

## Where Are They Now? – February

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Here I am, just coming out of the woodwork. I have a long story to tell, going back all the way to May 26, 1941, the first day of my job with the Glenn L. Martin Company. An input to the WATN column written by John Reus (January 2009), a good friend and fellow illustrator, inspired me to do likewise. John joined the company in 1956 and we worked together as pub tech illustrators; we both transferred to Orlando in December 1957 with the Missile Master project. Our first location was at Building 3 – a Quonset hut on Elwell Street close to Herndon airport. Our Publications department shared the building with the U.S. postal service. Eventually we moved to the main plant on Sand Lake Road, then later to other sites – Industrial Park, Major Center and Building 10.

Back to the beginning: I was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1921. My parents were born in Poland and arrived in America in the early 1900s. I was the youngest in a family of five boys and three girls and I am the lone survivor. Times were tough in my childhood days. Except for my oldest brother, I was the only one to graduate from high school because we all had to work and ‘bring home the bacon’ to help pay the mortgage, utilities, taxes and buy food for the family. Two of my older brothers had to go out of town to get jobs, though locally work was available in the silk mill and coal mines. As a kid I delivered newspapers and groceries for a neighborhood market. My next older brother and I helped keep the home fires burning by picking coal off the culm piles and stealing coal from slow-moving railroad cars, then lugging the filled burlap bags home on metal-wheel wheelbarrows.

I graduated from high school in 1938 and got a job in a grocery store, hung around for a while and in 1940 decided to move to Baltimore to find a job. I boarded with my married sister who had an apartment in Highlandtown, near Patterson Park – one of those brick row houses with the marble steps. My brother-in-law was head butcher at a neighborhood meat market, so he got me a job there, too. Soon came the opportunity to get a “real” job as the Glenn L. Martin Company was hiring. As a kid I used to build those balsam wood model airplanes so I thought that might help in finding work at a real aircraft company. I filled out an application and was hired as a shop dispatch clerk at a whopping salary of 50 cents an hour! So, May 26, 1941 was the beginning of my 35 + 5 years at Martin.

My clerical duties involved taking care of loft templates, hundreds of them, stored in large metal racks. I delivered these templates throughout the manufacturing areas in Buildings A, B C, and the remote Building D. Then, after use by the shop personnel, I had to go ‘fetch’em’ and return them to the racks.

What is a ‘loft template’ you may ask? It is a heavy gauge aluminum sheet onto which a photograph black-line image of an engineer’s drawing (blueprint) was superimposed on the face of the template. These were actual-size images of airplane basic structural parts

(fuselage frames, wing and tail structures, gussets, etc.) The templates were used by the Machine Shop, Manufacturing and Inspection departments. Sizes of loft templates range between 18x24 inches to 5x12 feet. Aren't you glad you asked?

Mine was a 'menial' but laborious job and I did a lot of walking in an eight-hour day. If a hauling cart was not available, it was a chore for me to have to drag the large-size loft templates along the old wood-brick floors to distant locations throughout the manufacturing complex. The storage racks were located in big B Building. Well, after a long day of walking on the job, that nice cold bottle of National Bo sure hit the spot. Incidentally, at the height of Martin Bomber production in the early 40's, we worked ten-hour shifts around the clock.

But the job had its amenities. My work station was located near the main aisle in B Building, and there seemed to be a lot of foot traffic and a lot of nice 'stuff' paraded by. I was able to see some of the Martin 'biggies' come by, like the company prez and Chief Test Pilot O.E. Tibbs and Ken Ebel. And, oh yes, Glenn L. Martin with his mother Minta, who at the time were showing off the place to Hollywood actress Linda Darnell (anybody remember her?)

I decided I didn't want to do loft templates for the rest of my life, and if I wanted to become company president, I had to step up to something else. Fortunately, an opportunity came for me to enroll in a Martin Basic Engineering course. Daytime classes were held at an offsite location, an old building on Pratt & Light Streets in the downtown Baltimore Harbor area. I was well on my way to becoming an engineer! However, just a few weeks into the course there was a call for technical illustrators to work in the Publications department. This sounded like something I'd like to do because I always had a desire to draw 'pretty pictures'. So I withdrew from the Engineering course and switched to Illustrating and I soon learned how to interpret blueprints and create freehand perspective drawings for use in Martin parts catalogs and maintenance manuals. Creating complex exploded views was an exciting venture for me and I never found it to be boring.

Publications and Presentations were both functions of Service & Spares at the time under the management of Al Varier. Pubs illustrations were done in freehand style while Presentations used isometric and trimetric scales. We worked on the PBM and B-26 projects and as the Bomber projects phased out, our illustrations related to projects such as Bullpup, Lacrosse and Missile Master. Pershing, Sprint and other projects followed.

I had added responsibilities as Group Leader/Art Coordinator on the Missile Master project at the time of relocation to Orlando in December 1957. During our heaviest workloads we utilized subcontractors in New York, Boston and Toronto. At weekly meetings in Orlando, illustration packages were awarded to the lowest bidder and together with Group Leaders Art Faulkner and Frank Caldarazzo, we monitored the quality and scheduled delivery dates at the bidder locations. Also, visits were made to our customer's facility (the Signal Corps) at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Working on the Missile Master project was an interesting and exciting experience for me.

Then the work shifted to the Pershing project. My duties varied as Group Leader/Art Coordinator, proofreader and scheduler. During peak workloads there were heavy demands to deliver the tech manuals on short order to the field. As scheduler I was assigned the task of keeping a close eye on the work progress in the functional groups – writing, editing, illustrating, checking and printing. About twenty different manuals were involved in the total effort. At weekly meetings with the supervisors, with the use of a large schedule board it was easy to see the status of each book and which ones needed prioritized attention. I was the ‘bad guy’ who occasionally had to ‘goose the gander’ but somebody had to do it and in the end, all schedules were met. Once I overheard a writer tell another, ‘Hey, that Joe is a pretty nice guy.’ You figure . . . .

In another peak workload situation, Presentations needed help in getting some hot proposals out on time. At that time I was employed by Avionics Research doing subcontract-illustrating work for Martin (from 1978 to 1982) after my retirement in 1976. I worked the 4:00pm to 12:00 shift, doing the same kind of work and even worked with some of my pre-retirement coworkers.

Some of us ‘night shifters’ availed ourselves for the proposal effort, working long hours and weekends as needed. And this, I believe, is when I met this cute blushing blonde typist – Andrea Lawrence. Whether she remembers me or not, I’m not sure. And look where she is now - Editor of the REALM News and enjoying the good life after 35+ years with Lockheed Martin. What a great asset she is to our retiree organization!

My life after retirement: Back in 1976 I opted for early retirement after 35 years of service. It was during a ‘lean’ period when employees were terminated and salaries were being cut. I had the notion to do some business in art and framing. It didn’t pan out too well so I decided to go to work at Applied Devices in Poinciana (down Kissimmee way), a small company involved in defense work. After a short stint I decided to do illustrating work at McDonnell Douglas, another defense plant in Titusville.

While at McDonnell Douglas I was struck with an acute bronchial asthma attack and was taken to the Holiday Hospital (now the Arnold Palmer Hospital facility) in Orlando. After years of a controlled case of asthma and allergy problems which were being treated with shots and medications, it all ‘came to a head’. At the hospital I received oxygen therapy but it did not help. I conked out and put a little scare in those present – my wife and the nurses. Fortunately, my doctor came to the rescue with an injection of adrenalin (I was told) and miraculously I had a quick recovery and I was released after a seven-day confinement. The year was 1978 and Publications was starting a new 4:00pm to 12:00 night shift. To end this ‘traumatic’ story, I got a call from Art Faulkner during my hospital stay and he asked if I would be interested in working nights but for a subcontractor (Avionics Research). I told him ‘yes’ and I was back to work within two weeks of my initial day of hospital confinement.

About my family: I have four grown daughters – three married and one single. There are seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Most of our family members reside in

the greater Orlando area, plus a grandson in Texas and a granddaughter and her three babies in Georgia. My late wife, Marie, and I were born, raised and married in Scranton, Pennsylvania. We lived in Baltimore for eleven years and transferred to Orlando in December 1957. Marie's parents, Peter and Anna Sek, had a small corner grocery store in Scranton which later was taken over by her oldest brother. People got a chuckle out of the sign he hung above the door which read 'Sek's Market'. (I just had to throw that in!)

By the way, the era of coal mining is long-past in the Scranton area. Though I'm not aware of any new major industry outside of high-tech businesses, Scranton remains a friendly town situated in a valley surrounded by scenic beauty including the popular resort area in the Pocono Mountains. Scranton, incidentally, was the ideal site in the filming of the popular TV show, "The Office".

During our 63-year marriage we had a happy partnership and were very proud of our wonderful and close-knit family. Unfortunately, there were periods of sadness when Marie suffered with deep depression, a mysterious illness that necessitated hospital and institutional confinement (caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, I'm told). There were three such episodes – first in 1950, again in 1985 and later in 1998. The periods between those dates were our happy times, but finally, advancing in age and after two nursing home stays, she succumbed to the illness. Marie passed away on August 12, 2009, one day after her 84<sup>th</sup> birthday. She is at peace with the Lord now.

Having resided in our first and only home for 47 years and because of Marie's confinement in a nursing home, it became a chore living in the house by myself. It was more room than I needed and I was not in the mood to do house maintenance and yard work, so with my daughters' guidance I made a wise decision to move into a smaller abode in the Fairways Adult & Golf Community, about 15 miles east of Orlando. The mobile home fits me comfortably and I'm back to living a contented life – playing golf three times a week with my octogenerational buddies. I am proud to say that we play a pretty good game for guys our age!

About my time in the Service: As a defense worker at GLM, I was subject to six-month deferments. When the deferments ran out I was drafted into the U.S. Navy in July 1944. I had boot camp training at Bainbridge, Maryland followed by Aviation Ordnance training in Norman, Oklahoma. Then I was sent to San Diego for shipment to Barber's Point Naval Station in Oahu, Hawaii. Unfortunately, with the war winding down in the Pacific there was no further need for Ordnance people, so I got 'stuck' in Hawaii for nine months prior to my discharge. (All together now – awwwwww!)

I met my fiancé Marie before I went into the service. Through my buddy (her brother), Marie and I got a little bit acquainted and had a couple of dates. It wasn't until I went into the service that we really got to know each other. We wrote to each other on an almost-daily basis – and spent a lot of money on postage (first class mail, 3 cents – air mail 6 cents!). There's a beautiful song entitled, 'Just a Bundle of Old Love Letters' – very appropriate for my situation because I still have a couple hundred of our love letters dated August 1944 to April 1946. Want to read them?

Hobbies: Among Marie's hobbies were cooking, sewing, doll-making, flower arranging and child care. As for me, like most husbands, 'honey-do's' became a hobby, especially in home ownership but I also enjoy art and sports. However, both of us became addicted to singing barbershop harmony. She was a member of Sweet Adelines for more than 25 years while I was a member of SPEBSQSA (now known as the Barbershop Harmony Society). I was active for over 30 years and am still a dues-paying member (my 55<sup>th</sup> year). We were both active in quartet and chorus performances and competitions in Orlando and throughout Florida. While a member of the Orange Blossom Chorus, I was also a member of a fun quartet called, "Memories & Madness" in which I sang bass and played string bass as well. Members of the quartet included two former members of the 1949 SPEBSQSA International Champions, the "Mid States Four" from Chicago (Forrest Haynes and Bob Mack) and two local guys and former Martin employees, William (Bill) Wood and myself. Barbershop harmony is usually sung acappella (without musical accompaniment). However, "Memories & Madness", a "show" quartet, had a unique style in combining song with strings (either banjo, guitar, ukulele and bass fiddle) and some slapstick comedy. It was a fun quartet and had great audience appeal. Because of my return to nightshift work in 1978 I was unable to continue. However, a suitable bass was found and the M&M quartet 'hit the road again' for another couple of years.

Work after retirement: My fellow illustrator, Charlie Salloway (deceased) talked me into working with him as a Golf Marshal on weekends at Sweetwater Country Club in Longwood. It was an easy job, paying minimum wage and included unlimited golf. I did that for ten years (1983-1993) and later I worked part-time at Florida Auto Auction in Ocoee for twelve years (1995-2007). I was a driver, working three days a week and later only one day a week. It was an ideal job for retirees – it paid well, with bonuses and other amenities.

Travels: I did most of my traveling during my working days. My business travels took me to New York, New Jersey, Boston and Ontario, Canada. My 'barbershop hobby' travel destinations were Florida (north, south, east and west), Atlanta, Hartford, Cleveland, St. Louis, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Toronto, Canada. My travels in retirement included trips to Pennsylvania, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan and Poland (birthplace of my parents). I also managed to go on a trip to Salt Lake City to attend the International Convention in 2007.

In closing, allow me to do some name dropping. These are Logistics/Publications friends and coworkers who come to my mind since my early days at the Glenn L. Martin Company. Please forgive me for any misspellings. Perhaps this will bring back memories to my fellow old-timers.

In alphabetical order: Ollie Anderson, Ed Blazek, Joe Blickman, John Burkhardt, Frank Caldarazzo, Keith Clark, Tom Dauer, Bob Eldredge, Art Faulkner, Jim Hagel, Clarence Hausladen, Charlie Kavanaugh, Charlie Lighthiser, Gene Levitt, John McAvoy, Al MacIntosh, Charlie Mayer, Chuck Plyer, Bob Parker, Bob Pores, Jack Pritchard, Frank Reilly, Paul Rouse, Al Varier, Paul Wetzels and Jack Wing.

Working at Martin for 35+5 years was a significant part of my life and knowing all the people I worked with and for throughout those years was, in itself, a wonderful and unforgettable experience. How this son of a coal miner without a college education and with the many 'ups and downs' in life got to this point in life is miraculous. At my age I find much contentment in having a dear, supportive, and loving family to enjoy. Golfing three times a week with my fellow 'oldies' adds to another of life's pleasures. I've been truly blessed.

My best wishes to all my fellow Martin retirees!