

“AS I RECALL”

Personal Remembrances

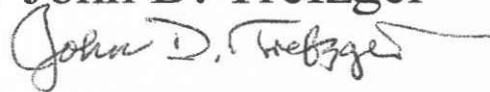
By John D. Trefzger

Volume I

# "AS I RECALL"

## Personal Remembrances

By John D. Trefzger



Volume I

TO SON, BOB TREFZGER.

HOW PROUD MOM & I ARE OF YOU  
AND CONNIE AND ALL YOUR MANY  
OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
AS A FAMILY!

SINCERELY,

Dad

CHRISTMAS, 2003

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AS I RECALL, I must have been about 18 months old, because I was not very conversant in the English language. It must have been the spring of 1925. My mother and father and I were making our weekly visit to Grandpa and Grandma Trockur's house down on Proctor Street in Peoria. Grandma had just finished her spring housecleaning, as least in the front part of the house.

In surveying the newly cleaned parlor on my own, I saw something that was upsetting. The two large photos that hung on the living room walls had been reversed! Great Grandfather and Great Grandmother Noll's picture was now on the wall where Grandpa Trockur's brother Michael's photograph had hung, and vice versa. Something must be done to correct this obvious error!

I went out to the kitchen where everyone was seated around the table and began to jabber my story with great concern and with a sense of urgency. When no one seemed too interested in what I was explaining, I went over to Grandma Trockur and pulled on her apron. "My goodness, Johnny, what is the matter?" She obediently followed me into the parlor, where I proceeded to point to each picture and pointed where they should be hanging. I added a few more jabbers to give further emphasis that I thought that this situation should be corrected immediately, and then rested my case.

Grandma Trockur was flabbergasted. She called everyone into the parlor, retold the story of her brilliant grandson's keen observations, and proceeded to ask my father if he would get a chair, take down the pictures, and replace them in their "proper place". I am sure that having heard that story retold so many times in succeeding years that it became firmly reinforced in my mind forever. No wonder it is the earliest experience that I can recall even though it goes back a full 72 years in my memory. And, oh yes, the rest of this story is that Grandma Trockur never again tried to change the place that those photographs were to hold on the parlor wall. When Grandpa Trockur died in the fall of 1947, Marilyn and I were sitting in the parlor, and I looked up to check again--you guessed correctly...the two pictures were still in their proper places!

It was in December of 1930, AS I RECALL. My brother Joe and I were very excited as Christmas approached. We had already been treated to a personal interview with Santa



Claus on our cousin Billy Betson's birthday on December 7th. Following a movie at the Palace Theater, his father had taken about seven or eight of us down to Block & Kuhl's Department Store and requested (and then demanded) that Santa come out of the front window and personally greet each of us kids! While cousin Bobby Steimel and Joey (as he was called in those days) were awed by the experience, Billy and David Andrews and myself contented ourselves to confirm that Santa's beard was a big fake.

As we prepared to celebrate Christmas in our home, things pretty much revolved around Joey and me. (Brother Tom was only a year and a half, and sister Mary would not be born until the following September. At age 7, as indicated above, I no longer believed in Santa, but my brother Joey was a true and devoted believer in Mr. Claus, and spoke at length with great emotion to the neighbors and family members about Santa's coming and the many gifts he expected. I should emphasize that Joey was a precocious child, obviously possessing a high IQ, with an excellent vocabulary, and with a great memory and talent for reciting nursery rhymes and singing songs to perfection and without prompting. In other words he could really communicate!

It was about the middle of December, when Dad got me aside one day and said. "John, you know the Federal Bakery horse and wagon that goes by our house. The next time that the horse has a BM (language has been slightly altered here!) in the street, get a shovel out of the garage and spread some of it around the base of our chimney." My only response was, "Why?" Dad replied, "You'll understand later." Within a few days, the horse did his job, and I did mine!

That night the conversation at the dinner table again centered on Christmas. Both Mom and Dad gently reminded both Joey and me that Santa is keeping an eye on all that we do. When Joey expressed some doubt about this, Dad said that he was sure that he had seen Santa just last night looking in our windows. Joey's eyes appeared as big as half dollars. Dad suggested that after we finish supper that we take a flashlight and go outside and investigate. As we came around the northwest corner of our house you can well imagine Joey's utter astonishment when the beam of light fell at the base of the chimney and revealed fresh "reindeer" droppings! Dad casually suggested that we might wish to share the news of this amazing find with other members of our family.

I was instructed to go back to our garage, find a small can with a lid, and bring it back to the site with a shovel. Mom was not too keen about the idea, but Joey and I could hardly wait to get into the car and head for 109 Ellis Street, where we could share this exciting treasure with Aunt Marie and Grandpa Trefzger. By now I felt like an adult and an "insider" in this adventure, and was delighted to observe others' reactions. Joey was almost breathless as he told the whole story to Grandpa and Aunt Marie, now with

eyes as big as silver dollars, and dramatically gesturing on each detail. When the can was opened, Marie thought it was hilarious, while Grandpa in his gentle way, quietly chuckled and patted little Joey on the head.

Obviously, one does not argue with success! Instead of staying at Grandpa's for some candy or at least a soda pop, with inspiration I suggested that we immediately go down to Aunt Mary Schifeling's. Joey thought that was a good idea, also. Marie was all smiles, and Dad offered no objection. So, it was down Main Street hill to Franklin, and on to 612 Second Street.

I can still hear the creaking of metal on metal, when we opened the gate of the wrought iron fence in front of Aunt Mary's old two-story house. It was awfully dark on the east side of the house, but that was where the narrow sidewalk led to the small porch and side door. (The front door was only used for special occasions, and never in the winter because it led into a small unheated hall that branched off to the equally icy parlor on the right.) Aunt Mary was our deceased grandmother Trefzger's maiden sister, and was always happy to see us. No one had to explain how it happened that we had come to visit that night. Four year old Charles Joseph Trefzger, Jr. took the floor. With genuine excitement he told the dramatic story in detail about how Santa is soon coming at Christmas, and how he brings toys to good boys (we didn't know much about girls at our house--yet!), and how Santa has been looking in our windows to see if we have been good. Aunt Mary listened attentively and shared an encouraging smile with little Joey, and said, "My, my, child!"

Finally Joey reached the exciting climax of his tale with proof that Santa had been to our house with his reindeer just the other night. He proudly took the top off the can so that Aunt Mary could see for herself. Poor Aunt Mary was not quite prepared for this Advent surprize! She looked into the can with disbelieving eyes, but carefully smiled at little Joey, and said as kindly as she could, "Isn't that nice." But before she had ended that sentence and not yet taken another breath, she looked up at my Dad with a look that could kill and snarled, "You bugger!"

JDTFAMIL      JT23E-3      LET'S GO TO GRANDPA'S!

My dad's father was Charles William Trefzger (1860-1941). His wife of nearly eleven years, Sofia Schifeling, died in May of 1901, leaving him with 3 small children. Marie was nearly 8, Florence was nearly 6, and little Joseph was only 4 1/2 years old. Grandpa never remarried. Running Trefzger's Bakery meant long hours away from his children, so various housekeepers helped raise them. In their early

teens, Marie and Florence took over the household duties. When Florence married in 1919, Marie continued to take care of her father and ran the house at 109 Ellis Street until her death in 1977.

AS I RECALL, when the four of us grandchildren came on the scene, going to Grandpa Trefzger's was a special treat. I'm sure that our folks enjoyed the treat, also, of getting rid of us for a while on those occasions! Grandpa Trefzger was an easy-going, quiet, likeable person--the perfect grandfather. He made sure that there was a plentiful supply of candy and soda pop and ice cream there to satisfy our needs. He had an eagle eye for what was new on the toy market, and didn't hesitate to buy bags of marbles, boxes of rubber balls, as well as a new yo-yo for each of us.

During the winter we were often invited over to the house for the entire Saturday. Grandpa had carefully saved the scrap lumber from a remodeling project on the house, sawed the 1" x 2" pieces into exact lengths of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12" lengths. These he had painted with bright colors of red, yellow, and blue. In addition to these perfect building blocks, he had saved the two foot long pieces which had been sawed off the rounded top storm windows. These he had painted red, and made perfect spans for building twelve foot long bridges in the parlor. These bridges which we built impressed us as being engineering masterpieces and architectural delights! When we completed one of these, we expected it to remain in the middle of the parlor for at least a month! Poor Aunt Marie, bless her heart, put up with all of this, and instructed her cleaning lady to work around the bridge.

Grandpa's house was extra special because it had two stairways to the second floor. Talk about the ideal place to play hide and seek, or just plain chase! When our cousin Charles "Jughead" Bourscheidt joined us on some Saturdays, we really tore the place apart! Grandpa smiled with delight, and poor Marie wiped her forehead with her handkerchief and prayed that the end of the day would come soon.

JDTFAMIL

JT33E-4

FUN AT THE TROCKURS

AS I RECALL, having fun at Grandpa and Grandma Trockur's house was varied and always interesting. In the 1930's two of their children, Nick and Verna, were still living at home. Even though they were 18 and 13 years older than I was, they related very well to me and to all of the grandchildren who came often to visit. There was a pretty

well established schedule as to when the Trockur daughters and their respective husbands and their children stopped by for weekly visits. I can't remember which families came on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but the Steimels always made it on Saturday evenings, and the Trefzger's night was Sunday. One of the big attractions for the grandchildren in coming here was to get in on the Pollyanna games that went on at the kitchen table nearly every evening of the week. The most enthusiastic player was Grandma Trockur, with her good natured son, Nick, not far behind. Pollyanna was a Parcheesi game, in which one moved his four pieces from "home" to the goal by advancing by the throw of the dice. Frustration came along the way as opponents could send one home by landing on the same space. (Grandma also enjoyed playing Bunko.)

Verna was an excellent piano player. Frequently many of us would join in singing both the popular songs of the day as well as the old favorites around the piano in the parlor. My mother had a good voice, and thoroughly enjoyed these sessions. Grandpa seldom entered into the singing, except on the big New Years Eve parties held there each year. One of the most memorable of these parties was the year when Grandpa was leading the singing, using his newly lit cigar as a baton, when he lost his balance and fell into the Christmas tree! December 31st was Grandpa's birthday (1862), as well as my mother's birthday (1898), as well as his daughter, Emma's, (married to J. W. "Bill" Betson) wedding anniversary. Those were some parties, with the grandchildren included!

Another memory that comes back to me is the image of Grandpa Trockur sitting in his favorite rocking chair in the dining room, crossing his legs and giving rides on his foot to the smallest of the grandchildren. As he gave these "horsey" rides he would sing in German. From the smile on his face and the laughter from the children, it was difficult to tell who enjoyed the experience the most!

In the summer it was fun to come to the Trockurs because next door to their house was a large empty lot, which Grandma called "the prairie". Sunday nights were special because so many of the cousins showed up providing lots of kids to play tag, hide & seek, and collect lightning bugs.

There were other features that made for interest. They had a rock garden with a small gold fish pool in their back yard. These were very popular in the Depression years. Across the alley was the Tyng grade school playground. In the back portion of the empty lot next door there were both a plum and a peach tree. Grandpa and Grandma had a large garden in which they grew nearly everything in the way of vegetables. Grandma also had a small fenced-in plot with about a dozen chickens. All of us kids were fascinated when



Grandma would come out and in preparation for supper would wring a chicken's neck. The headless chicken would run crazily all over "the prairie" for a time before succumbing.

Nick was a great one for homemade ice cream. He didn't need much coaxing on a Sunday afternoon to get the process going. First of all he would drive his Chevy over to the ice house, buy 25 pounds of ice, and bring it home on the back bumper. Of course all the grandchildren present wanted to turn the crank on the hand operated freezer. When it was time to take out the paddle, everyone got a spoon to get a taste of the ice cream. There were also more than enough volunteers to lick off any ice cream still on the paddle before it was taken back to the kitchen for washing.

I was very lucky to enjoy a special niche at the Trockur home. While Grandpa and Grandma Trockur loved all of their 20 grandchildren, it seemed to me I received some special favors. From the very beginning I had an edge in being named after my Grandpa, John Trockur. But there was an additional aspect to this. Their only child who died in infancy was named John. It is understandable how they looked at me in a special way. This showed itself in a number of ways. In the 1930's I was invited to stay in their home over the Christmas holidays on several occasions. Those were very special times for me. With my small suitcase I would board the electric street car at Knoxville and McClure, four blocks from my home, and for 4 cents would ride all the way downtown and out Lincoln Avenue to within three blocks of the Trockur residence at 215 Proctor Street, without even having to transfer. During my several visits there in the 1930's there were movies to attend at the Garden Theater, lots of Pollyanna, and one year when there was an ice storm, Verna and I were able to skate on Proctor Street. By 1936 Verna was married to Carthy Moore. They made their home with my grandparents for several years. Carthy was a great person. He not only took me bowling, but taught me how to operate his wood lathe down in the basement near the old coal burning furnace!

And then there were wonderful conversations with both Grandpa and Grandma. Grandpa was born in Alsace-Lorraine, a small area which Germany won back from France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, when he was just eight years old. While Grandpa could speak both French and German fluently, Trockur was a French name. As he grew to manhood, he was not pleased about facing compulsory military service for Germany under Bismark. He told an exciting story of his daring escape as a young man from Germany into Belgium, where he worked until he could get passage to England, and then on to the USA. He made several "dry run" trips on the train from Metz in Germany into Belgium, carefully noting the pattern of the military police in moving through the train in checking for persons who might try to flee the

country without a passport. On the day of his escape, he calculated the exact time to use the restroom on the train, where he stayed until the military police passed by him, and thus was never asked to show papers (which he did not have). Of course, he arrived in Belgium with only the clothes he was wearing and no luggage.

From England, Grandpa came to the United States, where he worked in a coal mine just west of Peoria. The owner of the mine was named George Noll. He and his wife, Anna, had several daughters, but the one who was nine years younger than John, named Elizabeth, caught Grandpa's eye, and they were married in 1891.

I also remember my Grandpa Trockur as a great walker. He never owned an automobile, nor did he ever learn to drive one. Even in his 70's he thought nothing of walking five miles from his home to go up on the East Bluff in Peoria to visit his daughters: Clara Wyss, Emma Betson, Dora Trefzger, and Fanny Steimel. And though each daughter tried to give him cab fare or street car fare on his visits, he always insisted on walking back home.

Grandma had her share of interesting stories to tell, also. She had nine children, all but one growing to adulthood. For that era this was remarkable. Only Nick never married. The remaining six girls and one boy all married and had children. Grandma was a very busy housewife all her days. Perhaps what impressed me most, coming from a household related to the Trefzger Bakery, is that Grandma baked once or twice a week--bread, rolls, pies, cakes, and cookies! What baffled Grandma was that the Trefzger kids, who had all the bakery goods any one would ever want, thought that her baked goods were the best!

In 1933 she went with us by automobile to Chicago to visit the World's Fair. Grandma, my folks, and my brother Joe and I did a lot of walking there seeing "The Century of Progress"--but Grandma outwalked us all! When we returned home to Peoria, my mother couldn't stop talking about how her mother wore the rest of us out. How old was "old" Grandma at that time? Today, looking through my 74 year old eyes, she wasn't that old--just 61--but we were all very impressed with her endless supply of energy! She died in 1954 at age 82.

One more story. On a very hot Sunday afternoon on September 19, 1948, I was ordained to the Christian ministry at Glen Oak Christian Church in Peoria. The following Sunday morning I was the guest speaker at the service of Morning Worship at Glen Oak. It was a big day! A large number of our family came to hear the new minister preach. Marilyn secured a corsage for Grandma and a boutonniere for Grandpa. In general the family sat in pews about halfway back in the

sanctuary, but Grandpa came down and sat in the very front pew. He wanted to be able to hear every word! Following the worship service there was a big dinner served at the Trockur home. Some family members came to the dinner who did not attend the church service. One of this group said to Grandpa, "Well, how did Johnny do this morning?" Without any hesitation he responded, "By God, he didn't make a mistake!"

JDTFAMIL

JT33E-5

FOURTH OF JULY

AS I RECALL, Fourth of July celebrations have always been a fun time in our family life. My earliest recollections go back to the early 1930's, when our family would gather at my Grandpa Trefzger's house at 109 Ellis Street in Peoria (later, 1015 N. Ellis). Besides Aunt Marie and Grandpa, there was our Great Aunt Mary Bauer and her sister, Anna, and our cousin Charlie Bourscheidt and his parents, Paul and Florence.

At dusk we would gather in the back yard, where my Dad was in charge of setting off a great display of night fireworks. There were Roman candles, flower pots, pin wheels fastened to a tree, and maybe a sky rocket or two. By modern measure it probably wouldn't be too impressive, but for those depression days, it was almost sensational! All of the children had to sit on their camp stools throughout the entire entertainment. Great emphasis was placed on safety, and only Dad could light the fireworks. Well, there was an exception made at the end of the show, when we children could each be given a sparkler to light and delight in its entertaining brightness.

In terms of daylight celebration, my brother Joe and I were allowed to shoot off small "lady finger" fire crackers, using punk to light them and to stand by. As we proved our ability, we were allowed to light the one and one-quarter inch long flash crackers, which we often set under tin cans to increase the noise and to demonstrate some action. Lighting the flash crackers and throwing them was a "no-no". We resorted to a different approach. We began making "mud bombs" for several days before the Fourth of July--much to our mother's consternation. Manufacturing these mud bombs called for pouring considerable water into the dirt in our small garden area beneath the back hall window of the house. It got pretty messy. The mud bombs were about the size of a snow ball, and made in the same manner. After they set for a while we made a hole in each about the size of the flash cracker that would eventually be placed within it. The invention was indeed inspired, but the results on July 4th

were anything but sensational! (The fire crackers were not powerful enough to blow up the mud "bombs".)

Like Memorial Day and Labor Day, July Fourth became a family picnic day for the Trefzgers in the late 1940's. Following World War II we met at The Farm over near Mackinaw, and continued this tradition through the 50's, 60's, and into the 70's until Dad's death in 1976. While I cannot recall ever shooting off fire works in the country, it was a great time for visiting, eating, hiking, and the grandchildren holding meetings of The Buckeye Club. In the early 60's there were a number of 4th of July nights, when we were able to sit out on our drive way at 16 Woodruff Drive and watch the aerial fireworks display at the Bloomington Country Club. One such night was made memorable because it was so cold that Grandpa and Grandma Wilson and the five of us all wore jackets and covered ourselves with blankets and beach towels to watch the show!

Through the 1970's and into the 1980's Marilyn and I enjoyed leading world wide tours that usually began in June and ended during the first week in July. As a result, we observed the Fourth of July abroad on a number of occasions. In 1971 Jim and Bob were with us in Paris, France. The next year Bob was with us on July 4th in London, England. In 1973 Marilyn and I celebrated the 4th in Hong Kong, singing all the patriotic songs with our Tour Group as our bus took us out into the Chinese country side. In 1975 we were in two countries on the Fourth of July. In the morning we were in Helsinki, Finland, and then we flew over to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg, Russia) in the afternoon. In recounting these years, we shall always remember celebrating the great USA Bicentennial on July 4th, 1976, with a big picnic at The First Christian Church in South Bend, Indiana. Our last "overseas" celebration of Independence Day was on July 4th, 1987 in Honolulu, Hawaii. Marilyn and I virtually sat among the musicians in the Royal Hawaiian Band that day to get a seat in the shade!

In returning to live in Bloomington, Illinois, we began watching the public fireworks displays at Miller Park in Bloomington, and at Fairview Park in Normal on the July 4th night. In 1997 we enjoyed going to Peoria as guests of my sister, Mary, and her husband, Mark Hurd, to view the evening fireworks display at the Willow Knolls Country Club. It was a spectacular show!



AS I RECALL, I had some interesting experiences in getting my first automobile. It was a 1939 black Chevrolet coupe, which I bought on time in June of 1941 just as I was graduating from high school. It was really my Dad's idea. Up to this time he had never encouraged me to learn to drive, and when I was in high school there was no such thing as drivers education. Now all of a sudden he determined that it was time for me to have a car so that I could drive it to work at the Bakery--especially when I would be going to Bradley in the fall and would go to work before classes at such an early hour that the street cars would not yet be running.

He and I went out to Earl Johnson's Chevrolet agency on Main Street to see what they had in used cars. This '39 Chevy had some 30,000 miles on its odometer--who knows what the actual mileage was, because in those days it was openly acknowledged that every used car dealer turned the mileage back. Its engine sounded "pretty good". The tires looked "pretty new". The price of \$640. sounded "pretty high" to me. But, the sale was made.

When Dad and I arrived home, we described the purchase to Mom. She was not too impressed. Her first remark was, "Why didn't you buy a new car?" Dad's serious response was, "Do you realize that a new car would have cost another \$200?" After using my Grandpa Trefzger's graduation gift of \$50 and draining all my savings from the bank as down payment, I still owed \$19.25 per month for the next two years! While I didn't have to pay board and room at home, my income at the Bakery was only \$12 per week.

However, the cost factor was not my biggest problem. I now "owned" an automobile, but I couldn't drive it! That is why Mom couldn't see the car--it was still over in Johnson's used car lot. Dad made a deal with Johnson that if we bought a car from him that someone at the agency would teach me how to drive it. Johnson said that would be no problem.

On the following Monday afternoon I took the street car over to Johnson's garage, where I met my instructor. Obviously, he was not Johnson's top salesman, nor was he his best mechanic. I quickly saw that my teacher was the latest hired and lowest employee in the garage hierarchy. When I arrived it was plain to see that my new friend had been thoroughly teased about his new assignment, was doing a slow burn, and was not the least bit happy to see me or meet me!

Now, 56 years later, I can't even remember his name, but at the time I did know it. He got in the car, with me on the passenger side, and drove away quickly. To my surprise, he continued to drive all the way across the West Bluff and

into the East Bluff and on to Knoxville, where he pulled over to the curb just south of Corington Street. The only conversation that we had on this roughly 3 mile trip was to ask me how old I was. When I told him I was 17, his response was that he couldn't imagine anyone who was 17 and couldn't drive an automobile. I didn't protest or argue.

When I took my place at the wheel, he simply motioned for me to start driving. I did my best, but it was a pretty jerky pull away from the curb. (It would be a while before I could use the clutch to produce a smooth start and confidently shift from low into second gear and then into high.) But once I got the car moving in high gear, it was a piece of cake! There wasn't much traffic, and Knoxville quickly became a two laned hard road (Illinois Rt. 88) going straight north. Before I knew it, I was going 40 miles an hour, then 50, and then 60! My instructor didn't say a word. As we approached the Mt. Hawley Airport, he instructed me to make a left turn. While I did slow down to probably 35 miles an hour, that was considerably too fast to make the turn. The tires screeched and my instructor cursed me out for "trying to roll the tires off the car".

I can't remember much more about that day's instruction. There was no time given for stopping and starting, nor learning how to signal for turns, nor learning how to park. I can still see the look on my Father's face, when he asked me how my first day's driving lesson went--and I described the experience to him!

My Father was never known as a laid back, even tempered pussy cat. He exploded in grand style. He called Earl Johnson on the telephone and ripped him up one side and down the other. I must say that there was quite a transformation in my next lesson. My instructor seemed madder and said even less to me. I lost most of my first day's confidence. There was no more driving on the hard road. We spent most of the time with me at the wheel driving the city streets.

I thought that all was going well, when I pulled up to a stop sign on a slope. Just as I was ready to go again, I didn't give the car enough gas, and the engine died. Instead of putting on the brake and restarting the car in a conservative fashion, I tried to start it quickly. The woman in the auto directly behind me blasted her horn and tried to go around me. To this day I firmly believe that her right front fender and my back left fender crunched because of her forward motion more than my backward motion, but the results were the same. The woman was furious and I was embarrassed. My instructor got out of the car, folded his arms, and acted as though he was simply a bystander who witnessed the accident. When I asked him what I should do, he shrugged his shoulders.

I decided that to be on the safe side I had better call the police. I went up to the corner house, and a woman let me use her telephone. I can still hear the police sirens as they approached the scene from 5 miles away! When they did arrive, they asked if this was the accident. There must have been 40 automobiles which had followed the police car. The police tried to act seriously about it all, but the crowd which had gathered thought that this was the funniest thing they had ever seen. The police made out the report. Needless to say, my Father was less than happy to hear about the second day's learn-to-drive session! That did it. Now Dad was going to become my teacher!

Two items to sum up this long story: First of all, I must admit that my Dad did a fine job in teaching me the basics of good driving, and within a week I passed the Illinois State drivers examination, both the written test and in driving and parking the car. Secondly, a few days later, I can still recall walking from the Bakery down to George Hediger's insurance agency to pay my auto insurance premium and to give George (a long time friend of our family) the claim against the policy to pay for straightening the woman's right front fender. The cost of the damage was the astronomical sum of \$7.50! Even George thought it was funny.

JDTAUTOS

JD33B-2

NAMING OUR AUTOMOBILES

AS I RECALL, it was Marilyn who thought that we should give the 1939 Chevy a name. At their house the Wilsons gave names to their automobiles. It was kind of a game, you know, and we had fun thinking up all kinds of monikers. However, we both agreed that the Chevy's name should be "MELODY". There was a very popular song at this time entitled "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody". The name fit, and members of both families called her "Melody". She served us well in 1942 and 1943, when we were dating and going to movies, basketball games, and dances. I made the last car payment just before I was called from reserve to active duty in the U.S. Air Force on June 22nd of 1943.

I got back from World War II on March 12, 1946. "Melody" was running, but showing signs of old age. Borrowing the new tires off of Dad's car, Marilyn and I drove "Melody" to northern Wisconsin on our honeymoon in June of '46. In 1947 while living in Eureka, Illinois, "Melody" was burning a quart of oil every 100 miles, giving evidence of needing new piston rings. When the new rings were put in, I had the loose back fenders welded to the body. With a little black paint over the weld spots, "Melody" held out quite well

until September 20, 1948, when she went back to Earl Johnson on a trade-in.

On Sunday, September 19th, following my afternoon ordination, the family gathered at 408 E. McClure to celebrate Dad's 52nd birthday. After opening his gifts, he said, "Mama, don't we have something for John?" She responded by handing me an envelope. Upon opening the envelope, I could hardly believe my eyes in reading out loud, "There is a new 1948 Chevrolet waiting for you to pick up at Earl Johnsons tomorrow. Congratulations. Mom & Dad"

It was indeed an exciting time. In just a few days Marilyn, Dick (now almost 9 months old), and I began our drive to Lexington, Kentucky, where my seminary studies would begin. On the way down we began to think seriously about a name for our shiny, beautiful black Chevrolet Fleetline sedan. We all agreed that the car should be called "DIXIE" to celebrate our coming three years in the South! What a tremendous automobile for its day--so quiet, so smooth, so pleasant to drive.

In 1951 I graduated from Lexington Theological Seminary (its official name then was "The College of the Bible"), and we moved to our first pastorate in Waukegan, Illinois. Now after five years, we needed a new automobile. We began looking at new cars in 1953, and purchased a green 1953 Chevrolet "150". This auto was an easy one to name... "WAUKEE" for our new community.

"Waukee" served well, but wasn't as good a car as we had hoped. After three Chevys, we thought that it was time to try another make. A new 1957 white, custom 300 Ford, trimmed in anodized gold, caught our eye in our last year in Waukegan. With Dick now 9 years old; Jim, 6 years old; and Bob, 3 years old; and all of us interested in baseball, the name for this car came easily: "WHITEY FORD"!

Five years later we traded in old "Whitey Ford" for a 1962 blue Galaxie Ford in Bloomington, Illinois, now to be our home for the nearly 16 year period, 1957-73. The name for this new car combined its color with the sound of our new home: "BLUE MING"!

Barker Oldsmobile Agency was located across the street from The First Christian Church in Bloomington on Lee Street. One day their salesman, Ray Maxwell, came over to my study at the Church. "John," he began, "How would you like to lease a new car from Barkers?" He went on to explain that this was a new program that the company was initiating. I remember responding, "Will Barker lease Fords?" He smiled and said that they would lease any make and model car available in the community. I told him that I would be interested, if the cost was better than owning a new car.



Barker was so eager to get some customers for their leasing program, that they leased a new 1964 Galaxie 500 Ford for two years at \$105. per month with no money down! This covered all maintenance including oil changes! I figured that I was saving about \$250 per year over what it had been costing us to operate our previous autos. Since we were leasing from Barker Motor Company, this new car received the name of "BARKIE".

When our two year lease was about up, Ray Maxwell came around to ask another question: "John, how about leasing a new Oldsmobile?" "Great," I responded, "If you can match the leasing price of a new Ford!" Ray wasn't sure that they could match it, but promised that they would come as close as they could. The long story made short is that they came within \$10 per month, and we had the good fortune of driving a new 1966 blue Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme. This was a beautifully designed, sharp looking sports auto which we all loved and called "OLDIE".

When 1968 rolled around, Barker Motor Company had another Oldsmobile Cutlass lined up for us to lease. This one was a beautiful gold. There seemed to be no problem in naming this car "GOLDIE". We did experience a problem, however. For some time we had been requesting and receiving a special Illinois license plate number for our automobile: 401-016. The Church's address was 401 W. Jefferson Street, and we lived at 16 Woodruff Drive. Now that we were leasing, Barker Motor Company owned our automobile, and they put the plate on our leased car each December. This one December day I came out of the Church building and noted that a mechanic from the Barker garage had come over and put on the license plate for the new year. I looked at it and couldn't believe what I read! I walked right over to Barkers and asked to speak to Ray Maxwell. "Is there a problem?" asked Ray very sincerely. "You bet there's a problem," I answered. "Did you put the new license plate on my car?" "No," responded Ray, "I think that Ralph did, what's the matter?"

I suggested that Ray come outside and see for himself. I said that I didn't think that it was very nice of Barkers to put this license plate on a minister's car. Ray took one look and began laughing. He laughed so hard that the Barker brothers, Bill and Alan, had to come outside to take a look for themselves. I laughed as hard as they did. The license read: BS 496 !

1970 was the last year that we leased from Barker. The new Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme was silver in color. The obvious name was "HI HO SILVER". An editorial comment: while the color of the auto went from gold to silver, the price jumped another \$10 per month to lease. It was now costing as much to lease as to own. The handwriting was on the wall.

Although it was so convenient to leave the lease car at Barkers for servicing, by the next time around we wouldn't be able to afford this luxury.

When the Oldsmobile lease ran out in 1972 we went up to El Paso, Illinois, to Heller Ford for our next new car. Heller sold us a 1972 Gran Torino gold colored Ford for cost plus \$100. We were very pleased. Our boys named the new car. It was "C.C. RIDER" after a popular song of the day.

We moved from Bloomington, Illinois, in August of 1973, to South Bend, Indiana. After driving "C.C. Rider" for 5 years and putting 120,000 miles on it, we sold it to Dick and Nancy for \$1,000 in 1977. They were living in Bellwood, Illinois, just west of Chicago. Dick was the chief resident surgeon at Presbyterian-St. Lukes Hospital at that time. We went back into leasing automobiles again. This time we went to Gates Chevrolet in South Bend. Our first Chevy was a 1977 dark blue Caprice Classic. Granddaughter, Emily, was now three years old. When we asked her what we should name this new automobile, she did not hesitate a second to respond: "NICHOLAS THE BLUE BUNNY"--and so from that moment it was known by that name.

Again, we entered into a 2 year leasing program. In 1979 our new Chevrolet Caprice Classic was brown in color. By this time, Dick and Nancy & Emily were living back in Bloomington, Illinois, at 212 S. Hershey Road. Emily was now five years old, and very satisfied that the name of our new car should be "HERSHEY BAR". We left First Christian Church in South Bend in early 1980 for First Christian Church in Bloomington, Indiana. Here we had the good fortune of having Sam Benevole, the Lincoln-Mercury dealer, and his wife as members of our congregation. Sam, with a big smile, said that he just couldn't have his minister driving a Chevy. When the lease on "Hershey Bar" ran out in the fall of 1981, Sam had a big, beautiful dark green Mercury Gran Marquis ready to lease to us. It was a great automobile. Why not name it after the man who made it possible? You guessed right! It was named "BENNY".

Two years later we welcomed another leased Mercury Gran Marquis. This 1983 auto was a silvery gray, and lent itself to being called "THE LONE RANGER". By then we had all 6 of our grandchildren. While Paul was just a baby and John was only two years old, Emily (9), Sarah (5), Amy (5), and Mike (5) all thought it was a good name.

In the early spring of 1984, after returning from a winter vacation in Florida, Marilyn and I accepted calls from The Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin to be Associate Regional Ministers. This brought us back to Bloomington, Illinois, after an absence of eleven years. We turned in "The Lone Ranger" to Sam Benevole in Bloomington, Indiana,

and each received a new 1984 Chevrolet Celebrity. Marilyn's car was maroon in color, and mine was blue. This time the color had nothing to do with the naming. Marilyn's Chevy was to be known as "ILLINOIS", and mine was to be called "WISCONSIN". After driving these two automobiles all over the region in our ministry to the various 200 congregations, we turned them in at the close of 1988 at retirement.

Since I retired in September, we bought a 1988 Chevrolet Celebrity Eurosport in August. It was silver in color, and was quickly named "THE SILVER STREAK". While this auto was a sharp looking car, it had a suspension system that was too tight for us to ride comfortably. The next year we purchased a white 1989 Chevrolet Caprice Classic Broughom. We named it the "GHOST BUSTER" after a current movie. It gave us five years of good service, but we began looking for an even more comfortable riding auto.

We were led to try out a Mercury Gran Marquis LS with its lumbar adjustment on both front seats. This 1994 model has proved to be the greatest automobile that we have ever owned and driven. Oh, yes, it is another white car, and since we were now living in Florida six months of the year, we named it "THE FLORIDA SNOW BALL". At this time of writing in 1997, we have put 50,000 miles on this auto in the little more than the three years we have driven it. We have a 75,000 mile warranty on it, so hopefully we will have it for another two years.

SUMMARY: We have been so fortunate to have had 18 new automobiles over the past nearly 50 years. Each has been special to us. Each has had its own name. Yet, it all began with a used car named "Melody" way back in 1941. Great memories, indeed!

ps. In 1998 we traded in THE FLORIDA SNOW BALL for a new 1998 Mercury Gran Marquis, which son Bob helped us drive down to keep in Florida. The official description of color was "desert sand". John wanted to name this car "Rommel" after the German general known as "The Desert Fox". However Marilyn's choice was simply SANDY--and so it is!

In 2002 we went back to Heller Ford & Mercury in El Paso to purchase a used 1999 white Gran Marquis to keep in Bloomington and drive during the summer months here. This being our 4th white auto, we had more difficulty coming up with a name. However, Marjorie named it for us: SNOW FLAKE.

That makes a total of 21 named automobiles--will there be any more?

A recent HOW TIME FLIES article in the Bloomington DAILY PANTAGRAPH indicated that in 1972 Bloomington's first downtown heliport was approved. It was located on the roof of the building at the southeast corner of Center and Olive Streets.

AS I RECALL, the heliport became a reality, and there appeared in the PANTAGRAPH an ad announcing that for a limited number of days helicopter rides over the city would be offered for only \$5.00 per person. In reading the advertisement to Marilyn I expressed some interest. She said that she would give it some thought.

When I came home for lunch that day, I told Marilyn that I wanted to take the helicopter ride that afternoon. "Count me in too!" she said. We anticipated a long waiting line, and were delightfully surprised to find no line at all. Our pilot was very friendly and accomodating. We took off of the building and flew directly west to Miller Park.

The date was June 7, 1973. I know this because I took my camera along and was able to take a number of colored slides. Each slide carries the date. Anyway, it was a beautiful sunny day, and a most enjoyable ride. The three of us sat next to each other in the bench seat right up against the large head-to-toe bubble windshield. It was just like sitting out in the sky on top of a 50 story building!

The Miller Park lagoon Friendship Bridge was beautiful from the 500 feet altitude. We turned south and flew across the Highland Park Golf Course, turning north along Veterans Parkway (Bus. I-55) and followed it to the then new State Farm Corporate Headquarters Building. Continuing north to the new Eastland Mall and to K-Mart, we then made a left turn west and across the Bloomington Country Club Golf Course to our house at 16 Woodruff Drive. Here we went down to about 200 feet, and I was able to get another great photo.

We continued west to downtown Bloomington, flying right over the 12 story State Farm Office Buildings, and I was able to get a neat picture looking down on the old McLean County Court House dome. Our pilot again accomodated us by flying by The First Christian Church at N. Roosevelt and W. Jefferson Streets. From the slide it is interesting to note that the new Fire House was in process of being built on Lee Street across from the Church. We then headed south a few blocks to the heliport and landed. I got one more good slide photo. This one was of Marilyn getting out of the helicopter. It was a memorable trip--and all for just \$5.00 apiece!



AS I RECALL, from my earliest days, our family enjoyed playing card games. My Dad was a great card player, and knew how to play many, many different card games. He enjoyed teaching us children and we learned quickly. At the risk of forgetting to mention some of the card games we played as children, I shall mention Old Maid, "Ordinary" Rummy, 500 Rummy, Michigan Rummy, Ah Shucks, Pig, Fish, Hearts, Fan Tan, Casino, Auction Bridge, Poker, and Pinochle. Later in life I tried my hand at Euchre and Contract Bridge, but I think that my favorite game has been pinochle.

It was the game that my parents enjoyed playing, and by the time I was ten years old we were playing 3-handed pinochle after the younger children were put to bed. I didn't play cards very much, when I first went into the service in World War II. However, when I went overseas and we lived four men to a tent, pinochle became our favorite pastime. George Asbill of Ft. Worth, Texas, and I always took on Bob Tabbert of Chicago and Walt Wdowka of Buffalo, NY. In the earlier days in India we worked long hours and played at night, only if no movie was available. By the time the war with Japan was over in August of 1945, our work schedules were down to four days a week, then three days a week, and finally two days a week. Recreation became a very important part of each day. We played volleyball, softball, wrote letters, watched evening movies, read, but most of all we played lots of pinochle.

One night, when we were camped at Ledo, India, George and I were having lots of fun thoroughly trouncing Bob and Walt. It was getting late, and we were close to calling it a day. I picked up my hand and couldn't believe it! We played contract pinochle, so that each player got just the one bid. I studied my hand again to make sure, and bid 70 (700)! Asbill laughed while Tabbert & Wdowka groaned. What was this spectacular hand? I laid down all 12 cards in my hand as announcement: A run in Spades with the 9, one hundred aces, and double pinochle!  $16 + 10 + 30 = 56$  announcement!

I didn't think that I would have any problems taking 14 in the cards, but I was mistaken. While I had more than half (7) of the trump spades, my partner had only one and not much else. But I lucked out and took in 16 for a total of 72 for the hand. Ah, yes, it has been the hand to remember as I have continued to play hundreds of pinochle games in the succeeding decades.

1957 was a memorable year in my athletic experiences. AS I RECALL it was the second year in which First Christian Church had a team in the Waukegan-North Chicago Church League. As one who had played only baseball and 12 inch fast pitch softball, I wasn't very enthused about playing this 16 inch slow pitch game. However, I quickly learned that it was a special game in its own right, and I came to enjoy playing it. While it was a hitters' game designed for small playing fields, it took special skills for pitching with a visible arc on the ball to get batters out. It was a ball game that was well established in the Chicago area. Here are two memories to relate:

First Christian Church had a good team of young men. We didn't realize how good the team was until we beat every other team in the league in the summer of 1957! We were very proud of that large trophy which we placed on the mantel in the living room of FCC Fellowship House.

A humorous incident took place in a game we played with a black Baptist Church. Being ambidextrous, I was throwing some pitches left handed and some pitches right handed--mixing them up. The Baptists were frustrated. After an inning or so they sent out their manager to protest to the umpire, who was at the pitchers mound. The manager demanded: "What does it say in the rule book about pitching with both hands?" The umpire was at a loss to know what to say or what to do. Since I was standing right there I responded: "In reading the New Testament, neither John the Baptist nor Jesus ever said anything against it." To my surprise and the umpire's relief, the black manager burst out laughing, and returned to his team at bat saying, "It's okay, it's okay!" I pitched the rest of the game right handed, and we all had an enjoyable time. (We submitted this story to READERS DIGEST, but it was never published.)

I should probably be more modest than to relate this next story, but let's just say that I tell it to illustrate the kind of expectations members of the Church often have of their pastors. The end of the victorious softball season of 1957 coincided with my resignation at FCC in Waukegan to go to Bloomington, Illinois. Benny Miller, our outstanding center fielder, was especially disappointed in learning of my leaving. He was talking about the situation to Rags Barnas, our right fielder and an Elder of the congregation. Rags explained that this kind of thing happens in every church. A pulpit committee would soon be named, and after interviewing the various prospects, the congregation would have the opportunity to call a new minister. Benny's unexpected response was: "One who can bat .500 and pitch??"

## AS I RECALL MY MILITARY EXPERIENCE

*Taken from notes in "My Life in World War II (1942-46)", summaries made at the end of each leg of the journey.*

### Foreword

It was early afternoon on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941 that every radio station was sharing the shocking news that the Japanese had bombed the U.S. fleet in Pearl Harbor on the Hawaiian Island of Oahu.

I was upstairs in my room at 408 E. McClure, Peoria, Illinois, doing my homework when my Dad called to me to share the bad news. I told myself then and there that I would be involved in a war.

During the next month as our nation went to war with Japan as well as Germany and Italy, my thoughts centered on how I might best serve my country. I investigated meteorology and discovered the requirements to qualify were high in college physics and calculus. Those were subjects I would be taking in my sophomore year. Was there a way to do this? The Army Air Corps recruiter offered a solution, saying, "If you can pass the physical for Air Corps cadet, you could be placed in the reserve for one more year of college." I was able to do both! From September 22, 1942 to June 21, 1943 I completed my sophomore year before being called to active service. I wrote the following descriptive accounts during my 34 months of active duty.

### **Basic Training: June 21, 1943-July 26, 1943**

At dirty, dusty, hot Sheppard Field (near Wichita Falls, Texas), I was initiated into the Army. I went through the rough schedule of basic training that everyone else does—close order drill, hour upon hour, in the dust and hot sun; sweating out chow lines "two miles long"; lectures; gas mask drills; plenty of scrubbing barracks, latrines, and washing windows; afternoon retreat parades; plus just the hell of being in the army and away from home. I was fortunate, however, in missing K.P.—the dread of any army man, let alone a "jeep". The cries of "you'll be sorry" still ring in my ears, I think!

One experience during Basic Training still stands clear in my memory: I had a confrontation with Major General J.E. Chaney, the base commander of the 50,000 men at Sheppard Field. When I was issued my army clothing, they measured my foot size as 10AA. (In civilian life I wore 9 1/2A). I could have refused to take basic training, but chose to move ahead. At an afternoon retreat a captain spotted my civilian shoes and questioned me. I explained I had not been issued GI shoes. He took me to a Major for a similar interview and then to a full Colonel. Would you believe the next stop was on the parade review platform with the Major General himself! Everyone accepted my honest response. The Colonel explained to the Major General that 10AA was a most unusual shoe size. The Major General gave the Colonel a look that would kill and said he was well aware of that and dismissed me. My name was never taken. I didn't receive the 10AA shoes until I was in Decatur 3 months later.

The greatest thrill that came at Sheppard Field was shipping out! And what a break: 11 men and I received by being sent next to Decatur, Illinois, for college training in the aviation cadet program! I was thankful I was in cadets, too, as I only had 25 training days in basic.

My address was: Pvt. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
303 Training Group  
Barracks 374  
Sheppard Field, Texas

#### **Aviation Cadet College Training: July 27-November 6, 1943**

The good fortune of cadet college training at Millikin University, Decatur, Illinois, was deeply appreciated, but being only 80 miles from home was super. With about half of our flight of sixty men from Illinois, we worked hard in weekly competition with four other flights. Each flight of men were judged on scholarship, drilling, cleanliness of our barracks, military appearance, superiority in athletics, etc. We won 9 out of a possible 11 week-end passes!

Of course it was always "Peoria Bound" on those winning Saturday afternoons for our Bradley University guys: Don Smith, Loyal Tillotson, Jim Webster, Harold "Moe" Morrison, Bill Marten, and myself. On the weekends we had to stay in Decatur and parade on Sunday afternoon, my folks and Marilyn and the rest of the

Wilson's came down and we had enjoyable wiener roasts, picnics, and one Sunday went swimming in Lake Decatur.

From 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. our daily schedule was rigid as well as extremely strict. At college I tutored speech, English, physics and mathematics. I also taught a math class in algebra, trig and logarithms. My grades for the three months of work in my major subjects were: mathematics, 99; geography, 98; physics, 98; and speech and English, 95.

Although I did not get to take part in athletics my last month because of a sprained arch in my foot, I won every weekly cross-country race. I set 5 track records: the 2 ½ mile cross-country run; the 100-yard dash in :10.5 seconds; the 440-yard dash in 56.6 seconds; and the long jump (19' 8"). I also held the record for the obstacle course.

It was a busy three months—without a doubt my best days in the service. The last month I received ten hours of flight training in piper cubs, which was part of the program. The time sped by fast and before we knew it, we were ready to go to San Antonio, Texas, for aviation cadet classification. It was with deepest sorrow that we said, "Goodbye" to Millikin. The sunny days of college, athletics, inspections, tireless cleaning and "keeping on the ball" were over. It was also farewell to Peoria and family again.

My address was:           Av/S John D. Trefzger  
                                  78<sup>th</sup> College Training Detachment  
                                  James Millikin University  
                                  Decatur 24, Illinois

#### **Classification Center: November 7-December 13, 1943**

It was on to the "stop and go light" station for air crew training. For most fellows it was a sweating-it-out affair from beginning to end. Many tests were given: physical and mental examinations plus aptitude tests. What tests! Probably the most rigid I have ever taken. The mental tests themselves lasted eight hours, covering everything from soup to nuts. Then came a thorough physical examination. On the third day we took our psychomotor tests, a group of very interesting aptitude tests for coordination, "aviation sense", and bodily control.



The tests took three whole days. The other 27 days were spent doing K.P., picking up rocks along with drill, parades, physical training, and sport days.

Slowly the final results were released: Don Smith, pilot; Loyal Tillotson, pilot; Jim Webster, pilot; Moe Morrison, bombardier; Bill Marten, navigator; John Trefzger, G.D.O. "Ground duty only" was my classification. My eyes were not good enough for pilot and bombardier training, and I didn't care to fly as a navigator. Consequently, I was washed out. When I asked to be classified for meteorology training, they checked and told me that the meteorology schools were now closed. Those who had not finished the school went into the infantry!

I was then sent to another classification squadron, where all the washouts were tested and classified as airplane mechanics, radio operators, or armorers. I qualified for all three and chose to be a mechanic. So, while the other fellows shipped out to Preflight, I shipped out to A. M. School at Gulfport, Mississippi.

My address was: Av/S John D. Trefzger 16122399  
Bks. 5813 Sqd. 116  
(also Flt. "C" Sqd. 114)  
AAFCC SAACC  
San Antonio, Texas

Gulfport Airplane Mechanics School: December 14, 1943-April 13, 1944

From the luxurious living in airplane cadet life, it was indeed quite a letdown to begin living in dirty, tar-papered barracks, and eating old army grub again. Then to make things more trying, I received K.P. my first three days at Gulfport. What a hole!

On December 21, I started school. Time passed fairly fast. Each day there was something new to learn and at the end of each phase a test to see if you passed or were to repeat that phase of school. My lowest grade was 80 in electricity, and my highest grade was 98 in airplane instruments. My overall average was about 90, nearly highest in the whole school.

I spent my first Christmas of three in the service here, and a pretty miserable winter. Gulfport had one of its poorest winters—rain, dampness, and cold. In

April, when the school shut down, I had only two weeks remaining. By a special examination I received my diploma and my "M.O.S." (Military Occupational Specialty) of 747—Airplane Mechanic.

One of the pluses of Gulfport was that I was able to telephone Marilyn each Wednesday morning at 6 a.m. for just 5 quarters in the pay phone. The telephone operator came to know us very well! Though I asked her to tell me when my 3 minutes were up, she must have enjoyed listening in and often let us talk for 20-30 minutes!

The last two weeks were spent on details and more K.P. I received a nice break, however, as I received orders to report to the Ford Willow Run R-2800 Airplane Engine Specialist School in Ypsilanti, Michigan. (I didn't know I was being trained to be a part of one of the Combat Cargo Groups being organized for service in India and Burma.)

My address was: Pvt. John D. Trefzger, 16122399  
632 T.S.S. Flt. B  
Gulfport, Mississippi

#### **Willow Run R-2800 Engine School: April 19, 1944-May 27, 1944**

Back in the North once again after six months in Texas and Mississippi! And only 450 miles from home. Well, it was close enough that I was able to telephone home more often.

In this school, located across the big runway from the huge Ford's Willow Run Aircraft Plant, we disassembled, overhauled, and rebuilt Pratt-Whitney radial engines. We also studied the accessories used on the same engine—the R-2800. This engine was used on the P-47, P-61, B-26, C-46, and several navy planes.

Our course consisted of five phases: (1) tearing down and rebuilding a new engine to become acquainted with all the parts and also the procedure of overhauling; (2) study of the accessories—carburetors, super-chargers, generators, starters, magnetos, and distributors; (3) actual overhauling of an old engine; (4) finish

rebuilding the overhauled engine, installation of the magnetos and the timing of the engine; and (5) run-up of the engines, trouble shooting, pre-fighting the B-26, and study of cold weather operations.

I thoroughly enjoyed the five-week course, and finished first in my class of sixty men. The days went slowly, however, and we marked them off one by one. The end of the course meant a furlough and home once more! One weekend in May, Mother, Dad, Marilyn, and Mary came up to visit me, and that really highlighted my stay at Ypsilanti. We had a wonderful time!

Mary wrote about it later saying, "This is just something so I will remember what it looks like and is." "We started at 5:30 this morning. We got here about 5:00 p.m. We are staying at Fort Shelby Hotel. We are on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor. It is really up high. We can see Canada from our room....This morning I got up at 7:00 o'clock. Marilyn, Johnny, and I went down and had breakfast. Without us knowing it, some man paid for our breakfast." That is something none of us has forgotten.

My address was: Pvt. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
Class 43-44 Bks. 321 Sect. H  
3509 AAF Base Unit (T.S.)  
Willow Run  
Ypsilanti, Michigan

#### **Home: (May 28-June 7, 1944)**

My first (and as things turned out, my only) furlough home! Technically this was a "delay enroute". To eat good food, to sleep in a good bed, to live with your loved ones again—in short, to live like a human being for ten whole days!

It was a busy ten days seeing friends, visiting the schools, having picnics, swimming, --and all highlighted by the June 5<sup>th</sup> announcement of Marilyn and me becoming engaged to be married!

While at home D-Day invasion of Europe began on June 6<sup>th</sup>, which brought many mixed emotions. The war was moving in the direction of victory, but it was to be yet another year before being over.



Needless to say again it was a wonderful time! The ten days were up too soon, and before we realized it, I was boarding the Rocket (train) for Syracuse, New York, my next base of operations.

My address was: Pvt. John D. Trefzger  
408 E. McClure  
Peoria 4, Illinois

### **Syracuse Army Air Base: June 8-August 16, 1944**

What to expect, when I got to Syracuse, remained an unknown surprise until the day I arrived. The first words to greet my ears were: "Hot outfit" and "Headed overseas soon!"

I was assigned to the 351<sup>st</sup> Airdrome in the 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group. Our squadron was just being organized, and since we had no airplanes to work on, we had a royal vacation—sleeping, eating, listening to the radio, going to the P.X., writing letters, and at night going into town! For a few weeks we enjoyed this life and then things began to happen fast.

We got in a dozen C-47's, our overseas training began in earnest, and old reliable K.P. gave us all hell. Half our day we attended classes on things, conditions, and probable obstacles we would meet overseas, besides classes in malaria education, airdrome defense, camouflage, and airplane refresher courses by mobile training units.

Around the first of August we went on a six-day bivouac, spending three days at Pine Camp, New York; and three days near Fulton, New York. There we got our taste of pup tents, digging fox holes, and general field living.

It was good to get back to our little house (we had no barracks!) at the Syracuse AFB again. The base was simply a section of land that had been taken over by the army, when the airstrip was built, and so we all lived in the farm houses.

It was a pleasant life at Syracuse—cool and nice surroundings. I played baseball on the Syracuse Army Air Base team, and managed to keep on the go all the time. Our next move was to Bowman Field at Louisville, Kentucky.

My address was: Pvt. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
351<sup>st</sup> Airdrome Squadron  
4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group  
SAAB  
Syracuse, New York

**Bowman Field, Louisville, Kentucky: August 17-October 26, 1944**

Here our training continued for going overseas. To be sure, we were going—but when or where, no one knew. We knew something new was in the air as we traded our C-47's for C-46's, the largest two-engine plane in the world.

So we received more mobile training on the C-46's, and got to apply our knowledge by working on them each day.

I received two 3-day passes from Bowman Field to Peoria, and to be sure, they were great days at home!

I also made my first stripe at Bowman Field, as well as being gypped out of a second one because of clerical oversight!

Near the last, I was sent over to Sturgis Field, Kentucky, for one day of glider training. It turned out to be a very interesting day, and a day's fun of taking glider rides and chasing tow-ropes. Our next stop was Baer Field for overseas processing.

My address was: Pfc. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
351<sup>st</sup> Airdrome Sqd.  
4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group  
Bowman Field  
Louisville, Kentucky

**Baer Field, Ft. Wayne, Indiana: October 27-November 17, 1944**

This was our last stop before P.O.E. (Port of Embarkation), and we all realized it. We received more last minute lectures, rules and why of censorship, training movies, clothing issue, physicals, and what seemed good to us all, plenty of leisure time.

Between playing football, baseball, seeing movies, and reading at the library, I was writing letters and making long distant telephone calls home.

The big surprise of our short stay was my trip home one weekend. It was only one day at home, but what a wonderful time we had—my Baby, Marilyn, and I. Church and a big Sunday dinner, an enjoyable afternoon, and then off to the bus station Sunday night. I was ready for a second trip to Peoria the following Saturday, with my bag packed, when orders came through restricting us.

On Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, early in the morning we boarded our new C-46, and took off for West Palm Beach, Florida. Reg Pryor, Don Hickman, Bob Brandon, Bob Kresge, Bob Tabbert, and myself were among the crew. Ivy "Pappy" Dean was crew chief of number 477-310. Lt. Col. Wilbur was the pilot, with Lt. Adams as co-pilot.

My address was: Pfc. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
351<sup>st</sup> Airdrome Sqd.  
4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group  
Baer Field  
Ft. Wayne 2, Indiana

**Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida: November 18-November 20, 1944**

Our trip from Baer Field down to Florida was a nice one. In flying up through the overcast we saw one of the most beautiful sights of the sky. The top of the layer of overcast was level, and the shining sun made the whole cloud field below us a sparkling, never-ending field of fluffy "snow". The sight was one I won't forget. Over the Appalachians we flew down the Atlantic coast to West Palm Beach. Coming from the cold north (about 10 degrees, when we left Baer Field) to the

sunny, warm south in just five and one-half hours seemed remarkable. It didn't take us long to change from our winter O.D.'s to khakis!

This was our P.O.E.—another clothing check, a few more lectures, and our last minute physicals with checkups on our records. My first night I was the guard on our plane, sleeping on parachutes. Sunday we played football and wrote letters home telling about the palm trees, the coconuts, green grass—all of which was cut out (censored)!

Monday we pulled a 50-hour inspection on the plane and prepared for our takeoff the next morning. It is interesting to note I was listed on our orders the last man in our 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group to fly overseas. I came on the last plane of 100 planes, carrying all personnel of the 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group. Because I was the lowest ranking man on the 100<sup>th</sup> airplane, my name appeared last on the orders for the entire group.

My traveling overseas address was: Pfc. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
351<sup>st</sup> Airdrome Squadron  
4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group  
APO 17712  
c/o Postmaster, New York City, NY

**Diary of Trip Overseas: Tuesday, November 21-Monday, December 4, 1944**

At daybreak on Tuesday, November 21, 1944, we took off from Morrison Field, and as we headed out to sea, we said "so long" to the good old USA. How long it would be before we saw home again—or if we ever would—no one knew.

After a five-hour trip over the Caribbean Sea, we landed at Borinquen Field in Puerto Rico. We stayed here for the remainder of the day and overnight. This is supposed to be the nicest camp outside the US, and I believe it. We billeted in 3-story, modernistic stucco buildings. We spent the afternoon swimming in one of the several pools on the base. What a spot to spend your overseas time!

### **Wednesday, November 22, 1944**

We left Puerto Rico for British Guiana this morning. Flying over the island on our departure, we saw the city of San Juan, the great sugar cane fields, and as we moved out over the sea again we admired the beauty of the coral reefs. We flew past Trinidad, and in to Atkinson Field at Georgetown, British Guiana. The trip took us 6 ¼ hours.

Here we saw the tropical jungle, all colors of wild birds, alligators along the shore lines of the muddy streams, and felt the heat and muck of the jungle air.

### **Thursday, November 23, 1944**

We headed southeast this morning, flying over the wild, South American rain forests of Brazil. I never knew there were so many trees in the world. As far as the eye could see in every direction from 10,000 feet high, there was one mass of tightly packed treetops! We flew over the huge mouth of the Amazon River (it took us over half an hour!)

Our 5-hour flight brought us to Val de Cats Field at Belem, Brazil, where we sat down to a big Thanksgiving Day dinner of turkey and all the trimmings. We could hardly believe we were in the Southern Hemisphere and so far away from home.

### **Friday and Saturday, November 24-25, 1944**

We were off on another five-hour hop down to the eastern tip of Brazil at Natal. Flying was rough this day over the jungle, and I believe that we all just about heaved our cookies. The field we were at Natal was Parnamirim, and it was here that we prepared our planes for the long Atlantic flight to Ascension Island, 1500 miles away.

Saturday morning we worked on our airplane, and then in the afternoon we went out to the ocean for a swim. It was my first swim in the ocean, and it couldn't have been more wonderful. The sandy beach itself was as beautiful and picturesque as any could ever be.

### **Sunday, November 26, 1944**

The tiny speck of an island lying better than a thousand miles from anywhere was our goal this day.

Exactly 1433 miles from Natal, it took us 8 ½ hours to get there, averaging a bit less than 170 per hour. It was “water, water everywhere”. We knew our ditching procedure in case we went down, and had our life rafts and “Mae West” life jackets in readiness.

The final minutes before arriving at the island proved to be the most dramatic. The gasoline supply was low, and everyone had his fingers crossed that our navigation had been true. There were anxious moments as we took turns looking out the astrodome in hopes of seeing land. Everyone sighed with relief, when we sighted Green Mountain, lonely but welcomingly planted on the horizon. It proved to be a barren plot (perhaps 3 x 10 miles), but one of the vital links in our overseas World War II supply-line.

### **Monday, November 27, 1944**

We left Wide Awake Field on Ascension Island for Accra on the Gold Coast. This time we had 1350 miles of the Atlantic to fly, but there was no anxiety as we were pretty certain we would hit Africa after 7 ½ hours of flying (180 mph) When we reached the African coast we saw our first native straw-roofed huts, huddled in small villages.

At Accra we found good food, served by colored natives dressed in white, with bright sashes around their waists. Mahogany was plentiful in this part of the country—even the outhouses were built of 1” mahogany planks! I added to my collection of foreign money here with a ten shilling note (3 pence equals 5 cents; 12 pence equals one shilling; one shilling equals 20.27 cents; and 20 shillings equal one pound.)

### **Tuesday, November 28, 1944**

Next stop was Kano in Nigeria. For 4 ¼ hours we flew over dried riverbeds and half desert, half jungle land. In Kano we saw yaks, huge anthills, and thousands of lizards. The air was dry and the sun not too hot. We had a softball game here in the afternoon.

### **Wednesday, November 29, 1944**

We left Kano for El Fasher in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, some 1150 miles away. We had to stop at Maiduguri, Nigeria, for a tail wheel change, but flew 6 ¾ hours on to our destination.

As we crossed French Equatorial Africa, we flew low over Lake Chad and saw some African wild life—hippos, gazelle, alligators, zebra, and many birds. We also buzzed an African village, and saw the natives run and dive for their huts. We saw fields with grain piled high in mounds out in the sun. The swampy ground around Lake Chad was very beautiful, but we soon passed into the desert lands and the mountainous country of the Sudan. The houses we saw looking down on the desert were built of clay and each had a wall around it.

At El Fasher we saw our first camels. We also saw a native girl displaying one of her breasts through a hole in her dress. We were told that this was to symbolize her virginity!

Our sleeping quarters here were excellent, with two men to a room in a quaint little hotel at the air base. It was cold that night, and as the moon shined down on the smooth desert sands, it looked like snow.

### **Thursday, November 30, 1944**

From El Fasher to Khartoum on the Nile it was a short 3 ½ hour trip. Staying at a very modern agricultural college building that had been taken over by the army, we enjoyed a wonderful day. Our sleeping quarters were on a large balcony that overlooked the Nile River. A more beautiful sight could not be found. Bob Tabbert and I walked down to the Nile and saw a caravan of camels and burros watering up for a trip across the desert. It was here that we saw sheep with hugh tails—the kind that Bob Ripley in his “Believe It or Not!” pictured as growing



tails so large that little carts had to be made to carry them. The sheep store fat in these tails, much like a camel does in its hump.

Our evening was made memorable by the sight of a large full moon rising over the Nile River.

#### **Friday, December 1, 1944**

We left Khartoum for Aden this morning, but our 4 ½ hour trip was not too eventful. Most of the fellows slept, as they usually did while flying, but Reg Pryor and I indulged in several more games of chess. We flew over the mountains of northern Ethiopia, crossed the Red Sea, and landed in the Aden Protectorate.

From one point in our flight, it was possible to see Eritrea, French Somaliland, Yemen, Ethiopia, British Somaliland, and Aden. Of course, they all looked the same from the air.

#### **Saturday, December 2, 1944**

We crossed the desert sands of Arabia this day in our eight hour and twenty minute jaunt to Karachi, India.

We stopped once, and that was at Masira Isles to eat and refuel. Then we flew across the dangerous Indian Ocean, where some of the fellows saw sharks and whales at different times from the air.

#### **Sunday, December 3, 1944**

We laid over at Karachi this day. Entering the China-Burma-India Theatre now, we were issued our bedding and more suntan clothes, as well as a few more odd and ends. After this clothing check Sunday morning, we went out and worked on our plane until noon. Then in the afternoon, we went into town and saw our first Indian city—and as we were to learn, a very typical one.

Cows, horses, goats ran through the streets unmolested, and the stench of filth, dirt, and offal filled one's nostrils. As we rode through the streets in a buggy, we saw people—beggars and cripples—lining the sidewalks everywhere. Many were



asleep on sidewalks where they live. Thousands of vultures circled high overhead all day long above the city.

The only good part of the town was the Red Cross building, where we were able to get away from the general filth of the town.

#### **Monday, December 4, 1944**

This day we left for Agra, India, our next to last stop. During our 4 hour trip about all that was below us was waste desert land. We flew over the Indus River, but saw little else until we were almost at our air base. As we were approaching Agra, however, we saw the famous Taj Mahal in the distance. As we flew closer and circled it, I was able to take a picture of it from the plane. I could also see the Old Fort.

In the late afternoon we made a trip out to the Taj in a tonga (horse and buggy). The beauty and exquisiteness of this wonder of the world awed me. It was so exact in every detail, so fantastically, delicately, and perfectly designed that I was completely taken away by its beauty. We stayed until the nearly full moon came up, mesmerized by this most beautiful and wonderful man-made structure in the world!

#### **Tuesday, December 5, 1944**

With our arrival at Sylhet, India so ended our memorable, eventful, and scenic trip overseas. Our trip from Agra to Sylhet took just a bit over 4 hours. We passed over the Ganges River, and thought that we saw Mt. Everest to the north.

From Baer Field to Sylhet we had flown about 14,600 miles in 78 hours of flying time (187 mph) in a period covering 17 days. Our C-46 had performed very well!

#### **Sylhet, India: December 5-December 26, 1944**

Here we were at our overseas destination. However, we were here only a short time while we were being organized. We lived in bashas (bamboo houses with straw roofs), and like most newcomers to the CBI, we hired a basha boy to make

our beds, shine our shoes, and keep the house clean. About eight of us lived in our basha.

The food was very poor. The first week at Sylhet over 1/3 of our squadron became very ill from food poisoning. The fact that I did not like salmon patties helped me to avoid the sickness.

The town of Sylhet was small and dirty, and not of much interest. The Asaam countryside was beautiful, with green tea plantations and considerable jungle. We were happy to move on!

My address was: Pfc. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
351<sup>st</sup> Airdrom Sqd. 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Gr.  
APO 433 c/o Postmaster N.Y., N.Y.

#### **Argatala, India: December 27, 1944-January 30, 1945**

We flew down into the Eastern provinces of India, where we were stationed for a month. Our real destination, we learned later, was Chittagong, but since it was occupied we couldn't move in.

We worked hard at Argatala, and the days flew by. The town was pretty with all white buildings, but it was still very dirty in the streets. The Maharajah lived in this city in a big, beautiful Palace, but it was closed to the public.

Reg Pryor, Walt Wdowka, Don Hickman, Bob Tabbert and I enjoyed the comforts of our own little room here. Our APO address was the same as Sylet's.

We lived on British rations at Argatala Air Force Base. The bread we ate each day had been baked with flour so filled with weevil that it looked like cracked wheat bread. We always kidded our Roman Catholic buddies that they were not allowed to eat this bread on Fridays!

On the last night in camp several of us walked about a mile or so to a nearby Indian village, where we attended a small, genuine Indian theater. The entertainment was live, with a variety of acts. Native dancers, knife throwers, and

musicians playing a number of primitive instruments made for a very delightful and unforgettable last evening!

### **Chittagong, India: January 31, 1945-June 11, 1945**

Down here in Bengal Province I spent the longest stay of any place in my nearly three years in the service. Only Gulfport, Mississippi, had run a close second.

At Chittagong we set records for hauling cargo. One month the Chittagong airstrip was the busiest in the entire world! We had been sent overseas as a task force with the sole purpose of supporting the British 14<sup>th</sup> Army as they fought the Japanese, and pushed them out of Burma. Our job was to supply them through forward bases by air. The record shows quite clearly that the supplies were delivered. In the six months we were assigned the task, the British 14<sup>th</sup> Army advanced more than they had in the previous year and a half. To accomplish this we airplane mechanics put in 12 hour days, 7 days a week, performing routine maintenance as well as 25 hour, 50 hour, and 100 hour inspections.

Living conditions were rather poor. We lived in large bashas, with stagnant, green ponds on all sides of us. We were less than 10 feet above sea level. The city of Chittagong was another over-crowded, filthy Indian city, and we did not go into town very often.

While we were here I played second base on our Squadron team that won the Airdrome softball championship. On March 1<sup>st</sup> I received my corporal stripes. On a three-day pass Reg Pryor and I flew over to Calcutta on a C-47, and had an enjoyable time. We lived in a clean British apartment house. We visited many interesting places, and bought a number of souvenirs, among them a Gurkha knife. We saw a cobra and mongoose fight. We enjoyed good food (dined at Firpo's), hot baths, ice water, and ice cream—all things we had yearned for over a long time.

On May 8<sup>th</sup> at the Chittagong Air Force Base, we celebrated V-E Day—the end of the war in Europe. Marilyn was able to send me a personal telegram!

My address was: Cpl. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
351<sup>st</sup> Airdrome Sqd. 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group  
APO 214 c/o Postmaster New York, N.Y.

### **Myitkyina, Burma: June 11-September 5, 1945**

Our new job at Myitkyina was to fly "The Hump" into China. Flying the C-46's over the Himalayas with 100 octane gasoline and Chinese troops as the main cargo. At Sylhet, Argatala, and Chittagong we serviced 25 of the C-46's. Here our squadron had only a dozen planes. Many of the pilots were reassigned, and those with many points returned to the USA. As a result of less work, we had much more time to play pinochle, as well as fish and swim in the Irrawaddy River, which flowed right past our camp. Volleyball also fit into the schedule of little work and much loafing.

The camp, when we moved in, was a great plot of mud with a mass of crummy looking tents. With much hard work, we fixed up our tent into a "mansion", which proved to be the best living quarters we ever had. We lived through the heavy monsoon rains with dry beds, though the tropical mold was quite heavy on most of our clothing and shoes.

The famous Ledo Road (which linked up with the Burma Road) used to transport supplies by truck into China was only a few blocks from our camp. The world's longest pontoon bridge crossed the Irrawaddy about half a mile from our tent.

The greatest news of our stay here was the surrender of the Japanese on August 15. The troops went wild! The Great War was over. Rumors of going home were strong. I turned down a rest leave to Darjeeling, because I didn't want to be left behind—big joke! Our next move found us flying to Ledo, India.

My address was: Cpl. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
351<sup>st</sup> Airdrome Sqd. 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Gr.  
APO 218 c/o Postmaster New York, N.Y.

### **Ledo, India: September 6-November 21, 1945**

"Back in Assam again". When I wrote those words I wanted to say, "Assam—our first and last stop in India". Of course, it came close to being so, but "close" did not get me home!

Three days after arriving at Ledo, I was with a small group sent down to Rangoon, Burma on detached service. In Rangoon we were to do the maintenance on several of our planes, which were flying allied prisoners of war out of Indo-China. Our trip proved to be one of pleasure rather than work. In the ten days down there we worked only three.

We were housed in nice homes on the University of Rangoon campus. These homes had billeted Japanese officers only days before we arrived. With Lake Victoria in our backyard we enjoyed swimming and boating. With several jeeps at our disposal we toured the area and saw many interesting sights, among them the Shwe Dagon Pagoda.

At the air base in Rangoon we saw the Japanese officials fly in to sign surrender papers for Southeast Asia with Lord Louis Mountbatten. The Japanese planes had been painted white, with green crosses painted over the red circles for passage across allied troops.

Upon returning from Rangoon, our life at Ledo became a trying one. There wasn't much to do, and we were all anxious to return home to the USA. We now had only a dozen C-47's and we worked about two days per week. We did enjoy listening to the baseball World Series rebroadcast over USA service radio. My favorite team, the Chicago Cubs, lost to the Detroit Tigers 4 games to 3.

Around the end of October the good word came that we were going home! Like mad we worked turning in our airplanes to the air depot, turning in all our tools, packing all our equipment, turning in excess clothing, and cleaning up the base camp. But, November brought no such orders, and we sat watching the days like so many dummies. With no work to do, the days passed slowly, and life around our tent was at standstill. We played a lot of pinochle. One evening I was able to bid 700 on a rather unusual hand of a run in spades with the nine, one hundred aces, and double pinochle. I laid down all twelve cards for meld of 560! George Asbill and I always played against our tent mates, Walt Wdowka, and Bob Tabbert. None of us could believe the hand!

The beautiful snow-capped Himalayas, easily seen from our camp seemed to call of winter and Christmas at home—but there we sat. I did receive another stripe at Ledo, but little did that compensate for the promised trip home for Christmas that never came.



When the war ended, U.S. servicemen were awarded 'points'—one for each month in the service, five for each decoration or battle star, twelve for each dependent, etc. in a system of priority in getting to go home. High point men—most of them married with a child or two—were leaving for home, but my lowly 52 points didn't look very encouraging. (My 52 points were for 37 months in service—I had received my 3 year "hash" mark in September, with 5% increase in longevity pay!—plus 15 points for my three battle stars from participating in the campaigns of India-Burma, Central Burma and China.

The next move came by orders for the remainder of our outfit to fly to Pandaveswar, India, about 120 miles northwest of Calcutta. Ledo had been a camp where work was unknown, and a place where the days proved to be 48 hours long—just waiting to go home.

My address was: Sgt. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
351<sup>st</sup> Airdrome Sqd.  
AAF IBT  
APO 689 c/o Postmaster New York, N.Y.

#### **Pandaveswar, India: November 22-December 27, 1945**

By this time we had all surrendered to the fact that the 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group would never go home as an outfit. I was to sit on my seat until the points of those going home dropped down to my 52. Slowly, slowly, the days passed, and gradually our men left a few at a time. Recreation became the backbone of our existence!

The weather in India at this season of the year is ideal. Every day is clear and sunny. I did a lot of reading, and besides attending the movies every night, we played softball, tennis, touch football, and even went swimming in a pool on the base. Al Zulli got to go home on an emergency, so Bob Tabbert and I drove him to Calcutta to the Hialeah Debarkation Camp. We stayed a day for sightseeing, and then drove back to Pandaveswar.

About the first of December the Christmas mail and packages began arriving. Several hours were spent each day in opening all of the packages. Valuables that

had been sent to men already on their way home (watches, fountain pens, etc.) we re-packed and mailed back to the senders. However, all of the fruitcakes, candy, cookies, were shared and eaten! Around Christmas, after all of the men with 55 points or more had been transferred, all men below 50 points were sent to China. How thankful I was to have 52 points!!! When the last of us left Pandaveswar, the 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group was deactivated. I was among the minority who had been a member of it from its inception to the end.

Our next stop was to be Kanchrapara. We traveled by truck. Here we were to be processed for transportation Stateside—to the U.S. and Marilyn!

My address was: Sgt. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
351<sup>st</sup> Airdrome Squadron  
4<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Group  
APO 690 c/o Postmaster, New York, N.Y. USA

#### **Camp Kanchapara, India: December 28, 1945-January 9, 1946**

After a grueling five-hour truck ride from Pandaveswar, we arrived at 6 .m. in time for a very welcomed breakfast. (We had left at 1 a.m. to avoid the pedestrian traffic on the Indian roads!)

The first few days were devoted to processing for our return to the States. After processing was over, time was ours. I took some Red Cross tours to various places of interest, and one day went into Calcutta.

The ships that were scheduled to come in to take us home, never came in, much to the bitter disgust of all. However, about January 7<sup>th</sup> an order came through for all 51 point men to fly to Karachi to catch the last ship out of western India. So-o-o-o we were off to Karachi, flying on a new C-54. The C-54 was the new four-engined transport plane that was the civilian DC-4. President Truman's Air Force 1 was one of these.

In flying to Karachi, we flew over Agra for a last look at the Taj Mahal. I was able to take several photographs from the air that came out quite well. However, when

our plane hit one of the big buzzards, putting a sizable dent in the wing, we bid farewell to Agra and headed for Karachi.

My address was : Sgt. John D. Trefzger 16122399  
APO 690 c/o Postmaster  
New York, N.Y.

### **Camp Malir, Karachi, India: January 10-27, 1946**

Here I arrived back in the hole, where I entered India thirteen months before. It was a matter of being processed all over again here at Camp Malir, and then waiting for the ship—"The General Morton"—scheduled to dock on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

I visited the fair city of Karachi a couple of times, while I was here, and surprisingly found it much cleaner than I had a year or more before.

The desert sands of Camp Malir were a pain to put up with, but the 16 days of waiting finally were up, and we were ready to get aboard The General Morton and head for the USA! At long last, our wished for moment was at hand.

We cashed in all of our Indian currency, we were paid, and it was novel to have U.S. money again. I shall always remember, however, that while we received bills of \$5, \$10, and \$20, no \$1 bills were issued. The dollars were silver dollars, bearing my birth year of 1923!

I was still writing a letter each day to my Baby, Marilyn, and to my folks. Naturally, I was no longer receiving mail, which made the days move even slower. (On January 27<sup>th</sup> we were to board the ship for home. January 27<sup>th</sup> was the very day on which I had begun grade school in 1930, and two years later (from boarding at Karachi) our oldest son, Dick, would be born on this same date!) It was now time to leave India.

### **Aboard The General Morton from Karachi, India, to Colombo, Ceylon: January 27-February 1, 1946**

Passing up the gangplank was quite a thrill, to be sure, but proved to be an anti-climax to that long-yearned dream of getting aboard the ship for home.

The living quarters were quite crowded for the enlisted men, and quite unbearably hot deep down in the holds. I was quartered down in "Dog Three"—D-3, which was the third section of the fourth floor beneath the ship's deck.

The sea was calm these first few days. We sailed down past Bombay and it got hotter. I was assigned to K.P. for the first half of the journey home, which didn't make me too happy. When not on K.P., I played cards with newly made friends on ship, and then spent some time watching the fascinating flying fish, and just looking out over the sea and the waves. Some of the sunsets at sea were magnificent.

On February 1<sup>st</sup> we docked in the harbor of Colombo, Ceylon, for a 24-hour stay. It was an interesting looking place, but the troops were not allowed off the ship. Shore leave was for the ship's crew only. Thus we began a pattern of docking for the crew's shore leaves, which was quite upsetting for those of us going home. It was well that at this time we did not know that our voyage, with all its many stops, would take us a full 40 days!

**Aboard The General Morton from Colombo, Ceylon to Singapore.  
February 2-7, 1946**

Another leg of the journey was over now, and we were moving again. While traveling through the Malacca Straits between Sumatra and Malaysia we were forced to proceed cautiously, because the waters had not yet been fully cleared of mines.

The sea was quite calm as we followed the path of the minesweeper before us. We could easily see British Malaysia on our port side, and the Island of Sumatra off the starboard.

We arrived safely in Singapore harbor to take on water, only to find that the city was quarantined. So, we anchored overnight in the harbor, and set out for Manila in the Philippines the following morning. We were disgusted that we had lost the better part of another day, but we were happy to be on our way again.

**Aboard The General Morton from Singapore to Manila:  
February 8-12, 1946**

Oh, what a trip! The South China Sea was really rough following a typhoon , and the trip to Manila Bay was a tough one. Not only was the ship slowed down because of the rough sea, but many of the fellows were seasick. It was fascinating to see our large ship down in the trough of 50-foot high waves, and then be lifted up on top of them, and then down again! In cutting across these giant waves, the whole stern of the ship would come out of the water, and the large propellers would vigorously vibrate the entire ship. I was among the few who did not suffer from seasickness. We didn't have many eating those last days, when I was pulling K.P. Manila was the half-way mark of our journey, and we reached the Bay on February 12<sup>th</sup>.

We came in past the shell-pocked island fort of Corregador and the famous peninsula of Bataan. The Bay at Manila was dotted with the hulls of sunken ships. We now needed a new generator installed on the ship, so we were sent out of the Manila harbor, on up the coast of Luzon to Subic Bay. We anchored there for three days while the new generator was installed. I was able to get off the ship here at Subic Bay, and enjoyed a very relaxing day on the beach and swimming in the ocean.

On February 16 we lifted anchor and sailed down into Manila Harbor again for water and fuel. Here the ship's crew had liberty again, and the precious days continued to roll by. After two more days we left Manila Bay, but with no fuel. Morale on board The General Morton was very, very low. There now was no chance of arriving in Seattle, Washington, by February 25<sup>th</sup>. After 21 days aboard The General Charles G. Morton we were still not half way home.



**Aboard The General Morton from Manila to Eniwetok Atoll in the Marianas:**  
**February 17-23, 1946**

From Manila we were to proceed directly to Seattle, and no word was given to the contrary. However, about two days out of Manila the word leaked out that Eniwetok Atoll was our next stop. After all, it was only another 1,000 miles out of our way!

The trip was uneventful, and after 6 ½ days we arrived at the barren, sandy looking, coral atoll. This place became famous six years later, in 1952, when the U.S. exploded the first hydrogen-type bomb here in a great atomic explosion test.

We refueled hurriedly at Eniwetok, but still had to remain in the harbor until - Sunday morning before lifting anchor. Next stop: Seattle—maybe! After having lost so many hours, one at a time, in traveling around the world from west to east, we got all 24 of them back at one time in crossing the International Date Line and experiencing two Tuesdays in one week!

**Aboard The General Morton from Eniwetok to San Francisco, California:**  
**February 24-March 6, 1946**

These last days aboard went by slowly. The weather was favorable and we made good time. The only land we saw was a few of the Hawaiian Islands from a distance. Several whales and many porpoises gave something to look at. At night it was interesting to look over the side of the ship down into the sea and view the millions of phosphorescent sea animals, sparkling like stars in the sky. The big news came that we were not to land at Seattle, but were to proceed to San Francisco, California.

Wednesday morning, March 6<sup>th</sup>, was indeed a beautiful day, as we got up early to watch as we sailed under the great Golden Gate Bridge and into the harbor of San Francisco. Tugboats tooted their whistles and came out to meet us, along with an official welcoming boat. Our photo was taken as we came into the Bay with all 3200 soldiers up on deck.

As we docked at the pier at San Francisco, a little old woman came out on the pier and called up to the thousands of men: "Willie! Willie!" The cheering and

conversations of all aboard hushed. She tried again, and still there was no answer. Then one of the negro soldiers on board responded: "Lady, if your Willie ain't on board this ship, he just ain't comin' home!" All aboard roared with laughter, and the poor woman walked away.

So ended our long and discouraging voyage on the "Morton"—but at last we were back in the United States of America—home, sweet home!

### **Camp Stoneman at Pittsburg, California: March 6-7, 1946**

After disembarking from The General Morton, we immediately boarded a ferry boat for Camp Stoneman at Pittsburg, California—a four hour trip up the Bay.

Our stay was only a little over 24 hours, and that didn't make a soul angry. Best of all were my telephone calls home to My Baby, Marilyn, and to my parents.

We happily boarded the train bound east for Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, on the evening of March 7<sup>th</sup>, knowing that our service days were few in number.

### **The Train Ride from Camp Stoneman to Jefferson Barracks: March 8 to March 10, 1946**

We slept as we crossed northern California the night of March 7-8. The next day we crossed the state of Nevada and into Utah, crossing the Great Salt Lake at Ogden at sunset on March 8<sup>th</sup>. On March 9<sup>th</sup> we continued through Wyoming, and crossed the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. Our trip through the Royal Gorge in Colorado was a high point for me. March 10<sup>th</sup> saw us continuing across the plains of Kansas and into Missouri, arriving late at night at Jefferson Barracks—our last army post. Our goal of civilian life was in sight!

The best news we heard as we were receiving our bedding at 3 a.m. on the morning of March 11<sup>th</sup> was that in 36 hours we would be discharged from the service.

**Jefferson Barracks (near St. Louis, Missouri): March 11-12, 1946**

Emotional pitch was high now that civilian life was so very close! Though we did not get to bed until after 3 a.m. on March 11<sup>th</sup>, we were all up for breakfast at 7 a.m. The air was cool—almost crisp—but the day was sunny. One fellow in the breakfast chow line asked what in the world my CBI shoulder patch was. He had never seen one. I never wanted to see another one! I reaffirmed that we would be discharged the next afternoon.

I telephoned Marilyn. She would be down with my folks on Tuesday afternoon, March 12<sup>th</sup>, to pick me up, and take me home. The remainder of the day was spent checking records for the last time, physical examinations, and turning in excess equipment. Everyone was given an opportunity to re-enlist!

March 12<sup>th</sup> arrived and it was my D-Day. Mom and Dad and Marilyn drove in just before I made my last army formation at one o'clock (exactly 36 hours after arriving at Jefferson Barracks). We marched to a nearby theater on the base, where a Chaplain made a short talk to about 100 of us. Then we were personally presented with our Army Discharge. Dad was on hand to take movies of the great last minutes of my army life.

How all my dreams of the past three years seemed to culminate in those few hours as we rode home to Peoria. Nearly three years of active service life had brought many good experiences, plus many experiences to be forgotten soon, plus others to be re-lived many times, plus the adventure of a trip completely around the world.

I close this record of my U.S. Air Force experiences with the hope and prayer for Peace!

(Countries seen and visited)

North America :

1. USA (all 50 states, with 8 trips to Hawaii)
2. Canada (6 of 10 provinces)
3. Bahamas...1997
4. Puerto Rico...1944 & 97
5. Mexico...1974 ...95...97
6. St. Thomas 97
7. Curacao...97
8. Grenada...97
9. Martinique...97
10. Panama...97

South America:

1. Venezuela...97
2. Guyana...1944
3. Brazil...44

Europe:

1. Norway...75
2. Sweden...75
3. Denmark...75
4. Finland...75
5. Russia...75
6. Scotland...92
7. Wales...92...71...72
8. England...71...72...92
9. Holland...71
10. Belgium...71
11. Luxembourg...71
12. Germany...71...80
13. France...71...72
14. Switzerland...71...72...80
15. Austria...71...80
16. Italy...71...72
17. Vatican...71...72
18. Monaco...71

19. Greece...72
20. Cyprus...72
21. Liechtenstein...71...80

Africa:

1. Egypt...72
2. Ghana (Gold Coast)...44
3. Nigeria...44
4. Sudan...44

Asia:

1. Lebanon...72
2. Syria...72
3. Israel...72
4. Yemen...44
5. Oman...44
6. Pakistan...44...46
7. India...44...45...46
8. Bangladesh...44
9. Myanmar (Burma)...45
10. Japan...70...73
11. Philippines (Luzon)...46
12. Hong Kong...70...73
13. Sri Lanka (Ceylon)...46
14. Thailand...70...73
15. Malaysia (Singapore)...46...70
16. Java (Jakarta)...70
17. Bali...70

Australia & South Pacific:

1. Australia ...70
2. New Zealand...70
3. Society Islands (Tahiti, etc.)...70
4. Enewetak Atoll (near Bikini) 46



## Countries seen from air or ship:

## North America:

1. Greenland...1975
2. Iceland...1975
3. Cuba...1995
4. Costa Rica...1997
5. Nicaragua...1997
6. El Salvador...1997
7. Guatemala...1997

## South America:

1. Trinidad...1944
2. Suriname...1944
3. French Guiana...1944
4. Columbia...1997

## Europe:

1. Ireland...1971
2. Poland...1975
3. Corsica...1972
4. Crete...1972
5. Elba...1972

## Africa:

1. Togo...1944
2. Benin...1944
3. Chad...1944
4. Eritrea...1944
5. Djibouti...1944

## Asia:

1. Jordan...1972
2. Nepal...1944
3. Bhutan...1944
4. Taiwan...1973
5. Sikkim...1944
6. Vietnam...1970 & 1973
7. Laos...1970 & 1973
8. Cambodia...1970 & 1973
9. Sumatra...1946

## SUMMERY:

Countries visited and lived in: 59

Countries, islands, etc. seen  
from plane, ship & bus: 30

89

AS I RECALL it was a cool autumn morning in early October of 1946. I was now 23 years old. After nearly three years in the Air Force in WWII, I had been home just a little over six months. Marilyn and I had now been married just four months. On this particular morning I was working in the shop at Trefzger's Bakery (at 537 Main Street) in my home town of Peoria, Illinois.

It was one of those mornings when we were behind in getting the bakery goods finished in the bake shop, and up into the store. At the moment, I was very busy icing sweet rolls. Effie Picton, the assistant head sales lady, came back to the shop and said, "John, there is a man here to see you." It was a strict rule that no salemen were to call in the morning. I asked, "Who is it?" Effie responded, "I didn't catch his name, but he said he was from Eureka College." With some reluctance I left my unfinished job, rinsed off my hands, and headed up the long hall to the room behind the store, where we sliced bread.

I remember that I wasn't very polite to my caller, but simply said, "Yes?" With a pleasant smile my guest introduced himself: "I'm Harold Wiltz from Eureka College. I'm a field representative for the College. I heard that you were interested in studying for the ministry..." I am afraid that I interrupted Mr. Wiltz at this point by injecting, "Who in the world told you that?"

Wiltz looked embarrassed. He began by explaining that from time to time the College sends out a letter to each of the Christian Church ministers in the state, asking them to share the names of young men and women whom they feel would make good church leaders. Your minister named you as such a person." I was stunned. I tried to respond. I think I said something like, "Well, I'll be..." but let it go at that. Very quickly Wiltz apologized for interrupting my work, said he was pleased to have met me, and then made his exit. Now, over 50 years later, I can only remember thinking what fun it was going to be to tell Marilyn about my caller, when I got home from work that night! Little did I realize that that brief conversation with Harold Wiltz would prove to be the turning point of our lives!

I recounted the morning's visit with Mr. Wiltz with Marilyn, and she, too, thought that it was funny. After all, I had just been baptized and became a member of the Christian Church just a little over six months before, and Marilyn and I had just begun teaching Sunday School classes the first

part of July. Well, as humorous as all of this sounded, it had an unbelievable impact on our lives. We noted that from that point on every conversation we had seemed to lead us to discussing just what we did want to do with our lives.

We enrolled in the autumn Peoria area interdenominational adult Bible program. We both signed up for the course on the New Testament book of Acts taught by The Rev. Dr. Wm. O'Neil, the senior pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church on Moss Avenue. This was a marvelous experience for both of us, as we discovered the historical approach to Bible reading and study. Our appetites were whetted for more enriching study!

AS I RECALL it was only about four weeks from the time when Harold Wiltz had visited me at the Bakery, that we called our Pastor at Glen Oak Church, the Rev. A. L. "Bert" Bradbury, for an appointment. We wanted to talk about some things. Bert acted quickly. He said he could come to our apartment at 6:30 that evening. Somehow, he knew what we wanted to talk about. His counsel was wise and appreciated. He suggested that the three of us drive over to Eureka College, visit the campus, check on available housing, and find out how many of our credit hours from Bradley Univ. could be transferred. Bert made all of the arrangements. That morning in Eureka couldn't have been better planned. We even got to sit down and visit with Dr. Burrus Dickinson, the President of the College!

Things really moved quickly from Thanksgiving. When I was in India during the War, I wrote home and asked my Dad not to sell the Bakery, as he was contemplating. I told him that I wanted to come home and be a part of the Bakery as the 4th generation. Now I had to ask him to release me from my earlier commitment. He graciously did so. Both sets of our parents were upset by our sudden decision to go back to school and prepare for the ministry, but both "played it cool" and acted supportively. They were puzzled as to why we would give up our wonderful apartment at 801 Knoxville, and go over to Eureka and live in the Musick's front parlor. I had a great job with life security at the Bakery. What kind of a life would the ministry bring? We knew, however, that we must break the ties with Peoria in order to give full time to our studies.

Both Marilyn and I were enrolling as students at Eureka College. She as a sophomore and I as a junior. It was ironic that on February 5th, 1947, the very day that we registered at Eureka College for our winter quarter classes, that Glen Oak Christian Church burned to the ground. As we

drove back from Eureka to Peoria that day, we saw the red sky as we entered the city. We drove to the Church at 1115 E. Republic Street only to see it in flames as the firemen were still pouring water on the ruins. As sad as it was, we commented to ourselves that in many ways it symbolized our next step in life. We had put our hand to the plow. We would not look back, but ahead.