

CHAPTER XIII - NAVAL INTELLIGENCE SCHOOL

Margaret, Patti, Richard and I were now at Washington D.C., and I was officially checked into the Naval Intelligence School. I was here because the Navy had screwed up in ordering me to Intelligent School at a time when they were suffering a critical shortage of AMs.

Now a decision had to be made that only the Bureau of Naval Personnel could make. I could either go to Intelligence School, and become a Photographic Intelligenceman or be issued new orders and remain an Aviation Structural Mechanic. The School's administrator decided to let me sit in on the classes while the Bureau made up its mind. I graduated without hearing a single word from the Bureau. The Bureau must have been on a holiday or something because the entire class graduated without any of us being redesignated to Photographic Intelligenceman. Because of this snafu, the entire class was transferred to their new duty assignments according to the needs of their old occupational specialty. I was mistakenly ordered to a Utility Squadron at Brown Field, just south of San Diego.

The Naval Intelligence School was excellent. It was run pretty much like a civilian school. We started off by spending a lot of time getting our eyes accustomed to stereoscopic vision. This entailed placing two aerial photographs side by side and lining them up properly for viewing through a stereoscope. Through the stereoscope the first print is viewed with the left eye and the second print with the right eye. Ideally the photographs are taken one after the other so that the images overlap each other by 60%. If you have good eyesight and your stereo pair is properly set up, you should see your photos in three dimensions. It's the same principal as the Mickey Mouse 3D viewer, except when viewing aerial pairs you see tiny landscapes in 3D instead of cartoon characters.

Next we were schooled on the techniques of identifying and measuring the tiny little objects we observed in our photos. We went on field trips almost every week visiting places like aircraft manufacturing plants, steel mills and railroad marshaling yards. Officials running these industries would give us their cook's tour. They made it a point to tell where bombs should be dropped in order to do the most damage.

We also had classes on making radar and submarine periscope predictions and then comparing our predictions with copies of the real thing. This was all a lot of fun. To prepare us for all of this, we had two difficult sessions of math. For the first two days we had a trigonometry refresher course. That was followed by a two-day geometry refresher course. We spent the fifth day taking tests covering these subjects. That was when I gained an appreciation for the phrase "hell week." For me it was just that. I was a high school drop out, and I didn't even know the definition of trigonometry or geometry. I knew they had something to do with math, but I didn't have a clue beyond that. Every night that week, I stayed up most of the night studying and trying to keep up with the class. I made it. In fact, I did a lot better than I expected. I mastered it well enough that in the summer of 1962 the Atomic Energy Commission asked the Navy to fly over ground zero and photograph the site just hours after a test. I was given a set of photos and asked what I could do with them. Using the math and techniques the school taught me, I measured the crater and gave them a report containing both the width and the depth of the crater. A couple of months later a ground crew, working for the Atomic Energy Commission, made the same measurements and reported that my data was right on the money.

Margaret and I found a small one-bedroom apartment in Suitland, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C. This little apartment was cramped, but we made do. In order to hold down

expenses we had to wash our clothes by hand in the bath tub. After a couple of weeks, I ran across a small portable washing machine that sat in the bathtub. It was an improvement, but not much.

Being able to tour the Washington, D.C. area was a joy and easily offset the inconveniences of a small cramped apartment. On weekends we would pack lunches and go touring. Number one on our list was the Smithsonian Institute. The Smithsonian can only be described as magnificent and enormous. It is housed in several large buildings. We made four trips to the museum and we saw less than half of it. We also visited Mount Vernon, the old Fort Washington ruins, Arlington Cemetery, the National Zoo and most of the memorials in the central Washington Area. The only thing I was disappointed in was the Zoo. I couldn't help comparing it with the magnificent San Diego Zoo. I felt that this little zoo was unworthy of the title "National." Anything representing our wonderful nation should be something to be proud of.