

The Life and Times of Walter Alcorn Elmore

My earliest recollections start at about age six. Tom Shannon Hawkins and I were very close since we were born two blocks apart and within two weeks of one another. My birthday was October 2, 1925 We both went to first grade at Nicolas Blackwell School.

My dad died about that time of tuberculosis. He had been manager of the Parts Department for Buick, which was a very responsible position for a 26 year old. He was a very good athlete, captain of his basketball team and had pitched a no-hit-no run game in an industrial baseball league.

When he died, we all (Grandmaw Agnes, Millard Brown Tapp, Lillian Tapp, Frank Tapp and Mother and I) Moved to 1858 Walker. I went to grammar school at Peabody Grammar School and got into my first schoolyard fight, which turned out to be a tie.

I started Junior High at Bellevue. When Charles Millard came along, we all moved to 1043 Bruce, near the Fairgrounds, and I transferred to Fairview Junior High where I became a star on the Peewee (less than 120 pounds) basketball team. The Tapps moved to their new house in Highland Heights . Mother married Loyd Raymond Duncan at that time, and we moved to 1068 Eastmoreland. With the rest of the clan in Highland Heights, Mother decided to move there too.

I thoroughly enjoyed the Boy Scouts, got a whole flock of Merit Badges and became a Life Scout and Senior Patrol Leader. Then I got interested in the Sea Scouts. We had an old tug on the Wolf River that the Coast Guard gave us. It was being used as a rum runner during prohibition, and the Coast Guard confiscated it and gave it to the Sea Scouts. We always cruised up the Mississippi, so when the engine failed, the Coast Guard could pick us up before we got to New Orleans.

Before graduation from Memphis Technical High School in 1943 ,where I was required to take ROTC, and while we were still at Eastmoreland, I volunteered to join the Army Air Corps. Having taken Physical Education from the high school football coach where he beat us to a pulp, I was in the best shape of my life and the army Phys Ed routine was a snap!! I never saw an obstacle course I didn't enjoy.

My time in the Air Corps was a joy. After all of the preliminary testing, though my eyes were 20/20, I was told that they weren't good enough for me to be a pilot. They offered me the choice of becoming a bombardier or a navigator. The latter looked good to me.

Prior to Navigator training, I went to Centre College in Danville , Kentucky for six months, where we studied Mathematics, Physics and basic Aeronautics. I also got 10 hours in a Piper Cub, to the point of being ready to solo. After that, I went to Maxwell Field in Alabama for classification and pre-flight training.

I really enjoyed Navigator School. I hadn't known that all those stars had a purpose. Today, they use GPS instead of a sextant. It's a lot more accurate too.

All of us had to go to Gunnery School. Imagine an 18 year old kid with all the ammunition he could blow up, all of the video games he could play, all of the food he could eat, some of the smartest and affable comrades, with the only commitment to do the job.

At this time, I was assigned to a Troop Carrier Group. You fly over enemy territory, drop the infantry out the window, and fly back to the officers club, but I never got to use all of that training.

By then, the war was over. Jerry Wilson and I took advantage of the GI Bill and tried, along with six million other GI,s to find a college with both a place to stay and with courses still open. The University of Tennessee didn't even want to talk to us. Same thing at Univ of Ark and Univ of Oklahoma. Jerry and I finally gave up and went home to wait for the next Quarter to open up. We went to work tearing down houses to save the good timber for new houses.

I did pretty well academically at UT- Martin because I had already taken the courses in High School or at Centre College in the Air Corps. There I met the most beautiful, the kindest young lady you could imagine who had her eye on becoming a doctor. We traveled together, spent time together, went to football games together and in in general spent as much time together as time would allow, but never studied together. We had met in a Trigonometry class. We just liked one another. After graduation,she spent one quarter as a teacher's assistant, and I went to work at Memphis Light Gas & Water doing a lot of good engineering, but mostly drafting.

We were married on June 3, 1950 and moved into a dump across the street from Treadwell High School. As we became more prosperous, we moved up to an apartment on National Ave. I got tired of working for \$ 295 a month, so I took a job with Westinghouse in Pittsburgh for \$ 300 a month. Jane took a job teaching school, so we were able to make out pretty well.

After I completed a one year training program, we were offered a job in Pittsburgh, Buffalo or Seattle. We chose, to our lifelong pleasure, Seattle.

Jane taught Junior High to a bunch of ruffians, but she was up to the task. I was associated with Westinghouse's electric utility operations, so I spent a lot of time with City of Seattle, Puget Sound Power & Light, City of Tacoma, Washington Water Power, Chelan County PUD, and all of the lesser utilities in Washington and Alaska. This required me to be away from home a lot.

When Robin was born, things changed substantially for Jane, but not so much for me, which made things even tougher for Jane. Six years later, our blessings abounded with the addition of Jamie.

When the bean counters decided to put Engineering under the Sales Department, and I, at the same time, had an offer to join the Relay Division, I jumped at the offer, and Jane graciously acquiesced to it. We moved to Millington, New Jersey which turned out to be a beautiful place, in spite of the nasty reputation Newark had. In spite of all of our commitments, we had a great time. Our joy was amplified when Laura Gay came into our lives.

I was able to advance nicely and finally became the manager of the Consulting Section in the Relay Division. I presented over a hundred technical papers and got to be Chairman of the IEEE Technical council. About this time, the bean counters struck again, and Westinghouse sold our part of the business to ABB.

I received two great honors in the later stages of the game. In 1989, the IEEE granted me the Outstanding Engineer Award which carried with it a \$10,000 stipend and ABB dedicated the manufacturing plant to me.

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