

## MY LIFE IN MY WORDS

My name is Denver Orville Sayre and I was born on April 14, 1918. I was not born alone...I had a twin brother, Doyle Jasper. We were born at home in Hartford, West Virginia to Orpha Mae Bowen Sayre and Orville Jasper Sayre. My parents already had my older brother Donald, who was 1 ½ years old when I was born.

Not having much of a memory of the early years I contribute a great deal of the first years of my life to my brother Donald. He tells of an eerie incident when we are at our Grandma Sayre's house. The kitchen had a door in the floor that led down the steps into the cellar. We kids were all around the door crack yelling BOOGIE, BOOGIE, BOOGIE, when this white glove came through the crack, slithered across the room and out the door. Our folks came running in from the other room to see what all the screaming was about. Of course no one would believe us! To this day I can't figure out who played that trick on us!

Donald also remembers when he was about 3 1/2 and we were about 2 that he was hammering down some bricks sticking up on a brick walkway, after warning us many times to stay back, Doyle was hit on the head with a flying piece of brick. Donald must have felt really guilty about that to remember that after all of these years!

When I was three the family moved from Hartford, West Virginia to East Liverpool, Ohio. Donald remembers our furniture went by boat to our new house; we took the journey by train. In 1921 there were still not many cars and trucks and many people still relied on horses and wagons. We acquired the house from Uncle Emory, my father's brother and his wife, Aunt Francis. Uncle Emory had been working in one of the many Pottery and China factories in East Liverpool area. My father worked at Babcock & Wilcox, taking care of the boiler room. He kept it shined up and polished at all times. They made bricks that were hauled away by train. Dad had an "Overland" car and sometimes he would take it into the plant to work on it and polish it. I don't have many memories of this plant but I know I was taken there along with my brother, Doyle. I am sure we enjoyed it there and had a wonderful time! I do have memories of going to my mother's sister's house, Aunt Hazel and Uncle Arthur Tuttle. They had a farm and we had wonderful times there on the tractor, the horses, cows, pigs, chickens and all things of interest to a 4 or 5 year old. Another memory from this time was when I was deathly ill the pneumonia. I remember the cure (which must have come from Aunt Hazel's farm). A poultice made from cow dung and placed on my chest. It smelled horrible that is why I remembered it! Also during the time we lived in East Liverpool we had a terrible wind storm. We were eating ice cream cones when it hit. Our mother rushed us down to the cellar where we waited it out. It was quite scary. Afterwards it turned into wonderment and fun. All of the windows were broken out of the house. Outside it was a crazy sight, in the middle of summer our backyard was covered with Christmas decorations of all kinds. It seems the neighbor's roof had blown off and their large supply of Christmas decorations which were stored in the attic had blown over to our yard. Their chickens and the coop were also blown away. Cars had been picked up and blown

several blocks away. It was very frightening for 3 little boys and their mother sitting on the cellar steps.

Our father came from a deeply religious family. His brother was a minister and all his family attended church faithfully. I don't know where or how he got his training but he became an ordained minister in the Free Methodist Church. The house in East Liverpool was sold to Uncle Ernest (my mother's brother). We packed up our belongings and moved to my father's first assignment, a church in Avonmore, Pennsylvania. Avonmore was a very small coal mining town and the house we lived in was a very small house, which looked like all of the other houses which was typical of the company owned houses of the time. It was around this time that all three of us boys came down with the mumps. Looking back I can understand that my mother had some really difficult times. I don't believe that they had shots for childhood diseases (around 1925). I know at one time or another we had them all, Chicken Pox, Scarlet Fever, etc. and we all had our tonsils removed.

Like other 6 year olds we were required to go to school. On the first day of school my brother and I had a devastating experience. At this school the desks and seats were very wide and two students were to occupy each desk. Being almost inseparable since birth my twin brother and I set together at one of the desks. Later when the teacher discovered we were brothers she decided to separate us. That started a big protest by my brother and me. We were screaming, yelling, and kicking so much she could not control us and ended up sending us home. What an introduction to the good old school days. Getting such a bad start in 1<sup>st</sup> grade it isn't surprising that I failed the first grade. Doyle moved on to the 2<sup>nd</sup>. In those days a teacher could paddle a child for just about anything and the paddling would be repeated at home from our father.

Avonmore was the first of at least seven places we lived in the next 6 years. We also lived in Hopwood, Pa (down around Union Town), Mt. Pleasant, where I finally succeeded in passing the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and my sister Wanda (who we called Tess) was born. Our next move was to Cove Run (also near Union Town). Cove Run was along a creek in an area with few homes and a nice walk to the school. One of our neighbors had a small monkey. On the way to school I stopped to pet the monkey, he grabbed hold of me and wouldn't let go. I would pry one monkey paw away and he would grab me with another or wrap his tail around me. I spent so much time getting loose that I was late for school. I believe I was in the second grade at this time. Father bought a radio which was considered an amazing invention. It was one of the first radio I had ever seen. It was made by Crosley and had a battery pack as large as the radio and a big round speaker that sat on top of the radio. After a lot of tuning & adjusting with much static and squealing a station would come in, usually KOKA in Pittsburgh. We moved on to Indiana, Pennsylvania. Mother surprised us on October 27, 1928 with a little baby brother named

Thurl Glen Sayre. Needless to say he needed a nickname, so we called him Billy. To this day 80 years later he is still called Billy! Our sister Tess, who was two years old at the time, received a tiny duckling for Easter. We found it later laying on the book shelf quite dead! She was seen earlier carrying it around by the neck! We all agreed that

live gifts for Easter presents are not good. I also remember a shocking experience. We had a earthen floor in the basement (which was common practice at the time). It was dark there and I was reaching for the light switch above when I stuck my finger in the light socket! That was a shocking experience! Someone had removed the light bulb. It was the weight of my body that pulled me free. Thank goodness there was no permanent damage and I recovered quickly.

Our next move was to Uniontown, PA, at Garrts Run. Because of all of the moving around my education suffered and I failed the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. We only stayed here for a short time, living with our Uncle Walter (dad's brother) and his family. Uncle Walter was also a minister.

On the road again! We moved to Tarentum, PA, where my father changed to the Nazarene Church. This was a very nice church with a house in the back that even had indoor plumbing! Next door there was a small house and the people who lived there had a small boy (I believe he was 1 1/2 to 2 years old). He would sit outside with his back against the wall. As he sat there he would bang his head back against the wall time and again for long periods of time. His name was Jimmie Mitcheltree. Such behavior was new to us boys and caused much confusion and wonder. Why would anyone let this happen? I remember my brothers and I were out after dark one night playing a game called "Run Sheep Run". There were many business buildings in the area and some street lights. I ran behind a hardware store where it was dark and started to cross to the next building. There in the darkness was a large stone staircase without a railing leading down to the basement. I did not see this and went airborne as I fell down the steps and landed on the bottom stone step. It felt like someone pounded on my head with a mallet, I was dizzy and nauseated. I crawled back up the steps and over to the curb and threw up! My brothers finally found me and helped me home. I recovered with only a few bruises to show for my adventure.

There was a women named Peg Pontious who was a church member, we got acquainted with her younger sister, Alverda, who was a real tomboy and was an expert on a bicycle. With her help, my brothers and I gathered enough parts to put together a complete bike. It was the early years of the "Great Depression". There was no way our family could afford a bicycle, not even a used one. We were excited to have a bike and soon learned to ride it.

My father who was giving family counseling to Peg Pontious. The counseling soon turned to a romance, which led to the breakup of our family. Mother and children went back to East Liverpool, Ohio to live temporarily with our Uncle Earnes Bowen (her brother) in the same house we lived in before. We lived there for several weeks then rented a very small house up on the hill above uncle Earnest's place. I was unaware of any income my mother had to raise 5 kids except for the income from the bread she baked at home and delivered to people that lived within walking distance to our small home. We helped her kneed the bread dough and helped out whenever possible. We older kids watched out for the younger Tess & Billy. We lived in a nice area with lots of open space and woods to explore during the warm summer days. On one of our

mother's trips to town to deliver bread she was struck by a train and killed. It was devastating. We kids did not know what was to become of us. It was decided by our Aunts that Donald was to go to Aunt Hattie's; Doyle and I were to go to Aunt Hazel's and Uncle Walters on the farm. Tess went to live with our father and Billy went to our Aunt Francis's. Doyle and I had to help with chores and it was new and fascinating! Milking the cows, slopping the hogs, feeding chickens, mucking out horse and cow stalls were our new chores. We also had time for fun like playing horseshoes with real horseshoes, exploring nearby woods and lots of things we shouldn't. In the fall we had to go to school. It was a long walk through the woods along a small stream. The school was a one room schoolhouse. All eight grades were in one room. The following summer our father came to the farm to take us back to his place. We missed our parents and was happy to be a family again (our father had married Peg Pontious).

We moved to Scenery Hill where we all lived in what they called a "wash house". It leaned a little bit to one side. Suddenly we had a new brother and sister and a stepmother. All seven kids got along very well. My father had a job operating and elevator for a coal mine shaft. We then moved to a place called Lone Pine. This place was so small they did not have a grocery store. They did have a gas station and a school on the main road. We lived about a mile up the side road on a big farm about a mile from the center of Lone Pine and our school. The farmer who owned the farm let us live there for free as long as my father worked on his farm for \$1.00 a day. We had enough land for a garden, a chicken coop, and a pig sty that held two pigs. We had plenty of food which we supplemented with wild rabbits. We had learned to hunt when we were quite young. My father, brothers, and I provided lots of rabbits for Peg to can for the winter. We also made sour kraut in a big crock. With the pigs we butchered in the fall there was plenty of food. There was an old barn that had fallen from age with huge timbers that my brothers and I chopped into firewood for heat and cooking. It was about gone the following year. I attended eighth grade here. Then we moved on.

We moved to Washington, Pennsylvania, and lived in house on Coldwell Ave. for a while. I finished the 8<sup>th</sup> grade over the hill and down the other side at a place called Logpile. Next to our house was a family by the name of Seargeant. They had a son named Tom who later would marry my sister Tess. They were very happily married until his death.

Our next move was to 121 Hamilton St. which put us very close to Trinity High School and work. We were just outside of the city limits so Trinity High School was a rural school. The rural schools was made up mostly of the children of farmers. My father worked for the P.W.A. (Public Works Administration). He was a time keeper for the road crew. The country was in the Great Depression until 1940. Down the hill from us on Hamilton Street was a large greenhouse which raised flowers for florists and special occasions. It was here us boys got part time jobs. We would plant seeds, then pot the seedlings and take care of them. My brother Donald got a job in the winter months tending the boiler furnace at night keeping the fire going. Any money we earned we gave half to the parents, it was a family rule. We were glad to help. I liked Trinity High School, it was much bigger than any school I had attended. They even had

a real nice cafeteria which was expensive, I brought my lunch from home. We did a lot of hunting and target shooting for many years. While my father and we boys were looking through a local store selling arms and ammunition, the owner approached us and said he had a target range in the basement. He invited us down to look it over and much to our surprise he asked us shoot a few rounds. So he set up the targets and told us how many rounds to fire on each target. We had a lot of fun shooting of course we had a competition to see which one would be the best. The next day in the paper was a story of how 3 boys from Trinity High School beat the team from Washington High! Now we knew why he wanted us to try out his range. The very next day they started organizing a Rifle Team at Trinity. My brothers and I were charter members. Not to brag, but these country boys could really shoot good. Incidentally, we never lost a match to our main competition, Washington High School, in the four years I was on the team! The rifle team my brothers and I started is still in existence today! My high school years went by quickly. For once I did not have any problems with my grades, except for Latin which was a mandatory two years, I managed to squeak by. I really enjoyed the rifle team and shooting. I managed to graduate in the spring of 1938 at almost twenty years of age.

The Great Depression was still going on and I could not find a good job so I signed up with the N.Y.A. (National Youth Administration). This was another plan of President Roosevelt. I had always been interested in art and often did pencil drawings. So when they said that there was a job available assisting an Art instructor I said I would take the job. My job was to carry supplies to the classroom and set up the easels. I was also allowed to set up an easel for myself. It was a small class of about 20 students. The students and instructor were great. I learned a lot and got paid \$20.00 a month! There was also a woman with a great voice that would sing for us and sometimes we would join in. By the way, at this time I had no car so the instructor would pick me up and bring me home. What a great job! I started to go to Washington & Jefferson College studying drafting and blueprints. While going to college I received a job offer from Hazel Atlas glass factory, a large company making canning jars. I of course took it. My duties were to load and unload box cars and stack them in the warehouse. My pay was \$30.00 a week. For us the Great Depression was finally over. Amazingly we enjoyed our life growing up during the depression, we really didn't know we were poor!

I signed up for the draft in July, 1941, and was called up for active duty in October, 1941. I left for Indiantown Gap, PA, the draft was for 1 year of service only. They would sing a song "I will be back in a year little darling", little did anyone know it would not be for only one year!

To be continued in the ARMY YEARS!

MY D-DAY STORY  
STEADFAST AND LOYAL  
4<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION

My name is Denver Sayre. My twin brother and I were born on April 14, 1918 in Hartford, West Virginia. Life was hard, my family was poor, but we all pitched in and made ends meet. In my twenty-third year the U.S. Postal Department brought me the letter that would change my life forever, "Greetings!" The United States Military Services had requested my presence. I left for basic training in Fort Bragg, North Carolina on October 30, 1941. After basic training I was sent to join the troops of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Battery C of the 44<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion at Camp Gordon, Georgia. I had been trained as a forward observer and radio operator for artillery at Camp Gordon and several other camps when Uncle Sam decided that it was time for this rural country boy to see the world and off I was sent. First to Southern England, at Denbury Camp near Newton Abbott, Devon. After six more months of intensive training (bringing my training to a total of two and a half years) I was extremely well trained and combat ready! I felt I was more than ready and even anxious to get this war over with so I could go home. On June 4, 1944 my travel in Europe continued at the expense of Uncle Sam, this time I was going to war, this is what I was trained for but not what I was prepared for. After boarding a large transport ship we learned that due to increment weather the invasion would not take place until June 6, 1944. On June 5<sup>th</sup> we were assembled on deck under a cold, grey, overcast sky, where several officers told us the plans for the upcoming Untitled-1 attack. We were given leaflets from S.H.A.E.F. that stated we were about to embark on a "Great Crusade" where the eyes of the world would be upon us and many of us would not be returning. It was signed with words of praise and encouragement by General Dwight D. Eisenhower. There was also a short service by our Chaplin. Those of us who had not started out frightened were now scared witless but determined not to show it. The ship took on a jovial fear, nervous laughter echoed in the night. We tried our best to sleep but to most of us the cold and apprehension of what was to come kept us awake thinking of loved ones, home, and the future.

In the wee hours of June 6, 1944 we set off for Normandy, France. The seas were rough and many were plagued with motion sickness from the high waves and rolling of the ocean. Before first light orders were given to load into the LC/VP landing craft, with sea swells of up to twenty feet the landing craft was bobbing up and down like a cork. You had to time your jump; if you had bad timing you would land in the water or have a very long fall. This could be very uncomfortable as we were in full battle gear including field packs and rifles. After boarding we joined many other landing craft in a large circle and waited for what seemed to be an eternity. Large battle ships on both sides of us stretched as far as you could see treated us to an arrangement of sights and sounds as they blasted their big guns on the enemy's defenses. You could hear shells exploding on the land like a distant thunderstorm and knew that they were taking a terrible pounding and hoped this would make our job easier. Finally the order was

given to go in, we headed toward the beach, code named Utah, we were frightened but determined to get the job done. The Navy man piloting the LCVP opened it up as fast as it would go. We were in a long line of landing craft in a straight line for the beach. The flat bottom of the landing craft would rise out of the water on top of a wave and slam down with a jarring bang. Those G.I.'s who were seasick did not look like they were in any condition to fight. Many may have been anxious to disembark onto dry land despite the enemies desire to keep us off their beach. I joined some of the curious peering over the sides while hanging on the top edge hoping to get a glimpse of what fate we might face on the beach. As I watched there was a huge explosion, a landing craft carrying a battery of M4-105 Howitzers had struck a mine. It went down quickly. We did not have time to speculate or grieve for our fellow soldiers, as we were about to hit the beach Battery C 44th F.A. was assigned to give fire support to the 3rd Battalion 22nd Infantry (one of the first assault Battalions to land in France). Our landing craft landed in shallow water less than three feet deep. We scrambled out as quickly as possible and headed towards dry land approximately 100 yards. We could hear artillery; we were fortunate, as it was not in our area, most were meant for the ships and landing craft. There were many casualties both in the water and on the beach, I don't know what killed them (land mines or small arms) nor did I have time to speculate. We followed the line of G.I.'s advancing across the beach and struggled up a brush covered hill. It was there I encountered my first up-close casualty. A soldier had stepped on a land mine; his body mangled horribly, bones and muscle jutting out of the ripped and bloody flesh. It had a chilling effect on me; it was the first time I realized how terrible war could be. It had a very sobering effect on everybody; they just starred and turned away without saying a word. This was the first but unfortunately not the last casualty I would see. It was war. You had to try to put it out of your mind, harden to it, do your job, continue on and live. We had been well trained and warned about land mines and booby traps. Unfortunately, some did not heed the advice as several lay dead along side of the path from booby traps baited with souvenirs and interesting objects left behind by the retreating Germans. The advancement was slow due to the enemies well placed machine gun emplacements. Some were underground emplacements that raised and fired then lowered again to avoid return artillery and small arms fire. We could not advance further as we were receiving casualties from direct 88- artillery fire and mortars. We then contacted the naval ships (via radio) sitting out from the beach and directed their "big guns" to fire on the enemy targets. This was one of my responsibilities as a forward observer/radio operator. My fellow F.O. and I carried along with our regular field packs and weapons a 610 radio and battery pack. It not only added an additional weight (approx. 40lbs each) but with a 6 foot antenna we were living targets! We were glad when we heard that 10:30 AM on D-Day our 105 guns mounted on M-7 tanks came ashore and at 10:38 AM they were firing on the German positions! Our Battery C, 44th F.A. became the first field artillery to fire on targets in France on D-Day. We could now depend on our own Battery C to give us fire support and they never failed during the rest of the war. Our 3rd Battalion, 22nd infantry had the assignment of advancing to the right along the beach to silence the big gun emplacements that had the landing beach and ships under fire. These were huge guns with six-foot thick reinforced walls around them. They were protected by bunkers and large numbers of enemy troops (in what we called pillboxes) that were round thick, reinforced concrete emplacements with slots for

firing out at the advancing Americans. They were mighty but not impossible especially for the United States Army! When heavy artillery could not penetrate the thick walls the foot soldiers would do the job with flamethrowers, grenades, and TNT charges through the openings. The 3rd battalion of the 22nd took these objectives, but not without a price, they suffered many casualties. As F.O. it was necessary to move forward with the infantry to obtain a clear view of the enemy emplacements to direct our artillery fire by radio commands. Quite often we would be spotted and be the recipients of return fire. I had many near misses but by the grace of God lived through it without a scratch. I will never forget the faces of the German soldiers as they surrendered and came out of those pillboxes completely covered with soot. They were in total shock with a dazed stare out of black faces from the explosions inside. They looked panicked and fearful of the Americans because of the propaganda put out to them by the German Commanders.

After overtaking many such fortifications during the very long day it was getting dark. It gets dark during June in France quite late and it was also starting to rain. We were exhausted, cold, hungry, and scared. The orders came down to stop for the night, it was close to midnight. We had advanced several miles during the day and most of us were too tired to dig foxholes so we just lay down along an old dirt road and covered with our raincoats. Those who could sleep were lucky, most of us just laid their heads down listening to the shelling still going on, silently praying for our fallen comrades and strength and protection for ourselves. Trying to shake the numbness of the day until exhaustion took over and sleep finally came.

We were lucky the first day with only a total of 200 casualties. That would soon change as our 4th Infantry division suffered more casualties than any other division in WWII, about 35,000 casualties. This ended the first day of our "Great Crusade" by the 4th Infantry Division with the assault on Utah Beach, June 6, 1944. The 4th Infantry Division was responsible for the capture of Cherbourg (6-27-44), spearhead of the St. Lo breakthrough (8-25-44), first into Paris (8-25-44), first through the Siegfried Line (9-14-44) and first Infantry division into Germany (9-11-44). We fought the bloody battle of the Hurtgen Forest in November and December of 1944 and saved the city of Luxembourg at the Battle of the Bulge on December 17, 1944. The 4th Infantry Division was "Steadfast and Loyal" and proved themselves again and again on D-Day and everyday of WWII. Though many lives were lost many more were saved by this courageous group of G.I.'s who were proud to do their duty for God, Country, and Freedom for the world.

Steadfast and Loyal  
Denver O. Sayre  
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MY  
Eighteen Days of Hell  
The Hurtgen Forest

I was a radio operator with our forward observer party consisting of one Lieutenant and two radio operators. We were from Battery C of the 44<sup>th</sup> FA Battalion providing fire support for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> infantry. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1944, the three of us were advancing with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion into the forest called Hurtgen. We had already been through many battles with these great warriors of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and were expecting no picnic, but were unaware of the horrible experience that awaited us in the forest.

In the Hurtgen Forest the trees were very thick and tall with lots of underbrush making visibility very difficult even for a short distance and you could rarely see the sky. The terrain was hilly with swift running streams. There were no paved roads. The only way through were the firebreak roads, which were narrow rutted muddy trails of swampy mire which due to the weather were not suitable for any vehicles. We had rain, sleet or snow almost every day. It was without a doubt the coldest, eeriest, and most depressing place I had ever been. The worst part was the constant artillery, mortar, machinegun fire and mines, all of which were responsible for the many casualties suffered by the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The artillery rounds would burst in the treetops and spray a large area on the ground with shrapnel making it necessary to cover the foxholes with limbs, brush, and dirt for protection. Although they were covered it did not stop the water from seeping in. It was so cold and wet that it was almost impossible to rest or sleep. Those who did ran the risk of freezing to death in their sleep. As for food, it was mostly K-rations, ate cold, as there was no way to get hot food up to us. I sure would have appreciated a hot turkey dinner or just about anything that was warm for that matter.

After several days in the forest as we lay in our foxholes monitoring the 610 radio and keeping up the fire missions the shrapnel from a close shell burst blew off our 6 ft. antenna. We were prepared and had a spare and were back in business in a few minutes. A few hours later it happened again. This time we were not so lucky and had no other spares. I was chosen to take a hike through this extremely hazardous place called "the death factory" were many of the new replacements never even made it to the front lines. Needless to say I wasted no time getting back to where Battery C was set up and picked up extra antennas and a battery. After returning and attaching the new antenna it was not long before it happened again. Three antenna in one day! I'll bet that it was a record. After days of digging and sleeping in the mud and no chance or desire to shave or clean up we were a sorry looking bunch. The terrific amount of casualties we were suffering each day gave us all a burning desire to get out of the terrible forest. I will have to admit there was some talk of extending one leg out of that foxhole and getting a million dollar wound.

As the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion moved out each morning the enemy seemed to know exactly where we were and casualties started mounting from the enemy artillery and mortar fire. After a day of advancing only 1000 to 1500 yards we had the task of digging a new foxhole.

This had to be done quickly as staying in the open was extremely dangerous. As we were digging our foxhole the Lt. told my fellow forward observer, Bob Smith and I to go out and gather limbs and branches while he finished digging the foxhole. As we were cutting branches and griping about how we were exposed in the open to shelling and machinegun fire and he was safe in the foxhole an infantryman came running up and informed us that a mortar had made a direct hit on our foxhole killing our Lt. instantly. Needless to say we felt guilty about the griping but at the same time we felt lucky to me alive. Day after day and month after month I saw men wounded and dying all around me and I kept wondering when it would be my turn. After so many narrow escapes how long could I beat the odds. Like many other G.I.'s I was hoping this war would soon end.

We finally came to the edge of the forest and could see Grosshau where the Germans were dug in amid all the rubble from bombing and artillery. We received permission to use Corps artillery with their 240mm guns as well as division. We sent the corrected coordinates from our adjustments and ordered fire for effect on Grosshau. What a great display and devastating effect as the whole town seemed to be exploding. Soon you could hear faint cries of "Komrad, Komrad" coming from Grosshau. It was still two more days before our 22<sup>nd</sup> was able, with the help of the armor to take the town and our eighteen days were over.

We may never know if the Hurtgen Forest was really worth the very high price paid by those we left and those who came home scarred and maimed both mentally and physically. But I know this, I thank God everyday for those men who believed in "Deeds not Words".

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## DENVER'S STORY

### AFTER THE WAR YEARS

After coming home from the war in October 1945 it was decided by all that we would move to Erie, Pennsylvania. The next summer we moved to Erie as planned. My sisters Tess and Audrey signed up for school along with my brothers Buster and Billy. My two brothers asked some girls out on a date and talked me into driving for them. To my surprise they had also chosen to include a date for me! One thing led to another and I ended up marrying my date Edna Curcy!! My brother later ended up marrying his date Doris Patterson. At first Edna and I lived in a room in a little old lady's small house. Edna's father got me a job at General Electric Company about 1 mile from where I lived. Our first child was born May 27, 1947 and we named her Mildred Ruth, nicknamed Midge, and she was a beautiful little girl.

My father was renting a house in Wesleyville and decided to purchase a small house on an acre of land. It was large enough to have a garden which he raised vegetables. It was located on East Grandview Boulevard on the outskirts of Erie. My twin brother Doyle bought a lot of equal size next to my father's place. The three of us proceeded to build a one story brick house on his lot. It took almost two years to complete. Then I bought a lot on East Grandview Boulevard about one city block west of Doyle's. There was two houses between us. The three of us again started building. First a basement underground with a partly water proof roofing on top which we lived in for the winter. The next summer we finished my house! Tess, Audrey, and Buster lived close by and we saw them often.

Our second child was born while living in the basement on August 12, 1952. We named her Denise Lynn nicknaming her "Denny". I now had two wonderful girls. We had the perfect family and I was very happy.

I liked my job and family life. I also spent a lot of time on my hobbies. I belonged to 3 shooting clubs, General Electric Shooting Club, The Walnut Creek Rifle and Pistol Club, and the Keystone Gun Club (part of Co. 24 National Guard). In the Walnut Creek Club we had a large group which we did small bore indoor rifle competition. We would travel to many small towns in a forty mile radius and have a rifle match. The top ten scores on each side would decide the winner. I managed to stay in the top ten quite often after the top score. This was a lot of fun as we always had a good feed of some kind and much comradery. With the General Electric Rifle club it was much the same. We had a shooting range in the basement of the local Gannon College Auditorium and would compete with similar teams locally.

I also spent time hunting with my father and stepmother Peg's brothers. Doyle, Billy, and sometimes Donald and I would sometimes hunt small game on a weekend. It was mainly rabbits and sometimes pheasants or squirrel. In the first week of December we would pack up to the Pennsylvania mountains to hunt deer. We stayed with a man who

had a large house and he rented a room to hunters. Usually one of us would come home with a deer!

My other love was oil painting! I studied art with a now famous artist named Plavcan, in the city of Erie paid for by a program for Veterans. I attended this school one day a week for 4 years.

In the summer I took my family to the beaches on Presque Island, the amusement parks, and on picnics with my brother and his family, went to movies and enjoyed a lot of time with friends and family. It was good years with good times with family and friends.

In 1957 General Electric decided to move the Major Appliance portion such as refrigerators, freezers, and stoves etc. to Missouri. I was laid off along with thousands of others. In a small city such as Erie it was devastating. I got a job a while later with a hot water heater plant but was laid off in less than 2 years. Shortly I got a job with a plant that made automatic ice cube machines and was laid off after a few months. All the layoffs were due to hard times and lack of sales.

My brother, Doyle, had moved to California a few years earlier. In a phone call he told me there were plenty of jobs in California to come on out! I missed my twin brother. I also hated leaving my family and friends in Erie but needing a job I sold the house I build to my brother Donald. We packed up our possessions (as much as the car would hold) and my small family and I headed to California. We were really excited to see this new place. We stayed at Doyle's place for a few weeks then found an apartment just a few miles away in La Habra. I worked for the owner of the apartments cleaning and painting when tenants left. Then I got a job with Fairchild Camera and Instruments where I worked on the Flight Recorder boxes Dept. for about two years.

The marriage was in trouble before we left Pennsylvania and I was hoping things would improve when we came to California. After 2 years it was not to be, things got worse. We could not agree on many issues and we split up. It was agreed the children would live with me and the divorce was in 1962. I went back to the apartment along with Midge and Denny. It was not a happy time for me or the children. I had an old car for a year and then I got a little Datsun convertible called "FairLady". The two girls and I would go to the beach, Disneyland, and Knotts Berry Farm amusement parks. Things were looking better. Edna and I divorced.

My oldest daughter Midge married one year after graduating from high school on March 11, 1966. Like all fathers I was not sure of her choice. I learned later that she had made a really good choice, Chuck Stidham was a great partner for her, loving, caring, and a good worker.

Denny began switching back and forth between living with me and her mother. We managed to handle I nicely then she finally decided to stay with her mother. In 1966, now living my myself, I soon became bored. My neighbor was a single woman with three children became friendly. I enjoyed the company of her children at

my apartment quite frequently. I would help Jarne with her homework and the younger boy was interested in all tropical fish. The older girl was in high school, she was interested in guitar and singing. I joined a church singles group at a local church which took up some of my time.

I still was not seeing eligible women so I decided to join a local Parents Without Partners Club. It was quite a large group with many activities. One of the ladies was an art teacher so being interested in art, I joined her art class.

When the fun really began was when I signed up for the dance class at Dales Studio. I never new dancing could be so much fun. I was meeting a lot of new partners and we had to rotate partners on each dance. When you dance with a partner you never naturally have to talk and learn a lot about each other. I became much more outgoing. Many of the dancers belonged to the P.W.P. and they talked me into putting on short skits, plays, and dance shows for the P.W.P. monthly meetings.

I was keeping myself very busy now! Besides PWP, art class and entertaining neighbor kids I would go to my brother's house on a week end and play cards.

I lost my job at Fairchild Camera. I was tired of the long commute so I decided to look for a job close to where I lived. The first place I tried was Beckman Instruments. They were a short distance, less than a half a mile. The job was in the shipping dept and they said I was too qualified for that job. I argued that due to the long commute and extra time I would be satisfied to accept less money. They decided to hire me. After awhile, with the raises I was making enough money to get along quite well and I had more time for all of my other activities.

Some of the dance class members agreed to met after class at a restaurant or night club that had a large dance floor and music to practice the new dance steps we had learned. We would also occasionally meet on a Saturday evening. It was not a boring time and I really enjoyed the dancing, planning and practicing for skits and dance shows. I was finally coming out of my shell and enjoying life!

I had also joined the Brea Rifle and Pistol Club in the late 1950's and visited the range often during the years. It was a nice range for practice. They did not have completion Shooting as I was accustomed to which was more challenging and fun. I did enjoy the target shooting and fellowship of the other members I met.

On August 16, 1968 my beautiful little daughter, Denny, got married to a great guy named Gene Jensen. He was an outdoorsman and we got along very well. They lived in Roland Heights not far from where I lived. I was busy with work and all of my other activities.

On July 5, 1969 Midge and Chuck adopted a beautiful little baby named Sherry. My first grandchild. They lived nearby in La Habra where I saw them frequently. Midge also helped by making some costumes for some of the parties and shows that I was

involved with at PWP. My family was getting larger now!

I would occasionally date one of the single ladies from PWP or the dance class. We usually went to a ballroom where they had a Big Band and a large dance floor. Sometimes to a movie or a night club where there was music and dancing. Often there was other couples we knew at those places. We would get together and go to a restaurant for a late snack before going home.

I was never one to enjoy alcohol or its effects. Sometimes I would have one alcoholic drink but most often none. None of these dates ever turned into a romance but we were all good friends and enjoyed each other's company.

On September 6, 1970 Denny and Gene had a baby girl they named Stacy. Needless to say she was a beautiful little girl. Another granddaughter!

## DENVER SAYRES LIFE A NEW BEGINNING!

I was doing great at my job at Beckman, I had two beautiful granddaughters and life was good. Beckman moved the shipping department from across the street which had formerly been an old orange packing plant into the new Beckman building where the main manufacturing was done. The stock room was upstairs. We had a cafeteria where we went for lunch. It was usually better than what I had at home which was take out or TV dinners (or an occasional home cooked meal which lasted for several days). I joined the Beckman Bowling league for one season and another year I joined the golf team for one season. It was fun but I had too many other things taking up my time.

One day at Beckman, when I was walking back to my workplace from the cafeteria, I had a life changing experience. When I was nearing my workplace to the left stood a lady with the longest hair down her back I had ever seen. I couldn't help myself. I had to find out if it was real. I walked up behind her and said, "Is that real?" She turned around to assure me that it was indeed real. As she turned around my mouth must have dropped open because standing right in front of me was the most beautiful lady I had ever seen. She was drop dead gorgeous and sexy. Here she was talking as if she was very interested in me. I was sure she could have been a movie star. After I got over my initial shock, we talked for a few minutes and learned that her name was Arvetta and that she was a single woman with two young sons at home. She did not live far from me. I had to get back to work, so after promising to see her later I headed back to work.

I did see her at work a few times and we talked of many things. Beckman was putting on a Christmas Party for the employees, Arvetta intended to go and I would see her there. At the Christmas party I sat next to her. I was trying to impress her and keep her interested. Another man from Beckman was also very interested in her and was quite upset that I sat beside her. I asked her to a PWP party with me and she agreed, much to my delight! It was the wrong place to go. It was a Sadie Hawkins party. I am sure no one there was happy that I brought a date. We made the best of it and left early. She let me know that she would like to learn to dance. Having about 4 years in dance lessons and assisted some students in lessons when the owner Dale was away I felt qualified to help her. One chilly night we went to the Hilltop Club in Long Beach. After steaming up the window in the car we went in and had a great time. I told her I had a record player at my apartment and she decided to come over in the evening to take dance lessons. After several lessons and she had to hire a baby sitter, also, I had a large tropical fish tank that the filters made a loud gurgling noises and she could not sleep well. She made a money saving suggestion that I should bring the record player to her house, move in, and forget the fish tank. I had fallen in love and she knew I could not refuse!

I met her boys, two very good looking and energetic. I had raised two girls so this was a whole new experience for me. It was a great feeling, both boys started calling me "dad" the first day we met. It was nice and comforting to be accepted this way from the very beginning. I fell in love with Kevin and Jeff and never looked back. Kevin was 10

years old and Jeff only 7. I always enjoyed family life and being a father was right up my alley. Arvetta had only lived in the house for one year, it needed a fence in the back yard for play and entertainment. So we soon had a fence and new carpet. I was very happy, I had a great new family. Arvetta and I worked the same hours and in the same shipping department at Beckman in Fullerton, California. We enjoyed our commute and chance to talk. We were very compatible and had the same views on most any subject. I was enjoying my new found family life. Week-ends we went to the movies, shopped in Pomona and went to restaurants. Sometimes we just stayed at home playing with the boys. I met Arvetta's daughter and her husband Mike Collins. She was a beauty, full of life, outgoing and fun to talk with. Arvetta had two other sons, Cleet Snyder (who was going to college in San Francisco) and Doyle Snyder who was living with his father.

We would occasionally go to a large Pizza Parlor where they had a band and a large dance floor. It was a family place where we took the 2 boys and had a great time. On one of these outings at the Pizza Parlor while taking time out between dances Arvetta snuggled up looking me in the eyes she said "Will you marry me?" I was taken by surprise! She said it was a leap year and she was afraid I wouldn't ask. I wasted no time in saying yes!!! I had hesitated to ask for fear she might turn me down. We decided we did not want a big wedding and to elope. We got our plans started and over vacation time off from Beckman we decided on August 14, 1972 for our wedding. Arvetta and I headed for Reno, Nevada on August 13, we slept in the car along the beach that night and finished the drive to Reno the next day. Once in Reno we rented a motel not far from downtown. We then headed for the Courthouse to get our marriage license. Not far away was a Justice of the Peace on the second floor of an office building who performed marriages. We were all set and ready for the ceremony to begin when the young lady who was to be our witness was across the street and we had to wait. We were looking out this large window down the to the street below. We saw her come out of the building on the run. As she crossed the street she fell down, she got up quickly with only a little bruising. The ceremony started and the man said he was an ordained minister. When he said "You may now kiss the bride we happily complied. We were now man and wife!

We headed out to tour Reno as we had never been there before. In the evening after dinner we went to Harrahs Casino where Debbie Reynolds was playing and bought tickets. We enjoyed the show, we liked the singing and her very warm personality. She came off the stage right next to anyone who had something to say or tell. I wanted to tell her we were just married but Arvetta was shy and would have no part of it. I wasn't brave enough to go against my brides wishes so I kept quite. Now for our Honeymoon the next day we had breakfast then headed for the airport to pick up our two little boys to join us on our Honeymoon. Shawna had helped them as planned safely on the plane. They came down the ramp with a little old lady who helped them. We toured Reno and then headed for Yosemite. We camped out and had a wonderful time. I liked the outdoors and it doesn't get any better than this.