

5. Enrollment in the Army

David: OK it is... what's the date today?

Henry: Today is the 18th

David: 18th of August... two thousand fourteen.

Henry: The last time we talked about my senior year in high school, and among other things I neglected to mention one important development, which had an effect on me throughout the rest of my life, quite aside from whatever effect my unhappy experience with the student government of Paly high had on my personality. I believe in one earlier session I mentioned the fact that my domicile at the Anderson nursery school was little more than a closet, which (*Chuckle*) was so small that it prevented me from my, whatever may have been my... inclination to collect things, or to scatter things, but when I achieved an unwanted position with the student government of Paly high, my mother thought that it would be beneath my new found station in life, to live in a closet.

So she began looking for a suitable residence for my brother and me and herself, and she would then have a resident take over the nursery school when she wasn't there. And she found a place about three or four blocks from the nursery school, on Colorado Avenue, a 3 bedroom, 2 bath house, very nice Spanish style architecture, and she bought it in time for my senior year in high school, with the idea that I could use it for entertaining my fellow commissioners and so forth and so on. As it turned out, I never (*Chuckle*) had the occasion to have a single one of them visit in this residence on any single occasion, and neither, incidentally, was I ever invited to any of their homes.

But I did have, for the very first time in my life, a rather generous size bedroom, ALL to myself, and I began dropping my clothes on the floor whenever I was through with them, and scattering my papers, and counting on my memory to be able to locate things, if I ever wanted to refer to them again, and (*Chuckle*) in the due course of time the place became (*Chuckle*), the place became so crowded that I was forced to sleep on a narrow eighteen inches or so of the bed, and all the rest was piled with stuff. It was such a sight that my brother took a photograph of it to record for posterity -- it exists somewhere among my archives. And this, unhappily, engrained in me the habit of being the world's worst housekeeper, if that's the word, and it has gotten me into a lot of trouble, all through life. It [ended?] some otherwise promising relationships.

So, let's move forward to my freshman year in college. I believe I mentioned the last time that, being 16 years of age, for the first time I was able to get gainful employment during the summer. This was the summer of 1944 and that was nice, it gave me a little spending money, and so forth. So then I went down to Claremont, California to begin at Pomona College. And at the orientation session, for the frosh class, before I had any idea where I'd be staying... that is by the room number, or my roommate or anything like that. I met a guy who was very outgoing and friendly and wanted to know all about me, and invited me to come to meet his folks in Long Beach, etc. etc. And so he suggested that he and I might become roommates, if we talked to

the guy in charge of the dormitory arrangements.

So I thought why not? I didn't know any of the other guys in the incoming frosh class, and in fact he said there would be no problem. And the arrangement at the frosh dorm was a two-room suite connected, with a bath, that was shared by another two-room suite, altogether four suite-mates I guess you could call them. So this guy and I had one of them, and everything began OK, until my new found housekeeping habits began to creep up and get in the way of (*Chuckle*), a beautiful relationship. And (*Chuckle*), he would ask me to pick my stuff up, and so forth, but I would back slide, and before terribly long, I, I guess maybe I stayed in that arrangement for six weeks or so, but there came one afternoon when I (*Chuckle*), I got back from class, and found that he had thrown all of my clothes out the window (we were on the second floor). He threw all my clothes -- not only the clothes that I had left on the bedroom floor -- but all my other clothes as well (*Chuckle*), he had thrown them out the window into the courtyard, and told me that I should find another roommate.

So, I went back to the guy in charge of the dorm, and he said that the guy that was originally scheduled to be my roommate was still lacking one, and so I was free to move in there, and I met him and he was amenable to the idea, and so I began all over again. And this time I tried extra hard to be a better housekeeper. And this fellow was much more easygoing and laid-back, and, even more important than that, I think, is that he had more smarts and was more interested in things like music and art -- he himself was a music major, he played piano -- and I was at that time, nominally, an art major, and we got along OK then, and for the rest of the year, and remained friends for years afterwards, actually.

Our two suite-mates were also rather interesting guys, one was another music major, in his case a singer, and the fourth member of our little group, was interested in journalism because his father published a political paper representing the Republican party, and he himself was very much a supporter of the Republican party.

This was a presidential election year, 1944. Franklin D. Roosevelt was running for president, once again -- for the fourth time. His opponent this time around, was to be Thomas E. Dewey, the governor of New York State, and his running mate was the governor of Ohio. The running mate of F.D.R. was unknown to almost everybody, at least in my circle, Harry S. Truman, a senator from Missouri.

Roosevelt's vice president, up to that time, well, for the previous four years at least, was Henry Wallace, of the state of Iowa, who was a very, very, liberal guy, and Truman, although a Democrat, was kind of, uh, well, a very conservative democrat, let's put it that way.

And we were in the midst of World War II, and I was of course, interested in the war as everybody was, I myself enrolled in the ROTC course at Pomona, it only gave one-half unit credit, but, I suppose it gave one a little leg up on going into the service, which all of the men who were of draft age were looking for -- something that was inevitable for most of them. I should mention the fact, that probably at least three-fourths of the student body at Pomona consisted of women, and among the men, a lot of them had physical disabilities, such as the

hold-over from polio which was a major problem in those days. And the rest of them were under draft age. I myself was still only sixteen, the other guys that I've mentioned were seventeen.

But I became more interested in politics than I ever had before, because of the influence of this fellow – Robert Work (sp?) was his name (although despite his name he was anti-labor). Very enthusiastic about Dewey, and talked me into going with him, into hearing a speech by Dewey, in Los Angeles. I was very naïve and malleable in those days, and (*Chuckle*), I wrote my mother a letter, saying that I was convinced that Roosevelt would never live out his term, and that Truman was at best a lightweight, and at worst a kind of Republican in Democratic clothes, and that if I were able to vote that year, I would vote for Dewey. And she (*Chuckle*), she was greatly shocked, and wrote back a rather strong letter, saying you don't, well (*Chuckle*), well, you don't change horses in the middle of the stream, I think.

Well as things turned out, of course, Roosevelt died quite soon after the election. So during the countdown of the end of World War II in the European theatre, involving the last days of the Nazi regime, Truman was the president and he would go to international summit meetings with Churchill representing Britain and Stalin representing the Soviet Union. All kinds of fateful decisions were made, regarding the future of Eastern Europe, and so forth and so on.

But here's the important point for my personal history, in April of '45, there began coming to light, some of the facts about the worst aspects of Nazism that had been kept hidden. Namely the existence of what they called concentration camps, which I found was really a euphemism -- in my naivete, I always conjured up a vision of camp in which people were forced to concentrate (*Chuckle*) on their wrong thinking and were re-educated to Nazi theories -- that sort of thing. I had no inkling of what was really going on in places like Buchenwald and Dachau. And there came to light photographs of horrors, unimaginable horrors, bodies stacked up like cordwood. And I had an epiphany, a kind of religious conversion (*Sigh*), that their victims, the Jewish victims and their survivors, were entitled, if anybody in the history of the world ever was, to have a country of their own in which they were free from oppression. And so without even knowing the word, I became, in my heart, a Zionist. And that runs through the years that followed.

Now, let me think about other developments. OK, I'm not altogether sure about the sequence of events, but, in retelling my story to some family members in the past, I have remembered that I was so moved by this experience that I volunteered for the army, before Germany surrendered. And that (*Chuckle*), that recollection enabled me to make a joke about my being responsible. Well, regardless of the matter of bad taste, it wasn't true. One's memory is not infallible and, I did some research before this meeting this afternoon, and found that the true sequence of events was that Germany surrendered in May, and I volunteered for the army in June.

Now, I was assigned to something called the A.S.T.R.P. which I think stands for Army Special Training Reserve Program, which meant, in practice, that I was sent back to college! The fact that I had already had one year of college I guess led the army to believe that it would to their advantage not put me into the infantry, or field artillery, or anything on the front lines, but

maybe something in the signal corps, or medical corps, or something a little more specialized. And that another year, another little while at least, of college, would help. Well, lo and behold, they assigned me to Stanford. And (*Chuckle*), lo and behold, who should turn up in the same class of ASTRP, than my old friend and nemesis, Dick Jennings (*laughter*). I think we took ... we didn't take the same courses -- apparently we had some latitude. We were supposed to take one scientific-type of course and I took physics. We were in the same history course. And I was free to take a third, and I took a course in British humorists. So, that was easy duty as we used to say.

As far as we knew, although the war in Europe was over, what was still lying ahead, was the war in the Pacific, which if anything might be even more difficult, because the Japanese had the reputation, and I think a well-earned reputation, of being even more fanatical -- as in the case of Kamikaze pilots that would simply dive-bomb their whole planes on the ships of their enemy.

So we had every expectation that the war in the Pacific would drag on for a long time. Once again, we were given no inkling of (*Chuckle*), what ended the war, and that, of course, was the A-bomb. The one on Nagasaki [Hiroshima – ed.], in early August followed, within three days by one on Nagasaki. And I remember vividly, Dick Jennings telling me: "Well, Hank, we're not going to die in this war". And, of course he was right, because, within a couple or 3 days after Nagasaki, the Japanese surrendered.

Now Dick continued at Stanford for the fall quarter, when the summer quarter ended. I learned that there was no reason why I needed to continue in the ASTRP, if I didn't want to. And I thought it would be a lark to spend the next time, the next 3 months, wearing my uniform, but, uh, going to San Francisco, and enjoying myself, doing whatever.

And that led to another event which had a powerful effect on me and, uh, affected my attitudes for the rest of my life, for better or for worse. Much of the time when I went to San Francisco, just to bum around the place and go the zoo, or, Sutro Baths, which was still in existence at that time, Coit Tower, all the ... whatever, I frequently would go in the company of a friend of mine named Bruce Pierce, who became my friend because his mother took the place of my mother in, uh, keeping tabs on the nursery school when she wasn't there, and Bruce stayed there with his mother, and he and I became friends. He was a sophomore when I was a senior, and we remained friends after that for years.

So he was still at Paly high, but on weekends when he was free, he and I would really have fun up in San Francisco, but then there were times when I was by myself. So on this occasion, I went to a movie in some third-rate place on Market Street. I have no recollection of what was playing, maybe a cowboy movie, or something. Sitting by myself, some guy came and sat down beside me, and put his hand on my knee. And that made my skin crawl. Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. I suppose that a service man sitting by himself in that particular theatre, all by himself, was kind of a signal, but, um, it was very shocking and all I could think of to do was to get up and move, or to leave the theatre, actually. But it started me thinking about what might be going on. San Francisco had a reputation, which most of us thought was just something to laugh about. There was a nightclub called Finocchios; the entertainment

consisted entirely of female impersonators. And so, among us young fellows, um, when we wanted to insult somebody in a humorous way, we would call him a “Finocch”. But I was forced to start thinking about, what, uh, might really be going on.

And (*clears throat*), I’ll have more to say about that later.

On the 27th of December, I had become eighteen (*clears throat*) passing that significant eighteen year mark on the 14th, and had to report for duty -- active duty, as distinguished from the enlisted reserve. Active duty meant reporting to a place called Camp Beale in the Sacramento Valley. The nearest town would be Marysville, and uh, I can’t remember how I got up there, but I was given (*clears throat*) a more complete outfit (*clears throat*) than I had had at Stanford. A complete ... I was given combat boots for example.

I’m (*clears throat*) having trouble with my bullfrog in my throat.

David: Take a break?

(Clearing of throat, water sipping)

David: Can I get you a cookie?

Henry: No, thanks.

Henry: Camp Beale was a madhouse. It was chaos. Swamped with people being discharged. [And?] the whole country wanted their loved ones back, but it wasn’t easy, getting rid of sixteen million people in a rush. So those of us who were coming IN to the army got kind of lost in the shuffle. I went through the incoming line, getting the uniform components and the toilet articles. Those who knew the ropes said if they gave you razor blades, which they did, throw them into the nearest ashcan, because they will not cut warm butter. Um, anyway I got the outfit of wool shirts and trousers called O.D.s, [color?] stands for Olive Drab and the lightweight uniforms that were called suntans, and so forth. All of them fitted into a big duffle bag, and uh, it was unclear as to where we were supposed to stay, and it turns out that in the section that was devoted to the incoming group, we could stay almost anywhere we wanted, and go to any of the mess halls that were open. And after a very short period of time, maybe a day or two, somebody stole my duffle bag. I thought I was really in the soup.

I don’t know whether (*Chuckle*), anybody but me remembers the Dickens novel *David Copperfield*, in which Dickens discovered that the most popular character in this novel, which was published serially, as all of his novels were, the readership liked the character Micawber better than any of the others. So Dickens would find ways to re-introduce Micawber into the story by extensive coincidences of one type or another. I thought about that when, who should turn up at Camp Beale, but my (*Chuckle*) my nemesis/friend Dick Jennings. And I told Dick Jennings about my problem, and uh, he thought he could help me out. So he took me to a depot, a portion of the camp, operated by the quartermaster corps, which had all the uniforms that anybody could possibly want, all the sizes of combat boots that anybody could want, etc.

So he personally accompanied me while I filled a new duffle bag with everything that I had had in the old one. And I guess we did this during a noon hour, or some time when there was nobody around, I can't (*Chuckle*), I can't believe that we got away with it, but we did (*Laugh*). I laugh because I would have to cry if what might have happened had happened and that is, I had been apprehended for stealing government property. Oh dear.

Well, time dragged on and I learned the way things were organized -- to the extent that they were, which wasn't much. Tuesday morning, every week there would go out a call, from the classification and assignment section, of people who were there in the holding company, waiting to be sent out someplace, for basic training. And, a lot of them, I noticed, were being sent to Fort Lewis, Washington, but occasionally, and there didn't seem to be any rhyme or reason apparently, some were sent to Fort Hood, Texas, or a place in Missouri, called Camp Crowder that I had never heard of. I hoped that I would be able to get to Fort Lewis Washington, which sounded like much the most congenial of the possibilities.

In between time, there was nothing to do. And, technically, (*Chuckle*), I was supposed to have a pass, to leave the camp. On one occasion, early in the game, I got a pass, a weekend pass, which, if I played my cards right, and made the right connections with buses and railroad trains, would get me back to Palo Alto, in time to spend some time with the family, and my friend Bruce Pierce, and so forth. Well, I began to stretch that pass, by (*Chuckle*), by erasing the dates, until the paper got thinner and thinner, and almost disappeared. And (*Chuckle*) I began leaving on the strength of this fake pass, earlier and earlier in the week, until after the, the Thursday meeting in the uh, holding company, at which my name was NOT called, I would take off, and (*Chuckle*), wouldn't come back until the following Monday.

So I was not, I was not the best soldier, but at this time, I didn't think I was doing any harm. I wasn't hurting any war effort. In fact, on one occasion, I really pushed the envelope, or whatever the saying is, by going on sick call, because I had, I had a kind of a sore throat, and I thought maybe a cold was coming on. So, I was in a group of a number of other guys, who were uh, there with apparently minor complaints. We were all given a thermometer, and, I took my temperature and was alarmed to see that I was, in fact, below 98.6 Fahrenheit, and I thought that I would not be taken seriously by any medic on the strength of that temperature. And so (*Laugh*), so it occurred to me that maybe I would try shaking that thermometer in the reverse direction, and made it go higher than 98.6, and I found that in fact, it worked, so I got it up to about 101.

(*Chuckle*) the guy came around and uh, said I should go the infirmary. And so I did, and uh, I spent another happy week there. Well eventually, it got to be a bit much. And so I took my chances. No, not entirely.

Just to show you I was not altogether a good soldier, I went to the classification and assignment section to see if I could talk to somebody about getting into the group that would be going to Fort Lewis. And here once again, I was there during the noon hour, and once again, there was nobody on duty there. So I began looking on peoples desks, and on one desk I found a group that was being assigned to Camp Crowder Missouri, and there was my card, in that group. Well,

tut, tut, tut (*general laughter*), that card found its way out of there (*laughter*). So, eventually, a duplicate card was found somewhere in the files and they, this time I ended up in the group going to Fort Lewis.

Gene: And for how long had you been there, how long had you -- it sounds like it had been quite a while.

Henry: I had probably been there for ... January, February, 2 and a half months.

Now, one night after chow, we were bussed down to the nearest railroad station (*clears throat*), where there was a troop train waiting. And we were uh going to be gone for two nights. If it had been a passenger train, possibly, maybe only one night, but in the postwar-period, troop trains no longer had the right of way that they enjoyed during the war. And, uh when there was any possible conflict with a passenger train the troop train was pulled to a siding, and so it took longer to get there. And this was an all Pullman, well, not the Pullman in the usual sense. Because I discovered that, in a troop train, the berths were shared. And here the memory of my experience in the movie theater in San Francisco came back to life and I didn't look forward to the experience. I survived it, but I wasn't happy about it. And I wondered, when later on, there was a big controversy during the Clinton administration, whether homosexuals would be OK in the armed forces. And Clinton had a policy called "Don't ask", what was it? "Don't ask, Don't tell", something like that.

Gene: Yeah.

Henry: But I never did quite understand how it would work, in actual practice.

In my day, I didn't, I don't suppose that a practicing homosexual would even be drafted at all. I don't know.

Anyway, I got to Fort Lewis, and, uh, embarked on what they called basic training, which was supposed to be six weeks, in which we would learn things like close-order drill, and the manual of arms, and so forth and so on. But, it never worked out for me in the way intended, because through a stroke of fate -- ill fate now that I think about it, in retrospect -- the company clerk, in my company, had just left. And there were certain requirements that had to be met, without fail, like a duty roster had to be typed up every day, for everybody in the company, which consisted of over 200 people. And it had to be typed without error. I mean, this was the army and certain things had to be done just exactly so, with no questions asked.

And I was the only guy, among the incoming class of approximately 200 people, who had any typing skills. I had typed in high-school and college and I was fairly proficient at it, so I became, in effect, the company clerk, meaning: that I was spared the drudgery of marching around a parade-ground in close-order drill, learning how to do all kinds of right order, right face, left face, to the rear march, etc., etc. I was spared all of that, and yet, at the same time, I missed out on the really important, the important part, which was developing any sort of esprit de corps, any sort of camaraderie, with the other 200 guys.

And that was a very serious shortcoming. In fact, I was deeply resented.

(Chuckle) The only saving virtue was that I had a very limited sleeping space, we had bunks, and everybody had a foot locker at the foot of the bunk and that was my space, period. And, so I didn't have the option of dropping my clothes wherever I took them off (*laughter*), or anything like that, so I didn't get in trouble for that reason, but I did get in trouble for the fact that they thought that I was a shirker. And suppose I, I was not altogether blameless. I suppose there are times when I was not needed in the company office, but I found excuses not to go out and parade around in close-order drills, and so I, in the long run I paid by being ostracized, and more than that, there came a time when they gave me what they called a GI shower. (*Laughs*). A GI shower consisted of your having to strip down, and they would brush you with stiff brushes and GI soap, which was a kind of lye soap, and uh, that was not pleasant at all. In fact I think I was the only guy I ever heard of that was penalized to such an extent.

Eventually, I survived the so-called basic training process uninjured except, to one extent. On the very last day, we were all hauled out to the rifle range outside of camp, where we took a test to determine whether we were ... there were three gradations – of sharpshooter, marksman, I can't remember all of it. But the problem was that I had never had the practice, and it was not that simple a matter. The rifles that they used at that time involved a clip of eight bullets that you had to push down into a chamber, and remove your thumb rapidly, or else the lid would click shut and give you what they called an M1 thumb. I'm sure it no longer exists, because it was a pretty primitive system. Well, I got an M1 thumb, because I couldn't get my thumb out fast enough. I passed the test, I hit the target frequently enough, but I got this wound, it's stayed with me all my life.

Now, I moved on from Northeast Fort Lewis, which is where the basic training took place, to the main fort, where permanent assignments took place, and this time I, my experience as a typist came in very handy because I was given the job as a clerk at the office of the inspector general, potentially a very, very interesting and important position. I mean the office itself was very important, the position of clerk wasn't particularly important at all, but that's going to be subject of the next installment. One other point before we adjourn, in a minute, takes me back to Charles Dickens. Guess who turned up again (*laughter*).

David: The Big Dick.

Henry: No, no, no. He was the middle.

David: The medium Dick.

Henry: No, he was the little Dick. I'm glad you remembered that, that Trinity. (*Laughs*) Yes, Dick Jennings was there again and uh, he was, uh, still a friend of sorts, I was always happy to have every friend I could. There were a couple of other guys from Paly high, they were juniors when we were seniors. So the four of us got together from time to time.

Gene: In the office or just on the base. In that same office?

Henry: No, no, scattered around. Dick Jennings himself got a very important job. I can't remember exactly what it was, but, he did very well for himself. He had a very, very engaging personality. Also I think it helped that his father was a brigadier general (*Laughter*). OK.

Gene: One question, the name of your roommate at Pomona? I don't think you mentioned.

Henry: Whatever happened to him?

Gene: What was his name?

David: The first one you mean, the one who threw your clothes out the window?

Gene: Well, both, yeah. Actually I meant the second one.

Henry: The first one was named Ken Lazar. His father operated a pharmacy luncheonette in Long Beach and he won me over by treating me to a tuna sandwich and a milkshake (*laughter*). That's the way to my heart.

The second one was Nevins Dorsey Young Jr. He was slightly disabled by polio. But he was not a bad tennis player as he proved when I made the mistake of going out with him on the court one day and he absolutely blew me away. He became a lawyer, very successful, very successful. I have no idea whatever became of Ken Lazar, and I furthermore, don't particularly care (*laughter*).

Gene: Alright.

David: OK.

Henry: OK.