

FAMILY HISTORY - CYRIL AND MARY KEARL
Chapter Twelve - World War II

While I was at Utah State I had an educational deferment from the draft, but everyone knew that as soon as the army could absorb and train all of the currently available men that deferments would be cancelled and we would be called up for service so every young man of military age was looking for an opportunity to get into a military program that would be exciting and one in which we might receive an officers commission. This was 1942 and the invasion of Africa had just started. Women were not drafted and could not enlist in those days.

I had found a program that trained Meteorologists. It required a training period of eight months at either the University of Chicago, Stanford, or at the Univ. of California. I applied, was accepted, and was assigned to a class starting in June of 1943 at U.C. - Berkeley.



Private Kearl in 1945.

First I had to complete Basic Training. In March I was inducted at Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City which was then the headquarters of the Ninth Service Command and one of their Induction

Centers. I think that I have never felt so completely alone as that first day in the Army at Fort Douglas.

I was then sent to Fresno, California for my basic training. The army had built a number of temporary Basic Training Centers around the United States. Basic Training Center #8 (BTC #8) in Fresno consisted of acres of stark single story sheds covered with tar paper built on their County fair grounds. Basic Training lasted eight weeks. It was a long hot, hot summer and each day the "meat wagon" (ambulance) carried men who had collapsed from heat prostration off the drill field. The training included instruction in close order drill and lectures in the use of weapons, indoctrination, first aid, and then you went on to an Air Force specialty school. We were allowed only one pass during the two months of basic training and on that great day we rented bicycles and pedalled through the city park, the zoo, and finally had dinner at "Omar Kyhams", the best restaurant in the city.

In June we were told that our meteorology class had been postponed until fall, and then in August that the program had been cancelled. Earlier classes had provided all the meteorologists that were needed.

Because I could type, not expertly, but passably, I worked as a clerk until I was reassigned. This spared me of the disagreeable jobs at camp. K.P. (Kitchen Police) was the most hated of all the camp jobs. The mess halls were enormous. The days duty started at 4:00 in the morning. Preparing, serving and then cleaning up

after each meal took most of the time. In the few minutes left between meals there was always the large mess hall to scrub and some food to prepare. The K.P. pushers (supervision) were usually misfits who could qualify for no other useful job. They were difficult to get along with. At night after K. P. you went to your barracks exhausted and collapsed on your bunk.

Since the meteorology program was cancelled I was assigned in late July of 1943 to the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). This program was University Education Program in Engineering, Foreign Languages, etc. It was to have been a 6 quarter, 2 year program culminating in a 2nd Lt.'s commission. I was sent to a re-assignment center at the Univ. of Utah in Salt Lake City where I was then assigned to my permanent University. They had set up rows of double deck beds in the field house at the U of U. With the exception of privacy (we all lived in one large room - the basketball court), a place to keep our gear (we each had one small locker), and adequate rest room facilities for that many people, it was great. I had dates with Mary two or three times a week and for me this was a very pleasant time in my life.

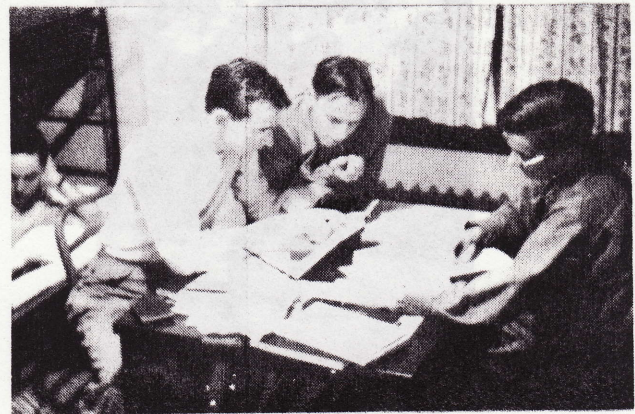
Finally, three weeks later, I was given my permanent assignment at the University of Indiana and in late August of 1943 I arrived at Bloomington. I completed two quarters in engineering while I was there. Nothing of note happened in those six months at Indiana. The only incident that impressed me was on a Saturday night when many stayed out beyond the midnight curfew and our Company Commander, Captain O'Neal, pulled a bed check. Wasn't I lucky that I was engaged

and stayed home on weekends and read.



Me in front of Memorial Hall where I lived for the six months that I was at I. U.

From midnight on, as the fellows got back to the barracks, they were sent over to the field house and were marched the rest of the night. With typical army logic, the guys who got in one minute after midnight marched 7 hours, while the worst offenders who might have got back only a few minutes before sun-up just before reveille marched only a short time.



Me studying at Indiana University.

I grew to dislike the Army. Mostly the conditions of service; a lowly private was ordered around, his life organized and arranged for him. I was too much of an

individualist to like this regimentation.

In February 1944, ASTP was terminated and I was transferred along with most of the rest of the fellows at Indiana U. to the 20th Armored Division at Camp Campbell, Kentucky. I had had one year of Engineering at Indiana much of it a repetition of the work I had done at Utah State but it had been pleasant.

The 20th Armored was a newly activated Division that was formed from the training personnel who had worked with a number of other Divisions that had been formed, trained, and shipped overseas from Camp Campbell. All of the non-commissioned positions in the new division were already filled and we, who had been shipped in from the discontinued ASTP Programs were the warm bodies used to fill out the private ranks. It was a very discouraging situation to be in. Even our Commanding Officer, General Fredendall, had been the guy who failed at Kasserine Pass in North Africa and had been shipped home to train troops. Because of the high score I had made on the mechanical aptitude part of the Army General Classification Test, I was assigned to the Service Battery of the 412th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. An Armored Field Artillery Bn. has five batteries, headquarters, three firing batteries, and a service battery. The firing batteries consisted of 105 mm howitzer guns mounted on the open chassis of a medium (Gen. Patton) tank. The tank carried the gun, personnel, and it's short term supply of water, gas, and ammunition.

Our Service Battery resupplied it, usually daily and at night. We had a motor pool of about 30 trucks. One carried water, one food, and the remaining trucks carried gas or ammunition. I was made the driver of a 2 1/2 ton gasoline

truck.



1944 - Me and my 6x6 truck.

The trucks had open cabs with canvas tops. I had a Private First Class rating and had an assistant driver, Pvt Leonhardt. Our section Sgt. Dowdy, and his assistant, T-4 Mooney, were a couple of pretty ordinary fellows. We spent eleven months training before going overseas. Most of the training consisted of field exercises.

Most of the summer the training areas were covered with a 2" layer of fine dust produced by the tank treads. We spent one month at Ft. Knox and a month on maneuvers (War Games) near Gatlinburg, Tenn in the fall.

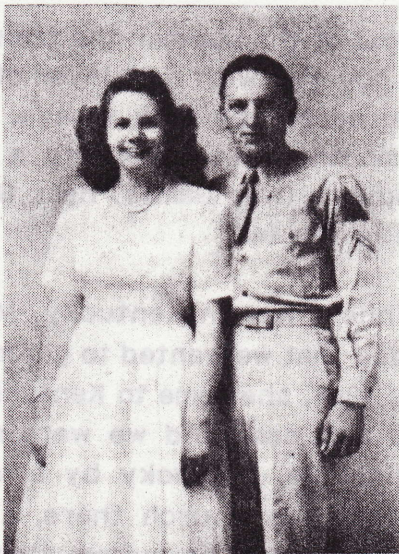
While I was in Kentucky, Mary and I decided that we wanted to get married. In June, 1944, she came to Kentucky. I got a three day pass and we were married in Hopkinsville, Kentucky by a Minister of the Christian Church there, a Reverend Shuster. I was so green that I didn't know that I was expected to pay the minister who married us. Mormon Bishops were never paid, and I didn't pay him. For years afterwards we regularly sent him a big box of chocolates at Christmas to try and ease our guilty

consciences.



The First Christian Church in Hopkinsville where we were married in June 1944.

On our only furlough Mother had a photographer in Mt. Clemens make a wedding picture of us. I thought it was a terrible picture and refused to have any prints made of it. Years latter I found a dozen copies that my dear old Mother had made. Because of her you children have a wedding picture of us.



August 1944 - Mary and I in our wedding picture.

We only had \$78.00 between the two of us at the time we were married. I wonder about the courage of the young now days

but then we weren't afraid of anything. We stayed in a Hotel in Hopkinsville on the night of our marriage. It was hot, hot, hot. Few homes or businesses had air conditioning in those days. There was a fan in our hotel room but it's bent blades kept hitting its housing and kept us awake when it was turned on. I worked on it the better part of the 3 days of our honeymoon. By bending the blades I finally got it so that it worked fairly well and we could sleep by the last night we were there.

On our wedding night we went to a movie, "The Desert Song", starring Dennis Morgan. The remainder of our three day honeymoon was spent trying to locate a room to live in, in Clarksville, Tennessee. It was extremely difficult to find homes with rooms to rent. The towns around the camp were crowded. Most WW II Army camps were newly built near towns which had no provisions for army wives. Local citizens soon learned how to squeeze all they could from this new source of income. The townspeople seemed skeptical that you were really married. They liked the money but resented servicemen.



Mary at an intersection of two of Clarksville's streets in 1944

We found a room with an elderly

couple who were in their 80's. He had been the sheriff of Clarksville. They were a part of the faded south. Their home was antiquated and dirty. Later we rented a room from the Harley Fite family. They were very nice people. He was the president of the small Austin Peay College there in Clarksville. It was about the size of a high school in Salt Lake City.

As a private I made \$50.00 a month and had an allowance of \$28.00 for Mary. Our room cost \$10.00/week and the remaining \$38.00 we spent on bus fares, food and a little entertainment. (Very little of the latter.)



Mary and I on the steps of the Austin Peay College.

Mary washed her clothes out by hand on a scrubbing board and dried them in the sun on a clothes line outside. No one had automatic washers or clothes dryers. Because of the rats that ran around on the dirt floor in the basement of the Fite home I kept Mary company while she washed. We cooked on a very small one lid stove that we also used to heat our room. Actually, in Tennessee we needed very little heat.

I had to be on the post for reveille at 6:30 in the morning and stood retreat at

6:00 in the evening, so I usually got home to Mary at 9:00 or later after a 25 mile bus trip from camp and I had to leave at 4:30 in the morning. I never got enough sleep and on many a morning I would sleep right through the alarm, wake up in a fright and then have to pay for an expensive taxi ride out to camp. One night, on the way home from camp, I fell asleep and went almost to Nashville before I woke up. I had to catch the next bus back to Clarksville and by that time it was almost morning and time to go back to camp. The buses were converted new car carriers and were a strange kind of vehicle.



Cyril making candy in our room in Clarksville.

We treasured every free moment. We mostly we did a lot of walking about town for our recreation. Occasionally we'd see a movie. There was a drug store in town that sold a big glass of lemonade for a dime and when we really wanted to do something special we'd walk down and get a glass. It was a real treat when Dad would send us some extra sugar ration stamps and we'd make a batch of fudge.

Most luxuries were rationed during the war but because he was manager of a sugar factory, Dad could get a few extra sugar and gas stamps. The gas ration was 3 gallons per week.

We had a couple of three day passes and on one we went to Evansville and to Nashville on the other. When we went to Nashville we went with a country couple who came from Texarkanna, Okla and who had an old car. Thanks to Dad we were able to furnish the gas ration tickets. When we got there we went window shopping at the Montgomery Wards Store and then we went to the "Grand Ole Opry". In those days the Grand Old Opera was held in a big drafty old barn full of wooden benches. There were a handful of people in attendance. They presented continuous musical numbers all evening long. Minnie Pearl and Ernie Tubbs were the star performers. After we listened to the Grand Ole Opry for what seemed hours the couple with the car decided to go back to Clarksville our big weekend in Nashville ended. It was very disappointing to us.



Mary in Mt. Clemens in early 1944 before our marriage.

On Cy's only furlough before we were

married we went to Michigan. We stopped in Chicago for a day on the way to Michigan. Most large cities had lots of free or inexpensive entertainment for servicemen who were passing through. I remember seeing a play in Chicago called "The Voice of the Turtle" by Carl Van Druten.

We got our orders to go overseas and had one last furlough and went to Michigan. Mary had been pretty brave to face the uncertainties and the hardships of staying with for those few months. Small southern towns whose facilities are strained by an unexpected soldier population are ugly places to live in. On one furlough trip I remember standing up all the way to Mt. Clemens while Mary sat one our suitcase in the aisle.



Cy buying the Sunday paper.

In January 1945, I was sent overseas. Mary went to San Francisco to stay with her parents. She worked for a draft board there. In the early days of the war everything went wrong in the Southwest Pacific and Admiral Ghormley was replaced by Admiral "Bull" Halsey in an effort to improve morale.

Halsey brought his whole staff with him. Mary's Father returned from New Caledonia to San Francisco where he was assigned to the Ninth Service Command as Naval representative for the Selective Service. He had been a Personal Officer at Admiral Ghormley's Advance Base in the SW Pacific at Noumea, New Caledonia.



Mary in front of Draft Board #91 in San Francisco.