacked my suitcase and started to settle down, and Han tells me; “let’s go to the beach”. I didn’t get a chance to rest for a minute. But never mind, I was excited to see The Hague. We drove a bit to the south to Kijkduin, a very popular beach area of Den Haag. It was a beautiful hot summer day and the beach was packed – bodies everywhere! We came down the dunes and made our way to Han’s favorite beach bar, La Mer. As we got closer, we were greeted by a lot of Han’s friends. It seemed like he was the Mayor of the town! He was popular and well-liked at the beach. I was introduced to so many people that day I could not remember a single name except for one: Micky. Micky stood out in the crowd, we were going to become very close friends very soon. We stayed at the beach drinking and partying till I passed out from exhaustion, jet-lag and beer. I do not remember how I got home.

“Holland” is actually a region south of The Netherlands but many people especially foreigners use the word Holland to refer to The Netherlands. I will continue to use the term Holland in this book. Holland is located on the west side of Europe. It borders the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The country lies fifty feet below sea level and to protect themselves from the ocean flooding the country, the Dutch built themselves a complex series of dikes and dunes. To drain a lot of the water, they built a lot of canals which directed water back to the ocean with the help of windmills.

The main cities in Holland are Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague. Amsterdam is the capital, The Hague is the seat of Government, and Rotterdam is the biggest port city of Europe. The Dutch still have their King and Queen and the Royal family, but they neither control nor are involved in Government. Holland is a socialist country and every single citizen is cared for, from “cradle to grave”. It is no longer like that today although they all still have a good life in this country.... Well, almost all of them do.



The windmills at Kinderdijk, Holland

LIFE IS GOOD

Holland is a beautiful country. There are so many tourist attractions all over the country, notably the huge tulip farms, world-famous cheeses, the canals crisscrossing the country and windmills to mention a few. I was fortunate to have seen and visited most of Holland during my stay. The Dutch are very friendly and kind people. And boy, with so many bars, restaurants, and bistros, can they can sure eat and drink! All summer long I would almost always tag along with Han and a bunch of other friends to the beach bars, spend the day there and through the night as well since the bars turned into discos during the evenings.



Micky and I at a typical sidewalk cafe in Holland.

By now I was having a romantic relationship with Micky. Micky was a beautiful Dutch woman, tall, slender and full of life. We hit it off from the day our eyes met when I first set foot on the beach the day I arrived in Holland. It was going to be a long relationship. During the course of our relationship that followed, we managed to visit many countries including trips to Spain, the Canary Islands, Paris, London and the U.S. In California Micky met my family and kids. Everyone liked Micky. One day I picked up my kids DeAnna, Denise and Bobsy and we drove down Highway 1 all the way to

L.A. and San Diego. We saw Disneyland, Universal Studios, SeaWorld, the San Diego Zoo and a lot of other tourist attractions along the way. Through Micky, I learned how to speak Dutch and she in turn learned how to speak English.

I became a bar fixture at La Mer, the beach bar we frequented and became very good and close friends with the elderly owners, Grandpa (Opa) Fritz, and Aunt (Tante) Nel. They loved me and treated me like a son. I would spend lots of time for free behind the bar making American cocktails which they did not how to do. This was an old-fashioned Dutch beach bar serving beer and Jenever (a strong local white spirit similar to vodka and schnapps). The local clientele was beginning to know me and accepted me as one of them. It was a fun summer. Before the summer season ended, I asked Opa Fritz and Tante Nel if they would be willing to sell or lease their bar to me. As I got to know them, I could see they were getting tired of running the bar. They were happy to see me run the bar as if it was my own. As the summer ended, all the beach bars along the coastline were dismantled and put into storage warehouses until they would be re-assembled the following summer. No more summer parties till next year. Opa Fritz called me one evening and invited me to their home for dinner and drinks. I was honored and happy to be there. To make a long story short, they told me they wanted me to take La Mer over next season. Financial arrangements were sorted out and I had the bar. My very own bar! I was to keep the name La Mer, but it was mine. I could not believe it but they were very serious. They did not want to give it to anyone else but me. I took possession of La Mer before the summer of 1978. Opa Fritz, Han, myself and couple of other friends, assembled the beach bar in time for the summer season grand opening. The bar run well and I had all of Fritz's old customers plus many more new ones. Business was going great.

After the end of our very busy summer season at the beach, we, the beach bums, spent evenings at different bars in town. One evening we were sitting at a bar called The Painter. The Painter was a very popular hangout with the expats living and working in The Hague. For the most part, they came from the UK. They spent a lot of time in bars, or "pubs" as they prefer to call them. This pub was also the main center of the darts leagues.

Everyone seemed to play darts. I got into it and eventually became very good at it.

Anyway, I was sitting next to a distinguished looking Briton from London named Adrian Welch. He was a very nice and friendly person and we talked a lot. It was mostly Adrian doing the talking asking me everything about my life. He, in turn, told me a bit about himself and what he was doing in Holland. At the end of the evening, he gave me his card and told me to come to his office the next day. His card showed he was the Managing Director for Cotleigh Engineering Europe.

I showed up at the office at 10:00 in the morning as agreed. Adrian introduced me to some of the staff then we proceeded to his office. After a little chit-chat, Adrian proceeded to explain to me who Cotleigh Engineering was and what they did. Cotleigh Europe was a branch of Cotleigh Engineering UK. They were basically contractors in the field of Engineering. They covered all industries; civil, structural, mechanical and electrical engineering onshore and offshore. Together with their contract work, they recruited Engineers of various disciplines. I was impressed. At the end of his speech Adrian asked me point blank: "Bob, how would you like to work for Cotleigh Engineering?" I was actually shocked. I did not come to Holland looking for work, I wanted to tour Europe on a Volkswagen van like the hippies did. Now here I am with a job offer on my lap! I actually accepted his offer. So I asked him when could I come in for an interview and also discuss salary and benefits. He laughed. He said; "when we were talking at The Painter last night, I was interviewing you". Another shock. It never entered my mind our conversation at the pub was an interview. Then another shock: He added; "I will pay you double the money you were making when you left the States, and you will get full benefits set by European law". I almost died! I did remember him asking me what kind of money I was making when I left the States. Jeez, I went through all that last night drinking beer with my future boss not knowing I was already hired at the pub! I mentioned to Adrian I would have problems in the coming summer. I explained to him I owned a summer beach bar and had to be there at least from mid-afternoon to manage the place. He thought about it and said, "That's fine". Then he added casually; "by the way, we are going to provide

you with a car so you can travel when you need to.” I said thank you very much for everything, Mr. Welch. As I walked out the office, Adrian said over my shoulder; “it is a two-year old company Mercedes Benz.” This time, I died!

Well, my party days were over. I worked as a Contracts Manager for Cotleigh Engineering Europe the following week. Believe me, I did not know a thing about their operation. I learned my job fast with the help of two other Contract Managers and supporting staff. Soon I was on my own. I was managing current contracts and looking for new ones. I was doing well and building confidence. I did travel quite a bit up and down Holland and up to Belgium occasionally. We had contracts there too.

By now I knew every single Engineering company in Holland. I met the Heads or Chiefs of the Engineering divisions and developed a good rapport with them. They loved dealing with me. I guess it was that big, bright, bold approach I used as opposed to the very reserved and formal approach my British colleagues used. Adrian was impressed at how our clients would call and ask for Bob Silos and didn’t want to talk to anybody else. That surprised me as well.

Towards the end, I could no longer work both jobs so I asked Han to manage La Mer in my absence. I eventually sold the bar back to Opa Fritz.

BELGIUM

By the end of summer of 1979, Cotleigh Europe and Cotleigh UK had high-level meetings to discuss expansion to Belgium. This new branch was going to be called Cotleigh Engineering Belgium. The plans were quickly approved. It was further decided that the branch would be headed by Bob Silos! I just could not believe this! Cotleigh had decided I was the most appropriate and most capable person they had, to start operations in another country. Funds were budgeted and set for this startup. On October 1979, Adrian and I went to Brussels, Belgium to look for a suitable office. We found one in Place Rogier right in downtown Brussels. It was an ideal

location with room for expansion if needed. We leased the place. It was totally bare. I was promptly sent on my way shortly after that, with everyone's blessings. The first priority was to build the empty space into offices and procure the office furniture and equipment we needed. A lot of it came from the Holland office, the rest I purchased locally. That done, I hired a Belgian Secretary to help get all the business paperwork going. We had a lawyer to take care of all the formalities and permits. Meantime, I rented a temporary apartment as soon as I got there with the intention of finding a bigger and more permanent accommodations. I had the company car.



The Atomium in Brussels, Belgium

Operations started within a month. It was hard at first. I was operating in a different country whose language in Brussels was primarily French, although Belgium claimed to speak three major languages; Flemish, French and German. For some reason, everyone insisted on speaking French. But that did not really matter. In the world of Engineering, English was the predominant language. I managed to generate new business contracts. I started meeting new clients. It looked promising.

One day in November, I answered an ad for an apartment. The lady who answered the phone had a nice German accent and she agreed to show me her apartment. This is how I met Siggi Schwiesow. She was cute and was working for the European Union. Years later she was going to become my wife. We met and I took a look at the place. She was going to leave it completely furnished. The place was located in a nice area of Brussels not too far from my work. Although it was just a one-bedroom apartment, it suited my needs and I liked it. The good part about this rental was all I needed to do was take over her lease agreement. I took over the apartment and Siggi was happy to transfer her lease without any consequences.



A Flower carpet covering the Grand Place in Brussels – a big annual event.

Business was going well at Cotleigh, we were beginning to become self-sufficient and hardly needed any assistance from Holland anymore. I now had a few good solid contracts with big name Belgian companies. I really did not like the idea that I was concentrated mostly in the construction industries, but really, Belgium did not have many industries to exploit compared to Holland and the UK. Nevertheless, I did well with what I had. I was getting very busy to the point where I was stretched and needed help. I had hired another administrative staff but I needed someone to cover me and do what I was doing. I called Adrian and told him I needed another person to help

me. I stressed to him I did not have the time nor the desire to train someone new. I needed someone who knew the business. I concluded the conversation by asking him to send me the person I liked the most, and worked well with the most, while I was there. He said; “Bob Carter?” It was my turn to laugh, and I said; “Yes, I want Bob Carter in Belgium to work with me”. And so, I had Bob Carter in Brussels. Bob and I worked well in Holland, in fact, he was with Cotleigh Europe before I was, and he taught me a lot of what I knew. We were a good team.

I had been seeing Siggi quite regularly. First, it was lunches, then it was dinners and drinks. We started to get to know each other well which led to a romantic relationship. When my lease expired, it was perfect timing. By now Siggi and I were pretty much involved with each other, so I conveniently moved in with her to her larger apartment. It was a convenient move, we shared expenses and everything else.

It was when Bob Carter came and joined me in Brussels that I had to move again. I figured it would make sense for us to rent and share an apartment. I found a large luxurious apartment suitable for us. I went on and rented it and Bob moved in with me when he came over. It was also when Bob Carter joined me, was I able to take a little time off. Siggi and I had a short vacation in California. She met my family. We drove down Highway 1 from the San Francisco Bay Area to L.A. and saw all the tourist sights. It was a nice short vacation.

It was in the summer of 1980, I took a short trip to the Canary Islands and then to Torremolinos, Spain to “speculate” on business possibilities. Spain impressed me very much and I told myself, Spain was where I would want to live next.

In Brussels, business was booming and we were busy. Headquarters was very happy with the Belgium operation. But while business was looking good, I was running into a number of troublesome issues with the Belgian Ministry of Labor authorities. They were bothered by the fact that we were taking a lot of work away from the Belgians. They probably had a point.



Gastronomy in Brussels. With Sis Elvie and Natasha in my arms.

I had a lot of civil and structural engineers in Brussels working for Cotleigh, together with a large number of construction tradesmen. We had big projects we were working on. The Belgian labor unions complained we did not employ an equal number of Belgian tradesmen. Again, the unions had a point. Our argument was, The UK was part of the European Union and had the right to live and work in any EU country. In fact, I did not really want to hire locals. The Brits were professional contract tradesmen, efficient at their jobs, worked long hard hours and were reliable. I couldn't say the same for the Belgian labor force. Cotleigh Belgium existed to make money, not give it away.

But Belgium was a very protectionist country. They hated to accept and see foreigners working in their country. They hated foreigners taking jobs away from them. This was the root of all the problems we were having. In the end, we could not win against the Belgian authorities. They made an issue of the most irrelevant and mundane issues. Even our clients were harassed by the authorities for contracting out to foreigners. It got to the point where we could no longer operate in peace in Belgium. They flat out told me, they were not going to renew our business license the following year. We were not a big company and we didn't have funds to hire legal counsel to plead

our case. Cotleigh shut down operations in Belgium on November 31, 1980. Holland offered me my position back in Holland, Cotleigh UK asked me to join them at Headquarters in London, but I declined both offers. Cotleigh told me I could keep the company Mercedes as part of a goodbye present. I decided it was time to explore other options. We parted in the best of terms.

I stayed in Belgium for a little while. I had given up the apartment Bob Carter and I shared and moved back in with Sigg. I made the decision to go to Spain and do something there. I wanted to live in Spain next.

GERMANY, FRANCE, AND THE UK

It was during my stints in Holland and Belgium that I was able to visit a number of other European countries. I was in Holland when I visited London for the first time. I was with Micky then. We took the ferry over from Calais in France to Dover in the UK. It was a short and pleasant trip. Then we took the rail from Dover to London. London is a beautiful city. They have so many tourist attractions I cannot possibly detail out in this book. You name it, we saw it. We were everywhere. I was excited and anxious to see all the major sites which I only knew from books or history. We only stayed four days, but these four days were packed with wonderful and memorable experiences.

My many visits to Germany, for the most part, originated from Belgium where I was then living and working. I was going out with Sigg at the time. Sigg's family lived in a village called Niedenstein, south of the bigger city of Kassel. I plainly and simply loved Germany. I met Sigg's parents Klaus and Margot on my first visit. They immediately welcomed me into their home. It was a typical but modern home with a nice garden close to the village center. Everything there was nearby and everyone seemed to have some kind of a farm. I saw Niedenstein as "farm country"; thus I coined the phrase "Bauern Kind". It means "farmer child". It was a loving term I called Sigg from that day on, although she resented it at first. It was nice in Niedenstein. I would hear the rooster's crow early in the morning, the cows mooing, the pigs grunting, birds chirping, and farm machinery in the distance. Okay, a



Skiing with just clogs... Dummy!

was hazardous driving in the winter, all the roads would be covered in snow. Once when we were driving to Niedenstein we got caught in a bad snowstorm. It was hell on the road. I did not know if we were going to survive this trip. We could not see more than a few feet in front of the car. Our guardian angels were watching over us, and we made it home, all shook up, and exhausted. I got to know many cities and tourist attractions in Germany during our travels. I still remember them well.

Siggi and I visited other countries as well. We drove to Paris, the City of Lights (La Ville Lumiere) and spent a few wonderful days there. As with all major European cities, Paris was beautiful. We spent our whole time visiting every major tourist attraction Paris had to offer. It was a lovely experience taking a tour of the city by boat on the Seine. We ate well and experienced the French cuisine. In my opinion, it was not as exotic as it is made out to be. I would rather have had my good-old “steak and fries”. But I am a simple person, and not into haute cuisine, petite this and petite that. The French can have that. Besides Paris, we made a few short trips to other countries like Luxembourg and London. The trips added more to my knowledge of European countries.

bit exaggerated, but you get the idea – I was not in the city. I loved all those sounds, reminiscent of growing up on my parents’ farm in the Philippines. Every visit we made was somehow memorable. I had absolutely nothing to do but relax and enjoy my weekends. I drank beer and schnapps with Klaus every day from morning till whenever. Margot would cook traditional German dishes, which were absolutely delicious. She would cook it especially for me knowing I loved her cooking. So it was eat, and drink all day long! The trips from Brussels to Niedenstein were long. It was over four hours on a good day. In the winters it took forever. It



Picturesque town of Monschau on the border of Belgium and Germany.

SPAIN

Well, “I wanted to live in Spain next” happened sooner than I expected. Sometime in December 1980, shortly after Cotleigh Belgium folded, I packed my Mercedes with everything I owned and drove from Brussels to Torremolinos (Malaga) Spain. I made the trip in four easy days. It was a very pleasant drive through Belgium, France, and northern Spain. I stayed in a nice motel in Torremolinos. The next few days, I explored downtown Torremolinos in detail wondering what I was going to do here. I ran into a Dutch bar right in the center of town. It was called Bar Amsterdam. It was a big busy bar and the majority of customers were, you guessed it: Dutch. Lo and behold, who were the owners of the bar? It was none other than Walt and his wife Atie the owners of The Painter in The Hague, in partners with another bar owner I knew in the Hague, Brady and his wife Connie. What a small world! They both sold their bars in Holland and came to Torremolinos to start Bar Amsterdam. Needless to say, we renewed our friendship and spent countless hours talking mainly about starting a business in Spain. They

were fairly new themselves. I felt at home in this bar, met a lot of Dutch people and expats either living here or on vacation here.

One day not long after I arrived, I stopped at a bar just outside of the center, within just five minutes walking distance. I forgot what the name of the bar was, but anyway, the owner was there, a young Dane named Niels. The only other person in the bar was another Dane, Jens Christensen. Jens was going to be a lifetime friend, and we still maintain contact today. The bar was in total disarray and in bad shape. It was no wonder nobody was around. I stayed a long time talking to Niels. His wife had just left him and went back to Denmark. He was totally dejected and broke. All he wanted to do was sell the bar and go back to Denmark. I offered to buy the bar for \$5,000 and assume his lease. He said he would think about it. It took a couple of days until Niels, on the advice of his close friend Jens told me he would accept my offer. I was so happy! Now I owned a bar in Spain! After all the legal paperwork was completed by a Notary, I took possession of the bar while, Niels left for Denmark.

The first order of the day was to completely renovate the bar. It was not a big job. I kept most of the basic structure intact, spruced it up, decorated it and I was ready to go in a short period of time. I named the bar: “Bob’s Junkyard”. News of new bars opening in Torremolinos always spread like wildfire most especially within the expat community – and there was a large community of expats from every country in the world living in Torremolinos. They came to see what the “Junkyard”, “owned by an American” was all about. They liked what they saw and they kept on coming back and bringing more friends every time they came back, and so the business flourished. I was getting packed houses every day. Even the Dutch community came to the bar. I had to hire a Spanish bartender and a waiter to help me out. Bob’s Junkyard became the talk of the town. What I did not get were local Spanish customers. Whenever they came to the bar, all they saw were foreigners and the language spoken was English. They always left shortly after coming in. I really did not mind at all. I was happy with what I had.

I also moved to an apartment. It was owned by a German named Alfred and his girlfriend Maureen. They were very nice people and excellent hosts.

We had lots of parties at their complex and they too came to my bar together with other Germans.



Here I am working at my bar, "Bob's Junkyard"

I had been running the bar for about a year and all this time I kept on asking Siggie to join me. It was not an easy decision for her to make. She had a lifetime job at the EU and was not about to give that up, not to mention all the benefits and retirement she had. The only option she had was to take a limited leave of absence. She got all the information on how to do it and decided she would come to Spain.

Winter seasons are usually not very busy times so I shut the bar down for a week sometime in January 1981, and flew back to Brussels. Siggie had goodbye parties and well wishes from friends and colleagues. We packed her little Fiat 127 with everything she could pack in it and we made our journey the same way I did; through Belgium, France, and northern Spain down to southern Spain, to Torremolinos. It was a long four-day drive for overloaded Fiat, but we made it without incident. It was actually a very nice trip on that little trusty Fiat 127, what a reliable little Italian car!

Siggi was well received and very much liked by the local community. She instantly became well known in the circles of expats. She brightened the atmosphere at the Junkyard, we were getting more customers. We started serving little snacks and select light meals. That went well. We worked long hard hours together with the help of “Kique” the bartender I hired earlier.

But we did have a lot of time to enjoy Spain on our days off. The Junkyard shut down one day a week. We visited many areas in Southern Spain including the world famous Alhambra in Seville, and a visit to Morocco. We went to the beach often... remember the Spanish always had a “siesta”. Siestas started around 3:00 p.m. and work resumed at 6:00 p.m. for us. That gave us about three hours to rest and enjoy the beach and do other things. We had many guests come visit us; Siggi’s Mom came, so did my Mom, my sister Elvie, Siggi’s sisters, and a host of other family and friends. We, mostly Siggi, took them everywhere, while I took them to the bullfights and flamenco shows.

One day the nuclear aircraft carrier U.S.S. Kennedy part of the U. S. Navy fleet conducting exercises in the Mediterranean docked in Malaga, Spain. Many any of the crew member on shore leave, hearing about Torremolinos, came to town. They came by the hundreds! A big chief on board, came to the Junkyard one afternoon and liked our place, liked Siggi and me, liked our customers and liked the fact it was an English-speaking American-owned bar. Before he left, he told us he wanted to rent the bar for three days for the exclusive use by his Division. They were going to pay a large sum of money for taking over our bar – all drinks included, they would provide the food and snacks. If there were any damages, they would pay for it. Siggi and I gladly agreed. We notified all our customers, and they did not mind at all. It was a huge success. The Navy brought a lot of food from the ship and everyone had a blast. For them and for us, it was a memorable event. Drunk as everyone got, there were no problems. The Navy Military Police (MPs) made sure everyone behaved, not just at the Junkyard, but all over Torremolinos. The most memorable event of this visit by the Navy was when the Chief invited Siggi and me to visit and tour the aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Kennedy. We came on board and the first thing we saw were the attack aircraft and helicopters parked on deck, we saw the launch and landing

ramps, above deck, we saw the complex arrays of navigation and what the control centers looked like, it was mind-boggling. Below deck we saw how personnel lived, the numerous restaurants, cafeterias, and shops all over the ship. It was like a small city. The tour ended with a fabulous dinner. We could eat anything and as much as we wanted. What a memorable visit we will never forget! The Chief brought us back to Torremolinos and thanked us profoundly for our help, support, and generosity.



With Mom at the bullfights in Torremolinos.

The bar business was starting to take a toll on Siggi and I. We really put in a lot of long hard hours even if we had time off. We had lots of parties, darts tournaments, and big New Year's Eve parties as well. They were all well-attended events by the expat community. Despite it all, the bottom line was, I was not making the fortune I dreamed of making.

Two events happened that helped us resolve our situation.

Number one: one evening, some crooked official from the Guardia Civil came and demanded money from us or threatened to turn us in (denounce or "denuncia" in Spanish), to the authorities because our papers were not in order. We paid him off a couple of times, on the third time, we

told him to go to hell. This was a problem for us. One day, one of our regulars, Vince, a Brit, took Siggie and me aside and asked if we would be interested in selling our bar. It came as a blessing. He had a bar in London and wanted to invest in Spain. He liked our bar and had been observing the business for quite some time and was impressed. Siggie and I looked at each



New Year's Eve Party at Bob's Junkyard.

other and thought the same thing without saying anything – this was the chance to get out of the bar business. We met a few times more times with Vince and finally reached a mutual agreement to sell the Junkyard. After all the legal papers were signed, Vince took over the bar. He renovated it to a typical English high-class pub and called it The Bulldog. He did inherit a number of our clients, but now the bar had a different atmosphere. Time would tell if Vince's venture would pay off.

Number two: When my Dutch friends Walt and Brady the owners of Bar Amsterdam, found out we sold the Junkyard, they immediately contacted us and made a proposition. They wanted to start a partnership venture in a Restaurant-Bar just a few minutes walking distance south of downtown Torremolinos in a restaurant area on the beach of La Carihuella. La Carihuella was famous for its rows of seafood restaurants right on the beach. This area

was always packed with people, locals, and expats. I told them I was interested, “Let’s talk”.

We spent some time hammering out the details of the new venture. We had to determine what food to serve to set us apart from all the fish and seafood restaurants, what were we going to name the restaurant and all aspects of the business.

It turns out they already decided to leave most of those decisions to me since I was going to be the Manager of the new venture and was actually a very good cook myself. I was going to run it with very little or no interference from them. They would trust my decisions. I was happy with that and assured them I would give it everything I had. I could see Siggie was a bit hesitant. She then flat out told me; “I do not like nor trust those Dutch Mafioso”. I convinced her they were not Mafioso even if one of them did look like one.

“Casa Bambu” was born. I picked the name because the theme of the restaurant was “Asian Cuisine”. We were going to serve three unique dishes from six different Asian countries namely, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Indonesian, Indian and Burmese. Each dish was going to be totally different and unique to their country. Now La Carihuela had a completely new restaurant amongst them and had actually no competition anywhere in the country. I hired a couple of cooks, one was Arturo, a Filipino, and my partners sent a couple of their waiters and a bartender to come and work for me. I knew how to cook all the dishes I proposed to serve. It took a bit of time for me to train the cooks. We spent countless of hours experimenting and testing what we prepared before we opened the restaurant. All ingredients were to be precise in quantity and servings. I did not want a customer to try something, loved it, and when he came back the next time, it would taste differently. So everything had to be consistent and precise. Where applicable, we pre-cooked some dishes, we pre-prepared every ingredient we were going to use the day we would cook it. I trained the bartender on how to make American cocktails, he knew the rest. Now, Casa Bambu was ready for business. We had a grand opening, and the house was packed! We were prepared for it. Bar Amsterdam had to send me a couple more waiters to handle the crowd that evening.



My team at the Casa Bambu Restaurant - easy money NOT!

Everyone was pleased and happy with the food and the service. Casa Bambu was off to a good start. My initial regular customers after the opening were my old customers from the Junkyard, mostly expats. Their presence attracted people. As the local restaurant goes in La Carihuela walked by, they would come in out of curiosity without really knowing what the food was all about and tried it. They loved it and later brought more family and friends and they too, liked it. The training I stressed to my kitchen staff and the strict adherence to the preparation of each dish paid off. All the dishes we served were consistent in taste and quality and the customers came back for more.

In particular, customers loved the spring rolls (lumpia) we served, especially the Dutch community who knew the dish. “Loempia” as they spelled it, was served in every Indonesian restaurant in Holland. It got so popular, Siggie and I decided to make it in bulk and sell them commercially. It was a good decision. The venture caught on fire and we were selling lumpia to other bars in town by the hundreds. This venture actually took place as we sold the Junkyard. I felt so sorry for Siggie. After she learned how to make them from scratch, all she did was make them every day. We stocked a large freezer in our balcony and filled them with lumpia. And she still came to the

restaurant every evening to help and entertain our customers. What a far cry from her job at the EU! Poor little German Fraulein.

As Casa Bambu grew and as the community began to know it, so did the city authorities. They began snooping around the restaurant, looking it over with interest and talking to my staff. I did not have good vibes about them. They came a few more times, then one day asked me to sit down to talk. They started to ask me for the papers and permits of the restaurant. That was easy, Walt and Brady made sure it was in order. Then they asked me for the employment paperwork of the staff. Their papers were fine. Then they asked me for my papers. I knew this was coming. I did not have the required work and residence permits for foreigners. I explained Sigg and I were in the process of getting our papers and I argued Sigg was a German national who should be allowed to live and work in Spain. That did not fly. I was in trouble. My partners were very concerned and worried. They tried to get legal assistance but it was too late for that. I had broken the law. It took a few more months and a few more visits and interviews, then the authorities came and served me papers. I was to leave the country immediately or as soon as possible or go to jail. This was a very big and hard blow to take. I told my partners I had to leave.

In January 1984, with a heavy heart, and reluctance, I packed and left Torremolinos. Sigg left first for Germany to see her family and joined me in the U. S. in February. Everybody was sad, all they could do was wish Sigg and me the best of luck and a bright future. This was the end of Spain for us. We left behind many dear and close friends, notably; from England, Bob and Iris Goding, from Canada and Holland, Bill and Julia Prokopuk and their two boys, from Denmark, Jens Christensen and Wally Partridge from the States. We still maintain contact with them till today – except for Bob and Iris whom we visited again a couple of times later but who sadly passed away in the meantime. Wally, we do not know what ever happened to him. He just simply disappeared. We will always remember them. They were there together with many others, from the day we arrived giving us support and encouragement in our ventures in Torremolinos. They all frequented the Junkyard and Casa Bambu and all the events we did. It was hard to leave such a wonderful group of people.

The one skill Siggi and I acquired and learned well while in Spain, was how to speak Spanish

10 BACK TO THE STATES

After selling all our assets in Spain, and bidding all our friends “adios”, we moved. I went back to the States first, and moved to my Mom’s home in Union City, California. I was going to start from scratch again. Siggi, joined me in February. We stayed with Mom for over a year. I found a job as a Sales Representative for a Machinery Company as I tried to continue my search for a better job. So that Siggi could reside legally in the U. S., we got married. We finally made it on our second attempt. On the first attempt, the car broke down half way up the mountains to Reno, Nevada. On the second attempt, we made it to Reno without any incidents. It was the 21st of February, 1984, Siggi and I got married. It was a small and quiet wedding with only three of my family and none of Siggi’s present. We continued to live with Mom for a few more months.

I started to write to every airline I could think of applying for a job once again. But now I was even in worse shape as far as pilot currency was concerned and it was looking hopeless. I had not flown in eight years! I was advised by my airline pilot friends from the old days at the Hayward airport that I should go for a Flight Engineer (FE) Rating. This would enhance my chances of getting hired by the major airlines. Flight Engineers were then in demand because everybody else aimed for a pilot’s seat. I could’ve easily found employment in the Diesel industry, but I did not want to go back to that. Siggi found a job at a law firm working as a Legal Secretary. She was happy there. I went for the Flight Engineer Turbojet Rating.

It was May 1985. I made contact with my brother Sonny and Larry in Hawaii. They invited me to come back to Hawaii and join them. I later found out during the course of several phone conversations, Larry and Sonny had decided to dissolve the business partnership. I could’ve actually predicted this because I knew Sonny did not really have his heart working hard, long hours. He wanted to live like he did before. He longed to follow the lifestyle of the local Hawaiians. They seldom worked, they were always playing around or surfing at the beach. They were proud to “live off the

land”. Sonny and Larry maintained a good close relationship, and Sonny would oftentimes come down to the shop to work just to make some money. Larry, however, expanded the small shop they had into a large Company. He partnered with a big diesel engine parts manufacturer based in Los Angeles called Industrial Parts Depot (IPD). The company manufactured aftermarket diesel parts and components and needed a distributor in Hawaii. Larry and IPD, formed Industrial Parts Hawaii (IPH), a totally independent entity. Larry was to manage this new venture, IPD was going to supply him with parts. This was a great venture for everyone.

Our first child Marc Joshua was born on June 10, 1985, in Hayward, CA. The week after Marc was born, I flew to Hawaii. Larry picked me up at the airport. Sonny by now was living in Kihei, Maui. Driving out of Honolulu airport, Larry did not waste any time explaining how the new company was developing fast. They were doing very well. He needed an Operations Manager “yesterday”. The Operations Manager would oversee outside Service and Repairs, General Administration and Marketing and Sales covering all the islands of Hawaii. Meaning lots of traveling. He would manage the day-to-day operations of the company in general. He finished his updates by telling me that I was the right person for the job and he wanted my help. The salary package was above average, not to mention I had the freedom and the latitude to operate on my own. He would trust my decisions and actions. He knew I could do the job. He knew me well and for a long time. I graciously accepted the offer. It was God-sent. I started working the day after arrival. I stayed at Larry’s for a couple of days while he found me an apartment to live in.

Larry moved me to a nice apartment in Makaha. Makaha was located at the very west end of the island of Oahu. It was, for the most part, a “local’s” town. It was one of the areas of Oahu with a large population of native Hawaiians. The apartment itself was located up in the hills overlooking the ocean, a mile outside of Makaha center. Makaha was a very popular surfing beach town. The highway to my apartment had a lot of beautiful local beaches and picnic parks. Makaha center had their own small local groceries and shops. I was living in real-life Hawaii! Makaha is quite a distance to

downtown Honolulu but just a few miles from work at Kapolei. The short commute was perfect for my situation.

Siggi joined me in Hawaii in August. She loved it in Hawaii. For her, this was Paradise. We tried as much as possible to live as the locals did rather than live as tourists or as temporary residents did. For Siggi, it was a big change but an impressive one. We lived well in Hawaii even if you considered the high cost of living there. That only applied to visitors and tourists. The locals (we were one of them) did not shop or buy anything in downtown Honolulu. We only went to Honolulu to be, and act like tourists. We shopped only at local supermarkets. Elvie and her Mom Ted visited Hawaii often since her youngest daughter Marie lived there as well. Marie had a management position with a commercial diving company, Seaward Marine. She was doing very well. I heard there were a lot of other Silos relatives in Hawaii whom I had never met. Hawaii became home overnight.

I was doing extremely well at IPH. Life was good! I had more than quadrupled the company's customer base, I had instilled trust and confidence in our company's services and reliability, and I was becoming well known in the construction, industrial, marine, sugarcane, and pineapple industries in all the islands. I was basically running IPH without physically working and getting my hands dirty. Larry was extremely happy, I felt good and so was my bank account.

We stayed a year and a half in Makaha. I don't know how I did it, but we managed to buy a condominium in Honolulu. The Crosspointe condominium complex was a brand new complex located in Aiea a very central area in Honolulu. We were close to Pearlridge a major shopping mall, the Aloha Stadium, Pearl Harbor, the International Airport, and just a short drive away to downtown Honolulu, Chinatown and Waikiki Beach. We could not have found a better place nor a better location.

I started flying once again when I lived in Hawaii, eventually ending up with an airline job with Mid Pacific Airlines (MidPac). For now, I am skipping how we ended up leaving Hawaii. I will detail that when we get to Chapter Thirteen.

Siggi, Marc and I went back to California in April 1988, three months after MidPac shut down operations unexpectedly. I did not feel like asking for my job back at IPH, and I did not feel like staying in Hawaii much longer. I wanted to pursue my career in aviation while I was still fresh and current. I figured, now would be an easy time to move up to the major carriers. I was wrong. It was during this period that a lot of airlines folded, declared bankruptcy or merged with bigger airlines. The pilot market was flooded with unemployed pilots. It was chaos in the airline industry!

I was still lucky. My younger brother Vincent had a big business going on in real estate. He bought and sold old “fixer-uppers” renovated and repaired them, and sold them again for a huge profit. He had a lot of houses lined up for repairing. I came back at the right time. I joined him and so did my other two brothers; Sonny came back from Hawaii and Eddy who was living close to Oakland where most of Vincent’s houses were located at, joined in as well. The four of us brothers were pretty much involved in the renovation and repair side of the real estate business. The buying and selling of property was good, the money was good. Meantime, Siggi got her old job back with the law firm she previously worked for.

Then came Natasha Marie, my second child with Siggi. She was born in Hayward on July 15, 1988, the same date as Siggi’s Dad. Siggi wanted to go back to Europe since our economic situation in the U. S. was too insecure. We decided she had to do so when she was offered a temporary job back at the EU. She had given up her permanent job there in 1985 when her official leave of absence had expired. We had no time to waste, we had to get back to Brussels. I too wanted to go back to Europe. I no longer really felt much at home in the United States. Having lived in Europe before, I gambled I would find something to do there.

11 BACK TO BELGIUM

We made the move back to Brussels, Belgium, in March 1989. We decided it was the best decision for the family. Siggi was fortunate to get a job back at the European Union and could start working there again full time soon after we arrived in Brussels. With a little help from some friends, Siggi was happy to get back into the EU in spite of having to start again from the bottom and losing seniority and benefits. It was lucky for all of us because this gave us the best opportunity to start a better life, and a better future. We settled down in Brussels.

I continued to look for work concentrating in the airline industry. It was not easy as an American, to find employment in Europe. Working regulations were very stringent. But I finally got my break. It was the Spring of 1990. I got a call from Tempelhof Airlines, USA an American company based and operating out of West Berlin, Germany. This became the continuing and eventually the end of the saga of my airline career. Again, this is detailed later in *My Life in Aviation*.

I came back home to Brussels in December 1990, after almost a year and a half in Berlin while my family lived in Brussels. I managed to land a job in Paris almost immediately after Berlin. I was hired as a Training Instructor by Flight Safety France based in Le Bourget Airport. Flight Safety was a large flight training company. I was hired immediately, but it was a temporary job. It was contingent on my ability to get a French residence and work permit. I worked for two months, and sure enough, the French authorities refused to issue me my papers. So, it was “Au Revoir” France. I really did not know what to do at the time. Since I could not be legally employed in Belgium without the proper documents – which I could probably have obtained being married to a Siggi, a citizen of the EU, I could only think of going back home. But the airline industry in the U.S. was in worse shape than ever before.

It was actually before I started working for Tempelhof, or maybe at about the same time, Siggie and I bought our first home. It was a large old brick house built in the 1950's located just south of Brussels. The house was in excellent shape. The location perfect. The town was called Steenokkerzeel. Except for all the homes lining the main street, it was really farm land all around us, yet we were not far from the city. The house sat on a large piece of land and had a lot of plants, and mature fruit trees. All it really needed was a renovation of the interior to modernize it, THAT, I could do. The exterior and foundation were solid. We loved this home. We move in to our new home in February 1991. My kids, Marc, and Natasha grew up in this home.

After Tempelhof was over, the idea of starting a bar struck me. If I could do it in Holland before, why not in Belgium? I scoured the local business advertisements in Brussels including nearby towns outside of Brussels. I struck pay dirt! I found a place in Mechelen, a town just outside of Brussels. Someone wanted to lease a place which was previously a bar. It was shut down for a couple of years. I went and saw it and it was the perfect place for the bar I wanted to start. It was ideally located right in the middle of town where a lot of other bars were, it was right next to the Cathedral. Perfect location! I was lucky to be able to negotiate a fair deal with the owners, they were desperate. They figured I would be the right person to rent and run a bar rather than keeping the place empty and shut, so they agreed to lease the premises to me. Het Toeternietoe became mine in the summer of 1993. Life was good!

I liked the bar's name before. It was unique. So I kept the name Het Toeternietoe. It was a Flemish word but no one seemed to be able to translate it meaningfully. That name made it unique. It did not take me very long or cost much money to renovate the place. I did a lot of the work myself. Remember, I renovated houses a few years ago. This was a piece of cake. I opened my doors for business in less than two months. It did not take long for the local community to discover the newest bar in town. Many people came out of curiosity and to find out who the new owner was. There was excitement in the air! I guess they were pleased with my American-style service and how I greeted and treated them. This is not very common in

Europe, Brussels especially. People are more formal and reserved. My bar was different. So people came and business started booming. Toeternietoe became the envy of other bars in the area. The bar business in Europe is hard work. I usually started at 2 p.m. and usually closed shop at 05:00 in the morning every single day, all week long. Did I have a family life? That was gone. Siggi supported me and my monkey business, but I knew she was bearing the consequences.

There were lots of private and public parties and friendly gatherings at Toeternietoe. One memorable event happened on January 14. I had closed down the bar around 3:00 a.m. and made it back home just before I passed out from exhaustion on the bathroom floor. Siggi helped me get into bed somehow. It was my 50th birthday. At some point close to lunch time, the phone rang. I answered the phone, my family was not home. It was my bar help calling and telling me there was an incident at the bar, and I should come as soon as possible to sort it out. So I dragged myself out of bed, did not ever bother to shave or put on decent clothes! I drove to Mechelen with all sorts of nightmare scenarios going through my head. I opened the doors, it was dark. Suddenly all the lights came on. There was what seemed like thousands of people there, well, maybe just a big gathering of close friends and customers. They were singing Happy Birthday! Siggi had just pulled a big surprise party for me. It was indeed the surprise of my life. I had no idea this was going to happen. Needless to say, it turned out to be a very big and memorable event for me. A 50th surprise birthday party! Drinks were flowing, everyone was buying everyone a drink and this went on till the wee hours of the following morning. Everyone was drunk, everyone was happy, all had a great time. Thanks to Siggi.

One evening a year into the bar business, a couple of well-dressed gentlemen (they looked like Mafioso to me then) sat at the bar. They had a couple of drinks as they looked the place over – inside and outside. I didn't feel comfortable with that. I felt they were up to something. They said goodbye and "we will be back again". Jeez, I couldn't tell if that was good or a warning. A few days later they came back, but this time, they had a friendlier attitude and were actually smiling! A few drinks later they asked if I would sit down at one of the tables to talk. I did. They started the conversation

with; “We like your bar”, “we like the way you run it”, “we like your kind of customers and how they react to you”, “we want to buy your bar”. I was shocked! I was indeed getting tired of the bar life at this point, but it never occurred to me to sell it. I was speechless. As the talks continued I finally told them I would definitely consider it, “what were you willing to pay?” I asked. They gave me a figure, I told them “it was too low, make me a better offer, and I would think about it”. It was actually a decent offer, but I was “fishing” for as much as I could. They said they would be back. Jeez, they must’ve really wanted the bar badly because they were back the next day. They increased their offer a bit more. I had already in my mind, decided to accept the offer they made the previous day. I did want to get out of the bar business. I knew I could start another bar somewhere if and when I wanted to. At the end of the negotiations, it was “take it or leave it”. I took it and Toeternietoe was sold on January 1995.

Now I was without a job once again, but, I was home with my family. It was exhilarating not to have to spend all night working, sleeping all day, not seeing my family and waste all my time playing around. But boredom set in after a while. I had to work, I had to do something.

I was lucky. I had met John Thomas through Joe Kucinski a neighbor of ours at our old apartment some years back. John lived in Kortenberg, the next town over from Steenokkerzeel. They were Americans, both working at USNATO. Through them, I eventually landed a clerical job at the U.S. Air Base in Chievres, south of Brussels shortly after I sold Toeternietoe. It was a start. John and Joe worked as IT Specialists. In addition, John was a programmer as well. They both encouraged me to get into the Information Technology (IT) field. I was already familiar with computers at the time and I loved hanging around John and Joe. I learned a lot from them, John especially. I followed their advice and went on and obtained both my A+ and Network+ Computer Certificates through self-study. I continued studying for the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) Certificate. At that time it was a series of five difficult courses to get the MCSE. Over the next two years, I got my MCSE Certificate. Now, I had the most important tools I needed to get into the IT industry.

During this time, I started missing Hawaii again. I wanted to go back to the land I felt at home at. Don't get me wrong, I loved Brussels, it was my home, it was where my family lived. Siggi understood how I felt although she thought I was a bit crazy. I subsequently resigned from my job and left for Hawaii in July 1997. Once again, luck was with me. When I went and saw Larry at IPH, he asked me if I wanted to work for him again. The company was doing well and he said he could use me. This was God-sent because I came to Hawaii without any idea of what I was going to do.

Siggi and the kids came over for the Christmas Holiday season that December. It was great to see my family again. It was a short vacation, but Siggi promised to come back for a summer vacation the following year. She did and we all had a great family get-together that summer. Seeing my family and being together once again made me realize I was at the wrong place at the wrong time. I realized I should be in Belgium with my family instead of "playing around" in Hawaii. To make a long story short, I went back home in September of 1988. Siggi threw a big surprise party for me. Everybody came in some sort of Hawaiian attire. It was great to be home again!

I still had contacts from my last job with the Defense Department, so it didn't take long before I landed a job with the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS). It was a Civil Service job which paved the way, or rather was a stepping stone to a better and higher position level with the Department of Defense based in Belgium. I was initially hired as a Supply Officer and assigned to the Brussels American School. I exceeded expectations at this post and was promptly promoted to a Regional Supply Officer and assigned to the District Supervisor's Headquarters. The District operations oversaw all the European DODDS schools within the European Union. It was a big step up and a big responsibility for me considering I had just really started working for DODDS.

It was during the course of this job, I applied for, and got a job with USNATO in Brussels. The U. S. Department of State oversees all U. S. Government operations overseas except for a few like the U. S. Military. Brussels, Belgium was the seat of the Tri-Mission Department of State presence in Brussels. It consisted of the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (USNATO) and the U.S. Mission to

the European Union (USEU), each operating separately with specific mandates and tasks in the host country.

Jobs at the Mission were only open to cleared U. S. American Citizens. Again, I was lucky to be at the right place at the right time. But I also had the basic computer background experience required by the job. Furthermore, I had previously studied and passed a few computer courses through self-study. USNATO hired me as a Computer Technician with a one month trial period. I made it, which eventually led to a much higher permanent position, a Computer Specialist. Work at NATO was very exciting for me. I had a lot of important responsibilities and learned a lot of new skills I never knew existed. I was proud to be part of the team representing the U. S. Mission to NATO. It was a prestigious position, to say the least. I had met President George W. Bush during one of his visits, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, and a host of Ambassadors during my tenure at the Mission.

It was a couple of years later, I was now a senior employee at the Mission and happy with my job when my Supervisor called me in to his office. Danny Lockwood was a senior ranking officer at the State Department. He suggested I apply for a direct hire position with the Department of State instead of working as a local hire restricted to Brussels. He told me he could get me in if I were interested. He said he knew me well enough at this point and he would not hesitate to recommend me. He proceeded to list all the benefits of working as a Foreign Service Officer like; free housing, extended U. S. Government benefits, travel around the world as a Diplomat, etc. I did not need much convincing. I had met so many colleagues who told me about the Foreign Service. I just did not know how to get in. It was a tough process then and it still is today.

But Danny Lockwood made it easy. I turned in my application and all the necessary forms together with two very strong and powerful letters of recommendations. One was from Danny and the second was from Ambassador Nicholas Burns who went on to be an Undersecretary of State under Hilary Clinton. (Nicholas Burns is still a very prominent name in politics and, a regular news commentator on TV today). The Ambassador supported my interest to join the Foreign Service and wished me luck.

Sometime in March 2002, The Department of State sent a cable to USNATO addressed to me. They wanted me to come to Washington DC for an interview. I could not believe it! The door had opened with the biggest opportunity in my life! All I had to do was pass the interview and the battery of tests administered by the Department.

It was during this period that Siggi and I were having lots of problems with our marriage. We had lots of problems before, but they were surmountable. This time, we were sailing in rough waters. It got worse when I started to talk about our future life in the Foreign Service – if I ever got hired of course.

Shortly after getting the cable, I flew to DC on my expense. The Department did not pay for initial interviews. Everyone in the Mission wished me luck. Yes, I needed lots of luck at this point. They at least paid for my hotel expenses realizing I had come from overseas. The interview was fairly easy and casual and I passed it. I knew I passed because I went to the next level of the process – the written exams. It was an eight-hour long battery of tests from just about every subject you can think of. I guess they wanted to know what made my brain tick. With that, they told me they would contact me with the results of my application for a Top Secret security clearance. This was a very lengthy process of investigation of my whole life conducted by the Department, the CIA, the FBI and other intelligence agencies. I was later going to find out how little I knew of my past. I went back to Brussels not really knowing if I had a job or not. I could only pray I did.

Late June 2002, the Department of State once again sent a cable to the Mission addressed to me. This was going to be the cable I dreaded or wanted to receive. It started with “Congratulations....” This was all I wanted to see, I hardly read the rest of the cable till later. I jumped with joy! I ran all over the Mission telling everyone I met; “I just got hired by the Department of State!” Everyone was happy for me. I thanked Danny Lockwood, and Ambassador Nicholas Burns profoundly. All they said was, “do well and don’t let us down”. I promised I would make them proud of me. More cables later outlined details of my employment; when I start, travel arrangements, accommodations, and tons of other details.

It was also around June 2002. Siggi and I had decided to go our separate ways. By now, we could not reconcile our differences. I left for Washington DC with a heavy heart instead of joy. It was just a couple of days before my son Marc's 17th birthday which made it even worse leaving. But life had to go on. Siggi and I remain good friends and even after our divorce a few years later we continued to be good friends. I left to start my new job with the Foreign Service.

12 LIFE IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

The United States Department of State (DOS), often referred to as the State Department, is part of the Executive branch of the Federal Government, equivalent to the Foreign Ministry in most other countries. The State Department is primarily responsible for International Relations and Foreign Affairs. The Secretary of State is the head of the Department and answers directly to the President of the United States. The U.S. maintains diplomatic relations with over 180 countries through a network of more than 270 Embassies and Consulates or other International Organizations around the world. The Department employs thousands of employees both civilians, Foreign Service Officers and Specialists whose responsibilities are to compile and analyze reports and data from many sources and providing logistical support for post operations, including other entities like the Department of Defense, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Homeland Security, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

There are many positions and career paths available to everyone when they decide to enter the Foreign Service. The jobs are very competitive, in fact at times very difficult to get into. Many qualified and highly educated applicants do not make it. The hiring process is lengthy and can take over a year. Once hired, it will take another six months or more depending on your cone or specialty of highly, specialized training before you go out on your first assignment. Once you go, you and your family will travel with Diplomatic Passports. In addition to traveling at government expense, there are many benefits in the Foreign Service. While at post, in addition to your regular salary, you get fully paid embassy housing which are usually ample in space and are built to U.S. standards. The Department also pays for traveling to and from post once a once every two years, not to mention they pay for moving all your household goods, belongings and one car from your state of origin. While at post, you receive not only all U.S. federal holidays but usually

all the local holidays of the host country as well. There are also other pay incentives such as danger pay, hardship pay and post differential costs for some countries. Most posts, unless you are assigned to some isolated island or country allow you the opportunity to visit many adjoining countries or cities over a weekend or holidays. Most Embassies especially the larger ones, provide employees the luxury of being able to purchase American made goods and groceries at the Embassy store. The cafeteria usually serve high quality meals at really cheap prices. The only reminder you get you are not in America is all the barred windows, fortified walls and gates and the presence of armed guards and Marines all around the premises. Then you realize you are in the Foreign Service. Overall, the Foreign Service can be a rewarding and fascinating place to work. If you can get over the idea you are living in a foreign country and maybe able to cope with the standards of life that could be below what you are used to in the States, you have it made.

I was hired as an Information Management Specialist (IMS) working under the Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM). The IRM is a component of the Embassy's Management Team. The bureau has a large mandate and is a very important part of all Embassy operations. Staffers working at IRM overseas are often times fondly called; "Commo" short for Communications Officer or, IM'er short for Information Manager. Our tasks are formidable and varied. Some of the tasks assigned to IRM Staffers are deployment and maintenance of a global network infrastructure supporting all the overseas missions, assure the security of State information resources, including all forms of communications, cables, and documents; unclassified, confidential, classified, Top Secret and above. Everything coming in or going out of the Embassy we see and control. We control who can see or not see sensitive data or information. Although every American Diplomat staff at the Embassy holds a Top Secret Clearance, not all of them can see nor read Top Secret documents unless it is addressed to them directly or their respective Sections. It is our responsibility to assure cables for example, go to the right person or section. IRM staff control and maintain all cryptographic equipment. Including encrypted telephone systems and fax machines, video teleconferencing equipment and control the inventory of the Embassy's IT-related accountable equipment. We support desktop users,

code software and applications, and develop long-term strategic plans for the use and deployment of information technologies. Last but not least, we manage the activities of the local IT Staff who support our unclassified systems, the Telephone and Radio Technicians, telephone operators, and the mailroom staff. That is a lot of people to manage especially in a large Embassy. We also generally conduct Emergency Destruction exercises twice a year to assure we know exactly what to do if we ever have to evacuate the Embassy in an emergency.

IRM operations at the Embassy is divided into two major offices, the Information Program Center (IPC) usually headed by the Information Management Officer (IMO), then we have the Information Service Center (ISC) usually headed by the Information Programs Officer (IPO). The IPC section is not accessible to Embassy staff. Our section is usually located away from the general layout of the Embassy. It is fortified with steel walls with no windows to the outside. Entry to our section is protected by a steel-bar gate, and a thick 8" vault door with a complex locking mechanism. Besides the IM staff, the only people allowed to come to the IPC are the Ambassador, or accompanied Heads of Sections, or visiting IRM staff who hold a Top Secret together with a Cryptographic Clearance.

In an emergency and evacuation, the IRM staff together with the Security Officers are the very last people that leave the Embassy. The primary task of IRM staff task in an evacuation is to destroy every piece of sensitive equipment included all classified or sensitive documents and files.

Remember the 2012 Benghazi, Libya attack when Islamic militants attacked the American diplomatic compound? Our U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens and our U.S. Foreign Service Information Management Officer Sean Smith Stevens were killed in the line of duty. The attack also killed two CIA security officers. I am guessing Sean Smith had to stay behind to complete the destruction of all the Consulate sensitive equipment and files. It was his job and responsibility. I am sure he wanted to get out of there, but it was too late, he got killed doing his job. This is an extreme example of the dangers embassy staff face in danger posts. Threats are always present.

I started my training on August 2, 2002. There were sixteen IRM new hires. We joined a group of about another one hundred new hires with different cones or specialty. We were known as Class 66. We met at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, VA where we began our week-long orientation program. We learned how the State Department worked and operated. It was a laid back course, very informative and truly interesting.

The following week the IRM group was moved to Warrenton, a remote town west of Virginia. Warrenton was a special training center. It was a Top Secret facility and we were not allowed to tell anyone where we were nor what we were doing there. The reason being, all the trainees there came from various government intelligence agencies. We were not even allowed to ask classmates who they worked for and vice versa. I thought at first this was ridiculous. But as I learned later in my career, this was a very standard practice which safeguarded our positions as we got deployed overseas. No one was supposed to know what we did and who we were working for.

We were all provided apartments which was going to be home for the next three months. We all studied hard every single day. We had to pass every single course we took or you were out. I was very fortunate during my training days at Warrenton. There were many training courses I was already familiar with, having done the job at USNATO before. My classmates and I became a very close group. We were sharing notes, stories, and anecdotes and, reviewing lessons learned. We also partied on weekends at the local bars. The bars knew who we were but they did not ask questions. They just “knew”.

IRM Class of 66 completed training toward the end of the year. We all came back to Washington, DC for our graduation ceremonies. A number of dignitaries came up and did their speeches.

We received our certificates from an Ambassador whose name I can no longer remember. Together with the certificates, we were going to receive the flag of the country we were going to be sent to. No one knew where

each was going. Each of us during training were presented with a long list of countries and we had to mark down our first five preferences. No guarantees we were going to get it, but nevertheless we had to list our choices. I screamed and jumped for joy and even kissed our Assignments Officer who was giving out the flags. I got my first choice: Athens, Greece!! Everybody laughed out loud at my reaction. I was the happiest graduate in that class!

The State Department promptly packed whatever little personal belongs and household goods I had. I shopped till I was broke for items I knew I would need overseas. They packed all of it and, prepared my car for shipping, yes my car, I bought a car while I was there. I bought a 1994 Mercedes Benz, practically new with 14,000 miles, and this car was going to travel with me for the rest of my Foreign Service assignments to come. I took another week to me to complete all the paperwork I needed. I had all my credentials, travel orders, airline ticket, and off I went. Greece, here I come!

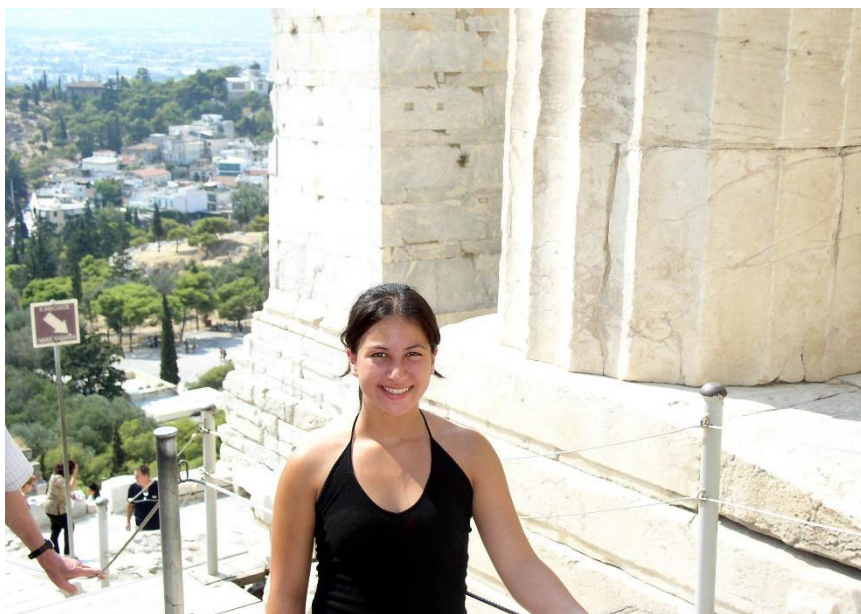
ATHENS, GREECE

I was met and picked up by a Consular Officer. His name was Tom. He brought me to my new home in Glyfada, a suburb of Athens ten miles away from the Embassy. It was totally furnished by the Embassy, all I needed to do was plop my dead tired body in bed and rest. Tomorrow, I had to be at work.

Tom picked me up in the morning, it was time to start my new assignment at the Embassy. I spent all of my first day meeting all the staff starting with the Ambassador, the Deputy Chief of Mission, and on down the Management hierarchy including the Chief of ORM, my boss. I met all the Heads of other Sections, and many local hire employees. It was a long tiring day, I was suffering from jet lag. To make a long story short, I fell into place at the Embassy. I fell into place with my new job. My bosses were actually surprised at how quickly I learned my tasks. The answer was simple, I was doing a lot of the same work at USNATO. The only thing different was the working environment. They were pleased and impressed with my

initial performance and I moved up the ladder fast bypassing a number of colleagues who were there before me.

To say, Athens, Greece is a beautiful country is an understatement. This was my first post and it remains to be my most unforgettable and memorable one. No other country I saw later would match Greece in beauty, culture and lifestyle.



My daughter Natasha at the Parthenon

My daughter Natasha later joined me while I was assigned to Athens, Greece. She was in her freshman year in high school. She was running into a lot of problems at the European School in Brussels and her grades showed it. Siggie and I decided the best way to get her back on track was to change her environment. I gladly welcomed Natasha's arrival. At least I had one of our kids.

Marc stayed behind, he was about ready to finish high school and it did not make sense for him to move. I enrolled Natasha at the American Community Schools of Athens (ACS). ACS is a private school offering international K–12 education to local, national and international students in Greece. The student population at that time was mostly American, British

and European nationals. ACS Athens embraces both the American educational system and the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma.



The Parthenon, Athens, Greece

Natasha followed the IB program. ACS Athens was the only school in Greece to offer the IB diploma as students pursued their high school studies. I must admit I had a difficult time with Natasha at first. I didn't know how to raise a daughter by myself, furthermore, Natasha wanted to go back to Brussels. It took a while but all of a sudden she found her niche. She made a lot of friends, studied hard and did very well in school. She graduated from high school in 2006. Siggie and Marc came down from Brussels for her graduation. Incidentally, Siggie and Marc came to visit Greece a couple of times previously. They stayed with me and Natasha. It was nice to see them again whenever they came to visit.

The Greeks are a very friendly people although many had anti-American sentiments. I visited so many islands in the almost four years I spent there. I was everywhere! Ancient culture and history were everywhere to be found. Everyone seemed to have a great social life. It almost seemed no one worked. How could they when they were out all night partying into the wee hours of

the morning. I was part of this lifestyle and loved it. I went out at least twice maybe three times during the weekdays, especially after work, and for sure every weekend. The Embassy put me in a very luxurious third-floor private apartment in an upper-class neighborhood in Glyfada located by the beach. I had a 180-degree view of the sea from my balcony, the islands in the background and the golf course below. It had a large pool. I could not ask for a better place and location.



At Sounio, southeast of Athens

Located by the beach, Glyfada was also the center of many bars, clubs, and restaurants. I studied Greek at the Embassy Language Center and was getting good at it for a while. Going to Greek clubs, I learned a few classic Greek dances. Going out to Latin Clubs I learned how to dance the salsa, merengue, bachata and the Cha-Cha. It was a lot of fun. The beaches in Greece are beautiful. I spent a lot of weekends partying with friends at the beaches. Life was good here. I was in Paradise!

I met my cousin Cristina Recto in Athens. Her husband Greg Candy and son Kyle were with her, they were visiting Greece. We were very happy

to meet each other for the first time. We didn't know each other before so it was "getting to know you", and catching up with family history and ties. They only stayed in Athens a couple of days and went on to tour the other islands. We were to meet again a few more times in 2014. This time, I also met her sister Lisa. We have maintained contact ever since.

Meanwhile, Siggi and I finally divorced in April 2005. It was the right thing and only thing to do. We had grown apart over the years, although we remained good friends. She remains a close "advisor" to me even today.

One important and very significant event occurred during my tenure in Athens. It was 2004, and Athens was hosting the Summer Olympics. The Olympics proved to be a statistical nightmare for all the U.S. Agencies in Athens starting with the U.S. Embassy followed by the Department of Defense, Intelligence and everybody else. We were tasked with providing security for all our dignitaries, athletes, and U.S. citizens. We had to build an infrastructure of communications and network systems between the Embassy, our military intelligence services, and the Greek intelligence services as well so everyone was on the same page. I was assigned to build a remote network system at the Hilton Hotel basement which the Embassy leased for the event. That was a formidable task... I was only barely two years on the job, but the Embassy had nobody else. I had to oversee the task. Incidentally, my son Marc was in Athens for his summer vacation. I got him a job at the Embassy and he was promptly assigned to my section to help set up the new satellite network we were building at the Hilton. My daughter Natasha was also working at the Human Resources Section at the Embassy as a summer hire. Hee, hee, hee... both my kids were working! Anyway, there were a lot of security issues and threats we had to address and resolve. A lot of military Special Forces were "smuggled" into Greece and embedded into the general community. Patriot missile stations were put up at strategic points in the hills surrounding Athens. I was involved in setting up satellite communications systems to support military operations. That was an Embassy task. We all worked around the clock and waited anxiously. The Olympics came and went without any disruptions whatsoever. It was a big relief. Everyone packed their bags and went home.

Another significant event during my tenure in Athens was the pleasure and honor of meeting our big boss, the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. She was a very nice and caring boss.

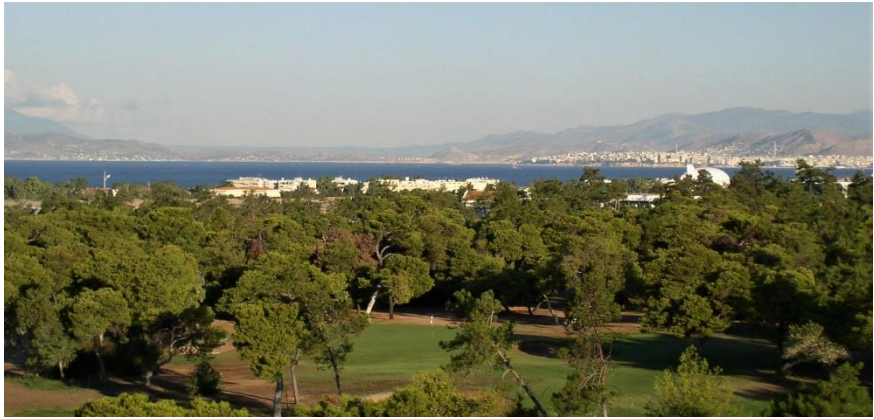
It was sometime towards the end of 2003 when I first met my girlfriend. By pre-agreement, and for a number of reasons, I will not be using her full and real name in this book. So let me just call her “Agapi” meaning sweetheart. She originated from a neighboring Balkan country. She and her family immigrated to Greece when she was thirteen and lived in Athens ever since. Agapi worked as a supervisor at a sporting goods shop in Athens. She also worked as a part time bartender at one of the bigger and well-known clubs in Glyfada while she was finishing her Music degree. I frequented this bar together with a contingent of Embassy Marine Guards and colleagues. We were quite well-known at this bar and Agapi took care of us whenever we were there. Long story short, we started seeing each other a bit at first, then more frequently later. We did go out a lot, toured many areas and islands of Greece.



My son Marc (foreground) in Santorini, Greece

We started dating regularly. In December 2004, and in the summer of 2005 we traveled to the USA; San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Hawaii for a short vacation. Hawaii was an unforgettable experience for Agapi, as she had

never seen such an exotic place before. She met my brother Sonny and my son Bobsy who were both living in Maui. They took us all over the island.



The golf course below my balcony, then the beach town of Glyfada and across the sea, the islands of Salamina on the left, Piraeus on the right.

She also met my daughter DeAnna and my grandkids while in Honolulu. In January 2006 we decided to get married, but getting all the necessary papers to get married in Greece was so difficult since we were both foreigners. In March we decided that it would be better to go and have the wedding in Las Vegas because since my assignment to Greece was going to end in July 2006. I asked the Embassy for another tourist visa for Agapi, and they gave it to us.

We then traveled to Las Vegas on April 3, 2006, and stayed at my cousin Pete's home. We practically got married soon after we got out of the airplane! We had the ceremony in the Chapel of the Chimes on April 5, 2006. It was hard for us, none of her family were present at such an important event in her life. The only people present were my cousin Pete and his wife, and my sister Meldy and her husband Everett who came from California for the wedding. Everything happened so fast! We didn't even have our wedding rings! Agapi used her Grandma's wedding dress – it was beautiful. No hairdressers, she did her own. Then back to Athens. My tour was coming to an end. We had to hurriedly get Agapi her immigrant visa for the United States so she could travel with me. My Diplomatic status enabled her to facilitate and expedite all the paperwork to leave Greece and immigrate to the United States. She got her papers in record-

breaking time. Everything was done fast - one of the perks working for the State Department!!

Athens was a great post. I was awarded numerous Performance and Achievement Awards during my assignment in Athens. I will forever remember Athens, hoping to one day go back again. I learned a lot in Athens including the language, although I have forgotten much of what I learned then. I made a lot of local friends in and out of the Embassy. I had to say goodbye but I wished I did not have to leave. I can continue to write memoirs of Greece, but that would take forever.



The port of Hydra. Hydra, is a beautiful island!

I finished my tour in Greece at the end of July 2006. The Embassy packed us out and made preparations to ship my household effects and car to my next post, Frankfurt, Germany. Natasha graduated and went back to Brussels where she would pursue a college degree in the U. K. We were then flown back to Washington while our stuff was getting shipped. In DC it was a week of debriefings followed by an orientation to prepare for my new assignment.

Before my next assignment, we took some time off and visited California and Hawaii once again. It was a great break from work, and great to see family again..

FRANKFURT, GERMANY

It was September 2006 when we arrived in Frankfurt. As always, we were met and picked up from the airport by an Embassy Officer. We were dropped off at our new home located inside the Embassy housing not too far from the U.S. Consulate. I was to report to work the following day.

Being a Regional Hub, the Consulate was huge by Embassy and Consulate standards. Almost all the U.S. government Agencies were located somewhere within the facility. This facility processed hundreds of visas every single day, including providing American military and civilian citizen services. I reported to the IRM Section and was given an extensive tour of the facilities by my bosses. Indeed the facility was huge! It was a hospital in WWII, then converted to what is now the American Consulate.

The Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM) further provides telecommunications, network, systems engineering, installation, and maintenance support to U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide through four regional support centers. These centers are known as RIMC. RIMC Frankfurt, is one of the four regional centers, providing high level and high-quality support for the 117 posts within the European region including Russia and all the former USSR countries in East Europe. The other RIMC's are located in Bangkok, Africa, and Latin America each providing support for their respective geographical regions. RIMC consists of a team of IRM Specialists called "Rovers", recently renamed Systems Operations Officers (SOO). But the name Rover never went away. Everyone still uses the term Rover. I was hired as a Rover. We had a Director and a number of Department Heads, each in charge of different specialties within RIMC operations.

The life of a Rover is truly a very interesting way of working for the State Department. We were hardly ever home. We only came home between assignments and those were usually only for a short time. We were sent out to whatever country needed assistance and, to fill workforce gaps. Very seldom did we ever go back to the same country. The assignments (or tours) were usually from a month to three months. This position afforded the biggest opportunity in the State Department to see, live and work in many cities and countries in a short period of time. All travel expenses were paid for including meals and local transportation. It was a very hectic life and schedule but on the other hand, it was very enjoyable and fulfilling. You always had time to tour and get to know the city or the country.

Some of the countries I was assigned to as a Rover, or visited were: Nicosia (Cyprus), Cairo (Egypt), Osaka (Japan), Rome and Milan (Italy), Strasbourg, (France), Amman (Jordan), Riga (Latvia), Bamako (Mali), Malta, Almaty (Kazakhstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), and Harare (Zimbabwe). Rome, and Strasbourg were actually vacations, trips Agapi and I did on our own. She did manage to join me in Milan while I was on official assignment there. I managed to visit a few adjoining countries wherever I was but I never lived nor worked there, so I am leaving those out. I am not covering details of my assignments to the above countries, I probably will at a later time in another book dedicated to my travels.

Agapi was fortunate. Almost immediately after our arrival in Frankfurt, she found employment set aside for spouses of Diplomats at the Consulate. She worked at various government agencies. She learned a lot working for the U. S. Government. This was going to be the start of her career with the State Department. She was happy to get a job.



A crowded downtown street in Frankfurt



A variety of German "Wursts" - the best in the world!

It was during my assignment in Frankfurt, June 4, 2007, Agapi gave birth to a beautiful and healthy boy. We named him Alexander Eduardo. Don't tell everybody I said this; he looked exactly like me, a spitting image of me! We had lots of family and friends come visit us. Agapi's parents came from Greece. Marc and Siggie came in from Belgium and Natasha came in from the U. K. It was great to have so many people come and visit. That was another advantage of living in Frankfurt. It was very centralized. I did not waste any time getting Alexander registered at the Consulate. He became the youngest diplomat in the Consulate, probably in the world. He had his Diplomatic Passport just about right from birth.

By this time, I was a senior member of the RIMC team. I had a lot of experience with the work we did, and just about all of the Embassies I visited had very good things to say and report about me and my performance. My reputation in the field was good and solid. We were happy in Frankfurt.

But now, I had to leave once again for my new assignment. My two year tour was over. We knew the routine by heart, pack out, fly back to the States, debriefings and pick up my papers for the new assignment then fly onwards to the new post. Isn't this a nice life?

CHENNAI, INDIA

January 2008, we arrived in Chennai, India. As in previous arrivals, we were picked up by an Embassy Officer and were dropped off at temporary housing. Preparation and work on the house we were going to move into were not yet completed. It was not a problem. The temporary home was more than adequate for our needs since all our household effects had not yet arrived.

Before I left Frankfurt, I bid for and was awarded the position of Information Programs Officer (IPO). The IPO was the second ranking officer in a post's IRM. I was assigned to the American Consulate in Chennai. My boss the IMO was stationed at the Embassy in New Delhi. So as a matter of fact, I was the boss in Chennai. With the help of another American new-hire and the local IT staff, I ran and managed all aspects of IRM operations. It was a formidable task at first. I was new to post and really, I always had a boss around I could call on if I had any problems or issues. In Chennai, I was it! I fit well with the Management and local staff at the Consulate. I was part of the Ambassador's weekly Country Team meetings, management and security meetings, post tele-video conferences, and a host of other activities. I had introduced and implemented a number of changes and procedures I had learned while I was a Regional RIMC Rover. Those changes are still in place today.

India is a very poor country. You see poverty everywhere, the streets are littered with garbage, people begging in the streets and the infrastructure was in bad need of repairs and updates. It was sad because the Indians themselves were very nice, kind and friendly people. They went out of their way to try and help where they could or when asked. We lived in a beautiful villa in Besant Nagar which was middle to upper- class neighborhood. All around, we had very nice neighbors with nice homes and gardens. We had a maid who took care of cleaning, cooking, and Alexander – for so little money! We just gave her more than what she asked for, it was affordable and worth it. We had a gardener come in weekly, he too charged very little. Wages in India are pathetic. You have to wonder how the people existed. Our home was within walking distance to the beach. Here again, the walk to the beach

was littered with trash and shacks. The beach was not very clean at all. We never went swimming in Besant Nagar. If we wanted to go swimming we either went to a beautiful, clean private beach park about twenty miles away or used the Ambassador's pool at his residence.



How about fresh lobster and seafood? Everyday!

It was open to all Embassy staff. India had a lot of tourist attractions, temples, and ruins. You don't want to miss seeing any of this. We never had the opportunity to visit the most famous landmark in India, the Taj Mahal. It was too far away from Chennai... we didn't see any major sites in India, but we saw everything else and more.

In December of 2008, Agapi and I decided to do something different... something exciting and new. We made the decision to spend the long Yuletide season traveling to neighboring countries. So off we went. Our first stop was Bangkok, Thailand, then Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, finishing up

in Hong Kong and Kowloon. As I write this book, I realize it would be very difficult to describe each of these countries in detail. I will instead generalize since all of them have so much in common. First and foremost, they are all beautiful countries each having their own unique culture, language and food. We just loved all the food we tried, so varied in taste and presentation not to mention very inexpensive – except in Hong Kong. Noodles was a common ingredient, but prepared in so many different ways – all delicious. Common to all three was traffic congestion. All the streets were crowded with cars, buses, taxis, and “tuk-tuks” (three-wheeled bicycles powered by strong-legged drivers). Except for Bangkok, Malaysia, and Hong Kong were very clean cities. Malaysia and Thailand had the most colorful native costumes and attire. Thailand and Malaysia were the friendliest people, with Hong Kong a bit on the aloof side. We spent Christmas in Kuala Lumpur and New Year’s Eve in Hong Kong. It was uniquely different from how we spend them in the U.S. We had a great time, a great vacation.



At Victoria Peak overlooking the Hong Kong-Kowloon harbors.



The Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



One of the many sights seen while touring the Chao Phraya River, Thailand.

LIFE IS GOOD

Back to India. Food and groceries were very inexpensive. There was an abundance of meats of all sorts, goat being the most popular, plenty of fresh vegetables, fruit and fish. We just needed to make sure we washed everything well and cooked our food thoroughly. Although we ate out quite a bit without really being sure how the food was handled in the kitchen, we never got sick from bad food while in India. I just love all the different curries and side dishes they served. The food was always spicy hot but I loved that. I loved the way they serve food on banana leaves and the pleasure of eating with your hands.

My son Marc came to spend one summer in Chennai. Through a good friend of mine and his recommendation, Marc was promptly hired by Tata Corporation one of the biggest enterprises in India. He worked in the IT section. My daughter Natasha also came with a friend of hers and spent a couple of weeks with us. The kids had a great time and a memorable experience of India.



Some of my Embassy IT Staff partying at home.

In March 2009, I went back to the States. I was going to buy property in Las Vegas. I had already done a lot of research work by the end of 2008 and made arrangements to see property when I got there. To make a long story short, I ended up buying a home in foreclosure. It was a bargain. It was the time when real estate went into a tailspin and every property in the

U.S. especially Las Vegas was selling for less than half their original values. I never lived in the house I bought. I rented it out for the duration of time I owned it. I was going to retire there, but in the end, I lost interest in Las Vegas and the idea of retiring in the desert. In 2014, I sold the place.

It was during one of our return visits to California and Las Vegas in 2010 when Agapi and I met some relatives. I had been in contact with Betsy Silos from the Jose Silos branch of the family via the internet. When I wrote I was going to be in Las Vegas, she eagerly wanted to meet up. Her sisters Olivia and Carol came along. We had a great meeting and reunion. Together we met more Silos Family who were actually living in Las Vegas. They were the Silos-Bugarin family. This was even a bigger reunion of the family. What a memorable event. I had never met any of them in my life, yet when we met, it was like we knew each other for ages.

My assignment in Chennai was completed at the end of 2010, so off to my new assignment once again.

TIRANA, ALBANIA

Tirana, Albania was a country Agapi really wanted to go for our last tour to Albania. I loved the suggestion, so I asked the Department for Tirana. This was Balkan country. I was to retire in less than two years. The State Department granted me my wish. In August 2009 the family set foot in Tirana. We lived in a closed-off Embassy housing with security guards. We were given a nice big home completely furnished with standard government furniture similar to those we had at other posts. Tirana is a heavily populated city. People just seem to be everywhere doing something, yet they were not doing anything! There are many cafes, bars, clubs and restaurant. A couple of close Embassy friends and I used to go out a couple of nights a week plus weekends to the Latin dance clubs. I was back to my passion. The family and I would often drive out of the city to explore other areas and eat wherever we were at. While in Tirana, we drove to many outlying towns and cities from the north to the south, from the east to the west. I got to know Tirana

well. We took the time to explore as much of Albania and the Balkans as we could. This was going to be my last assignment, I was going to enjoy it.

One long weekend, we started west from Tirana to Durres, a beach town which had an abundance of fish and seafood restaurants and bars. Talking about beaches, further south of Durres, driving along the Adriatic coastline which was a beautiful drive to start with, you run into Vlora. Vlora is a cove with a beautiful sort of private beach. It is the city where the Albanian independence was declared in 1912 from the Ottoman Empire. We like it there so much we actually stopped and stayed at a hotel for a night. We experienced the most beautiful sunset I had seen in a long time. Further down the coast, we came upon Saranda. Saranda is a very popular getaway resort for the Albanians and expats. It is a beautiful village, has beautiful beaches and an abundance of bars, clubs and restaurants. We also stayed in Saranda for a night. Saranda has a lot of Greek influence. In fact in the nearby villages which traditionally belong to Gjirokaster, there has always been a Greek minority living there. From our hotel balcony, we could see the Greek island of Corfu across the ocean. The views in Saranda were absolutely fabulous. Further south, we visited a historic town called Butrinti. Butrinti was the site of a Greek colony, and a Roman city. The Venetians were the last to occupy the city, and after that, it was abandoned in the late middle ages. Butrinti was big, it had many ancient ruins, and museums housing priceless artifacts. Very interesting, I did not realize Albania had an attraction similar to Greece's. At this point in Albania, we were not too far away from the southern border of Greece. We drove back north to Tirana taking the inland highway through mountains and valleys. It was a nice but long and treacherous trip. We ended up at the town of Gjirokaster.

Gjirokaster is famous for its cobblestones streets and traditional houses. The old town is a World Heritage Site, a rare example of a well-preserved Ottoman town. Gjirokaster is famous for its cheeses, yogurts



Kotor, Albania



A beautiful private beach in Vlorë, Tirana

and a host of other dairy products. We enjoyed the tour of the town and ended up staying for the night at a nice hotel recommended by the Embassy. The owners welcomed us warmly and bragged that our Ambassador spent a

night there as well. We drove through many small towns and villages, the largest one of interest was the town of Elbasan. We didn't stay long, it was just like any other town in Albania. I wanted to get home and we were getting close. Finally we were home. It was a memorable short vacation of southern Albania.

One long holiday weekend, the Embassy management section decided to host a tour to Shkoder a city north of Tirana. Shkoder is a small city located up in the mountains of Albania. It is one of the oldest and most historic places in Albania, as well as an important cultural and tourist attraction. We toured the city, the bazaars, the museums and the absolutely panoramic view of the valley and the Adriatic Sea. The main museum was of particular interest although I am not a great fan of museums. But this museum had an impressive display of many archaeological artifacts from the Greek and Roman periods, traditional dresses, musical instruments and more. Management hosted a fantastic lunch of typical and traditional Albanian cuisine accompanied by great wines and beer. All had a great time and enjoyed the day trip to Shkoder.

On another long weekend, we decided to explore northern Tirana and continue north towards the neighboring Balkan countries. We drove north, and passed the city of Shkoder which we had already seen, and onwards to the border of Montenegro. It was ferry crossing across the bay to the west side of Albania and then a short drive later we entered Montenegro. Montenegro was one of the upcoming Balkan countries in line to be part of the European Union (EU). They were building their infrastructure to conform to EU standards. After initially driving through some very bad and rough roads we hit the Adriatic coastline at Ulcinj. From here on north, the highways were good and modern. We stopped briefly at a couple of larger towns like Bar and Petrovac finally ending our day at a bigger town called Budva. Budva was a very nice cozy town, mountains on one side and the Adriatic Sea on the other side. They had many bars and restaurants. We stayed at a fairly nice hotel.

On with our journey.... we continued north along the coastline, and stopped at the city of Kotor. Kotor is another beautiful coastal city located at sea level but has hills and mountains that let you have breathtaking

panoramic views of the city below and the Adriatic Sea beyond. We toured the city and loved most of what we saw. We then crossed the border into Croatia. We headed for one of the biggest cities of Croatia, Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik is a very picturesque city. We first saw it from the top of a mountain as we approached the city below us. It was a sight to see! It is a very tranquil city with the center being a pedestrian only area. Dubrovnik is a city surrounded by massive walls, towers, and gates. Within the enclosed city are churches, palaces, and museums packed with art and treasures. Dubrovnik will not disappoint you. It is a beautiful old city which was not destroyed during the Balkan wars in the 90's. We stayed at a nice hotel just



Approaching Dubrovnik, Croatia from the south.

outside the walls and came back the next day to finish our tour. We made our way back to Tirana the following day. I cannot find the words to describe this trip. In a word, I would say it was fabulous but that would be an understatement. This was another memorable experience in my life. The Balkans was beautiful.

Just as I enjoyed and loved all my previous tours, I loved Tirana as well. Tirana was my last State Department assignment. It was time to retire. I didn't feel like working anymore. It was also a troublesome period with Agapi and me. We were having lots of irreconcilable differences to the point where it was getting difficult living with each other. I told her to go back to Washington DC and I would help her get a job with the State Department.

I was in a position to help her at the time. If she waited till I retired, I would not be able to get her in. Time was running out before I retired and I had to get all my affairs in order. Getting Agapi settled was one of my first priorities. She left for Washington, DC.

All my separation papers from the Service were completed and approved in December 2011. I was officially retired. After the final pack out was complete, Alexander and I left for Washington DC. It was the beginning of January 2012. I joined Agapi and we proceeded to find a bigger and more suitable apartment. Meanwhile, I still had a lot of out-processing to complete.



Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and yours truly

In November 2012, The State Department sent me an invitation to attend a Retirement Recognition Ceremony at the Main State Building. This was to acknowledge and award new retirees, with Certificates of Recognition for their service in the Department. Our special host for the Retirement Ceremony was our big boss, the Secretary of State, Madame

Hilary R. Clinton! Hilary Clinton personally gave us our certificates of retirement. This was a memorable event to culminate my career with the State Department.... Or so I thought it was.

THE WAE PROGRAM

Somehow it was not going to be the end of me with the State Department... not yet anyhow. The Department run a special operation called the WAE Program. WAE stood for “When Actually Employed”. This was managed and staffed by Department retirees of different cones and specialties. The purpose of the program was to provide posts worldwide, temporary, short-term staff assistance when they needed it. The program employed retired specialists in their respective fields if you still wanted to work part-time. It was not easy to get into the WAE program. To be considered, you had to be retired, had to have an excellent track record and history of past performance, a good reputation in your field, and most importantly, recommendations from previous supervisors and high-level officers you had worked for in the past. Only then would your name be put in a “pool” of qualified applicants. It did not guarantee you a job, but at least your name was on their database. I had applied for consideration a year before I retired with impeccable credentials and recommendation letters. Then, I totally forgot about this opportunity for re-employment after I got out of the service. I was retired.

Before summer 2012. I got a call from the Chief of the IRM Division of the WAE Program. He asked; “what I was doing”, I replied; “bored, doing nothing”. He said; “good, come on down to the office”. I came in the next morning curious to hear what he had to say. After the normal formalities and small talk, he asked me if I would like to work for three months. I went on and heard all the details of the job and I accepted.

I was assigned to SA-11. This division was simply known as SA-11, it was part of IRM operations. SA-11 was a department charged with research, development and deployment of all new State Department IT equipment,

operating systems, network security and applications before it was implemented worldwide to all the posts. I was in the deployment and implementation section. My job was to make sure new products complied with State Department standards and specifications. I was the link between the State Department and RIMC IT specialists or posts. Having worked for Frankfurt RIMC before, it was only now I realized, we had a division in Washington who actually directed deployment and policy guidelines for RIMC. I was working there! We were also responsible for troubleshooting systems and application problems RIMC or posts encountered. It was a job and a half!

My assignment ended in April. A permanent replacement had arrived and much as I enjoyed the job, I was also glad it was over. I really wanted to deploy overseas somewhere.

BAMAKO, MALI

My wish came true. Early May 2013, WAE called again and asked if I would go to Bamako, Mali. I wasn't too sure because I had been reading about troubles and uprisings in Bamako. The French had just "invaded" Mali at the request of the government. They were there to prop up the Malian government against a number of revolutionary factions who wanted to overthrow the government. I accepted anyway not thinking much of the danger in Mali itself. I arrived at the end of May and was promptly whisked away to the Embassy where I was briefed on current events and conditions by our Regional Security Officer and a warm welcome by the Ambassador. I was initially put in a luxury hotel not far from the Embassy, the Radisson Blu while my more permanent quarters was going through security upgrades.

I was not informed by the State Department prior to my departure that the U.S. Embassy in Bamako had just recently been evacuating all non-essential staff and their families. I was surprised to see operations were run



The poor citizens of Bamako



And the not-so-poor citizens

by minimum staff. Only essential personnel were left behind. The U. S. was afraid of a possible uprising or revolution and took evasive action. It was no wonder I noticed militia all over the city. So many soldiers were carrying heavy weapons. Many of them looked like kids. We were obviously restricted in our movements. We traveled for the most part only to and from the Embassy and our homes in armored vehicles. We were only allowed to go to bars and restaurants like the Radisson and other big name hotels. We had to observe a curfew, like be home by 8:00 p.m.

I was really lucky. If you followed world current events, in November 20, 2015, you would've heard the news that Islamic gunmen took 170 people hostage in Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako! There were a number of American and Westerners staying at the hotel at the time, and there were more than a dozen casualties. I think an American guest and a couple of European and Chinese citizens were among those killed. As I followed the news, I had goose bumps. I frequented that very same hotel a couple of years ago. I thanked God and my lucky stars nothing happened while I was there. My tour of Bamako was over in two months. The State found a permanent IRM officer to replace me. I was actually glad I did not get extended – which does happen.

HARARE, ZIMBABWE

I had barely got back to Washington when I was informed I had to go back to Africa to do another short tour. This was going to be a one-month assignment to Harare, Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe was not in any way like Bamako. Nevertheless, Embassy staff were urged to be very security-conscious, and we also had to comply with curfew and restricted as to where we could or could not go. I lived alone in a huge Mansion! The house was an old colonial-style English home set in a large piece of land with so many beautiful plants and flowers and a manicured lawn. It had a swimming pool and a jacuzzi in the spacious backyard. The house was very well kept and maintained. Everything in that house seemed so elegant. A lot of Embassy staff had similar housing and we got together quite a lot for parties, barbecues and drinks. We couldn't go anywhere else, so we socialized together. It was a fun post to be stationed for a longer time.



This was home in Harare, Zimbabwe

I got back to Washington once again and told myself I did not care to go out on another assignment for a long while. I wanted to rest and I did not particularly want to go to Africa again where most of the vacancies for WAE were.

OSAKA, JAPAN

Until I got a call from our Chief in September, I thought for a while there that I was content without any further assignments; BUT our Chief asked if I would like to go for a three-month assignment to Osaka, Japan. Wow, this was a luxury assignment for anybody. I asked Chief if he wanted me to leave “yesterday”. Preparations for the trip were quickly made and off I was to Japan in October 2013. As with all arrivals, I was met at the airport by a Consular Officer and brought to my home. I enjoyed the scenic ride to the Embassy housing compound in Nishinomiya which was outside of downtown Osaka. The compound was located in a very classy suburb. Each house in the compound was very large compared to standard Japanese homes. We had all the amenities of luxurious living. The Consulate provided an Embassy van available for us to use to and from work. For the most part, I took the rail system which was an absolutely beautiful and reliable way to commute. Taking the rail also provided me with the opportunity of walking all over Osaka town, eating out, and “patrol” all the bars and clubs before I went home. The van simply transported us to and from home to work. There was nothing much to do at home. I must add, everything in Japan was expensive, the cost of living was very high. But the Japanese also made good wages, lots of benefits, and were able to cope. We had an adjustment on our cost of living allowance to compensate for our low U. S. wage standards.

I was the head of IRM operations in Osaka. My immediate boss was based at the Embassy in Tokyo. I had a very capable and knowledgeable young locally-hired, cleared American working for me. For the most part, he managed all the local IT and Technical staff who were all Japanese. He spoke fluent Japanese having lived in Japan for many years. He made my job easy. The work at the Consulate was easy and very laid-back. Everything was in place, and operations were running flawlessly. I had it made. The Consulate was located almost in the center of town in a high-rise building. The top floor housed the Ambassador. My office occupied the floor below that, Management and the Regional Security Office were below mine. The rest of the staff and offices occupied the rest of the floors down to ground level. My office the “Cage” as usual did not have a single window to enjoy the

beautiful views around the building. I had to go down one floor to my assistant's office to enjoy the view – which I did often.

I did find, or rather made time to visit many towns and cities close to Osaka, like Kyoto to the northeast, Kobe to the west and my old “hunting grounds” in the 60's Nagoya. I never made it to Tokyo for lack of time even if the “bullet train” was in operation. One needed at least a week to really see Tokyo, I did not have that time.

I had been in contact with a niece of mine, Elizabeth “Nene” Silos-Kono via the internet for a number of years. Nene is a granddaughter of my uncle Captain Jose Silos. She practically lived most of her life in Japan. She was in Yokohama while I was in Osaka. I managed to make contact with her by phone to arrange a meeting. But the timing was bad. Nene was very sick and not very mobile. She could not travel long distances and neither could I at the time. We talked a few more times during my stay in Osaka but we never met. How unfortunate to be so close yet so far away. Perhaps another time?



The Osaka Castle in the background

Every city or town in Japan had hundreds of large and small temples. They were a sight to see! Kyoto especially, was famous for many temples and shrines.



Entrance to a temple in Kyoto

I had a lot of fun in Osaka. I managed to even find a Latin Dance club which I became a member of and spent a lot of evenings dancing and partying with the Japanese. Incidentally, the majority of them could really dance, putting me to shame. I thought I could dance!

Suddenly and sadly, my tour in Osaka came to an end. I bid a fond farewell to the many friends I had made. They too were very emotional and sad about my departure. We really bonded well. I will always remember Osaka. Osaka was going to be my last assignment, and this assignment capped my career with the State Department.

I went back to the States and made up my mind I was really going to retire for good. I resigned from the WAE program in 2014. They still needed me and wanted me to go out some more, but this time, I turned the offers down. I wanted to enjoy my retirement while I could.

13 MY LIFE IN THE WORLD OF AVIATION

As I wrote earlier in this book, my love for aviation started at a very young age. From the moment I was given a tour of the DC-3 aircraft when I was eight years old, seeing all the complex array of instruments in the cockpit, and getting brainwashed by the pilots, my mind was made up to one day become a pilot as well. It was a dream I was going to achieve.

Back to my story about driving by the San Carlos airport every day while on my way to and from work. I went to the airport early on June 17, 1967. I visited all the flying schools and flying clubs on the field. I ended up selecting Flying Ten, quite a popular flying club at the airport. I selected them mainly because it was a very warm and friendly group of people I initially met. They were a very informal group of enthusiastic flyers; not to mention the fact, they had one of the least expensive rates for flying lessons. \$5.00 per hour rented you a single engine Cessna. \$2.00 per hour more and the aircraft came with a certified instructor. It wasn't cheap for me at the time, but if you compare those rates with today's rates of \$100.00-150.00 and hour, it was a huge bargain! I had my very first flying lesson that day. My instructor was Jack Durban. It was just simply a great and exhilarating experience flying that Cessna. This first flight ended after an hour. I really wanted more. I did not go through any ground school training classes when I went for my Private Pilot's License. Instead, I bought all the books and manuals for the private pilot license exams and studied on my own. It was not easy since I really did not know many of the aviation terms or phrases in the manual. But I did it. I studied and I passed the FAA private pilot written exams while I was taking flying lessons. I soloed after 11 hours. It was probably one of my most anxious moments in aviation. Jack was giving me intensive take-off and landing practice one day, then suddenly he told me to pull the aircraft to the side of the runway, he opened his door, and he said; "good luck Bob, you are on your own, you are flying this bird all by yourself?". I was shaking, I was nervous, I was actually scared. But he told me to "Get your ass moving, you are holding up traffic". Off I went, on my own. It felt so strange without an

instructor on my side. But I concentrated on what I was supposed to do, and I successfully completed my first solo! I had a second and then a third solo flight the next two days. Now I felt very comfortable on my own! I completed the time requirements for the flight check ride and I finally received my Private Pilot's License on October 21, 1967, after 42.0 hours of flight time. This was a milestone and the start of my career in aviation.

The next license I needed to get was the Commercial Pilot's License. This license would enable a pilot to fly for hire and would start the process of building flight time. I needed 160 hours plus pass the written exams. As with the private pilot's license, I bought all the study guides and material, and I spent countless hours studying.

Meantime, if you will recall, I had changed jobs, and I had bought another home. I worked in Fremont, lived in Union City both on the East Bay. The next city north of Union City was Hayward. Hayward had a bigger airport than San Carlos. They had a control tower, it was a busy airport and there were a lot of aviation training schools on the field. I enrolled at California Aviation, an FAA-certified flight training school. The difference in going through an FAA-certified institution was it only required 160 hours to qualify for a commercial pilot's certificate. Non-FAA institutions required 200 hours.

All this time, I took many friends and family for flights to many airports up and down the California coast. I was building time. Spread over time, the cost became irrelevant although aircraft rental was going up every year. I finally accumulated all the required flying time for a commercial pilot's test, I had 160 hours. I had already passed my written exams a few months earlier. My new flight instructor Jim Ricolli gave me the required ten hours of instruction required to complete the course and he signed me off to take the check ride. I passed my Commercial Pilot's License check ride on April 13, 1969. Was I ever so happy! The second license in my hand!

The next license I needed was the Instrument Pilot's License. The instrument license provided you the skills and the training to fly solely by reference to the flight instruments, just as you would be when flying in the clouds. My first ten hours were completed on a flight simulator. The next

ten hours were completed on an aircraft. On the aircraft, a hood was used to block your view from outside references to the horizon. You flew the aircraft strictly using the instruments to navigate, take-off and land. The hood was popped off just prior to touching down on the runway. As with the previous written tests, I studied on my own. I was getting good at this. As soon as I passed the written test and with the required twenty hours of instrument time on my logs, I took the flight check ride. I passed. This gave the third license needed to becoming an airline pilot.

Now I had to build up 1,500 hours to qualify for the Airline Transport Pilot License (ATPL). To do this, almost every pilot built up their time by flight instructing, and, you were getting paid for building time. The requirements were fairly easy if I completed it in an FAA approved school. As the case may be, I only needed ten hours of training and flying from the right seat of the aircraft. Actually, that was weird at first because all these time at training, I flew the aircraft from the left seat. Now I had to fly from the right seat where it was very difficult to see the instrument panel. But I got over that in a couple of hours. As before, I studied for the written test and passed it. I completed the flight training and passed the Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) check ride on July 17, 1969. Now I could fly and get paid for it!!

I only had two unforgettable experiences during my flight instruction years. One day I was with a student pilot flying alongside the coastline practicing maneuvers at around 8,000 feet. One of the required advanced pilot maneuvers was how to recover from an accidental spin. A spin is a condition when the aircraft stalls and plummets to earth in a rotating motion. If you don't recover from that spin and you are close to the ground, you are dead. So we started to simulate entry to a spin. You pull the yoke backward, nose of the plane points up until the aircraft could no longer fly. It stalls. You then step on either rudder so the plane immediately nosedives to earth and it starts spinning. The correction applied would be to release the yoke to let the airspeed build up so it can start flying again, at the same time apply opposite rudder to stop rotation. Then you pull the yoke gently back up to level flight. Well, as soon as the plane pointed to earth and started to spin, my student froze on the controls. He actually had his eyes shut and forgot

everything I taught him! I told myself this idiot was not going to kill me. I had to forcefully get his foot off the rudder, I had to break his grip on the yoke and finally, recover from what could have been a catastrophe, to say the least.

The other incident happened on another training flight. All was going well. We were at high altitude over the Livermore Valley practicing high altitude maneuvers. Suddenly a loud bang from the engine, the propeller stopped spinning and we had oil all over the windscreen. We had just lost our engine! I immediately instructed the very shook up student pilot to configure the aircraft into its best dead-engine glide configuration. I had practiced this many times. At seventy miles per hour, we had the aircraft set for the minimum loss of altitude and maximum distance traveled. The aircraft was under control, we only had to find a suitable place to land. I picked the Livermore airport. It was about four miles away and I knew we could make it if the winds were with us. I also knew if we were short, there were a lot of flat farm field around and before the airport. God and luck were with us. We glided and landed at the airport just perfectly. There was going to be no room for error. It was only when I got off the plane did I realize my knees were shaking and I could hardly stand up.

Other than those two incidents, my flight instructing days were great. I built up a lot of hours and I started to prepare for the most important license I needed. The Airline Transport Pilot License (ATPL). Building time took a lot longer than I wanted. But that was to be expected since I was working and running my business almost full time. Without the help of Sonny and Larry, I would not have been able to make it. Every chance I had, I flew. I flew nights, weekends and took off early from work to fly on weekdays as well. I was stretched to my limits, but I kept on going. I met a lot of professional airline, corporate, and charter pilots in Hayward. I oftentimes had the opportunity of flying corporate and charter aircraft just to build time.

One of them was Dean Hodges. He was a corporate pilot flying for a multi-million dollar land development company. He let me fly whenever he could. He was my aviation mentor. Later over the years, he came to visit me wherever in Europe I was. Dean and I still maintain contact today.

I still continued to instruct whenever time allowed. In the meantime, I continued to apply for a pilot's job with every airline in the U. S. and worldwide. No Luck. I needed the ATPL. I went on and obtained a couple more of pilot licenses, they would enhance my chances of employment. I got the Certified Flight Instructor Instruments (CFII) and the Multi-Engine Rating (MEL).

Sometime in 1970, Jack Durban, remember him? He was my very first flight instructor. He replied to a resume I sent him. He was working for Cal State Airlines, a regional airline. They operated between Long Beach/Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, Bakersfield and Fresno. Their fleet of aircraft was mainly Beech 99s, a 15 passenger turboprop aircraft. He told me to come down to headquarters and talk to the Chief Pilot about a job. He would recommend me. I did, and I got a Trainee Co-Pilot job while I was working on my ATPL. Those were the conditions. I was in heaven and enjoyed every moment of it. But this job was short lived. By the end of 1970, Cal State declared bankruptcy and folded. What a letdown.

I did not give up hope. I continued to fly out of Hayward just to build more flying time. I got interviewed a few times by major carriers, but the fact I did not have an ATPL and with so little time (so they said) made it difficult for me to be competitive.

In the interim, I enrolled at the Sierra Academy of Aeronautics based at the Oakland airport. I was going to go for my Flight Engineer's (FE) Turbojet Rating. It was an extremely difficult course. But I persisted. I was determined. I first went through ground school. I burned the midnight candle every single night studying. Then with the aid of a mock-up cockpit panel I continued to study and practice procedures at home covering all the aircraft systems. I carried a set of flash cards with questions on one side and the answers or procedures on the reverse side. I carried these cards everywhere I went and reviewed them every chance I had. I memorized everything about the Boeing 727 aircraft. Three weeks into the course, Sierra gave us our FAA written exams. There were six students taking the FE course. I passed! We all passed. Now it was time to train in the full-motion Boeing 727 flight simulator. The simulator was the exact same replica of a real aircraft with fully functional systems, controls, and motion. We spent a

lot of hours training on the simulator. We practiced every single normal and emergency procedure one would encounter in actual flight conditions. After twenty hours of training, the FAA Examiner came to Sierra and gave us our simulator exam. It was a very thorough and somewhat difficult exam. It had to be, because in the actual flight test many emergency procedures could not actually be given for safety reasons. So the examiner hammered us with everything he could come up with. Once again we all passed. The instructor at Sierra Academy concluded we were ready to take the actual flight test. Sierra flew us to Salt Lake City on May 24, 1985, where they chartered a Boeing 727 airliner. Now it was going to be the real thing. Each of us took turns on the flight engineer panel and the FAA examiner ran us through all the procedures from take-off to landing. It turned out to be an easier test than the simulator test. They obviously could not pull real emergencies on the aircraft and that is why that was all done and covered in the simulator. We all passed the check ride and got our Flight Engineer Turbojet certificates. Once again, I was in heaven!

I went on to complete another course, the Airframe and Powerplant license (A&P) which was not mandatory, but seemed easy enough to obtain. I had an extensive mechanical background. It would be required if you flew as a flight engineer for a non-airline company. There were actually many of these types of companies all over the world.

At last, on the first of January 1986, I had over 1,500 hours of flight time. I now met the minimum requirements for the ATPL. I had already passed the written exams a few months earlier, now I needed to train for the flight test. Less than two weeks and ten hours later, I was ready. It was my birthday January 14, I showed up for my FAA check ride. It was a very grueling test. It lasted almost two hours, most of it was flying under the hood. I never saw daylight from the time we took off till we finally landed. Every maneuver I ever learned and practiced over the years was thrown at me. When I got out of the cockpit after landing, I was soaking wet with sweat. I was sweating more as I waited for the results of the check ride. Finally, out comes the FAA Examiner, he calls me over and he says; "Congratulations Bob, you have earned your Airline Transport Pilot's

License”. I was so happy and overwhelmed when I heard that, I could just scream with joy!! Happy Birthday, Bob!!

I had moved to Hawaii by mid-January, shortly after I had received my Airline Transport Pilot License. I got a phone call the evening of February 1, 1986. It was the Chief Pilot of Reeves Air a regional airline based at the Honolulu airport. In comparison to the three major airlines operating in Hawaii; Aloha, Hawaiian and Mid Pacific Air, Reeves Air was a small airline, one of three regional airlines operating out of Honolulu airport. They had seven eight- passenger twin engine Cessna 402's. They had a good operation going for them. They were filling all the gaps left open by the major three. Reeves Air was responding to an application I had made four, five months ago. They wanted me to come in and talk to them. Mind you, I had just about given up all hopes of flying. That evening, my hopes were once again burning high and bright. I showed up promptly at 09:00 for my appointment. I was received by the Chief Pilot, then later I was introduced to the General Manager. After a lengthy interview, Reeves Air offered me a Pilot's job. I could start immediately after flight training and a check ride if I wanted to. I just happened to be at the right place at the right time. I had all the qualifications they required and they gambled that I would be “too old” to be hired away from them by the major airlines. That was always the problem faced by smaller carriers. Pilots would leave smaller companies for the bigger ones as soon as they had enough flight time. Another plus was I was a local registered Hawaiian resident. Reeves did not have to fly applicants in from the mainland to Hawaii to interview them. I was elated and so happy. There was one big problem: I explained to them I could not quit my current job immediately, I was part of management and would create a big void if I left all of a sudden. I asked, would they consider hiring me on a part-time basis including all weekends. In fact to my surprise, they said that was great, they preferred that condition. Too many pilots did not want to fly late into the night, and they were not enthusiastic about ruining their weekends. I was going to fill the company's needs perfectly. I was hired! Flight training started two days later. I passed my check ride on the 4th of February, and they put me on the line.

The arrangements worked perfectly for me. I was still working full-time at IPH and I was flying. It was a very hard life. I put in twelve to fourteen hours almost every day. I started work at 08:00 and did not usually get home till 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. every day. But at least I was home. I worked just about every weekend. The long hours were beginning to take a toll on me mentally and physically. But I had to keep on going. I still had a good life in spite of all.

One day, it was about the last week of May 1986, I got a call from Mid Pacific Airlines (MidPac), the third major airline in Hawaii. They were looking to hire a couple of Pilots and found my application and resume. As with Reeves Air, they were interested in talking to me. I could not believe it – when it rains, it pours! I came in for an interview and as soon as they verified my credentials and current employment, they told me I had a job! Now, what to do? Reeves Air was happy with me, and, I still had my full-time job, MidPac wanted to hire full-time pilots. I now had to make a crucial decision. I had to give up my lucrative job at IPH and quit flying for Reeves Air, or fly full-time for MidPac. Both decisions were difficult to make. On the other hand, this was the chance I have always dreamed about, fly for a major airline. I told MidPac I would think about the offer and would come back to them. I was cautioned not to take too long, they had other applicants.

To the dismay and disappointment of both IPH and Reeves Air, and with a lot of reservations and anxiety on my part, I elected to fly for MidPac. MidPac Airlines presented me with the dream I always had – fly for the airlines. They operated a fleet of fourteen, sixty-passenger YS-11s turboprop aircraft. It was crewed by two pilots and a flight attendant. Their routes serviced all the Hawaiian Islands.

I once again went through company orientation and flight training. I passed the check ride and line training and immediately started flying the line. It was great. I was finally flying a large heavy aircraft, and I was in the airlines. We were busy when I first got on board. We took-off and landed at all the airports many times a day. It was beginning to feel like a “yo-yo”. Thank goodness by FAA regulations, pilots were only allowed to fly one hundred hours a month. So I had a bit of time off to be with Siggi and Marc and family. My former employers IPH, allowed me to continue on a part-time

basis. I had time to do it since one hundred hours a month was the maximum hours we were allowed to fly. I was living a normal life now, life was good.



Mid Pacific Air (MIDPAC) YS-11A

The following year in June, I got a call from an old friend of mine, Robert. He was working as a “Flight Engineer/A&P” for a private company called Saudi Oger based in Saudi Arabia. He wanted to know if I was still looking for an FE job and proceeded to describe to me what he did and the tons of money he was making. The starting salary for an FE at Saudi Oger was \$10,000 a month plus all expenses paid while they traveled all around the world. Free housing included of course. He offered me a job. It was a very interesting proposition and I told him I would think about it and would ask MidPac if I could take a short leave of absence. Siggi did not mind, she was happy I would have the opportunity to make some money. I wasn’t making it flying for a U. S. airline. Pilot’s wages were low at the time. I met with MidPac management a couple of days later and asked them if they would allow me to take a two, three-month maximum, leave for personal reasons. They looked at the projected crew requirements and schedules and determined they could afford to lose one pilot for a short period. They approved my request.

I notified Saudi Oger I would take the job. They promptly got me a visa for Saudi Arabia and airline tickets. I was instructed to meet the aircraft at the Le Bourget airport in Paris on June 19. I was going to be met by the flight crew at the airport. I was there as arranged.

I was met by the crew and after all the formalities, my bags were loaded in the cargo hold, and I was given a tour of the aircraft. HZHR3 was a three-engine Boeing 727-200. It was flown by a cockpit crew of three, and the cabin had two male flight attendants. When I first toured the aircraft it left a lasting impression on me. This 727 was a privately owned luxurious aircraft equipped with everything needed for worldwide luxury travel including long range fuel tanks. Everything on board was new or modern. The normal airline passenger configuration for a 727 was two hundred seats. HZHR3 was configured for fifteen passengers! The seats were huge, elegant and the most comfortable seats you can imagine. It had a long conference table which doubled as a formal dining room partitioned off the passenger compartment. Next was the Master bedroom with a queen-sized bed, a toilet, and a bath. There were so much gold fixtures and trimming all over the aircraft. All the door knobs and bathroom fixtures were gold! Further down, was a private office which doubled as a guest bedroom when needed. Then a bar filled with any type of expensive alcohol you might want to drink. Mind you, the Arabs do not drink... or that is what I thought. At the rear of the aircraft was a full kitchen and pantry. This plane was total luxury if you ever saw one. It was a "home on wings"!

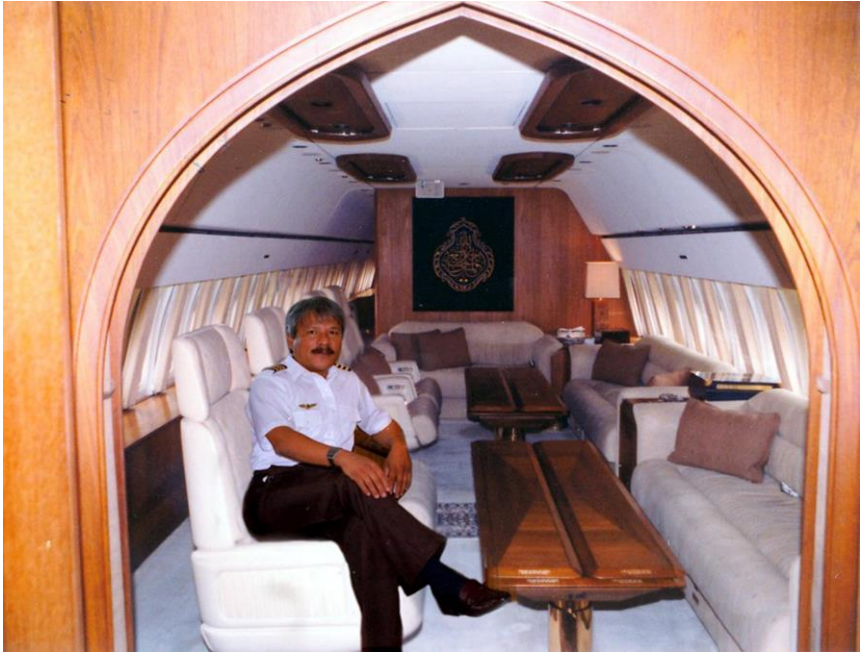
The company Saudi Oger was owned by the richest man in Lebanon, Sheik Rafik Harriri. He ran a huge multi-million dollar construction company based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, with branches in Paris, London and other cities in the Far East. Rafik Harriri was in exile from his country Lebanon because of the uprisings and revolution going on at that time. He was invited as a guest by the King of Saudi, and that is where he operated from. Harriri hanged around the royalties and dignitaries of Saudi, and so did his wife.



Saudi Oger's Boeing 727-200



The Boeing 727 cockpit. Even our seats were luxury leather!



Bob, hard at work!

The crew was each provided with a luxury home, car with driver, maids, and other help. It was crazy because we hardly lived in Saudi. We lived out of our suitcases which remained on board the aircraft because of the frequency of our flights out of the country. Out of country we lived in hotels. We stayed at 5-star or first class luxury hotels wherever we went, ate at expensive restaurants, and lived it up high on the hog.... All paid for by Saudi Oger. As Robert had described in our initial phone conversation, everything was all true. You could not ask for more money - We were swimming in money!

But there is a price to pay for every good thing in life. We were flying constantly, all over the Middle East and Europe. We were going everywhere almost every day. I really do not recall a day we had off, rested or were left alone to tour. We had to be close to the aircraft at all times. The flight crew was exceeding normal flight hours as prescribed by the FAA for airline operations, and, we were not getting the proper rest time between flight times. In a word, we were slaves of Sheik Rafik Harriri. He did not care. If

he or anyone in the company, or any dignitary needed to be somewhere and the plane was available, we went.

One day, we had just flown an eleven hour day and landed in Paris. We checked into our hotel and were headed to a restaurant for a late dinner. We got a call from Harriri. He needed to go back to Saudi immediately. We explained we were tired, didn't have any sleep and were about to go out and eat. He said it was an emergency, and to meet him at the airport in one hour! End of conversation.

A similar incident happened one day when we had Mrs. Harriri and a couple of wives of other royalty on board flying with their husbands. We were in London that afternoon. We were preparing to disembark and secure the aircraft and proceed to our hotels to rest. That didn't happen. Mrs. Harriri and her royal friends wanted to fly to Geneva, Switzerland to buy some stuff. With permission from her husband, we went. We waited at the airport for four hours. The ladies came back, big smiles on their faces, boarded the plane, and we flew back to London. We later found out from the flight attendants, the ladies went to Geneva just to buy a bunch of stupid wooden jewelry!! We were not the happiest crew that evening.

Another time, we had just taken off from Saudi. We had just crossed land and were over the Mediterranean Sea. Suddenly the Sheik pops his head into the cockpit and told us to change our flight plan and land in Larnaca, Cyprus. The Captain explained we would have a problem doing that because the plane was heavy with fuel destined for a long flight and that we would be overweight if we landed in Cyprus. He simply told us to dump the fuel and land! That was the first time in our lives to actually dump fuel in a non-emergency condition. You only do that on emergencies. What if the fuel dump valve did not close? What if the monitor gauges were not accurate? We didn't have a choice, we had our orders, so dump we did, nervous as hell throughout the whole procedure. Damn, what a life! I have a lot of other minor anecdotes, but the point is, we were not in command and control of our lives.

Two months into the job, I was unhappy. Money was not everything. I was beginning to miss home. I was also very concerned about my job at

MidPac. I decided to quit at the end of July and flew back home to Hawaii. It felt good to be back home. I had had enough of a crazy adventure. I later heard Sheik Hariri returned to Lebanon. The revolution was over. On February 14, 2005, I heard on TV, Rafic Hariri, the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, was assassinated along with 21 others in an explosion in Beirut. How sad, I knew the man.

I was immediately back on the line with MidPac with no consequences from my leave. Thank God. I continued to fly the line, it was becoming very routine, I was also moving up in seniority. Life was back to normal again. I was happy.

On the afternoon of January 20, 1988, I was getting ready for work. I was going to fly the night schedule. I got a call from MidPac Operations, they were calling everyone. I was not prepared to hear what the Dispatcher had to say. He said: "Bob, there was no need to show up for work. MidPac declared bankruptcy this afternoon and promptly shut operations down. The doors are closed". What a shock! I could not believe it. There were no indications or rumors anything like this was going to happen. I could only guess MidPac suffered from the "trickle down" effect of many mainland airline companies shutting down operations or merging with other airlines causing loss of passengers coming to Hawaii. I will never really know, but it was a bad time for the aviation industry. I and hundreds of other pilots and crew were the casualties.

Siggi and I moved back to Brussels, Belgium shortly thereafter. I continued to look for work in the airline industry in Europe. My continued efforts paid off. At the end of February 1990, I got a call from the Chief of Operations of Tempelhof Airways, USA. Tempelhof was an American registered airline operating out of West Berlin, Germany. They wanted to talk to me. Berlin at that time was still divided into East and West. Only three countries were allowed to operate out of West Berlin; England, France, and the U.S. Tempelhof Airways was one of two American airlines flying out of Berlin. I jumped at the invitation and got on board one of their early morning aircraft that happened to be in Brussels on a regularly scheduled stopover.

We landed at Tempelhof International Airport where their headquarters were based at and met with all the Management Officers. The interview went very well. They were happy to see I met all their pilot requirements, I had all the licenses and ratings, more than the required flight time, and experience on large aircraft, and, I was already a resident of Europe. They hired me on the spot.

I started working for Tempelhof Airlines on March 3, 1990. They sent me to Linköping, Sweden for initial and aircraft training at the Saab Training Center. Tempelhof operated a fleet of six thirty-passenger turboprop Saab 340 A and B's. The 340 was a new aircraft. It was very modern. It had a "glass cockpit" and an Electronic Flight Information System (EFIS) which were very new innovations in the airline industry at the time. A glass cockpit replaced the old fashion gauges in the cockpit –no more gauges! The EFIS enabled the aircraft to fly electronically. Many systems like navigation and a host of other components were gone. This plane allowed the pilots to basically fly solely with their fingertips by pushing buttons! All the airlines today use the glass cockpit and EFIS systems on their aircraft.

I spent ten days at the factory training center in Sweden. I passed the ground school exams, the flight simulator test, and the actual aircraft check ride. I then came back to Berlin to fly the line. I spent a few more hours learning the various routes they flew in Germany and other European countries, and they set me loose. Management was pleased to have me on board, I had learned very fast with minimum training. Management was pleased to have me on board.... and I was very happy to have an airline job once again.

I was in Berlin when the wall came down. It was a memorable and a historic event for Germany and the world as well. I was there to see it and experience it. I regret not having kept a stone or rock for a souvenir as many people had done. When the wall came down, East and West Berlin became one Berlin in a short period of time. Shortly after the wall came down, Lufthansa, the national carrier of Germany immediately laid claim to all flight operations in Germany. They immediately took over all our routes



Tempelhof Airways USA, a brand-new Saab 340A

and gave all the foreign companies operating in Berlin one year to cease operations and get out. This was another heartbreaker for me. I had a great job and suddenly it was going to be gone. In December 1991, Tempelhof and all the other carriers at the airport shut their doors and Lufthansa took over completely.

This event was going to be the last time I would fly for the airlines. I never found another job after Tempelhof. By now, I really got so disappointed with the airline industry and the dreams of making aviation my ultimate career. I gave it up for good this time.

14 THE MARTIAL ARTS IN MY LIFE



Robert "Bob" Silos
4th Dan JKA, Instructor JKA
2nd Dan Kobudo (Butokukai)

My first exposure to the Martial Arts was in 1960 as a member of the Araneta University Judo Team. I was a very active member of the team and won a number of intercollegiate matches and tournaments. I earned my 1st Dan Black Belt in Judo in 1963. I must admit, I could not find fulfillment in Judo. It was sort of a "gentle sport". Don't get me wrong, training and matches can get very rough. And Judo is an excellent self-defense art as well. In 1962 I simultaneously started Karate training under Latino Gonzales, 6th Dan, Shorin-Ryu, and Chief Instructor of the Philippine Amateur Karate Association (PAKA). I received my 1st Dan in Shorin-Ryu Karate in 1964.

The word karate is a combination of two words: Kara, meaning empty, and Te, meaning hand; thus, karate means "empty hand." Adding the suffix "-dō", means "the way or path," Therefore karate-dō, implies karate as a way of life that goes beyond self-defense. There are four main styles of karate in Japan: Shotokan, Goju-Ryu, Shito-Ryu, and Wado-Ryu. Many offshoots came from this four major styles. With all styles, serious karate training takes a lifetime. One does not learn karate and become an expert overnight. It takes years and years of rigorous training involving repetition of every movement and form hundreds and thousands of times. Only then can you say, you know a bit of karate. Ranks and Belts take many years to achieve and is only awarded when your teacher believes you are ready.

It was during my reckless days of misadventures in Japan that I visited a number of well-known Karate Honbus (Training Headquarters). I was very impressed at how hard and dedicated everyone was during training. There was a sense of total discipline at every level. I was fortunate at the time to have met and briefly train with two world-famous Karate Masters of the Goju style; Masutatsu Oyama, founder and head of the Kyokushinkaikan, and Gosei Yamaguchi, of Goju Kai. Master Oyama was world famous. He was known as the only person to defeat and kill a bull with his bare hands. He was a very powerful man. He performed this feat in many countries including Las Vegas in the USA. I was totally impressed with his training methods although I also felt it was very extreme. This visit to Japan was the turning point in my love for Karate-do. Master Yamaguchi was also very strong, very quick and very deadly. He was fondly known as “the cat”.

When I was on board the SS President Roosevelt on my way to the United States, I accidentally ran into a group of crew members practicing Karate below deck. Little did I know that the Instructor I met, would turn out to be one of the most well-known Karate Masters of his time. His name was Richard Kim, 8th Dan at the time. He was the Head and Chief Instructor of the Dai Nippon Butokukai, San Francisco, CA. There are many references and links on the internet about this great Master. He was awarded the rank of 10th Dan a few years before he passed away on November 8, 2001. (Note: Since the early 1900's the Butokukai in Japan was the most prestigious organization in the field of martial arts whose objectives were to bring together all styles of Karate while maintaining their individual identities, to preserve and propagate the teachings of the Martial Arts and the use of ancient weapons.) Sensei Kim's physical training and in-depth lectures on the history and philosophy of the martial arts were phenomenal and without equal. He has also published many books. When I met him on the ship, he told me to join his organization in San Francisco. I did. Sensei Richard Kim taught me Shorinji-Ryu Karate, a style of Karate closely similar to the Shotokan style. He also taught me Kobudo (ancient weapons). He was a foremost expert in Kobudo. To mention a few weapons were the; Bo (long stick), Jo (short stick), Sai (a three-pronged metal “sword”), Tonfa (a wooden stick with a handle similar to those used by law enforcement), Kama (similar to a cycle with a wooden handle and the Nunchaku (two sticks held together

with a string. Popularized by Bruce Lee). Sensei Kim awarded me the 1st Dan (1971) and 2nd Dan (1974) in both Karate and Kobudo.

I had the opportunity of training and completing three extensive training camps hosted by Sensei Hidetaka Nishiyama, the designated Japan Karate Association (JKA) Chief Instructor Representative for the U. S. West Coast since he first arrived in the U. S. Sensei Nishiyama was awarded the 10th Dan before he passed away in November 2008. The JKA practiced the Shotokan style of Karate, the most popular of the four major karate styles. He was also the Chief Instructor of the All American Karate Federation (AAKF) together with Sensei Richard Kim in 1973-1976 who was then the Director and Head Instructor of the AAKF/ITKF.

In 1976 when I moved to Brussels, Belgium from the Netherlands, I promptly continued my karate training under JKA Sensei Satoshi Miyazaki, 8th Dan JKA, and Chief Instructor of the Brussels Shotokan Karate-Do Center. I trained many years with Miyazaki Sensei. When Sensei Miyazaki passed away in 1993, his assistant Sensei Kazuhiro Sawada, (now) 7th Dan JKA, took over the organization. I had a very long association with both Senseis spanning 35 years. Although my Dai Nippon Butokukai Dan ratings and certificates were recognized by the JKA, I nevertheless, had my Dan ratings revalidated under the JKA system by Sensei Miyazaki and Sensei Sawada and Sensei Keinosuke Enoda, chief instructor of the JKA in the United Kingdom (UK). I also completed two JKA Instructor Training Courses in 1989 and in 1992.

During the course of the previous years, I met and received special training courses and seminars for advanced belts given in person by Master Masatoshi Nakayama, 10th Dan JKA, Head and Chief Instructor of the JKA Organization worldwide. Master Nakayama, was a direct descendant and student of the founder of Shotokan, Master Gichin Funakoshi. Besides the Senseis I have named above, I also had the honor to meet and received training from many high-ranking JKA Instructors like; Sensei Hirokazu Kanazawa, Sensei Yoshiharu Osaka, Sensei Minoru Kawawada, Sensei Keigo Abe, Sensei Mikio Yahara and a host of many others.

In 1982 while I was living in Torremolinos, Spain to run my bar/restaurant business. I met Didier Kuchler, 3th Dan who was the Shotokan Karate America (SKA) Representative of Tsutomu Ohshima. Sensei Ohshima was also a direct descendant and student of the founder of Shotokan, Master Gichin Funakoshi. Ohshima Sensei was Chief Instructor of the Shotokan Karate America (SKA) organization. Didier and I got along very well and teamed up to give Shotokan karate instruction to many Spanish nationals. I was featured twice in the sports section of the local Southern Spanish newspapers.

During this time, at my invitation, Sensei Satoshi Miyazaki and his family came to Torremolinos for a summer vacation. Sensei Miyazaki and I developed a special bond with intensive one-on-one daily training, lectures, and guidance during his week-long visit.

In 1992 when I moved back home to Hawaii for a couple of years. I rejoined old peers (Sempais) at the JKA Honbu in Honolulu. It was during this period that the JKA in Japan was undergoing a very complex and difficult split. The Tetsuhiku Asai faction prevailed very strongly in Hawaii where Sensei Asai (10th Dan JKA) was very well known and is recognized as one of the first JKA Instructors to bring Shotokan to Hawaii in the 1960's. Ed Fujiwara, 6th Dan was the Chief Instructor at the time.

During this period, I started a Karate School for young adults at the U. S. Navy Base Recreation Center at Pearl Harbor. I had more than 25 kids, ranging in age from 6 to 18, all military dependents. It was a very nice club and did very well. Unfortunately, Europe called once again, I had to go. I left behind a legacy at the Base.

Back to Brussels, Belgium at the end of 1994 – on a new job assignment. I rejoined my old Dojo (Training School). It was now headed by Sensei Kazuhiro Sawada, 7th Dan, who took over after Sensei Satoshi Miyazaki passed away in 1993. A couple of years later, Sensei Sawada and I drove to The Netherlands JKA Honbu to meet up with Sensei Keinosuke Enoeda (9th Dan JKA). Sensei Enoeda is the designated the JKA European Chief Instructor. He came from his headquarters in the UK to give training

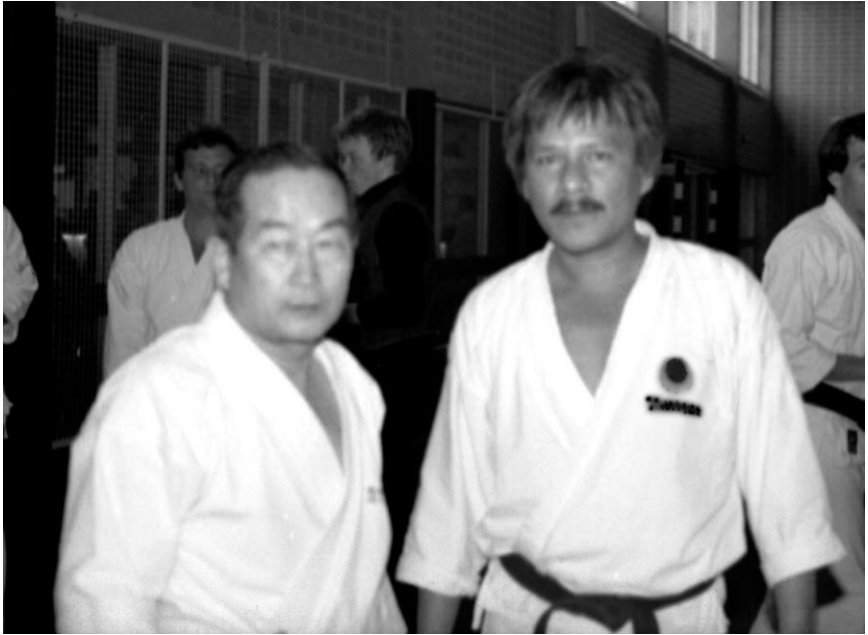
in Holland. Sensei Enoeda gave a very memorable and intensive 3-day special training camp for advanced black belts.

I later received my 4th Dan Black Belt from Sensei Tetsuhiku Asai in 1998 and also attended another Instructor Training Camp held at the same time.

While working for NATO in Brussels, in the 90's, I started the NSA Shotokan Karate Club at the Brussels American School. My students were young schools kids from grade school thru high school, dependents of U. S. Military personnel stationed in Brussels including some adults up to 56 years old. I operated the club and instructed under the JKA organization.

My commitment to Karate Training had been interrupted a number of times due to situations beyond my control. To start with, as a Foreign Service Officer (now retired) with the Department of State, I had to travel and relocate to different countries every 1 to 3 years. Karate schools or clubs were not always available in many parts of the world, thus I missed out on continuous formal training although I did continue training on my own. And then there was a time in the 70's when I had some serious knee injuries requiring operations. I had to stop karate for a couple of years. I still have, and still experience, recurring stiff shoulder and knee issues. Reluctantly, I had to cut down the frequency and intensity of training a number of times through the years due to health concerns.

Nevertheless, at 73, my heart and my commitment to Karate will never end. I am now passing my knowledge to my youngest son, Alexander in the hope Alex will follow the path of Karate-do. It looks promising. We joined the Dominion Shotokan Center in Falls Church close to where we live. The Club is led by Sensei Steve Majors, a 4th Dan student of Sensei Teruyuki Okazaki, 10th Dan who is another direct descendant of Master Funakoshi. Okazaki Sensei is the Head of the International Shotokan Karate Federation in the U. S. After a year and a half of training Alex has attained the rank of 3rd KYU Brown Belt, the start of the Brown Belt levels.



Master Masatoshi Nakayama, 10th Dan (1913-1987) and yours truly.

When I think back, I will never forget all the opportunities I had to train with the best Karate Senseis and Masters of all time. I truly cherish the fact that I am actually a 4th generation Karate-ka from the founder of Shotokan. Then a smile crosses my face when I realize that I was actually, albeit briefly, a 3rd generation Karate-ka when I trained directly under Sensei Nakayama. That will always be memorable.

15 IN RETIREMENT

In October 2011, Agapi and I divorced. We simply had way too many irreconcilable differences we could not resolve. Although divorced, we never really went our separate ways. We continued to live together for convenience. More importantly, we lived together for Alex. We wanted to share Alex equally and, we wanted Alex to grow up with a Mom and Dad.

After I finally finished with the Foreign Service I went into full retirement. I settled down in Falls Church, VA where Agapi had an apartment. Together with our son Alexander, we share a large two bedroom apartment in a high rise building. What a different life retirement is. I had plans to travel to places I had never been to, but those plans never materialized nor were they easy to achieve. I keep busy by bringing Alex to and from school every day. I generally play the role of “housewife”, which keeps me even more occupied. And then over the past year and a half, I have been taking Alex to a nearby Shotokan karate school three times a week. Fortunately, the organization we joined asked me to help teach Karate, something I love to do.

Before I officially retired, I had already visited Cancun, Mexico at least two or three times for vacation. Agapi and Alex came with me on a couple of occasions. We all liked it there so much so that I decided I was going to buy a retirement home in Cancun. The year I retired, I did it.

I bought a nice two-story home in Puerto Juarez a town just outside of the center of Cancun and away from the large tourist areas. The house was located two hundred feet away from the beach of Playa De Nino. This beach is mostly a “locals” beach which very few tourists discover or come to. The beach is very cozy and is lined with many seafood restaurants. The place is packed on weekends with locals and Mexican residents.



Isla Mujeres with Cancun in the distance

The house itself was in bad shape when I bought it. It had been empty for quite some time. I spent a lot of time renovating it to make it livable to U. S. standards. In the end, it began to look and feel like a new home. I keep busy when I am home. There are always a lot of things to do at home and in the garden. I live in it off and on when I am away from VA. Other times, I rent the house out. Everything worked out fine.

One time I traveled to Ecuador. I wanted to see if moving there would be a wise move. I saw all the major cities, towns and villages including Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca and the beach resorts of Salinas and Montanita to the west. Ecuador is a beautiful country and really inexpensive. The cost of living in Ecuador is so low, every retiree can live there well and comfortably all year round. Problem was, it was too far away to commute back to the U. S. compared to Cancun. I decided it was not worth it. Cancun was it for me. I am happy in Cancun.



My little villa in Puerto Juarez in Cancun, Mexico

I continue to spend time between VA and Cancun taking Alex with me when he is off from school. All the locals at the beach have accepted us as one of them. I know everybody and everybody knew me. Life is good in Cancun.

It was mid-March when I got a call from my sister Meldy who was in California. She told me Mom was in critical condition and could pass away soon. I immediately left Cancun, stopped by Palm Springs to see my brother Vince. Together we drove to Union City to see Mom. She was indeed in dire straits. She was lapsing from alert to semi-conscious for the next few weeks since we arrived. My only consolation was I was able to care for Mom for the last two weeks of her life. A bit too late, nowhere could I make up for all the years I have not given Mom attention or loving care. My sister Meldy and brother Vincent did all of that for Sonny and me. April 2 was Mom's 98th birthday. The whole family in the area came and celebrated her birthday. Mom was not really very conscious nor coherent on her birthday, but, she was alive. Our local pastor came that day and administered Mom her last rites before the party. How sad and happy a day it was.

LIFE IS GOOD

On April 6, 2014, four days after Mom turned 98, she passed away peacefully in her sleep. It was a very sad moment in my life. It was a big loss for the whole family. Francisca Luz Joven Silos, the oldest living member of the Joven family was now gone. It was inevitable, it was to be expected, and it was Mom's time to go. I will miss Mom to my last days.

16 CONCLUSION

As this book and my memoirs come to a close, I must first and foremost give thanks to God for giving me life. I thank Him for blessing me with a good life.



Part of my many grandkids. DeAnna is on the right

I have six wonderful children. Except for Alex, the rest are now mature young adults and are doing very well with their own lives. DeAnna the oldest has given me six beautiful grandchildren, the two oldest have finished college, and the rest are on their way to doing the same. She has been living in Hawaiï for many years now. Denise, my second child has given me two beautiful kids as well. Denise lives in Texas. And my third, Robert IV (Bobsy) has three wonderful boys. Like DeAnna, Bobsy has also been living in Hawaiï for many years. Marc is in Santa Clara Silicon Valley working in the IT industry. Natasha elected to live in London where she

works as a Forensic Psychologist and is about ready to finish her Master's in that field. All my kids are the best gifts I will ever get in this life.



With Robert IV "Bobsy", DeAnna and Denise

For the most part, I do not have any regrets with the life I've lived. True, there were a few low points or sometimes desperate times, but I never let those times get me down. I always picked up the pieces and started over again till I achieved what I wanted to do or to be.

In this life I am grateful to have learned so much; acquired so many skills (some through sheer determination), and a lot of valuable learning experiences. I am also deeply grateful to all those who touched my life in unexpected ways, who "walked" with me, and are still "walking" with me. I will cherish every single one of you. I have lived or visited so many countries, learned different cultures and languages. I can still speak five of them but am slowly forgetting that skill. I have had my experience of so many different foods from all the countries I have been to, not to mention, I learned how to cook most of what I saw or ate. I have learned how to deal with, and

communicate with people from all walks of life. I have learned to adapt to, and handle almost any situation I am thrown into or faced with.

People say that life is a journey. As I look back, I am thankful and proud of my own “journey” which brought me where I am today.... a lot smarter, or should I say wiser.... and certainly fulfilled! If I were asked to describe my journey, I’d say it was as exciting and fun as a roller-coaster ride, wonderful and colorful to say the least, interesting, rewarding, and challenging.

What a life that was and still is! Life IS (truly) good!

End

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bob Silos is not a writer. Somehow he became one as he wrote this book. Bob graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture, majored in Animal Husbandry and minored in Farm Management; but, he never practiced what he had learned. Instead, he ended up going into so many totally different paths in his life. As you will find out in this book, he has been a sailor in the Merchant Marines, a Heavy-Duty Diesel Mechanic and a Diesel Entrepreneur in the Diesel industry - while completing an Associate's Degree in Mechanical Engineering. He then obtained all his Pilot's Licenses required for an Airline Pilot's job, which he did. He completed the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) certifications, and worked in the IT field for a number of years. He bought bars in different countries and experienced the life of a Bartender/ Restaurateur, and finally, he travelled all around the world as a Diplomatic Officer for the U. S. Department of State. Bob is now retired and living between homes in Virginia (USA) and Cancun, (Mexico).