

Aim Point

An Air Force Pilot's Lessons
for Navigating Life

Colonel Bruce Hurd, U.S. Air Force (Retired)

Appendix A

My Timeline and Background Information

Because I had 16 separate assignments in the Air Force and I jumped around my timeline as I wrote this book, I've gathered a summary of my duty history and associated background information to use as a reference to help clear up any confusion. These entries focus on where I was, when I was there, and what I was doing during each assignment or phase of my life. I've also identified key events on this timeline that I described as part of my book.

APPENDIX A: MY TIMELINE AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION



*My wonderful brothers and sister in the mid-1960s.
Clockwise from upper left: Dave, Caroline, Kevin (in front of Caroline), Drew
(seated in chair), and me (on floor in front of Dave)*



*My wonderful siblings at Emily's and Chris's wedding in 2018.
From left to right: me, Dave, the bride and groom, Kevin,
Caroline, and Drew*

From December 1954 to September 1973 I lived in the San Francisco Bay Area with my father, mother, and siblings Dave, Caroline, Drew, and Kevin — I was between Drew and Kevin and we were all close in age, with just seven years between the youngest and oldest. Something of a mob scene. We lived in a nice suburban house in Los Altos in northwestern Santa Clara Valley before it became “The Silicon Valley.” It was semi-agricultural then, where it wasn’t unusual to be driving along the main roads and see small shopping centers, houses, and orchards all on the same block.

I went to Grant Elementary School and Cupertino Junior High School and I graduated from Homestead High School in 1973. I played a lot of football and baseball and I was a Boy Scout for a while. Where I excelled, though, was when I became a YMCA camp counselor during the summer after my sophomore year. In addition to getting leadership experience during the summer, I became involved with the high school age “Hi-Y” program of the Northwest YMCA. Hi-Y was a social/service club aimed at high school boys and girls.

At the beginning of my junior year, I started a club with my friends from Homestead and they elected me president since I was the one guy all of them knew. I really enjoyed it and I was elected president of the entire 12-club Northwest YMCA Hi-Y council my senior year. In addition to being a lot of fun, I’m certain being elected to the presidency of a large, multi-school service organization helped me get admitted to the University of California, Berkeley and get awarded an Air Force ROTC scholarship. ***This was when there were lots of incidents with my Mom’s drinking. This was also when my 6th Grade teacher’s abuse happened in 1966.***



From September 1973 to April 1977 I was a student at UC Berkeley and an Air Force ROTC cadet. I started off as a physical science major. After one year of beating my head against the wall trying to compete with pre-med students, I realized I would be wise to switch my major to something a little more up my alley. I applied for and was accepted to the upper division School of Business Administration (now known as the Haas School of Business). Much better.

I graduated in April 1977, one quarter short of four years because my father had the wisdom to encourage me to take the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests before starting classes, for which I received 30 units of quarter credit. These credits didn't allow me to get out of taking any courses I needed for graduation. What they did was allow me to not have to take classes solely to meet the total 180-credit requirement for a bachelor's degree. For the 10 months between college and the Air Force, I did some travelling, and I worked as a pizza delivery driver. I also worked as a "die inventory clerk" at a new company called Intel in Santa Clara. *This was when my Mom first went to rehab in 1975. This was also when the Air Force cut the number of pilot training candidates by 70% in 1976. Right before graduation, I also had the precommissioning eyesight exam prior to getting assigned to pilot training.*

Air Force Timeline



From January - December 1978 I was a Student Pilot in Air Force Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT), at Reese AFB, just outside of Lubbock, Texas. UPT was conducted by the 64th Flying Training Wing (64 FTW) and I was in Class 79-02 (our patch pictured above). The year-long UPT program was separated into two phases, primary and advanced, each lasting about six months. The primary trainer was the subsonic Cessna T-37 “Tweet” twin-engine jet. At Reese, the 35th Flying Training Squadron (35 FTS) conducted that phase. The advanced trainer was the supersonic Northrop T-38 “Talon” and the 54 FTS ran that phase of training at Reese.

All pilot trainees had to go through the entire training program regardless of whether the newly graduated pilot ended up in heavies (tankers, airlifters, or bombers), fighters, or trainers (new pilots assigned as UPT instructors). The training objective was to create a universally assignable pilot who could transfer between aircraft types based upon the needs of the Air Force. In practice, pilots almost never made the move between heavies and fighters once they became fully mission-ready.

Recognizing this reality, the Air Force modified UPT in later years to focus on mastering specific skillsets needed by tanker/airlift pilots (such as crew coordination/management) or fighter/bomber pilots (such as tactical maneuvering). Pilots were assigned to an airlift/tanker or fighter/bomber track after the basic flying training phase. In 1978, though, all of us had to master every skill, including multi-ship fingertip formation flying and tactical map navigation — skills that were not required during my flying career as a tanker pilot. *This was when I had my nearly fatal T-38*

night flight and my failed T-37 Mid-Phase Check. Ultimately, the entire experience was very successful.



From January - May 1979 I was a KC-135 student copilot at Castle AFB, near Merced, California. KC-135 qualification training was conducted by Strategic Air Command's (SAC's) Combat Crew Training School (CCTS). The initial, academic part of CCTS was the responsibility of the instructors of the 4017th Combat Crew Training Squadron. Flight training was conducted by the instructor pilots, navigators, and boom operators of the 93rd Air Refueling Squadron. Both organizations were part of the historic 93rd Bombardment Wing. After four months of academic and flight training, I graduated as a qualified KC-135 copilot, ready to move onto my first operational assignment in Northern Michigan.

The focus was on getting us to succeed. The CCTS schedule was leisurely enough, so I had weekends off unless something big was happening on Monday. Castle was also only two hours from where I grew up and I took advantage of that by going home to see family and friends from Friday after class to Sunday night — it was great. Most importantly, this was not a situation like UPT where we students were always on the edge of failing out.

Until I became mission qualified, I was still considered a student; however, CCTS instructors treated students like qualified professionals, with an appropriate level of respect provided. CCTS was demanding, but it was a nice surprise to be taught by instructors proud to be tanker pilots.

This was quite different from what we were led to believe SAC would be like while we were students at UPT.

After graduating from CCTS and before reporting to KI Sawyer AFB, *I went to Land Survival Training (with the mock POW camp) at Fairchild AFB in Washington and Water Survival Training at Homestead AFB in Florida.*



From June 1979 - August 1982 I flew the KC-135A for the 46th Air Refueling Squadron (ARS) at KI Sawyer AFB, just south of Marquette in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I began my assignment in the 46th as a copilot, and as soon as I acquired the minimum number of hours to qualify, I upgraded to aircraft commander at Castle AFB in early 1982. The moment when I received command responsibility for my very own KC-135 aircraft and crew was a proud and humbling point in my career.

The 46 ARS, along with the 644th Bombardment Squadron (flying B-52s) was one of two operational squadrons in the 410th Bombardment Wing (BMW) at KI Sawyer. While there was a separate F-106 squadron flying an air defense mission, all other base units and activities were designed to support the bomb wing. With 21 assigned crews, the 46th was one of the largest KC-135 squadrons in SAC. In 1979, the Boeing KC-135A was the backbone of the SAC refueling fleet, with over 600 aircraft in the inventory. The “A” model, with its loud, water-injected Pratt & Whitney J57 engines, was seriously underpowered when it was fully loaded with fuel.

This performance challenge caused the Air Force to build enormous 2 ½ mile runways so both the KC-135 and B-52 would have enough distance to accelerate to takeoff speed at full weight (such as when we were on alert). The takeoffs I most remember from my A-model days were the ones involving either heavyweight fuel loads or Minimum Interval Takeoff (MITO) operations designed for “flush launch” of the alert force. Both situations required very precise takeoff calculations and timing even if everything went right. If there were engine problems or water injection was lost close to “committed to takeoff” speed, the degree of difficulty/danger and the need for quick, appropriate reactions increased exponentially.

While we trained for worst-case situations, I thankfully never had either of these takeoff emergencies occur. I did have MITOs where I was uncomfortably close to the aircraft in front of me (due to differences in acceleration) and heavyweight takeoffs where I used every bit of the runway to lumber my fully loaded plane into the air, barely clearing the trees just past the end of the runway.

I recall one time when we scared the crap out of a motorcycle rider on the base perimeter road. We happened to fly over him as we took off heavyweight on an unexpectedly hot August day in Upper Michigan. He emerged from a row of trees and did a head-snapping double take as it became clear our paths were intersecting — his eyes became huge as he saw us coming. We couldn’t have cleared him by more than 10 feet. We even checked afterward to make sure there wasn’t an accident caused by our jet blast.

This was where I met and married my first wife Carol. It was also where we had the incident with my mother taking bottles of alcohol from the distinguished visitor quarters. Also, it was during this assignment my squadron commander stood up during an inspection debrief and confronted the SAC Inspector General for unwarranted remarks aimed at us in his squadron — I’ve always admired him for that.



From August 1982 - September 1984 I flew the KC-10 for the 9th Air Refueling Squadron at March AFB, near Riverside, California. It thrilled me when Strategic Air Command chose me to become a KC-10 copilot in the spring of 1982, shortly after I upgraded to KC-135 aircraft commander (pilot-in-command). The KC-10s were just starting to come off the assembly line, and I was a part of a brand-new squadron being started from scratch with handpicked, highly experienced crewmembers selected from throughout SAC. It was exciting, and I felt like I was a part of something special.

The McDonnell Douglas KC-10 Extender is the military version of the three-engine DC-10 airliner. The KC-10 is much larger and more versatile than the KC-135. The biggest improvements are its capability to receive fuel midair as well as carry large amounts of cargo. The Air Force developed the KC-10 to supplement the KC-135 following Air Force air refueling experiences in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Only 60 KC-10s were produced for the Air Force, so those of us who flew the plane got to know each other well over the years. The working environment was fantastic — I enjoyed the mission and the people I worked with. I made some of the best friends I had in the Air Force during this two-year assignment. This exciting, leading-edge experience was a big reason I decided to make the Air Force a career.

In addition to developing my skills as a KC-10 pilot during this time, I volunteered to be a squadron scheduler — a full-time staff role for a one-year period that would help me better understand how the squadron functions and provide greater visibility for me in a highly competitive environment. I also

earned my master's degree in systems management from the University of Southern California at night. *It was during this time Carol and I divorced. I filed for divorce in early 1983, with the divorce becoming finalized in mid-1984. It's also when I had to rush to my parents' home from work to see if Mom was okay after a severe drinking bout.*



From September 1984 - September 1985 I was assigned to the Air Staff Training (ASTRA) program at the Pentagon. ASTRA was a yearlong tour of duty designed to expose young officers to air staff operations at Air Force Headquarters. Each year, the Air Force chose 75 young captains at around five or six years of service for this career-broadening experience, where we were introduced to high-level Air Force leadership perspectives. We also participated in other educational opportunities while we worked as staff officers within a headquarters directorate.

At the conclusion of the tour, we were sent back to our primary career fields to continue our careers. This was an extraordinary experience for me and I appreciated the opportunity to take part. During this time, I spent six months as Assistant Military Airlift Command Liaison Officer to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and six months as an action officer in the HQ USAF Directorate of Personnel Programs. *This was where I worked for the colonel who had integrity issues — a good example of a bad leader.*



From September 1985 - January 1988 I flew the KC-10 as an aircraft commander and instructor pilot for the 32d Air Refueling Squadron at Barksdale AFB, near Shreveport, Louisiana. Along with having my own assigned crew, I also served as a flight commander for three additional crews. The 32 ARS was one of three flying squadrons in the 2d Bombardment Wing, along with the 20th Bombardment Squadron (B-52) and the 71st Air Refueling Squadron (KC-135). With three active operational squadrons flying three different types of aircraft, the 2d Bomb Wing was one of the largest flying wings in the Air Force.

This was one of my most fun assignments: I was a full-time aircraft commander/instructor pilot and my flying skills were at their peak. I enjoyed leading my crew and the feeling of being good at what I do. Because of our squadron's worldwide commitments, I spent a great deal of time flying challenging missions throughout Europe and the Middle East. As one of the few unmarried aircraft commanders in the squadron, I deployed regularly to Saudi Arabia, often on short notice.

Our squadron had a standing obligation to station three crews and two aircraft at Riyadh Air Base when the U.S. presence in the Middle East was very limited. Most of our missions revolved around refueling the USAF E-3A Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft and Royal Saudi Air Force F-15s in support of their air defense mission. The Iran-Iraq War was raging at the time and Iran was just across the Persian Gulf from Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was a very prominent Iraq supporter, and they were concerned Iran might attack them. It was only a few years afterward

that things would turn around dramatically. Iraq invaded Kuwait in the summer of 1990 and Saudi Arabia would develop into a major staging base for the 1991 American-led invasion of Iraq during the Gulf War.

I am grateful for all the success I had at Barksdale. In addition to making wonderful friends throughout my tour, I upgraded to KC-10 instructor pilot, and I was promoted early to major in late 1986. The Air Force also selected me to attend the prestigious Army Command and Staff College, which would happen in 1990. Plus, the Cajun food in Louisiana is fantastic. *This was where I became qualified in night air refueling on that wild training flight. I also flew home for Christmas and Mom entered rehab for the last time in 1986. She finally stopped drinking during this timeframe, too. It was also during this assignment that I had the privilege of working for Lt Col Lias, mysquadron commander — an outstanding leadership example.*



From January 1988 - June 1990, I served as a staff officer at Strategic Air Command Headquarters at Offutt AFB, near Omaha, Nebraska. I became an assignments officer, working as the Deputy Chief of Selective and Command Assignments, followed by a move up to become Chief of Tanker Assignments. Both jobs were non-flying positions, and I missed the excitement and satisfaction of being a pilot and leading a crew. That said, I worked with a great group of men and women performing an often thankless job of managing the assignments of SAC aircrew officers (pilots and navigators).

I also learned a great deal about how SAC and the Air Force manage people — this knowledge would be useful for mentoring younger officers as I moved into leadership positions later in my career. As I officially became a major in early 1988 (having been selected for promotion at the end of 1986) and saw things from the vantage point of a fully embedded headquarters staff officer, this was the first time I embraced things from a much broader, command-wide viewpoint, rather than just seeing the situation from the limited perspective of a line pilot within a flying squadron. This was no coincidence, as the Air Force encourages mid-level officers to complete a headquarters staff tour such as I did at SAC. It's almost a requirement for an officer to have this type of assignment to be a viable candidate for promotion to lieutenant colonel and beyond. There was often fierce competition for these types of jobs.

One huge benefit of this job was the regular schedule I had. I went to work and came home at the same time each day, travel was infrequent, and I had most weekends off. It was great. This was very different from the “don't plan on anything, always be ready to deploy, and fly at all hours of the day and night” life of a KC-10 crewmember. It was also different from the one week out of three scheduled exile of an alert-pulling KC-135 pilot.

My schedule at SAC Headquarters allowed me to have a semi-normal social life since I had the ability to arrange a date with a woman and expect to make it. *It was during this assignment I met and married my wife JoAnn.* We connected in the summer of 1988 via a video dating service named “New Beginnings.” JoAnn had been divorced for some time and she supported herself and her son Justin by working as a registered nurse.

We became engaged around one year after that. *It was shortly after we were engaged when the doctor told me I would never be able to father a child. It was also when we started our subsequent search for medical assistance. This was also where I worked for the colonel who was an extreme careerist — so much so that he lost the trust and respect of many of us who worked for him.*



From June 1990 - June 1991 I was a student at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas just outside of Kansas City. Selection to attend CGSC was considered a real plus for an officer, as we represented the Air Force to the Army’s upcoming leaders — they wanted to ensure we left a favorable impression as capable and intelligent. Because I was the only Air Force officer in my staff group of 14 majors (all the rest being Army, of course), I needed to speak on all things Air Force, not just tanker operations. This assignment forced me to learn more about my military branch, which helped make me an even more well-rounded Air Force officer.

This assignment was great in so many ways. I’ve always enjoyed learning, and this was an opportunity to study a wide variety of military history and national security topics as a full-time student for a year. The civilian and military professors at CGSC were outstanding and the resources and guest speakers available to us as students were tremendous. I also liked interacting with my talented and dedicated Army classmates, marveling at all they have to do to accomplish their challenging mission.

This year was also a time of change for the three of us (JoAnn, Justin, and me), as we merged as a family for the first time. Since we were scheduled to move at the end of our first six months of marriage, whenever consolidated everything we had while we were in Omaha — we still had two rental homes full of furniture and clothes. The move went well, with a lot of the credit going to Justin as he adapted to a new step-dad and a move

away from his friends in Omaha. *The absolute highlight of this assignment was JoAnn becoming pregnant with Emily.*



From June 1991 - May 1994 I was Assistant Operations Officer and, later, Operations Officer for the 344th Air Refueling Squadron at Seymour Johnson AFB, near Goldsboro, North Carolina. The 344th was one of two KC-10 squadrons in a huge composite wing that also included three F-15E fighter squadrons and an operational support squadron. I was back flying as a KC-10 instructor pilot, which was very rewarding in itself.

I also assumed my first major leadership role as the operations officer in the 344th — it was a huge step up. In that role I was second-in-command of the 200+ men and women of the squadron, and I oversaw all flying operations and aircrews. It was an enormous increase in responsibility, and I was honored to be selected by the wing commander to take on this job.

During my time as operations officer, I deployed with our Seymour Johnson KC-10s to Al Dhafra Air Base near Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for close to two months in the summer of 1993. While deployed, we supported Operation Southern Watch operations by air refueling Air Force and Navy fighters and E-3 Airborne Warning and Control (AWACS) aircraft patrolling the no-fly zone over Iraq. I also performed as squadron commander for three months while my boss was in the UAE in the fall of 1993.

My tour as operations officer, which included directing flying operations in the UAE and acting as squadron commander when my boss was deployed,

was an exciting highlight of my career. I had the amazing opportunity to mentor and lead the wonderful men and women under my charge. I also had the very good fortune of being promoted to lieutenant colonel during this tour.

Emily was born in July 1991, shortly after we arrived in North Carolina. Emily's miracle birth, along with my marriage to JoAnn and gaining Justin as my bonus son, are the two highlights of my entire life. Nothing can compare to those events. This is also where I confronted the married captain about his inappropriate behavior with the female airmen while deployed to the UAE.



From May 1994 - July 1995 I was Commander of the 6th Air Refueling Squadron (6 ARS) at March AFB, near Riverside, California. The 6 ARS was one of two flying squadrons (the other being my old 9th Air Refueling Squadron) in the 722d Air Refueling Wing (722 ARW). Becoming a squadron commander is the goal of nearly all flying officers in the Air Force — it represents a career achievement for those of us fortunate enough to be given a command. I was indeed very privileged Air Mobility Command chose me as commander of the 6 ARS.

In this role, I commanded a KC-10 unit, and this was the only time the Air Force ever assigned me to a location where I had lived before. I was one of the first pilots assigned to KC-10s at March in 1982 when we started the 9 ARS, and in my role as commander, I would be shutting down the 6 ARS as the unit moved from March to Travis AFB in Northern California.

The squadron move occurred because the Air Force was downsizing and consolidating. March was closing as an active duty base due to congressional Base Realignment and Closure decisions; however, March remains open as an Air Force Reserve base even today.

There's nothing like being an Air Force squadron commander; I enjoyed it immensely. I had the chance to lead an amazing group of 200+ officers (mostly pilots), noncommissioned officers, and airmen. I also had excellent commanders above me who allowed me the freedom to lead my squadron how I felt best. I could use the experience I gained over my previous 16 years to help develop my officers and airmen individually and forge them into a high-performing team without excessive influence from above.

During my tenure, I deployed with my squadron to both Zimbabwe (for a short tenure in support of the Rwandan relief effort) and the UAE (for a four-month deployment, I was in command of the 4413th Air Refueling Squadron (Provisional) supporting Operation Southern Watch). The Southern Watch deployment was to Al Dhafra Air Base, the same location I had gone to a year-and-a-half earlier. Both deployments were very successful and highly rewarding, although the UAE deployment was more challenging this time around because of its length and the fact my troops and I were all facing family moves to other locations once we arrived back home to California — this weighed on all our minds.

I am proud to say the highly deserving and talented men and women of my squadron won several awards while I was in command. My maintenance section, which was more than half my squadron, won the Maintenance Effectiveness Award for being the “Best Large Aircraft Maintenance Unit” in the entire Air Force. Wow, that still blows me away — what a remarkable team of airmen I had the pleasure to lead. The 722 ARW also nominated my squadron to compete for the Spaatz Trophy as the best tanker squadron in the Air Force. I was also honored that the wing commander chose me as the 722 ARW nominee for the Air Force's Lance P. Sijan Award for outstanding leadership.

It was during this assignment when I had my one-way “shape up now” meeting with my squadron leadership. It's also when we had the

sexual harassment incident with my executive officer and the yellow stripe painted on the back of one of my NCOs. Those two incidents happened while we were deployed to the UAE.



From July 1995 - June 1996 I was once again a student, this time at the Air War College (AWC) at Maxwell AFB, near Montgomery, Alabama. AWC is the senior professional military education school of the Air Force. The one-year course emphasizes the employment of air, space, and cyberspace in joint operations, with a focus on higher-level national security topics. AWC is intended for colonels and those lieutenant colonels seen as having great potential to be promoted to colonel. Officers from all four military services, career civil servants, and foreign military officers were all in attendance.

This was a fun year. After the around-the-clock stress associated with squadron command, it was a welcome relief to be part of a 12-officer seminar where I was simply responsible for participating in class, passing tests, and doing my required homework. I found the coursework fascinating, the professors extremely knowledgeable, and our class discussions lively and entertaining. The highlight of the school year was when we all travelled to different regions of the world as part of a two-week focused study where we interacted with our military and civilian counterparts in foreign countries. For this, we divided into nine groups — I was a part of the South America seminar, where we traveled to Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. The trip turned out to be fantastic — I enjoyed it immensely.

After returning, all of us wrote our dissertations on topics associated with our regional travel. My dissertation (“Free Trade in the Americas: Regional Trade Agreements as National Security Policy”) dealt with the importance of trade agreements from a national security perspective. Trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are often judged by the economic benefits they provide. I argued the national security benefits were just as great, since trade agreements enhance cooperation and increase stability for all participants. I was surprised and honored when the AWC faculty chose my dissertation as a finalist to compete for the 1996 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff National Defense and Military Strategic Essay Award. I hadn’t envisioned myself as a distinguished scholar or author until that point.



From June 1996 - July 1998 I served as a Strategic Planner within the Directorate for Plans and Policy at the United States Atlantic Command (USACOM) in Norfolk, Virginia. While the overall commander of USACOM was a four-star Navy admiral, a two-star Air Force general led the plans directorate. USACOM was a joint service command responsible for the wartime control of all U.S. forces operating in the Atlantic and Caribbean region. It was a holdover from the Cold War days when we needed to be prepared to fight a major war against the Soviets where the Atlantic Theater would be a major focus for our naval forces.

Since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, though, Atlantic Command had focused primarily on the Caribbean with an emphasis on containing Cuba,

dealing with unstable countries (such as Haiti), and preventing the flow of drugs into the U.S. from South America. When I arrived in 1996, USACOM was beginning a transformation into United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM). USJFCOM had a much larger role, controlling US-based military forces under a single joint commander. While it wasn't intended to have a specific combat mission, USJFCOM would be responsible for training and coordinating the deployment of all joint forces in support of the regional wartime commanders in Europe, the Pacific, the Middle East, South America, Africa, etc.

A primary purpose of my job was to help our admirals and generals develop a vision for the command as it moved into its new role. I worked with a talented team of Army, Marine, and Naval officers to make this happen (I was the only Air Force officer on the team and, hence, they looked to me for "the Air Force perspective"). It was fascinating to see the interplay between the four military services and the senior officers as they gave their perspectives and negotiated among themselves.

I also participated in some fascinating classified tabletop exercises involving information operations. These exercises were sophisticated for the time, but I'm certain they'd be considered rather primitive now (20+ years later). While I was only in this assignment for two years before the Air Force promoted me to colonel and pulled me back into the Air Force, I very much appreciate my wonderful friends at Atlantic Command and all I learned from my military comrades there.



From July 1998 - June 1999 I served as Deputy Commander for the 319th Operations Group within the 319th Air Refueling Wing at Grand Forks AFB in North Dakota. The 319th was one of three massive KC-135 tanker wings in the Air Force, and its operations group contained four fully manned squadrons of KC-135s and an operational support squadron — this was a result of the same Air Force-wide force structure consolidation that caused my old squadron at March AFB to move in 1995. I took a short requalification course in the KC-135 and joined the 319th in July 1998.

The KC-135 had changed a lot since I last flew it in 1982. The most notable difference was the new, much more powerful CFM-56 engines with twice as much thrust as the water-injection engines from years earlier. This allowed for larger fuel loads and operations from shorter runways. This difference was so significant, the re-engined KC-135s were re-designated KC-135R (as opposed to the original KC-135A model).

I enjoyed this assignment a lot. I was back in flying operations after three years away and, most especially, I was in a large Air Force wing focused on tanker operations. It was refreshing to be part of a team that wasn't considered an adjunct to B-52s or F-15Es. I saw some of this at March AFB in the 722d, but the 319th was much bigger and, as a result, carried a lot more weight. We also were very busy.

Between Saddam Hussein rattling his sword (where we would need to deploy/respond) and what turned out to be a major, months-long deployment to European air bases in support of the 1998-99 Kosovo War, we seemed to always be meeting ourselves coming and going. On many of those occasions where we needed to generate crews and aircraft for short-notice deployment, I filled the role as group commander when my boss was not on station or busy with other duties.

It was a high-stress operational environment. We often accomplished our mission in freezing cold and blizzard-like conditions. I learned a great deal, though. The dedicated and talented men and women of the 319th were ultimately very successful. I'm proud of them and honored to have served as their deputy commander (and sometimes acting commander).



From June 1999 - July 2001 I served as Commander of the 19th Air Refueling Group (ARG) at Robins AFB, outside Warner Robins, Georgia. While every one of my military assignments was enjoyable and special in their own way, this was the best and most rewarding job I ever had in the Air Force, along with my squadron command. The 19 ARG had 500+ personnel and was composed of four separate squadrons: the 99th Air Refueling Squadron (KC-135 aircrews), the 19th Aircraft Generation Squadron (KC-135 maintenance), the 19th Operations Support Squadron (intelligence, planning, standardization/evaluation, inspector general, and other support functions tied to KC-135 flying operations), and the 19th Maintenance Squadron (C-5 and C-141 depot maintenance at the air logistics complex on base).

I loved being the 19th commander. The men and women of the 19th were absolutely the best part, and the independent structure of this command lent to it being especially challenging and enjoyable. I was in charge of the only separate tanker group in the Air Force — meaning I didn't have a wing commander on base. My boss was a two- or three-star general at McGuire AFB in New Jersey, who had enormous responsibilities beyond my group. This meant I had more freedom to do what I felt was important. Without a senior officer in my chain-of-command above me on base, though, I was also held solely responsible for the success or failure of my group. This was exactly how I wanted it.

There were numerous challenges throughout my two years of group command, but I don't want to leave the impression being commander of the 19th was a burden, or I considered it unreasonably difficult — it

wasn't, and I didn't. I had plenty of help from my outstanding squadron commanders and my superb staff. We managed to navigate through all of this and received tremendous recognition as well. During my tour as commander, in addition to being awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award and the Spaatz Trophy twice, I was proud I could get recognition for the outstanding leadership displayed by several of my squadron commanders — they each did just an excellent job for me, their squadrons, and my group. I was also able to convince my boss many of my amazing noncommissioned officers and junior enlisted standouts deserved early promotions and other types of acknowledgement. This success in gaining recognition for my people was one of the most rewarding parts of my job.

This was where these leadership challenges I identified earlier occurred: *the shaming of a senior master sergeant who stuttered, the refusal of a young lieutenant to wear a flight suit for religious reasons, the general-officer investigation for integrity issues regarding promotion recommendation forms, the temporary misplacement of a top secret document, the firing of a squadron commander for disobeying a direct order, my recommendation to court-martial a chief master sergeant, and the time I stood up for my two officers who were being scapegoated for an incident that happened in Hawaii. It was also when I trusted the Universe to get me the next assignment I wanted.*



From July 2001- July 2004 I was the Chief of the Programs and Mobility Division within the Logistics and Security Assistance Directorate of

the United States European Command (USEUCOM) in Stuttgart, Germany. In this position I was responsible for all joint supply and transportation processes, plans, and programs that involved cooperation between the three major military services stationed in Europe: Army, Air Force, and Navy. There was only a tiny Marine presence in Europe, so they were represented by their Navy counterparts.

I had a staff of 20 experienced and talented officers and government civilians who worked for me as we tirelessly strove to improve the “en route” mobility infrastructure (typically airfields) and supply chain processes requiring multi-service cooperation within Europe. In addition to running the day-to-day operations for the division and providing an overarching vision to my staff, I collaborated with my Air Force, Army, and Navy counterparts to make things better for our soldiers, airmen, and sailors in Europe.

Of all the jobs I held during my Air Force career, I probably had the most system-wide impact in this position. I’m glad I held the position for three years, because it took that long to make progress in many areas. I found I had to wait out the retirement or transfer of some older, rather hidebound colonels I had to deal with to initiate necessary changes to make progress. In the end, I accomplished more during my last year than my first two years combined. It wasn’t because I was working any harder. It was because I could cooperate with my new Army counterparts more effectively.

My staff and I had been working on a multitude of issues and plans that began to come to fruition near the end of my first two years. Because of our preparation, we were able to institute many of the process changes necessary to dramatically improve the speed and reduce the cost of transporting and delivering supplies to all our military locations throughout Europe. What made this even more impressive is that we accomplished all of this against the backdrop of the 9/11 attack and our subsequent supporting efforts for the War in Afghanistan (starting in October 2001) and Iraq War (which began ramping up in 2002).

Near the end of my tour, I was fortunate to be invited as one of the keynote speakers at the annual National Defense Transportation Association

gathering in Germany. I felt very honored since I was the only presenter who was not a career military transportation officer. One of the most satisfying compliments I received during my European tour was when two Air Force senior NCOs came up to me at the conclusion of my three-year chairmanship of the quarterly European Theater Distribution Conference. I had worked closely with them the entire time I had been chairman. I was in my Air Force blue uniform that day. Typically, I wore my BDU camouflaged uniform, which was identical for all four military Services. The NCOs both expressed great surprise I was an Air Force officer. I worked very hard my entire tour to create an atmosphere of fairness and impartiality by not favoring the Air Force, the Army, or the Navy. The NCOs' reactions to finding out I was an Air Force officer, combined with our mutual successes over the three years I had been there, told me I had succeeded.



From July 2004 - June 2005 I was, once again, a student. This time, both JoAnn and I took the intense Basic French course at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) at the Presidio of Monterey in California. They sent me there to prepare for my follow-on assignment working with Belgian and Luxembourg senior military officers as a section chief supporting the U.S. ambassadors to Belgium and Luxembourg. In my new capacity, they deemed it essential that I learn French, which I wholeheartedly accepted. Because we, as a couple, had a representational role in Belgium, JoAnn

could take the French course with me; consequently, we studied together and sat next to each other in class.

This was a fun assignment, and I loved living in Carmel, right next to the Bay Area where I grew up. The school was intense, with more written, oral, and listening examinations than any other course of study I've ever taken. Each day we would have about seven hours of class, with endless examinations of one type or another mixed in throughout the week. It was constant. Some exams were relatively small quizzes while many were major tests. And they all were graded, and they all had to be passed, which was a major contributor to the small 50 percent(!) graduation rate of our class.

Fifty percent was an about average success rate for DLI. The entire experience was numbing and the proliferation of tests contributed to the sense of always being under the gun — this feeling was especially pointed since I was the senior ranking officer at the school and the absolute last thing I wanted to do was report to my new boss (the American Ambassador to Belgium) and have to tell him I flunked French. JoAnn went through the entire course with me, including all the exams. In the end, both of us successfully graduated and I'm grateful I had the chance to learn this fascinating new language.



From July 2005 - August 2007, my last assignment in the Air Force, I worked directly for the U.S. Ambassador to Belgium as his Chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) at the American Embassy in

Brussels. I also worked for the U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg; although that role took up much less of my time, as Luxembourg only had a couple of small American facilities on their soil and supported an army of 1,000 (though they did use mostly American equipment). I had a small team of officers, American civilian employees, and Belgian nationals working for me in my capacity as section chief.

I received this assignment because the general who made it was the same person I reported to in my previous job at USEUCOM. When I found out the ODC Chief job in Belgium was coming open, I expressed an interest. My boss liked the job I was doing and had confidence in my ability to reinvent myself in this entirely new role. JoAnn, Emily, and I were interested in remaining in Europe and we looked forward to the exciting adventures we would have in this new location. We enjoyed it thoroughly. I loved the job, which not only required me to engage with high-ranking Belgian military officers, but also offered me the opportunity to work with Belgian government officials and Belgian defense industry representatives.

Additionally, NATO headquarters, an enormous organization, is in Brussels. As a result, I had the chance to connect with the many American defense industry representatives located there during my assignment. These connections would help me considerably as I began my search for a job following my 30-year military career. During my two-year tour, I organized a forum for all the Belgium-based American defense representatives, I chaired a panel on defense industry cooperation at our EUCOM-wide security assistance conference, and I facilitated the establishment of strong bonds between our U.S. ambassador and defense industry representatives in Brussels. What I'm most proud of, though, was my direct intervention between the USAF and Belgian Air Force to successfully negotiate the targeting pod contract I described earlier.

One of the aspects of my job in Belgium I found fascinating was the requirement to entertain senior Belgian officials and other officers I worked with. We would do this at our home just outside of Brussels — I even had a small and tightly controlled budget for that sort of thing. It was a real pleasure for JoAnn and me to get to know them and their spouses outside

of official channels. It was particularly fun for us to gain an understanding of the “European way” of entertaining, which tends to be much more formalized, with distinct protocols associated with it. We also used this opportunity to introduce the Belgians to some of our American customs, such as when we held a traditional American Thanksgiving dinner for them.

A favorite memory of mine was Valentine’s Day in 2007, when we hosted numerous generals and admirals and their spouses at our house for dinner. Afterwards, in the spirit of the holiday, we played a G-rated version of The Newlywed Game, wherein we separated the men and women and asked them questions about their spouses. We then gathered back together in our living room and asked their spouses the same questions to see how each of them thought the other one had responded.

To set the stage, Valentine’s Day in Belgium is considered a private affair between a couple — certainly not an occasion for gathering to play a game about their relationships, so this was something radically different for everyone involved. Despite this extraordinary departure from what typically were rather scripted social events, the Belgians loved the game. They thought it was hilarious, especially because it gave them an opportunity to connect with other Belgian couples they may not have known well to begin with. While I don’t remember anything monumental coming out of this or any other social events we hosted, JoAnn and I were very pleased to make such wonderful Belgian friends and to provide some fun for everyone involved. *This was when we bought our home in San Diego before I even had a firm job offer—another act of trust.*

Post-Air Force Timeline

From August 2007 to October 2015 I worked at Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) as a Senior Program Manager. I started my job search while I was finishing my tour in Belgium, going on a job-hunting trip to San Diego and Southern California in April 2007. While I was in San Diego, I made some excellent contacts at SAIC and other companies in the area. In July, SAIC offered me a position, whereas other companies

indicated they were on the verge, but nothing firm materialized. Being a big believer in “bird in the hand,” I gratefully accepted the SAIC position and joined the company. I have been with SAIC or its renamed successor Leidos for the last 10+ years.

For my first six years at SAIC, I was the Program Director for the complex and classified Common User Application Software (CUAS) application — a key component of the Department of Defense Electronic Key Management System (EKMS). EKMS is the system by which classified and unclassified messages are sent securely to combat units throughout the military. As the program manager, I had a team of 20+ system engineers, software developers, test engineers, and technical writers working to produce updated versions of CUAS created to address software vulnerabilities and to take advantage of new equipment and satellite-based delivery systems.

It was a whole new world for me, as I was not a software person by any stretch of the imagination when I left the Air Force. Fortunately, as always, I worked with some smart, patient people who brought me along to where I became familiar with the technical aspects of the program. I also benefitted from the 2009 passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which provided tuition for veterans who wanted to go to school after leaving the military. That fall, I jumped right on this opportunity.

Over the next four years I earned an Associate’s degree in Computer and Information Science from Mesa College (one of the San Diego Community Colleges) and a certificate of proficiency in Project Management from the University of California San Diego. This two-year degree helped provide me with some academic basics I needed to know so I could converse intelligently with my team and with our military customers about computers and software development. The PM certificate, along with experience I gathered at work, helped me gain the knowledge to become certified as a Project Management Professional (PMP).

Largely because of success with the CUAS program, I was promoted to San Diego Site Lead for our division in June 2013, shortly before the company split in two. I went with the portion of SAIC that changed its name

to Leidos Corporation. In 2015, I voluntarily transitioned to a consulting employee role at Leidos and began looking seriously at becoming an author.

I am grateful to SAIC/Leidos for taking a big chance on a 52-year-old Air Force colonel with no software engineering experience. One of the many things that attracted me to this company was the way it emphasized quality and integrity, which I have found to be true throughout the organization all this time. I also very much enjoyed working with my dedicated, hard-working, and talented colleagues at SAIC/Leidos. *This was where I had to trust my Leidos boss and the Universe as JoAnn and I moved into a new chapter of semi-retirement in 2015.*



From October 2015 to now I've been a consulting employee for Leidos, working on a part-time basis on proposal activities aimed at our government customers. My wife and I have moved from San Diego to Maui to Seattle and back to San Diego, enjoying the opportunity to see our children and grandchildren and the freedom being able to work remotely brings with it. I am now embarking on this new career as an author and speaker, and have even established my own company, "Aim Point LLC" in support of that. I have placed my trust in the Universe as I have done so many times before.

Appendix B

Air Force Ranks and Abbreviations



U.S. Air Force officer rank depiction (justom.hubpages.com)

The Air Force is a world unto itself with its own language, structure, and culture. While I’ve tried to make things understandable throughout the book, it may not be easy to decipher for those who aren’t former servicemembers or military enthusiasts. This appendix is a compilation of useful information regarding the Air Force officer rank structure the reader might find useful.

Officer Rank Structure

Rank	Abbreviation	Typical years of Service	Comments
Cadet	None	4 years before commission	See Note 1
Second Lieutenant	2nd Lt (O-1)	0-2 years of service	
First Lieutenant	1st Lt (O-2)	2-4 years of service	Promotion rate 100% qualified
Captain	Capt (O-3)	4-10 years of service	Promotion rate 100% qualified
Major	Maj (O-4)	10-24 years (maximum)	See Note 2
Lieutenant Colonel	Lt Col (O-5)	15-28 years (maximum)	See Note 3
Colonel	Col (O-6)	20-30 years (maximum)	See Note 4
General Officer	O-7 to O-10		See Note 5

APPENDIX B: AIR FORCE RANKS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Note 1: Cadets become officers through the Air Force Academy (4 intense years) or Air Force Reserve Officer Training (2, 3, or 4 years concurrent with attending a civilian college). A few officer candidates go through 90-day Officer Training School (OTS). My brother Kevin was an Air Force OTS graduate in 1984. Except in times where the military is expanding rapidly (as during the Reagan buildup in the 1980s), OTS officers are typically former enlisted members or have special technical skills needed by the Air Force.

Note 2: Major is the first promotion that is considered competitive. While the promotion rate for those who meet the board is 85-90 percent, only around 50 percent of the officers commissioned 10 years prior to the board become majors. The difference between these two numbers is that some officers willingly leave the Air Force before coming up for promotion (usually they see better opportunities outside the Air Force). There is also a small number of officers who are asked to leave because of force reduction or substandard performance. Majors typically retire at 20 years, which is the minimum amount of time served to qualify for a small annual pension. Regulations require majors to retire by 24 years of officer service.

Note 3: Lieutenant colonel is the first promotion seen as highly competitive. The promotion rate for those who meet the board is approximately 75 percent. At this point, everyone meeting the board is an accomplished career officer. Only around 33 percent of the officers commissioned as second lieutenants many years before are promoted to Lt Col. Lieutenant colonels typically retire at 20-24 years. They must retire by 28 years of officer service.

Note 4: Promotion to colonel is a combination of dedication, skill, and good fortune. The promotion rate for those who meet the board is approximately 33 percent and everyone meeting the board is a highly accomplished career officer. This means around 10 percent of the officers commissioned as second lieutenants 20+ years before achieve the rank of colonel. The quality of those who compete for promotion is stiff — there are lots of lieutenant colonels who aren't selected for promotion who would

clearly make outstanding colonels. Colonels typically retire at 26-30 years and are required to retire by 30 years.

Note 5: There are four general officer ranks in the Air Force: Brigadier General (Brig Gen or O-7); Major General (Maj Gen or O-8); Lieutenant General (Lt Gen or O-9), and General (Gen or O-10). It is ridiculously competitive to get promoted to general officer — only one-half of one percent of the officers in the Air Force are generals of any grade. Brigadier Generals need to retire by 30 years. Higher-ranking generals must retire by 35 years; however, extensions are routinely made for 3- and 4-star generals depending on the positions to which they are assigned.

Appendix C

Eulogy for My Father



Mom and Dad in 1966. They were devoted to each other through 54 years of marriage.

I talk about my father and his impact on my life throughout this book. I believe I best expressed my feelings toward Dad in the eulogy I gave at his funeral in Austin, Texas and his memorial service in Los Altos, California in 1995. He died at age 75 after a three-year battle with prostate cancer. I focused many of my remarks on his military service, as this was a profound connection we had — I was a lieutenant colonel squadron commander at March AFB when he died. My oldest brother, Dave, also eulogized my

father, focusing on other aspects of his life. Both of us talked about our love for Dad in his role as our father. Here's what I said:

“It is my great honor to pay tribute to a man who was more beloved and more respected than any man I have ever known. While my father was many wonderful things to me and to all of us who loved him, it is my privilege to represent two very important parts of his life: his service to his country as a dedicated Air Force pilot and officer, and his devotion to his family as a loving father and husband.

“To know my father is to understand the deep patriotism he held as one of his strongest beliefs. While my father would never brag about any of his accomplishments (we always had to drag “war stories” out of him), he was very proud of his career as an Air Force officer. It began in early 1941 as an aviation cadet, leading to pilot wings and a commission as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps on September 26th of that year. It was on that same day he married my mother, over 53 years ago. My father was on a troopship headed toward the Philippines when World War II broke out in the Pacific. Diverted to the South Pacific, he fought courageously as a C-47 pilot during the dark days of 1942 and 1943.

“Returning to the United States in 1943, he became commander of the newly formed 314th Troop Carrier Squadron — a very demanding and rewarding position which I believe was the highlight of his military career. He finished his active duty career in late 1945 with the rank of lieutenant colonel — an astounding achievement, even during wartime, for one who was a mere 26-years-old.

“My father continued his Air Force career in the reserves, retiring in 1963 as a brigadier general, a rank only earned by a fraction of one percent of all officers who enter military service. As a combat pilot, he was highly decorated for courage, being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross three times and the Air Medal on four occasions. Rank and medals, as impressive as they might be, only tell part of the story. Far more important are the wonderful friendships he and my mother made that have lasted over 50 years. As an Air Force commander, at times the most one can hope for

APPENDIX C: EULOGY FOR MY FATHER

is respectful obedience. It speaks volumes about my father that he is so beloved by those serving with him during those difficult years.

“As a parent, my father taught me more than I can ever repay, not that he ever expected anything in return:

He taught me the joy of unconditional friendship and love.

He taught me to trust in the future and never give up hope.

He taught me to never surrender and ‘don’t let the bastards get you down.’

He taught me to believe in myself and reach for the sky.

He taught me to never let my airspeed get too low and that if an approach doesn’t look good, take the aircraft around — there will always be another chance.

He taught me to ‘always keep my options open.’

He taught me not to judge a person on race, religion, sex, or nationality, but only on the character of the individual.

Finally, he gave me the greatest gift a father could ever give a son — he taught me what being a man was all about

“My wife, JoAnn, says it was an honor to know my father. To have him as my dad makes me feel I have been given the greatest blessing a man could hope for. On behalf of my mother, my brothers, and my sister, I want to say ‘We love you, Dad. We miss you very much, but we know you are at peace and with the Lord. We pray we will join you in heaven someday because that is where you surely are.’

“Thank you.”

Appendix D

Eulogy for My Mother



Mom in the Philippines in 1952. She already had two small children and three more were to come.

My mother died peacefully in early December 2002 as she slept. My relationship with my mother is complicated. Her alcoholism profoundly affects my memories of her. yet, she was so much more than that. As with my father, my brother Dave and I both gave eulogies at her funeral in Austin, Texas in 2002. I believe the eulogy I gave sums up my love for Mom and does a good job of describing her loving qualities. I was a colonel stationed at United States European Command in Stuttgart, Germany at the time:

“Good morning. It is my great privilege to stand here this morning and tell you about my mother, Ann Cornell Hurd.

“My mother would want all of us to be happy — you all know that. That’s the way she was. So, I’m going to start out with a joke.

“In a recent poll about things people fear, death came in second place. Number one was public speaking. Which means many of you would rather be my mother right now, lying in her casket, rather than me standing in front of you talking about her.

“How do I describe my Mom? Many words and feelings come to mind. She was giving to all: family and friends, young and old, those she has known her whole life and those she has just met. Her giving was all without obligation and she was one of the most generous people I’ve ever known.

“Along with this, my mother was a very trusting soul. Her motives were always honest, and she naturally expected others to treat her the same way. This was one of her great strengths. She kept her positive and trusting attitude toward others throughout her entire life, sometimes despite evidence to the contrary.

“My mother was intelligent and curious. A professional teacher with a master’s degree in special education, she was always an avid reader and could speak on a wide variety of subjects. Even during her last few years when she was not mobile and didn’t get out much, she still followed world events and the San Francisco Giants in the World Series with equal enthusiasm.

“My mother was adventurous. How else would you describe a Fort Dodge girl who followed her husband to post-war Manila in the Philippines, full of shortages and short on comfort, and love it? She travelled extensively with my father and made close friends throughout the world.

“My mother was a collector of things. Plates, Lladros, Disney figurines, Zolan paintings, you name it, she collected it. For those of you who have looked in her garage on Windmill Road or saw the small storage building my Dad constructed next to the house in Los Altos, you know what I’m talking about. I’m sure the Franklin Mint Collectibles Exchange and numerous dealers throughout the United States are in mourning at my mother’s passing, as are we. In all seriousness, her penchant for collecting speaks to my mother’s great enthusiasm and joy for life, which I will talk about in a minute.

“I believe, above all else, my mother wanted to love and be loved. It showed abundantly in how she would instantly bond with children whether she knew them previously or not. It showed in how she would always welcome our friends with open arms. It didn’t matter whether it was a pal at grade school or an Air Force buddy, she always made them feel like family. My mother’s abundant love showed clearly in how she treated the five of us as unique and very important individuals. Most of all, my mother showed her love in her wonderful relationship with my father. He was her heart’s desire from the day they met through their 54 years of marriage and beyond. And the truly beautiful thing about their love for each other was that my father shared her feelings every bit.

“To talk about my Mom, we have to center on my Dad — the two of them shared a very deep and powerful love for each other. As with every great love, their relationship was complex at times. Because Dad was such a profound success, Mom often found herself living in his shadow and, while she adored him, I believe there was some envy there.

“The truth is that while Dad was the leader of our family, our strength, and our foundation, my mother was our heart. From my mother, we learned to express ourselves. We learned to laugh freely and give each other great big hugs. From her, we learned the great joy of having our friends over for a party. Whether it was a birthday party or a Little League celebration, a drama club get-together or a ‘Bruce is home on leave’ party, she made hundreds of events, big and small alike, very special.

“Her warmth and love and friendship drew people to our home like a magnet. Neighborhood friends would invariably come to our house to play and my mother loved it. She didn’t care we wore a big bald spot in the lawn where home plate was — she just wanted us to be happy.

“My mother and father together taught the five of us the value of honesty, working to achieve our goals, and loving one another. And while my father was the strong and sturdy rock upon which our family was built, my mother was the unbridled, unquestioning spirit of love and joy which allowed each of us to go many places, do many things, knowing whatever happened, we always had a home to come back to where we would find a

APPENDIX D: EULOGY FOR MY MOTHER

joyous welcome as if we were the most important person in the world. And when you were with my mother, to her you were the most important person in the world.

“While we all dearly love my mother and we’ll miss her tremendously, today is a time for celebration. We celebrate my mother’s love for all of us and our love for her. We celebrate all the many gifts, both real and spiritual, that she gave us. And, above all else, we celebrate her great joy, for she has been reunited with the one, greatest love of her life. As sure as I stand before you, I know that the first face my mother saw, the first voice she heard as she passed peacefully into the next life on two strong legs free of pain, was from a handsome man who welcomed her with his big smile and open arms. And as they joyfully embraced, he said to her ‘Hello, Ann, my love. Welcome to heaven. I’ve been waiting for you.’”