

FALCON 1964

On June 7th 1964, I started a thirty-nine day Third Class Orientation Tour called Falcon 1964 with six hundred and fifty classmates from the US Air Force Academy (AFA). During this program we visited selected units of the Army, Navy, and Air Force for indoctrination in the Major Commands of the Department of Defense. The highlights of the trip were the following:

1. One week on the Aircraft Carrier USS Hornet observing flight operations.
2. Flying second seat, with stick time, in an Air Defense Command (ADC) F101 "VOODOO" out of Hamilton AFB, CA
3. Observing Titan and Minuteman missile launches at Vandenberg AFB, CA.
4. Flying in a Tactical Air Command F100 close support fighter on the Gunnery Range, and observing an emergency U2 landing at Cannon AFB, NM.
5. Attending classified briefings on future weapons systems at Wright Patterson AFB, OH.
6. Winning a Commander's Trophy for having the best score as Radar Navigator in a flight of fifteen B52 Bombers on a simulated bomb run out of Westover AFB, MA.
7. Completing basic airborne training (short course) at Ft. Benning, GA.

I was very fortunate that I had been rated very high militarily in my class at the end of our freshman year and was afforded Cadet Rank ahead of the majority of my classmates. Those who held rank were on Staff for the Orientation Tour. Being on Staff gave us a little more freedom of movement and allowed us first pick when there were assignment options.

Hamilton Air Force Base, CA

The first day at Hamilton AFB they gave us several briefings on the Mission of ADC, the planes used, and the pilots who flew them. Most people did not know much about the job of ADC. In almost all combat rolls, the object is to deter or kill the enemy while preserving your own life. ADC had a slightly different mission. In the 1960s bombers had the ability to fly much higher than any fighter aircraft, so special tactics were needed. If Soviet bombers had been launched toward the USA, the planners wanted those bombers intercepted as far away from the US as possible, so again special tactics were needed. If the ADC pilots had been launched on a 'for real mission' to intercept and destroy enemy bombers, they would scramble toward the bombers on an intercept course at full military power, or on afterburner, using fuel at an alarming rate. When they got to a specific point below and slightly in front of the on coming bombers they would go to after burner, fly straight up as far as they could go, and then fire their air to air missiles (nuclear warheads) into the path of their targets. With no offensive ability left, it was time to think about survival. Because they were actually higher than controlled flight would allow, each pilot would try to do a controlled fall through the sky while keeping the undercarriage of the plane facing toward the bombers and wait for the explosion blasts to pass by them. If they lived through that much of the mission they would then roll their planes right side up and go as fast as possible in whatever direction would take

them toward a place to land. In most cases, however, the pilots would be out of fuel at that point and probably over the waters of the northern oceans with no hope of a safe landing. Even if they were able to execute a safe bail out, the elements would surely kill them before any rescue could be mounted. And, because we would be committed to an all out war, it was unlikely that any rescue would even be attempted. This was the mission ADC pilots trained to execute, a one way mission. They were already dead men just waiting for the time and place. Did this take a special kind of person? Oh yes. Were they slightly crazy? They were CERTIFIABLE.

Our entire group was taken out to the flight line to await the arrival of an ADC Squadron that had been out on a training flight and the outside speakers were left on so we could hear the radio traffic between the control tower and the pilots. That was the beginning of a long list of mistakes. These pilots, knowing that they had an audience and not caring much for proper procedures, decided to put on a little show. They came through the pattern three abreast, almost wingtip to wingtip, ignoring the screams and threats of the Air Traffic Controllers and came down the runway in five flights of three. Only they didn't lower their landing gear. They traveled the length of the runway with less than six feet of clearance to the ground while on afterburners. The shock waves almost knocked us off our feet. The controllers went silent and nobody said a word until the flight had made a loop around the field and lined up in proper formation to land. As the lead pilot came in for a landing a different controller came up on the radio and directed each plane to where it was to park. We were hustled inside a nearby auditorium where we were scheduled to receive a briefing by the pilots that just put on the show. We were sure they just wanted us away from the heated words that were flying around the flight line right then and were convinced that there would be a definite program change. But, to our surprise, all fifteen pilots came strolling in like they owned the world, took their seats facing us, put their feet on top of the tables in front of them, and rocked back in their chairs with a definite air of being bullet proof. We realized then that there must not be much the Brass could do to dead men. Besides, if they took these men off flight duty, who were they going to get to take their place? On top of that, these pilots had just put on a demonstration of superb flying ability. It was an interesting and lively session.

Only a limited number of Cadets got to fly second seat with the ADC Pilots in their F101 VOODOOs, and of course, the Staff members were at the top of the list. I'm not sure where the name VOODOO came from, but the plane was actually two rockets strapped together with a pilot sitting on the front. It was the first fighter the US had that could fly faster than the speed of sound straight up into the air. I was paired up with a Captain who gave me one of the most interesting afternoons of my life. He stayed with me from the preflight briefing through the post flight debriefing and coached me every step of the way. He was interesting, very knowledgeable, and extremely competent. But, before the ride was over, he proved without a shadow of a doubt that he was certifiably insane. I previously had been given an orientation ride in a T-33 jet trainer with a pilot out of Lowery AFB, Denver, Colorado, but the T-33 did not come close to the responsiveness of the F101. After take off we flew out to the North-West over the Pacific and the fun started.



F-101 Voodoo

He would execute a flying maneuver while explaining what he was doing and how, then he would talk me through the same maneuver. Eventually we were doing a series of things with good timing and form. One maneuver that was kind of fun was doing a 180 degree roll while in level flight and then feeling how different things were while flying upside down. He was a great teacher. He even had me execute the pitch up maneuver used to lob missiles at enemy bombers. I kind of lost control of the plane on the first attempt while falling backwards and he had to get us out of a spin. But, on the second try, I got it right. I was very impressed that he never really took advantage of me. If he was doing something and I started turning green, he would back off a little and keep me from throwing up. Eventually the fun had to end and we headed back toward Hamilton AFB. We had gone quite a ways North while playing over the Pacific and he decided we should go inland a ways before turning back to the South. Most of this time I had the stick and would just do whatever he told me to do. We were flying down through a long inland valley and he kept telling me to take it a little lower. At about tree top level, just under the speed of sound, I asked if he knew if there were any power lines crossing this valley. He calmly responded that there had not been any there yesterday and asked me to go lower. I was about at the limits of my nerve as I watched the low brush go under us so close I could swear I was feeling it tickle the belly of the plane. I was looking up at the tree tops flashing by when I heard him say, "Okay, now let's do one of those slow rolls."

After all the crazy things we had done so far, this request, given the position we were in, almost sounded comical. However, he was serious, and repeated the request. I didn't really want to think about the consequences that could attach to an attempt to comply, so I raised both hands up to shoulder height and said, "You have the plane." I barely felt the plane respond as he gripped the stick, but in the next instant we were upside down, still level and still just under the speed of sound. As I watched the ground go by in a blur, the thought came into my mind that at any moment the tail of the plane was probably going to stick into something and the joy ride would be over before I even knew what had

happened. Then he slid the stick forward and popped the throttles to the stops. In an instant we were a rocket flashing straight up at over the speed of sound. That definitely took my breath away. After a few seconds of sheer exhilaration he leveled out, turned us back toward the air base, and asked me to fly us home. He did all the talking to Air Traffic Control, but kept giving me commands on what to do all the way down until we were taxiing toward the hanger. When I got my feet on the ground I was flooded with differing emotions. On one hand, logic told me that I probably should be dead, but another part of me was just pumped because we had come close to death, from my perspective, and walked away without a scratch. I was looking for some tell tale sign from my pilot as to what he felt about it, but he showed absolutely nothing. I was convinced that, besides being crazy, he had ice water running through his veins instead of blood. During the remainder of the time we were together, the possibility of a close call never came up. During debrief he didn't mention the low pass through the valley so neither did I. As we said good-bye and parted, he had a little smile on his face like he had actually enjoyed himself. There was no question that I had had the time of my life, and maybe he was smiling because he had made my day and he knew it.

Vandenberg Air Force Base, CA

At Vandenberg AFB we found that the Air Force is very open with the public about test missile firings and even published a schedule of when and what type of missiles would be fired off. At first I thought this was some kind of security breach, but then after witnessing a test flight I realized that there was no way anyone could miss such an event because of the noise generated and the unmistakable brightness at night or huge smoke trail during the day. It really was much better to publish the schedule ahead of time, let everyone plan ahead to watch, and garner good will from the public. One night we watched two Minuteman Missiles being shot off at the same time and boy that was impressive. The noise, brightness, and speed of those missiles was more than I could have imagined. At the height of the cold war with the Soviet Union there were Minuteman Missile sites all over Montana and North Dakota. They would randomly remove a missile from a silo, ship it to Vandenberg, and test fire it as part of the quality control program.

The next night we witnessed a Titan Missile launch. The earth shook, we went deaf, and the whole area lit up brighter than day. That was before the missile had even left the ground. I was very thankful for the dark glasses they had given to us. That missile started upward slowly, but the velocity change was dramatic. The missile was so big and powerful that it remained visible for an extremely long time, especially at night. The Titan is the missile that was used to launch the Gemini (precursor to Apollo) 2-man capsules into space, so it had to be able to lift a significant payload. They did confirm that the Titan we watched did carry a package into space, but because of its classification, they would not discuss it further.

We also learned right after arrival that the Base Hostess, usually a high ranking officer's wife, had planned a big beach party for the Cadets at a beach down by Santa Barbara, CA on the last day of our visit at Vandenberg. To say the least, these social events for the Cadets were interesting. If a Cadet did not have his own date, which was a rarity, a date

was supplied for him. The Hostess would round up every girl within dating age of the Cadets in question from on Base sources and then go to off Base organizations with requests for other available young ladies to participate in this hallowed event. At the appointed hour the Cadets were herded into a reception line while the girls herded into a converging line. Where the lines came together, the Cadet would take the young lady's hand and introduce himself to his date for the event. Sometimes you won and sometimes you lost. When a few hundred girls were needed the selection criteria got rather vague. At a minimum all the body parts were there. They didn't necessarily have to all be operational. I had been through this system several times during my freshman year and knew that it was always better to find a date for myself. With hundreds of Cadets vying for the attention of any young lady we came across, it was tough to find a date while amongst the herd. Our schedule also included a day at Disneyland prior to the beach party. I began thinking of the possibility of finding a date among the many available young ladies who worked at the Park. As soon as we arrived I recognized that this was definitely a target rich environment, but it became immediately apparent that at least a hundred other Cadets had the same thing in mind. There were no private and few semi-private places for Cadets to even approach let alone engage the fairer sex in conversation so most attempts at talking to the young ladies had to be out in the open and usually in front of fellow Cadets. Most were shot down forthwith and had to suffer the cat calls of their so called friends.

At one point I was walking past the area where the ride through 'A Small Small World' started, and noticed that the boat pulling up to the dock had a very attractive young lady at the controls. The line was short so I ran over and boarded. It was no problem getting a seat right next to the operator. It was immediately apparent that this lady was a prime candidate and truly met the description of a FOX. At every opportunity I engaged her in conversation. I didn't want to rush things and get immediately rejected, so I kept things light and tried to end the ride on a very positive note. As I stood on the landing and watched her pull out with the next group she looked up and saw me. She was all smiles. I positioned myself where I would have a good shot at getting on her boat when she came back in about fifteen minutes and waited. As she approached she saw me standing there and she really lit up. I thought "This is going to work." She was much more attentive the second ride and before the end, I told her about the beach party and asked her if she could accompany me. Her beautiful smile got interrupted by a frown. As she looked down she said that she probably could not go and then said something about a steady boyfriend. As I got off the boat I noticed a look on her face that betrayed her thoughts. I could tell that she wanted to go and was wishing she had said yes. In her age group all the attractive gals had boyfriends. That just made the game more interesting. I decided to wait and give it one more try. However, that stupid song was starting to get to me. When she came around the corner and saw me waiting, she lit up like a Christmas tree. As I sat down beside her she wore a look of someone very pleased about something. Evidently no one had ever endured three trips through 'A Small Small World' just for her before. As I started to ask if she might reconsider going, she cut me off with an emphatic YES. It isn't the easiest drive for a young lady to get from Orange County up to Santa Barbara, but she made it and I had a wonderful time at the beach party.

Hill Air Force Base, UT

During a brief stopover at Hill AFB, North of Salt Lake City, we learned about many of the problems faced by the Logistics Command and how they go about solving those problems. We also got a tour of the chemical weapons test facility that was out on the north side of the Great Salt Lake. I was even able to arrange a visit with the Base Commander. We had been in the same LDS Church Ward in Alexandria, VA while I was stationed at the Military Academy Preparatory School at Ft. Belvoir and he was stationed at the Pentagon. I had sought the Colonel's advice prior to accepting the appointment to the USAFA. He never forgot that I did him a favor once and made it clear he would help me out if I ever needed it. While we were both stationed in Virginia I had procured a military cargo parachute, at no charge, for the Colonel to use as a canopy in his back yard when he hosted a party for some important guests. He ended up doing two things for me. The first was arranging for me to fly from Hill AFB to Malmstrom AFB, Great Falls, MT on military aircraft after the Orientation Tour ended that summer. A problem surfaced when I tried to get off the aircraft at Malmstrom. It was a C-141 cargo airplane carrying a Minuteman Missile and was very highly classified. The Strategic Air Command Security Police at Malmstrom wanted to arrest me and throw away the key. However, after a call to the Hill AFB Base Commander, the Security Detachment Commander gave me a ride to the front gate of the Base and declared the incident a "non-event." The second thing the Colonel did for me was write a letter to Mr. Kenneth A. Lauritzen, Chairman, Department of University Standards at BYU on my behalf. When I applied for admission at BYU, I was officially notified that because I had been arrested in December 1960 for public intoxication while stationed at Ft. Ord, CA, I would need letters of recommendation attesting to my character or my application for admission to BYU would be denied. The Colonel sent a rather blunt letter to Mr. Lauritzen regarding my excellent character and taking him to task for questioning same. My application was immediately approved. Even I must admit that sometimes it is good to have friends in high places.

Cannon Air Force Base, NM

At Cannon AFB, NM, we were wooed by the pilots of the Tactical Air Command (TAC). These are the pilots who fly close air support for soldiers engaged in ground warfare. If the ground pounders run into an obstacle or serious opposition and they are out of reach of their support artillery unit, they call the close air support units for help. The Army has lots of helicopters and some fixed wing aircraft for close air support missions, but in large, coordinated operations USAF Tactical Air Command units with a wider range of specialized aircraft are assigned to support the ground units. The F100 fighter that the Air Force used in the 1960s was nothing like the aircraft available today in terms of mission capability and performance, but it was very good in its day. They got us all pumped up watching gun sight movies of death and destruction being rained down upon tanks, artillery pieces, gun emplacements, bridges, bunkers, buildings and massed charging enemy soldiers by the various ordinance dropped or fired from TAC aircraft. Then they announced that they would be giving back seat rides to many of the Cadets while TAC pilots shot up different targets on the gunnery ranges. Yes, Cadets on Staff got first pick for those rides.

The feelings of the kid in the candy store do not in any stretch of the imagination compare to the excitement I felt as I strapped into that cockpit seat prior to take off, knowing we were heading to the gunnery ranges. I don't know what the other pilots did, but my pilot decided it would be okay for me to take the controls on a few of the range passes.

F-100 Super Sabre



Each time we would be cleared onto one of the ranges to attack a target, the feelings of power, the power of the aircraft and the power of destruction at my fingertips, was awesome. Our time over the ranges was cut short by an emergency message for all aircraft to suspend operations and return to base. By the time we had landed we had learned from the radio traffic that there had been an accident over one of the ranges and an aircraft had crashed during gunnery practice. Fortunately the crash had not involved one of the aircraft carrying an AFA Cadet. One of the USAF Pilot Trainees taking TAC Training had developed target fixation and had flown his aircraft into the target and crashed. Out of caution the powers that be decided to suspend all training flights, including ours, until a Board of Inquiry looked at all aspects of the accident and related training criteria. That put a minor hole in our schedule for time at the Base.

The next day I was hanging around Flight Operations with a small group of Staff Cadets hoping that by some magic someone would decide that the Cadet's flights would be resumed. The Senior Officer on duty had decided to give us a detailed tour of the behind the scenes activity at Operations (Ops). He was in the process of explaining something when a strange radio conversation came over the loudspeaker. We all stopped to listen. I will point out here that in 1964 the U2 aircraft and U2 operations were highly classified.



U2 Reconnaissance Aircraft

We were listening to a Pilot in a U2 aircraft out over the Atlantic Ocean declaring an emergency. He was talking to a Flight Controller on the East coast and they were working out a location for the U2 to land for emergency repairs. Because of his altitude, speed, and glide slope factors, the best Field for him to shoot for was determined to be Cannon AFB, NM. The external speakers were immediately turned off. In a couple of hours we were going to have company. Because we were already at Ops we were told we could stay, but if we chose to leave, we would not be allowed back. In fact, the entire flight line was being shut down and flight line personnel and visitors were being removed from the area. Security Police flooded the flight line area, escorting people away and securing access points. Next a group of specially cleared mechanics arrived who would be the only individuals allowed to get near our special guest. When the U2 arrived, it swooped in with no fanfare, rolled down the runway, and taxied into a large hanger near the end of the flight line. The hanger doors were immediately closed and the entire flight line became a ghost town. Less than an hour later, the U2 was rolled out of the hanger, fired up, and taxied to the end of the runway. Without even stopping at the turn, the Pilot lined up on the runway, went to afterburners, and within moments disappeared into the wild blue yonder. A lingering trail of grey smoke was the only evidence left of our visitor and the last recognition of its presence. Within minutes the ghost town became an operational flight line again and the alleged U2 was no longer spoken of.

Westover Air Force Base, MA

Westover AFB was the home base of a B-52 Bomber Wing. The Wing Commander, a full bird Colonel, was a tall Jimmy Stewart type individual, open, confident, and upbeat. He had arranged for extra B-52s to be flown in so that as many Cadets as possible could get orientation rides while at the Base. At that time, the flight crew of the B-52 included the Pilot, Co-Pilot, Electronic Weapons Officer (evaluated threats against the aircraft

from ground or air and directed available weapons against those threats), and the Radar Navigator (controlled the flight of the B-52 into a selected target and actually released the bombs onto the target). Right after we arrived, we found out that the Colonel had arranged for a little competition among the flight crews. He had scheduled an eight hour simulated bombing mission where each of the fifteen B-52 crews, accompanied by four Cadets acting as back up for the four crew members, would fly to a target location and drop a simulated nuclear bomb as close as possible to the center of the target. The flight path would be a route that had terrain features similar to the flight path that might be used to fly to an identified target in Russia. Our actual target would be a warehouse on the Saint Lawrence River that was similar to and gave a radar picture like the target in Russia. The bomb would actually be a beamed radio signal but would indicate very accurately the impact point of a live ordinance drop. With fifteen planes and four Cadets per crew, only 60 Cadets would be allowed to fly the mission. Again, the Staff members were at the top of the list and could pick what position they wanted to be assigned. I chose to be a radar navigator because that is the person who lines the plane up for the bomb run, has some of the best gadgets to play with, and probably the most comfortable seat on the plane.

We also learned right after arrival that the Base Hostess had planned a big party/dance for the Cadets at the Officer's Club. I decided to see if I could get a date for myself. I went straight to the phone book, looked up the number for the Bishop of the local LDS Church and called him. Can you imagine the surprise he got when I said, "Bishop, I am a member of the Church, an Air Force Academy Cadet and currently visiting at Westover Air Force Base. In a couple of days they are going to have a party here for the Cadets and if I don't come up with my own date they will assign one to me. Do you know of any quality young ladies in the Ward close to 20 years of age that I might ask to accompany me?" There was a lot of "hummm" and periods of silence before he said maybe he could help. He wanted my phone number and said he would call right back. He did call right back and gave me the name and number of a High School Senior whom he described as a wonderful young lady and indicated that she was waiting for my call.

Have you ever heard someone's voice over the phone for the first time and had a feeling come over you that you really need to meet this person? Well, that was how I felt and I was very relieved and excited when she asked me if I could come to their home the following evening for dinner. I could and I did. What a wonderful family and what a gorgeous young lady. I tried not to embarrass myself too much with my looks of admiration and frequent checks to insure that my mouth was not hanging open. She did have one thing that may have been seen as a flaw. She had a scar on the left side of her face that ran a couple of inches from the corner of her mouth up toward her ear. However, after the explanation about the car wreck when she was younger I hardly noticed it again. When I did notice it I had the thought that on her it actually looked like a beauty mark. Yes, we hit it off very well. In fact she almost got in an argument with her father about whether or not she would go to her school play practice that evening as she wanted to stay home and spend time with me. I thought it best to make the arrangements for our date at the Officer's Club for the following evening and excuse myself before any real damage was done. For me the party was a complete success.

Unfortunately many of my Cadet friends did not have nearly as good a time at the party as I had. Their random selection of dates for the evening left much to be desired. I accompanied my date back to her home and stayed up quite late taking advantage of the opportunity of talking with one of the choice daughters of Zion. The only down side of staying out late that evening was the 0600 hours briefing the bomb crews were having the next morning for the competition flight.

I made it through breakfast okay, but when I got snuggled down in my seat at the briefing and the lights were turned down for the slide presentation I drifted off to a happy place. I found myself daydreaming about a great Bishop, what a wonderful Ward they must have here, what beautiful young ladies they had here, and that wonderful scar. Then I felt an elbow in my ribs and was emphatically jarred back to reality. An all business Major was showing a series of slides depicting radar pictures of the final moments of the bomb run we would make coming into the target location with the final picture being the actual sighting we should see at the moment the bomb would be released.

I was fascinated by the technology that could give us that detail. My fascination didn't last long because I found my conscience thought wanting to return to that happy place with the beautiful girl and the opportunity of spending more time with her. The happy place won and the next thing I knew we were all jumping to attention while the Colonel and his staff left the room. A heart beat later I was out the door with my adopted flight crew and on my way to our assigned B-52.

They had arranged for our take off to be as close to an actual alert scramble as possible. In an actual alert scenario the crews would leave from the alert building, get to their bird, go through the startup procedure and then commence take-off. Our drill, for safety reasons, would start with the crews on board and startup completed. However, after the go signal was given we would leave the assembly area as quickly as possible, stay as close as we could to the plane in front of us, then get airborne and into flight formation as quickly as possible. A plane cabin built for four is not a very comfortable place for eight. That was a fact we would all endure for the next eight hours. The first problem we noted was that every B-52 down the field with the throttles pushed to the stops puts out an enormous amount of grey-black smoke. Being number twelve in take-off order insured that we would see nothing past the wing tips until we were about a mile from the runway and had turned slightly away from the path of the previous aircraft. It was interesting watching the absolute composure of our Pilot as we raced down the field building speed with no visible references to indicate how much runway was left. When the speed indicator hit the magic mark, he pulled back on the stick and we left the ground. It seemed simple and evidently it happened every time.

At first there was a lot of confusion as the Cadets tried to squeeze from place to place to get up close looks at the controls and equipment at the various stations around the cabin area. However, after a while the novelty started to wear off and the realities of an eight hour mission started to take over. As things got quiet I found a comfortable out of the way hole for my body and let my mind go in search of a happy place. I must have been successful because the Radar Navigator had to shake me to wake me up when we were getting close to our objective. He was very patient and gave me a crash course in

operating the equipment at his disposal. It wasn't long before I started recognizing the actual radar scope pictures from the slides we had been shown during the briefing. Everything clicked and it was apparent that we were lined up right on target. In some bomb runs the pilot actually transfers flight control over to the Radar Navigator for him to make last minute corrections and bring the plane directly down the flight path and over the target. For our exercise the Pilot retained effective control, but followed a pointer that indicated which way I wanted the plane to maneuver as we came over the target.

B-52 Stratofortress



The picture finally came into view that indicated we were directly on target and I pushed the button. It was amazing to think of the destruction I could have caused with a real nuclear bomb release from that altitude of several thousand feet. I also found it comforting to know that because that capability existed, our military was able to hold the greatest threat ever known at bay for many, many years. We didn't have to wait long for the evaluators to call us with our score. We had hit the target 150 feet from center. I wasn't sure if that was a good score until I saw the smile on the Radar Navigator's face and heard the whoop from the Pilot. Evidently I had done good. I started thinking about the target warehouse being one quarter of a mile long and ground zero being measured in miles. 150 feet was sounding very good.

With the Radar Navigator's job completed there wasn't much for me to do. I listened in on some of the traffic while the Electronic Weapons Officer ran some simulated attack scenarios and then watched as a Cadet tried to get our Bomber to change altitude in a hurry. It didn't even help to brace himself with both feet on the consul while pulling back on the stick. Nothing changes in a hurry in a B-52. Eventually, my need for

meaningful sleep got the best of me and I ended up missing most of the return flight. We were all up and attentive as we prepared for the landing. Because all the B-52s were coming back in at several minute intervals we were able to see and hear everything very clearly. It wasn't like landing in a fighter, but it was still exciting. As we taxied into our assigned parking spot we saw a small reception committee waiting for us. It wasn't until we had exited through the bottom hatch of the plane that we noticed our reception committee was led by the Wing Commander. He started walking toward us and then pointed at me and said, "You, I don't believe it." Then he started laughing. I was at a complete loss. I didn't know whether to run, stand still, or disappear. Finally the Colonel said, "How could you have beaten our score? You slept through the briefing." A question seemed to demand an answer so I said, "I did see the slide presentation of the radar pictures going into the target. When we made our bomb run those pictures came back to me and I was able to line the plane up just like the picture indicated." He shook his head, laughed some more, reached out to shake my hand, and said, "Well done." Evidently the Colonel had flown the first plane over the target and his Cadet Radar Navigator had gotten a very good score. Their score had held until plane number twelve got a score of 150 feet. The last three planes were farther off the mark. He had wanted to meet, greet, and congratulate the Cadet Radar Navigator who had scored that exceptional score. He walked away still shaking his head, still laughing, and a little confused.

The next morning, the Colonel took time before one of the briefings for the Cadets to make a special presentation. He called me up to the front and presented me with a Commander's Trophy, a chrome model of a B-52 that had a wing span of about one foot and stood on a stand about a foot tall. He was very congratulatory for my winning first place in the B-52 bombing competition and asked me if I would come and fly for him. I told him that if he could commission me then and there, I would fly for him. Evidently he could not do that.

Fort Benning, GA

We had been offered the option of giving up part of our summer leave and going through an abbreviated paratrooper jump school at Fort Benning, GA. I elected to go through jump school. They poured a three week course into us in one week, but they left out most of the harassment stuff that jump school is famous for. We were treated like officers and with respect. It felt good. It was sure different from the training schools I had gone through during my time as an Army enlisted man. As we progressed from the low tower to the high tower and static line training the Training Cadre NCOs explained all the things they wanted us to do and why. I actually learned a lot and it was enjoyable. Before we knew it Friday afternoon was there, the Summer Detail was concluded, and we were on leave until the new Fall Semester started in about a month.

The drive to Colorado Springs, CO

A First-Classman from 18th Squadron had been one of our Summer Detail Commanders and would be our Squadron Commander when the Fall Semester started. He was with us at Fort Benning and had asked me if I would help him drive a car from Washington, D.C. back to the Academy at Colorado Springs. I told him I would, so on Friday we caught a

late afternoon flight to Washington. After a cab ride to the Virginia suburbs we picked up an almost new red Chevrolet convertible that his grandfather on his mother's side had given him and we headed across country. Our plan was to take turns sleeping, eat on the go, drive 1,400 miles straight through to the Academy, and average over 55 miles an hour. The trip went by so quick only a few things really stood out.

We were in Pennsylvania a little before midnight when we decided to change places. Rather than stop and waste a minute we just slid over and under each other and kept as close to the speed limit as we could. The next thing I knew there were red lights blinking behind us. We pulled over. A Pennsylvania Highway Patrol Officer had been right behind us when we had switched seats. Because the rear window in the convertible was that hard to see through plastic he could not see well, but knew that people were moving around inside the vehicle. Also, we had been pushing the speed limit a tad so he decided to talk to us. When he asked for my driver's license I handed him my Montana license and a copy of my military orders (we were wearing Air Force flight suits). He finally figured out that we were assigned at the Academy and were placed on leave that date at Fort Benning. He asked how fast we had had to drive to make it from North Carolina to Pennsylvania that same day. Luckily we still had ticket stubs from our flight. Then he looked at the car registration and determined that it didn't belong to either of us. It looked for a time that we were going to detour to the Highway Patrol Station until the car story could be verified, but then he finally just gave everything back and told us to be on our way and to take it easy.

The next morning just after sunrise we were making our way through the Chicago metropolitan area. We had to stop for a freight train that had stopped for some reason and was blocking our street. I must point out that this was 1964 and little of the freeway system we now enjoy had been built at that time. While we waited for the train we both fell asleep and were awakened to some rather rude honking from the cars lined up behind us. Fortunately pit stops, gas stops, and food stops all merged together and we were able to keep flying low without incident. A financial problem almost grounded us later that morning in Western Illinois when we stopped for gas and found that we were almost out of cash. We walked into the closest bank with intention of pleading our case and trying to cash a check. Then we took a look at each other and realized that the road wear was starting to show. We hadn't shaved, washed or changed and looked rather scruffy. However, the Bank President loved the Military and said we could cash any amount we wanted. We were off again. In mid afternoon I was driving and we were flying low through Western Kansas. We had gone through a few little communities without even slowing down and it looked like we were approaching another one. Because of the trees along the road and a rapidly approaching bend to the left, it was difficult to tell just how big the town was so I kept up a good head of steam.

As I rounded the corner with a little squealing of the tires, I got a look down the street and could see that we were entering a major city. At the same time I saw two men near the back of what looked like a patrol car parked in front of a business on the right side of the road. I pulled my foot off the gas, but it was too late. In the rear view mirror I saw one of the men, who appeared to be wearing a uniform, run toward the driver's door of

the patrol car. I could just imagine how bad the ticket was going to be. Instincts of fight or flight were kicking in and my buddy said, "Kick it!" I pushed it to the floor and that Chevy jumped. When I could see the patrol car straighten out into the chase I made a quick right then a left and another left into an alley between two businesses. I stopped as close to one of the walls as I could get. Within moments, the patrol car flew past me on the street behind us. I quickly drove across the main street, made a right a couple of streets over, and headed toward the West end of town at a reserved but anxious speed. When I got to the end of town I got back on the highway and went on my way at the speed limit, at least for a few miles. I never saw the patrol car again. That evening, a little over 24 hours after leaving Washington, D.C., we pulled into the Air Force Academy. A shower, bed, exhaustion, and the prospect of a good breakfast the next morning put me out like a light.

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November 20, 2007