

# A 1951 Christmas Story

## Ten Years after Pearl Harbor

My first class at the Jacksonville Naval Training Center was for fifteen weeks of training; relative to becoming immersed in Naval Aviation. I successfully completed the course on September 30, 1951, scoring 4.0 and the rate of AN (Aviation Airman). I was then transferred to the Aviation Storekeeper School for ten weeks of training as an Aviation Storekeeper. I graduated in the top ten in my class becoming an AKAN (Aviation Storekeeper Airman) on December 7, 1951; just ten years to the day from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor!

I received my transfer orders to my new duty station which was the Naval Aviation Supply at Quonset Point, Rhode Island. I was granted a 10 day leave which would give me time at home for an early Christmas.

December 8<sup>th</sup> I flew from Jacksonville, Florida through Chicago with my final destination being North Platte, Nebraska. When we landed in Chicago the winter wind was blowing a gale off of Lake Michigan and my thin blood from my six month stay in Florida gave me no protection. Even with my dress blues and peacoat buttoned up, I was freezing as I hustled down the outside stairs from the plane and scurried into the terminal. I had approximately an hour in Chicago before boarding my plane to Omaha and it would probably take that long for me to thaw out!

Before long, they announced that the Omaha flight was ready for boarding. Once again I was facing that wind-chill off of Lake Michigan as I ran across the tarmac for my plane to Omaha. Our Nebraska-bound plane hurtled down that snowy runway, defying gravity by lifting off, and making the long, slow turn over the lake, finally heading west. I could breathe again and it didn't take me long to drop off to sleep. It had already been a long day, so I didn't remember much about the flight. When we landed in Omaha I didn't have to de-plane as this plane would take me the rest of the way to North Platte.

I had left Jacksonville early Saturday morning, which became Sunday morning as I arrived home. I was glad to be home, but also knew that this would be a very short stay. I needed to start for Quonset Pont in just five days.

On Wednesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, Mom wanted us to have our early Christmas dinner. She invited Jean, Ken and their little boys for this last chance for us to get together as a family while I was home.

Mom had Jean gather all of us in the dining room and asked us to form a circle holding on to each other's hands while Dad said grace. "Dear heavenly Father we are so thankful that you have blessed us with this family, and have made it possible for all of us to be together ahead of the celebration of your birth. We thank you for the food your have made available for us and ask you to use this nourishment to build our bodies to be better servants for you. Amen."

After dinner we were all having coffee and pumpkin pie, when it hit me that I wouldn't be home for Christmas! I said, "I want to share with you how much it means to me to have such a special family. The Navy is giving me opportunities to see new things, and to meet new people but none can compare with the closeness we have as a family. This special family Christmas, the opening of presents and the enjoyment of our special fellowship is very meaningful to me. This alone is the best present I could possibly receive."

Lots of hugs and kisses were going on with a few tears being shown, mine included. Dad finally put a cap on our festivities by sharing a Christmas prayer with us. "Lord, we are so blessed as a family and I thank you for that blessing. We also take this opportunity to thank you for the birth of your son, Jesus Christ. His birth, time on earth, his short ministry, and his death and resurrection; gives us pause. We are early with our celebration this year and you know why. Please keep Bud safe as he travels back east, and open new vistas for him to pursue during the balance of his time in the Navy. I lift up my family to you on this Christmas of 1951 and again thank you for each and every one of them... Amen."

There for sure wasn't a dry eye in the house.