

CHAPTER XI - BARBERS POINT, HAWAII

When I checked in to VR-21, the personnel office advised me that the squadron had a detachment on Midway Island and everyone in the squadron was obligated to spend three months with the detachment. I was also told that as a “brown bagger,” it would be better for me to meet my Midway Island obligation before my family followed me to Hawaii rather than after. With my Midway Island obligation behind me I could be with my family for their entire stay in Hawaii. The term “Brown bagger” is what sailors call other sailors, who are living, with their families, because most married sailors carry their lunch to work in a brown paper bag rather than eat in the mess hall. This entitles them to a special allowance called community rations

The best estimate for Margaret Ann and Patti’s arrival in Hawaii was about four months. Four months would give me enough time to get our names on the waiting list for Navy Housing and to fill my three month Midway obligation. Hawaii, and later Midway Island, turned out to be miserable for a man without his family. I killed much of my free time by going to all the movies at the Base Theater. The movies were affordable. Admission was only a dime. After the movies I would drop by the Petty Officers Club and have a few mixed drinks. During happy hour mixed drinks were also a dime. I would drown my misery on dime drinks and then walk off the effects of the alcohol. I was a good walker in my younger days. One night I took off, trying to walk away my loneliness, and I wound up on the outskirts of Honolulu. The bright lights of Honolulu seemed to beckon the lonely part of me, but to me these people only seemed to make my loneliness worse. The only people that could relieve my loneliness were Margaret Ann and Patti. I turned around and walked back to the base.

LIFE ON MIDWAY

The Navy finally flew me out to Midway Island to serve my ninety day obligation. One of the first things I discovered was that Midway Island is actually three islands. The largest of the three is Sand Island. It is made up of approximately 1,200 acres of coral. It is said that a good golfer could hit a golf ball across it at its widest part. The second largest of the three islands is Eastern Island. It is about 2 miles east of Sand Island. It is approximately ¼th the size of its larger neighbor. About half way between the two larger islands is a tiny 6 acre hunk of land called Spit Island.

Midway Island was used as a fuel stopover to service airplanes that didn’t have the range to make it all the way from Japan or the Philippines to Hawaii. Not long after I arrived in Hawaii, the Navy saw fit to promote me to Petty Officer Second Class. As a such, I was senior to everyone else in my section. Because of this I was designated Crew Chief for my work section.

The VR-5 Detachment at Midway was an all male society headed up by a young Lieutenant and assisted by an even younger Ensign. Under them there were about twenty enlisted men with absolutely nothing to do, except routine housekeeping, unless an airplane happened to land there and needed refueling. Visiting aircraft were rare and when one did happen to visit, the entire island went to the air terminal in the off chance of seeing something feminine. When my crew had the duty, my four designated drivers would position the two fuel trucks, one oil truck and the utility truck around the visiting airplane. Two hose men would climb up on the wings and begin fueling the airplane. The rest of the crew would oil the plane, tidy up the interior and empty the honey buckets. I would assume the task of cleaning the interior of the plane. I enjoyed this because there were always newspapers and magazines lying about that could easily be mistaken for trash. Girlie magazines were always mistaken for trash.

I would take these newspapers and magazines to our “line shack.” The line shack was where we hung out, when it was our turn to service incoming aircraft. Usually there wasn’t anything to do except for reading or playing “penny ante poker.” “Cheat poker” would have been a better name for our little game. The ante was kept down to one mill, or a tenth of a penny. That way no one could get hurt financially. We had a box of white poker chips that were counted as mills. To break the monotony of endless hours of play, all forms of cheating were legal. There was only one penalty. If a player was caught cheating, he became ineligible to for that particular pot. The game was more of “Try and catch the cheater” than it was poker.

Everyone would usually go back to the barracks at about 10 P.M. One man would have to stay behind, in the line shack, just in case of an emergency. The only thing I hated about staying alone all night was when things got quiet the rats came out. Midway was heavily infested with rats. Some of the guys enjoyed rat hunting at the dump. They would borrow a 22 caliber rifle from the armory for an evening of rat hunting. The only rat hunting I did was when it was my turn to stay over at the line shack. I would gather up a bunch of empty soda cans, sit myself on top of the card table, and wait for them to come out. After things were very quiet for awhile, these nasty creatures would start scampering about. I would then try and hit them with my soda cans. I don’t believe I ever hit one.

PRACTICAL JOKER

We would try almost anything in an effort to pass the time and maintain our sanity. One of the more popular pastimes was the creation of elaborate practical jokes. One of the best practical jokes ever was pulled on a naive young sailor, not too long after his arrival at Midway. A long-time member of the detachment decided he would have some fun and find out just how gullible the naive newcomer really was. The seasoned resident told the newcomer that the Federal Bureau of Prisons had built a woman’s barracks on the nearby uninhabited Eastern Island to house women prisoners. He explained that because Midway Atoll was way out in the middle of the ocean, the Federal Prison System wasn’t worried about walls, guard towers or security fences. He went on to say that a lot of the VR-21 Detachment sailors make regular visits to Eastern Island and were always well received. The youngster bought the story, hook, line and sinker. He enlisted the help of another gullible newcomer, swiped a boat from Special Services and made a futile pilgrimage to Eastern Island. The following day everyone on Sand Island had a good laugh at the young sailors’ expense.

GOONEY BIRD

When I was on Midway, there were several signs posted on Sand Island proclaiming Midway Atoll to be a National Wildlife Refuge. I never saw a conservationist during my entire stay at Midway. I understand that since then they have become more active and have made great strides in restoring the atoll back to nature. Midway is indeed a national treasure. The large variety of bird life did much to preserve my sanity during my time at Midway.

The most interesting bird on Midway is the Laysan Albatross, better known as the Gooney Bird. The Gooney bird stands about two feet tall and has a wing span of over six feet. I’ve spent hours watching this magnificent bird. Most remarkable is the young when they are learning to take off and land. They are so big and cumbersome that they need a straight of way of at least a hundred yards in order to take off. They run their little hearts out, wings extended,

flapping all the way. Then, as often as not, for no apparent reason they give up. They fold their wings and go somersaulting head over heels before coming to an abrupt halt. They rest a bit and then try it all over again. Many of them use the lagoon for their long take off. Unfortunately, the sharks wait for them in ambush.

It didn't take long for me to learn to respect these beautiful creatures. They are inclined to peck if you get too close. One evening I went to the base movie and lost myself in the melodrama. For a couple of hours I forgot all about being on Midway. Walking out of the theatre, I passed between two gooneys and both of them pecked me at the same time. In their own way they had let me know that I was intruding in their world.

THE MOANING BIRD

Another fascinating bird on Midway was a bird that we called “the moaning bird.” This little bird lives in burrows all over the island. Their moan is eerie enough to really give you the creeps. Years later I found out their real name is Wedge Tailed Shearwater. I'm told that their eerie moans are part of their courtship ritual and also serve as an effective defense.

These were a few things that helped preserve my sanity. Nothing seemed to work for some of those suffering isolation out in the middle of the Pacific, however. Unable to cope any longer and unable to find any other means of transportation, one poor sailor was caught trying to swim his way back to Hawaii. They found another deranged sailor sitting in the middle of the garbage dump staring upwards into the torrential rain that was plastering his face.

I was ok until an administrative snafu caused my three month tour of duty to become a tour without end. Everyone sent to Midway, including me, had been sent to Midway on non per diem orders. Per Diem is an allowance paid to individuals who are serving away from their regular unit and entail hardships because of the assignment. The Navy Comptroller ruled that our non per diem orders were illegal and all future orders for temporary assignment to Midway had to be on per diem orders. The man scheduled to relieve me could not be issued per diem orders because there wasn't any money budgeted for per diem orders in our squadron. It looked as if I would remain on Midway until this issue could be settled.

WHO WILL MEET MARGARET ANN?

While this was going on, Margaret Ann, unaware of the snafu, had filed the required documents necessary for her travel to Hawaii, fully expecting me to be there when she arrived. The Military Air Transport Service had scheduled her and Patti on a flight 46 days after I was supposed to return to Hawaii. Only days before Margaret Ann's scheduled flight, I was still stuck on Midway with no relief in sight. To make matters worse, I had no way of contacting Margaret to advise her to cancel her flight.

On another issue, our parent squadron in Hawaii, had decided that the Midway Detachment wasn't doing its job properly. The powers to be decided to replace the Detachment Officer in Charge with a new one and create a Leading Chief Petty Officer billet to “square away” the enlisted men. The Chief was all spit and polish and made it clear that he expected us to follow his example. Things would be done his way or else.

Following Navy tradition, a full dress inspection was scheduled, to greet the new Officer in Charge. I requested that I be excused from the inspection because I didn't have any regulation shoes to wear. Some prankster had stolen my regulation shoes a few months earlier, and small stores didn't have any my size to replace them. I had no choice but to either go barefooted or wear shower shoes. The supply department at Midway wouldn't order replacement shoes for me because of my temporary status on the Island. Because of my unusual circumstance, I requested that I be excused from the inspection. My request was denied. I stood inspection in full dress uniform and shower shoes.

The real fun started when the next airplane came in for refueling. Our mission was to get them in and get them out. My crew met and serviced the airplane like the professionals that they were. The Chief was obviously impressed, but he made the mistake of asking one of my men if he had a Navy driver's license. After my man told him that he didn't, The Chief came over to me and chewed me out. He said that all drivers were required to have Navy drivers' licenses and that no one without a valid Navy license would be allowed to drive any of our service vehicles. He even threatened me with a Court Martial if I failed to enforce this demand. I tried to explain the impossibility of his orders, but he would hear none of it.

WE DO IT THE CHIEF'S WAY

A few hours later, a second transport landed anxious to refuel and be on its way. Rather than face another Court Martial, I decided to follow the Chief's orders to the letter. Since none of my crew had driver's licenses, except for me, I ordered my crew to go to the airplane, and I would bring them the equipment that they needed to service it. I had to make five trips to get all the necessary equipment to the airplane. Each trip entailed a hundred yard walk to the equipment parking area, followed by a hundred yard drive to the airplane. Then after the plane was serviced, I had to repeat the process, in reverse, to clear the equipment away from the aircraft. The Chief showed up just as I was about to move the last vehicle. The pilot was complaining about the delay to our Officer in Charge, and the Officer in Charge had passed the pilots scorn on to the Chief. The Chief let me know how unhappy he was with me and my crew's performance. I told the Chief that they had performed in an outstanding manner considering his ban on using unlicensed drivers. More words were said, most of them about my incompetence. I finally told him that in view of his impractical restrictions; I had handled the task as well as anyone in my position could. I went on to tell him that if he thought that he could do better, he was welcomed to try. He sputtered a bit and accepted the challenge. He relived me of my job and didn't bother assigning me with a new one.

The next day the Detachment Officer in Charge called for an all-hands meeting at the line shack. He gave the standard pep talk, saying what a privilege it was to be in command of a fine outfit such as we were. He went on with his rah-rah speech for about a half an hour and finished up by asking if anyone had any questions. Several sailors had questions about things long lost to my memory. After everyone else had their fill of questions and answers, I raised my hand and unloaded on him. I told him that my wife and daughter were arriving at Hickam AFB, Hawaii in a few short days, and she expected me to meet her there. I went on to tell him that I had completed my Midway obligation six weeks before his arrival, but I couldn't go back to Hawaii because I didn't have a relief. I then told him that because of a silly misunderstanding between me and the Chief, that I didn't even have a job. I concluded by asking him why I needed a relief when I didn't even have a job. The Officer in Charge responded by asking me to meet him outside after the meeting for a one on one talk. After a brief chat, he made a call to squadron headquarters and made arrangements for me to be on the next flight for Hawaii.

BACK IN HAWAII

I arrived back in Hawaii just a little over 24 hours before Margaret Ann and Patti landed there. Hawaii is a wonderful place, if you have money. Without money it can be a nightmare, however. We had to spend our first 30 days in an old enlisted man's barracks that had been sectioned off for emergency family housing. We wanted to stay longer, but 30 days was maximum allowable stay. We moved from the old barracks to the Army Rest Camp near Waianae. Our stay there was also limited to 30 days. From there we moved into a small house in Waianae. The rent was barely affordable. Besides, we had to live somewhere. Things seemed ok until we received our first electric bill. The bill was outrageously high. It was way beyond the scope of affordability. I checked the electric meter and it was whizzing around like crazy. I asked Margaret Ann to start unplugging things while I monitored the meter. One by one we shut off everything electrical throughout the entire house, but the meter was still spinning around like crazy. Next I started tracing wires and I discovered that the landlord had tapped into my meter. I confronted the landlord about his brazen larceny, and his attitude was if I wanted to stay there I would continue paying his electric bill.

I was lucky enough to run into another sailor who was transferring off the island shortly. His family was living in a Quonset hut in a small settlement called Makalualei. This small residential settlement was right next to a Navy communications station called Lualualei. There wasn't much at Lualualei that wasn't off limits to everyone except those who actually worked there. Lualualei had a nice cozy movie theatre that was open to dependants and admission was only a dime.

There wasn't a waiting list at Makalualei either. The lease at Makalualei was tied to the furniture. Whoever bought the furniture automatically assumed the lease. Life was beginning to look good again. Our Quonset hut was cozy, not too far from N.A.S. Barbers Point, and I was finally working in my career field again. We even had a banana tree next to our Quonset hut. The tree produced a fat stubby banana, and made fruit the year around. I tried to make a vegetable garden next to the hut but gave up after my first crop. The soil was fertile, but growing vegetables such as cabbage and lettuce were impossible. The outside of the vegetable would look beautifully healthy but the inside would be a rotten mess.

CHRISTMAS SHOCK

Margaret Ann bought me a Christmas present when we were living at Makalualei that gave me the scare of my life. She bought me an electric drill motor kit that contained a small assortment of drills, a rotary scrub brush and a buffing wheel. In order to show Margaret Ann how pleased I was with the gift that she surprised me with, I decided to use it to wash the car. I had a 50 foot extension cord that would reach the car with cord to spare. What I failed to notice was that the motor was turned off and on by a hard-to-reach toggle switch, and the motor had nothing even resembling a circuit breaker or a dead man's switch. I hosed and lathered my car down and started scrubbing it with my new found toy. Washing and waxing the car wasn't Margaret Ann's thing, so she brought out a lawn chair and was sitting there watching me work. Then, as quick as a wink, the extension cord managed to get itself wrapped around the drill motor shank. I was wet from hosing and scrubbing the car, and I was grounded about as well as I could possibly be. 120 volts were running through my body, and I couldn't let go of the damn thing. I couldn't find the off switch. I tried to tell Margaret Ann to unplug the cord from the wall socket, but I couldn't. Words wouldn't come out of my mouth. I was in sheer agony and

Margaret Ann thought I was clowning. As I dance on the end of a live wire, Margaret Ann sits there enjoying the show laughing herself silly. I finally managed to dance my way into the Quonset hut and pull the plug. I never used that infernal machine again.

MY BOUT WITH BOECK'S SARCOIDOSIS

I survived my shocking experience just fine, and everything was going good until the joints in my fingers began to bother me. It started out with the end joints of all my fingers on both hands feeling as if they were separating. It was very painful. This was soon followed by the next to the end joints feeling as if they were also separating. This painful separation feeling continued working its way up my arm. It got so bad that I couldn't even open my car door without help. Even after I made it into the car, steering it was extremely painful. I had it in my head that this was a temporary thing that I could work my way through. My supervisor decided differently for me however. He sent me out to one of our airplanes to remove a large wing panel. Normally this would have been a piece of cake, but the pain was too great and I asked him to reassign me until I could work my way through this mysterious malady. He said that if I couldn't complete the assignment that I should report to sick bay. I had no choice, I reported to sick bay. The doctor at sick bay sent me to Tripler Army Hospital. The preliminary diagnosis was rheumatoid arthritis. They also seemed to think it might be rheumatic fever. Whatever it was, if tests would cure it, I was in good hands. They ran all kinds of tests on me. They x-rayed my hands and my lungs, and had me taking penicillin, just in case something was infected. While I was on penicillin, they started me out a series of allergy test. Apparently I was allergic to something in one of the test because I broke out with a bad case of hives. This scared the hell out of them, so they issued a stop order for both the allergy test and the penicillin. They entered "possible allergy to penicillin" on my chart and warned me never to take penicillin again saying that it could kill me. They also did some blood work on me and had me logging my liquid intake and outflow. Still puzzled they put me under the knife and removed the lymph node near my right hand collar bone. They flew the lymph node to the Oakland Medical Hospital for evaluation. The Lab Technicians at Oakland immersed my node in gelatin. Then they sliced it into tiny slices and examined the slices under a microscope. The diagnosis that came back from Oakland was "Compatible with Boeck's Sarcoidosis." They explained to me that this disease was sort of like tuberculosis in that it is a respiratory ailment that hides in the lungs and strikes other parts of the body. Since that time, several other doctors have defined Boeck's Sarcoidosis for me and each of them describe it a bit differently so I content myself with what the first doctor was trying to explain to me.

In any case, I was enjoying my 15 minutes of fame. They put me in a wheel chair and wheeled me to the hospital auditorium where I was positioned next to the podium. The auditorium was packed with white coated doctors. One of the doctors then walked up to the podium and introduced himself and me to the audience. He then gave a lengthily talk about Boeck's Sarcoidosis and then asked the audience if there were any questions. There were none. There were none for the moment that is. I was then wheeled back to my bed where I was questioned and poked by doctors for the next several hours. As they crowded around me, none seemed satisfied until he managed to poke or squeeze some part of my anatomy. Once they got their feel, they step aside and make room for another doctor.

MARGARET ANN'S GRANDFATHER DIES

Not long after I was admitted to Tripler Army Hospital, Margaret Ann told me that her mother had called and told her that her grandfather Fahey was dying. She said that her Mom and Dad would pay for airline tickets for her and Patti if she would come home for a couple of weeks. Margaret Ann was reluctant to accept their offer because she didn't want to leave me friendless in the hospital with no one to visit me. I told her to go on home that I had made a few friends on the hospital ward, and I would be fine.

One of my new hospital buddies was an old guy called "Papa" Grey. Papa Grey had the bed right next to mine. He had painted for the Navy for several years and was in the process of dying from lead poisoning. The poor old guy's hands were all twisted so bad that he couldn't hold anything. Once a month his wife would visit him with his pension check. She would hold the pen with him and together they would scribble something that passed for a signature. Papa Grey's hands were so bad that someone had to spoon feed him. Keeping a close eye on the Hospital Corpsman that normally fed him, Papa Grey noticed that the Corpsman would empty a bed pan and then bring Papa Grey his food tray without stopping to wash his hands. Papa Grey asked me if I would replace the Corpsman as his designated feeder. In addition to feeding him, I also filled out his menu for the following day. Because he was dying, the doctor ordered a special menu for him featuring a lot of goodies not available on my menu. All of his meals were made up in the Officer's Mess. About a week before they released me, Papa Grey was furloughed home in compliance with his wishes. Papa Grey wanted to die at home.

The hospital released me after a 45-day stay. Margaret and Patti were still visiting in California. I drove out to Makalualei to check on our Quonset hut and make sure it was still standing. It was, but I found it to be a very lonely place without Margaret Ann and Patti. I splurged on a long distance telephone call, and asked them to come back to Hawaii as soon as possible.

WE MOVE INTO NAVY HOUSING

While waiting on Margaret Ann and Patti to return to Hawaii, it occurred to me that I hadn't heard from the Navy Housing Office in a long time. I gave them a call and asked them where we stood on their list. They told me that we had worked our way to the top of the list but our name was removed because they hadn't heard from me in awhile. They assumed that we had found adequate housing in the private sector. I told them that the housing that we had found was anything but adequate so they returned our name to the top of the list. Then they told me that they had a two bedroom duplex available and we could move into as soon as we wanted. It was cheaper, nicer and right next to the base. We were thrilled with our new home.

I BECOME AN EDUCATION PETTY OFFICER

As I was checking back into VR-21 from the hospital, I ran into an old officer friend from VR-5 Detachment, San Diego. He remembered me as the sailor who gave pre-flight briefings to the passengers departing from NAS North Island. When we last saw each other, I was an Airman (pay grade E-3) and now I was a Petty Officer Second Class (pay grade E-5). After spending almost four years as an Airman, I had earned 2 promotions in a little over two years. My old friend had also received a couple of promotions during these years and was now a Lieutenant Commander and was the Education Officer for VR-21. He told me that VR-21's Commanding Officer had been transferred to VR-21 from the Bureau of Naval Personnel, and he

was gung ho on promotions. He said that our new skipper wanted all E-2's promoted to E-3 and all E-3's promoted to E-4. He then asked me if I would accept the position as his Education Petty Officer and help him achieve the Commanding Officers goal. I accepted.

As Education Petty Officer, the first thing I looked into was the E-2 to E-3 promotion situation. The failure rate for the E-3 exam was 100%. I asked the Education Clerk about this and found out that he was the author of this nightmare of a test. He also told me that he took great pride in the fact that no one could pass his test. I suggested, to him, that his test was too difficult, and that we put his test to the test. I asked the Education Officer to have two Officer Pilots take the E-3 exam. My reasoning was if two Officers took and failed the Airman test, then the test was unfair and should be re-written. To my delight, both officers failed the test miserably, and I was given permission to re-write the test. My test had about an 80% pass rate for those who studied the Airman Manual. A month later the other 20% managed to pass a retake exam with the help of a little tutoring.

Turning E-3's into E-4's was a bit more challenging. I was up to snuff on the Aviation Structural Mechanic (AM) Rating but sadly lacking in knowledge when it came to the other ratings. Recognizing that I couldn't do it all alone, the Education Officer found me a Second Class Aviation Machinist Mate (AD2) to help those wanting to be Aviation Machinist Mates. He then sent the two of us to the Fleet Shipboard Instructors School at Pearl Harbor to help prepare us for the task ahead.

AIRMAN SLIKER STAYS AN AIRMAN

We organized a school designed to develop Airman Apprentices into Airmen and turn Airmen into Third Class Petty Officers. We had each trainee for one full month. From my viewpoint, the program was a huge success. Our Captain had succeeded in promoting almost every E-3 and E-4 in the squadron. There was failure, however. One of my trainees, Airman Sliker, was sent to me for a month of intensive training. Each Division throughout the squadron was directed to send the best and most deserving men for this program. In reality, Airman Sliker was a goof-off and wasn't really deserving of the program. Despite not being deserving, Airman Sliker was flattered at being called the best and took the title to heart. Airman Sliker listened intently during the lectures and studied during the breaks. He was aware that I spent a lot of time at home studying for the First Class test and asked if he could study at my house with me during our off duty hours. Counting school time, our studying turned into 18 hour a day marathons. When promotion test time came, Sliker passed with ease. Unfortunately, when Sliker's Department head saw Sliker's name on the promotion list, he exploded. "Who in the hell recommended Sliker?" he demanded to know. "You did, Sir, you recommended him when you certified that he was your best Airman," was the reply. "Well, un recommend him," the Department head demanded.

When Sliker was told that he wasn't going to be promoted, even though he was on the promotion list, he went ballistic. He went to town and got good and drunk. Then he returned to the barracks and busted up most of the toilet fixtures in the head. The Barracks Master at Arms finally quelled the one-man riot.

Formal charges were brought against Sliker and he was brought before the Captain at Captain's Mast so that the Captain, acting as judge and jury, could determine Slicker's fate. One by one Sliker's Leading Chief, his Division officer and his Department head had nothing but bad

things to say about Sliker. Sliker stood mute. The Captain was about to render his judgment, and I interrupted him, asking if I could have a say. I informed the Captain about Sliker being certified the best. It was now obvious that his division didn't see the school as an opportunity for their best candidate but as a chance to rid themselves of a goof-off for awhile. To them, the school was a shit detail like mess cooking or compartment cleaning where you sent your worse. I went on to tell him of how hard Sliker had worked and the long hours he had spent trying to live up to the title, "best." The Captain dismissed all charges against Sliker and asked the Department Head, the Division Officer and the Leading Chief to remain after mast for a private little chat. He then asked me if I would like to have Sliker working for me. I told the Captain that I would be delighted. A little later Sliker told me that he would rather be transferred to Midway Island than to stay in Hawaii. Reluctantly I passed Slickers request on to the Captain. Sliker's request was approved and he was transferred to Midway. The same promotion list that led to Slicker's downfall also authorized my promotion to First Class.

MY SON, RICHARD, IS BORN

On the 18th of December, 1956, not long after my promotion to First Class my son Richard Allen was born at Tripler Army Hospital, Oahu, Hawaii. He was named Richard Allen because that was the name picked out for Margaret Ann or her sister June Marie, had either of them been boys. Not long after Richard was born, I was ordered to attend the career counseling school in San Diego. Upon graduation I was assigned the position as a career counselor. I managed to do a passable job at it but my heart was with Margaret and the demands of a very sick daughter and a newborn son. I spent as much time as I could help Margaret Ann by washing diapers, making formula, and making emergency runs to the Sick Bay with Patti. The Sick Bay visit was often an all-day affair. The Doctor at the Sick Bay usually gave Patti a shot and had me take her to the Tripler Army Hospital.

The seriousness of Patti's illness became apparent not long after we were transferred to Hawaii. Her asthma attacks started coming more often and with greater severity. What started out as an asthma attack would often develop into pneumonia. Patti's prognosis was grave. One doctor predicted that she would never reach adulthood. None of them offered much hope.



Photo of Margaret Ann's silhouette taken aboard the S. S. Ainsworth by me.

WE RECEIVE ORDERS TO NAS MEMPHIS

Patti was about three when we received orders transferring us from Hawaii to Memphis. Patti's health was my number one concern in life. The Defense Department found that money

could be saved by transporting military families on an ocean liner from Hawaii to the mainland, rather than using the airlines. As part of this cost-cutting effort they had chartered the S.S. Ainsworth. I wasn't confident that the Ainsworth's medical staff could handle one of Patti's attacks. In fact, I really wasn't confident that the Ainsworth even had a medical staff. I was deathly afraid of our being away from hospital care for even a short period of time. The thought of Patti having an attack, out in the middle of the ocean, terrified me. A short eight hour flight made much more sense than having us spend five days at sea. I begged the Navy to reconsider their decision. The Navy denied my request, and we sat sail for the mainland on the Ainsworth. The weather was perfect, and thanks to a benevolent God, Margaret Ann, Patti and Richard had a wonderful cruise. Mine had a few lumps, however. First of all, I became sea sick almost as soon as we pulled away from the dock. Can you imagine Navy Petty Officer with six years service getting sick on a cruise ship? I not only felt awful, I was also humiliated. Lucky for me, a crewmember came to my aid with a package of Dramamine tablets. While Margaret spent most of her time in the cabin, taking care of the kids, I spent my time washing diapers, making formula and heating up baby food.

My orders allowed me nine days travel time plus thirty days leave before reporting to NAS Memphis for duty. We drove to Los Banos, California so that Margaret Ann could spend time with her folks and so we could show off our new baby. From there we drove to Texas City, Texas to spend a little time with my folks. From Texas City, we went on to Memphis.