

Tom G. Stevens Autobiography From 1942 To 1969

BORN: January 9, 1942

I was born in Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital to Granville Thomas Stevens and Charlotte May (Wheeler) Stevens (21 1/2" long, 7 1/2 pounds) and we lived at 4590 Northridge Drive (Windser Hills) Los Angeles California. My parents were the original owners for about 2 years.

DAD: Born June 2, 1908 in Mt. Vernon Indiana to Thomas and Laura Belle (Bottomley) Stevens

Their parents: Thomas and Georgana Stevens and James and Lydia Bottomley. (Laura Bottomley was cousin to baseball great "Sunny" Jim Bottomley of St. Louis Cardinals, batted .310 lifetime average, MVP in 1928, played 1991 games in 15 years (1922-37), and holds record for most RBIs in a game (12).

MOM: Born October 12, 1912 in Greencastle Indiana to Franklin Henry and Mary Alberta (Myers) Wheeler

Their parents: Frank born in Warsaw Indiana to Thomas Sanford Henry Wheeler and Mary Susan Reed and Mary born in Parke County Indiana to Henry A. Myers and Sara Catherine Myers (they were first cousins). Frank and Mary both graduated from Depauw University, she received her teacher's certificate, he became an engineer (for most of his life).

Mom's mom died when mom was 4; her dad later married their housekeeper, (Nina) Gladys Leatherman who was the very kind grandmother I knew. She made us sheets of the best carmel, and made dresses for Mom and shirts for Ron and I. She even made me a Roy Rogers shirt with fringe (like the real Roy) when I was in the 6th grade.

AGE 1-2: 1943-1944

We moved to Anchorage, Alaska when I was 1 1/2 years, because Dad got a high-paying manager job working for a Concession to feed troops. I still remember the train and bus trip there and the ship coming back to Seattle. Then after the year in Alaska, we lived briefly in Henderson, NV in a motel.

AGE 3: 1945

Mom became pregnant with Ron, and we lived Mom's Parents' farm. Dad was a traveling salesman. During that time he began a secret "affair" with Edith whom he later married.

BROTHER RON (Ronald Albert Stevens) BORN: September 4, 1945 in Indianapolis.

AGE 4: 1946

We moved To Oklahoma City because Dad bought the Boyer Hotel Court Motel at 5120 NW 39th Street (Highway 66) at Auburn Street. We lived there part of the year. Then Mom, Ron, and I moved to 2113 Cashion Place in a 2 bedroom wood-frame rental.

KINDERGARTEN; AGE 5; 1947

I began kindergarten at Sequoyia Elementary School on 36th Street and Altadena Street. It was a long walk of more than a mile. I remember days in the Winter walking to school alone into the very cold wind many days. Mom worked, and it was the only way I could get to school. Looking back it probably taught me how to be tougher and keep going one step at a time to overcome painful circumstances to reach my goal. We lived at 2113 Cashion Place in an all wooden 2BR home.

That was probably the year mom began divorce proceedings after she caught Edith living at the Motel

with dad. After some time, Mom hired “Aunt Gladys” Murphy to take care of us while she worked at her new job at the Ford Parts Depot in OC as a secretary, then accountant. She worked for Ford over 30 years in OC, then Dallas after I left college. She was a wonderful mom, whom the Parts Depot manager, Mr. Mandeville said to me, “Your Mom is a saint”. She enjoyed her work and was very good at it. She was about the only divorced woman at Ford, and I was the only student I knew at Sequoyah with divorced parents. She also began taking us to St Luke’s Methodist Church, which later became very important to me.

Miss MacGregor was my first teacher, and we all loved her. I played with Bill Chastain and David Yoes mainly who were 2-3 years older than me. We used to climb trees together and play games. I loved my wagon and garage, and began a life-long interest in building. I was excited to get my first tools after my tonsillectomy at age 5, and loved making things from the wood scraps that were in our garage. Mom bought us a swing set, and I loved swinging in our very large backyard. I played alone most of the time, and enjoyed my wooden-sided wagon, which I played was my car and hiding place for my toys and tools.

FIRST GRADE; AGE 6-7; 1948-49

Miss East was teacher; liked school and did well; first friend in school named Timmy. I was good at kickball, which was the main sport played by boys then. I had my first girlfriend, Donna Helderman, who I often walked home after school. I played in my Cashion neighborhood and at a partially complete church building. I sometimes went to Swatek Park at 2301 NW 29th. At Swatek I later taught myself to swim by watching others swim in the 3-4 foot deep pool. I loved to swing and climb trees—even big Cottonwood ones. In the Summer someone started playing old Tom Mix movies in an empty lot, and many neighbors would watch them. This was before TV of course. We would listen to radio programs such as Sargent Preston, The Shadow, The Green Hornet, and The Lone Ranger. I always did well in school and liked my teachers. Mrs East was my First Grade teacher and happened to be a neighbor who sometimes took me to school. I loved the “Friendly Village” book for both their stories and the title, which I still love to think of living in a friendly village. I often have—especially at Claremont and currently at Monterey Country Club.

SECOND GRADE; AGE 7-8: 1949-50

I didn't like Mrs. Riley, my teacher, very well; but had fun that year. I sometimes of wrestling with other boys (at their initiation), and did well at that. It was sort of a test of macho, and being somewhat shy at the time, it gave me more confidence. I made more friends, began Cub Scouts. Eddie Huey was a best friend. I still played kick ball most recesses, and loved to swing.

Ron and I took trip with dad and wife Edith to Mt. Vernon, Indiana for his Mother’s funeral and to see his family. Dad bought a Roy Rogers-like golden gun set for me from his sister Elenor’s husband who sold toys. Roy was my favorite cowboy and a role model for me. Dad had married Edith by this time.

THIRD GRADE: AGE 8-9: 1950-51

We moved to 3612 Altadena St. It was an old house with a partially dirt driveway and a small rundown garage. I really missed my Cashion Place garage. However, the house had three bedrooms, and was across the street from school. We put our swing set in the backyard we had 3 crab apple trees and a huge wild yard behind those. Many mornings I was one of the first students to school so I could swing on those big swings.

I really liked teacher, Mrs. Culbertson very much and had a great year. Later I discovered that 9 of 13 boys in the class obtained a PhD, MD, or law degree. Pretty amazing for a middle-class elementary school. I had a lot of fun with new friends Don Harrison and Chris Weaver. We were the "big three" in kickball, and later “stars” of our baseball teams.

I began playing baseball in the YMCA under ten level 2 team, a year behind most of my classmates, but

enjoyed it and played well at second base. Mom had to escort me over to sign up, because I didn't know how to play baseball and was afraid I wouldn't do well. I did pretty well, and the next year got to play on the next level team with my classmates. I loved baseball, and even considered it as a possible career when in high school. I was impressed that my 3rd cousin, whom I never met, was "Sunny Jim" Bottomley the St Louis Cardinal great who was rated 52nd best hitter of all time by a book I read.) Speaking of famous relatives, Thomas Stevens was the first person to ride around the world on a bicycle (in 1857) and whose book is still available. I read it in 2023.

Mom got our first car, a 1952 Ford company car. We were excited to not to take the bus everywhere. We also got our first TV--a gift from dad, who bought them for the motel. Those were big events for us all.

FOURTH GRADE: AGE 9-10; 1951-52

I liked my teacher, Mrs Kirkpatrick, and became good friends with Jerry Ray. Jerry was one of my best friends of my school years. He was our shortstop, and he and I were the best hitters on the team. I played centerfield and hit well on the UT-1 team with my classmates. We finished second (as every year!) We were the Sequoyia Bobcats.

This was the year I began playing the violin at school with Mrs. Murray. Again, Mom told me about it and encouraged me to join. I enjoyed playing and practicing the violin several mornings a week during school years. I played in a few school recitals during the years. I also played almost yearly in an OC orchestra for children. Mom, at significant expense paid Mrs Grossman (fifth chair in OC Symphony) for several years, and in the 8th grade I achieved 9th chair first violin in the Okla State Junior Symphony Orchestra for their summer session. However, after that summer, I decided that since I was not going to be a professional, I would stop playing the violin.

FIFTH GRADE: AGE 10-11; 1952-53

Mrs Buchanan was my teacher. I continued to do well, but became a little more rebellious and sometimes took on a role as a class comic. This was also the year we studied each area of the country and I decided to move to California when I could. I asked my Mom why we moved to away when CA had good weather and green all year round. For Christmas, I finally got my first bike--my friends had had them for years. We didn't have the money. Mom sacrificed to get me a good one--a Colombia, and I loved it. (That was the same brand Thomas S rode around the world on—though we didn't know it.)

Due to Mom's concern for my social skills, she encouraged me and paid for me to join about 5 friends in "Dance Soiree" dance and etiquette classes at a local Episcopalian Church. The social circuit of dances, parties, etc began at Sequoyah. I also became a boy scout and began camping, which I loved. We usually camped at Camp Kickapoo outside OC. I was in Troup 10, and became very active. I took the Scout Motto "Be Prepared" and creed very seriously to this day. Later I became a patrol leader, which helped with my leadership skills.

I was determined to become a baseball pitcher to the amazement of my peers. I tried out for and became the number one pitcher on the team with the help of an older neighbor boy. My coach, Mr. Hefley, Earl's dad, gave me another chance when the first time I pitched, I was so nervous I threw a pitch over the backstop. I became the starting pitcher for the rest of my baseball career. Mr. Hefley was my coach through the eighth grade. When I wasn't pitching, I played center field. That pattern continued through my baseball "career."

That summer we took the biggest trip of my youth, spending two weeks on a driving trip in our 1952 Ford to Los Angeles. I was excited to see where I was born and the city where I thought I might want to move someday. The thought that we might actually move there was exciting. Mom was considering moving there and working at a Ford Parts Depot in Pico Rivera. However, the size of the city scared her, but I was still determined to live there some day. We did have a great time visiting the beach, the Hollywood Bowl, and other LA sites. Overall, I always considered this one of my best years in elementary school.

SIXTH GRADE: AGE 11-12; 1953-54

Mrs Harris was my teacher. She was the School Librarian and very soft-spoken. I had a great year. That Spring, every day I had an activity, scouts, baseball, violin, or a dance. I was also particularly interested in Art and Math that year. I was the 6th grade's "second best" artist--next to Jimmy Loftus, who later became an architect. Don and Jerry were still my best friends, though I had others. I frequently took Diana Hallmark to dances. She was a very pretty redhead, but we were both very quiet. I probably went on my first Winter Camp about that year. I also played in the Ok City Junior Symphony for two years.

We moved to 2632 NW 37th (actually faced on Miller Ave) into the first house that mom later purchased with money from dad's divorce settlement. I lived there until I was married to Jane, and Mom lived there until she was transferred to Dallas in the late 1960's or early 70's. We finally had a brick home like everyone else, and one with a nice garage for my workshop. We had a big side yard; however, Ron and I had a lot of yard to mow and take care of. At age 12 I told Mom that we didn't need a housekeeper/sitter any more. Ron was now 9.

This was the year that we got our second dog--a red/blond cocker spaniel we named "Cindy." She was initially Ron's dog, but we all loved her until she died of a heart attack in Ron's arms when I was in college.

I had a great summer, was the pitcher and had the best batting average. Jerry Ray's dad owned a Root Beer stand about then and we got Root Beers whenever we won a game (a float for a home run).

TAFT SEVENTH GRADE; AGE 12-13; 1954-55

I began Taft Junior High School (on 23rd and May Ave). I rode with Jerry Ray's mom or rode my bike the one-plus miles. It was the worst year of my youth. For some unknown reason I seemed to be in with the poor students and "hoodlums" in my classes. I was left out of sports because I knew nothing about signing up--it cost me throughout JHS and HS. My social life also went to nil. Mr. Hefley was asst coach for our JHS Y team and I played less and pitched little on the Taft seventh grade team. This may have been the year that I was a "Patrol leader" in the scouts and we got snowed in during winter camp at Camp Kickapoo.

Dad sold his motel in 1955 for about \$200,000. He had previously divorced Edith, and he began dating Lavon (Brooks?), whom he later married. She was much nicer to us than Edith had been, and we often stayed at her beautiful home in NE Ok City. Her father had been an oil millionaire named Turner. I continued to do well in school and took violin lessons from Mrs. Grossman; but now I rode my bike with the violin on the back through cold and heat for several miles to get to my lessons after school-- then home.

TAFT EIGHTH GRADE; AGE 13-14; 1955-56

This year was an amazing turn-a-round from 7th grade. I was now in with the best students, became one of the "Four Musketeers" as Jerry Vernon called himself, Jerry Shockley, David Huffman, and me. We met that year and had a great time for one year. David became a best friend. (He had formerly been a rival for Donya Smith during Dance Soiree days. That year I had a crush on Sara Jo Freeney, but she liked Jerry S, though he didn't take her seriously--Oh well. I did well in school, and enjoyed playing basketball. However, the I didn't know enough to go out for the Taft team, so was now 2 years behind other players. The 4 Musketeers split after that year when both David and Jerry S moved out of state. I was very sad to lose David.

This was the year that I played in the Okla State Junior Symphony Orchestra at Norman. There were tryouts and I was 9th chair, first violin--a great honor for me. But I had had to ride my bike several miles carrying my violin in all types of weather to take private lessons. It also conflicted with baseball, and I decided to permanently give up my violin.

However, that summer was one of my most fun ever. I became a star pitcher and hitter on my team again and we finished second in a tough league. Jerry Ray and Don Harrison had gotten Vespa motor scooters and I got a slow Cushman. We spread our wings and saw the city—even Springlake amusement park across

town. We rode to swimming pools (none were nearby), and overall we had a great time. Mike Fancher (my catcher) and Chris Weaver also joined us on their motor scooters. We were constantly playing ball or going someplace.

That was also one of the two summers that I went on a 3-day river "float" trip on the Illinois River in NE Oklahoma with the Explorer Scouts. I had a great time both years. Our scoutmaster, Bill Smith, owned a plumbing company and arranged it all. We rowed down the beautiful, somewhat remote river about 50 miles back to Lake Tenkiller. Bill Smith also brought his boat, and I was the only time in my life I went water skiing. We carried all our own food and gear in canvas tarps. We hoped our flat-bottom boats wouldn't capsize in the "rapids," but we all did at least once. My boat mate and I packed well, so our sleeping bags didn't get too wet the one time we capsized.

NORTHWEST CLASSEN HS FRESHMAN YEAR; AGE 14-15; 1956-57

I began NORTHWEST CLASSEN HIGH SCHOOL. We were the first class to complete four years at the beautiful new school. Our class of 1960 was also one of the most successful academically and in sports in the school's history in the 40 years since.

My best friend during the school year was Denny Carriker. Denny and I started basketball (BB) later than other the varsity BB players, but loved playing. We went to the YMCA downtown almost every Saturday and played BB in the morning and pool in the afternoon. We were both not quite in the "in group" who were on the varsity teams and in the "in" dating and social groups. I was a little lost my Freshman year, but decided to probably become an engineer and decided that I wanted to go to a good college or get a scholarship and go to California. Therefore, I tried hard to make good grades for the first time since third grade. I made straight A's my second semester.

I finally got a Vespa of my own and sold my slow Cushman. I also began working on everyone's scooter--thus beginning my do-it-yourself mechanical aspect of my life. It started because I had to take my engine apart to fix it, since I couldn't afford to pay anyone to do it.

Dad moved to Scottsdale, Ariz that year with Lavon and we were required to visit him for six weeks. It cut my baseball season very short. I was on the "second" level team anyway, and was not happy. Ron and I were often bored that summer though we enjoyed swimming in Dad's pool and watching Perry Mason on TV. However, we loved visiting dad in Phoenix during Christmas; because the weather was so nice and everything was green though we hated the 23-hour overnight bus trips!

NORTHWEST CLASSEN HS SOPHOMORE YEAR; AGE 15-16; 1957-58

This was the year I began to drive! Mom had bought a 1955 Ford station wagon in '55 and replaced it with a 1958 station wagon. Both were Ford company cars. However, I was hot to buy my own car. I began a paper route for two months, but quit to go out for the varsity basketball team. When I could see that I would not be a starter, I quit. I could never stand sitting on the bench in baseball or any sport. Instead I played basketball in sixth period and had a great time with Don Harrison and "Lefty" Rhodes. Denny kept playing second string BB on the varsity team. Denny got me a job with him at the *Daily Oklahoman* newspaper company inserting papers from 5pm-4am on Friday and Saturday nights. I worked for \$1 then \$1.25 an hour--good wages then. I worked there--except summers until well into my Junior year. It didn't do much for my social life--no real dating. Denny and I gradually quit hanging out together when he was absorbed into the "in" HS party crowd. I only occasionally drank part of a beer with my Mom and friends, and had a strong aversion to hard liquor and being intoxicated. One of Mom's best friends was a Catholic who wouldn't leave an alcoholic husband who spent their money and was always in trouble, and soon I discovered that Lavon was also a "closet" alcoholic.

The Summer of 1958 was a great summer for me. I had great fun and a great year again playing baseball on a new YMCA team from NWC. I was possibly the best pitcher in the league. I had a 6-1 record when I had to go to Phoenix, and we were in first place. I was also the best hitter on the team. Don, Bill "Butch" Hill, and I had lots of fun on and off the team. Bill and I both had probably unrealistic dreams of playing professional baseball then, and the next (junior) NWC year we were best friends and two of the best students in our Physics class, which consisted almost entirely of seniors except for us. Bill years later started his own very successful winery in the Napa Valley with his label "William Hill Winery," and it became a large corporation. Don went on to become a Vice President of General Mills. Denny Carreker became CEO of his own large accounting firm.

On our arrival to Phoenix, Dad told us that the "big surprise" he had been telling us about was that we were going to have a baby sister soon. I was 17 and Ron 13. I had been hoping that Dad's surprise was that he had bought the Austin-Healy sports car he had been thinking about. However, Sharin Stevens was born while we were in Phoenix, so we really did get a new sister, and we grew to love her.

In the Fall Mom had taken us to a church film and I saw "Susan Slept Here." I loved Debbie Reynolds

in that movie, then I saw her again in “Tammy and the Bachelor,” and fell in love with Tammy and Debbie. That summer in Phoenix was when I had time to reflect upon my life, and especially questioned how I could ever marry a woman like Tammy/Debbie. Tammy seemed to be able to turn any situation into something positive and even inspirational. Why would anyone like that want to marry me? I could see many of my own characteristics such as trying to be completely honest—which was often negative and critical; fearing to be too positive, because I might be wrong and ridiculous; failing to give many complements to others; being afraid to be open with my feelings out of fear of being hurt; and trying to always be logical, right, and better than others were very different that my Dad had always stressed being successful (especially financially), the best, number one, and always right. I had incorporated those beliefs in my life to an extent that I could see it was interfering with my happiness and my relationships. Tammy wouldn’t like that part of me too much. Instead I realized that what was more important to me was being happy. Success vs. Happiness as number one in my life—that was the conflict. Of course both are important; but what about when they conflict? I debated within myself quite a bit. I knew that Mom would clearly choose happiness, honesty, “doing what’s right,” and the Golden Rule. She would often say, “I just want you boys to be happy.” I discussed my proposition that happiness should be the most important goal for people with my Dad. He liked the idea of being happy, but thought that people could only be really happy if they were successful, and thought my idea was ridiculous.

I discussed my proposition with Lavon’s mother, who was visiting. She seemed like a very happy person—much happier than Dad or Lavon, who had much more money and possessions than she. She had divorced one of the richest men in Oklahoma years before, and got no money from him. She married a very nice man who didn’t have much money; but they had always been happy. She knew what it was like to be really rich but preferred happiness. After much internal debate, I decided to try an experiment. I would try making happiness for myself and others my top goal in life, and see how it worked out. One of my debates had been, “What if I become too optimistic, and the outcomes turn out negative? Wouldn’t it be better to just be more realistic and expect the expected?” My answer to myself was, “Which is the worst mistake: being too optimistic and being wrong or being too pessimistic and being wrong?” My answer was, “If you are too optimistic and wrong, at least you go through life happy until the negative outcome. On the other hand, if you are too pessimistic and wrong, then—even if you get the positive outcome, you are unnecessarily unhappy until the positive outcome.”

I decided to write some guidelines for how I needed to change in order to actually be happy, and hopefully someday end up married to someone a lot like Tammy. So I wrote my "How to be Happy" guidelines (see references) and chose to make happiness the most important goal in my life during this experiment. I was very excited about my decision and feeling very optimistic. Even though I was excited about my new happiness experiment, my greatest fear was that in a few weeks or months I might forget all about my new mission. However, it changed my life and my career goals. Happiness for myself and others has remained my main goal in my life and my career. The experiment has been an overwhelming success for me. I have had a reasonable amount of success; but I have had a wonderful life filled with happiness.

NORTHWEST CLASSEN HS JUNIOR YEAR; AGE 16-17; 1958-59

This was a great year! It was the first year I tried living by my new guidelines, trying to convert negative thinking into happier thoughts. I met Donita Elliot in my algebra class. Even though she was not as pretty as some others I had met, I loved her enthusiastic and happy spirit and her charm. She sang in a trio and was in charge of Northwest Classen "Classics" a variety show put on by students. She was a popular senior "going steady" with someone, and I was a less popular junior who had hardly dated at all. We became good friends in our math class, and had a lot of fun. She helped make my whole year happy. I was very encouraged by that success with her, and I hoped to date her in college. However, in my first semester at OU, I was a little intimidated when she was voted one of the "top ten" freshman women and her photo appeared on the front page of the OU student paper. The next year she went to New York to become a dancer. That ended my hopes with Donita.

In 1958 I bought my first car--a 1952 Ford similar to the one mom had owned years before. But it was a

clunker and I quickly sold it--at mom's urging. She generously let me drive her car to school and she rode with a friend to work. After selling my car, I quit my newspaper job and began pursuing a social life. I decided to take dance lessons again and learned steps I still remember (from my notes). I dated for the first time since 6th grade.

I decided to take baseball seriously for one last chance--as did Bill Hill--who had become my best friend in our Junior Year. However, that idea didn't last long. Bill and I were two of very few juniors taking Physics that year. I loved it and eventually made an "A." That Fall I ran cross-country to "get in shape." Don and Bill also ran. But in the Spring, I experienced one of my biggest "failures" in life--not making the High School varsity baseball team. I was angry that I felt I was not looked at fairly and that the coach had no knowledge of my previous successful summer performance.

Dad bought the Sante Fe Lodge and moved to Sante Fe, New Mexico with Lavon and Sharin that year, and Ron and I spent much of our summer there doing chores and exploring Sante Fe. Now that I could drive, we could go town on our own in Dad's car.

NORTHWEST CLASSEN HS SENIOR YEAR; AGE 17-18; 1959-60

This was another great year! It began with Ron and I building our rear porch into a den--a big job taking much of first semester. My senior year my life was changed by beginning to play basketball on the St. Lukes Methodist Church team with Jay McCain, Tommy Newsome, and others. Jimmy Johnson and the three of us also became best friends and did everything together. I had broken off with my previous group--who had all begun heavy partying and drinking. I still did not drink due to negative experiences with alcoholism by one of mom's best friend's husband. Also, Lavon's alcoholism was becoming evident. The St. Lukes group also were top students and we had a ball in our math analysis class. It was a TV class broadcast throughout the state. The teacher would announce the scores of students making 100% on exams, and Jimmy Johnson led the state with about 8 100's. I was high on the list with about 4. I was very proud of that.

I had a great social life and dated frequently. Donita had gone to college, but I had a lot of fun with girls in classes--especially two hours of chemistry--Peggy Spivey, Shirley Stewart, and others. I especially liked Shirley and dated her on and off through my college freshman year, but it was never "serious."

My graduation party was a memorable night at the Twin Hills Country Club. Preacher Smith sounded like Ray Charles playing "What'd I Say" and I had a wonderful time with my first grade sweetheart whom I had only been in one class with since--Donna Helderman. She was a very pretty redhead who I liked a lot, but that summer I was so busy, and she was going to Okla State instead of OU, so I regretfully let that relationship go. That summer I wanted to buy a car for college, so I worked 70 hours/week selling ice cream off a truck to kids. I bought a 1958 Plymouth (with big fins) and loved it, but wrecked the ice cream truck the next week (due to bad brakes).

I also played softball for the St. Lukes team with my friends and we beat my old baseball friends (playing for a Baptist church)-- we went 23-1. I had a great hitting year! And I was finally on a league winning team--my old team with Don, Jerry, Eddie, Chris, etc. finished second again!

That Summer I was determined to earn enough money so that I could buy a car to use at OU. I thought it would be a big help with dating. So I got a job as an Ice Cream truck driver in a decorated truck ringing the bell all over my route. My main competitor was the Howdy Doody lady. I did make a lot of money, but was working nearly 70 hours/week. I bought a used 1958 Plymouth that I loved. However, one week after buying it the brakes gave out on my ice cream truck, and I lost a lot of income. Nevertheless, I met my goals, and started OU with a nice car. At OU I dated the ice cream owner's daughter for awhile.

I only went to Sante Fe for a couple of weeks that Summer because of my job. However, I had a great time driving my new car on Highway 66 etc to Sante Fe on my first real driving trip.

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA (OU); Freshman; AGE 18-19; 1960-61

Even though I had a great senior year in High School, I had looked forward to being on my own and going to college for a long time. I had dreamed of going to California--ideally USC--for years; but could have only gone with a full scholarship. So my choice in state was OU, despite the fact that most of my friends and acquaintances from HS were going to Oklahoma State U (where my brother Ron eventually attended).

I decided to major in mechanical engineering. I had been considering both architecture and engineering during high school, but decided to major in engineering after a HS career day when an architect told me that it required a fifth year and about three years apprenticeship to become an architect. I was shocked--I couldn't imagine being in school so long. (I ended my PhD with 11 years in college and post-graduate work). So I chose mechanical engineering.

I lived in "Mills House" freshman dorm. I initially knew none of the about 48 male students. Our floor (3rd of 4) consisted mostly of Engineering students and other non-smokers. I met Steve Lambert and Al Crosbie that year--the three of us were to become best friends (with whom I still correspond). Both are very successful engineers. We all had a great time. Third-floor dormees went to the OU-Texas football game in Dallas, played lots of jokes on each other, had long philosophical discussions, and played inter-mural basketball and softball.

I came home about twice/month to see Mom and Ron, hear Dr. Stowe, and get my clothes washed.

I dated Shirley Stewart for a few weeks, but she wanted to be "just friends." I dated Judy Sims and several others, but met no one I had any real interest in. OU was fraternity-centered (and I was not in one--because of the cost and heavy drinking associated with most), men outnumbered women 2-1, and I had a difficult time meeting the few women in my classes.

My first semester yielded my best grades in college. I was well-prepared from NWC HS and made a 3.73 gpa despite taking 18 units (I didn't work much my freshman year--though I paid for almost all my college expenses for the 4 years overall). I was excited about being inducted into the Freshman honor society--as were Steve and Al. Very few engineering majors got in. I loved the math and science and was interested in everything but required ROTC. I did have one job--all the way through college. I sold concessions at OU's football games. I didn't care a lot for football, so I didn't mind selling during the games. I sold carrying the cokes (later hot dogs) in the stands hawking to fans. I got to see the games for free and made a lot of money selling. I made more in one game than a student working at 60 cents/hr made in a 20 hr/wk campus job.

That summer I got a job with OGand E--the electric company--as an engineering trainee making "big money" (\$1.75/hr). I worked on line crews that summer, and enjoyed it more than any job in college. I didn't play any sports that summer, but got plenty of exercise from my job.

That summer I also started dating Jane Ellen Wotring--who also went to St. Luke's Methodist Church. I was attracted to her because I thought she was very pretty, but found myself continuing to date her because she was so easy to talk with and seemed so nice. We had a lot of fun together and she also had similar beliefs and values.

My brother Ron had gone to Sante Fe earlier that year--I worked all summer and went for 2 weeks in late August. I really enjoyed that trip. I got to drive my "new" Plymouth to Sante Fe by myself, and I became good friends with one of dad's waitresses, Annette, who was "Spanish-American," and who taught 2nd grade during the winter. We particularly enjoyed Sante Fe's Fiesta--a week-long event in which the town goes crazy.

OU; SOPHOMORE; AGE 19-20; 1961-62

I decided that the only way to meet more women was to join a fraternity, so I went through rush and started pledging Delta Upsilon. It had one of the highest GPAs on campus and the members seemed a little more sane and less rowdy than others. For a couple of weeks I went to functions and had some fun with them, but quickly grew tired of the restrictions and authoritarian structure.

I decided that I was sick of the cold, brown Oklahoma winters and wanted to attend Arizona State University within one year. I developed a financial plan. Part of it was to work during school and live as cheaply as possible. So I got a job cleaning a rooming house for my room (a run-down room in the basement with a mouse that used to eat my leftover popcorn). Second semester I moved into an upperclass dorm with my friend Neal and got a job working noons as a busboy in the student union.

I was also still dating Jane very steadily and had no immediate need for a fraternity--so I de-pledged. Soon I found that Jane was dating someone else--named "Joe." For the first time she told me that they had dated their entire freshman year and that he had been in Texas for the summer, but he was "very serious" about her. For about five months Joe and I were in a "competition" for Jane. He wanted to marry her, but I was not even sure how I felt--I certainly didn't want to think about marriage. But nevertheless, in January, she decided to drop Joe and date me. We dated steadily after that and had few problems and a lot of fun together.

One of my joys was to build my first stereo. I was very excited about it. Academically, I thought I could do anything. My career plan was to become an engineer and then someday own my own business--probably some sort of engineering business. Therefore, I intended to minor in business along with majoring in engineering--I was now thinking more of electrical than mechanical engineering. I took eight classes and 20 units my first semester, plus working and dating Jane a lot. It was too much--my gpa was barely over a 3.0.

I had been toying with the idea of becoming a Methodist minister for some time. Christianity, as presented by Dr. Stowe, seemed such a wonderful way to help people and contribute to the world. It seemed like being a minister could potentially have much greater impact on people's lives than being an engineer. However, I had a number of reservations. I had always intended and expected to make a *lot of money*. I didn't think that my talents lay in the direction of speaking, persuasion, and interpersonal skills. I had much more confidence in my potential as an engineer. Plus, being a minister didn't fit my or anyone else's image of me. I was too fun-oriented, rebellious, blunt, and "sacrilegious" to become a minister. But, I decided to do it anyway and shocked everyone when I told them.

I made my decision midway through Spring semester, but decided to try to do my best in my engineering classes anyway. Besides Al Crosbie and I were locked in a deadly competition to see who could make the highest grade in our differential equations class--the last math class required for an engineering degree. It was my toughest class in college. It was a class where only about 30 of 80 students even bothered to take the final exam. I ended up with a "B," but I edged out Al due to my final exam score. Al later obtained a PhD and became a Mechanical Engineering professor at U of Missouri.

That summer OGA&E would not rehire me after I told them I was no longer an engineering student, so mom helped me get a job with Fred Jones Ford working in the parts department. But the hours were long and the pay poor. Jane was the bright spot in that summer. I may not have gone to Sante Fe that year--I do not recall.

OU; JUNIOR; AGE 20-21; 1962-63

I was excited about becoming a minister and wanted to learn all I could. I picked a "Letters" triple major--Psychology, Philosophy, and Math. I loved my philosophy courses that year--they seemed the most relevant to religion--and I had excellent teachers. Drs. Romanell and Feaver were especially good. I made a "B" in my first psychology class, one of few times I didn't make an "A" in psych. I still lived with Neal in the ugly dorms built by the CCC during the depression--referred to as the "Pink Palaces."

Jane and I had been coming home every weekend--partly so I could see Dr. Stowe. That Christmas eve I proposed, she accepted, and I gave her a ring. Her mother was afraid she wouldn't finish college (as she hadn't), but otherwise everyone was happy. We tentatively decided to get married after college, but were thinking of an earlier date. I decided to save money, so I decided to sell my Plymouth and buy a Renault "Dauphine" to save gas. I had trouble selling my car, so mom sold hers and took my Plymouth (to the Ford employee parking lot each day).

Dad visited us in the Spring and pleaded with me to come to Sante Fe and work as a manager of the motel for the summer. Lavon's alcoholism had gotten worse, dad had begun drinking quite a bit, and they were in constant conflict. He said he needed me, so I agreed. In Sante Fe Lavon and Dad fought terribly and (half-sister) Sharin was caught in the middle. The business was deteriorating and it was a nightmare for them all. I was naive and did all I could to help, but of course I had no real effect and became discouraged. On a visit back to OC to attend Al and Ann Crosbie's wedding--and see Jane. Jane told me of a job in the Oklahoma textbook warehouse. I took it and went back to Sante Fe to tell dad and pack. I was so happy to be back in OC and also be able to see Jane regularly. We planned how we could afford to get married mid-semester of our senior year.

OU; SENIOR; AGE 21-22; 1963-64

The year 1964 was a big one for me. I got married, graduated from college, moved to California, and began the Claremont School of Theology (STC). I probably had more changes than any year of my life, but they were all positive.

During the academic year I carried a light load and spent lots of time studying the Bible and other readings suggested by Dr. Stowe--especially Barkley's Bible commentary. First semester, I lived in a rooming house off-campus. Steve Lambert lived down the hall, and we had a great time. I got a meal ticket in Jane's dorm so we could eat together. She had been a member of Alpha Chi Omega sorority, but lived out-of-house to save money. Jane had always worked in the campus library 20 hrs/wk as a typist making about twice what most students made. She had played the piano and could type over 100 wpm accurately.

Jane and I were married in the Chapel at St. Luke's Methodist church January 22, 1964. Ron was my best man and Steve and Al were the ushers. Jane's bother Earnie (a Methodist minister) married us. We paid for our wedding because Jane's father had been laid off from his job as a rural electrical coop manager for about a year. Yet her mom wanted to have a big say in wedding decisions--it was difficult, but the wedding was wonderful. My dad also attended and Sharin was the flower girl. We spent our honeymoon in a nice OC motel for three days and after registering for classes at OU.

At OU we lived in a *very* small one-bedroom apartment, but were thrilled at it all. I added selling ice cream at basketball games to my work (along with my student union busboy job). Our rent was \$55/month and we had a \$2/wk entertainment budget--enough to see a movie. I applied for the Claremont (California) School of Theology and Jane applied for teaching jobs in that area.

During early Fall, a woman turned head-on into me in my Renault and destroyed it. I went without a car to save money until midterm, when I bought a 1961 Plymouth Valiant cheap. After our marriage, I had to teach Jane to drive because she had to drive to her student teaching assignment.

That summer we lived in a small, but nice apartment. Jane had her same summer typing job and mom helped me get a job at the same Ford parts depot where she worked. I worked stocking parts in a union job that paid extremely well. In August, Jane and I packed our car to the brim and put everything else in boxes shipped by truck. We drove to Claremont via Carlsbad Caverns.

Leaving Oklahoma and my family and going to California and STC, married, was one the biggest events in my life. Even though our first sight of the LA basin was a layer of dark brown, dirty smog, and even though our first drive on the freeway included the only flat tire I ever had on a freeway, we were excited and happy to be there.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY, CLAREMONT (STC); AGE 22-23; 1964-65

I was very excited to be in California and at STC. I loved many things about Claremont. We lived in a relatively new, very nice, furnished, 1-bedroom student apartment which had a huge glass wall overlooking palm and eucalyptus trees. Our address was 1401 N. College, Claremont, CA; Apt D-14. The campus is in a beautiful setting. Directly behind is the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens, and behind that (a few miles) is Mt. Baldy (actually Mt. San Antonio--over 10,000').

I loved the weather and the outdoors (but hated the smog). I loved going for walks in the Botanical Gardens and felt close to Nature and God there. I used the time to think--I had much to contemplate. Most of our entering class experienced "culture shock." I thought that I had pretty liberal theological beliefs when I arrived, but discovered Biblical criticism that doubted many of the foundations of Christianity. The ones that bothered me most were the doubts that we could know much about Jesus and the doubts about any sort of physical resurrection or life after death. STC professors and students also tended to put a much higher value on social change than the sort of personal psychological changes (and pursuit of happiness) that I had seen as the primary value of Christianity. That year the Watts riots occurred, President Johnson sent the troops in large numbers to Viet Nam, and Martin Luther King (and others) were creating social pressure for civil rights changes.

While I was persuaded by many of these ideas, a part of me felt that the kind of Christianity that had appealed to me in the first place was getting lost in all this. There was much less general positive thinking emphasis and no preaching around to compare to Dr. Stowe's. I began to have doubts that I could get too excited about this new form of Methodism. It was more of a social change movement, and its emphasis was too much upon personal sacrifice instead of personal happiness. I was so unhappy with the emphasis at one point that I even considered transferring to Dallas' Perkins School of Theology.

At the same time I was in a personal growth group led by Dr. Howard Clinebell, and I thought we all benefitted from it. Many of the students were going to therapy and the therapy and personal growth movement was also gaining steam. I was grateful for that introduction. I took all the pastoral counseling courses I could, and read Dr. George Kelly's 1200 page *A Theory of Personal Constructs*. I cruised in most of my classes--such as Church History, but I read all of the Biblical Criticism--especially Rudolph Bultmann--that I could (initially to find any weaknesses in it). Finally, I resolved some of my dilemma by deciding to go into counseling instead of the preaching ministry. The more I thought about counseling, the more I thought that I would need a secular PhD instead of a theological degree. So I devised a plan to attend Cal State, Fullerton for a year to get a masters degree, then get into a PhD psychology program. Late Spring 1965 I applied for CSUF and was accepted.

Music had always been important to me. I had built a new EICO stereo tuner, amplifier, and reel-to-reel tape-recorder just before leaving for Claremont. I built a new cabinet for it. But one winter Friday night burglars stole that stereo and almost anything else of \$\$ value. We had no insurance and were very upset. I took out my grief by borrowing money and built a new, better EICO stereo within about a two-week period (putting in about 60 hours in addition to my studies). We also began attending the Hollywood Bowl--thus fulfilling a childhood dream.

One of the things that I loved most about STC was the people and sense of community. I made many close friends, and part of the wonder of it all was that most lived within the same complex. I always thought that this was the model of what communities everywhere should ideally be like. It helped support my beliefs in the practical value of Christian-type beliefs. A community of believers sharing such good common philosophical beliefs and values can be a wonderful thing. Larry and Jean Webb, the Dale Johnsons, Dave and Ruth Sharrard, Phil and Ray Sperber, the Dick McIntire and his wife, the Andersons, Dick Gregory, Cal Torrence and his wife, Colin and JoAnn Zavitz, Jack Blackstone and wife, Chris Margo and his wife, Ed and Ann Hansen, Dave and Ann Richardson, Dick and Jo Ann Knowles, Ignacio Castuera, and Ed and Kathy Stefan are examples. Some have remained friends to this day.

Another thing we loved was exploring the region. We went everywhere. We loved Disneyland and went to all the other tourist sights. We especially liked to Disney's big bands and the original exhibits. In those days first run movies stayed in Hollywood for months, so we frequently drove into Hollywood (over 30 miles)

just for a movie and dinner. For other recreation, we visited friends 1-2/week, went to movies (\$1.25) and went for drives. I had thought that when I was an adult, that meant giving up sports; however, Dick Gregory talked me into playing on the STC basketball team. I played and I think we won the City League championship. But the heavy smog caused me to suffer for it.

I also began playing golf more regularly. Next to STC was a beautiful 9-hole golf course. Dave Sharrard and I began playing and forming a close friendship. For years I corresponded with Ed Stefan and still do with Dave Sharrard. I played there regularly the whole time I lived in the area--1964-68.

Jane taught second grade in Pomona. She loved teaching and did a great job, but was very anxious her first year. Several of the STC wives were new teachers, so they had a mutual support group. Her first salary was \$5,300--very good pay in those days. She had received 4 job offers (sight unseen), but had picked Pomona. The "culture shock" also had an impact upon her. Even though she was not taking the classes, she heard all I had to say about it and it disturbed her beliefs as well. She talked with other wives who were upset about it. She also became more "liberated" (in pre-liberation days) due to the semi-personal-growth atmosphere and I had to become more aware of some of my dominating habits that I was unaware of. I had always considered that I wanted equality and democracy in my marriage--probably due to Mom's influence.

That first year I took 16 graduate units per semester, but did not work. That summer I applied for an chaplain internship program at Patten State Hospital. Methodist chaplain Jess Moore had been called by Dr. Clinebell, "one of the best in the US." Ed Stefan, Colin Zavitz, Ed Hansen, and myself commuted each day (40 hrs/wk) all summer to Patten State Hospital. We did as much therapy as a group as we did with clients (due to Jess's influence). We all became close and we had a very memorable experience.

CALIF STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON; AGE 23-24; 1965-66

Since I no longer attended STC, we had to move. We were very sad about it, but got a nice inexpensive, new apartment in South Pomona (on Franklin Street)--not far from Jane's school. We bought some very cheap furniture. Even though we no longer lived at STC, we maintained an active social life with friends from STC.

One of the most memorable events that year was our first trip to San Francisco, via Big Sur. We took it with Ed and Kathy Stefan on a shoe-string budget. In SF we all stayed with the Hansens (Ed had moved there to take an internship at Glide UMC to work with the homosexual community and others). We had a great trip.

I commuted daily to CSUF over 20 miles and took 15 units/semester. I needed to make up 12 units in psychology. I knew that I had to quit coasting in my classes and make good grades to get into a good PhD program, so I focussed on my classes and ended up with about a 3.85 gpa (compared to barely over 3.0 at STC). My teachers or classes did not make the fundamental impact on me that some previous experiences at STC and OU had; however, I learned the nuts and bolts of psychology, strengthened my interest in cognitive psychology, and ended up with a 730 score on my advanced psych GRE. I got to know some of my professors, Dr. Schmidt, the chair of the department and my thesis, was very helpful. However, I didn't get to know one student--most seemed very young and immature to me or were just there for class like me.

I spent the summer writing my thesis on the congruence between personality theories and tests. It gave me a chance to do a great deal of reading of some key personality theorists--Freud, H. A. Murray, Maslow, Cattell, and Kelly. I spent a lot of time at Claremont's Honald Library, and loved the scholar aspect of the whole experience.

Even though--according the UCLA Psych department chair--I had a good chance of getting admitted to their PhD program, I chose OU--of all places--because Jess Moore had given it such a high recommendation for its applied experience. So, putting education ahead of personal desires, we decided to move back to Oklahoma to get my PhD. Jane was happy to be nearer family again, but would also miss CA. So, at the end of the summer, we packed a big U-Haul and pulled it to Norman behind our little Valiant.

OU PhD PROGRAM--THEN STC AGAIN; AGE 24-25; 1966-67

Jane had again easily obtained a teaching position--this time in SE Oklahoma City. She commuted in the Valiant, and I bought a Vespa motor scooter to get to classes. We lived in almost new married student apartments that were very nice--quite different to the ones from 1964. We quickly made new friends with the other three (grad) couples in our entrance way. Cliff and Carolyn Layton later moved to Newhall, CA and we maintained our friendship with them for years--until they moved back to Oklahoma many years later. (Cliff was getting a masters in math).

This was an eventful and anxiety-producing year. The PhD program was not all it Jess had said it was. I did not realize that my acceptance was very conditional and that we would be expelled from the program "if they didn't like us"--for personality or any other reason. I was later accepted, but it was too late, and I enjoyed turning them down.

The Viet Nam war was in its full fury, but I had had a IV-D ministerial classification, then a II-S student one. They "never" drafted PhD students. So I was shocked when I received a I-A classification in October and met with my draft board, who told me that I would be drafted at the end of May. This fact plus my dissatisfaction with the PhD program prompted me to decide to finish STC in pastoral counseling, then get a PhD later. So Jane took a teaching job back in Pomona (they loved her); I went back to STC; and we moved back to the Franklin apartments--eagerly waiting to get back into STC housing. (We moved to STC, Apt E-14 in June.)

I remember driving into the Pomona Valley that January day. It had just rained the night before, and the mountains and everything else was bright and beautiful--and warm. We were so happy to be back in California, and so happy to be back at STC. We had a ball that semester. We spent a lot of time visiting with old friends. I started playing golf a lot, and I enjoyed my studies. I had to pass my "Middlers exam" that Spring, 1967 semester, but enjoyed it anyway. I signed up for all the counseling classes I could and began doing counseling at the Claremont Counseling Center (under Drs Kimper and Clinebell) in January. I worked there for over a year as an internship. I also began substitute teaching about two days/wk. That summer I took 12 units. I also officially received my Master's degree in Social Science with a psychology emphasis from Cal State, Fullerton in 1967 after transferring back 9 units from OU.

==> FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE 1967 CHRISTMAS LETTER

STC; AGE 25-26; 1967-68

This year was a continuation of the 1967 STC experience. I graduated from the School of Theology, Claremont (STC) in June with a Master of Theology degree (an 84-unit, 3-year degree). It was a wonderful year--one of the happiest of my life up to that point. We lived in an environment we loved (except for the smog), had many friends, enjoyed our adventures exploring the area, and were the best off financially we had ever been. Of the classes I had, the most memorable was reading Paul Tillach's *Systematic Theology* with a well-known philosopher from the Claremont Grad School named Hutchinson. Dr. John Cobb--even though I had not had a class with him--was influential--as was Dr. Frank Kimper from counseling. I was very impressed with the level of maturity--self-actualization--and scholarly knowledge of a number of our faculty--President Colwell, Cobb, Kimper, Betz, Titus, Clinebell, Carlson, and others. It was the most ideal scholarly community I have ever experienced. Their interaction with students was also exceptional.

That year I became *de facto* editor of the student publication that published student papers and included a paper I wrote on the integration of the personality--based upon a George Kelly psychology integrated with ideas like those of Tillach's ultimate concern--ideas I value as much today.

I was also ordained as a deacon (first level minister) in the United Methodist Church that year--after going through a rigorous set of tests and interviews. I decided that a year or two's break from school would be good before perusing a PhD, so that June I applied for appointment to a church in the Southern Calif--Arizona UMC conference. I had a choice of an associate pastor position at either a nice, growing Lompoc church near Vandenburg AFB or First UMC of Long Beach under Dr. Donald O'Connor, a former District Superintendent--and very nice man. I began work July 1, 1968 but got 4 weeks "vacation" to move and get settled.

==> FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE 1967 and 1968 CHRISTMAS LETTERS

FIRST UMC, LONG BEACH; AGE 26-27; 1968-69

I was excited about getting my first full-time professional position and found working at First United Methodist Church of Long Beach as associate pastor of education and counseling very interesting. It had been one of the largest churches in the conference, but had declined and had a largely older congregation due to the movement of younger families to outlying areas. There were many retired people in the church as downtown LB was heavily populated with retired people. The church was in a huge, classic building that Dr. O'Connor was to rebuild with a smaller church (and succeeded in his efforts). I got a chance to try a number of ideas that year and shared many experiences with Dick Knowles, a good friend from STC who had been appointed to nearby Los Altos UMC. We shared many ideas and golf weekly.

One of the most exciting things about the move was that Jane and I got to live in our first house--a relatively new 4-bedroom stucco house in Huntington Beach (6072 Ivory Circle). I commuted to LB. Jane did not work first semester, but got bored and got a job teaching in Westminster second semester at Hoover Elementary School. We then made more money than ever before and felt "rich" on two full salaries.

We had a great social life. We still visited with friends from STC, but also became very involved in the church young couples group--including the frequent parties. I had restarted that group at the request of Dr O'Conner. That was the most fun part of our church experience. However, it didn't take me long to decide that I wanted to get on with my pursuit of a PhD in Psych. The only problem was that the Vietnam war was beginning to wind down, and many veterans and others were beginning to apply for PhD programs. Suddenly, getting in was extremely difficult. When I called UCLA, now they told me they were only accepting less than 30 of over 1500 applicants. It was like that everywhere and I became worried about getting accepted anywhere. Plus, I wanted to stay on the west coast or Arizona. After a series of rejections, I was accepted to the University of Portland and then to the University of Hawaii (with a full assistantship). I checked them out and UH seemed very good, so I accepted and Jane applied for a teaching job in Hawaii. We moved in August after a trip back to see our parents and to see Ron and Judy all the way to Chicago (Mom went with us in her car).

==> FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE 1968 and 1969 CHRISTMAS LETTERS

**THAT'S ALL FOLKS FOR NOW!
SEE MY CHRISTMAS LETTERS FOR ALMOST EVERY YEAR SINCE
(and go to my website for my writings) FOR MORE!**