

# Starting at the beginning - The 50's



**I** was working on writing about my life before Wendy gifted me this program for a year, so I thought it was time to get off my butt and get it done. I am going to start with the 50's, I know I did one already but this one has some more things I missed in the first one.

I was born Sept 5, 1951 in a hospital, I wanted to be close to my mother. Hamilton AFB, Northern California, just above the Golden Gate Bridge. was the place and it was funny, I was not admitted to any other hospital until 1971 and that was to the same one. Hamilton AFB does not exist anymore, I think it is a big residential area for those commuting into SF to work.

Of course, I don't actually remember from my own memory any of these events, but with the stories told by my parents and others, this is what happened in that time frame. My own

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memories will start when I write about the 60's.

I have my most embarrassing photo shown around the world with me sitting on the big boys potty with most of the roll of toilet paper all over me and the floor. Mom and dad were big with having slides and with every slide show, for every relative and friend, that photo was there.

Next as things went, we were in Okinawa for a little over a year. I was in a high chair and we had a maid, Flamico, that came in everyday and helped mom and during dinner helped me. I had a time that my hands did not work. I would put them behind my back and Flamico would feed me. Most every meal for almost a year. Flamico always called dad Papason and I was Babyson. She said that there was no denying I was dads son.



Of course when we came back to the USA and there was no maid and I tried the no hands thing, mom said "Oh that is too bad, I guess you don't eat." Seems my hands got back in business, because I was never a skinny baby.... When I was older and asked mom what was for dinner, she would say 1000 things and I knew

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we were having beans again. If you were not happy with what was for dinner then it was go to bed without dinner. That was until TJ my son came along and then Mom would say oh what can I fix you TJ.....

Don't know if any of you even have seen what was a car seat for the 50's. It was a chair that had a frame with two hooks that went over the back of the front seat. Legs went thru the front like today's shopping carts and chair was hung from middle of the front seat to be close to driver to retrieve pacifier or what ever else might be dropped by the infant. They say that this was when I had my first driving lesson. Mom and I and I guess my two sisters, were in the car and mom stopped at a neighbors to just drop something off. So us kids stayed in the car. Back then most cars had the gear shifter on the column as well. Like most kids sitting with feet dangling, I was kicking my feet around when I kicked the car out of gear and it rolled down the neighbors driveway and across a two lane road and then knocked down a fence and ended up against the barn of another neighbor. I am sure it was exciting for mom to watch and they said that was my first driving lesson.

Kathy, my older sister, felt I was her toy doll and to play and drag me around the house. I guess mom figured it was Kathy helping to take care of me. But I would tire of it and I found she would leave me alone if I would bite her. I never got in trouble biting

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her, but then not sure I really had much for teeth. Mom felt it was my way of letting her know I was done with being dragged around like a doll for today. So this was working great right up to the time when one of moms friends brought over her kids to play and I bit one of them. That got me a spanking and was no longer tolerated at all. So biting was in the past and I had to try other things for defense from Kathy.

When we moved to Massachusetts in the middle of the 50's Dad had met a guy named Bud. He was the developer in the lake that we built a house at outside of Fort Devens. He was a hunter as well and he and dad started going hunting in some of the Northern States, I know Maine was one of them. We also started camping and had a large cabin like tent and the family would go and we would camp for a few days at a time.



Tommy, my older brother was pretty good fishing and we usually were camping on a lake. We always had a fire at night

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and enjoyed all the usual camping fun. One time though as we were done with breakfast and breaking up camp, dad had put out the fire and then covered it a bit. I was running around barefoot and managed to walk on the place that was the covered fire and burned my foot pretty bad. I had it bandaged up and limped around for a while.

One of the rare pictures with all four of us in 1959. Tommy, Kathy, Candy and I.

The little house that dad built in the development was a two story cracker box we called it. There was one property between us and the lake, but we had a small row boat on the lake and frequently dad would take us fishing and Tommy would gig frogs from the front of the boat. I guess when dad thought it was time to teach me to swim, he rowed me out a little from the shore and tossed me in the lake..... I learned to swim in a hurry.

Candy, my younger sister had been born there and Kathy and I felt that we just did not get the attention we should be getting or we would be in trouble for making too much noise or something. Anyway, more than once, we decided to run away... We would take a small bag and put some clothes in it and then head out. Of course there was only one road from the lake into town. Along the way was a corral with a couple horses and Kathy always liked horses so we would stop to visit horses and sure enough someone would find us and take us back home. I am not sure if

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Bud was the local Constable or if that was someone else, but if he found us that far from home he knew we had run away and he would arrest us and take us home. Good thing dad was his friend and I guess we had “Get outa Jail” cards.

I had a friend in the house behind us, I think his name was Ricky. We would play all the time. In the winter there was enough snow that my brother Tommy would make us a sled run between houses and we used an old refrigerator door for our sled. Tommy being 10 years older than me also had the fun of shoveling the driveway of snow and he would pile it up and then hollow it out for us an igloo. There was a lot of snow every year.

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One time, I guess I was tired of playing with Ricky, so I went in the house and left him standing outside. he kept knocking at the door and the door had three glass panels. I yelled at him to go

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away and then ran at the door and pushed the door/glass with y hands and the glass broke. mom jumped up and grabbed Ricky to take to bathroom to wash his eyes to make sure no glass was in them. I was standing there in bathroom when we noticed the blood on the floor. My right bicep had a gash from the glass. Mom put a butterfly bandaid on it and I still have the scar today. Funny the only other scar I have, is from putting my left had thru a door glass years later. See the 60's for details.

When I got almost big enough to learn to ride a bike, I found that riding was not hard but stopping was so I usually just headed over to the grass and crashed but laying the bike down. I think part of the problem was that i was riding a bike that my feet did not touch the ground. I could get started by stepping on pedal and swinging my leg over but then no way to stop. But I enjoyed riding and was determined not work let little things like crashing both me.

The way our house was, the front was at the the ground level in front but back was lower as we had the concrete basement. When digging it out, dad also had a lot more area dug out so we kinda had a yard in the back out the basement. We had stairs in the side of it to get up to the actual ground level. The yard had a row of rocks from one side to the other. In the winter, dad would start spraying water on one side up to the rocks and after a couple days, built up an ice rink for us to skate on. The lake was usually



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mostly frozen but not safe to skate, but we skated most the winter in our own skate rink in our yard.



Thanksgiving 1958 in our little house on Hickory Hills Lake.

In the summer, after learning to swim, Kathy and I would play on the lake and I would row the boat out a bit and we had a great time. I have thought I would like to visit that place someday, but have not made it yet. It was called Hickory Hills Lake.

I mentioned Bud before, he was a fun guy. He would stop by and I got my second driving lesson by sitting in his lap as we went driving down one of the dirt roads around the lake. He bought a new Lincoln every year. One time he came in and asked mom to come look at his new Lincoln and she said it was nice but she did

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not like the color. Dad says he took it to the dealer and insisted on trading it for the exact same thing different color and the next time he came by she approved.

My older brother Tommy was in high school and he drove but never had his own car. I don't know how far the High School was but he never road the bus, regardless of weather he walked to school. But one time, I guess for a school function, he had the family car in town and after the function, I guess he was getting stoped by police for speeding or something. Thinking he could get away, he drove thru a parking lot, only to find a ditch in the middle that he went into damaging the front bumper of the car. Dad was not happy and took it to a shop and the repair guys said well... Mostly it is the one side of the bumper. Most people don't know what bumpers look like anyway on old Chrysler's, so he cut off bad side and then cut the other to match and not one every said anything about it or even noticed. Tommy was not too lucky driving. The lake had a small dump that we took trash too and we had a small trailer that we would hook to the car to go dump. Tommy took it one day and ended backing the trailer over the edge. Had to walk back and then get one of the guys with a tractor to go out and pull him back up from the dump.

Dad being in the military of course, had uniform requirements and when they first came out with the dress blues required he bought a set. They were not going to be mandatory for a few

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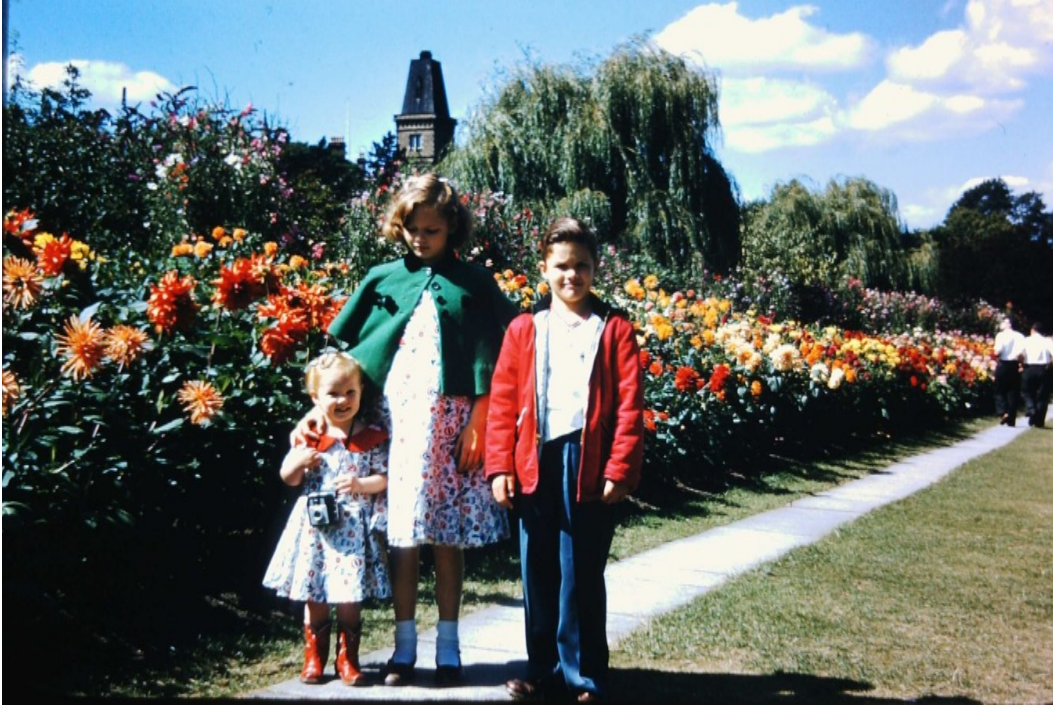
years but he felt if he got one right away he would get the most use out of it. That is the same uniform he was buried in with only minor alterations mom made to it for him thru the years. While still at Ft Deven's, there was going to be a formal event and dance at the Officers Club, so dad had mom buy a dress. It is what we always called her "Cinderella Dress" and the photo of her and dad together is one of the best of their lives. I am not sure when or how down the years that dress disappeared but I think mom had it up the 70-80's.

Speaking of dresses, while we were still in Okinawa, there was an event at the Officers Club and dad bought mom one of the local dresses and it had a slit up the one side. Now mom was a pretty nice looking gal in her time and dad thought she would look great in the Oriental dress. Mom liked it but she took the sewing machine and "Zipped" the slit in the side to below the knee. The commander, one of dad's friends, mentioned to mom about the dress. He said the prettiest woman here, in the prettiest dress and you sewed up the side of it!!!

Well in summer of 1959 dad got orders for moving to England. My brother Tommy was going to go to West Point so he did not go with us. We took a boat for the crossing and mom spent most her time sick in the cabin. Much like when she went to Okinawa and back. Mom was not a sailor!! But Kathy and I were big enough to run around ship on our own. There were planned

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activities for kids on board and movies and we went to those and then found many of our own activities to enjoy during the crossing.



So with our arrival in Harrogate, England, just outside of Menwith Hill Station where dad was assigned we started the 60's. The base was not even completed and we lived first in one and then another hotel to start with. Then Kathy and I went to a British School one year and we had two different houses in town before they completed housing on base. More on that in the 60's....