Navy Families Compared to Civilian Families: E.G. The BouterseFamily.

Written July 22, 2002.

My Grandson, Dylan, and a couple of young ladies were discussing the difference between Civilian Families and Military families. Somehow I was brought into the discussion and assured them that the experience of my family could very well be unique, so I wouldn't be a good source for "Normal" Information, because I felt that because I had always been under the impression that it was God Who called me into the Navy as a Chaplain, just like He did into the Ministry as a Baptist Preacher. perhaps looking for the "average" family and ours could well be considered completely different. Not that we were "special" or anything like that, but Their question had taken me by surprise and my mind had immediately flashed back to the first 2 children we had acquired, and the way God "arranged" them, and the timing of their birth. It looks like this is going to get complicated, so perhaps we better "Batten Down the Hatches, and prepare for all kinds of weather...and whether or not you'll be interested- We'll see. After all, it is a sort of Sea Story!.

I didn't include this in my answer to them, but the first thing that hit me was the way The Lord had used giving us the reality of pregnancy for a very unique purpose that had nothing to do with having a baby! Virginia and I had married , rather "on the fly!". I had almost lost her because my getting a college education was during such a period of "Depression" in America that this was almost a miracle. She also received a miracle at the same time because her family was incapable of "sending her to college" In fact the money she was able to scrape up working in odd jobs and the better pay she eventually recieved, because someone sent her to X-Ray School in Minneapolis and her pay in a hospital, eventually was given to help her Mother receive the care she needed. No one knew about the tears that were shed, nor did I at the time. My miracle was happening at the same time.

I have to go back to our meeting, another miracle. I graduated from Mt Dora High School in 1932, with no money, no car, no prospect of affording college, and no idea of doing something I had never done. Other than working in a grocery store I had never had a job. Somehow God through the fact that my father was pastor in Mt Dora, and he and Mother were given time on the only radio station in that area to conduct a half hour radio program by the owner of the station, a retired USArmy Colonel. He had heard them sing, and Dad preach and they were able to have that sourch of income, which in those days was very small, but regular for 13 years.People all over the state heard them sing and Dad give short sermonettes and guest groups of children and choirs and guests from evangelical churches It's hard today for us to believe that they did not "get rich", but they did make hundreds, maybe thousands of friends. One, at least had heard me read Christian poetry over the air, and had written that she thought I ought to "study to be a Minister". She offered to send some money each month to assist me.

The amount was enough to send me to the University of Florida, which in those days was very inexpensive.To be perfectly honest, I'm afraid that had as much as anything to "assist God" in calling me to preach!! The "Real Call" came later when I was "interim pastor" of a small church in Eau Gallie Florida driving down on Saturdays, visiting and receiving half of the collection for Sunday morning!.

It was about that time that 2 sisters in law, one in Umatilla, the other in Mt Dora who were sponsors of their Youth Groups decided to throw a party at Lake Joanna which was a lonely lake between the 2 towns. There was a county picnic place there.

This has become what could have become "A Tale of Two Cities" except they were not cities, but 9 miles in those days for kids was "outer space". I didn't even have a bicycle!

But here again God arranged a game we played and I became aware that in playing the

game I was caught holding the hands of "a golden haired shapely angel" the likes of which I had never seen or imagined. But smitten into almost delerious unconsciousness I realized we were no longer holding protective hands, keeping "safe" the person we had been "protecting". God gave the words to say, "Let's go take a walk!" (Those words became a Sacred Mantra, the Rest of My Life"!

We took that walk along the shore of Lake Joanna,(where Virginia and I and the last of our 5 children came to live the last of our retirement years on this earth.)

I said to her "**I am going to marry you in seven years, after I have finished College, and Seminary"**. I am certain there were other things I said but that was Divine inspiration if ever I received any, and I am reasonably assured God has Given me that since then, especially since in Umatilla First Baptist Church on Christmas Day in 1938 in answer to a

There came several reasons why I could not continue my studies at Florida and I had to return to my parents who were now living on a 10 acre orange grove in Plymouth Florida, closer to Orlando where they were still holding forth at WDBO, commuting each day to the Radio station that was located inside the Ft.Gatlin Hotel where after the program we were always welcome to eat breakfast. About that time we got word from my "rich uncle", John Young who was manufacturing armament for police forces all over the world.

This was another one of God's strange accomplishments in the life of our family. Uncle John's wife was a Bouterse, my fathers beautiful young SISTER name Pauline, and she too was a Salvation Army soldier; In fact she had become an rather high ranking officer and eventually was put in command of a Salvation Army post in Pennsylvania, in a rather rough and tumble mining section of that state. She was very talented, very beautiful and a great singer and preacher and became quite well known all over the area near Pittsburgh where John Young's family lived.

John Young's mother was a very religious woman and 2 of her children became missionaries to Africa and South America with their families. John was preparing to become a minister and was a student at Carnegie Tech, preparing to go to Seminary. He got a job with the Wearever Utensil Company who sent their employees out to give demonstrations about their aluminum pots and pans by getting a prospective cutomer to invite a group of their friends for a dinner, free, and the hostess got a big discount. The salesmen had to become good cooks and John was not just a good cook, but a very persuasive salesman! In a short time he earned a promotion as a district manager, teaching others how to do what he did so well. It was in one of those group occasions that somehow he met Salvation Army Captain Pauline Bouterse.

I never learned all the details, but they were married, she left the SA, and he eventually left what he was doing and began his own business making police equipment "quelling riots" with tear gas in little things like a fountain pen, larger equipment for police and foreign nations military and police. They had decided that he was good enough at earning money, so he and Aunt Pauline would support both his siblings and families in their Mission labor since God had given talent in business to John. Incidently later he went into making "Young" washing machines during the first years of WW2. We bought our 1st one from him!

He also invented some kind of airplane starter and sold it to the Germans. This was before WW2, of course, and I remember eating with a few Germans in their new home

Now, back to my story how this swept my life into all this."My Lord was Writing All The Time" (You mean you never heard that Spiritual?). He was at it and I was ready!

They heard I was back with my parents and they were getting ready to build a huge stone house in a wealthy suberb of Pittsburg, "Ben Avon Heights", overlooking The Smoky City, where his factory was located. They had 2 cute little girls and a son who was about 6 and they needed someone to care for them since a great deal of their business called upon them to entertain foreign representatives of other Governments, and they had quite a social life too and needed me to be their "referee, pal, playmate,-whatever I could make of it! " Also in a few months I would have a job as laborer on their new home just a bit farther up, which a cousin an architect would build . As far as I was concerned it was one long big picnic, and I was able to save enough money to consider after almost a year, going back to school. In the work on the new home I found myself digging ditches for 40 cents an hour. The picnic was almost over!

There's another story here that I'd enjoy mentioning. They enteretained groups of men from Japan, South America,Russia,etc at very formal dinners where, for some reason they usually wanted me to sit with them all at the huge table, while the children ate with the cook and maid in the kitchen. I had picked up a few words in Spanish and in polite Japanese, and I guess that helped. But it was really a very important help in broadening this Florida Cracker, and I

really believe God appointed that. I also was elected to drive their huge Packard Limousine to drive them to operas and concerts with foreign guests, let them off in front, and then take my "Balcony Ticket" and sit up there with the Music Majors and their folders with the music in them.Stretching things a little more forthat Cracker! One small detail and I'll leave Pittsburg. Some 30 years later, Bob Young, their son came to Florida, married once, and again,- moved to Florida and visited my family and told me that he had always looked on me as more of a father figure than his own dad. I buried both of their parents all in good time. It was a strange part of my life. All part of God's Plan!

The Lord was ready for His next move for me. Again He had prepared Stetson University in DeLand,Florida to allow me to enter with very little cost as a Ministerial student, and with a job as janitor for the School Little Theatre. Not only that but another family who were "Family Altar" Faithful had a young son they wanted me to "influence" and I could commute from their place near Sanford to Stetson if I had a car. This time Dad was able to get me a tiny midget car made in Tampa, an Austen, long ago disappeared, but sufficient for the purpose. It even made it to Daytona Beach many times full of friends, and even a few times with Virginia, after my sanity returned and I "reclaimed her!" She was still working to help her family in the Harry Anna Crippled Childrens' Hospital in Umatilla, bless her heart.

One of the other Divine Interventions prepared for me was an opportunity to preach at a Congregational Church in Orange Cityl passed every day going to Stetson. I preached there a few times as they waited for a Pastor and a Dear Little Old Lady, the widow of a well to do doctor, a member there caught me in another job I had found. I was driving a "Dime Taxi" for a woman who had a "thing" about "College Boys". When this dear Mrs Dr. Curtis saw me driving one of those taxis thru DeLand one day, the next time she saw me she asked me if I could study and do that also. I sorta admitted I wasn't very happy doing that. She said,"Honey, if you will quit that...How much do you make?? I told her, it was enough for my meals. (The taxi lady had a boarding house) She said if I would quit she would send me 20 dollars a month until I finished Stetson. There were a lot of reasons why I jumped at that Happily!

Incidently, when Virginia and I were finally married a few years later, she insisted that she was going to get us a room in the little hotel in Orange City for our First Night, before we left for Daytona Beach for our Honeymoon. after we had breakfast with her!!! Could YOU think of a way to say "no"? We didn't! (That's another story)

One has had to live in the '30's to understand what :"The Great Depression" of the United States in those days was like. Ingenuity was the "Order of The Day, and the clever ones, or the lucky ones, or the blessed Ones were the ones who succeeded in any great ambition. As I see some of the films of poor folks in the dust bowl or some other tragic situation, and there were plenty of such, I am rather puzzled because I do not ever remember being depressed or sad, or feeling unlucky. One didn't feel that way because we were just too busy . Life was for young people in those days just a simple matter of coping!, with no time for envying some other folks. And the fact that the "Dear Little Lady" also continued the monthly gift during our last year at Southern Baptist Seminary didn't surprise us at all.

My first 2 years of Seminary was in Philadelphia at Eastern Baptist Seminary and it was during that time that I almost lost Virginia. (The fact that a widow from the North, a listener to "Family Altar of the Air" intervened and assisted financially in that-another chapter)

During that time Virginia was dating another young man and they were in a car wreck in Eustis, and Virginia suffered a broken back! My stupidity was revealed because I couldn't figure out anyway I could write to her and tell her about my concern. It was at that time that I lost her father's respect for a long time. Her Mother, bless her Virginia-like heart, never wavered. That period was my genuine :"Depression"!

It was during that time in my life that God came to my rescue and during the summer vacation from Philadelphia our relationship was restored, with her on a hospital bed in her room at Harry Anna Children's Hospital in Umatilla, where she lived and had worked, wearing a practically "cast iron" curved cast..(She was even shapely like that!) treated with love and compasion by the many doctors who served freely for the "children" at Harry Anna, a work of the BPOE, the Elks all across Florida. During that blessed time God taught me a lot about what Courtship really could be. Her bravery and patience and the fulness of her spiritual love, was the genuine revelation of her character, and what a treasure I had been given for my "Much Better Half"!

I went back to Philadelphia, and made a jackass of myself! Yes, the blessing of the love of a woman with far more intelligence than I have ever had, more common sense, more practical, more Everything, could not make me yet Grown Up! When I returned to Eastern Seminary where they had bent over backwards to encourage me in my studies, and to enable me to achieve far more than I had ever expected, because I was one of the first Southern students there. For instance the first thing they did for me was to arrange for me to also attend the University of Pennsylvania, just a bridge across the river from Rittenhouse Square, where the Seminary was located at that time. I was enabled to worktoward a Doctorate at Penn in American Theater, because I had mentioned in my application there that I was a member of Theta Alpha Phi in college. Religious Drama was to be my specialty, and they were paying for it. I didn't know it at that time but they also paid for apartments for married students.

Christmas time was the time for a dash back to Florida for me, and sure enough Virginia agreed to marry me that Christmas. On Christmas Day, the Church was beautifully decorated with all kinds of flowers, not for us, but for Christmas! But look what we couldn't afford! Her Grandfather, an old time baptist preacher was in his 80's and had never had an opportunity to marry any of his children and so we paid him the princely price of $5.00 for doing that. Mrs Self, the church organist had taught Virginia to play that very organ and she was still in shock that Virginia could take her place when she went away on vacations, and, I think, she was almost unbelieving that Virginia could play anything she had heard, and didn't have to read the music! So she didn't expect a fee, and we didn't think of it!! It was the cheapest wedding, and the most beautiful...at least for us, and ours!

I went back to Philadelphia, and was called into a meeting with the Faculty. A somber group of Professors faced me and "assumed that I had gotten married while back home". They must have been Prophetic Professors because I didn't tell them. The outcome was that I would be allowed to complete that year and would be expected to not come back for my senior year, and would have to withdraw from The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School immediately!

It didn't occur to me until many years later while far away on a Navy ship at sea, that I remembered what hit me that day, "A voice of memory or sadness, or just "war willies" said to me, "Y'know, you might have asked before you left Seminary that year, to go home for the Summer, those nice old men who had been so good and thoughtful and kind to you. They just might have given you and Virginia their Blessing and you both could have finished with your wife taking courses like many of the other wives had been so happily doing..They had scholarships and an apartment, and could do it together"!!!.I didn't attempt to go "man overboard"

That was possibly the closest I ever came to ask myself "How did I happen to leave my Beloved wife, and Mother of my son, and the pastorate where I was famous in all that part of the Bluegrass State as the Little Preacher, and husband of The Little Preacher's wife, and father of the little wife's baby!" Alas History doesn't allow Recapitulation! Assuradly never in the NAVY.