

## A Disappointed Man

I'm seventy-five now. This had to be left unwritten until I reached an age of better understanding. I couldn't have written it before. I've written about my father previously but wasn't mature enough to write anything about him from anything like an adult perspective. I could only write as if still a frightened child or later an early adolescent just beginning his rebellion. Those stories were among the first I wrote, they had to be, they were on the top of my thoughts, of my urge to tell the story. The stories were good. I don't disown them. They are true in fact and true to my feelings. They have authenticity and power. But now I can write the bigger story. My perspective has grown.

I'm going to begin at the ending. That's for dramatic effect because I so very much want you to keep reading but also because it was when I caught a glimpse of my father's vulnerability and his disappointment with life.

He was a thoroughly disappointed man because he lived in a way that could only end in disappointment. He had chosen a path in life in which showing disappointment and weakness were forbidden so he never showed them. He bore them in secret. He displayed only power and anger toward the world and often toward me, because in his heart he was so profoundly disappointed with the path he had chosen. He was disappointed with his entire life. I was part of his disappointment. I was a disappointment to him.

I saw fear and grief his face as he lay dying in front of me and my mother in the little room in Wilford Hall. I was fifteen and so frightened I couldn't fully comprehend what I was seeing but over many years of imaginary conversations with him I have come to understand him better. It is those conversations and so many other conversations and so many other small events that have made up that part of my life, raging against him and finally making peace with him, that when I put them all together they are enough. I have learned to have some compassion.

I could see fear and bewilderment and grief march across his face. It drooped from his ongoing stroke. He was dying and he knew it and he couldn't speak, couldn't form words, couldn't move his left arm, but reached out with his right hand, taking my mother's hand in his. I could see him trying to say "But I always loved you" when he would never be able to say it again.

At four years and eight years and fifteen years of age I feared him. Not always, not in every moment, but fear was the emotion that ruled me. Of course I also loved him, I couldn't help that, that is a pitfall of childhood. One of my earliest memories is walking beside him and reaching out my hand hoping he would take it, he so big and strong, that he would take my hand and he did! he did! and I walked with him, lengthening my stride, trying to make my four year old steps equal to his, his steps that were so long, so manly. I wanted to be a man like him, my father.

I am now worn down smooth by the griefs and humblings that life has given me and so can write with more comprehension and more compassion. I want to bring these as gifts to my long dead father. They are all I have, compassion and memories. I wish they could please him and placate my memory which always accuses him and me of the imperfections that we both bear. Of course it is too late to placate him and he was implacable anyway but I will write this even so. I will write it for myself. I will write it in memory of him.

Yet I must tell the truth. There were so many things my father believed and did that were so wrong, so hard to live with and so hard to accept even now. When I was a callow twenty I enjoyed telling about how bad he had been, how bad the America he represented and had fought for was.

How easy it was to blame him! At seventy five years, after wives and children lost, and friends dying and my country America running off the rails, all this blaming rings hollow. The blame rests on me, who else? Ask not for whom the bell tolls.

There were moments that were glorious and moments that were sordid or tawdry. I will try to balance these. I do want to come away with a story that is more than cheap anger. I have lived so much cheap anger. I have been so angry, just as he was.

Bernard Merrill Pittman was born at Riviera, Texas in 1914. His father moved to Sparkman, Arkansas a few years later. Merrill (he went by his middle name, just as I do) grew up there, attending its elementary school, then Sparkman High where he did one thing that was exceptional. His school work and his work as a clerk in his father's general store were ordinary but in his senior year he took the Scholastic Aptitude Test. I took the SAT myself, along with many high school seniors thirty three years later. I made a good score, 1385. I don't know my father's score but it was the highest score in the state. Arkansas is not well thought of regarding scholarship but the highest score was still the highest score and it was an indicator of Merrill's ability.

His mother, Lola Mae Bozeman, told him he would go to college, he must go, but his father Van, himself a college graduate, said "No. I need you to work in the store" so that was that, or so Van thought. Van was a tyrant, an old-fashioned German, but Lola Mae prevailed. One morning in the first week in September of 1935 she woke Merrill, shushing him, whispering he must not make a sound, and she took him to the car and drove away with him. She had packed clothes for him and was taking him to Ouachita College in Arkadelphia twenty five miles away. She would arrange the details when they got there.

With his stellar SAT score and his mother's insistence, admission was easily accomplished but there was no money. Lola Mae could take the car and take her son but Van had tight control over the money. She found a way. Merrill would receive a Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship that paid the tuition. For room and board he would work, raking leaves and mowing grass, and there he was: a college student!

Van didn't take this well. Van didn't tolerate being thwarted. He was a violent man, both physically and emotionally, the son of a German immigrant. The German language was still sometimes used in his home and he was a paternalistic German tyrant. It was his practice when disobeyed to bark out "Eins! Zwei! Drei!" and if the object of his wrath, son or daughter, had not corrected the insubordination a hard slap would follow.

Merrill took a bus from Arkadelphia to Sparkman every Friday evening to work in the store every Saturday and Sunday but Van never spoke to him for four years, not even when Merrill's mother, Van's wife, died early in Merrill's senior year. Merrill and his sisters Glenda and Alice Beth all blamed their father for her death, agreeing that it had been caused by Van's selfish hardhearted nature.

Merrill's studies at Ouachita were unexceptional. He had a C average. He wasn't much interested in his other courses but he was finding so much to like in ROTC: the order, the discipline, the power to command, he loved all of that but in one thing he truly excelled. He was on the national ROTC rifle team in 1938 and made a perfect score with his 1903 Springfield, 40/40 standing at 500 yards, best in match.

After graduating from Ouachita in 1939 Merrill escaped his father again by marrying Carol Royston. Soon after something thrilling came along: he was sure to be called up as an Army Air Corps Officer and war was surely coming! Carol, now Carol Pittman his wife, a violinist, was also

a college graduate. She had gone to Baylor College in Waco, Texas on a music scholarship and married Merrill even though she preferred another young man who was also a musician. Her father told her no, marry the Army man, and she did. Fathers have called the shots for generations in my family, for better or for worse.

Marriage had been difficult. He would never admit it but he didn't like women and didn't desire them for sex. He married one, yes, but that's just what a man did, and it gave him a new family, the Roystons, that wouldn't be dominated by a Prussian, all that was easy but Carol expected Merrill to be eager to have sex with her and that turned out to be disappointing. She was eager to experience this new thing but Merrill turned away saying nothing on their wedding night, and every night of their honeymoon in New Orleans. Carol was hurt. She didn't know what to think or say. She had chosen New Orleans for their honeymoon because it was romantic and seemed foreign and somehow racy. It had a suggestive quality that appealed to her. Her honeymoon turned out a disappointment. There was none of the new experience she had wondered so much about. Merrill stayed distant. His distance only grew and Carol blamed herself. She didn't think it was his problem, she thought it must be her fault. Eventually he would suppress his fears enough have sex with Carol. It finally happened on the night of their first anniversary. It had taken him an entire year.

It was 1941 and war was brewing. There was no question about what Merrill would do. Soon after the marriage he was called up to active duty in the US Army and served in the Air Corps. He was assigned to the Air Training Command, designing and planning the training of the men that would pilot and navigate and maintain the aircraft needed for the war. Marriage and family weren't the center of his life. From Ouachita onward, it was always his military career.

He served in the Air Training Command throughout World War II, first at Miami Army Airfield, then at Sparks Field near Reno, Nevada. There he helped design the training for air crews flying over the Sierra Nevada Mountains, training them to fly C-47s over the hump from India to Burma. After those years at Sparks he spent 1945 in the Philippines training the B-29 crews that were laying waste to Japan. He was good at what he did and loved military life. He made Captain, then Major during the war. The only disappointment was he would never be a pilot. His eyes weren't good enough. He was only going to be a desk pilot.

Along with his duty at Sparks he made interesting new friends at Reno; Harold Smith owned one of the earliest casinos opened in Nevada, Harold's Club. The Club was nationally famous. Gambling was legal in Nevada but not in any other state so that helped, but Harold had the idea of putting up signs all across the US that read "123 Miles to Harold's Club" with an arrow pointing the way and they became a well-known bit of Americana, like the Burma-Shave signs that were everywhere too. There was a sign that read "3429 Miles to Harold's Club" on Midway Island for years, with the arrow pointing east. I think some Navy men must have put it up. Anyway, Harold's club was famous so Harold Smith was too.

Pitt (that was the nickname he went by now) met Harold at the Club. They hit it off and Pitt became a regular at Harold's Sunday poker games, held at Harold's house, not at the Club. These were penny-ante games, played not to gamble, just for socializing and fun. This is where Pitt met Shizu Sakurai. Shizu was visiting the US as an agent for the Mikimoto Cultured Pearl Company when Pearl Harbor was bombed. She was in Reno, Nevada on January 7, and as a Japanese citizen she was in a frightening situation, at risk of being imprisoned. She asked her good friend Harold Smith to shelter her and he did so, hiding her for the entire duration of the war. That was how Pitt and then Carol became friends with Shizu Sakurai.

When the Hump route was well established there was a new duty station: China. Pitt helped design and provide the continuous training that combat in World War II required, so different than in "the war to end all wars" where strategy was mired for years, tactics never changed and always failed and millions were killed. Continuous development of strategy and tactics partnered with continuous training spared American troops. The Japanese were fanatic but American hardware and the best training were vital to our victory.

The war was being won. Pitt would fly to the Philippines. Carol had already gone back to Searcy, back to her parents. Pitt's adult personality was fixed by now. He was smart, capable, hardworking and inflexible. He didn't like people much, but he liked being good at his job in the Army Air Force. He had few friends, all of them fellow officers. They called him Pitt now, not Merrill, and with no derision. Pitt was a single hard syllable that could be a seed or a place to position a machine gun or mortar. The new name was manly, just like Pitt. Pitt obeyed orders and was obeyed. Marriage still wasn't what he had thought it would be and he still didn't much like sex, it was too intimately personal, and he didn't want children. The Army saying went "If the Army wanted you to have a family you would have been issued one." He was hard on his subordinates, confident that job execution was the important thing, not getting along or being kind. He caught his Filipino "boy" making off with an egg and a bar of soap and asked "What did you steal it for?" "To eat it" and he made the man eat the soap. He laughed when he told me. It still amused him, twenty years later. He added that "Filipinos are clean people, they bathe whenever they can." but had nothing more to say about making his servant eat the soap.

The war was won, first in Europe, then in the Pacific. Pitt had enjoyed the war. It gave him the opportunity to do a difficult and important task well. Kindness, compassion, gentleness, those were for women. Men were hard and unflinching, they did what had to be done without making a fuss, without tears. That's how you win a war. That's how a man should live. The war was the best thing that had ever happened to him. He didn't know it, but the war years were the best years he ever had.

After the war Pitt was demobilized. A military of twelve million had to be shrunk to little more than a million so there wasn't a place for him. His Commission was only Reserve. Like it or not, he had to return to civilian life.

Pitt went back to visit Sparkman where he discovered something he hadn't expected. Every high school friend of his, all his childhood friends, had been killed in the war. None had gone to college like he had. All were enlisted men, mostly infantry, none of them officers, and all had been killed. This made a lasting impression on Pitt.

Pitt and Carol lived in the Royston house in Searcy, of course. Going back to Sparkman to live in his father's house was out of the question, especially with his mother gone. He tried selling life insurance, led into this by his father-in-law, an insurance man. He tried law school for a year. His father-in-law Alec Royston, so much kinder than Pitt's father Van, gave him every opportunity but nothing worked out. He hated selling insurance. He hated the law. He was lost outside the military. His future that had looked so bright was turning out a disappointment. The war had been so good! He had a purpose! Something important to do and he was good at it! The war had been the best part of his life. Pitt yearned for more successes but couldn't find them.

Then out of the blue an opportunity came: the War Department was going to create a new branch of the Armed Forces. It was to be the United States Air Force, entire and complete, not a little brother of the Army but with its own bases and its own West Point someday that would be called the Air Force Academy. This new Air Force would have a seat in the Joint Chiefs, answering only to the Secretary of War and the President, not to some ground-pounder infantryman or artillery

sad-sack. Pitt's new Joint Chief would be all about the commanders that were all about flight and air power. And it needed an Officer Corps, ASAP. Pitt could be one of those commanders, and with a regular Air Force Commission, not Reserve. There would be a qualifying test for men, for officers who had served in the war. Right up his alley! His spirit soared.

Pitt didn't hesitate. He applied to take the test, of course he did, he was reaching for a lifesaver. He took the test and only the top seven per cent were in but of course he made the cut. He was active again and this time with a regular commission! Just like the West Pointers! But he came back in as a Captain, not a Major. O'S, not O-4. Whatever it takes. He was back where he belonged.

After he rejoined the Air Force, Pitt's first assignment was to Barksdale Air Force Base near Shreveport, Louisiana. Barksdale was then the headquarters of the Air Training Command, Pitt's field during the war, so it was familiar duty. It chafed him, having to give up his oak leaves and go back to railroad tracks, but it was what was required so he accepted the reduction in rank. He thought it would only be two or three years until promotion back to major but he was thinking it would be like in the war days when promotions came quickly. He was young, only 33, strong and healthy and sure he could still reach his goal: General Officer, United States Air Force! Unlikely for a non-pilot but Pitt believed he was smarter and he drove himself harder than the pilots. He was confident that he had stuff pilots couldn't match. He was back where he belonged and would never look back. He soared through his assignment at Barksdale AFB, doing his own kind of flying. He was good at it!

There were other developments in Pitt's life too. Carol was pregnant with their first child. That difficulty about sex had been put aside. Pitt wasn't so sure but Carol was eager for children to fill her life. She was confident she would be a good mother and Pitt a good strong father, a strong masculine man and so smart! Pitt was pleased he had solved the problem of providing for a family with the rebirth of his military career. He didn't worry about anything.

Although becoming a husband had not been what he expected, becoming a father was worse. His new daughter was not a cute little bundle of sweetness and spice, she was an angry squalling ball of anger with unending demands. Thank God he was a father, not responsible for taking care of this little demon! Pitt thanked God for creating women to take care of children!

Soon came the Pitt's next assignment: to Scott AFB, the new headquarters of the Air Training Command, located just east of Saint Louis, Missouri. ATC-HQ moved, so personnel were transferred, so wives and children moved with them, so Carol and Mary came along to Scott. At least it wasn't too far from Arkansas and Carol was pregnant again. A year after the transfer, their new child, a son that was born at Scott AFB hospital. That was me. My mother Carol named me after her father, Alexander Henderson Royston, who had died 268 days before I was born. January 18, 1950 - October 12, 1950. 268 days. My father said "But we'll call him Roy."

While at Scott, two events of great significance happened for Pitt: a bad Efficiency Report and a delayed promotion. His commanding officer was well known as a Colonel who was himself commanded by two personality traits so dangerous to subordinates: he was a vengeful man and an angry drunk. Pitt was up for promotion, back up to O-4, back to Major, but this Colonel submitted a bad ER on Pitt and his promotion was frozen. It is one of the sad truths that the military is a place where outrageous abuse of men of lesser rank often takes place and Pitt was truly stuck. Fortunately, this Colonel was transferred away. That was half the battle. The other half was up to Pitt. He had been working fifty hour weeks before the bad ER; now he started working sixty and seventy hour weeks. Pitt drove himself every minute of those hours for two years. It paid off. His

promotion finally came through and he was a Major again. But there was a cost, too. In December of 1952 came the heart attack.

Narrow coronary arteries run in our father's family. They killed my father's mother, Mamie Bozeman, and nearly killed my father in 1952. We were all in Searcy for Christmas and Pitt had what sounds to me like a big, nearly fatal anterior MI, an extremely serious heart attack, but only three days afterward he insisted on being driven back to Scott. He was too sick to drive our car but he made himself get back to work and he showed up to work as planned when his seven days leave were up. I don't remember any of this but have been told he rode on the floor of our 1949 Cadillac, laying down behind the front seat, with Mary sitting on the back seat and me up front next to my mother. Decades later she told me his face was green as he lay on the floor of the car. The family doctor in Searcy had forbidden any travel but Pitt insisted on it. He wanted to keep his promotion and he wanted the next one, too. He didn't tell anyone at Scott about the heart attack. He had to keep it a secret to stay active USAF.

He got the promotion, and rapidly, more quickly than usual. He earned it by doing more work in less time than his new commanding officer had ever seen. Now he was Colonel Pittman! Only a Light Colonel, full Bird would take more time, more years of effort, but Pitt was confident he was still on his upward arc. His next transfer came in 1955, To Randolph Air Force Base, the Headquarters Crew Training Air Force (HQCTAF), located just north and east of San Antonio, Texas. My first memories are of the day we moved in to our new house at 10 East Park Street. Pitt was O-5 now and he was assigned housing inside Inner Octagon near the Officer's Club, right at the center of Randolph. Every Saturday evening there was Smorgasbord Dinner, all summer long the stylish O-Club swimming pool was open, everywhere there were big open spaces, lovely faux-Spanish Colonial architecture. There was no crime, everything was peaceful and quiet except for the whine of B-47s landing and taking off at all hours. There was noise the day Captain Bill Eberle crashed his T-33 jet trainer on the broad pavement of the main boulevard that ran from the main gate to the HQ building, the noise of the crash and then the sirens. Eberle died in the crash but he saved innocent lives by putting his T-33 down on the broad pavement instead of in housing. Eberle Park was named after him. We used to picnic there.

Pitt was happy with how life was going. He was proud of the work he was doing, helping the Air Force train personnel to operate the biggest, best, most deadly fighting force in the world. The USAF was a constant threat to the Soviets, keeping them from spreading their un-American way of life further over the world. The Air Force was also enabling the Stars and Stripes to frighten our other enemies, China and Korea, all of them godless commies! The Air Force had helped win the big one, WWII, and now protected our old allies who were still with us, and we were protecting our old enemies too, Germany and Japan! Imagine that! Pitt was serving a cause that he could always take pride in.

He was proud of the way he was head of a family, living in a nice stucco house with an enormous back yard to play in and the O-Club just a block away, and free medical care for them, and he had a new Cadillac! He had traded in the '49 last year for a new '53 Sedan de Ville that was fast and sweet and because the '54s were already coming in, he got a good price.

His wife was obedient. His kids: not so great. Mary was still difficult, always stubborn, always wanted things her way. Disobedient was the word for her. She was smart, he had to give her that, but that just made her insolent ways worse. Roy was too dreamy. He was real smart, even smarter than Mary, but didn't act like a boy should. He was timid, that was his problem. He didn't like to rough-and-tumble with the other boys on Randolph, he always was reading, Carol had taught him how when he was only four and that made Pitt proud but his feelings about that were mixed. The truth is, Roy was kind of a sissy. He was always playing with a little boy named Kerry who

lived down the street and Kerry was kind of a sissy too. Pitt thought he'd better keep an eye on that. But all in all, things were good. Then came the second heart attack.

This one wasn't as bad as the first one. Oh, it was bad alright, but it didn't almost kill him. The real problem was it happened on base. Pitt was always on base, he worked and lived there, and so he was taken to the base hospital and it became part of his record. It was a death blow to his career. The Air Force didn't want any cripples and Pitt was a cardiac cripple now. Cardiology didn't amount to much in those days. All the medicines that keep me alive hadn't been developed. The idea of cardiac rehab then was "Sell your golf clubs. You won't be using them any more. If you try to exert yourself like you used to it will kill you. It's time for you to take it easy from now on." That's what the medicos told him. And there would be a medical court-martial.

A medical court-martial has all the force of law and there can be no appeal. It can end a military career. For Pitt, termination would be like a death sentence. He had representation, as was usual in courts-martial. Here came his big stroke of luck. He drew an old friend as his Judge Advocate General defender, Light Colonel David Lightfoot, with whom he had served in the war and who had gone to law school after the war to become a JAG officer. The court-martial went as it had to: Lt. Col. Pittman was found to be unfit for further service. He was devastated. He looked at Dave and asked "What am I going to do now?" and Dave said "Be calm. You'll be OK. Let's go."

As they walked out of the room Dave picked up a manila folder that had been left on the judges' bench. As they left to courtroom Pitt couldn't contain himself, blurting out "I mean it Dave. I'm forty-two years old, wife and children, and the Air Force is the only thing I'm good for. It's all I've got! What am I going to do?" And Dave said "You can stop worrying. All the records of your court-martial are right here in this folder." And they were and Dave Lightfoot "lost" them. Pitt stayed in the Air Force for ten more years.

Even so, Pitt's second heart attack had consequences. The brass at Randolph knew about the heart attack and the medical court-martial and what had happened to the records. The Air Force took care of its own, but only in its own way. Pitt would stay an active duty officer but there would be no more promotions. That hurt, it changed everything Pitt had planned for his life, never to be a General. Pitt was smart and capable and he worked hard but he was not flexible.

An element of his love for the military was its inflexibility. Here he was, denied his goals. The military mirrored his own shortcomings. I don't know if he saw the irony. I didn't see it myself until I wrote this account of his life. I knew he was angry. I didn't realize he was so disappointed. Thwarted is accurate too.

There were other new problems. He was easily winded. He was told by his doctors not to exert himself so he didn't. He quit smoking cigars and tried to eat less meat and lose weight but this was hard and he struggled with it. He had to take new a medicine for his heart's new abnormal rhythm and this medicine had a side effect: he bled easily so he changed from Gillette Super Blue Blades to a Norelco Rotary. Most of all Pitt, Carol and his children lived with the constant awareness he could suddenly drop dead. This affected them all and set the tone of their home as much as the threat posed by the USSR did.

Life went on. Pitt continued to be excellent at his job. He still enjoyed it. His kids were starting school and his wife joined the Officer's Wives Club. The family went to the O-Club most Saturday evenings for dinner when the Club put on a smorgasbord, an elaborate buffet with many Scandinavian dishes but there were American standards as well. Randolph had been built in a time when military officers lived well and the O-Club was part of this largesse. It was a very short walk

from our house, the swimming pool was there, the kid's school was on base and a very short walk too but there was no need for them to walk. They would have to cross a heavily traveled street so a bus was provided to carry them the three blocks. Heavily traveled meant a few cars might go by every few minutes. There was no such thing as heavy traffic on base and everyone drove slowly anyway. The hospital and Base Exchange and Commissary were all close. It was idyllic Norman Rockwell Americana with nuclear-capable bombers. It was almost perfect, except Truman had integrated the armed forces and Eisenhower went along with the new rule. Pitt hated that but he had to make some compromises to live the life he loved.

It came time for the next transfer and it was a good one: Japan! Pitt had been in the Philippines and China but never Japan. He had heard it was good duty and was excited. The kids would have to change schools and houses and give up their friends and the dog and cat but all that came with the territory: they were Air Force brats.

Roy's teacher had called Pitt and Carol in for a conference and Pitt had thought the boy was in trouble but that wasn't it at all. She told him he should leave the Air Force so his son could stay in San Antonio to go to a new school there. It was named Keystone School, it was for "gifted children", whatever that was supposed to mean, and that was just crazy thinking. Give up the Air Force? Find another job, another whole way of life? Give up all the Air Force benefits, have to start paying for what was free for an Officer, all that just so his kid could go to a special private school? Expensive, too, probably. Forget about it. Not going to happen. Pitt knew all about being smart, he was smart, and knew education was important, he was educated, had a B.A. and just think of his high school buddies, all killed in the war, but he had had to make his own way and Roy could too. Pitt was father and made the decisions for the family. It was nature's way. Pitt was going to Japan and so were the wife and kids.

Japan was good. Pitt flew there in a MATS Constellation, first to Tachikawa Air Base then a bus took him and other personnel to Johnson Air Base, his new duty station. He was assigned to the 5045 Air Base Group. It was routine duty, planning and carrying out the training of airmen so the base could perform its function. That was to support the Tactical Air Command bases like nearby Yokota. Everything was several layers of organization deep, all to support the men who would do the fighting when it came to that. Air Training Command was part of the tail that made the teeth able to bite. It was complicated, some thought it was boring, but Pitt saw it was necessary and he was good at it. OK, he wasn't a pilot of an F-86, but he made it possible for that pilot to fly.

Pitt's wife and kids came over a month later on a ship the Navy operated, the USS Gaffey, a converted troopship from WWII. Pitt had enjoyed working with no distractions but he was a husband and father and his duty to them, while only his secondary duty, was calling. Pitt had bought a house for the family to live in. It was a strange arrangement: it was on-base but the Japanese government owned it and he had to buy it, then sell it when his next transfer came, but it was cheap and he had a guaranteed buyer when his Japan tour was over. Strange and overly complicated but it was how the system worked. It wasn't like stateside but it came with being an officer. What the hell. And he was a homeowner! He'd never been a homeowner before!

These years in Japan were quiet ones for Pitt. Some things were exciting for his family, for Carol and Mary and Roy. We three and Carol's mother Etta and sister Lillian made a trip by car from Tokyo to Kyoto, stopping along the way at Gifu and other garden spots, venturing into areas where Americans had never been seen by the local residents. Shizu Sakurai was our guide and we couldn't have done it without her.

We visited a Bonsai garden where we saw three hundred Bonsai trees that ranged from fifty to three hundred years old. We visited Osaka Castle which was magnificent. We visited the great

temple of Kyoto, where the English-speaking guide apologized that we could only see the new temple as the old original temple had been destroyed in a fire. When asked she clarified that the fire had happened six hundred years ago.

We saw and fed the tame deer at Nara. Mary and I especially liked that. The high point of our trip was viewing the cormorant fishing at Gifu. It was festival time. We went out on the lake at night in a small boat and had a Japanese meal as we watched the fishermen draw the fish with torches to the birds who catch the fish which were immediately taken from them by the fishermen. What a spectacle! We were all delighted and Shizu was proud of her country and pleased by our appreciation of this singular event.

On the way back North, on the New Tokaido, a modern highway named for the old Tokaido, an ancient road used even before the days of Tokugawa, we had a flat tire. We were only women and children! What would we do? Before the adults of our party could get too distressed (Mary and I were enjoying being out of the car and were exploring the roadside), a little truck stopped to help us. It held two middle aged men who were very courteous and helpful. They changed the tire in a jiffy. They talked with Shizu and she translated. As they changed the tire the older of the two men related that his entire family had been killed in the bombing of Nagasaki. He remained friendly as he told us about this. I was amazed that he stayed so pleasant.

After the two men drove away we set off North again in our Buick. Aunt Lillian said "I hope they tightened the wheel nuts enough." The man had. The wheels didn't fall off. We got back to Johnson safely.

The time came when Pitt (my father) had to give his son (me) the talk. The talk about sex. It could be deferred no longer. His son was eight years old. Pitt didn't look forward to this but it was his duty. If he didn't give his son this talk he might learn about it from others who would likely present it in a smutty way or even try to persuade his son to take part in something perverted. There was no way out. It had to happen and it was time. Pitt handled this task like he handled the teaching he did for the Air Force: he gave a chalk talk. He didn't rush through it, he took twenty minutes or more to draw diagrams of the reproductive organs of the sexes and the process itself and answered any questions his son might have. His son had none. It was a completed task and completed thoroughly as Pitt always completed tasks. He had done his duty. It was over. That was a relief.

For his son, that would be me, it was bewildering. Yes, but it was fascinating too. I had no idea people did that! What a revelation it was! I could tell my father was uncomfortable with the topic so I didn't interrupt. I wanted the chalk talk over. I wanted to be alone to think about this new thing.

I was only eight but fascination with sex had been lurking. It may be dormant but it lies ready to be aroused in all of us at any age. My father didn't bring the subject up again for years and when he did it was to condemn someone. I will come to that.

I did it, Pitt thought. I gave Roy the talk. I don't have to do that again. What a relief!

One afternoon Pitt was sent to the dispensary by his commanding officer. "You look bad. Go get checked." His blood pressure was sky-high. He went to the base hospital and the doctor sent him home. "Your blood pressure is dangerously high. The only thing I can do for you is send you home to rest. Pick up a bottle of whiskey at the Class Six store, lie down in a dark room and drink a shot every hour. That will help." I watched him dilute the whiskey with water from the kitchen

sink. He told me he hated the taste, hated drinking whiskey and then he did lie down in his bedroom. I didn't know enough to be scared. He wasn't much of a drinker then.

The Pentagon assignment was a required stop on the path of an officer. Pitt hadn't fully accepted the consequences of his heart attack and the partial reprieve his medical court-martial had granted him. This came slowly. Pitt had been so determined to make flag rank and so used to overcoming obstacles that he had successfully deceived himself about being stuck at O-5, he still looked forward to full Colonel, but this denial couldn't last forever. He realized his true situation during this tour.

There were contributing factors. He was now a further step removed from being a pilot. The uniform of the day every day at Pentagon duty was civvies, not the uniform he was so proud of. He was around Generals all the time. They are common at the Pentagon, he was seeing them and he wasn't one of them and he wasn't ever going to be one. Pitt saw the pitying looks given him by officers still on their way up and it all sank in. He still worked hard and excelled in his work but he was a cardiac cripple. He became an angrier man, a disappointed man.

He had to drive a Chevy, not a Caddy, which he hated and was ashamed of and he couldn't even drive that underpowered heap to work. He had to take the bus. He couldn't drive himself to work because the Pentagon parking lot was too big so the walk to the doors was too far for him. He couldn't afford the gas for the drive because he had to pay for civilian housing and his pay just barely stretched that far, which is why he didn't have a Caddy for the first time since Scott.

He had to walk to the bus stop and that was OK in the mornings. Mount Ida Avenue sloped steeply down to the bus stop so it was no problem but in the evenings it was uphill and Pitt had to stop and rest on the way up because he had chest pains and the docs had warned him about that. He could have another heart attack and drop dead right there. Maybe that would be better, to not have to try any more.

Pitt had always been a violent man, easily angered, but now he was consumed by resentment. It was so unfair! He had done nothing wrong. He had always worked so hard and done so well. He didn't ask for the narrow coronary arteries he had been born with. Why me? he thought. He remained pleasant at work, he made himself do that, but he was explosive at home. Underneath his anger was disappointment, with his career, with his wife and children, with his fate. He became a more difficult husband and father.

Pitt never hit Carol but he hit his children more often. He had always done that, that was what a father did. It was how you disciplined children, but now he hit them because of his simmering rage. One evening in the kitchen Mary said something Pitt didn't like and he slapped her so hard her eardrum was broken. She was hurt so badly that she needed a doctor and this was a problem. Mary couldn't be taken to the clinic at Bolling or Andrews because the Air Force frowned on child beating and it would be a black mark for Pitt so Carol took Mary to a civilian doctor. Carol was worried about having to pay the doctor, the Air Force had provided all the medical services the family needed free of charge, but money wasn't the problem. The civilian doctor listened to the story Carol told, asked her to leave the exam room, and told Mary he knew what had to have happened. The doc took out one of his cards, wrote his home number on it, gave it to Mary and told her to call him if anything like this ever happened again. He called our mother back in and told her he knew how Mary had been hurt. He told her it must never happen again. So Mary escaped any further beatings.

Pitt's drinking had increased too. He never drank hard liquor except for eggnog made with Bourbon whiskey at the New Year's Eve party which Pitt and Carol threw every year. Now his beer

drinking had gone from an occasional can at picnics to about six daily. He would go to work in the morning, work all day, and pick up a six-pack of Bud at the drugstore near the bus stop. Pitt would slowly drink the six cans as he read the Washington Post, sitting on the living room couch after supper. He wasn't an angry drunk. He didn't yell or stagger. He quietly drank to console himself for his disappointments. I feel sorry for him now, remembering. I have done the same and worse myself.

Two big events, things with national or even international scope, occurred during Pitt's Pentagon years. In October of 1962 it was the Cuban Missile Crisis. Washington, DC was the most heavily targeted city in the world, except perhaps Moscow. I had read up on Civil Defense. I had sent away for pamphlets that were given away free to anyone who asked, published by the government, which showed ordinary citizens how to prepare for nuclear warfare. In the midst of this crisis I asked my father if I could gather some grocery bags, we used heavy-duty paper bags in those days, fill them with dirt, and put them in windows, to resist the flash and blast of the nuclear explosions we all were expecting. He told me not to bother, they wouldn't work, we would all die whether I made these efforts or not. That was scary and he was right. Civil Defense was just propaganda to lull a gullible populace. Pitt was in the Air Force, he worked at the Pentagon, he knew what a nuclear attack would be like.

In November of 1963 it was the assassination of President Kennedy. Pitt didn't much like Kennedy, he thought him soft on communism, tolerant of the societal changes that were already emerging, even in the early sixties. Pitt wasn't much affected by the assassination but the rest of the family was. He was the stalwart warrior, we were the timid dependent civilians.

There is one other event that occurred in these years that sticks in my mind. It happened a month or two before the Kennedy assassination. I was a great reader of science fiction and the 21st World Science Fiction Convention was held in DC. Of course I went, I wouldn't miss it! I got my picture taken with Isaac Asimov (black and white Polaroid) and then Philip K. Dick, a favorite of mine, got the Hugo Award for best novel, *The Man In The High Castle*. I met an aspiring writer, a pleasant man in his twenties who was a SF enthusiast. We talked, he encouraged me to write stories and write to him as well. He told me about the stories he was working on and I told him about mine. We exchanged addresses. A few weeks later I got a letter from him, again encouraging me to write. My father spotted the letter, read it, and forbade me to reply. "He's a homosexual. You can't have anything more to do with him." I was upset. I did write back but only to tell him what my father had said. He wrote again, was offended and angry, and I never heard from him afterward. I didn't connect the dots. My father's reaction to the letter was inappropriate. It fit in with other of his behaviors but I didn't know about them at the time and I was too young and naive to recognize the pattern.

Mary and Roy were sent to a Lutheran School, Missouri Synod, for the four years in DC. That was at our mother's insistence. Pitt was Southern Baptist but not really. Every Sunday morning Carol, Mary and Roy would attend services at Immanuel Lutheran Church while Pitt attended the Southern Baptist church up on the hill above our house, or so he said. He wasn't a believer. I think this troubled him a little but he always came down on the side of power, of the use of force. He was Air Force all the way. It was all he had.

In 1964 Pitt was transferred to Lackland AFB in San Antonio. It was like a homecoming. San Antonio meant Randolph, and Mexican food at La Fonda in North Main. Pitt was in the South again, he was unreconstructed and he was home again, to the extent he was was at home anywhere.

Pitt worked at his assigned tasks, planning trainings. Mary went to civilian high school off base, Thomas Jefferson, a bus ride away from Lackland. Roy went to San Marcos Academy, sixty

miles away, a harsh military school. Pitt assigned Roy to SMA and hoped he would someday attend the Air Force Academy.

Pitt's second-to-last task for the Air Force was redesigning the twelve-week basic training for recruits. The twelve weeks was divided into fifteen minute blocks, 672 of them. Of course there were repeated blocks. Sundays, except for Reveille, Retreat and Taps, were breaks in the seemingly endless training, and there were twenty-eight blocks allotted to sleep every night, but redesigning basic training was a colossal task. Pitt completed it in fewer days than allotted. He was aging, he was a cardiac cripple, but he still excelled at his job.

Pitt's last assignment was a strange one. It was a short one, just a TDY assignment, but what made it strange was it was to solve a problem for the Army. This was unheard of, an Air Force officer sent to fix something no Army officer had been able to fix.

The Army had replaced the M1, a World War II rifle, with the new M14. All infantry and all new recruits had been trained on it. The Vietnam War was heating up with many units shipped there. The problem was that noncombat soldiers such as quartermasters, cooks, even chaplains, weren't checked off on the new rifle. The Army wanted them trained before they were deployed but couldn't make it all work properly even though they had been trying for months. Someone knew this USAF O-5 at Lackland that was a wizard at planning training so Pitt was called to Fort Ord in California.

Pitt did it. He devised a plan that separated all the men that needed to be trained on the M14 from their units, sent them to Fort Ord for three days training, and flew them to Da Nang to rejoin their units. These soldiers were to arrive at Da Nang within three hours of their units and they did. It was complicated but Pitt planned it and it worked. He was indeed a wizard.

Pitt returned to Lackland on the 21st of December, 1965. His presence, as always, filled the house. He had worked long hours on his assignment and was very tired but even so was forceful and commanding. That evening, getting ready for sleep, I stood next to my bed, the bedroom door open, as my father walked down the hall and stood in the doorway. I looked at my father, feeling the mix of love and fear I always felt when he approached. He looked at me silently for several seconds.

I had no idea what to expect. I saw that my father's face was drawn and pale, his eyes red, and his lips were quivering. "I love you, son" came out in a choked rush, forced past a lifetime of barriers. We were both shocked. We stood there silently for only a second or two, eyes locked, then my father shrugged apologetically with a half smile, and turned down the hall. He had never said these words to me before, nor looked so uncertain, nor had he ever seemed apologetic. I think he was having a premonition.

The next day Pitt went to work and had a stroke. Roy took the call from the doctor at Wilford Hall. It was a cerebral bleed, a big stroke, and nothing could be done. The next day Carol couldn't bring herself to make the necessary decision. It fell to Roy to give permission to the doctor that the ventilator could be turned off. Pitt was 51. Roy was 15.