



ON THE ARMED FORCES' APPRECIATION OF CORONADO

A TALK AT THE CORONADO LIBRARY ON THE CENTENNIAL OF ITS FOUNDING

ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 2ND, 1990

BY VICE ADMIRAL JIM STOCKDALE, RETIRED

DO NOT  
CHECK  
OUT!

A TALK ABOUT THE COURTSHIP OF SERVICE FAMILIES IN RESIDENCE, WITH THE CITY OF CORONADO, CAN TAKE MANY FORMS - DEPENDING ON THE GENERATION AND EXPERIENCES OF THE SPEAKER. I'M HONORED TO BE CHOSEN FOR THIS PLEASANT OPPORTUNITY - BUT YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO TAKE IT AS I SEE IT - IT'S MY TURN TO SHAKE THE KALEIDOSCOPE, HOLD IT UP TO MY EYE, AND DESCRIBE WHAT I SEE AMONG THE FASCINATING PATTERS OF SYMMETRY.

IN MY DAY, YOU COULD NOT BE IN THE U.S. NAVY AND NOT WISH YOU WERE IN CORONADO. SYBIL AND I HAD BEEN MARRIED FOR 15 YEARS BEFORE WE FINALLY MADE IT. I WELL REMEMBER OUR DRIVING DOWN OLD 101 HEADING SOUTH, TO THAT POINT JUST NORTH OF LA JOLLA WHERE YOU GOT YOUR FIRST LOOK AT THE BROAD PACIFIC OFF SAN DIEGO. SYBIL, WHO WAS A BORN AND BRED CONNECTICUT YANKEE, WAS RAISED ON ITS SHORE, AND HAD NEVER YET BEEN DOWN THIS WAY, SAT UP VERY STAIGHT FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP DOWN TO AND ACROSS THE FERRY. WITHIN A

WEEK SHE HAD A FEEL OF THE TOWN THAT NOBODY HAS BEEN ABLE TO  
BUDGE IN THE 28 YEARS SINCE, THE 28 YEARS THAT WE'VE CALLED  
CORONADO HOME. LIKE MANY NAVY FAMILIES OF THOSE YEARS, AND THOSE  
WHICH PRECEDED THEM, WE FELT THE TOWN BECOMING A PART OF OUR  
HEARTS, -AND FOR WE NAVY MEN ON ACTIVE DUTY, A PART OF US FOREVER  
AND IN EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY OF THE WORLD.

WE WERE STARTING OUR THIRD YEAR AS A FAMILY HERE WHEN I TOOK  
COMMAND OF AIR GROUP 16 ABOARD THE CARRIER ORISKANY. SHE WAS  
MOORED TO THE QUAY WALL AT NORTH ISLAND, LOADING UP FOR WHAT WAS  
TO BE HER FIRST OF SEVEN RECORD BREAKING 8 MONTHS VIETNAM COMBAT  
CRUISES. AS WHEN I TOOK OVER MY FIGHTER SQUADRON 51 AT NAS  
MIRAMAR TWO YEARS BEFORE, I HAD ARRANGED TO HAVE THE REVEREND  
KENNETH CARSON OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ON THE PLATFORM TO GIVE  
THE PRAYER. HE WAS OUR MINISTER IN CORONADO; I HAD ALWAYS  
CONSULTED HIM FOR PHILOSOPHICAL MATERIAL FOR MY NAVY LEADERSHIP  
TALKS; AND OUR SON JIMMY'S FIRST BOY SCOUT EXPERIENCES HAD COME  
ABOUT AT TROOP HEADQUARTERS ON HIS CHURCH PROPERTY.

I SAID HELLO TO THE MAN WHO JUST INTRODUCED ME, THEN-

COMMANDER WYNN FOSTER, AT THAT CEREMONY. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE WOULD BE EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF ONE OF MY LIGHT ATTACK SQUADRONS FOR THE COMING CRUISE. IT WAS ABOUT NOON ON FEBRUARY 9, 1965.

I SAID GOODBYE TO WYNN FOSTER JUST 7 MONTHS LATER, ABOUT NOON ON SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1965, WITH A HAND SIGNAL BYE BYE AND THUMB TO THE REAR AS WE SPED ACROSS THE TREETOPS OF NORTH VIETNAM, EACH IN THE COCKPIT OF ONE OF WYNN'S SQUADRON'S TINY A-4E BOMBERS, SIGNALLING HIM TO FALL BACK IN TRAIL AS I LINED US UP TO DROP OUR BOMB LOADS INTO THE NORTH VIETNAMESE FREIGHT TRAINS PARKED IN THE MARSHALING YARD AHEAD. A MINUTE LATER, JUST AFTER PICKLING OFF MY QUICK-DECELERATING 'SNAKEEYE' BOMBS, ABOVE ALL THE ENGINE AND AIR FRICTION NOISE, I HEARD THE BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! OF WHAT I SWUNG MY HEAD AND SAW TO BE A GIANT POM POM GUN POURING RED BLOBS OF FIRE, POINT BLANK INTO ME. I GOT OFF ONE FAREWELL 'MAYDAY' RADIO CALL TO WYNN AS I RODE A WOUNDED BUCKING BRONKO OF AN AIRPLANE, NOW ON FIRE, CONTROL SYSTEMS SHOT OUT, HEADING FOR THE DIRT 200 FEET BELOW. EJECTING WITH THE EMERGENCY HANDLE, I FOUND MYSELF: FIRST FLAILING IN A CASCADE OF AIR OF THE FORCE AND TREACHERY OF

NIAGARA FALLS, THEN SUDDENLY ENVELOPED IN SILENCE PUNCTUATED BY RIFLE SHOTS FROM BELOW AS MY THEN-BLOSSOMED CHUTE WAFTED ME JUST OVER THE TREETOPS; AND FINALLY OVER A ROAD AND ACROSS SOME UNDERBRUSH ON A BEE-LINE, SO HELP ME, FOR A CROWD OF ANGRY ROUGHNECKS, SHAKING FISTS FROM THE MAIN STREET OF A LITTLE TOWN DEAD AHEAD, SHOUTING BLASPHEMIES I COULD HEAR BEFORE I TOUCHED DOWN WITHIN THEIR GRASP. TWO MINUTES LATER I LAY IN THAT STREET, STRIPPED NAKED, LEFT LEG AND BACK BROKEN, PASSING OUT FROM WHAT WAS APPARENTLY SHOCK AS I HEARD WYNN'S AND A COUPLE MORE ORISKANY AIRPLANES HE HAD CALLED TO THE SCENE, FLYING IN AND OUT OF THE LOW CLOUDS, TRYING TO HELP ME OUT AS BEST THEY COULD. GOODBYE AIR GROUP 16; HELLO WORLD OF EPICTETUS.

SNAPSHOT ONE: THREE AND A HALF MONTHS LATER. NEW YEAR'S EVE: GOODBYE 1965, HELLO 1966. I HADN'T SEEN AN AMERICAN YET. I HAD ARRIVED AT THIS PENITENTIARY IN DOWNTOWN HANOI IN A STRETCHER IN THE BACK OF A TRUCK, 3 DAYS AFTER SHOOTDOWN. BY NOW I WAS HOBBLING ON CRUTCHES ON A LEG SURE TO BE STIFF FOR LIFE, UNABLE TO RAISE MY LEFT ARM DUE TO THE BROKEN BONE IN MY BACK. BUT

TODAY, DECEMBER 31ST, I HAD BEEN CAUGHT WHISPERING UNDER MY CELL DOOR TO COLONEL ROBBIE RISNER, U.S. AIR FORCE ACE AND MY COUNTERPART AS HIS SERVICE'S SENIOR OFFICER IN NORTH VIETNAMESE CAPTIVITY. BY THIS TIME WE WERE THE ONLY AMERICANS BEING KEPT IN THIS, HANOI'S MAIN CIVILIAN PRISON. ONCE CAUGHT IN THE ACT OF BREAKING ONE OF THE JAILERS' THOUSAND RULES, BY VIETNAM'S WAY OF THINKING, THEY HAD JUST OBTAINED MORAL JUSTIFICATION FOR MY WORKUP FOR A TORTURE SIEGE BECAUSE I WOULDN'T GIVE THEM THE INFORMATION THEY HAD ASKED FOR. I HAD BEEN MOVED IN THE LATE EVENING TO A PUNISHMENT CELL IN THE OUT-BACK PART OF THE PRISON- AND NOW I WAS STUDYING EERIE CRUDE ETCHINGS ON ITS WALLS- HUNCHBACK AFRICAN ANTELOPE, LONG LEGGED OSTRICHES - LEFT, SO A CRUDE ETCHED EPITAPH I LATER FOUND SAID, BY AFRICAN FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION PRISONERS CAPTURED AT AT THE SIEGE OF DIEN BIEN PHU 11 YEARS BEFORE.

"GET UP ON THE SLAB", YELLED THE ENGLISH SPEAKING POLITICAL OFFICER. MY CRUTCHES ARE STASHED OUT OF REACH, AND MY LEGS, GOOD ONE AND BROKEN ONE ALIKE, ARE EACH LOCKED IN A LEG STOCK AT THE

FOOT OF THE SLAB WHERE THEY WILL REMAIN FOR A MONTH. THE CELL DOOR SLAMS SHUT AS I HEAR THE SETS OF BELLS OF TWO OLD FRENCH CHURCHES IN HANOI (ABOUT 30 SECONDS APART, ON DIFFERENT AZIMUTHS), CHIME 11 PM, DECEMBER 31ST, 1965. I AM 42 YEARS OLD. I KEEP AWAY GLOOM THE WAY I WAS TO DO IT FOR ANOTHER SEVEN YEARS: I SHIFT GEARS IN MY MIND AND ASK MYSELF: "WHAT TIME AND WHAT DAY IS IT IN CORONADO, RIGHT NOW?" AS I STARE UP AT THE 14 FOOT CEILING PAST THE SINGLE BARE, LIT, ELECTRIC BULB I'M COMING TO KNOW WILL ALWAYS BE MY ALL-NIGHT COMPANION IN PRISON, I CONCLUDE: "LATE MORNING ON THE 31ST". BY NOW THE OLD CLOCKS ARE STRIKING MIDNIGHT, RINGING IN THE YEAR 1966. SO HELP ME, AS I WROTE IN IN LOVE AND WAR, AT THAT INSTANT MY THOUGHTS DRIFTED TO PAMONA PARK WHERE I IMAGINED THAT JIMMY (JUST TURNED 15), WOULD BE HORSING AROUND WITH HIS BROTHERS SID (11), STAN (6) AND TAYLOR (3) WITH NEW CHRISTMAS SPORTS STUFF, WHILE SYB FIXED LUNCH AT HOME ON NEARBY A AVENUE. NOT TOO FAR OFF THE MARK, I LEARNED YEARS LATER BACK HOME.

SNAPSHOT TWO: A LITTLE OVER A YEAR LATER, THE NIGHT OF

JANUARY 26TH, 1976. IT HAD BEEN A TOUGH WINTER, THAT ONE OF 1966, WITH RISNER AND ME ALONE, EACH IN SOLITARY IN THIS CIVILIAN PENITENTIARY, WITH TWO INTERROGATORS, A TORTURE GUARD, AND SEVERAL ORDINARY SOLDIER JAILERS, PERMANENTLY STATIONED THERE UNDER THE FREQUENT SUPERVISION OF THE HEAD COMMISSAR OF ALL NORTH VIETNAM MILITARY PRISONERS, JUST TO SQUEEZE THE JUICE OUT OF US. IT WAS FIGHT AND FALL BACK, FIGHT AND FALL BACK. THEY REALLY HAD PLANS FOR US, EACH TO SAY TO HIS PILOTS: "LOOK HERE, IF WE WANT THIS WAR TO BE OVER SO WE CAN GO HOME, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO COOPERATE WITH THESE PEOPLE." WE WOULD DO THAT ONLY OVER OUR DEAD BODIES.

IN THE FALL OF THAT YEAR, I HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO THIS SECOND PRISON WE CALLED THE ZOO, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY. I'M STILL IN SOLITARY, OF COURSE, STILL NEVER HAVING SEEN AN AMERICAN. THAT DOESN'T MEAN I HADN'T TALKED TO ANY, BY WALL TAP OR WHISPER. THE VERY BEST THING THAT HAD HAPPENED TO ME SINCE I HAD WOUND UP IN PRISON WAS TO BE BUOYED, AS EVERYONE IS ALWAYS BUOYED, BY CONTACT WITH HARRY JENKINS.

BUT HOW FOR HARRY'S SAKE I HATED TO FIND OUT IT WAS HE, THE NEW PRISONER ACROSS FROM ME IN A CELLBLOCK FOR NEW GUYS WE CALLED HEARBREAK HOTEL, JUST A COUPLE OF MONTHS AFTER MY SHOOTDOWN. "THEY'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, HARRY", I HAD WHISPERED, "THEY TOLD ME WHEN I FIRST GOT HERE THAT THEY HAD BEEN READING ABOUT YOU IN STARS AND STRIPES". OF COURSE I NEEDN'T HAVE TOLD HIM THAT. HE HAD BEEN BEATEN TO A PULP ON ARRIVAL BECAUSE HE WAS CLASSIFIED AS AN "AMERICAN HERO" IN THAT NEWSPAPER'S WRITEUPS OF HIS SUCCESSFUL STRIKES. HARRY WAS THE SKIPPER THE A-4 SQUADRON NICKNAMED "THE SAINTS" IN MY ORISKANY AIR GROUP, AND AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW - WYNN FOSTER'S BOSS. I HAD DESIGNATED HARRY TO SEND MY PERSONAL THINGS BACK TO SYB IN CORONADO IF I GOT BAGGED. WHISPERING UNDER THE DOOR IN HEARTBREAK HOTEL HE HAD TOLD ME ABOUT PACKING ALL MY GEAR, AND OF HIS HAVING A LETTER FROM SYB. HE ASSURED ME THAT SHE AND OUR KIDS, AS WELL AS MARGE AND THEIR KIDS, WERE OKAY. WE HAD ONLY A FEW MINUTES FOR THAT YEAR-AGO CONVERSATION - JUST ENOUGH FOR ME TO GIVE HIM THE TAP CODE BEFORE THEY TOOK HIM AWAY. BUT WITHIN A MONTH AFTER I GOT HERE TO THE

ZOO, I KNEW HARRY WAS HERE. IN A DIMMLY LIT PRIVY WHERE I WAS SHOVED TO POUR THE CONTENTS OF MY CELL TOILET BUCKET DOWN THE HOLE I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF A STRING OF TEN TINY LETTERS SCRATCHED WITH A NAIL ALONG THE BASE BOARD: "HI CAG, SAINT". WHO ELSE COULD WRITE THAT BUT HARRY?

ON THIS COLD COLD JANUARY 26TH NIGHT, I HAD FALLEN ASLEEP UNDER THE GLOWING BARE BULB IN WHAT WE CALLED 'THE PANTS UPSIDE DOWN' CONFIGURATION. (TAKE OFF YOUR PAJAMA PANTS, PULL THE WAISTEBAND DRAWSTRING TIGHT AND TIE IT MAKING A "BAG" FOR YOUR COLD FEET AFTER YOU THREAD EACH LEG THROUGH THE CUFF AND PULL THE CUFFS TO YOUR CROTCH.) "BANG", THE DOOR OPENS. "ROLL UP, YOU'RE MOVING", SAYS THE GUARD IN PIGEON ENGLISH. MYSTIFIED AS HE SEES THE WAY I AM WEARING MY PAJAMAS, HE FIDGETS AS I QUICKLY PUT THEM ON STRAIGHT, ROLL UP EVERYTHING I "OWN", STAND PATIENTLY AS HE APPLIES THE INEVITABLE BLINDFOLD, AND STAGGER OUT IN SILENCE FOLLOWING THE STEERING SIGNALS HE APPLIES WITH A GRIP ON MY BICEP. THE VIETNAMESE KNOW I NOW CAN GET AROUND WITHOUT THE CRUTCHES, AFTER A FASHION, AND THE BIG AWKWARD WOODEN THINGS ARE

LEFT IN MY VACATED CELL.

AMID VIETNAMESE WHISPERS, I AM LIFTED INTO THE BACK OF WHAT SEEMS TO BE A COVERED STAKE TRUCK, LIT INSIDE BY AN OVERHEAD BULB, WITH ABOUT SIX LOUD MOUTHED GUARDS, AND ABOUT AN EQUAL NUMBER OF PRUDENTLY SILENT BLINDFOLDED PRISONERS LIKE ME. WE ARE HANDCUFFED BEHIND, AND LINED UP SITTING AGAINST THE HIGH SIDES, ABOUT THREE ON A SIDE, SEPARATED BEYOND TOUCHING OR WHISPERING DISTANCE, FEET TOWARD THE CENTER. WHAT I AM BUILDING UP TO IS A CORONADO REUNION IN THE BACK OF THIS TRUCK AS IT SPEEDS FROM PRISON TO PRISON THROUGH A CITY, HANOI, UNDER SIEGE FROM AMERICAN BOMBS.

"KEEP QUIET", THE GUARDS WOULD CHANT, AS THEY PARADED AROUND US AS WE ROLLED ALONG - MAKING SURE THERE WAS NO COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THESE PRISONERS THEY HAD SPENT MONTHS KEEPING ISOLATED AND AGITATED OUTSIDE THE COMFORT OF EVER TALKING TO ONE ANOTHER. SOON I AM AWARE THAT MY BARE RIGHT FOOT IS RESTING AGAINST SOMETHING WARM - LIKE ANOTHER FOOT. THEN FROM TIME TO TIME I HAVE THE FEELING I AM HEARING A FAINT NOISE I'VE HEARD BEFORE-

AN OCCASIONAL SNIFFLE, WITH A FAMILIAR RESONANCE. READY ROOM FIVE ON THE ORISKANY! HARRY JENKINS! WHO ELSE SNIFFLES LIKE THAT WHEN HE HAS A COLD? WHO ELSE HAS SUCH A LONG LEG AS TO EXTEND BEYOND THE TOUCHING LIMITS THE VIETNAMESE HAD SET? SO, BY PRESSURE ALONE - NOT MOTION OF MY FOOT, I GIVE HIM THE OLD 'SHAVE AND A HAIRCUT' CALLUP SIGNAL. WHEN THE WARM THING ANSWERS WITH THE 'GO' SIGNAL, "PUSH, PUSH", WE'RE OFF ON A FIFTEEN MINUTE CONVERSATION. WHAT DOES HARRY TELL ME? THINGS HE HAS PICKED UP FROM OTHER SAN DIEGO PILOTS THROUGH THE WALLS OF HIS WANDERINGS: THE ORISKANY FIRE OF '66 AND THE NAMES OF MUTUAL FRIENDS KILLED OR NOTABLY INVOLVED. STORIES OF THE AIR GROUP'S FLYING: THIS GUY AND THAT SHOT DOWN AND LOST OR PICKED UP. BUT THE FIRST STORY AND THE MOST NOTABLE NEWS WAS ALL ABOUT WYNN FOSTER'S ARM BEING SHOT OFF IN FLIGHT, AND HIS ONE ARMED EJECTION AND SURVIVAL. THE LAST HARRY HAD ON WYNN THAT JANUARY NIGHT IN '67, WAS THAT HE WAS RECOVERING AND BUCKING TO STAY ON ACTIVE DUTY.

BY THAT TIME WE WERE AT CURBSIDE BACK AT WHAT I SOON ENOUGH, BY SMELL, IDENTIFIED AS THE OLD HOA LO PRISON FROM WHICH I HAD

COME ONLY MONTHS BEFORE. (I'M NOT KIDDING, ALL HUMAN SENSES ARE PEAKED UP IN THIS DRIED OUT CIRCUMSTANCE.) ONE AT A TIME WE WERE WALKED INTO A CELL BLOCK AND LOCKED IN SOLITARY CELLS. BEFORE WE WENT TO SLEEP, I VERIFIED THAT HARRY WAS NOT ONLY IN MY TRUCK, BUT NOW MY NEIGHBOR! I WENT TO SLEEP WITH A GLOW IN MY HEART- AND COMPASSION FOR WYNN WHO WAS IN SOME HOSPITAL SOMEWHERE TANGLED UP ALMOST AS BADLY AS HARRY AND I WERE.

IT WAS SOME MONTHS LATER WHEN, DURING THE DAILY BUCKET DUMPING SEQUENCE, I COULD TELL BY THE SOUNDS AND THE UNDERDOOR SHADOWS THAT ONE PRISONER IN SEQUENCE WAS LAGGING WAY BEHIND HIS GUARD. SUDDENLY MY DOOR'S LOCKING BOLT WAS QUIETLY MOVED TO THE OPEN POSITION AND THE DOOR SILENTLY WHISHED OPEN, AND THERE STOOD HARRY, GRINNING, LOOKING LIKE ABRAHAM LINCOLN WITH HIS BEARD. IN THAT INSTANT, I SAW MY FIRST AMERICAN IN NEARLY TWO YEARS - AND AS HARRY SCANNED MY DIRTY CELL QUICKLY BEFORE QUIETLY CLOSING AND BOLTING THE DOOR, HE SAID, SOFTLY, ONLY SIX WORDS: "NICE LITTLE PLACE YOU'VE GOT HERE". AND DEAR SWEET HARRY RISKED TORTURE TO GIVE ME THAT UPLIFT THAT LASTED ME A YEAR.

ALREADY WE WERE GETTING MORE CORONADO COMPANY IN THAT LITTLE COLONY, AT THAT TIME COMPOSED OF NO MORE THAN A HUNDRED AMERICANS. THE SUMMER OF '67 WAS THE BIG BOMBING TIME IN HANOI- AND EVERY TWO MONTHS WE WOULD GET A NEW CORONADO NEIGHBOR. IN MARCH, MEL MOORE SHOWED UP IN HERO STATUS AS ONE OF THE PIONEERS - INDEED AN INVENTOR OF - A TECHNIQUE OF BAITING THE FIRING OF VIETNAM'S NEW SURFACE TO AIR MISSILES - THEN DODGING THEM AT THE LAST MINUTE, AND ATTACKING THEIR FIRING PADS - AN ADAGIO DANCE IN AN AIRPLANE THAT WOULD REMIND YOU OF THE PERFORMANCE, THOUGH MORE DEADLY, OF A BULL FIGHTER'S PASS - IN SPAIN - OR MAYBE TIJUANA- WHO KNOWS WHERE MEL GOT THE IDEA? THEN IN MAY, BILL STARK ARRIVED FRESH FROM AN F4 FIGHTER COCKPIT, VF 96. THEN AGAIN TWO MONTHS LATER, IN JULY, ED MARTIN, SHOT DOWN IN AN A-4 OF VA 34.

DON'T FORGET, WE WERE ALL MOSTLY IN SOLITARY AND NOT OUT IN SOME HOGAN'S HEROES' COURTYARD SLAPPING EACH OTHER ON THE BACK. WE LIVED BY THE SOUND OF WALL TAPS AS THE MESSAGES MADE THEIR WAY AROUND THE PRISON, BRINGING PLANS FOR RESISTANCE AND ESCAPE, NEWS FROM THE WAR FRONT, AND NEWS FROM HOME. I DON'T KNOW WHO

INITIATED IT, BUT ONE TIME AN IMPORTANT BULLETIN CAME THROUGH FOR ALL CURRENT AND EX CORONADANS (WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN QUITE A GROUP IN THAT COMMUNITY): QUOTE: 31 FLAVORS HAS JUST OPENED A SHOP ON ORANGE AVENUE.

IN DUE COURSE, CORONADO-BASED WIVES SHERRY MARTIN, SHIRLEY STARK, AND CHLOE MOORE JOINED A GROUP SYBIL HAD FOUNDED IN 1966 TO SHARE PRISONER NEWS AND WORK AROUND A U.S. GOVERNMENT EDICT THAT ALL SHOULD KEEP TOTALLY QUIET ABOUT THEIR PREDICAMENT - THEY WERE NOT EVEN SUPPOSED TO KNOW EACH OTHER WERE PRISONER WIVES. BY LATE SUMMER 1967 THEY HAD ALL DECIDED THAT THE WAY TO SHUT OFF TORTURE IN COMMUNIST PRISONS WAS NOT TO KEEP QUIET BUT TO TELL THE WORLD WHAT WAS GOING ON AND SHAME THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OUT OF IT. SHAME WOULD BE NATURALLY AROUSED BECAUSE THEIR HIGHEST VALUE WAS GOOD PRESS IN THE USA. (AS THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TOLD ME, THEIR WHOLE VICTORY STRATEGY WAS BASED ON PROTRAYING THEMSELVES TO AMERICANS AS VICTIMIZED HUMANITARIANS.) HOW TO GET WASHINGTON TO SEND SOMEBODY OUT TO HEAR THESE WOMEN'S STORIES AND PROPOSAL WAS THE PROBLEM. THEY WERE TREATED LIKE MAVERICKS - THORNS IN

THE SIDE OF A STRICTLY "MEN'S WORLD" PROBLEM. UNTIL SOMEBODY AMONG THEM CAME UP WITH A SIMPLE BUT EARTH SHATTERING IDEA: HAVE LETTERHEAD STATIONERY PRINTED, EMBLAZONED WITH THEIR THEN CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL NAME: LEAGUE OF WIVES OF AMERICAN VIETNAM POWS. ON IT, SYBIL WROTE THE FIRST LETTER TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. "LEAGUE? JESUS, THEY'RE ORGANIZED NOW! - WE BETTER GET ON TOP OF THIS RIGHT AWAY!" - SAID THE PIN STRIPED DIPLOMATS. AND WITHIN THREE WEEKS THEY WERE IN TOWN, GIVING THE LITTLE LADIES A "PRESENTATION" OF ALL THEY WERE DOING TO GET THE WAR OVER AND EVERYBODY HOME. "JUST KEEP CALM LADIES, DON'T WORRY YOUR LITTLE HEADS, WE HAVE A SECRET PLAN FOR QUICK VICTORY; SORRY YOU'RE NOT CLEARED TO HEAR IT." BUT STILL NO DICE ON PUTTING TORTURE STORIES IN THE PAPER. AVERILL HARRIMAN DID NOW WANT TO GET THE NORTH VIETNAMESE UPSET AS HE PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE "SOON", OR AT LEAST AS SOON AS THE TWO SIDES COULD AGREE ON EXACTLY WHAT SHAPE THE TABLE SHOULD TAKE. HO HUM. BUT WITH TIME AND CHANGE AND FRUSTRATION AND EVENTUAL SUCCESS WITH MEL LAIRD AND HENRY KISSINGER, GREAT THINGS WERE DONE AROUND OUR KITCHEN TABLE AT 547

A; A HARD ROCK UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT POSITION WAS TURNED AROUND 180 DEGREES, AND THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WAS BORN.

THIS WAS BY NO MEANS THE FIRST TIME BIG CHANGES WERE WROUGHT AROUND KITCHEN TABLES IN CORONADO NAVY HOUSEHOLDS. I REMEMBER AN ARTICLE A FEW YEARS AGO THAT DESCRIBED FIGHTER PILOT JIMMY THATCH'S FRUSTRATION AT DEALING WITH JAP PLANES THAT EASILY OUTPERFORMED AMERICA'S BEST EARLY IN WORLD WAR II. AFTER DISCUSSING AND THINKING AND STEWING, WHILE SCRIBBLING ON A TABLET AMONG HIS COHORTS AROUND THE THATCH CORONADO KITCHEN TABLE, JIMMY CAME UP WITH THE FAMOUS "THATCH WEAVE". THE MANEUVERING SCHEME THAT HELPED GET THE AIR NAVY THROUGH THOSE WAR MONTHS WAS BORN IN A KITCHEN IN CORONADO.

AM I GOING TO GO ON WITH JUST ONE SEA STORY AFTER ANOTHER? PRETTY MUCH. I DON'T KNOW A BETTER WAY TO GET THE FLAVOR, AND ITS THE FLAVOR THAT IS UNIQUE TO CORONADO, THE FLAVOR OF WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE. STRANGE AS IT SOUNDS, AS BOTH AN ACTIVE AND RETIRED NAVAL OFFICER, CORONADO TO ME HAS BEEN THE ONE TOWN IN THE WORLD

WHERE I AND MY FAMILY HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED AS CITIZENS, "CIVILIANS"  
YOU MIGHT SAY, RATHER THAN AS SOME SORT OF STRANGE MILITARISTIC  
TEMPORARY PEOPLE WITH A CODE OF ETHICS THAT BEARS WATCHING. YOU  
CAN BE YOURSELF, A REAL PERSON WITH THE SAME VALUES AS ANY OTHER  
PATRIOTIC CITIZEN, - JUST ONE HAVING SPECIAL INTERESTS AND JOY IN  
SERVING HIS COUNTRY EVERY DAY. TO THOSE OF YOU WHO THINK OF THIS  
AS A STRANGE COMPLIMENT, TRY LIVING AS WE DO HALF THE TIME, ON  
THE CAMPUS OF A VERY LIBERAL UNIVERSITY. ALTHOUGH THE PEOPLE I  
WORK WITH AT THE HOOVER INSTITUTION KNOW US FOR WHAT WE ARE-  
RANDOM SOCIAL EVENTS WITH OUTSIDERS ARE NOT VERY PLEASANT. YOU  
DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO LAUGH OR CRY AS THE PURE ACADEMICS TRY TO  
MAKE YOU OUT TO BE SOME STRANGE SORT OF DANGEROUS ANIMAL. WE'LL  
BE HERE IN CORONADO FULL TIME, BY AND BY, AND GLAD OF IT. IT'S  
JUST THAT I DO ASSOCIATE WITH INTERESTING COLLEAGUES AT HOOVER  
(GEORGE SCHULTZ, ED TELLER, MILTON FRIEDMAN), HAVE EXCELLENT  
LIBRARY RESEARCH FACILITIES, AND OF COURSE A FREE GANGWAY TO COME  
DOWN HERE AND DO MY WORK AT THE HOUSEHOLD WORD PROCESSOR WHENEVER  
I WANT - SO ITS JUST TOO GOOD A DEAL TO CUT LOOSE FROM JUST YET.

SURFACE SAILORS, BY THAT I MEAN MOSTLY DESTROYER AND CRUISER MEN, HAVE LIVED IN CORONADO SINCE ITS FOUNDING. BEFORE HIGH TECHNOLOGY SWALLOWED US UP, THE SOUL OF THOSE SHIPS WAS BUILT AROUND SELF-SUFFICIENCY, TO NOT BE DEPENDENT ON LAND BASED INSTALLATIONS - IN THE VERY EARLY DAYS, TO NOT BE DEPENDENT ASHORE EVEN FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING. IT WAS THE "SCHOOL OF THE SHIP" THAT COUNTED - APPRENTICESHIP ON THE JOB WAS SEEN TO BREED VIRTUES THAT IN THE OLD BRITISH NAVY WERE SUPERIOR TO ANY OTHER LEARNING AS A STEP-STONE TO PROMOTION TO ADMIRAL. THE MOST AMBITIOUS WOULD BE TOLD "THE PLACE FOR THE YOUNG MAN IS AT SEA".

SO IN A ROUGH WAY, CORONADO HAD ALMOST NO SURFACE SHIP INSTALLATIONS - PLENTY OF SAILOR MEN AND THEIR FAMILIES -, BUT NO INSTALLATIONS TILL WORLD WAR TWO IN THE PACIFIC REQUIRED US TO DEVELOP BIG AND VERSITILE AMPHIBIOUS FORCES. EVERYTHING FROM LANDING CRAFT COXSWAINS TO BEACH MASTERS TO THE GEAR THEY OPERATED, BEGGED FOR QUICK AND SURE SHORE BASED TRAINING, AND THE "AMPHIBIOUS TRAINING BASE" STARTED ON THE FILL LAND HERE IN 1943.

THE PACIFIC FLEET AMPHIBIOUS FORCES STARTED GETTING BIG AND BEING COMMANDED BY THREE STAR ADMIRALS. THROUGHOUT THE MAIN PART OF WORLD WAR II, THEIR THREE STAR BOSS (RICHMOND KELLY TURNER BEING THE MOST FAMOUS), COULD BE FOUND ONLY AT SEA IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC. IT WAS NOT UNTIL JUST AFTER THE WAR, IN 1946, THAT TURNER'S THREE STAR SUCCESSORS STARTED ROTATING THROUGH THE HEADQUARTERS AND RESIDENCE HERE AT THE THEN-RENAMED "AMPHIBIOUS BASE".

(I FOUND IN MY READING THAT THE OLD AMPHIBIOUS TRAINING BASE HOUSED A GERMAN POW CAMP LATE IN THE WAR. ABOUT 600 PRISONERS WERE CONFINED AND GUARDED IN THE CENTER OF THE BASE AREA - WITH PING PONG, HORSESHOES, TENNIS, ARTS AND CRAFTS. KARL-HEINTZ OPPINGER OF THE LUFTWAFFE DESCRIBED HIS PRISONER EXPERIENCE THERE AS "A PARADISE". ONE PRISONER PRAISED HAVING THE FREEDOM TO USE HIS ALLOWANCE ORDERING THINGS FROM THE SEARS AND ROEBUCK CATALOG. HE ORDERED A RIFLE AND SOME AMMUNITION AND THE SEALED POSTAL SHIPMENT WAS DELIVERED TO HIS CELL. IT WASN'T TILL AFTER HE HAD UNWRAPPED THE CONTENTS THAT SOMEBODY SPOTTED THE GUN AND TOOK IT

AWAY. I'LL HAVE TO SAY THAT AMERICANS DON'T RUN THE KINDS OF  
JAILS SOME OF US LATTER DAY CORONADANS GOT USED TO.

AFTER THE VIETNAM WAR, THE FACT HAD TO BE FACED THAT  
CRUISERS AND DESTROYERS WERE JUST AS LOADED WITH EQUIPMENT  
REQUIRING SPECIAL TRAINING AND SHORE BASED CARE AS THE CARRIERS  
AND SUBMARINES, AND "PHIB PAC" BECAME "SURF PAC", A THREE STAR  
TYPE-COMMANDER OF ALL SURFACE NAVY UNITS BETWEEN HERE AND THE  
SUEZ CANAL. HE NOW RESIDES AT THE CORONADO BASE, WITH A MYRIAD  
OF SCHOOLS, INCLUDING THE PACIFIC FLEET'S "SURFACE WARFARE  
SCHOOL" FOR ALL OFFICERS MANNING THEIR SHIPS. THE BASIC CORE  
CURRICULUM FOR YOUNG OFFICERS TAKES ABOUT SIX MONTHS - SO THE  
INFLUX AND OUTGO OF TRANSIENT SURFACE OFFICERS IN CORONADO TODAY  
IS PROBABLY GREATER THAN EVER.

POSSIBLY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE IN THE  
1990'S, NO CORONADO INSTALLATION HAS MORE CURRENT RELEVANCE THAN  
THE BRAND NEW NAVY SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND, WITH THE FLAG OFFICER  
IN COMMAND'S MODEST HEADQUARTERS LOCATED BY THE ONE STAR FLAG ON  
THE RIGHT AS YOU HEAD DOWN THE STRAND. IN VIETNAM, NO MORE

GLAMOROUS WARRIORS EXISTED IN ANY SERVICE THAN THE NAVY SEALS; THEY CAME FROM TWO HOME BASES: LITTLE CREEK VIRGINIA, AND CORONADO. SINCE THAT WAR, CORONADO IS THE ONLY HOME OF ALL SEALS AND SIMILAR SPECIAL WARFARE SKILLED COMMANDOS OF STRENGTH, ENDURANCE, CUNNING AND AGILITY. MOREOVER, THAT ONE STAR ADMIRAL (ALWAYS A SEAL HIMSELF) REPORTS TO A JCS COMMAND IN TAMPA, FLORIDA, AS WELL AS TO THE U.S. NAVY FOR QUICK REACTION GUIDANCE AND TASKING. SO OUR EXPERIENCE WITH COMMANDO-TYPE SWIMMING AND DIVING SAILORS SINCE THE FIRST DAYS OF UDT IN WW II, AND THE IDEAL SURF AND BEACH TRAINING CONDITIONS OF CORONADO, HAVE PLACED US IN YET ANOTHER WAY, ON THE NATIONAL MAP AS A KEY TRAINING CENTER OF AN IMPORTANT FACET OF NATIONAL POWER.

OF COURSE, WE AIREDALES HAVE HAD TO HAVE SHORE BASES FROM DAY ONE. AND DAY ONE FOR THE AVIATION NAVY WAS IN THE SUMMER OF 1911 WHEN WASHINGTON DECIDED TO ALLOW NAVY LT THEORORE "SPUDS" ELLYSON TAKE FLYING LESSONS FROM ENGINEER, INVENTOR, AND ENTREPRENEUR GLENN CURTISS WHO HAD MADE A DEAL WITH THE CORONADO BEACH COMPANY (ESTABLISHED BY BABCOCK AND STORY WHO BOUGHT

CORONADO ISLAND AND THE SILVER STRAND IN 1886 FOR \$100,000), TO OPEN AN "AVIATION CAMP" - OR AVIATION SCHOOL - ON THAT EXPANSE OF SAND AND BRUSH ACROSS SPANISH BIGHT CALLED NORTH ISLAND. CURTISS' FIRST CLASS CONSISTED OF NAVY LET ELLYSON AND THREE ARMY LIEUTENANTS. BY 1917, THE JOINT AMRY/NAVY BOARD RECOMMENDED NORTH ISLAND BE A TRAINING GROUND FOR PILOTS OF BOTH SERVICES. ON THE NAVY SIDE, LT EARL SPENCER WAS ORDERED IN TO BE THE FIRST COMMANDER OF NAS SAN DIEGO - AND YOU ALL KNOW HIS WIFE MADE THE MOST OF HER CORONADO STAY. THE ARMY (FLYING OUT OF WHAT THEY CALLED ROCKWELL FIELD ON NORTH ISLAND) WAS A JOINT TENNANT OF NORTH ISLAND UNTIL ABOUT 1937, WHEN A TWO YEAR PHASE OUT WAS STARTED.

ONE OF MY GOOD FRIENDS, JIMMY DOOLITTLE TOLD ME A STORY ABOUT HIS CORONADO EXPERIENCE IN THE EARLY DAYS. JIMMY WAS BORN IN 1898, AND COMMENCED FLYING ABOUT 1917. A LITTLE LATER IN THAT TIME FRAME, WHILE STATIONED HERE, HE MARRIED HIS LONG TIME SWEETHEART JOSEPHINE. THEY DECIDED THAT CORONADO WAS THE PERFECT PLACE FOR A HONEYMOON, AND JOSEPHINE HAD HER HEART SET ON STAYING

AT THE DEL CORONADO FOR THE FIRST COUPLE OF WEEKS. JIMMY CHECKED THE RATES THERE, AND TOLD HER OKAY, BUT THAT A LT'S PAY DID NOT GO VERY FAR ON A DEL CORONADO BILL, AND THAT THOUGH THEY WOULD HAVE A NICE OCEAN FRONT ROOM, THEY WOULD HAVE TO AGREE TO GO TO THE GROCERY STORE AND BUY A LOT OF FRUIT AND HAVE THEIR MEALS ON THAT IN THEIR QUARTERS UPSTAIRS. JIMMY TOLD ME - LAST SUMMER, MIND YOU - SHORTLY AFTER JOSEPHINE DIED AT 90 - THAT IT WAS AN IDYLIC TWO WEEKS AT THE DEL, WITH WORLD WAR ONE VICTORY IN THE AIR ALL ABOUT TOWN. HE HAD WHISTLED A MERRY TUNE AS HE WENT UP TO PAY THE BILL HE KNEW HE COULD AFFORD. THE CLERK PULLED OUT JIMMY'S ACCOUNT, AND WITH SURPRISE SAID "MY GOODNESS, LT DOOLITTLE, NOTHING SHOWS HERE THAT YOU AND MRS. DOOLITTLE HAVE HAD ANY MEALS IN OUR DINING ROOM. WE ARE ON THE AMERICAN PLAN, YOU KNOW."

THERE WAS NO SUCH JOB AS COMAIRPAC HERE UNTIL WE WERE WELL INTO WW II, THOUGH FLYING HISTORY WAS MADE YEARLY AT NORTH ISLAND. CHARLES LINDBERG TOOK OFF FROM NORTH ISLAND IN 1927 ON THE FIRST LEG OF HIS FLIGHT TO PARIS. ANOTHER MAN I'VE KNOWN-

AS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE NAVAL ACADEMY WHEN I GRADUATED, FATHER OF A CLOSE FRIEND, AND GRANDFATHER OF MY SON SID'S COLLEGE ROOM MATE AND BEST MAN AT HIS WEDDING, WAS THE SENIOR AVIATOR AROUND CORONADO WHEN PEARL HARBOR BROKE. HIS NAME WAS AUBREY FITCH, KNOWN A 'JAKIE' - MOST OF YOU KNOW THE BIG FITCH HOUSE DOWN ON OCEAN AVENUE - HE WAS PART OF THAT FAMILY. A LITTLE TOUGH PRACTICAL MAN OUT OF THE NAVAL ACADEMY CLASS OF 1906, JAKIE FITCH WAS A REAR ADMIRAL CARRIER DIVISION COMMANDER AND HIS FLAGSHIP SARATOGA WAS THE ONLY CARRIER ON THE WEST COAST. AFTER THE JAP RAID, THE NAVY COMMUNICATION CIRCUITS WERE OVERLOADED FOR HOURS AND HOURS. JAKIE COULDN'T GET A MESSAGE IN OR OUT - JUST READ COPIES OF WHAT WAS GOING BACK AND FORTH FROM WASHINGTON TO PEARL HARBOR. THINKING NOTHING OF IT, HE TOLD THE SARATOGA AND HER TWO DESTROYER ESCORTS TO PREPARE TO GET UNDERWAY WHILE HE WENT DOWN TO THE CORONADO TELEGRAPH OFFICE AND SENT A PLAIN LANGUAGE CIVILIAN TELEGRAM TO THE NAVY IN WASHINGTON: LEAVING CORONADO ON DECEMBER 7TH, 1941, HEADING WEST WITH SARATOGA AND TWO DESTROYERS LOOKING FOR JAPS. HE STOPPED AT PEARL HARBOR, WAS SENT ON AHEAD

TO THE CORAL SEA BY ADMIRAL NIMITZ, WHERE HE DID MAGNIFICENTLY,  
AND HE BECAME THE FIRST EVER COMNAVAIRPAC ON SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1942.

ALL THE GREAT CARRIER PILOTS OF WWII SEEM TO HAVE HAD  
CORONADO ADDRESSES WHERE THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN WAITED BEHIND.  
ONE OF THE VERY TOP AIR GROUP COMMANDERS AS THE WAR STARTED WAS  
COMMANDER STANHOPE RING, HUSBAND OF ELEANOR RING STORRS AND  
FATHER OF HER CHILDREN, INCLUDING COUNCILWOMAN SUSAN KIETH.

I SPOKE AT A FAREWELL PARTY AS MY OLD SQUADRON VF 51 DEPARTED FOR  
THE WESTERN PACIFIC IN THE VINSON A FEW MONTHS AGO AND STUDIED  
THE HISTORY OF MY PREDECESSORS AS HER COMMANDER. CHARLIE  
CROMMELIN, ONE OF THE FAMOUS FIVE BROTHERS, WAS ONE VF 51 SKIPPER  
WHO WENT ON TO COMMAND TWO AIR GROUPS - SEPARATED BY A STATESIDE  
RECUPERATION PERIOD FROM BATTLE WOUNDS IN THE FIRST - AND KILLED  
IN ACTION IN THE SECOND - THE KIA WIRE GOING TO HIS WIFE AT HER  
CORONADO ADDRESS. VF 51 BECAME THE FIRST JET SQUADRON IN THE  
PACIFIC FLEET, AND THEY TAUGHT THEMSELVES TO FLY THEM RIGHT HERE  
AT NORTH ISLAND IN 1947 AND 1948 - WORLD WAR TWO HOT SHOTS AND  
RINGERS, ALL: PETE AURAND, JOHN MAGDA, ED HOLLEY, BOB ELDER, RED

DAWG DAVIS, ON AND ON. THIS WAS NO HOT HOUSE OPERATION WITH CAREFUL INSTRUCTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BOOK. THEY WERE WRITING THEIR OWN BOOK. THERE WAS SOME WILD FLYING GOING ON. YOU ALL KNOW HOW THE WEATHER CAN CLOSE IN OVER NORTH ISLAND, AND THERE WERE NO FEDERAL AIRWAY INSTRUMENT FLIGHT PROVISIONS FOR JETS. RED DAWG TOLD ME HE WAS ONE OF ABOUT 20 OUT ON A GROUP GAGGLE WHEN SAN DIEGO SUDDENLY SOCKED IN. THEY WERE ALL ABOUT OUT OF FUEL AND IT WAS EVERYBODY FOR HIMSELF. EACH WAS TRYING TO GET DOWN THROUGH THE SOUP AND FIND THE NORTH ISLAND MAT, NEVER MIND THE RUNWAY. HE SAID THERE WERE AT LEAST A DOZEN NEAR MID-AIRS, AND WHEN THEY GOT THROUGH THERE WERE FJ-1'S PARKED ALL OVER THE MAT, MOST OF THEM OUT OF GAS, ALL HEADING IN DIFFERNT DIRECTIONS. THE SATURDAY EVENING POST CARRIED A BIG ARTICLE ENTITLED "JET GUYS ARE DIFFERENT", WITH COLOR PICTURES OF ALL THE COUPLES HAVING DINNER AT THE AURANDS' HOUSE ON B AVENUE, AFTERWARDS.

CORONADO WAS HOME FOR THE VERY BEST OF THOSE SERVICE GENERATIONS. SOCIAL HABITS OF NAVAL OFFICERS WERE THEN MORE

GEARED TO MEAGER INCOMES AND OFF DUTY COMRADESHIP THAN NOW. THE MEXICAN VILLAGE WAS A BIG DOT ON EVERYBODY'S MAP. ALL OUR KIDS PLAYED LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL HERE, NO NAVY FAMILY EVER FOUND A BETTER BEACH FOR A SWIM OR A PICNIC, NOBODY EVER FOUND A CLEANER, MORE MAGIC LITTLE CITY FULL OF SYMPATHETIC AND GOOD HEARTED PEOPLE.

IN A SOLITARY CELL WITH NO SENSORY INPUTS, YOU LEARN TO LIVE IN YOUR MEMORY. YOUR MEMORY BECOMES VERY SHARP AS YOUR BRAIN DRIES OUT OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS, AND WITH PRACTICE, YOU CAN RECALL THE FINEST DETAIL OF MOST ANY DAY IN YOUR LIFE. YOU DON'T LOSE TRACK OF TIME; YOU KNOW THE INSTANT YOU WAKE UP EXACTLY WHAT THE DATE AND DAY OF THE WEEK IS. YOU LIVE IN YOUR MIND, AND YOU KEEP IT GEARED TO EVERY REVOLUTION OF THE EARTH. YOU COME TO LIVE BY A SELF-INVENTED, INVOLUNTARY RITUAL: A TIME FOR THIS, A TIME FOR THAT: EXERCISE, MEDITATION, MEMORY DRILLS, PLOTTING DEVILTRY AGAINST THE ENEMY BY TAP CODE, AND STROLLS DOWN MEMORY LANE. ALL THESE MUST COME ONLY IN THEIR DISCIPLINED TURN. WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT WITHOUT SEEING ANYTHING BUT DIM LIGHT IN

DAYTIME, AND BARE BULBS ALL NIGHT, ONLY RARELY CATCHING A GLIMPSE OF SKY, OR VEGETATION, OR ANOTHER AMERICAN FACE, NO PENCIL, NO PAPER, YOUR LIFE COMES TO HAVE ALL THE VARIETY AND EMOTION AND INTELLECTUAL SATISFACTION IT ENJOYS ANYWHERE ELSE. NATURE FILLS THE VACUUM. YOUR LIFE EXPANDS TO 24 HOUR-A-DAY FULLNESS. AND IN THAT HOUR LATE IN THE DAY, WHEN I PERMITTED MYSELF RECREATIONAL DAY DREAMING, CORONADO SCENES WERE THE BEST: SEEING YOUR KIDS IN JUNIOR HIGH BAND CONCERTS AT SCHOOL, SEEING YOUR BOY SCOUT SON OFF FOR HIS GREAT CHALLENGE: NIGHT-TIME GUARD DUTY AT THE FLOWER SHOW TENT, GET-UP BASEBALL GAMES IN THE MIDDLE OF A AVENUE, GOOD HONEST FACES GOING TO CHURCH - PARTICULARLY BEST FOR ME, SYBIL'S.

WHEN THE TIME FINALLY CAME THAT I DARED THINK ABOUT ACTUALLY GOING HOME, I INDULGED MYSELF IN REPEATING TIME AND AGAIN AN OLD (5TH CENTURY B.C.) LINE FROM A SOPHOCLES PLAY I HAD ONCE USED IN A LETTER FROM THE TICONDEROGA TO THE FAMILIES OF MY SQUADRON: "NOTHING IS SO SWEET AS TO RETURN FROM SEA AND LISTEN TO THE RAINDROPS ON THE ROOFTOPS OF HOME." AND THAT WAS THE WAY IT WAS WHEN IT FINALLY HAPPENED. THANK YOU, CORONADO, FOR HAVING BEEN A

*PART OF My Life.*

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*James S. Sorkolak*

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