

The 80's opened up my horizons...



The 80's found me at the trout farm in Yellville AR. I was trying to run the trout farm in the daytime and had started working at the sheriff's office at night as the jailer/dispatcher for the county. It was fun and I did it for almost a year. It was fun to get to know all the deputies and Highway Patrolman. One of the Highway Patrolman was GB and he got to be a good friend and we had a bass boat together for a while. Would go fishing and he was real busy casting and reeling it in. Me, I kind a put my feet up on outboard and cast but did not really care about reeling it in. I just liked being on the water. But there were some very strange things going on in the jail and I tired of it and started looking for other things to do.

I got elected to be the Chamber Of Commerce President for Yellville, AR and the first thing I did was find us office space in town. Then the only real thing that the Chamber did was put on

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an annual festival called “Turkey Trot”. It was in the fall and for the past 36 years one of the main attractions of the festival was the dropping of turkeys from an airplane flying low over the city square. No, these are not butterball turkeys. These were game birds and dropping them from air was how the Fish and Game Department stocked the birds into the areas for hunting. Of course dropping them in town, the birds did not really understand flying with telephone pole wires and buildings. But it had been done for years and most the birds ended up in trees around the square and the kids had a great time trying to catch them. However, the year before the FAA had an issue with planes flying that low and the only thing allowed to be dropped from airplanes was water and feathers. Well, we were close to that. The previous year the FAA had chased the plane and found it at airport where it landed and the pilot was fined and license suspended. Opps....

Well as summer was coming along and we were planning the event, I started getting questions about how we were going to get turkeys over the square for “Turkey Trot” festival. I made no full commitment on how, but guaranteed that we would have turkeys on the square. Well it became an issue and I had more than one reporter ask me to comment and a couple radio interviews I told them all I would have turkeys on the square but would not comment on how. The FAA made it known that a chase plane would be in Harrison, nearest airport and it would chase any

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plane trying to fly low over Yellville.

Well as October approached and at Chamber Meetings, I had chamber members concerned that we had to have turkeys on the square, I kept telling them I would handle it. I guess some of them got together and decided I was not going to be dropping turkeys from the sky and that was a tradition they did not want to see broken.

Turkey Trot Festival started on Friday and there was a good showing of booths and vender's. On Saturday we had our parade and there was a Miss Turkey Trot competition and a Miss Drumsticks competition. We were all having a great time. Then in the afternoon, we heard a plane approaching and sure enough it dropped in low and had 5-6 turkeys dropped over the square. This was going on about the time that I had someone tossing turkeys off the tallest building to have them on the square. Well later we heard that the FAA chased down and fined and suspended the pilots license again. The citizens committee I guess would not allow the tradition to not be honored.

However, about an hour after that a plane came up out of the creek area and dropped more birds and then headed into the creek and going south. This plane was never found. We had a great festival but I did have some t-shirts that did not sell, so I had the back of the shirts stenciled with, "The Year Of The

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Phantom”. I sold everyone of the shirts. The “Phantom” is another very funny story.

My wife and I had separated and getting divorced. I had the kids staying with me at the Trout Farm since she was living with a girlfriend at the time. I would take the kids roller skating on Friday or Saturday nights. During this time, I met cute blond and started dating her. She had two girls about same ages as Wendy and TJ, so it was fun to spend time with them. On other nights, I would go and meet her and one night as I pulled into her driveway another car pulled up and blocked me in. Turns out it was her ex-husband. I wanted to get out of there but could not and I was encouraged to come in and have a drink and meet him. So not much I could do about it.

Turns out he used to be a pilot and ran a flying school until he got in trouble running drugs as well. I guess they had divorced to keep her and kids out of all the problems. So, in September the cute blonde suggests that maybe her ex could find a plane and drop some birds for me. He had friend in sheriff’s office in Missouri, north of us that had a plane. I provided some birds. Turns out he asked his friend to borrow plane and was told no, no, no. But that the plane was usually at the airport with the key in it. So, the plane as appropriated and flown south of town, then into the area above the creek, then dropped birds and went back into the creek and headed south.

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Later it turned north and back to Missouri and feathers cleaned out and never heard from again.

So the Phantom had completed his mission and we had turkeys on the square for Turkey Trot.

I have a scrapbook with lots of news paper articles about it and asking me what I was doing and one even from Great Britain, with a funny picture of someone in a helicopter tossing birds out. Asking why and what was going on. I really enjoyed the whole thing. Note – The first of the year, the Phantom finally was tried and went to jail for his drug running.

As I got divorced, my birthday was coming up and she had gotten the car in settlement and I had a motorcycle. Of course, dad had cars on the trout farm I could drive, but I needed my own. So for my birthday, I rode my motorcycle to Little Rock to a dealer that had a rep o-ed 1979 Trans Am. I ended up trading my motorcycle for the down payment and drove home in the Trans Am. It was a great car and I really liked driving it. I made the mistake of allowing TJ, who was only about 4, ride with me a bit and I had a habit of not being patient with cars going to slow and would say, “Get that piece of shit outa my way”. Much like a parrot, TJ picked this up. So, he made the mistake one day, while riding with Grandma in her truck of quoting that and he was in big trouble. She was not amused!!

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Since Mom was living on the Trout Farm and mostly running the day to day stuff, I looked for other ways to make money. I took over a gas station in Flippin about 15 miles from Yellville and running it with a buddy to help out. Since TJ was not in school yet, he would come with me most days and started helping out. People would get a kick out of him reaching up to doors window to collect payment for gas. He was too small to wash windshields but a rag in his back pocket to wipe off headlights. I taught him real quick to not run out when someone was driving into the pumps. He was to stand at door till they turned off engine. If I did not happen to bring him some days, people would want to know where the boss was??

Of course with a nice trans am and just divorced I was doing a bit of running around and at times a little faster then the law would allowed. Once I was headed to my station in Flippin and going a little fast when a state trooper came over top of hill and saw me. I saw him turn around and turn on lights. I thought that maybe if I was fast I could get over the hill and pull into the highway department work yard and park and he would not see me. Well it was working fine I thought until I actually turned into the parking lot. It was gravel and I was traveling way to fast to make the car turn. So I ended up hitting the curb, and tearing off the lower front dam of car and blowing out the left front tire. Then as I jumped curb, I came into the parking lot and stopped in a

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parking space. When I looked up in my mirror, there was the trooper, it was GB. I got sheepishly out of car and GB was laughing and said that it looked like I had enough issues for one day. That I should slow down in the future.

Another time I was headed to my gas station and there was another car and we both were going pretty fast. Then I saw a state trooper came over the hilltop. I saw him turn around and turn on lights. The other car started slowing down to stop and I just went on to my gas station. In a few minutes the trooper pulled into the gas station. It was GB again and he said that he had turned the other guy loose because I had not stopped and we both had been speeding. He let me know, this was the last time he was going to overlook such a thing. I tried to clean up my driving a bit.

My gas station was not making a lot of money but when the gas war started in Mountain Home a few miles away, my business pretty much died. I went up to Springfield Missouri and got a job driving a truck for O'rielly Automotive out of their warehouse there. Closed the station and moved to an apartment in Springfield. It was the perfect job. I went to work around 10-10:30 weeknights and got back into the warehouse around 7am. I would drive from Springfield out to a lot of little towns almost to Joplin and drop off parts at our stores and pick up returns. Bring the truck back to warehouse and parked it. This

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left me with evenings to do what I wanted. I started taking Country dance lessons and was pretty good at it. I was dancing almost every night till about 10pm and then off to work. I met a lot of ladies.

Some weekends I would have my kids up to my apartment to spend some time with them, but I would find a babysitter so I could go dancing. Met a couple gals that had kids and living out of town, so they brought their kids into town and we would have maybe 5-6 kids for the babysitters to look after for us. One of the gals had a nice Corvette and I would drive it sometimes as we went out dancing. It had an issue with the starter so I volunteered to fix it for her. One Saturday she brings it over and I thought it would be quick and easy, as Chevy starters are normally. But with a corvette, I ended up taking off wheel, inner wheel liner, the losing the engine mounts and jacking up just the engine to be able to get in and replace the starter. Took me 4-5 hours!!!

I was spending a lot of time at the dance club and when the guy teaching quit, I took over teaching. It was a racket, I got \$40 a night to teach for an hour and free drinks the rest of the night. I taught 4 nights a week. My blonde girlfriend from Arkansas was a cocktail waitress there as well. I found other clubs wanted a teacher as well, so I was teaching in 2 clubs in Springfield and on Sunday night a club in Branson. I recruited a cute blonde to help

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me and we had leather belts made. Mine said Outlaw and hers said Lady. I wrote a small book with the steps of the line dances and it was titled "Lady and the Outlaw." I had 200 books printed and sold them all. It was fun.

With teaching and girls, some nights I would get to warehouse a little late for picking up truck but no one there, so not an issue but it meant I had to hurry. One night as I was going, I miscalculated small bridge and ended up hitting the bridge with the back wheel of the truck and blowing out the outside dual tire. I limped into the next town and found a parking lot and curb, drove the inside dual of the rear wheels up on curb and managed to get the outside dual off. Put it in truck and then finished route and back to warehouse. Boss was not amused. Not only flat tire, knocked rear axle out of alignment. So next day they made me an inside warehouse guy. This actually turned out to be a better job. I went to work at 10am and pulled parts for loading on pallets to be put on trucks. I would finish about 6pm when we had all the pallets on the trucks. I would hurry home, shower and be out at the club by 7pm to teach lessons. Even when we would go to breakfast at 1am I still got home in time to get some sleep before going to work at 10 am. It was always fun that my apartment was just a couple exits south of the exit for the warehouse. However, there was a train track between exit and warehouse. The train came thru just a bit before 10am and was a very long train. So it

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was a race to be sure I crossed the tracks before the train came each day.

Going to breakfast at 1am with a group of us there were not a lot of options where to go. The Howard Johnson's was open 24/7. We would show up and 6-10 of us sit down and order. Since of course we had all been drinking and dancing all night, we felt we should continue dancing until our food came. The only song we could sing was "Going to Hire a Wino" and dancing up and down the isle. It seemed that this would speed the arrival of our food.

I had several, what I called friends, and we would meet at clubs to dance and I would get tickets to concerts to get everyone to go. I found this less than satisfactory. One time, one couple was mad at each other and did not go and another the guy left in middle of concert. I was enjoying Springfield but I found that nobody there really cared if I was there or not. No one ever called me to arrange activities. If I did not call and organize things, then no one called me. I stayed home one week and no one even called to ask where was I? I decided it was time to get away and start over, no one would miss me. I decided to check out the Army Recruiter and did a delayed enlistment. So signed up in July but not going to report until late November. I did not tell anyone I was leaving except my family in Arkansas. What was really funny when I came back to Springfield on my way to first duty assignment in April the following year, no one really had even noticed I had

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been gone.

I reported to Ft Knox, Kentucky on Nov 29, 1982. See page on being in the military.

While working in Germany in the military, I had started running the NCO Club and Officers Club and was hoping to get a chance to stay in Germany and run the Officers Club full time. But did not happen. So, in November of 1986 I returned to Ft Riley and was mustered out of the military. I was told I was due 13 weeks of unemployment, so I went down and signed up. But they wanted me to look for work and turn in forms each week showing my efforts and companies that I contacted. It was kind of tedious. Also, I had to do that each week and there was a 4 week waiting period before I would get my first check!

I was staying with an Army buddy and he was married. Being single and not doing anything during the day, I would be out to the clubs and breakfast and getting in early mornings. I always tried to be quiet, but one morning while having breakfast with my buddy and his wife, she indicated, that unless I could get in at a decent hour then don't.... I got the message and went down to the unemployment office and picked up a dozen forms and found a phone book with yellow pages. Filled out all of them with info as though I had gone to companies looking for employment. I asked my buddy to send in one each week for me. The got in my

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Malibu and headed east.

My acquiring the Malibu is a funny story. When I first got out of military, I have gone to visit family and was in Houston looking for a car. I found Malibu at a shop that did repairs and sold cars. However they had an issue with the Malibu, it was not accelerating like it should. Dad and I looked at it and then offered the guy a couple hundred less than he wanted. He made the deal. I took the Malibu to a parts store. Bought a carburetor rebuild kit. Loosened the top of carb and only enough to slide the little steel ball that was supposed to be in the accelerator bowl in and put the top back on and the car ran fine for years.



Anyway, I took off to visit another buddy in Fort Campbell Kentucky. He and his wife were really happy to have me visit. We went out most nights and they were pretty big drinkers, so I would make sure they got home safely. The only time I was in a

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bar fight was when I was with them. I did have a couple times my buddy had been drinking a little too much while we were in Germany and we ended up backing out of a couple bars to stay out of trouble. But this time she was with us and got mad at another gal in bar and started fighting and rolling around on the floor. My buddy and I got into things and tried to get her up and away from the other gal. I was backing out of bar with my buddies wife in my arms and then he was following us out. We managed to get out without any serious injuries.

My friends wanted me to stay, I had been a few weeks already and had finally started getting my unemployment checks deposited into my Kansas bank account. I was happy not working but I did go down and applied with Auto Shack to be a manager trainee. A couple of interviews and then they said I was hired. BUT, I was going to be trained in Nashville and would be assigned store in Tennessee. I put off starting until middle of February so I could go visit the kids again and then get moved to Nashville.

My training was fun and the company was having a contest for a new name. They were being sued by Radio Shack for using the "Shack" in their name. It is now known as Auto Zone. I was assigned a store in Franklin, Tennessee. I got an apartment and the kids came to live with me.

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Kids and I had fun since we had not been together for over 4 years. A few years prior I had bought TJ a corvette shaped go cart and we had it sitting in dining room by patio door at the apartment. When we had time we would take it across the street to the school property where there was room to run and have fun. Except for the fact the use of school property was not very legal. We had someone turn us in to law enforcement a couple times. So we would go over and play for a while and then run it back to apartment and have it back inside before the cops managed to come checkout the complaint of us being there.



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I enjoyed running the Auto Shack but did not have an assistant manager so it was a lot of hours. But one time when there was an event downtown, I was walking to the event when I heard someone talking. There was no one there. I found a nice two-way radio on the ground. Not sure who it belonged to and no one around, so I took it home. I put it in my bedroom closet till I decided what to do with it.

One evening while I was at the store, two policemen came in and wanted to know if TJ was my son? Then they produced the radio and said that TJ apparently thought it was a CB radio and was chatting on it and disturbing the police band. He was pretty surprised when the patrol car showed up and found him using it and took it away from him. Turns out his sister had been snooping around my bedroom and found it.

I was assigned the store in Franklin in April of 1987 and in Dec of 1987 I got a phone call from Germany. I was asked if I was still interested in running a club in Germany. I said absolutely. I checked to make sure they would not have an issue with me having a beard. When I got out of the military, I decided not to shave anymore. They did not care. By Jan 1988, I was in Wiesbaden Germany and running the Rod and Gun Club for the military community. They were in the process of remodeling the club house and I had them make some changes to make it more usable.

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When I came in country, they put me up in the American Hotel. At the same time my boss was also put in the hotel. Since I still had a driver's license for military in Germany, I was issued a VW bus and told I was to make sure my boss got to work and pick him up at night. My boss Jerry was a lot of fun. He joked him being a one legged Marine. He had lost the leg in Vietnam. We had rooms that shared a bathroom between the rooms. Also I met and became good friends with a younger guy, named Jerry as well, that ran the computer retail store in the community. We all had a great time in the evenings and weekends. There was also another lady Claudia running a kitchen in the community. She would hang out with us. We enjoyed Sunday Brunches and drinking at times in my room where we would all get together. My boss, Jerry, liked to sing, songs like Danny Boy and others. Claudia considered herself a vocalist as well. One night we are sitting around in my hotel room drinking and Claudia started singing something that was going to have some real high notes. I picked up a plastic glass and as she hit the high note, I broke the glass. Everyone laughed and thought it was really funny, but Claudia was not amused... She quit hanging out with us as much. No big loss. We were in the hotel for several months.

Finally, Jerry's wife comes to Germany. So, Jerry and Marilyn found a house moved out of hotel. The kids were to be coming for the summer, so by April I found a nice rowhouse in Walluf about

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3 exits down from where the Rod n Gun Club was. One of the nice things about the Rod n Gun club was that it was off base so Germans could come and teach our members to hunt in Germany. A very different hunting experience than in the USA. The club also had a trout stream about 30 miles north of Wiesbaden and I had to go up and get it stocked with trout if a good weekend was coming for the members/GI's to go fishing. We had an old trailer we would tow up there and a volunteer would spend weekend selling license and bait. The old VW bus was not really good for towing. The club president was complaining that we did not have a decent vehicle. I was told they had asked for a new one but always denied. I had met a cute gal that was the Nissan Sales person for the base. I decided to take advantage of a reason to chat and spend some time with her. Finally I got a purchase order for Nissan Pathfinder. Everyone said there was no way it would be approved. So I just took the PO done to the community boss that had hired me and asked him to approve. He signed it and I went a couple weeks later and picked up our new Pathfinder. Also, we did not have to return it to the motor pool each night, since we had a gate on our parking lot. All the other club managers were jealous, they had to go to motor pool to get vehicles and not telling what they might end up with. Our trailer that we used was really in bad shape, so I took it to a dealer for trailers and found one I wanted, got a PO for the newer, but not new trailer. I went again to the big boss and he

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just signed the PO. Everyone wanted to know how I got him to sign everything. I just told them I did all the legwork and made it easy since he just had to sign.

One of the first things they wanted me to do as Rod n Gun Club Manager was to go and take a course on hunting in Germany. It was a week long course and one other from the club went with me. The first day of the class I found there were 20+ guys and 2 ladies in the class. One lady was very attractive and seemed pretty fancy dressing. The first night there I had her studying with me. She was from the Berlin Public Affairs office that controlled hunting there. My roommate said there was no way I could make any progress with her. Hahaaa, after the class she agreed to come visit me at hotel. Then I visited her in Berlin. When the kids came for the summer we went over to Berlin and visited some more. She became my second wife. She really liked skiing and wanted to be on the Ski Patrol for the ski resorts. I would go with her to Austria or Switzerland to ski resorts for her training. While she trained, I got a free lift ticket for the mountain. In Switzerland, your lift ticket was for the region and also your bus ticket to get back to where you started. One time I got off the lift and found I was at the ski lodge used for the movie Clint Eastwood did, "The Eiger Sanction." I always liked to see places where movies were made.

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When her brother decided to buy their mom a new car, they were going to junk a nice 700 BMW that was low mileage. So we talked him into giving us the BMW. It was a great car. Would run 250-260+ km all day on the autobahn. One time as we were going down to Switzerland for in the evening and snow storm. Not much traffic but road was getting snow accumulation. I am not sure why but maybe the wind, but the BMW started to drift and then I ended up doing a 360 in middle of the autobahn and then continuing down the road.

Since I had the nice BMW, I decided to sell the Malibu. I had paid \$700 for it and sold it in Germany for \$1600 2 years later!!

One weekend the kids and I decided to go to a carnival near us. TJ and I had so much fun on the bumper cars that we played on them for 30-40 minutes. Come Monday, my back was killing me so I went to the doctor. He asked if I had been in an accident, my back was so bruised. I would not admit that I had spent an afternoon in bumper cars.

The kids were having fun in Germany and they both stayed there to go to school for the 1988-1989 school year in the American School on base. Wendy was doing well but TJ not crazy about it. Since we lived of post, he did not have many friends. Well, one of his buddies from the school was getting sent back to the USA even though his father was still assigned there. The kid had been

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getting in trouble at school and being sent home. His parents not happy, mom and family had to leave and dad stayed. So TJ thinks if he gets in trouble he could go home. I straightened him out pretty quick after the first parent teacher conference. I pressed on him that he had made a commitment to spend the school year with me and he was staying.

Come summer, I sent both kids home to see their mother. Wendy had said she wanted to come back for school again but TJ said he was staying with his mother. In August, my girlfriend and I went to Reno, NV and got married and then over to Arkansas to see folks and kids. I picked up Wendy and she was going to travel with us back to Germany. TJ was sad to see us go, but I reminded him he had made his choice and he had not really enjoyed being in Germany.

We got back to Walluf, Germany and enjoyed our row house and work. My wife had gotten a job in Mainz Public Affairs, transferring from Berlin, so she could move to Walluf and be with us as a family.