

Richard Merrill Oveson

An Autobiography

An account of the life of Richard Merrill Oveson from growing up in Moro, Oregon, to attending Oregon State; his mission to France, ROTC, and running for student body president at BYU; his Air Force flight training and becoming a pilot; purchasing his new 1957 Chevy convertible; dating and marrying Alix Wells; his military assignments in Oxnard, California, Fairbanks, Alaska, and Wichita Falls, Texas; getting a PhD at Harvard, and birth of his three children, Virginia, Merrill, and Alice Oveson; teaching at the Air Force Academy; flying 74 combat missions in Vietnam, and teaching at the War College in Washington D.C.; his time as the representative of the U.S. Air Force at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, France; teaching at BYU; serving as President of the France Bordeaux Mission and in the presidency of the Provo Temple, and living in Provo, Utah.



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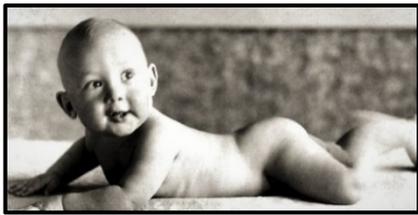
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Richard Merrill Oveson

An Autobiography

Like Nephi of old, I* was born of goodly parents on the fifth day of January, 1930. I was born in Corvallis, Oregon, where my father was finishing his graduate work in soil science at Oregon State College (now Oregon State University). My mother



Top right: Merrill M. Oveson (father) and Mal Berg Oveson (mother) admiring their new son, Richard Merrill Oveson, who was born January 5, 1930. Above left: Baby Dick Oveson. Above right: Dick with admiring relatives.

and father both grew up in Castle Dale, Utah, and both attended BYU. When my father graduated in 1927, he and mother married and left for Oregon State where Dad had a

**Richard Merrill Oveson is the son of Merrill Mahonri Oveson and Mal Berg. He married Alexandra Campbell Wells on August 30, 1957, and has three children: Virginia Christine Oveson, Merrill Richard Oveson, and Alice Alexandra Oveson. He also has fourteen grandchildren.*

scholarship to do graduate work. He had received a position at the branch experiment



Top left: Dick at age two: "Hurray." Above: Dick's parents, Merrill (1900-1981) and Mal Oveson (1903-2005), with their first born child in 1930. Top right: Dick and his baby sister, Joan Oveson, in 1933. Right: Dick and Joan riding horses (middle), and with a cousin.

in eastern Oregon, centered in the state about 20 miles south of the Columbia River. Moro

station in Moro, Oregon, and was spending the winter in Corvallis to finish his master's thesis when I was born. We moved that summer to Moro and there I spent the next 19 years of my life. Moro is a small town of about 300 people

is the county seat of Sherman County, a wheat growing area of eastern Oregon. The county



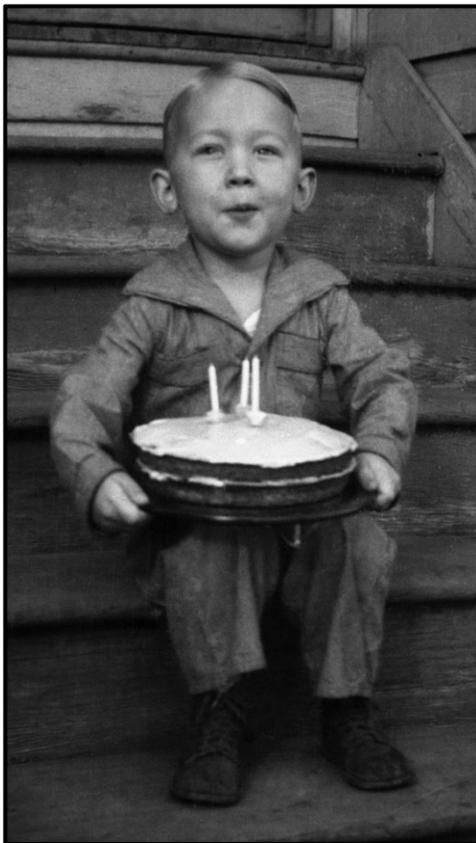
Top left: Dick’s father (right) with his brother, Clarence Oveson. Top right: Dick wearing overalls and a hat with his dog, “Lady.” Above: Sitting with his rabbit and being held by his father (right).

is composed of rolling hills covered with wheat and the few trees grow along the small drainages in the gullies and canyons and around the farm houses, which are scattered throughout the county.

Early Days in Moro, Oregon

We lived first in a very small house near the center of town and I only remember small

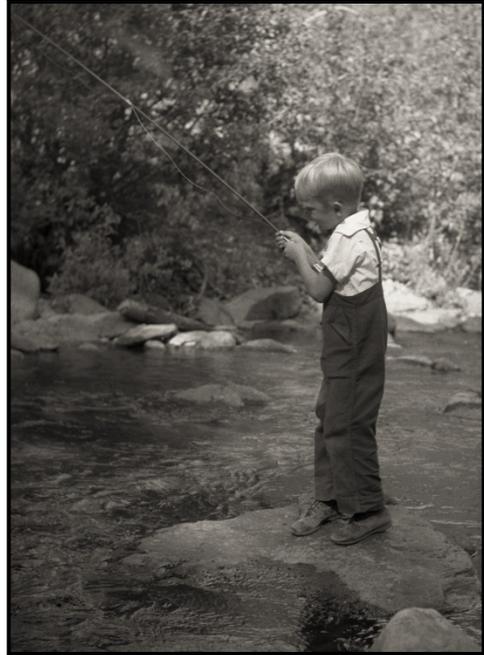
flashes of that home. I do remember that my parents bought a radio after saving for a long



Top left and above right: Dick with the family dog “Lady,” when he was three years old. Above left: Dick holding his third birthday cake in 1933. Top right: Dick age four.

period. The radio was delivered just before the national bank holiday and when my father

went to pay for it his savings were unavailable. They returned the radio, much to my



This page: Dick playing with his sister Joan, Steve fishing, and Joan's first birthday.

consternation, but were later able to make arrangements to pay for it little by little and so the radio was a part of my early life. My

father made occasional trips to Pendleton, Oregon, to visit the experiment station there. It



Above: Dick at age four. Right: Dick, age three, riding his tricycle with his grandfather Lars Peter Oveson, in 1933.

was a trip of about 130 miles then and took some time so I missed my dad. When I got the chance, I slipped through the fence and headed for Pendleton—much to my mother's consternation. We moved from that small home to a larger place in Moro when I was still small. Here our family was blessed by the arrival of my sister Joan, born in 1932 on October 1st and by the birth of my brother Stephen, born on the 9th of July, 1936. I started school that fall in

the Moro school house—and I continued in that same building until I graduated from high



Top left: Dick with his baby sitter. Rest of page: Dick with his younger sister, Joan Oveson (born October 1, 1932). Note the Easter egg baskets (right).

school 12 years later. The school building contained three floors—with the basement floor

housing the locker rooms, the wood-working shop and the janitorial facilities. The first floor



Above, left to right: Dick's sister, Joan Oveson, Grandpa Lars Oveson (1852-1943), brother, Steve Oveson, and Richard "Dick" Oveson in 1938. Top right: Dick riding his tricycle in 1933. Right: Dick's parents, Merrill Oveson and Mal Berg Oveson about 1930. They had four children and were married (1927-1981) for 53 years.

consisted of the cafeteria, classrooms for the first six grades and the gymnasium/basketball court/stage for assemblies and plays etc. The first and second grades shared a classroom as did the third and fourth and fifth and sixth grades. Graduation from the sixth grade meant a promotion to the top floor where the seventh and eighth grade classroom was located and where the high school classrooms took the rest of the space. The two floors were connected by a ramp and one of my earliest memories is of a stampede of young people coming down that ramp for lunch. The first floor had a cafeteria where we ate school lunch and were I first gained an appreciation for Spanish rice.

I was not a particularly sturdy young man and I went through a number of childhood



Top: Dick with his new brother, Stephen “Steve” Berg Oveson (1936-2013), left to right: Dick, Merrill (father), Steve, Mal (mother), and Joan Oveson in 1937. Above: Joan’s third birthday in October 1935. Right: Joan and the family dog.

diseases, as well as some more serious ones. Polio went through our county when I was small and I may have contracted a minor case of it. In any case I had a weakness in my left hip which was variously diagnosed as TB of the hip and/or some unknown malady. I could not walk up or down stairs for most of my third grade year—Dad would take me to school,

carry me up the steps and into the classroom and then come and get me when the day was



Top. Dick with cousins, left to right: Marjory Duzett, Joan, Calvin Duzett, Dick, and Berg Duzett in 1936. Above: Dick, Steve, and Joan in 1937. Right: Joan on her fifth birthday.

over. I was not a good eater and our third and fourth grade teacher would not let anyone

leave the room at noon until everyone had finished their lunch. I took sandwiches for lunch

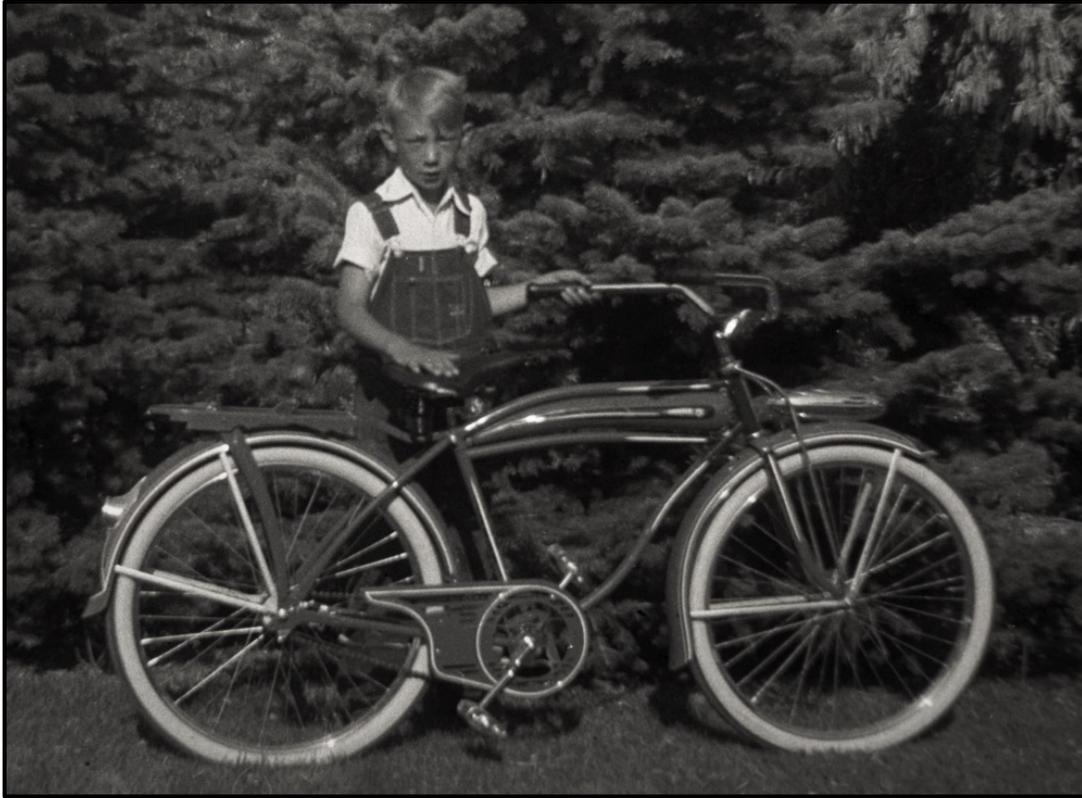


This page: Dick with his sisters, brother and mother between 1937 and 1940. Above: Dick's sister, Mary, sleeping with a cat in the "Station home."

and I have a vivid memory of every one of the thirty or so kids in that classroom staring at me as I tried to choke down what seemed to me to be an enormous piece of bread and cheese or whatever. The teacher helped by standing over me and pointing out that everyone was waiting for me. It is not my favorite childhood memory. I need to get over it! As a result of my illness or whatever it was, I played very few

games until I was declared cured—then, I spent a long time being last chosen for whatever sport was being played on the playground. I spent the rest of my school days trying to compensate for that period, I guess.

As I said, each classroom housed two grades. In the grade just ahead of mine were 9 boys



Above: Dick with his brand new, red bicycle that he got when he was eight years old in 1938. Left: Dick is standing with his grandpa Lars Oveson and siblings about 1940.

and a few girls. The nine boys were a handful for most teachers and consequently every other year was something of a bust academically. In the seventh grade we had an older lady as a teacher and the challenge was more than she could handle. She would show up at the beginning of the school day, read us a story out of the Reader's Digest and then disappear for the rest of the day (or so it seemed to me). The classroom was pretty much chaos. One day we were having an eraser fight (with the erasers used to clean the blackboards) and one of the older boys and I were wrestling on the floor for an eraser when the principal showed up at the door. He was a very strict man, but a good principal, and he took us to

the principal's office. I was sure the punishment was going to be severe, but we only waited

a couple of hours and then we were released. I realize now that he really didn't know what



he was going to do either. Our teacher resigned and we got another teacher more equipped to deal with us and we finished the school year. One of those boys was my best friend, Bobby Hoskinson, who became an Air Force pilot and was killed in Vietnam. One of the others owned a trucking line and was a very active Scouter. Everyone that I know about went on to have productive lives, so all was not lost in the seventh and eighth grades.

Top and middle: Two photographs of Moro, Oregon, where Dick Oveson lived from 1930 until his family moved to Pendleton in 1948. The population was between 300 and 350 between 1930 and 1950. Above: Location of Moro in Oregon (Wikipedia). Left: Train station in Moro in early 1900s.

In December of 1941 I was just a month short of my 12th birthday. On Sunday morning the

7th of December I was watching my younger sisters and my brother while the folks made



Above right: School that Dick attended in Moro, Oregon, from first grade to his senior year in 1948, and students standing outside the remodeled building. All of the grades met in this same building. The first grades were on the first floor and the later grades on the second floor. Top left: Downtown Moro, Oregon, in 2013. Middle: Dick (age 9) with his entire family in 1939. Lower left, left to right: Mom, Steve, Mary, Robby Hoskinson (Dick's best friend—he became an Air Force pilot and was killed in Vietnam), Joan, and Dick about 1940-.

a short visit to some friends. I had the radio on and I heard the announcement that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. It was stunning news and as soon as Mom and Dad got home I rushed to tell them. I had a 12 year old boy's view of the Japanese military and I remember telling my father that "This war won't last two weeks!!" I

still remember the look on my father's face as he said that it would last a lot longer than two weeks. How true that was. Although the impact wasn't immediate, the war and Americas entry into it had a profound impact on our little community and on all our lives. Over the next four years virtually every young man in our county left as soon as he graduated from high school, and many left sooner. Moreover, many young men with

families also went into the service. The most immediate impact on me was that the shortage



Above: Dick's family home in Moro, Oregon, soon after its construction. Left: Home of Dick's grandparents, Carl Rasmus Englebregt Berg (1869-1954) and Martha Amalia Olsen Ungerman (1869-1962), in Castle Dale, Utah. Castle Dale had between 500 and 840 citizens from 1890 to 1970.

of men meant that boys like me had lots of opportunities for work, which had previously been done by those older

than we were. Many of these young men did not return from the war and the county lost a number of outstanding young men.

The summer after I turned 12, one of the local farmers asked my parents if I could work on a combine during the summer. The combine harvester of those days was a large machine which cut and threshed the wheat as it was pulled through a wheat field. The combine had a large sickle bar which extended out the side of the machine and which cut the wheat which then fell on a moving belt and was carried into the harvester to be threshed. The header, as it is called, was moveable and could be raised and lowered with a large wheel much like those used to steer steamboats. It was my job to stand next to the wheel and raise or lower the header depending on the height of the grain and the nature of the ground. Our county was characterized by rolling hills cut by gullies and thus the wheat fields were sometimes quite steep. On this type of ground the combine was leveled by a gear arrangement which allowed the large wheels to be raised or lowered in order to keep the machine level. One day we were on a steep section of the field when the leveler broke, tipping the combine down the hill into the header. As the machine tipped the header wheel spun and the spokes just flipped me off the combine and onto a rod which ran from the front of the

combine back to the header. I had a bruise on my head and a cut on my arm that went to



Above: Family gathering about 1938. Left to right: Gma Berg, Vera Duzett, Berg Duzett, Steve Oveson, Cora Berg, Grandpa Berg, Courtney Berg, Uwin Van Buren, Winnie Van Buren (baby), Dick Oveson, Fred Van Buren, Marjorie Duzett, Calvin Duzett, Mary Oveson (held by her mother, Mal Berg Oveson), Joan Oveson, Lars Peter Oveson, and Rowana Van Buren (little girl). Left: Dick Oveson at the age of eight in 1938.

the bone. I got stitched up, but the doctor wouldn't let me go back to work, so my first away from home job ended there. I spent the rest of my high school years (and some of my college years) working for Dad on the experiment station. It wasn't just nepotism—he really needed me!

My high school (Moro High) had only about 50 students, give or take, during my high school years. The high school was located on the top floor of the school building where I started first grade. Junior high was also on the top floor so when I started 7th grade I moved upstairs—a major step in my academic career! The local school board or whoever made those decisions, decided that Moro High would field

a football team, beginning with my freshman year. I could hardly wait—to play football



Above, left to right: Lars Peter Oveson, May Oveson, Merril Oveson (younger brother of Lars), Mal Berg Oveson, Joan “Jo,” Steve, Dick, and Mary (being held by Louis Oveson (oldest brother of Lars)). Right: Dick with his siblings and best friend, Robby Hokinson (back left; he died in Vietnam).

was my fondest dream, never mind that I probably weighed 125 or 130 pounds. We freshmen inherited all the football equipment that the older boys didn’t want, so my football uniform was a little shabby—but I loved it. I lived for practice and we all played because with about 25 or thirty boys and an 11 man team, we needed everybody! I played football my freshman year, but at our school spring picnic I was playing touch football with all the other kids and I was kicked in my left eye. It turned out that the kick had detached the retina in the back of my left eye, leaving me with about half the vision out of



of my left eye.

that eye. The folks took me to The Dalles and subsequently to Portland where a Dr.



Above, left to right: Merrill Oveson, Mal Berg Oveson, Ann Oveson (wife of Crawford) and Crawford Oveson (Merrill's nephew); children—Steve, Joan, and Dick Oveson. Right: Ann, Crawford, Dick, (Bob and Alice Henderson—friends not family), Mary (baby), Joan, Mal, and Steve; 1939.

I let a few selected flight surgeons in on my secret later on and they were all astonished! Anyway, I spent my sophomore year as the team manager—not my favorite position! I am grateful for the blessing of good vision and I recognize the hand of the Lord in this blessing.

I was a reasonably good student—learning came easily to me and I regret that I didn't take better advantage of this gift earlier in my life. I was something of a daydreamer and a procrastinator—traits that I'm afraid still linger. Academics at Moro High were something of a mixed bag. Classes were small—



Kenneth Swan had developed an operation for this type of injury. I had maybe the second or third of these operations ever performed. I spent the summer in bed with my head lowered and sandbagged so I would not move it and with bandages over my eyes so I would not move them. As I later recovered, I had black glasses with tiny pinholes through which I could see a bit of the world. I had a white cane and I was treated as though I were blind, which I almost was. The operation, which is now done with lasers and is quite routine (even outpatient), was successful and I regained 20-20 vision in that eye.

if teachers were gifted and committed classes could be exciting—if not, little was accom-



plished. There was a wonderful English teacher at that time—Mrs. Shelly Roberson. Her husband was a local businessman and her son was a great football player, but Mrs. Roberson taught English. We learned both the structure and use of the language and she never gave up on any of us. We diagrammed sentences, learned vocabulary and then we read and wrote. I passed out of freshman English at Oregon State—but then I had to take bonehead



Above: Dick playing soldier. Top right: Dick crossing the road with his youngest sister, Mary. Right: The faithful family dog watching over baby Mary.

math because that subject had been more or less hit and miss in high school. Probably one of the most useful things I did during high school was to work for the county newspaper. The editor, Giles French, was something of a legendary small town newspaper editor with a following throughout the state and some recognition beyond its borders. He wrote and printed the paper, aided by his wife on the linotype and me making and preparing the advertising slugs. I also got to write once in a while and during my senior year I was

editor of the student newspaper, which we printed (for the first time) in the Journal press-room.



Above: Threshing machine, working near Moro, Oregon. During World War II, Dick operated this big machine. One day he was thrown off the combine and got a serious cut, which ended his days doing this particular work. Left: Dick's grandparents: Lars Peter Oveson (1852-1943) and Louisa Otterstrom (1858-1931); married in 1874.

A typical day during those years began with Dad waking me up. I would dress and come downstairs where Dad would make a fire in the kitchen stove and put water on to boil for oatmeal mush. I would grab the milk bucket and head for the barn where I would feed and milk our cow while Dad fed the horses, chickens, pigs and sheep when we had them. When I was finished milking, I would bring the milk into the house and run it through the separator. (This involved turning the separator crank which spun the lighter cream into one spout while the heavier milk came out the other.) I would wash up and go in for breakfast—usually oatmeal with heavy cream! The family would be together—Joan, Stephen and Mary.

Then we'd all go off to school—all to

the same building. I would get out of school at about three o'clock (I really can't remember!) and then it was either football or basketball or baseball practice until about 4:30 when the busses left with the kids from the south end of the county. I would go home and

then do chores (milk the cow and feed the animals) and then go in for supper about six.



Top: Grandpa Lars Oveson, Mom, Dick, and Joan on a road near his home. Above: Dick reading with Joan, and standing next to their father (left).

Evening was for homework and listening to the radio (no TV). We went to bed about 10 and got up about 6:30. On Saturdays and

sometimes after practice I would get my gun and go hunting for pheasants or rabbits or



Left: The family loaded up the car and drove from Moro, Oregon, to northwest California, in the summer of 1941 to see the tall Redwood trees, including the Chandelier Tree, which is 276 feet tall and at least 2,000 years old. Left to right: Mom, Dick, Mary, Steve, and Joan. Above: The Chandelier Tree in August 2021, which has thrived even though a car sized hole was cut in its base over a hundred years ago.

quail or whatever. We always ate whatever I shot.

All of us participated in 4-H club. That stood for head, heart, hands and health, and involved all sorts of agricultural and domestic skills. We raised beef calves, sheep and pigs which we took to the county fair and then to Portland to the big Pacific International Livestock Exhibition. I went the first time when I was 9 and the last time when I was a freshman at Oregon State. We loaded the livestock into a railroad freight car in Moro and when I was older I went (with a couple of friends) in the train car to care for the animals. It was an adventure for me. We showed our animals at the PI and then sold them at auction. In my senior year of high school they

started an event at the evening rodeo called a “calf scramble.” They released 10 young



Top right: Mom, Dick, Joan and Steve at the Chandelier Tree in 1941. Above right: Dick with his brother and two sisters on June 2, 1942. Above left: Joan Oveson, age eight, holding a cat.

beef calves into the arena with about twenty boys and we could keep a calf if we could catch it. I caught one the first night and that calf turned out to be the champion scramble

calf at the next year's show. I sold him for enough to pay for almost two years of college.



Top: Dick's father at Celilo Falls on the Columbia River. Thousands of Indians once fished for salmon at this location, but today it is under water at the Dalles Dam. Left: Dick riding down from his house on his bike. Above: Dick in the middle with his family in 1943.

We all stayed in a dormitory at the show and it was a yearly event we

all looked forward to. I won a cane as the best hog showman at the show my senior year—wish I still had it!

Oregon State

When I graduated from high school I had a small scholarship to Oregon State. I had friends from Moro that were going there and so I decided that I should attend there. I left for school

in September of 1948. I moved into the Beta Theta Pi fraternity house (a fellow from Moro

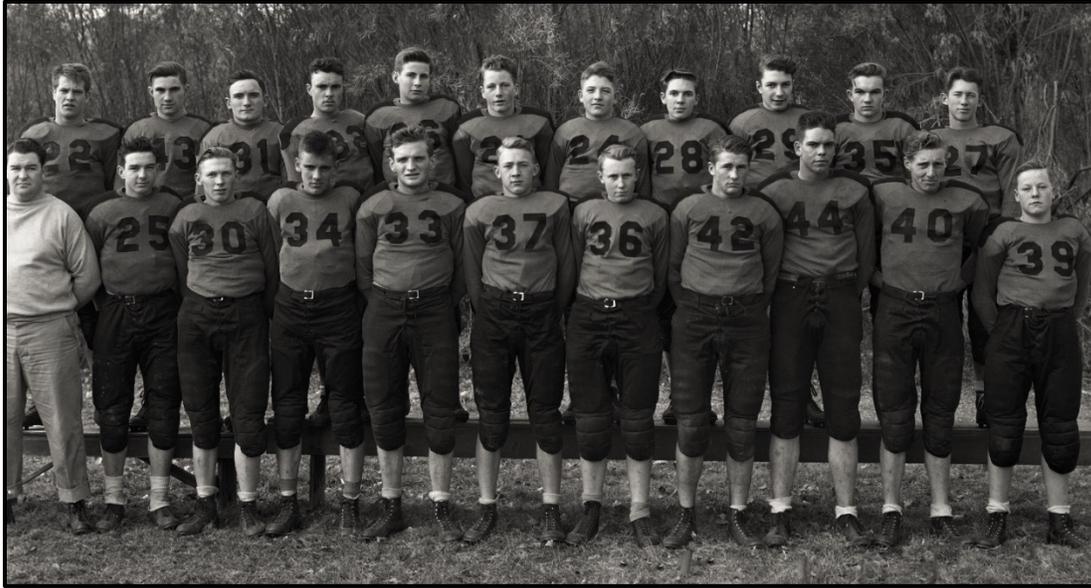


Top: Dick's sister Joan working in the garden. **Right:** Joan celebrating her eighth birthday. **Above:** Merrill Oveson inspecting the wheat crop.

friends, the fraternity was focused on scholarship and teaching us manners. There was little of the binge drinking now associated with fraternities and it was generally a civilizing environment for young college men. I tried to do all the things in college that I had done in high school—I went out for cross country, worked on the school paper, got involved with

invited me) and pledged that fraternity. In many ways it was a good experience—I was with nice

campus politics and even went to class when I could fit it in. As a result my first quarter



Top: Dick played on the Moro football team (close-up above). Left: Dick in his uniform next to the coach. Dick sustained a serious eye injury while playing a touch football game and only a new procedure saved him from losing the sight in that eye. It took months to recover, but he later had 20-20 vision.

grades were not too good and the fraternity would not let me go home for Thanksgiving. That was a blow that I have never forgotten. I was already somewhat homesick and I missed home and family. I got the grades straighten out and went home for Christmas—but not to Moro. In the fall of 1948 my dad was transferred to direct the experiment station in Pendleton, Oregon, and to direct all of the soil conservation work in the Pacific Northwest. The station in Pendleton was eight miles out of town, but Pendleton was a city of about 5000 people whereas Moro had about 350 inhabitants. It was a promotion for Dad with a significant pay increase, it was a

much bigger high school for my sisters and brother and there was an actual ward! The folks



Above, left to right: Mal (Dick's mother), Sarah Bowen, Joan, Dick, Ruth Bowen, Harold Bowen, Mary, Louise Bowen, Raymond Murdock (holding Grover Murdock), and Betty Jane Murdock in 1943. Right: Dick on his bicycle when he was about 14 years old.



moved the first part of December and I went to church with them on their second or third Sunday. It was in Pendleton that the folks met the Woods and the Jenkins, two of their closest friends. Both the Woods (Don) and the Jenkins (Stan) had sons

my age and we all three went into the Air Force and became pilots. Both Don and Stan were killed—Stan in a B-47 accident and Don in an F-105 in Southeast Asia.

Pendleton was almost a new world for our family. We left behind good friends, but for

Mom and Dad and my brother and sisters it meant an organized ward and a full church



Above: Dick's siblings, Mary, Steve, and Joan, built this snow fort next to their home in Moro in January 1944. Left: Christmas morning in 1944. They were always a close family.

program—which was fully embraced. I grew up with a home Sunday school until I was about 16 when we started attending church in The Dalles. I certainly would not trade my experience with

anyone—I learned the gospel from my parents—but the Pendleton Ward did provide a new experience for the family. Dad was made Elders quorum president, then a member of the high council and then a counselor in the stake presidency. Mom served in primary and then was stake relief society president for seven years.

Meanwhile, at Oregon State I ran on the freshman track team where I earned a point against the University of Oregon—enough to get me my freshman numerals and put me in the books as part of the track program at Oregon State, where I have remained all these years. This did lead to a discovery of two of my Cousin Crawford's sons who were real track stars at Oregon State, but who have been only marginally aware of their Church heritage.

Mission to France

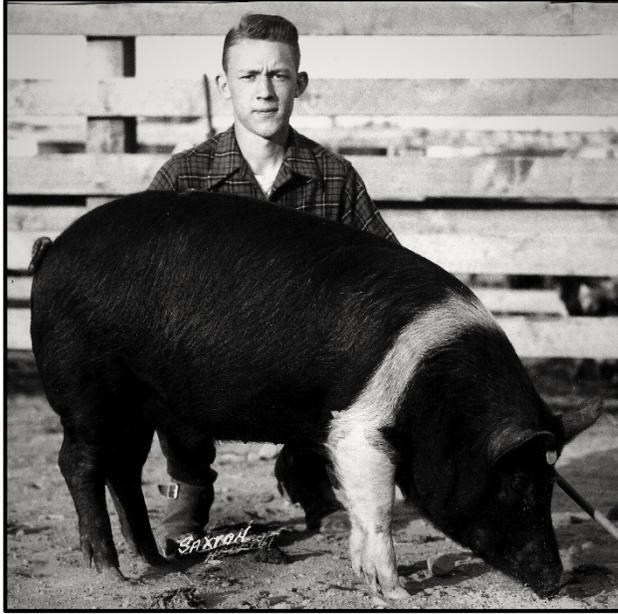
At the end of my freshman year at Oregon State I returned to Pendleton and began to



This page: Dick raised some champion steers and hogs, which won him prizes at the county fair. His champion scramble calf won him enough money to pay for two years of college! He won “a cane as the best hog showman at the show during his senior year” of high school.

prepare for my mission. I would turn 20 in January and that was the minimum age for missions at that time. I had my bishop interview and my stake president interview and then Don Wood and I drove (in Don’s car) to Salt Lake for our general authority interview. At that time all missionaries were interviewed by a general authority. I had my interview with Elder Widtsoe, who had visited in our home a number of times and who had been very kind to our family and to me. He had ordained me a deacon. I told Elder Widtsoe that I would like to go to a German speaking mission (I was still thinking about majoring in physics then). He asked if I would go wherever I was called and I said I would. We had a very pleasant visit and then I came home. In due time I was

called to the Swiss-Austrian mission (Don was called to Holland), but in a few weeks I got



Clockwise from top: Dick with his champion hog in 1948. Mal with friend, Marie Hokinson (middle). Amalia Berg (sitting; Dick's grandmother). Carl Berg, Mary, Mal, Fred Van Buren (kneeling; holding Winnie Van Buren), Amalia Berg, Cora Berg, and Uwin Van Buren.

a letter asking if I would accept a change to the French Mission. I replied that I would and that action had a significant effect on the rest of my life. In October I reported to the Salt Lake mission home for a five day stay—we went to the Temple, got shots and had some sessions with the brethren. I was set apart by

Stephen L. Richards and then climbed on the train to New York. I had said goodbye to the folks in Pendleton when I left—I don't suppose I realized then how long two and half years could be.

I left Salt Lake with (as I remember it) 26 missionaries destined for European missions.

We stayed in New York in the hotel McAlpin—where all the missionaries stayed and the



Above: Dick's parents and siblings in 1946. Left: Memorial Union building on the campus of Oregon State. Dick spent his freshman year of college at Oregon State, where he was a member of the track team. Many of his friends went to Oregon State so it seemed to be a good fit at that time.

next day we boarded the *America* bound for France. We left on the first of November—not the ideal time to cross the north Atlantic! The crossing was very rough and I was somewhat seasick most of the trip. We went to the ship's swimming pool—which was indoors—and that was the only place I felt comfortable. The ship would roll and pitch and the water in the pool would climb the walls—but the water stayed fairly level and so did we who were in it. We arrived in France on the 5th of November 1949 and took the train to Paris, where we were met by Elder James Paramore, one of

President Barker's assistants (and who later became a member of the Seventy). We stayed

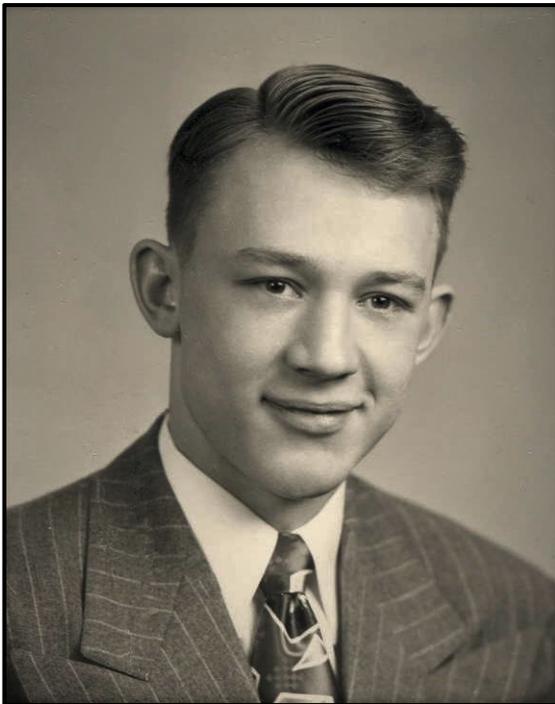


Top: Another photograph of Dick's family in 1946. Above: Elder John A. Widtsoe (Apostle from 1921 until 1952) with his wife, Leah. Right: Ezra Taft Benson (President of the church from 1985 until 1994) (left) with his wife, Flora Benson, and John Widtsoe. Benson and Widtsoe were well-acquainted with Dick's father.



in a hotel and then met with President Barker—a wonderful man. I was assigned to go to Mulhouse, France, to be a companion with Jim McFarland. Mulhouse is a city on the eastern border of France, near Basil, Switzerland, and also near Germany. The

fortifications of the Maginot Line were just outside of town and there were rusting tanks



Left: Dick's formal mission photograph taken in 1949. Dick served 2 ½ years in the France Mission from October 1949 until April 1952. Above: Elder Dick Oveson (left), with Elder Dick Wilkins (middle), and Elder Bruce Brockbank (right), resting on a street in France at the end of their missions. They visited Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and England together in 1952.

still in the woods. We lived with a wonderful woman there whose husband had been in the German Army in WWI, and who had one son in the French Army and one in the German Army in WWII. Alsace had been part of Germany from 1879 until 1918 and the older people only spoke German and Alsatian. Everyone spoke Alsatian and the younger people spoke German, French and Alsatian. Personally, I was struggling to learn French! After about two months I was convinced that not only could

I not speak French—the French couldn't speak it either. They just made those funny noises and pretended that they understood one another. Then one day we were giving a lesson to a lady with a small son. He left the room, went out the door and his mother called after him

“Ferme la Porte!” I said to myself, “she told him to close the door!!!” That was a turning

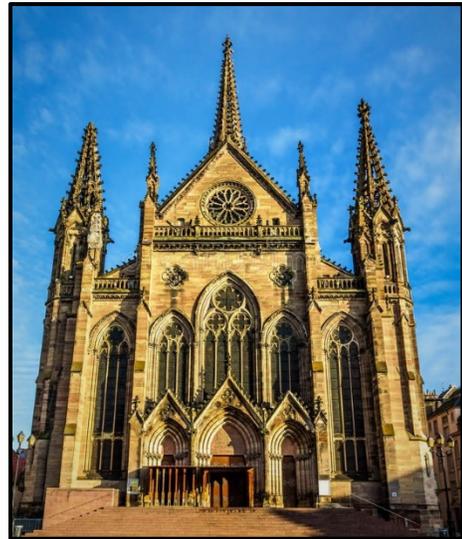


Above: Places in France and Belgium that Elder Richard “Dick” Oveson worked in as a missionary between 1949 and 1952, left to right: Le Mans, France (April 1950 to July 1951), Verviers, Belgium (July 1951 to April 1952), and Mulhouse, France (November 1949 to April 1950).

point and from that time on I made progress. We had materials which President Barker had prepared and I studied every day—and Elder McFarland helped me. He had been a missionary in Lebanon and was transferred to France when that mission was closed. He was a veteran of WWII and had participated in the invasion of Saipan. Like many of the missionaries at that time he had served in the war and had then chosen to serve a mission. He became a dentist in Utah following his mission. He was a fine missionary.

I remained in Mulhouse for five months and was then transferred to Le Mans, France, to be companions with Elder Alvin Lisonbee. Elder Lisonbee had been crippled by polio when young, but he was an energetic and able missionary. He had a motor on his bicycle and that’s how we got around Le Mans. Elder Lisonbee’s brother worked in the Provo Temple when we were in the presidency and I was able to contact Alvin and we had lunch

together in the temple before he died. He was a faithful member all his life. We lived with

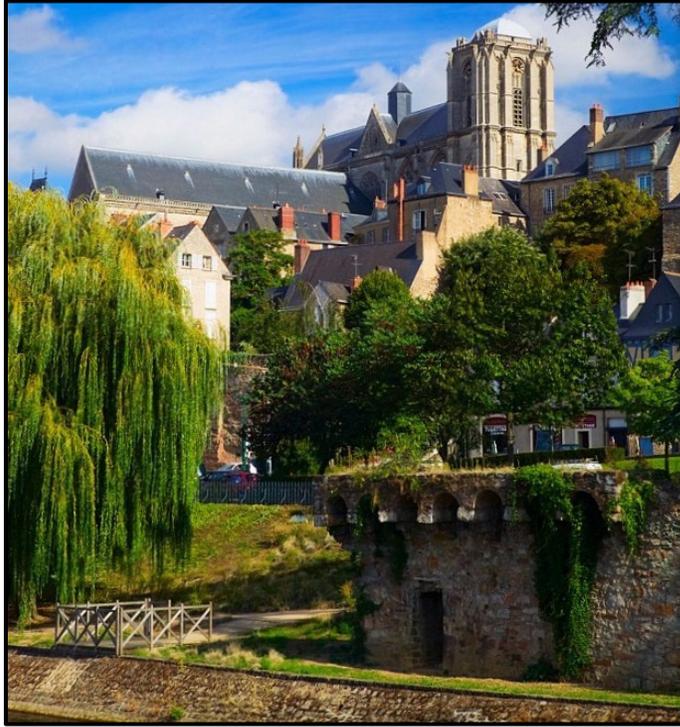


This page: Mulhouse, Alsace, France, in 2015. Right: Cathedral of Mulhouse, located in the main square of the town. Mulhouse was Elder Dick Oveson's first and shortest assignment in France from November 1949 until April 1950.

a French family—a mother, father and daughter, who was also crippled with polio. She was a sweet young lady and I wish we could have baptized her—but we didn't. When Elder Lisonbee was transferred I became companion to Elder Richard Grant. While I was still a junior companion to Elder Lisonbee, four of us took a bicycle trip to the Normandy beachheads. Elder Lisonbee had a motor bike and he led us throughout the trip. We put the bikes on the train and rode the train to Caen where we disembarked and started pedaling. We rode along the Normandy coast, visited the beaches at Omaha and Utah and then turned down to St. Lo where we caught the train back home. We slept in abandoned fortifications overlooking the beaches and ate bread and cheese. This was in 1950, just 6 years after the invasion, and the cliffs at the edge of the beach at Omaha were still littered with helmets, cartridge belts, boots, and all kinds of military gear. There weren't any weapons, but there was a surprising amount of other "stuff." The French were just beginning to clean everything up. The people in St. Lo (which was obliterated at the breakthrough) were still a little leery of Americans. They said that they could endure another occupation, but not liberation. The city was just moved to a nearby location and all the buildings were new.

In June of 1950 I had been on my mission about 8 months and was beginning to feel somewhat confident in the language. I had received a new companion, Elder Dean Bitter,

and we were busy contacting people, although we had not yet baptized anyone. Elder Bitter



and I got word that we would receive two new companions—one for each of us. These brethren were Elder Theron Draper and Elder Wendell Despain. Elder Despain was my companion and Elder Draper was assigned to work with Elder Bitter. My companion and I had moved to another room in a home owned by a sister who was interested in the church. Her name was Line Tusseau and she had been the mistress of one of the famous men in France, Pierre Bollee, son of Leon Bollee. The elder Bollee had been an innovator and inventor of the automobile (he developed the carburetor) and had worked with the Wright brothers in the early days of aviation. The relationship with Pierre Bollee had ended for sister Tusseau, but she and her son owned a home and she rented a room. She was a wonderful woman who joined the church. She, her son, and her maid were the first converts in Le Mans. We moved because there was not room where we had been staying, and we left that room to Elder Bitter and Elder Draper. We met at their place every evening to study and we were reading the Book of Mormon. Elder Draper informed us on his arrival that he was only on a mission to please his mother and that he would go with us, but not to expect any preaching or praying! So as we studied, Elder Draper would sit in another corner and read Time magazine (which was available at the train station). After a few weeks we noticed that Elder Draper was hiding the Book of Mormon behind his magazine, but no one said anything. Then he started to challenge us with questions regarding the Book of Mormon—until one evening he came over to the three of us and said “No one can tell me this book is not true. I’ve read it twice and I’ve prayed about it and I know that it’s true!” True to his word, Elder Draper was a wonderful missionary from that time on. When he came home he became a dentist and was

This page: Le Mans, France. Left: The cathedral was completed in the 14th century. Le Mans was Elder Dick Oveson’s second assignment from April 1950 to July 1951. It was in Le Man’s that he began to truly communicate with the French people, and he tracted out all but one part of the city twice.

a member of the Utah National Guard. He was killed in an automobile accident while on duty with the Guard some years later. At that time he was a member of his stake high council. His son was in our ward in Provo for several years and was a faithful member. I have contrasted his story with another experience I had earlier on my mission. While I was in Mulhouse we were in the Strasbourg District. The district president was a wonderful missionary named Elder Vance Holland. Elder Holland had a companion who had struggled most of his mission and who challenged Elder Holland to prove to him that the Gospel was true. One night late Elder Holland awoke and shook his companion. "The Lord is going to answer your request. Tomorrow we will be on a street where we have not been before (he described the street) and we will come to a door (he described the house) and a lady will answer, invite us in, and will join the church." Elder Holland said he didn't sleep the rest of the night, but the next day everything happened as Elder Holland had foreseen. His companion was impressed and his attitude changed—for about two weeks. Elder Draper had desired to know for himself, had read and studied the Book of Mormon and had gained a personal witness of its truth. Elder Holland's companion had sought after a sign—which the Lord had given him—but the witness of the Spirit was apparently missing and the experience did not have a lasting impact. Elder Holland later became a Regional Representative I believe, but I don't know what happened to his companion. I hope his life changed later on.

Elder Despain and I moved over to madam Tusseau's place. It was spotlessly clean, and we then had the opportunity to teach her, her son Marcel, and Mlle Grizard (her maid). All three joined the church as the first baptisms in Le Mans. Sister Tusseau was a wonderful woman. We got to see her when we were on our mission in Bordeaux. Neither she nor Marcel were active in the church, for some reasons which I hope are sorted out in the next world. Mlle Grizard married a member of the church while we were living in Paris. I put on my dress uniform, took my car and driver and went to the ceremony at the city hall in La Rochelle (I think). I hope I impressed the mayor that this was no ordinary woman!

I was in Le Mans for 15 months—long enough to tract the whole city twice (except for the communist sector which was a little hostile). We made many friends. We rented a small upstairs salle which had been used as a small gymnasium. It needed cleaning and so we cleaned it! It took about two weeks before we had it scrubbed and polished and presentable. We went to Orleans on the train and picked up a portable organ that had been left behind when the Air Force was in Orleans. We brought it back and it became our music for our Sunday services. We had a young artist friend whom we commissioned to copy the temple pictures on the articles of faith cards and we placed these on the walls. The pictures were each on a piece of wallboard so they were good sized and pretty much covered the walls. We then started regular Sunday meetings. There were four of us so we had the sacrament, I played the organ for hymns, and we usually had about 20-25 investigators to our meetings. One week when I was about ready to be transferred, our district president (Joseph Fielding Nelson) came down from Paris to work with us. We had a meeting with a family scheduled for that evening and about an hour before our appointment I suggested we leave. Elder Nelson noted that it was a little early, but I told him it would work out about right. We left on foot (as we always did) and as we walked through the city we stopped maybe 10 times to visit with people whom I knew. It was always like that and we arrived just about on time! I still have a warm spot in my heart for Le Mans and the wonderful people

who lived there. There is now a ward in Le Mans with a nice chapel. In 1961, Mother and I went on a trip to Europe and we stopped in Le Mans and went to church. I was introduced and after the meeting a sister came up to me and said, “Can you ever forgive me!” I was somewhat confused and I asked why. She said that I had knocked on her door 10 years earlier and she had closed the door in my face. She felt so bad about her actions that she tried to find us a little later. When she finally found the missionaries about two months later I had left—but she took the lessons and was baptized!! I had no recollection of that event, but it happened while I was there so I suppose it was me—we knocked on a lot of doors and a lot were closed in our faces. You never know!!

This page: Verviers, Belgium, which is located about 30 miles east of Liege. Top right: An old postcard of the Grand Bazar. Elder Dick Oveson worked in Verviers from July 1951 until April 1952, where he served as Branch President over 20 members.

In July of 1951 I was transferred to Verviers, in Belgium. Verviers is a city of about 50,000 located about 30 miles east of Liege. Our district was Liege and Verviers was the only outpost, since the other cities were close in to Liege. We were only a few miles from Malmady, where the massacre during WW II occurred. The German thrust west during the Battle of the Bulge stopped just short of Verviers. Verviers is a wool manufacturing city, due primarily to its extremely soft



water. Wool can be washed there with about a tenth of the soap needed elsewhere, and I quickly discovered this fact the first time my companion and I took our towels and clean underwear down to the local bath house for a shower. I'm not sure all the soap from that



Above: The Queen Mary leaving New York City for Europe in 1961. Elder Dick Oveson sailed on the Queen Mary from Liverpool, England, for America in 1952 after serving on his mission for 2 ½ years.

shower is not still on my body. (Probably not—it's been sixty five years!!). My first companion in Verviers was Elder Ray Williams—we had gone to France together and he had spent his whole mission in Belgium and northern France. We were only to be together for a while to allow me to become familiar with the

members and friends in Verviers, but we had a good time together. Ray went on to become a contractor and he came back to France and built the chapel in Versailles. When I was a Branch President at the MTC one of his sons was in my branch.

The branch in Verviers had about 20 members. The Church had rented a fairly large building and we held meetings on the first floor. The missionaries lived on the second floor and we had a kitchen of sorts where we cooked. We ate a lot of noodles. The members were very nice and lovely people, but quite poor. We probably fed the members at least as much as they fed us. I was the branch president and the relief society president as well, although we did get a sister to accept that responsibility later on. After about a month Elder Williams left for another location and I became companions with Elder Daniels. Elder Daniels had also been in the Middle East and had been sent to finish his mission in France. We worked together for several months and then I finished up my mission as a companion to Elder Despain whom I had been with in Le Mans!

Europe and Home

We were released while on our missions in those days—I got a letter from President Woolf telling me that I was released on the 19th of April—so after saying goodbye to the members and the other missionaries, I left to join Elder Bruce Brockbank to tour a bit in Europe. We went to the south of France and visited Lourdes, a place which was in our mission when Mother and I went back to Bordeaux. We then traveled along the Mediterranean to Nice, and then down into Italy. We visited Rome, Pompeii, Florence, and Venice among others. We came back through Switzerland, went up through Germany and then I wanted to go to Denmark, so I left on my own—but then I calculated my money and changed my mind and went straight to London. When I got to London and met the other missionaries we realized that we had enough money to eat or to sightsee around London, but not both! So we got on a double decker bus and went sightseeing. We rode the train to Liverpool that evening to get on the Queen Mary. There was no dining service that evening, so we got up

early the next morning and headed to breakfast. I remember that the waiter handed me a menu and I handed it back and said “that looks fine.” We all had big breakfasts!



The trip home was uneventful, as I remember. We were about five days on the ship and another three on the train home to Salt Lake. The family was there to meet me—the first time I had seen or spoken to them in 2 and ½ years. There had been some changes. I hugged Mary and said hi Jo. Mary leaned back and said

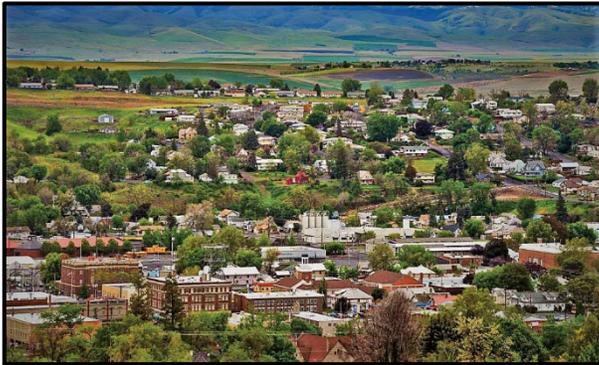
Above: Dick’s sister, Joan Oveson, in her high school graduation gown on the porch of the family home in Pendleton, Oregon, in 1950. Right: The family home in Pendleton, Oregon. Dick’s family moved from Moro, Oregon, to Pendleton in 1948. The city had a population of over 11,000 when they moved there. Lower right: Downtown Pendleton in the late 1940s or early 1950s.



“I’m not Jo—I’m Mary!!” It was great to see them again. We soon left to go back to Pendleton and back to work. I worked on the Station that summer and then left for school in the fall. Since all of my Oregon State friends had now graduated (and the new friends from Pendleton were not going to Oregon State) I decided to shift to BYU. Difficult as it may be to believe now, the Brethren were actually recruiting students to attend BYU. While I was making these plans I was notified that I needed to report for a pre-induction physical prior to being drafted in the Army!! I went to Boise for my physical (which I passed) and then came back to Pendleton. Dad had talked to the draft board and they agreed that if I enrolled in ROTC at the Y that I could be deferred. I had had a year of ROTC at Oregon State so that worked out, and I took the first steps toward what would become my career by evading the draft! Don Wood had returned from his mission at the same time I



did and we went to BYU together, although Don did not live with us. He married Marilyn



Richard Merrill Oveson
Dick Oveson . . . Economics major . . . political science minor . . . claims to have been fifty-seventh in cross country track meet . . . sixty were running. President of IOC . . . veep of Blue Key . . . Cadet chief of staff in ROTC . . . looks good in red . . . crew cut . . . likes athletics . . . a preferred man.



Top left: Pendleton, Oregon in 1950s and today (middle). Above: BYU yearbook photograph of Dick Oveson, “a preferred man.” Dick ran for student body president. Left: Dick typing. He wrote, “I worked on the student newspaper all the time that I was at the Y and that turned out to be a very valuable experience.”

and decided to live with her instead. My roommates were Gary, Arlen and Reed Jenkins from Pendleton. We lived in a house on 440 west and 782 north in Provo. Steve would not come to

school for two more years, so we had four other roommates who varied somewhat from year to year. We all belonged to the Viking social unit and so we became the Vike House. We cooked for ourselves and kept the place reasonably clean and I lived there for the rest of my college career.

BYU

Church at BYU at that time was divided into two branches—Campus Branch and North

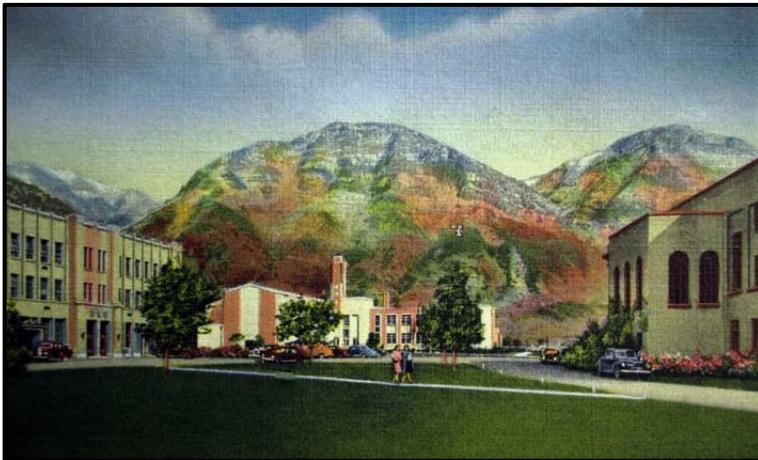
Campus Branch. Each branch had about three thousand members and sacrament meeting more closely resembled stake conference. Everyone was nice, but I was starting to question some of the testimony experiences I heard. I didn't like those feelings and so I decided to go to my home ward. It was only a few blocks away and after a few weeks I became the Deacon's quorum advisor. I had, I think, 21 deacons, and Sunday was not a day of rest (at least at the beginning), but those deacons saved me and I still am grateful for that assignment. They were all outstanding young men and went on

Right: Dick's father, Merrill M. Oveson, at Oregon State in his cap and gown where he earned his master's degree in 1929. Below: Postcard of BYU campus in the 1950s. Dick graduated from BYU with a bachelor degree in economics in 1955. He was involved in student life and wrote, "I was very active in student government and in my social unit. I dated quite a bit and had a good time!" During his senior year he was president of "the organization of all the campus organization presidents." He failed though in his attempt to find "the right girl" at BYU—that would come later.



to successful lives, in spite of their deacon's quorum experience!

Academically, I decided that I had been away from math too long to resume my physics major, and I toyed with Political Science for a bit, but finally decided to major in economics. The econ program at BYU was not mathematical at all, but the professors were good men and I profited from my association with them. I was very active in student government and in my social unit. I dated quite a bit and had a good time! BYU was smaller then—



6000 students when I came and about 8,000 when I graduated. I worked on the student newspaper all the time I was at the Y and that turned out to be a very valuable experience. I wrote probably three or four hundred words every day while I was at school and that was one of the most useful things I did at the Y.

Near the end of my junior year I decided to run for student body president. I received sup-



port from my social unit and from others on campus and so the last semester of my junior year was heavily occupied with campaigning. I made it to the finals, but a Bricker (another social unit) named Lloyd (Duko) George was elected president. He became a good friend and went on to have a brilliant career as a judge in Las Vegas. The federal courthouse in Las Vegas bears his name, so the student body obviously knew what they were doing! I didn't drop out of student government though, and during my senior year I was president of the organization of all the campus organization presidents. My firm plan was to graduate, spend my required time in the Air Force, and then go to law school. (That's what Duko did—he was a B-47 pilot and then went to law school and then back home to Las Vegas.)



Top left: Dick with one of his best friends, Don Wood, leaving for the Air Force in 1955. Don became an Air Force pilot, but was killed in an F-105 in Southeast Asia. Left: Dick with his sister, Mary, and tall, younger brother Steve, about 1955. Steve roomed with Dick at BYU for a year before leaving on his mission.

I went home that summer and worked for Dad on the experiment station and then in the fall I returned to BYU with Steve as a roommate. He had graduated from Pendleton High and was to spend a year in school before leaving on his mission. Joan had grad-

uated at the end of my junior year and she was off to California to work, while Mary still had two years of high school ahead of her. Steve and I roomed together my senior year and shared a car. It worked out fine. I wish we were still doing things together!

I also assumed that somewhere along the line I would meet the right girl and get married. I dated several "right girls" while at BYU, but all of them married someone else! I would have to wait till later when the real "right girl" came into my life.

During my senior year of the ROTC program, the ROTC officials decided that they would



Top: Steve, Dick, Mary, Mother, and Aunt Sarah Bowen. Above, the entire family: Joan, Dad, Mary, Dick (holding his daughter, Virginia), Mother, and Steve, in 1960.

place students who had been active on campus into leadership positions. I became a cadet colonel and the group commander of the Tuesday drill unit. At that time there were about 1600 cadets in the BYU ROTC, so I watched while my 800 cadets drilled each Tuesday—the largest command of my whole Air Force career! I still had no thoughts of an Air Force

career, and I took the whole command role with a small grain of salt. I thought it was more fun to command than to drill, but I didn't take it too seriously. I did, however, oversee the



Above: Dick with his cousin, Ruth Bowen, in 1949.

Sponsor Corps. This was a sort of female auxiliary to the ROTC and it had as members a number of the most popular girls on campus. Following one of my several failed efforts to convince a lovely girl to marry me (she had eloped with a man who turned out to be just right for her, and her grandson is now best friends with one of my grandsons), I called the Sponsor Corps out for an inspection. I picked out what I thought was one of the prettiest girls in the ranks and called her for a date as soon as the inspection was over. I dated her quite seriously for the rest of my senior year until she finally told me that she was engaged to a man back home. I didn't give up, but she married the man back home who became a bishop and the father of her six children.

Post-College

By this time school was about over and graduation loomed. In connection with graduation, I was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Force with a reporting date of September 12th, so when I left for Pendleton I had a diploma from BYU (in economics), an Air Force commission, and no money. I had borrowed \$100 from Steve to finish the last month of school and I needed to get to work. I really didn't want to work on the station that summer, and a family friend had a house moving business and offered me a job back in The Dalles. It sounded good, and he was fun to work for, but the hours were very erratic. He wanted to work from five in the morning until noon and then take the afternoons off. That would go okay for a few days and then I would show up at his house at a quarter to five and there would be no sign of life, so I would nap in the car until about 8:30 when he would emerge

and we would go to work. Then we would go back to the original schedule and the whole process would repeat. This got old after a few weeks and I decided to quit and go live with my college friends in Los Angeles for the summer and get what work I could. Mom washed, ironed and packed all my clothes and I took the 1940 Mercury sedan that Steve and I had shared at the Y and drove down to LA. I arrived late at night, parked the car at my roommate's apartment (where I had arranged to stay for the summer) and went to bed. When I got up in the morning all my clothes were gone. Welcome to the big city!! I scrounged up sort of a wardrobe, and thus was not quite the best dressed man in LA for the balance of the summer. I quickly got a job selling magazines door to door (which lasted a little over a week), moved on to stocking shelves in Bullocks for the summer sales, and when that ran out took a test at the Kelly Girl (temporary secretarial help) office and passed (thanks to all that typing at the newspaper), so I became a Kelly Girl! My first assignment was to Coast Federal Savings and Loan in downtown LA. When I arrived, the lady to whom I was assigned took me into a room filled with papers and explained that they were pages

of reports and they needed to be collated—that is put into order to form booklets. They had a collating machine, she showed me how to use it and left me there feeling a little like Rumpelstiltskin with the straw to weave into gold. I got to work though and surprisingly was finished by about eleven. I went and found the lady and asked if there was anything else. She looked up in astonishment and said (I can still remember it) “That was three days’ work!!” She came and checked and sure enough, it was done. She promptly offered me a job for the summer and I spent the next two months doing odd jobs at the bank. I built a



Above: High School graduation photograph taken of Alix Wells in 1953. Dick met Alix after a church meeting in Los Angeles, California, in 1955. Alix said, “Once I met Dick I didn’t want to date anyone else.” She also said, “He was the nicest man that I had ever met.” A year before she died she repeated this and added, “And I still feel that way today.”

room, repaired an offset press, and was just someone they called on whenever there was a problem (minor and physical) anywhere in the bank. I was, however, interviewed by one



Left: Alix Wells, wearing her stewardess uniform) in 1956. Being a stewardess in the 1950s and 1960s was a prestige job. Alix worked for Pan Am for one year and flew to every country that the airline visited in Southeast Asia and Polynesia except New Zealand. She wrote Dick often while on her many trips.

of the vice-presidents who had discovered I had a degree in economics after which I was offered a full time job. I told him thanks but that I was off to the Air Force in two weeks and that was the end of that.

Meeting Alix Wells

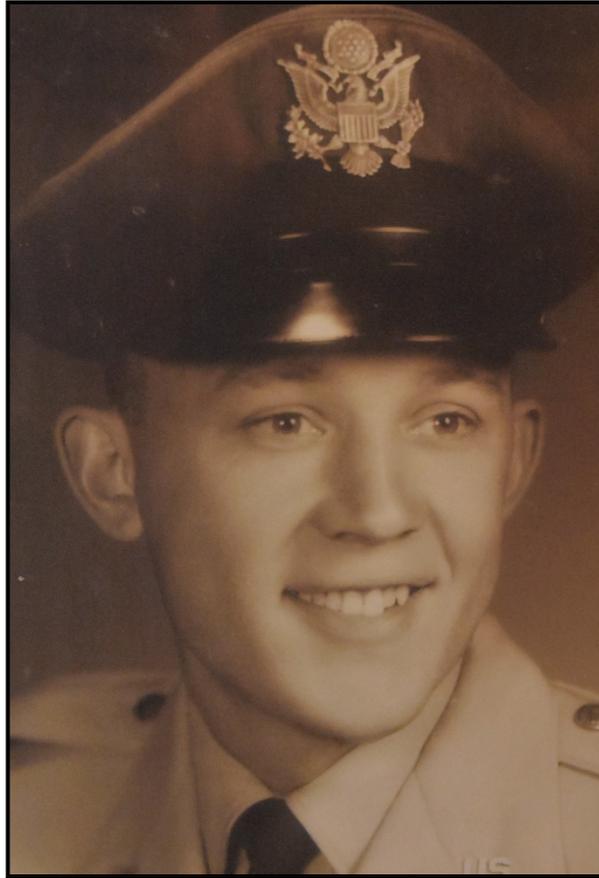
The first Sunday I was in LA I went to the Wilshire ward with my roommates. After church Bob Ensign (whom I had roomed with at the Y) said that there were some new girls who had moved into the Doanes home for the summer and we ought to go meet them. We got in Bob's new 1955 Ford convertible and drove over to the house and knocked on the door. The girls came out—one blond and one brunette. The blond was Miriam Barker and the brunette was her best friend, Alexandra Wells. Alix had been Sandy all her life, but she told me her name was Alix—so Alix it has always been. I maneuvered Alix into

the back seat with me while Miriam sat in the front with Bob and we drove around I can't remember where. I thought Alix was not only pretty, but sweet as well. I still feel that way after 60 years! Anyway, Alix and I dated all that summer. I didn't have any money so most of our dates were to the beach and to free things like the planetarium. We had a lot of friends and we had a wonderful time. At the end of the summer I drove Alix back to Salt Lake—although I had to borrow money from her to get the car fixed on the way home. It's a wonder she ever had anything to do with me after that—maybe she just wanted to get her money back!!

Air Force Flight Training

In September Don Wood and I left Pendleton for San Antonio, Texas, where we began our Air Force careers (although at the time I had no idea it would become a career). I re-

member that I received a check for \$900 before we left. That was a \$300 uniform allowance, travel pay, and (I think) TDY pay till I arrived at my final training base. I looked at that and thought “Wow, I can live on that much money for a year, and they’re going to give me more next month! Anyway, we arrived at Lackland AFB in early September, bought our uniforms and began a two week orientation. That included swearing in, orientation lectures, some physical training, and some confidence building courses. It also included another physical and then we got orders to our primary pilot training bases. I was assigned to Spence Air Base just outside of Moultrie, Georgia. We would fly T-34s and T-28s. I was in class 57-C. Part of our class went to Bainbridge, Georgia, and part to Florida. We all went to civilian contract bases, and thus our training was in the hands of civilian instructors with a few military officers to handle that side of things. Moultrie is located in southern Georgia. The country is rolling hills covered with fields surrounded by southern pines. The city is typically southern Georgia—very friendly people and there was a nice branch of the Church there with wonderful members who took us in and fed us and kept us busy.



Above: Richard “Dick” Oveson, in his Air Force uniform about the time that he met Alix in 1955.

There were seven of us who were members of the Church in my class and there were several members who were in more advanced classes. In Moultrie I met a family whose daughter is still one of our closest friends. Wanda Pierce lived in Moultrie and was on a mission in Florida when I was there, but her family was wonderful to all of us. I can still taste her fried chicken. Wanda had become engaged to a former student at Spence who was then training in F-89s in Valdosta, Georgia. Wanda and Delmar Bastian married when she came home and we have been stationed with them on two occasions. Delmar got out of the Air Force after about ten years and went to work for United Airlines—he also stayed in the Reserve so he retired from both the Air Force and United. We see them periodically.

In early October of 1955 I finally began flying! We initially flew the T-34, a conventional tailed adaptation from the Beechcraft Bonanza (a popular civilian 4-place private plane). The T-34 was easy to fly (I guess—I didn’t have anything to compare it to!) and it was our first flying experience. My instructor was competent and, like all the instructors, very vocal. I was about average and after a little over 8 hours of instruction he climbed out of the back seat and told me to go alone. I managed to take off okay and flew around the field while I contemplated landing! I was thinking about this when a voice on the radio informed

me that they were changing runways due to a wind shift. That meant I had to reorient myself and rethink my landing pattern. I knew that my options were to land the plane or get



Above: Dick in his pilot training in 1955. Top right: A T-34 and a Navy version of a T-28 (Wikipedia). Dick flew both of these planes while learning to fly at Spence Air Base just outside of Moultrie, Georgia. About twenty percent of those who began their training with Dick “did not finish for one reason or another.” He was always concerned that something might happen and that he would get “washed out.”

hurdle was successfully passed! There would be many more in the next 21 years! We flew the T-34 for 40 hours and then we transitioned into the much bigger T-28 for 80 more hours of instruction. The T-28 (Air Force version) had an 800 HP engine and was fully aerobatic, so we learned to do all sorts of aerobatics. We also began our instrument instruction, where we flew from the back seat with a hood over the cockpit while the instructor watched from the front seat. We got to spend a lot of time solo, just flying around and playing in the puffy white clouds of a Georgia winter. It was a lot of fun, but there was continued anxiety—not about an accident, but that we might “wash out.” I suppose about 20 percent of those I started out with did not finish for one reason or another. Many never soloed, others got sick doing aerobatics, and some couldn’t manage instrument flying. I remember a friend, a graduate from Princeton, who went before the flying evaluation board and was asked by that group of instructors (I suppose to try and motivate him) whether or not he felt that he was smart enough to fly. “Smart enough,” he responded, “of course I’m smart enough!! Look at the people who fly!” He washed out.

killed, so I decided that landing sounded better and I did. It went well and my first

I lived in the bachelor officer's quarters with the other student officers, while the aviation cadets lived in a barracks. We ate in a mess hall most of the time. We flew half a day and had classroom instruction the other half. We studied principles of flight, aircraft engineering, navigation, instruments, weather, radio communication, and code. We also had PE every day. We did have free time in the evenings (when we weren't night flying) and I was called to serve as a district missionary while I was in Moultrie and that was a good experience. There was basically no one to date, but Alix and I were exchanging letters. She went to work as a stewardess for Pan American Airways that winter and she flew across the Pacific to the Orient. I can't say enough about what a blessing the Church was during this period—lots of new friends and good and kind people.



Above: The T-33, a subsonic American jet trainer. Dick flew the T-33 at Webb AFB in Big Spring, Texas, in 1956. He wrote about his first solo flight: “I looked in the rear-view mirror and saw myself in my helmet and oxygen mask and I thought, ‘I’m a jet fighter pilot!’”

After seven months of training, we were split into two groups: Those that were going on to multi-engine aircraft and those going to single engine training. I was anxious to go to single engine jets and so I was assigned to Webb AFB in Big Spring, Texas. I arrived in Big Spring in late May of 1956. I went right out to the base, and I'll never forget the smell of Jet fuel and the hot sun of west Texas. After the usual classroom instruction and ground school we finally got to fly jets! We were flying the T-33, a trainer adapted from the F-80, one of the Air forces first jet fighters. The airplane was built by Lockheed and for all I know is still flying somewhere. It actually outperformed its parent F-80 in some respects and it was exciting. My first flight was with my instructor. We flew around while he demonstrated the capabilities of the aircraft and then came back to land. It had been new and different—the oxygen mask, the confined cockpit and the g-forces all combined to bring on a real case of airsickness—and it all came to a climax as we pulled a couple of negative G's hitting the right altitude for the traffic pattern. Anyway, I spent a happy hour afterwards cleaning up the cockpit. I soloed soon afterwards and on my first solo flight I looked in the small rear-view mirror and saw myself in my helmet and oxygen mask and I thought “I'm a jet fighter pilot!” I was so exhilarated by the whole thing that I decided to do some vertical rolls. I pushed the throttle all the way up and pulled the airplane straight up and started doing rolls. The T-33 had a small string on the nose of the aircraft that showed if you were yawing one way or the other. It was supposed to fly straight back at you. After a couple of rolls I noticed that suddenly the string was pointed straight up at the sky—and the airplane was falling backwards on its tail. I knew I was going to get into a spin and there were thirteen steps to the spin recovery and I wasn't sure I could remember them all! So I just kept the controls in neutral and watched as the earth came by and then the sky came by and I remember that I had been told that the T-33 could not recover from a tumble. But after a couple of tumbles the nose stayed down a bit and the airspeed picked up and I could recover—so I did and

flew home and landed! That lesson stayed with me and probably helped me not to panic a few years later when I got in an inverted spin in an F-89. I needed airplanes with a little more power!

Training went on relatively uneventfully after that—until we started flying formation. I was a good instrument pilot but I had an instructor (who was a fine young man) who stressed



Left: “The Northrop F-89 Scorpion was an American all-weather, twin-engine interceptor aircraft built during the 1950s, the first jet-powered aircraft designed for that role from the outset to enter service. Though its straight wings limited its performance, it was among the first United States Air Force jet fighters equipped with guided missiles and notably the first combat aircraft armed with air-to-air nuclear weapons” (Wikipedia). **Above:** The F-86 Sabre. At graduation Dick had the choice of flying the F-89 or the F-86, a more glamorous jet fighter. He chose the F-89 so he could be stationed in Oxnard, California, and see Alix.

smoothness on the controls. That’s normally a good idea, but the T-33 engine had a lag when the throttle was advanced and the airplane was so smooth that it didn’t slow down when you smoothly retarded the throttle. I was so smooth that I would fall out of formation, smoothly advance the throttle and when I finally picked up speed and caught up I would go zipping past my flight lead as I smoothly retarded the throttle. I went through an agonizing few weeks trying to get this worked out until I was suddenly up for a check ride (a washout ride) with the flight commander. I should note that out of 16 of us who started in my flight, only 10 finally graduated. I thought I was a goner. The flight commander, though, saw what the problem was right off the bat. He told me that he didn’t care if I jerked the throttle from the horn (all the way back) to the rumble (the engine rumbled a bit when you jabbed the throttle all the way forward), just stay in formation! So I did. No more smoothness, and lo and behold I stayed in formation. We came in to land and after the pitchout we were all sent around again, so I jammed the throttle forward and tried to catch up with the flight lead. I finally caught up in the middle of a tight turn when his airplane was in an 80 degree bank and pulling about 3 G’s, but I slipped up on his wing and stayed there. We came around again and landed this time and as we were returning to the flight line the flight commander said “Oveson, you’re not supposed to join up in the traffic pattern...” My heart skipped a beat, but as I was waiting for the debriefing I over-heard him telling one of the other instructors “You should have seen Oveson join up on the go-around!” So I passed the check-ride and moved on. I was always anxious when we flew formation that I would mess up and be back in trouble, but once I got the hang of it I had no more problems. I eventually went on the fly all-weather interceptors and flew a lot of formation at night in bad weather! I should mention here that

this was a very stressful time for me—I saw a lot of my dreams in jeopardy and I let the folks know how worried I was. I got a wonderful letter from my father telling me that they didn't care whether or not I became an Air Force pilot and that things would work out for the best. That made me feel better and it did work out.

Alix and I had been writing (she was now a stewardess for Pan American and flying over the Pacific). She had told me about all the interesting men she was dating on her travels and I was telling her about the stresses of pilot training. Anyway, she was on my mind a lot. As graduation approached, the subject of our next assignments was on everyone's mind. When we got our assignments we had 72 fighter slots—one for everyone in the class. But which fighter? I finished high enough in the class so that I could have any assignment I wanted and our assistant flight commander had flown F-86's in Korea and he urged me to take an F-86 assignment to Williams AFB in Arizona. But there was an F-89 assignment to Oxnard, California (as a final assignment) and I told my friends that if I went to Oxnard I could see Alix (she was living near the San Francisco airport then). I wavered, but I had about decided to take the F-86 assignment (a more glamorous airplane) as the day for the meeting neared. On that day I still had one more hour to fly to complete the required hours for graduation. I took a T-33 up to fly around for an hour and then land for the meeting that afternoon. As I returned to land, a west Texas sandstorm hit the base and the base was closed and I was told to go to Abilene, Texas and land. I did, refueled and finally, after dark when the sandstorm was over, I returned and landed. I went in to close my flight plan and I had a call from the wing commander. He told me that they had had the meeting without me and that my friends had said that I wanted an F-89 to Oxnard, but if that was not correct, they would have the meeting again. I just had a feeling that fate (or providence) had stepped in and so I said "No, that will be fine." I really believe that that sandstorm was no coincidence and that I was meant to go to Oxnard and find Alix again.

First Assignment

I graduated from pilot training and received my wings on Halloween Day, 1956. The next day, as I remember it, I left for Valdosta, Georgia, and my F-89 training. I was driving a 1950 Ford that I had bought in Moultrie and that I had owned for almost a year. It wasn't very fancy, but it ran fine and it didn't cost a lot. I remember arriving in Valdosta in early November, checking into the BOQ, getting my room and then heading into town to look around. I didn't have any plans and I noticed a football stadium pretty much filled with people for a night game. I bought a ticket and went in to watch. I remember the kickoff went into the end zone—and then I found out that it was two junior high teams. Pretty much described the Georgia attitude toward football!

Valdosta is a city in southeastern Georgia not far from the Okefenokee swamp. The base was just outside of town and still is a major air force base. At that time it was the training center for two place interceptors—the F-94 and the F-89. The F-94 was basically a T-33 with an afterburner and a radar nose. The F-89 was a Northrup airplane with twin engines and two afterburners. It was a large airplane for its time and it had a crew of two—a pilot and a radar observer. It was designed as an all-weather interceptor, and it had some special all-weather features. Since we were supposed to be specialized all-weather pilots, we got 40 hours of specialized instrument training. This training was generally recognized as

additional life insurance by the whole air force and it was a big confidence booster. After that training, we transitioned into the 89. That consisted of climbing into the airplane and flying it, since there were no two pilot airplanes. On my first flight I taxied into take-off



Above: An F-89 fighter jet exploding. Dick witnessed a crash of an F-89, which was landing when it “suddenly flipped on its back, made about a half turn and smashed straight down between the runways. There was a big explosion, a big ball of fire and then a few wisps of smoke...I could hardly believe my eyes...Later it turned out that the controls had malfunctioned and the crew never had a chance. We had a lot of accidents on the base. For two and a half months we had one death a week.”

position and lit the left afterburner and the whole airplane started shaking. I quickly shut down the left engine, called the tower and told them I was taxiing in. About the time I turned off the runway, I remembered that all the hydraulics were driven by the left engine. I soon lost the brakes and steering and I coasted to a stop without hitting anything. Just luck and a first lesson. After about ten hours in the airplane we started night flying. On our first night flight the weather was heavy overcast with about a six hundred foot ceiling. All of the pilots surmised that the night flying would be cancelled—but when we showed up there was a full

schedule. So I had my first weather flight on my own and my first night flight in the F-89 on the same night. That night I lined up, lit the afterburners and took off. Almost immediately we went into the clouds and I thought the airplane had blown up! The after-burners just lit up the clouds all around us. Scared me! The flight worked out though and all was well. I did have an experience later though which has stayed with me. We were night flying and I went down to the ops building and as I was walking into the building (it was still light out) I stopped to watch an F-89 flying in to make a landing. The airplane banked sharply to (pitch out) turn and land and when he banked the airplane suddenly flipped on its back, made about a half turn and smashed straight down between the runways. There was a big explosion, a big ball of fire and then a few wisps of smoke and a big hole in the ground. I could hardly believe my eyes. I went in the ready room and told everybody that an airplane had just crashed and everybody rushed out. Later it turned out that the controls had malfunctioned and the crew never really had a chance. We had a lot of accidents on the base. For two and a half months we had one death a week—Just a taste of flying jet fighters in the first few years of their introduction into the Air Force.

I finished at Valdosta (Moody AFB) in early April of 1957. Just before I left, I went over and spent the night with the district president and his wife. Their last name was Greiner and they lived in Quitman, Georgia—just a short way from Valdosta. They had been very kind to me during my stay at Moody. They had a son who was attending BYU and had been killed in an automobile accident on his way home from school and that event had been very hard for them and I think that to have a young man visit was maybe some com-

fort. Brother Greiner had a Chevrolet dealership in Quitman and that morning after breakfast I asked if he had any good used cars I could look at. He said no, but he had a new one that I might be interested in. We rode down to the dealership and he had a brand new 1957 Chevy convertible on the floor. It was turquoise with white wall tires and cost \$3,000! I was smitten and I bought it (for \$3,000). The payments were \$100 a month and my gross salary was \$530 a month! I have often reflected that I could buy a pretty nice car if I was now willing to pay 20% of my gross income for a car! Anyway, I drove it back to the base, packed up and started for Oxnard, California. I stopped in Laredo, Texas, and went over the border to where Steve was serving his mission. He took me to some investigators homes (pretty primitive homes) and we had a good visit. I went on to Provo where I met



Above: Almost an exact copy of the 1957 Chevy Bel Air, turquoise convertible with white wall tires that Dick purchased brand new for \$3,000 (\$28,000 in 2021 money). Dick wrote what he felt when he first saw the car in a showroom: “I was smitten and I bought it.” Today it is considered a classic and a favorite with collectors. He drove it from Georgia to Mexico, where he visited his brother on his mission, and then saw his sister Mary at BYU. Eventually, Dick arrived at the Air Force base in Oxnard, driving one of the best looking cars of the 1950s.

Mary (then a freshman at BYU) and I left her with the car while I made my way back to Pendleton to see the folks. I spent about ten days there and went back to Provo, picked up the car and went on to Oxnard. I checked in to the base about 4:30 in the afternoon and was immediately asked if I was current in the T-33. I said I was and so they told me to run over to Norton AFB and pick up a T-33 and bring it back to Oxnard. They sent me over in a C-45 and by the time I got all the paper work done it was dark. I got in the T-33, taxied out to the runway and took off. About the time I got airborne I asked myself which way I should turn—I was visual flight rules all the way, but Norton was pretty smoggy and I couldn't see much. So I turned left and as I was climbing and turning I thought the bottom part of the smog was a little darker than the top, so I climbed a little steeper—and sure enough as I got closer I realized that the darker part were mountains! Finally, I cleared the top of the hills, but not by much! When my heart slowed down, I headed for Oxnard (about fifty miles away), landed and went and checked in at the BOQ. An interesting introduction to the base.

The next morning I reported for duty. Oxnard was part of the chain of bases charged with guarding the coast. We had the southern part of California, Hamilton near San Francisco had the northern part, Portland was further north and then a base at Tacoma, Washington. The Canadians had the border to Alaska where we had two squadrons in Alaska—one at

Anchorage and one in Fairbanks. There were other Navy, Marine and Air Force squadrons nearby and so we had lots of company. We were divided into five flights and we were on alert for 24 hours every five days. On alert we lived in the alert hanger. A big building, it



Above: Oxnard Air Force Base, which was located 61 miles northwest of Los Angeles, California. Dick Oveson was stationed here from 1956 until 1959. The base was closed in 1970.

had bays for four fighters with large doors that swung up to allow the airplanes to exit and enter. We had two airplanes on five minute alert and two on 15 minute alert. The five minute alert aircraft were completely set up so that we could jump in, start the plane and take off in a minimum amount of time. The 15 minute airplanes were back up and later on were equipped with nuclear weapons. The aircrew members were housed in a room in the middle of the hanger complex, with a glassed in enclosure that looked out over the runway where a sergeant sat who coordinated the ground crews and answered the phone. We napped, played bridge, read and waited for the horn to sound. When it did, we raced down the stairs, out to the planes, jumped in, started up and took off. The first plane to the runway was the flight lead. On my first alert I was there with my flight commander, an old WWII fighter pilot named “Slick” Thomas. Slick was pretty laid back, a nice officer who became (as did all the other squadron members) a good friend. We were having lunch when the horn blew. I dropped everything and raced for the planes. Then the horn blew again. Everybody else went back inside but no one had told me that a second horn meant that the scramble had been called off. I was in the cockpit when the horn sounded a third time—the scramble was on again, and when my radar observer got in the cockpit I was ready to go! I was first off and as soon as Slick joined up on my wing we called the command post and they told us that there was a Navy carrier off the coast and that their airplanes were flying in and out of the ADIZ and would we tell them to stop. The ADIZ stood for Air Defense Identification Zone and it surrounded North America. Any aircraft entering the ADIZ needed to be within five miles of its intended course and within 5 minutes of its intended penetration time. Anytime an aircraft entered outside of these limits, we were scrambled to identify the aircraft and report it. Anyway, when we got that call, I pressed my mike button and said to Slick “How do we do that?” Slick responded, saying, “We’ll just fly over them and they’ll get the message.” OK, I said, how high? “About 2000 ft.”

said Slick as I watched his plane drop off my wing and head for the ocean. “Ah Hah,” now I had the picture! We dropped down on the water and I aimed for the bow while Slick took the stern. We lit the after-burners and just popped over the ship and headed for home. To say the Navy was irate would be an understatement, but the folks controlling the ADIZ simply told them that if they would move out a bit to do their exercises such things wouldn’t happen.

Things were obviously a bit looser in those days—we would fly our radar intercepts and then go look for a dogfight. There were other Air Force squadrons at George AFB, there was the Navy and the Marines, so there was always somebody to race with. The F-89 was not as fast as some others, but it had a big wing and above 25,000 feet we could turn with anybody. As I said, our squadron was about half WWII and Korean fighter pilots so they had a lot to teach us about air to air combat. Our wing commander was a somewhat swashbuckling man with a thin mustache. He told us that we should be careful flying too low around southern California, but the base was his and he could “fly lower than anybody.” Every Friday afternoon the day flight had a “flagpole run” where we flew over the flag as it was being lowered, and then we would put on an impromptu air show. When I first got to Oxnard we were allowed to take wives on the flagpole run, but that was discontinued before we got married so Alix never got to go.

As I mentioned, when we were on alert, it was something of a race to see who could get out of the barn first when we were scrambled. The cockpit was all set up, but we had to start the engines. The F-89 had two spring loaded toggle switches to start the engines. You had to hold the switch up to engage the starter and get the engines revving up to about 20% before moving the throttle up and then the engine would start. I rigged a paper clip so that I could prop the switch up and I set up my cockpit this way. When the horn blew, the ground crew would rush out and start the power cart, putting power on the airplane and so on my plane the left engine would begin to rev up before I got there. It would be at about 20% when I got to the cockpit and I would just lean in, push the left throttle all the way up and jump in and fasten all the straps. By the time I was strapped in I could start the right engine and when it hit 20% the left engine would be at about 50% and I would signal the ground crew to disengage the power cart, I released the brakes and out the barn I went. Nobody ever beat me! Also, no one could figure how I was so fast, and I didn’t tell anybody. Then one stormy night we got scrambled three times! After the last flight we got home about 2:30 and we had had a little trouble with the radar so I made a note of it and went to bed. The next thing I knew I was being shaken awake by the crew chief, saying “Lieutenant Oveson, your airplane is running and we don’t know why!!” I knew why. I should note that the ground crew was never supposed to put power on the airplane without checking with the pilot—but they said they felt sorry for me because we had been flying almost all night, so they thought they would just check out the radar and they needed power for that. Needless to say, my secret was out. The next day the squadron commander called me in and said that he admired my ingenuity, but questioned my good judgment and not to do that anymore. So I didn’t. I was still fast, but I was no longer unbeatable!!

Alix Wells

As soon as I knew I was going to Oxnard, I wrote Alix to tell her and as soon as I got to

Oxnard I called her and we arranged to meet. We started dating again. Alix would some-



Above: Dick and Alix Wells Oveson on their wedding day, August 30, 1957.

times arrange to return to Los Angeles from her overseas flights, I would pick her up and she would stay with Richard and Ula Collins—members of the church, good friends and by now my flight commander. We would leave early Saturday morning and drive to Alix's in Burlingame (near San Francisco) and then go out in San Francisco. We would eat dinner someplace, go to the Fairmount Hotel and dance and finish up at a place called The Bocci Ball—a restaurant and bar where aspiring and successful opera singers would stand up and sing. Lots of fun. I stayed at a nearby Naval Air Station and then we would go to church on Sunday and I would usually leave in the evening and get back to Oxnard about 2 or 3 in the morning—just in time to get up and go to work on Monday. We got engaged soon after I arrived in Oxnard, so much of this occurred while we were engaged.

Married Life in Oxnard

Alix and I were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple on the 30th of August, 1957 by Elder Adam S. Bennion. It has now been 60 years and I count marrying Alix as one of my

greatest blessings. (The others are my parents and siblings and our children—and the Gospel.) I didn't do a very good job planning our honeymoon! We had our reception in Alix's Aunt Mary's home. Mary and Doc were very kind to us, always, and it was a lovely

reception. My folk hosted a wedding breakfast at the Doll House in Salt Lake right after



This page: Dick and Alix with her bridesmaids on their wedding day in 1957. Dick wrote that marrying Alix was “one of his greatest blessings.”

the Temple and then the reception was in the evening. We finally got away after the reception and we were both tired!! The next morning all I wanted to do was leave, but we had to go pack the car with the wedding gifts and people kept dropping by. We finally got away in the late afternoon and I told Alix we would just drive to Wendover where they had lots of nice hotels—and of



course I hadn't made any reservations. When we got to Wendover we found it was Speed Week (on the salt flats) and there was hardly standing room for miles around. So we kept driving till we finally got to Wells, Nevada. (Somewhat appropriate since I was married to

Alexandra Wells!!) Anyway, we got what must have been the last room in Wells—it had



Above: Dick with his arms around Alix, Bob Ensign, Gima Wells, Joe Barton, Virginia Wells (Alix's mother), and Mary Oveson at Temple Square on August 30, 1957. Left: Dick and Alix next to the Salt Lake Temple.

a bulb hanging from the ceiling and Alix was sure there were cockroaches in the bathroom. We ate supper at a little restaurant in Wells and then said that we would put two dollars in nickels in the slot machines and then go to

bed. At about midnight we were still about three dollars ahead, so we took our winnings and left. We drove on to Lake Tahoe the next day, where I had rented a cabin on the lake that my roommate at the Y had assured me was ideal for a honeymoon. It was ideal for Reid and his bride—not for Alix and me! It had a single room, wire spring under a saggy mattress and great scenery, but nothing else. We stayed there two nights (I think) and moved across the lake to a casino hotel which was a little better. We spent a couple of nights there and went home to Oxnard. I had rented the top of a two family apartment right on the beach at Oxnard. I had not noticed that it backed on the city dump and that it was a

couple of miles from anything else. When I installed my new wife in our first dwelling and



Above: Dick and Alix packing up his famous car on their way to a new life together in 1957. On the first night of their honeymoon they found out that there were no rooms in Wendover so they drove on to Wells, Nevada, where they got the last room available, which had a light bulb hanging from the ceiling with roaches to keep them company. Then when they arrived at Lake Tahoe, the cabin they stayed in came with a “wire spring under a saggy mattress.” There was “great scenery, but nothing else.” Two days later they switched to a casino hotel, which was better. Then they drove home to Oxnard.

took the car to work, Alix had nothing to do and nowhere to go. That was a major adjustment for someone who had just recently spent her time flying to all the exotic cities in the Orient. I was very fortunate she stuck around! We were close to the Seabee base at Port Hueneme, and we could go to the movies at night for 10 cents. If we arrived after the national anthem, the lady had left and we got in free!! We also went to the beach a lot, and after sitting around for couple of months, we bought some small, tight inflatable rubber mats and began to “body board.” At the beach we would spend maybe a half hour in the water and then spend six hours in the surf! It was a lot of fun. We also took picnics to a small secluded beach which we had found and that was also fun. I had a reasonable schedule—no TDY away from home, and we always had at least one day off during the week.

The ward in Oxnard was a real blessing to us. We made many good friends and we have fond memories of those early days of our marriage. After a few months (I can’t remember how many!!) we found an apartment in Oxnard which was closer to neighbors and work and we moved there. Alix worked for the city as a recreational specialist for children at the park after school. She had a lot of kids, and for some of them I’m sure she was almost a surrogate mom. They really clung to her and she was great with them. We still went to the movies and went out with friends when we moved into Oxnard. We did have one interesting experience just a few months after we got married. Both of us had worked before

we married and neither of us worried much about money. I just put my paycheck into the bank and there was always money there. Alix had to quit her job as a stewardess after we



Top left: Downtown Oxnard, California, in the 1950s. Dick and Alix lived in Oxnard from 1957 to 1959. The city had a population of about 35,000 during this time. Left: Dick and Alix went to the beach at Port Hueneme many times while they lived in Oxnard. The pier shown here had just been completed in 1956 and was a nice addition to the area. Dick wrote: “At the beach we would spend maybe a half hour in the water [on body boards] and then spend six hours in the surf! It was a lot of fun.” Top right: Port Hueneme lighthouse. (Wikipedia)



got married, but we still had the same relaxed attitude about money (after all we were making over \$500 dollars a month and out car payment was only 20% of that!). Anyway, one month one of our checks bounced! That’s always a cause for concern, but it’s a real no-no for a military officer! I was astounded—I had no idea how such a thing could have happened. Anyway, we had to figure out what was going on, so we adopted a plan whereby we both kept track of every penny we spent. Every night we would place all of our money on the table, count it, and we had to account for every penny we had spent during the day. We had a ledger and we wrote down all our expenditures and then put them in categories at the end of the week. It didn’t take long to realize that we were both spending a surprising amount on things neither of us really wanted—things like milkshakes, magazines, candy bars, etc. After we had spent some time figuring where we were, we sat down and began to organize our finances. We kept very careful and detailed records of everything and we cut out almost all of the non-essentials neither of us cared about. Things got better. We have continued to keep careful financial records throughout our marriage, although we no longer count our pennies every night!

When we set up housekeeping we didn’t have any furniture. We got a bed, a few chairs, a table, and a few pots and pans. Alix was a wonderful cook from day one, so there was no learning curve there. We started going to estate sales around the area and gradually we acquired the necessities to make our home a little more comfortable. We also started to

learn how to live together. I remember one week I traded alert with someone so that my day off came on Sunday and we never flew on Sunday—but sure enough we had an exercise that day and I was gone on Mother's day. Alix was not happy with me!! I remember that I had to go fly as a target for that exercise and that made it even worse. I was playing bomber coming in to the coast and some Navy fighters were scrambled to shoot me down. I got on their frequency so I could listen and I heard this fighter roll in on my tail. I was not in the best mood, and I determined that I wasn't going to get shot down by a Navy guy, even if I was supposed to be a bomber, so as he swung down to get into firing position I lit the afterburners and pulled up into a hard, high speed barrel roll that put me right behind him. I put down the mike button and made a machine gun noise over the radio. The controller called him and asked if he had made the kill yet and the Navy pilot said "Uh, no, not quite yet." We chased around for a while and I never did let him back on my tail and he eventually went home—we weren't supposed to do things like that when we were targets, but I was pretty sure the Navy pilot wasn't going to explain the details of what happened, and I never heard any more about it. I felt better about the day, even though Alix was still a little miffed at me!

A few months after I arrived we were out in the Pacific firing rockets. I had to make an extra pass or two because I was the new guy in the flight so I was coming home alone. I heard the wing commander call for winds at the bubble—which meant he was going to do a little air show for the folks at the radar site out on one of the channel islands just off Santa Barbara (lonely duty, by the way). I felt I should do my part so we dropped down right on the ocean and as we approached the island, I lit the afterburners and then headed up the hill toward the radar dome and the supporting buildings. I could see people lined up between the dome and the closest building and I aimed at the middle of the group. As I got closer, people started dropping to the ground so I knew I was about the right altitude. We went blasting by and I pulled back just a little on the stick and rolled the airplane. I remember leaves on the trees (maybe I imagined that) and luckily the hill dropped away and we completed the roll and I flew on home. There was a long silence from the back seat and finally my RO said "I guess that's about as low as I've ever done a roll." I told him that that was as low as I was ever going to do one and we left it at that. People have gotten killed doing dumb things like that!!!

Right after we got our new airplanes with the smooth tip tanks there was a discussion among us pilots about whether or not the F-89 would go supersonic. So next flight I decided to try. We climbed up to 50,000 ft. (we just barely made it) and I pointed the nose straight down (at Long Beach) and lit the afterburners. We went right up to Mach .98 or .99 and I could feel the airplane bumping into the barrier—but it wouldn't go through. At about 30,000 ft. my RO kept saying, "Maybe we should pull out." So I shut off the burners and pulled the throttles back and we lunged forward in our shoulder harness. I was straight and level at 20,000 and we didn't boom anybody.

One night flying evening, I took off in formation with Dick Collins, a good member of the church and my flight commander. It was a pretty evening and I could see a contrail coming in from the west in the sunset—a B-52. My RO (I was flying with Bill Young regularly then) said, "I've got him on the radar so I called a contact to the ground control and said we were going to practice an intercept. Dick heard me and said, "You'll never get him."

Anyway, I lit the burners and started climbing—we were head on so as we climbed I got steeper and steeper. We finally got close enough to fire when I was upside down at about 40,000 feet and just as we splashed him we ran out of airspeed. We started falling flat on our back and spinning a little. I moved the stick around and nothing happened, but we still had fuel and the nose was heavy so pretty soon the nose began to drop and we picked up airspeed and recovered while we were still pretty high. I remembered I had done that in the T-33 and so I avoided any drastic action and it worked out fine.

Near the end of our tour in Oxnard, I was on alert when we got scrambled to do a fly-by for Memorial Day. The organizers had called and asked if we could do this (we did it on special occasions) and so we knew pretty well where to go. I was the flight lead and just to make sure, we stayed low and flew over the cemetery at about 1000 feet with the gear and flaps down. (We were a flight of two, by the way.) We made sure we had the right place, cleaned up the airplanes and came around again, maybe a little lower. There was about a 2000 foot layer of clouds and we were under the clouds. As we approached the cemetery, we came in right over the tree tops. When we got close, we pulled straight up, lit the burners, flew up through the clouds and went home. A little while after we landed, we got a phone call from the organizer. He was so excited he could hardly talk. He said that when we came over the first time everyone thought that was it and the program proceeded. He said that the last notes of taps were just dying away when the whole world exploded, we appeared and then disappeared into the clouds. He said that there was not a dry eye in the whole crowd. That was fun!! (Just luck that the timing worked out like it did, but who knew!)

Toward the end of January in 1959 Alix started to feel sick in the mornings—and sure enough we found out that we were going to have an addition to our family. I had been at Oxnard almost two years and they were building some new base housing and we were due to move into the first ones finished and we were excited about it! As the spring began it also became apparent that my number was coming up to take a cold weather tour. In the Air Defense Command every pilot had to take one of these far north assignments, either to Iceland, Greenland, Newfoundland or Alaska. The first three were unaccompanied tours which lasted a year and the Alaska assignment was accompanied, but for three years. I certainly didn't want to leave Alix for a year and so when the opportunity arose I said that I would go to Alaska. We soon got orders to report to the 449th FIS in Fairbanks, Alaska, in early July of 1959. We started making preparations. We decided that a drive up the Alcan Highway would be something of an adventure, so we got the maps and started preparing the car. I covered the gas tank with an old inner tube, we packed what we needed and shipped the rest and in late June we said goodbye to Oxnard and our folks and started for the North Country. We went to Salt Lake, saw Alix's mom, then to Pendleton to say goodbye to my folks and then headed up to Canada. It took a few days to get to Edmonton and then we were off into the wilderness. As soon as we left the paved portion of the highway, we slowed to 40 MPH and drove 6 hours a day. Much of the way was though stands of pine trees away from the mountains so it wasn't terribly pretty—just long!! We stayed in Inns along the way, which were pretty rustic. It took us most of a week to finally make it to Alaska and I had promised Alix that Fairbanks was a big city and that she could have a real bath and rest—remember she was five months pregnant! (She was a great sport about everything and did as well as I did on the trip.) Anyway, as we drove into the outskirts

of Fairbanks I told her that any minute we would come to the main part of town. We crossed a bridge over the river and suddenly we were in the bush again! We had driven right through Fairbanks while looking for it!



Alaska

There was no base housing when we checked into the base, so we rented an apartment in a big apartment building right off the end of the runway. We called it Crash Courts. There were a number of members of the squadron living there and we were all waiting for base housing. I went to the squadron and the



Above: Bridge on the Alaska Highway. Dick and Alix drove up from Edmonton, Canada, to Fairbanks, Alaska, on the mostly gravel Alaska Highway in July 1959. They stayed in “rustic” inns along the way. Much of the way was through pine trees “so it wasn’t terribly pretty—just long!” They were both surprised to find out how small Fairbanks was. Middle: Fairbanks, Alaska (population 32,500), in 2020. The city only had 13,000 people in 1959. Left: Northern Lights. Dick witnessed sights like this one many times while stationed in Alaska. (Wikipedia)



first question I was asked was if I was a pilot or an RO. When I said I was a pilot I was

almost immediately scheduled to go to Anchorage and pull alert. They were really short of pilots! Anyway, we were just getting settled in our apartment—our belongings had arrived and there was Alix, pregnant, sitting in the middle of unpacked boxes and I had to say goodbye—I’ll see you in a week, and I was off for Anchorage.

I got two rides in the T-33 before I left—one in the front seat as a field checkout and the other in the back as an instrument check. The ceiling was about 600 feet on both flights

and I really never saw anything from the air. I was declared okay to go and the next day I took off for Anchorage. We climbed out through thick clouds and broke out on top about



Above: Mount Denali, also known as Mount McKinley, the highest mountain peak in North America, with a summit elevation of 20,310 feet above sea level. (Wikipedia) Dick wrote: “We used to play around on Denali both going to and coming back from Anchorage—on one flight I got right down low (about ten feet) and we just shot off the summit.”

16,000 feet. I was looking at the instruments and when I glanced outside I could hardly believe my eyes! There was a mountain off my left wing which was still going up! That was my first look at Denali (Mt. McKinley), at over 20,000 feet, the tallest peak in North America. Very impressive. We used to play around on Denali both going to and coming back from Anchorage—on one flight I got right down low (about ten feet) and we just shot off the summit. The north face of Denali drops down to the flat land to the north very quickly—a drop of about 17,000 feet. That’s the only time I ever had a sensation of height in an airplane. For a moment I felt like I was holding the plane up by the stick!!

Flying in Alaska was a bit different. For one thing, when we got there in July it never got dark. I would wake up at 2:30 in the morning and lie there trying to figure out if it was afternoon or morning. The squadron got a note from ADC headquarters asking why we were behind on our night flying—so the commander sent back a note saying not to worry about it, we’d be caught up in a few months!! And we were—in the winter the sun would just peek above the horizon and then disappear. We would take off on the morning mission at about 9:00 and on the afternoon mission about 2:00 and we would log an hour of night time on each mission. In the winter we would have ice fog—you could see down through it just fine, but on approach everything just disappeared. I had at least two landings where I never saw the runway at all—just felt the wheels touch. The runway at Ladd had the Chena River at each end and the base road also ran across the end of the runway next to the river. One night one of the pilots landed in fog and missed the taxiway and turned off on the highway—he taxied until he came to a stoplight before realizing that he’d made a small mistake.

Virginia Oveson

We arrived in Alaska near the middle of July in 1959. Alix was 6 months pregnant with



Left: Baby Virginia Oveson, born October 18, 1959, being held by her grandmother and grandfather Oveson. Top right: Proud Dad with his firstborn daughter. Virginia almost died when she was five months old from a respiratory infection (five other babies died at that time), but she was strong and in a few days back to her normal self. Above: Playing in Texas in 1961.

our first baby, but she managed the move just as she always has—she just does what needed to be done. We had moved out of the apartment and into a small house in town when she announced that the baby was coming. I was on alert and

one of the members of my flight substituted for me and I was at the hospital when Virginia arrived. I have often thought that that event, on the 18th of October, was the beginning of one of the greatest blessings of our lives. Virginia was a cute and lively little girl and we

could hardly get enough of watching her. Around the middle of November I was assigned

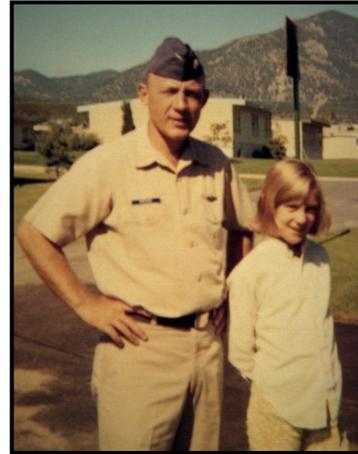
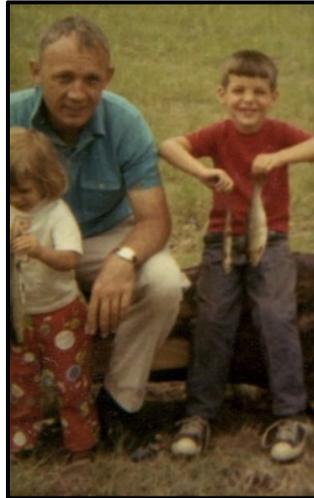


Top left: Dick with Alice in Paris about 1974. Top right: Dick in spring 1969, just before leaving for Vietnam. Above: Dick and Alix in Europe in 1960. Right: Dick and Virginia in front of their house in Belmont, Massachusetts, in 1964.

to go to Hamilton AFB near San Francisco and begin ground school for the F-101, which our squadron was scheduled to receive. I didn't want to leave Alix and

Virginia, but we decided that Alix would go home to Salt Lake while I was in California and take Virginia home so she could meet her grandmother Wells. I went to Hamilton and checked out in the simulator so I could put the rest of the squadron through that training (I was the squadron training officer) and the ground school. When I finished I got one ride in the F-101 in which we flew Mach 2—my only supersonic flight during my air force career! When we got back to Alaska after Christmas, I learned that we were not going to receive the F-101 and that the squadron was being deactivated. I had just accepted a regular commission in the Air Force and had been promised that the Air Force would send me to graduate school at San Francisco State for a masters in political science when our three

years in Alaska was over. I had assumed a two year commitment when I accepted the



regular commission so I couldn't leave the Air Force and my educational assignment was cancelled. We were assigned to go to Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas, and teach in the ballistic missile program (along with about half the squadron). I was stunned and disappointed, but we

decided to just make the best of it.



Top row: Dick and Alix with Virginia and Merrill Oveson (born November 3, 1965), in 1970; Dick with Merrill and Alice Oveson (born May 23, 1968) in 1970; Dick with Virginia at the Air Force Academy in 1970. Left: Dick with his family in spring 1969, before leaving for Vietnam. Above, left to right: Merrill, Dick, Alice and Alix.

About the middle of March, Virginia came down with a respiratory infection that quickly grew worse. We took her to the hospital on base and found the intensive care wing filled with children suffering the same infection. It was also all over town. We stayed with her as her illness progressed for about two days and we finally went home to get some rest. About 3 in the morning the hospital called and told us that we had better come, because it looked like Virginia might not make it. We had already given her a blessing, and when we arrived she was under an oxygen tent with tubes running

into her nose and down into her chest to help her breathe. The doctor was standing with us as we looked on helplessly. As we watched, Virginia reached up and grabbed the tubes and



Above: Dick with his parents, siblings, spouses, and children at a family reunion in 1966. Back row, left to right: Alix, Dick, Joan, Larry Heath (Joan's husband), Mary Oveson, Steve, and Dixie Oveson. Middle on couch: Virginia "Ginnie," Merrill holding grandson, Merrill, Vickie Heath, Mal Oveson, David Heath, and Lynne Heath. Bottom row: Randy Oveson, Brent Oveson, Kim Heath, and Lori Heath.

pulled them out of her nose! I gasped and wanted to do something, but the doctor (who was young and hadn't been to bed since the epidemic started) said "It's alright. If she's strong enough to do that she's going to make it." And she did. Two days later we brought her home and in a few days she was the same bouncy little girl she had been earlier. She was right on the edge of that illness. Many of the children who were younger died while those who were a bit older recovered quickly. Five babies died from that illness in Fairbanks. We felt, and still feel, that our Heavenly Father blessed us in allowing Virginia to remain with us.

We made some close and lasting friends while in Alaska. I suppose the closest are Delmar and Wanda Bastian. Wanda grew up in Moultrie as a wonderful member of the Church, met Delmar when he was going through pilot training there, and eventually married him. She was on a mission in Florida when I was in Moultrie, so I didn't really know her until we were stationed together in Alaska. When the squadron deactivated, we went to Texas together, but Delmar got frustrated without a primary flying assignment and after a year or so he got out of the Air Force and went to work for United Airlines. He stayed in the

Reserve and finally retired as a full Colonel and as a United Airlines captain. He and Wanda now live in Salt Lake and we see them from time to time.

In July of 1960 we left Alaska and flew home. I had taken the car down to Anchorage to be shipped to the States and so we flew to McCord near Seattle, picked up our car and drove to Pendleton to see my folks. I had a long visit with Dad and told him of my frustrations. I mentioned that I felt we had done the right thing, we had prayed about staying in the Air Force before accepting the regular commission and suddenly everything seemed to be going wrong. I didn't have a flying assignment, my educational opportunity had vanished and I faced three years teaching in an Air Force school about a subject I knew nothing about. Dad listened patiently and then just told me to do the very best I could at whatever my assignment was and that things would work out. That turned out to be true beyond either of our expectations I suppose.

Texas

After visiting with Alix's mom we drove on down to Wichita Falls. Before we got to Wichita Falls, we went through Amarillo and I had a sinking feeling—that part of Texas didn't look very good and I was worried about what Alix was thinking. Fortunately, Wichita Falls was much greener and apparently more prosperous than Amarillo and so we felt a ray of hope. I checked into the base and after a night or two in a motel we were assigned base housing. The housing at Sheppard was pretty basic—very small, two family buildings (duplexes). The houses were located in a square block with an open space in the middle of the block. That was okay, but was not landscaped. We had a little lawn in front and a carport on the side. Three bedrooms, a living-dining room and a kitchen. Some of the houses (fortunately not ours) had a termite problem. We had some friends who were sitting in their living room and a picture fell off the wall—the termites



Top: A Sheppard Air Force Base postcard from around 1953. Today it is “the largest training base and most diversified Air Education and Training Command” in the U.S. Air Force. After a relatively short stay in Alaska, Dick was assigned to Sheppard, which is located five miles north of the central business district of Wichita Falls, Texas. **Above:** Ariel view of Wichita Falls, Texas, about 2015. The city had a population of 100,000 when Dick moved here with Alix and Virginia in 1960. Dick taught missile guidance and control systems, and was an instructor pilot for the T-33, which was “a fun airplane to fly.” (See a photograph of the T-33 on page 51.)

had hollowed out the frame. They soon found that the same thing had happened to their piano and some of their furniture.



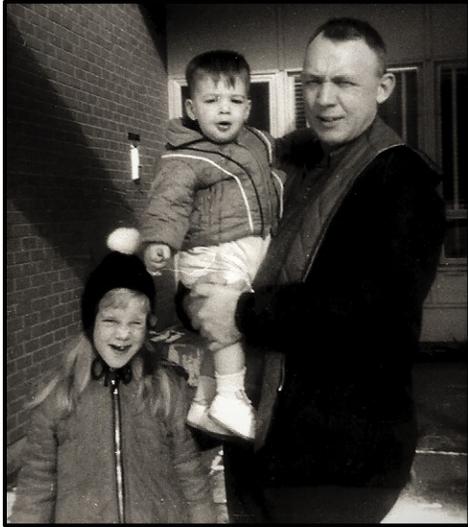
Sheppard was located on the outskirts of Wichita Falls, a city of a little over 100,000. There was a nice branch of the Church there and the downtown was quite nice. There was a lot of oil in the area and the city was and is quite prosperous. Sheppard was home to the largest technical training school in the Air Force, and had been chosen to house all of the missile training fa-



Top: Dick's family with Alix's mother in spring 1969. Above left: Dick with Joan, Mary, and Steve in front of Joan's house in Santa Maria, California, in 1970. Above right: Dick with his firstborn daughter in 1959.

cilities in the Air Force. The Soviets had just launched Sputnik and we were frantically trying to catch up in the missile race. We were responsible for training for all the crews who would man the Atlas and Titan ballistic missile wings in the Air Force and consequently the school ran 18 hours a day, six days a week. Almost all of our squadron was

there and we all were assigned a subject and started learning the missile systems. I was



Top left: Dick holding his son Merrill with Virginia in 1966. Top right: The entire family with Alix's mother, Virginia Wells, holding Alice, in 1970. Right: Dick's family before leaving for Paris in fall 1973. Above: Dick at Christmas-time when he was a young man.

assigned to teach guidance and control systems and electronic checkout equipment. An entire wing

would arrive, from the commanding officer to the newest technician and we would put them through the course (and I can't remember exactly how long it was but 12 weeks seems about right) and send them off to their missile wings across the northern tier of states in the U.S.

I, of course, knew nothing about guidance and control systems but we had a core of young electrical engineers with ROTC commitments who took us in hand and explained things

to us. I thought the whole system was so complicated that I could hardly imagine how



Top left: Dick in Vietnam in 1969. He was 39 years old. Above: Dick is being promoted to the rank of Colonel by General John Donaldson (left) and General George Quay in January 1974. Left: Dick and Alix at a costume party in 1958.

has carried over to my university teaching.)

I, like the rest of the squadron in Alaska, was disappointed to be assigned to something other than flying!! It turned out, though, that we still did a lot of it—most of those students coming through the missile school (the officers) were pilots who had to get their flying time, and we all became instructor pilots in the T-33. We checked out the new students, gave proficiency and instrument checks and ferried high ranking officers around the country. I flew about as much as if I were on primary flying duty, although it was all in the

T-bird. (That's okay, it was a fun airplane to fly.) We were active in the branch in Wichita



Above: Caveman Dick with Alix slung over his shoulder at an Air Force Academy Halloween party in 1966.

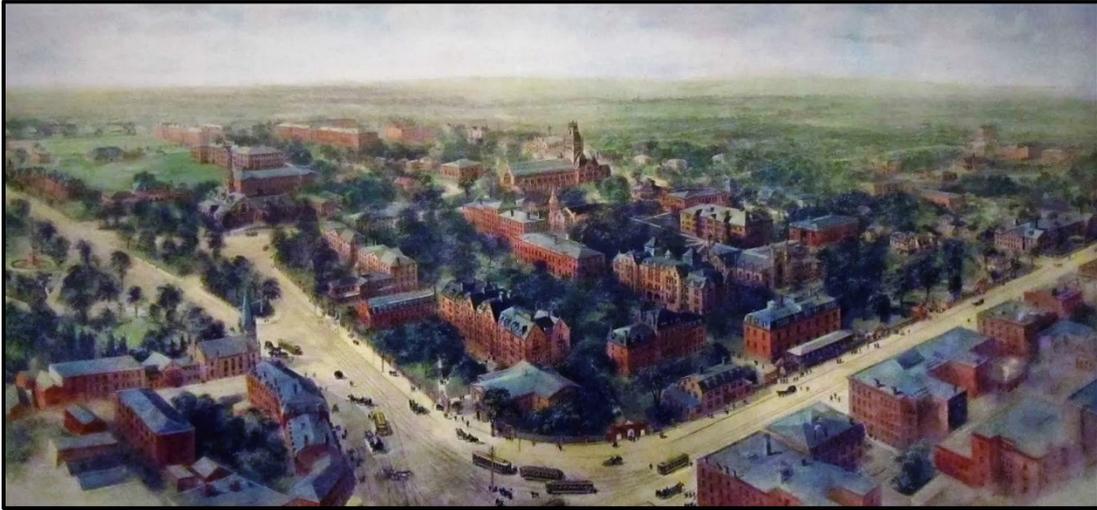
Falls and met nice people there. Virginia turned one year old shortly after we arrived and it was fun to watch her grow. I was sent to Squadron Officer School at Maxwell AFB in Alabama while we were stationed in Texas, and Alix and I and Virginia drove down to Alabama and lived in a little rental house for three months. The first evening there, I took Virginia down to the park to try the swings etc. and found the park locked up tight! It was the middle of the civil rights movement and there was some racial tension in Montgomery—not on the base, however. The officers club at Maxwell was a social center for Montgomery and it was completely integrated. Not off the base however.

About two years after we arrived in Texas Alix's mother was visiting and was about to leave for home. About 5 in the morning, I just sat up in bed and told Alix that I thought we should drive her mother to Denver and put her on a train home there, and that then we should stop by the Air Force Academy and see if we could get assigned there. So we did. I talked to the department heads of economics and political science and we headed home. About a week later, I got a phone call from Colonel Wayne Yeoman's, head of the econ department, telling me that they would hire me and send me to graduate school. I asked

where, and he said “anywhere you want.” I could only think of one school on such short notice, so I said Harvard. He said that was a good school (!) and to apply. And therein lies one of the great blessings of our lives—but it’s kind of a long story.

Harvard

I continued to teach in the missile school and I applied through the Air Force Institute of



Above: 1906 watercolor landscape view of Harvard, facing northeast. Today the campus is much the same. When Dick didn’t get an answer about his application to Harvard, he flew to Boston. He was first told that his chances of getting in were zero so he walked into the chairman’s office and asked, “How do I get into this place?” He replied, “Well, that’s certainly straight-forward.” They talked for a while and he sent him to Ms. Gertrude Manley, who was the registrar. He talked to Gertrude. “She said yes she thought they would take me. I said maybe I should talk to the Dean just to be sure. She said (in words I have never forgotten)—‘If I say you’re in, you’re in!’ And I was.” He later got into the PhD program, “passing 765 better qualified candidates.”

Technology to Harvard. I didn’t apply anywhere else and I awaited orders to leave for Cambridge. Nothing happened—I was supposed to go in the spring of 1963 and when I had heard nothing by March. I had a feeling that all was not well, so I got a friend who was willing to go with me and we took a T-33 to Hanscom Field in Boston and I went in to talk to the econ department at Harvard. I arrived there in the early afternoon, went up to the department office and told the secretary what I wanted. She looked up my application and said, as nearly as I remember. “Your application was late, so it went into the group who will be considered when we hear from all those who were accepted.” I asked how many they would take and she said “35.” How many applicants I asked. “800” she replied. “What are my chances “I asked? She looked at my application for a few moments. “Zero,” she said. Oh my—could I talk to the department chair? The chairman, Dr. John Dunlop, (soon to be secretary of labor) was in his office with the door open and willing to see me. I walked in and Professor Dunlop asked “What can I do for you? “ “How do I get into this place?” I responded. Professor Dunlop looked at me and said “Well, that’s certainly straight-forward.” We talked, he asked about my background and said that he had recently had a graduate assistant from BYU and he thought a lot of him and respected the school. He then said that the Littauer School was starting a program in which mid-career civil servants

would come to Harvard, take classes in Political Science and/or economics and graduate



Top left: Alice, Virginia, Alix, Dick, and Merrill at his parent's 50th wedding anniversary in 1977. Top right: Dick's family with Alix's mother at Christmas 1976, and in 1975 in Paris (middle). Above: Alix, Alice, and Dick in 1985. Left: Dick and Alix in 1976.

in a year with a master's degree in Public Administration. He thought they were looking for some military in the program and that I should go down and talk to Ms. Gertrude Manley, who was the registrar. So I did (after thanking him). I went down and talked to Gertrude. She said yes she thought they would

take me. I said maybe I should talk to the Dean just to be sure. She said (in words I have



never forgotten)—“If I say you’re in, you’re in!” And I was. We came to school in May, I took classes during the summer and then I took the same courses in the fall that the PhD candidates were taking. To jump ahead, at the end of the first semester I went up to see Professor Robert Dorfman who was head of the graduate program in economics. I asked what I would have to do to get into the PhD program. He asked



Top left: Dick and Alix in their apartment in Paris in 1974. Top right: Dick with his daughter, Alice, on prom night in 1985. Above: Dick and Alix at Virginia’s (Ginnie) wedding on July 17, 1981. Left: Major General Larry Killpack (1925-1983), who became a good friend of Dick’s while at Harvard. He was “commander of the famed Triple Nickel squadron flying F-4’s in Vietnam” while Dick was there. He crashed in a private plane soon after he retired from the Air Force. His brother and sister-in-law died in the same crash with him.

what I had taken and how I had done and he then said “I don’t see why not!” He scribbled a note on a yellow pad, ripped the paper off the pad, handed it to me and said “Here, take this down to Gertrude.” It said “Please admit Mr. Oveson to the PhD program.” And I was admitted, thereby passing 765 better qualified candidates. It was a blessing which still leaves me in total awe. I don’t know why the Lord blessed me so completely—I certainly have not made any significant contributions to either the Church or to society as a result of my Harvard degree—it has been a personal blessing of great magnitude and I have no idea how to adequately express my gratitude. It was, and is, a gift.

We moved back to Cambridge in May of 1963. We went to church the first Sunday, introduced ourselves and met wonderful people. Among the first we met were Larry and Joan Killpack. Larry was an Air Force officer who was getting his MBA at Harvard Business School. He asked where we were living and we said that we were looking and he said that they were leaving for part of the summer and why didn't we live in their house—so we did for a few weeks. They became good friends and we followed Larry's career with interest. He was commander of the famed Triple Nickel squadron (555th fighter squadron) flying F-4's in Vietnam while I was there and he later became a general officer and was commander of the finance center in Denver. He retired as a major general and went to work for Church's Fried Chicken in Texas. He crashed and was killed in a private plane soon after. I believe Joan still lives in Salt Lake. In any case, we found a permanent place to live that summer. It was the top floor of a two family house right at the end of the bus line that ran from Belmont into Harvard Square. It was owned by a very nice lady who became a sort of surrogate grandmother to Virginia, who was three when we moved there. I could get on the bus every day and commute to school and leave Alix the car. It worked out well and we lived there until we left in December of 1965.

I started school as soon as we arrived. I was enrolled in summer school and I took a micro economics class from Hendrick Houthakker (my eventual thesis advisor) and a math class. I remember that I got 14 (out of 100) on the mid-term—I hardly understood a word of what professor Houthakker said in class. He was very tolerant and I finally passed the class with a B- (anything less was a failure, so I essentially got a D). I did about the same in the math class, but I was beginning to make progress. In any case, I made it through the program thanks to a tolerant faculty, a helpful wife, and a little study. I passed my exams in November of 1965 and we were set to leave for the academy when I got orders to go to Vietnam and fly F-105's. I called my boss, Colonel Yeoman, who had also been at Harvard for a DBA. He told me that I could go to war later, that he needed me now, so that's what happened. It was about this time that Don Wood was killed in Vietnam flying F-105's.

The Church played a big role in our lives in Cambridge. I had only been there a few months when I was called to the Boston stake high council. Wilbur Cox was our stake president and he set me apart as a high priest. He later served as a mission president and as president of the Manti temple. He was a fine man. His first councilor was Elder Bob Hales, whom I had known and who had flown F-100's in the Air Force. Merrill Bateman was also on the high council as were several other brothers who became general authorities. Since the brethren had counseled President Cox that many of us were in graduate school and had a demanding schedule, we should have fewer meetings. So we did—we had one high council meeting a month, but it often lasted a good part of the night. It was a privilege to sit with those men though and I remember the experience with fondness.

We were close enough to Aunt Alice and Cube so that we could visit them and they invited us down for Christmas our first year there. It was Christmas of 1963 and Virginia had just turned four. Virginia has been one of greatest blessings in our lives and no one could ask for a more wonderful daughter or one who has brought more constant joy into our lives—but she was a little girl with a mind of her own and we had a few differences when she was very little. On several of those occasions I mentioned to her that Santa gave presents to good little girls and the others got a sack of coal. I didn't think much about this

and it didn't seem to have much impact on Virginia either. But little did I know, Alice and



Cube had a closed in back porch that looked over their back yard and it was in that area that they had placed their Christmas tree. We had gotten Virginia everything we could think of (short of a pony) that a little girl might like and we awaited Christmas morning with real anticipation. That morning I went in and got Virginia up with a message that we should go



This page: Merrill Oveson (born November 3, 1965) with his parents at different times in his life. Top: Merrill is about to leave on his mission to Portugal in March 1989. Above: With his parents and cousin, Rob Frye, in 1984. Middle: In Napa, California, at Christmas 1989. Right: In Hawaii with his parents and Virginia, in 1990.

dead and would not move onto the porch. Finally, I just picked her up and took her in and set her down in front of the tree. She stood there a few moments while she contemplated the scene before her and then she looked up at me and said "I was bad and he came anyway." It will soon be 53 years since that Christmas and that scene is still etched in my memory. In a flash I saw the anxiety of a four year old who knew that Santa would never come to

and see what Santa had brought her. She came with me into the living room and then stopped

someone like her, because she knew her father would never tell her something that was not so. I have apologized every Christmas since 1963 and I suppose there are a few more that are still due. That event has become, in a way, symbolic of Christmas in our family. We are all bad—and He comes again and again and will never disappoint us until He brings us all together as a family once again. It remains our most memorable Christmas.

Merrill Oveson

Alix and I had been trying without success for



Top: Merrill with his mom and dad in 1989. Above: Ariel view of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Dick taught economics at the university from 1966 until 1969, and 1970 until 1973.

some time to add to our family and finally in the spring of 1965 we found that we were going to be blest with another child. It came at a time when I was preparing for my oral examination (a period of some stress) and Alix was suffering from morning sickness. As usual, she dismissed her discomfort with the disdain she thought it deserved and reserved her energy to help me—and I was generally living in the library and at school. Generally

due to her encouragement, I finally passed my orals, but not before she brought a wonderful son into our family. Merrill was born on the third of November 1965. Alix only stayed in the hospital a couple of days and then we were home with a sweet daughter and a new baby! Alix's aunt Alice came up from Washington to help her, and on the day she was to come, I went into Boston to pick her up at the bus station. It was just starting to get dark as I left and as I got into Boston it became apparent that there were no lights on anywhere in Boston. It was the evening of the great northeast blackout, when all the electricity in the northeast was out. What an eerie feeling!! Anyway, Aunt Alice arrived safely and I took her home with me.

Air Force Academy

We left Cambridge in late November of 1965 and after a somewhat eventful trip (car trouble) we arrived at the Academy in December of 1965. I remember driving up Academy Boulevard toward the academic area and feeling excited to be part of that institution. We checked in, got assigned housing, left a few things and headed to Salt Lake for Christmas. I started teaching right after New Year's Day as the winter semester began. The cadets were fine young men (no women then) and good students and I learned a lot. In addition to teaching, I continued work on my dissertation. The Academy had a great computer and I could use it about when I wanted. I had a direct link to the RAND Corporation and I got quite a lot done. That first summer we went as a family to the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California, where I worked—again on my dissertation. Alix and I rented a small house and we went to the ward in Pacific Palisades. Merrill and Marilyn Bateman were also at the Academy and were spending the summer at RAND and Merrill lived with us for a couple of weeks until Marilyn arrived with their kids. The first Sunday we were there I was in the hospital with a kidney stone, so Merrill took Alix and Virginia and Merrill to church. The first Sunday after Marilyn arrived we went together and I walked into church with Michael while we basically arrived together. I think people were confused all summer about who was married to whom. We had a good time. I enjoyed the summer at RAND—right down the hall was a man named Jim Slessinger, a Harvard PhD in economics and a defense policy specialist. I used to wander down to his office and visit with him. He later became Secretary of Defense under President Ford while I was the Air Attaché in Paris. We didn't have any contact during those years however and I apparently didn't make much of an impression on him. He was nice however. We were about the same age. Leonard Arrington, who wrote "Great Basin Kingdom" was in our ward that summer and I got to know him and thank him for giving me lots of thoughts that got me through economic history at Harvard.

I began teaching at the Academy with the beginning of winter semester. I taught economics and had a research class that explored ways to quantitatively measure the results of public policy decisions. I had really good students and the next three years were rewarding. I became a member of the high council in the El Paso stake and that was an interesting calling. The stake covered much of southern Colorado east of the Front Range and so once a month we (Alix and I) traveled to a different ward for a high council speaking assignment. We also took Virginia and Merrill with us.

I got to fly quite a lot also. We gave each cadet two local flights in the T-33 and then we had one day-night cross country. I would often fly down to Williams AFB in Arizona and



Above: Pikes Peak, Colorado, which is 14,115 feet high and located 12 miles west of downtown Colorado Springs, Colorado. Dick wrote: “During the summers we gave each incoming cadet a twenty minute ride in the T-33—up around Pikes Peak, a quick strafing run on the road up to the peak and back to land.”

see my parents or I would fly to Hill AFB north of Salt Lake which gave me a chance to fly over Emery County and up over the mountains east of Salt Lake. We would fly out in the afternoon and back after dark. During the summers we gave each incoming cadet a twenty minute ride in the T-33—up around Pikes Peak, a quick strafing run on the road up to the peak and back to land.

The first three years at the Academy passed quickly, but not uneventfully. We made good friends, I learned a lot and we had another baby!!

There were two housing areas at the Academy, located in two valleys on the Academy property. I should note that those who planned the Air Force Academy were determined not to make the mistakes made at West Point and Annapolis, where those academies ran out of space years ago. The Air Force Academy was built on 17,000 acres just north of Colorado Springs, Colorado, and near the base of Colorado’s Front Range. As one of the Superintendents put it, “I’m not only running a service academy, I’m running a national park!” (That’s more or less a quote). We lived in Douglas valley—a bit closer to the academic building and to the school for the kids. The homes at the Academy had been designed by a company in Florida—who had obviously never been in Colorado. The houses had flat roofs with gravel on the roofs. When the wind blew (as it did frequently) the gravel flew off and pitted windshields, paint jobs etc. The carport (yes, carports) were open so a winter storm left the cars covered in snow. The houses were 1100 square feet, which meant three small bedrooms, a living-dining room combination, two small bathrooms and a small kitchen. They did have an unfinished basement which could be finished as many people did. Ours, on our first tour, was not. We were thrilled to get a house, though, and get to live on base, since it was a long way from any other housing to the Academy. The school for Virginia, who was in first grade, was good, and she still has fond memories of the Douglas Valley School.

Alice Oveson

In August of 1967 Alix informed me that we were going to have another baby. Virginia was almost eight and Merrill was almost two. We were thrilled and after the required amount of time, Alix was ready to get acquainted with the new baby outside of the womb! The baby was due on the 11th of May, so the doctor informed us, but that date came and went and no baby, but Alix knew where she was! On the 23rd of May, Alix woke me up in the morning and informed me that she was having contractions, so we dressed and went up to the hospital—her doctor was Bud Brekken (a good friend and neighbor; he became chief of obstetrics for the Air Force later in his career, but at that time he was at the Academy hospital and lived close to us). When we arrived at the hospital Alix was examined by the nurse and told to go home—she was not having a baby that day and was somewhat condescending. Alix was embarrassed and really disappointed and discouraged. When we got home, I gave her a blessing and as I was finishing, she started having strong contractions! I told her to get in the car—we were going back to the hospital. Alix told me she was not going back there and be embarrassed by that nurse again and I said that I was not going to deliver our baby at home, so she reluctantly agreed. We got to the hospital and this time the nurse said that there was no time to prep Alix and they rushed her into delivery. Bud gave her a spinal and it was her easiest delivery of the three. In a short time Alice was born—a beautiful little girl (who has grown up to be a beautiful big girl with five children of her own). She has been a blessing to us every day of her life!!

We had been at the Academy for three years and I began to feel that I had a duty to take my turn in Vietnam. I consequently called personnel and asked about potential assignments—and I was initially slated to fly F-100's. A friend of mine had just returned from a tour flying B-57s and he strongly suggested that option. That appealed to me since the training was at Hill Field in Utah and I could spend the training time with my family, helping them get situated. We found an apartment close to mother [Wells] on Sunnyside Avenue and the moving truck arrived on Christmas Eve, 1968, with the driver having obviously stopped to celebrate Christmas along the way. We unloaded the last box well after dark on Christmas Eve and I suggested that maybe this year we would skip having a tree. I looked at Virginia and her little lips were quivering and I realized that we had to have a tree, so I said “Come on, Virginia, we'll go find a tree.” So we did. We found a lot that was still open with an attendant who was warming himself by a fire in a barrel. Nobody else was in the tree lot. There was a big, beautiful flocked tree and I said to him, “How much for that one?” He looked hopefully at me and said “Five dollars?” “I'll take it” The attendant helped us load the tree on the car, closed the lot and we all went home to Christmas. We set the tree up, found the ornaments and presents and sure enough, Santa showed up that year. We unpacked later.

My transition training was supposed to take about three and a half months at Hill, but after about six weeks the Air Force decided to move the training to McDill AFB, near Tampa, Florida. So we closed our place in Salt Lake, flew the family to Florida and rented a small apartment in Tampa and I continued my training. Our apartment was in a complex located on a sandy strip of land. Merrill, who was three, had a big Tonka truck and he excavated quite a hole in the yard during our stay there. We lived in the complex with a big group of Basque hi-li players, who watched over Merrill with care. We put Gennie in school and

she did fine and all in all we had a nice time in Florida. When we finished, we purchased an Oldsmobile station wagon and drove back to Salt Lake where I quickly built a fence around the back yard to contain Alice and Merrill and then I left for Vietnam.

Vietnam

I stopped on the way in the Philippines to attend jungle survival school. The school was not far from Clark AFB and we spent most of our time in the jungle. We had an orientation hike, led by our Negrito guide (who had lived



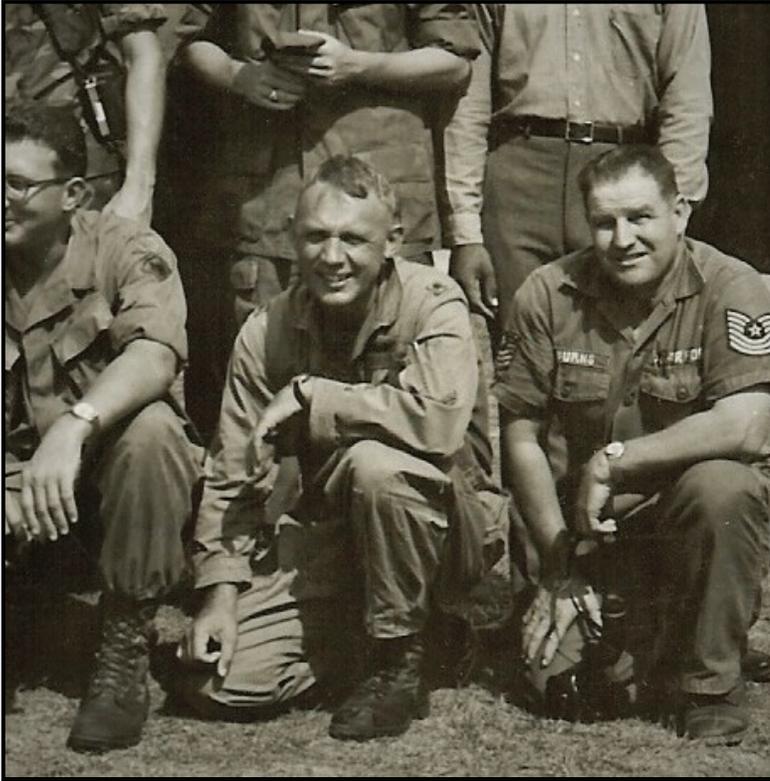
This page: Dick in Vietnam, where he flew the B-57, America's first jet-powered bomber (two photographs of the B-57, left). He flew 74 combat missions and would have flown more, but his squadron was deactivated and the B-57 was phased out. He spend the last months of his tour as a tactical analysis for the 7th Air Force in Saigon. His primary assignment was to fly night missions to stop enemy trucks traveling down the Ho Chi Minh trail. It was dangerous and he would usually be shot at by gunners on the ground.



there his whole life). He was showing us edible plants, etc. and as we moved along he was bitten on the shoulder by a bamboo viper! That got our attention. He was immediately air lifted out to the hospital and was okay, but I was pretty wary after that. The survival area was near Mt. Pinatubo, which later erupted and basically destroyed Clark AFB with ash. It was also an area in which the last Japanese forces moved to hold

out at the end of the war. No attempt was made to capture them and most of them died there. There were lots of evidences of their presence in the jungle.

After a week of survival training, I reported to the squadron in Phan Rang and started flying



missions. I flew a few daylight missions in South Vietnam and then began what was our squadron's principal role—night interdiction on the Ho Chi Minh trail. I started flying night missions in late May of 1969. The wet season was just beginning, so I had a lot of weather missions. We would take off as a single ship, fly up into Laos, hook up with our forward air controllers and wait for instructions. Our FACs were generally C-130's, cargo planes with lots of detection equipment aboard. The observers on the C-130s would use

This page: Dick was in Vietnam from 1969 to April 1970. Dick served as branch president of about 40 members (pictured next to him in both of these photographs is one of his counselors). He was also in the district presidency. He got to meet a lot of members of the church because he would visit different units on Sunday.

their low light level television or their infrared scopes to identify the trucks as they made their way down the trail. The trucks would run with lights out over a short



section of road which the drivers had memorized. They ran almost exclusively at night and holed up in the daytime to avoid detection. When the FAC had identified a target he would drop a "log" (a burning marker which was visible from the air) and then describe the location of the target with relation to the log. The usual description was in terms of "nape widths." When a napalm was dropped it made a fire swath in the jungle and they were always about the same width. Anyway, we would locate the area and roll in on the target. We would roll in from about 9000 feet and drop at about 4000—the navigator would call

out the altitudes and when we neared the drop height he would say “ready, ready, pickle, PULL” and we would bottom out at about 2000 feet. We would dive at about 45 degrees and come down in a hurry. When we rolled in we would pull the power back and the gunners on the ground could tell the difference in the sound—so when we pulled the power back they would start shooting—a cover fire over the target. They knew

Right: Dick and Alix at Lake Powell. Bottom: Two photographs of Dick when he was in his early 50s; 1982.



approximately where we would be and they would try and fill the area with flack. When the guns would shoot, the navigator could see where the fire was coming from and then we would roll in and drop a 500 lb. bomb on the gun position (as close



as we could tell). We didn't very often actually hit a gun position, but we could make their ears ring and so it was harder for them to tell when we were rolling in on a target!

Soon after I arrived in Phan Rang I was called as the branch president of our small branch. There were about 40 members as I recall and we met each Sunday for sacrament meeting,

Sunday school and priesthood. We met in the base chapel, thanks to the base chaplains—



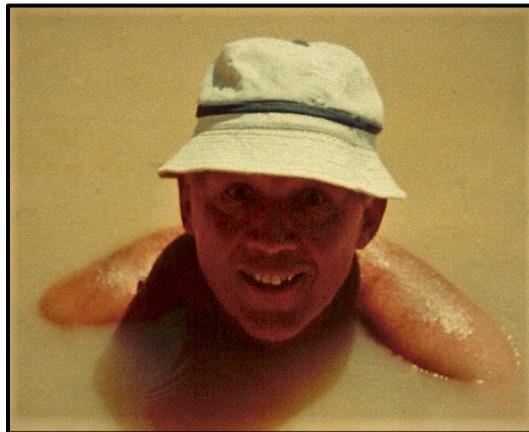
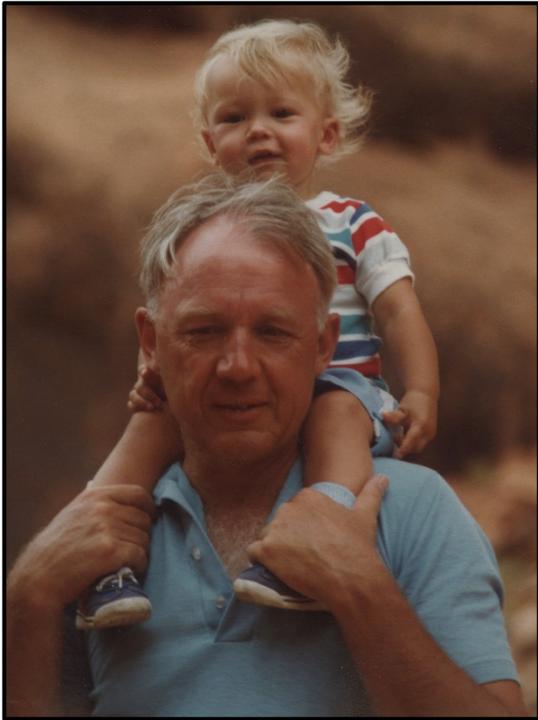
This page: Virginia’s wedding day on July 17, 1981. Back row: Mal Oveson (grandmother), Alice Oveson, Kevin Frye, Merrill Oveson, and Virginia Wells (grandmother). Front row: Dick (father), Virginia “Ginnie,” and Alix Oveson (mother).

we added significantly to their weekly attendance numbers, so we had a decent working relationship with them. I had an interesting experience shortly after being called—I had a feeling that everything was not quite right within the branch, and finally, after some interviews, a young airman told me that it had been revealed to him that he was the one “mighty and strong” who was to right the church in the last days, and that he had been having special meetings with about half the branch during the week. There were a number of



returned missionaries in his group (he hadn’t served a mission) who somewhat surprisingly were involved. I prayed about what to do—and then did what seemed right. I told the young man that I had no idea whether or not he was the “one mighty and strong” or not, but that if he was, then the Lord would tell the prophet who would then tell the area president who

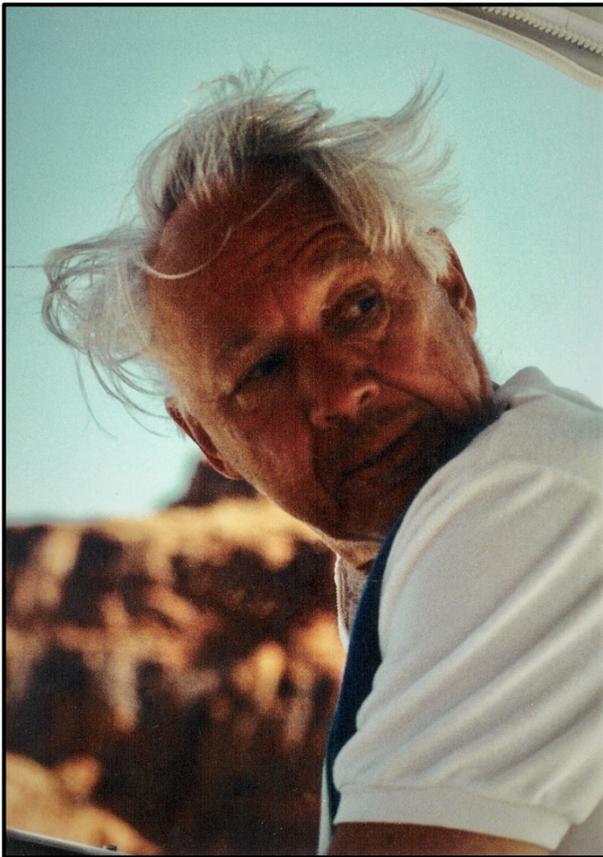
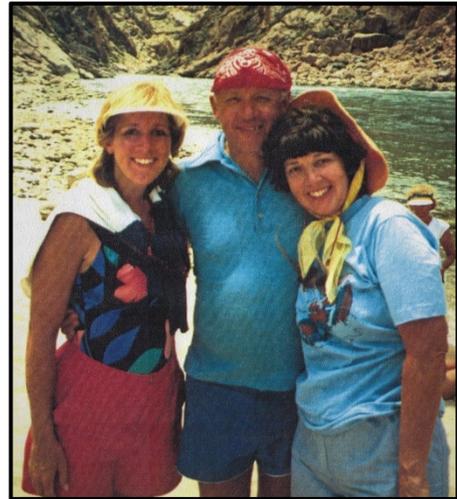
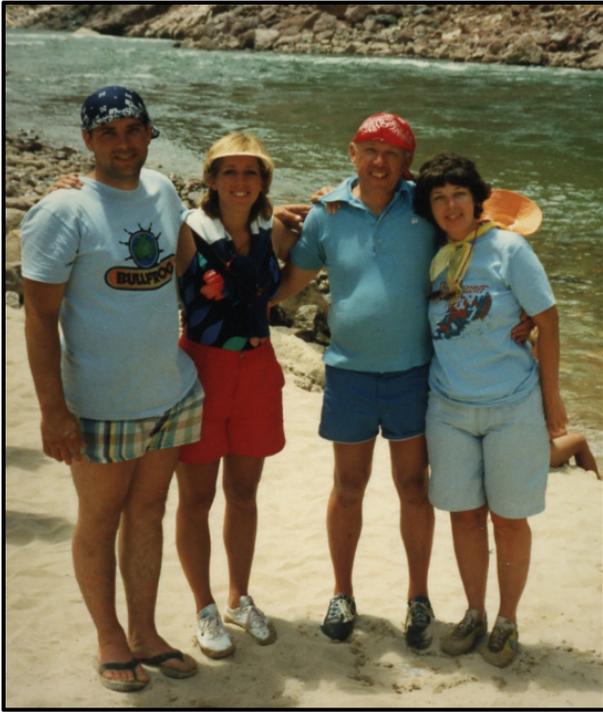
would inform the mission president who would tell the district president who would call



Top left: Kevin Frye, Virginia, Dick, Merrill, and Alix in Hawaii in 1990. Top right: Merrill, Alix and Dick at Christmas in France in 1993. Middle: Dick with grandson, Rob Frye, on his shoulders in 1983. Above: Dick started going to Lake Powell in 1971 and here he is in the water in 1982. Left: Dick with his sister Joan in 1982.

me and I would tell him and then he could begin to tell others. We discussed the 43rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants (among others) and had a nice talk. He was receptive and in a few days all was resolved. He remained active and extra meetings stopped. A few months later I was called as a counselor

in the district presidency. The district president was a chaplain with the Idaho National

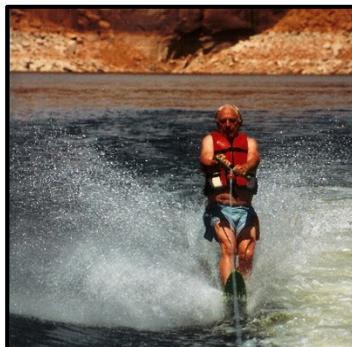


Top left and above: Dick and Alix with Virginia and her husband, Kevin Frye, in the Grand Canyon in 1986. They were celebrating the 50th birthday of Steve Oveson, Dick's brother. Left: Another photograph of Dick at Lake Powell, where he has spent many vacation days with his family over the years. Top right: Dick on a couch at home in 1985.

Guard, stationed at Dalat in the central highlands. I visited outlying units on Sundays when I wasn't flying and met lots of members of the Church that way. About half way through my tour in Vietnam we received word that the squadron was to be deactivated. Thus

the B-57, (which was the first jet airplane to be used by the U.S. in Vietnam) was to be

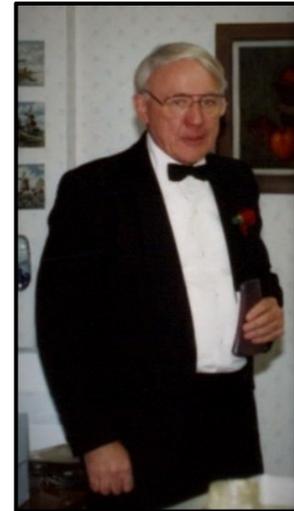
phased out. We had just run out of airplanes. The B-57 was very rugged and lots came home



with a lot of battle damage. We had one airplane that had half of the tail shot off and another that had the hydraulics shot away and belly landed without landing gear. I never did get hit, although there were some near misses. Anyway, I brought an airplane home in

This page: Scenes at Lake Powell, Utah. Top, left to right: Dick, Alice, Ginnie, Merrill, and Alix in 1982. Middle and left: Dick skiing and wearing a hat in 1988. Far left: Dick with his brother, and untangling a rope (above).

late September and got to be in Salt Lake for Virginia's 10th birthday. I went back a week



Left: Dick learned to snow ski from Alix, who was a champion skier and was on the University of Utah ski team; 2005. Lower left, left to right: Alix, Dick, ski instructor, Steve, and Dixie in Deer Valley, Utah, in 1980s. Above: Dick at Alice's wedding on December 28, 1991.

later. I flew 74 combat missions which was about half what I would have flown if the squadron had remained in place.



I was concerned about my next assignment, and after being told I was to go to Korea as an instructor pilot in the T-33, I called 7th Air Force and volunteered as an analyst in the office of tactical analysis for 7th Air Force. They were happy to have me and so I finished my tour in Saigon

analyzing what we were doing in the air war. I went home in April of 1970 and we moved back to the Air Force Academy just in time for the summer vacation.

Air Force Academy and Lake Powell

Alix spent that year near her mother in Salt Lake and certainly handled everything well.



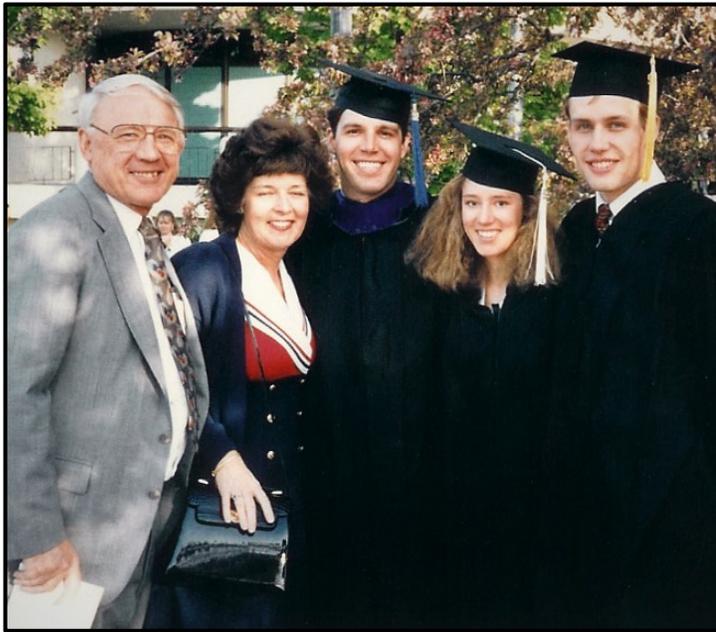
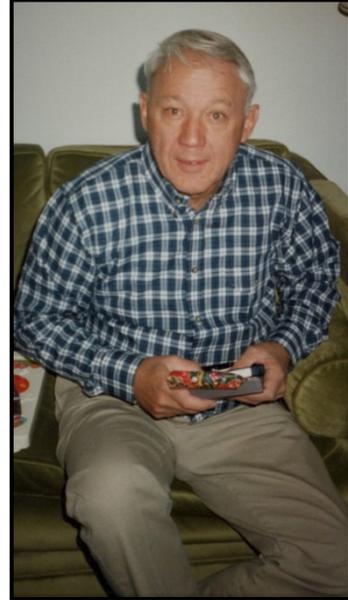
Above: Dick and Alix on the slopes. They loved to ski and went often; 1980s. Left: Dick carrying his skis after making a run in the 1970s.

The children were well and seemed happy to have me home—with the exception of Alice. She was just a year old

when I left and she was just two when I got back and it was two weeks before she would let me pick her up. We got better acquainted and she finally let me be her dad.

That summer we had our first Lake Powell experience. Alix had been to the lake with her aunt Mary and Uncle Doc, and loved it so we decided to rent a small houseboat and try it. I tried to see everything on the lake and spent lots of time driving that houseboat. We had Virginia and Merrill along—Virginia was 10 and Merrill was four and they were troopers. We had some adventures and I learned a lot about camping at Lake Powell. The next year

we went with friends from the Academy (the Lunds), rented ski boats and camped on the



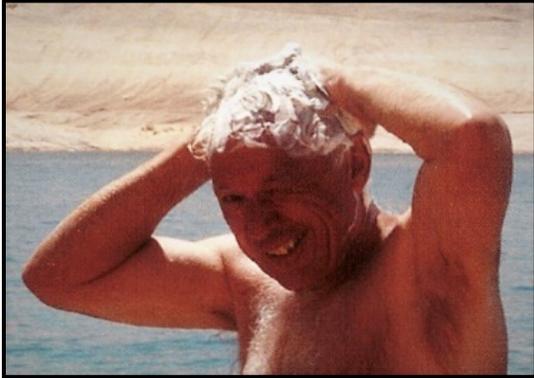
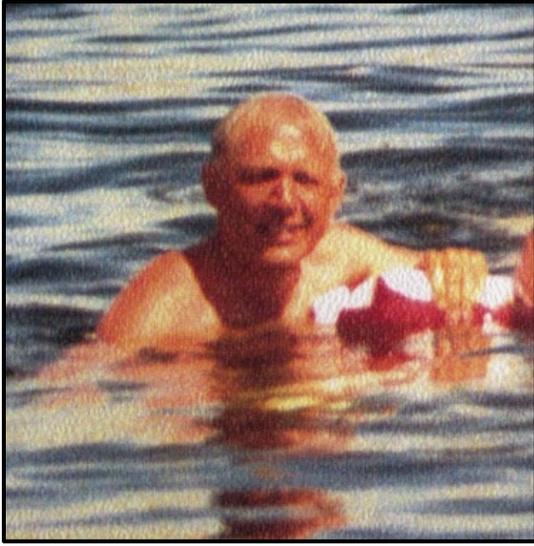
Top left: Wedding Day for Alice Oveson on December 28, 1991. Left to right: Dick, Phil Huber, Alice and Alix. Above: Graduation day in 1992 for Merrill, Alice, and her husband, Phil Huber. Top right: Dick holding a gift. Middle: Virginia holding her last child, Sarah, in 1998. Right: Dick and Alix at the Mission Home in Bordeaux, France, in 2003.

shore. We had torrential downpours, along with beautiful weather and we had a good time. We didn't go back for five more years, but we had caught the bug.

War College in Washington D.C.

We spent two more years at the Academy—I taught early morning seminary and Virginia

went back to grade school. We had a ward on the Academy then (and we began building a



Top right: Wedding Day for Merrill and Andrea Ault Oveson on December 17, 1996. Left to right: Dick, Alix, Merrill, and Andrea. Left: Dick at Lake Powell, Utah. Above: Dick wearing a white sweater.

chapel just outside the south gate for the Academy Ward). Merrill turned five in November of 1970 and then started pre-school in the fall of 1971—we weren't anxious to get

him into school early—we felt it might be to his advantage to be one of the older kids in



Top left: Dick and Alix at a zip line in Alaska in 2007. Above: Dick on a boat (top) and on a jet ski in Lake Powell with his granddaughter, Christine Frye, in 1991. Middle: Dick with Ginnie and Alix in France in 1992. Left: Dick with Ginnie at Rob's farewell in 2001.

his class—I think that turned out to be a good decision. Alice was just a baby although she remembers things about the Academy. In the spring of 1972, I was offered the chance to attend the National War College in Washington D.C. as a faculty member and as a member of the class of 1973. It was a rare opportunity, since the National War College was probably the premier senior service school for all the services. The class was comprised of 35 Air

Richard Merrill Oveson

Force, 35 Army, 35 Navy and Marines, and 35 State department and other government



Top right: Dick and Alix with Merrill, his wife, Andrea, and Rob Frye in 2009. Above; Dick and Alix with Merrill's family on Alix's 80th birthday celebration in 2014. Left to right: Dick, Riley, Merrill, Lindsey, Andrea, Richard, and Alix. Top left: Dick and Alix in France in 2003. Left: Dick and Alix at Rob Frye's wedding in 2009.

officials (CIA etc.) All were Lt. Colonels and Colonels or civilian equivalent. I was to teach the economics classes and attend the other classes as a member of the class. We didn't own a home—Mom and I had lived in base housing everywhere we had been stationed. I told Alix to go to Washington and find us a house, which she efficiently did. She stayed with her friend Miriam and her husband Dale Zabriskie and found a house in Alexandria, Virginia, that needed

a little redecorating but had a lovely yard and which, with a GI loan, we got for nothing



down. We paid \$52,000 for it and I felt that for fifty thousand you ought to get servant's quarters—but we didn't. We left our friends at the Academy and headed for Washington that summer, got moved in and began our life in Washington. We

Top left: Alix's 80th birthday in 2014. Back, left to right: Alix and Dick; middle: Christine, Sarah, Alix, Jack Wilcox, Kevin Ginnie, and John Frye; front: Noah and Preston Wilcox. Left: Ginnie, Trish, Eric, Riley, Aubrey, Rob, Dick, Taylor, and Kevin. (Everyone is a Frye, except Dick). Christmas 2020.



had a good time. The school was very interesting, the Alexandria Ward was great and we made new friends and got reacquainted with some old ones.

One of the special aspects of the NWC was the yearly trip, which came near the end of the school year. The students and staff of the college were divided into four groups—one to the Far East, one to the Near East, one to Europe, and one to South America. We had some say in where we went, and I wanted the Near East, which is where I went. Each group was

about 35 members strong—our group went to Morocco, Iran, Pakistan, Bahrain, Saudi



Top: Jane's sealing to her family in the Provo Temple in October 2005. Left to right: Clayton, Beth, Phil, Jane, Alice, Alix and Dick. Front: Eric, Claytie, and Jens Huber. Above, back, left to right: Steve, Dixie, Mom, Alix, and Dick, Front: Larry and Joan Heath, Mary and Ted Stoddard—in Manzanillo, Mexico, in October 1986. Middle: Steve, Dick, Mary and Jean in front of their school in Moro, Oregon, in June 1996. Right: Dick and Alix on their mission to France in 1992.

Arabia, Jordan, Israel, Turkey, and Greece,

with a short stopover in Spain on the way home. We met with the heads of state in each country and it was a fascinating look at different lands and cultures. Among other noteworthy

experiences, we met with the Shah of Iran in absolutely opulent surroundings, and with



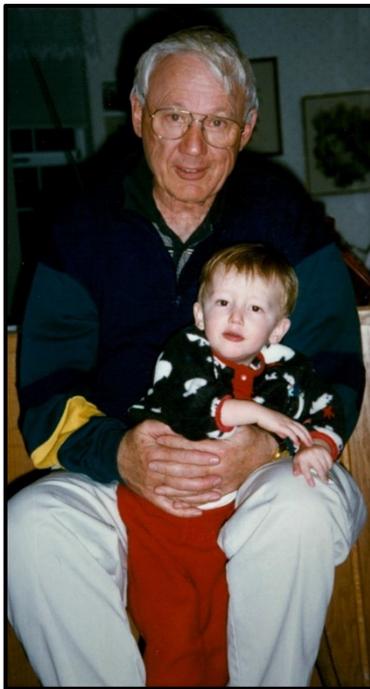
Top left; Merrill, Dick, Alix, Alice, and Virginia, celebrating Merrill's 40th birthday on November 3, 2005. Middle, left to right: Merrill, Andrea, Kevin, and Ginnie Frye, Alix, Dick, Alice and Phil Huber— at a zip line in Alaska in 2007. Lower left: The War College in Washington D.C. Dick attended the prestigious War College from 1972 to 1973. Top right: Dick and Virginia in 2004—Dick and Merrill in 2004. Above: Dick and Alix during the service years.



Golda Meir on folding chairs in a simple room. Both were memorable.

As the school year was drawing to a conclusion, Alix and I began to discuss where we were going next. I was unlikely to get a command in a flying unit—I had just been out of the loop for too long with five years at the Academy. We had been reading the “Winds of War” and the sequel “War and Remembrance” in which the protagonist was the naval attaché in

Berlin prior to the start of WWII. Alix said one evening, “That sounds interesting, why



Top: Dick and Alix with their children and their spouses in 2004. Left to right, back: Phil Huber, Dick, and Kevin Frye. Middle: Alice, Alix and Virginia “Ginnie.” Front: Merrill and Andrea Oveson. Above left: Dick holding his grandson, Jens Huber in 1996. Above right, left to right: Virginia, Rob, Dick, Alix, Dixie, Merrill, Andrea, Steve, and Mom (i.e. Mal Berg Oveson) at the Provo Temple.

don’t we do that?” “OK,” I said— “I’ll call the attaché office in the morning and see what the possibilities are.” So I did. The conversation went something like this—Me, “What are the chances of getting an attaché post?” Officer on the phone—“Have you been to a senior service school?” Me—“Just finishing at the NWC.” Officer—“Are you rated?” Me—“I’m a pilot; had a tour in Vietnam.” Officer—“Do you have any post-graduate education?” Me—“I have a doctorate in economics from Harvard.” Officer—“Do you speak any foreign languages?” Me—“Yes, I’m fluent in French.” Officer—“You can go anywhere

you want!!” (Not quite true, but almost). Later, I found out that General Keegan, Chief of



Top: Dick with his siblings, their spouses, and his mother in June 1996. Back row, left to right: Dixie Oveson, Ted Stoddard, Dan Talbot, and Alix. Front row: Steve Oveson, Mary Stoddard, Mother—Mal Oveson, Joan Talbot, and Dick. Above; Dick and Alix with grandchildren: Jens, Claytie, and Eric Huber in 2002. Left: Dick and Alix with their grandchildren: Rob and Alix Frye at Christmas 1986, and in France, 1994.

Air Force intelligence, had sent a memo to the attaché office stating that he wanted attaches who were pilots, graduates of senior service schools, had PhDs and were fluent in a foreign language. The head of the office told me he looked at his assistant and said, “There’s no one like

that in the whole Air Force.” He told me never to tell General Keegan that I called them! In any case, when school ended, Alix and I stayed in Washington and I went

to Attaché School for four months. We went home for Christmas, and then left for France, arriving on my birthday in 1974.

French Embassy

We really had no suitable housing when we first arrived in France—the outgoing Attaché



Above: Dick's children, their spouses, and grandchildren in 2004. Back left to right: Kevin, Ginnie, Alix, Dick, and Mark Frye. Middle: Merrill, Andrea, Lindsay, Sarah Frye, Eric Huber, Claytie Huber, Alice and Phil Huber, and Alix Frye. Front: Richard Oveson, Rob Frye, Riley Oveson, Christine Frye, and Jens Huber. Alice's family at the sealing of Maren to her family at the Provo Temple in 2007. Left to right: Dick, Alice, Eric, Alice, Maren, Clayton "Claytie," Jane, Phil, Jens, Beth, and Clayton Huber.

(George Guay) was still there and would be for another month or so and we didn't like his place anyway, so we moved into embassy housing—apartment

like—near the Bois de Bologne and lived there for about four months. With the aid of the



embassy, we found a wonderful apartment on Avenue de Wagram, about four blocks from the Arc de Triomphe. The apartment had been the home of a woman in her 80s who had lived there all her life—the apartment

This page: Dick and Alix with their family in December 1995. Top, back, left to right: Merrill Oveson, Phil Huber, Alice Huber, Dick Oveson, Alix Wells Oveson, Ginnie Oveson Frye and Kevin Frye. Front row: Christine Frye, Mark Frye, Jens Huber, Rob Frye, Alix Frye, and John Frye. Above left, left to right: Merrill, Phil, Jens, Alice Huber, Dick, Alix, Rob, Christine, Alix, Mark, Ginnie, Kevin, and John Frye. Above right: Dick Oveson and Alice Oveson Huber at his mother's burial in Castle Dale, Utah, in 2005.

owner had never been inside the apartment since she had lived there for over 70 years! The apartment was completely refinished (without changing any of its unique features, such as the stained glass window that took up one wall of the dining room or the molded grape vines which filled every corner of the thirty foot long living room). We did have to buy all

the fixtures, including lights, kitchen cabinets etc. which took a little time. We bought



This page: Dick and Alix entertained or went to parties or receptions two or three a week while serving as the Air Force Representative in the French Embassy from 1974 until 1977, when Dick retired from military service. Part of his duties was to report directly to Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, and to his National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft (who was LDS).

adequate accessories, but nothing too expensive. (When we left after three years the apartment was rented to the manager

of the biggest department store in Paris—his wife had told us that she didn't want any of the fixtures we had purchased. I was taking down a chandelier one day when the husband came by and he asked what in the world I was doing. I told him, and he said not to touch anything—he would buy everything! So we sold it intact after all!)

Our apartment was near one end of the and the embassy was at the bottom end, about a fifteen minute drive (depending on traffic), so most mornings my driver would stop by and pick me up to go to work. Sometimes I took our car (we bought a new Peugeot station wagon), but that left Alix with no transportation. Virginia took the bus to the American

School of Paris, which was out in St. Cloud—about thirty minutes away. Virginia was a



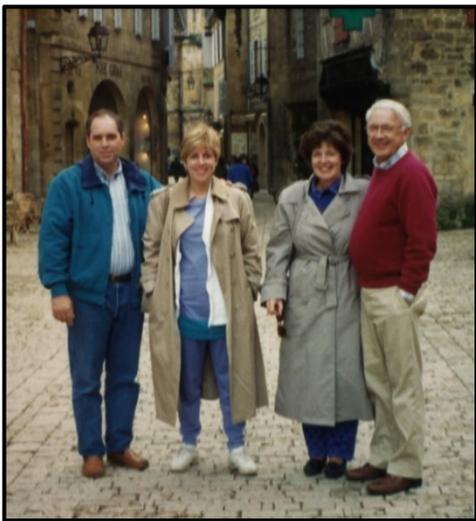
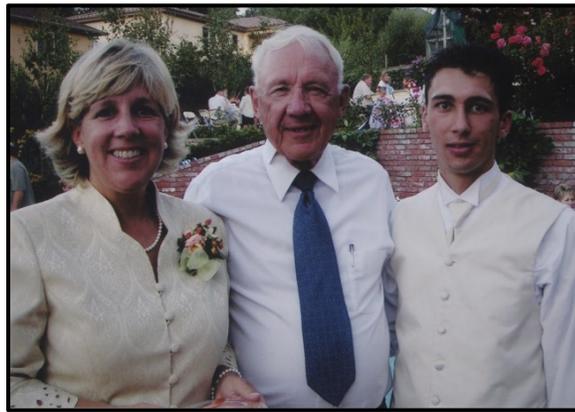
freshman in high school. Merrill was in second grade and Alice was in kindergarten and both went to a Catholic school which was close to our original apartment. When we moved to our new apartment (after school closed for the summer) all the child-



Top left: Dick and his family lived near the Champs-Elysees, “Frances most famous avenue,” while serving in the French Embassy. **Middle:** Dick working at his desk. **Left:** Dick with Rex Lee (1935-1996), President of BYU. **Above:** Dick and Alix on the BYU campus. Dick retired as a full colonel from the Air Force on September 26, 1976, after serving for 21 years. He was offered the department chair of economics at the Air Force Academy, but turned it down and began teaching at BYU in the fall of 1976. Except for a sabbatical to try a business adventure for a year, he taught at BYU until 1985. He then worked in another business before being called to become President of the France Bordeaux Mission in 1992.

ren went to ASP for the balance of the time we were in Paris. Virginia was not very happy to be leaving the United States and starting her high school in France. She felt that she would miss out on all the High School activities and she would be without friends in a foreign country. It turned out that the entire student body at ASP had spent their lives moving and

living abroad—they were largely the children of diplomats and international business



Top: Dick at the age of 47 in 1977. Middle: Dick and Alix aboard a cruise ship to Alaska in 2007. Left: Dick and Alix with Ginnie and Kevin in France in 1992. Above: Dick with Ginnie and her son, Rob Frye in 2004.

people—so, interestingly, there were no cliques and everybody was included in everything. Virginia made lifelong friends with whom she still keeps in touch. The only hard part was leaving at the beginning of her senior year! Merrill missed the freedom to roam—we had to get in the

car and drive to the Bois de Boulogne so he could ride his bike. Alice was pretty small, so

she adapted quickly. We had an au pair to watch the kids and they had lots of room to play in our new apartment.

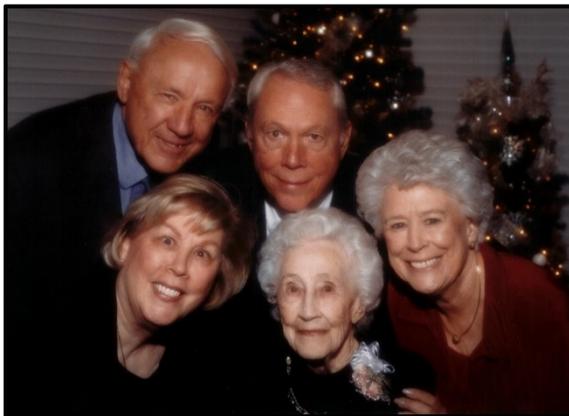
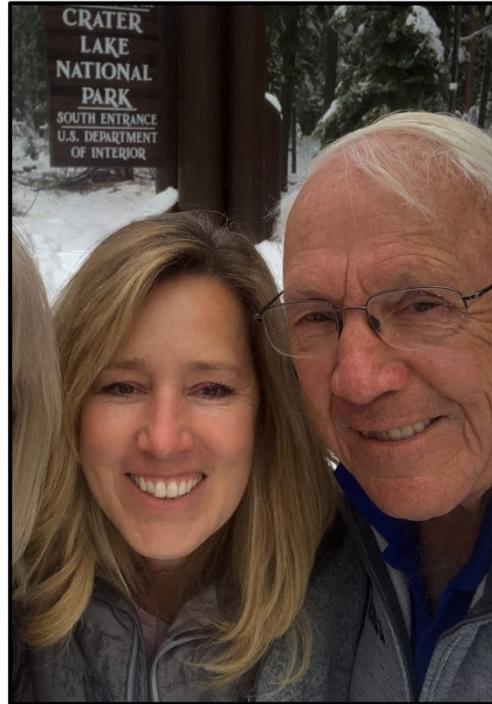


Top left: Dick imitating his Scandinavian ancestors in 2003. Above: Dick with his brother Steve (left) and Merrill Bateman (right), who was head of his economics department at BYU; 1992. Top right: Dick and Alix in France in 1992, and in front of their home in Provo, Utah, about 2015.

France. Everything dealing with the Air Force came through my office, which consisted of myself, two assistant air attachés (both officers), a secretary, and a non-commissioned officer. There were also some OSI personnel who reported to me. I was part of a larger

My job as air attaché in Paris was three fold. First, I was the representative of the U.S. Air Force in

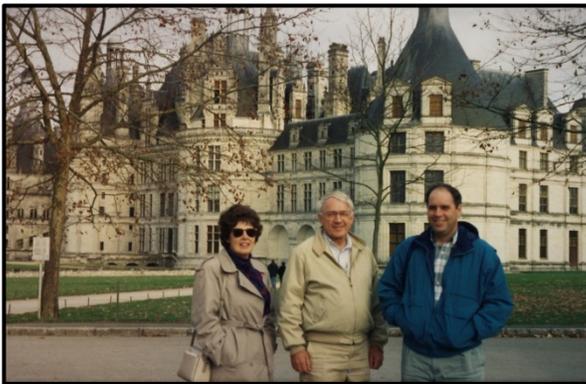
office, headed by an Army general consisting of the Army attaché and his staff and a Naval



Top right: Dick with his daughter Alice in Crater Lake National Park in 2020. Right: Dick with Ginnie at wedding of his granddaughter, Christine Frye, in 2015. Top left: Dick at a family reunion at Lake Tahoe in 1991. Above: Dick, his siblings, and his mother at her 100th birthday celebration in 2003.

attaché with his staff. Second, our office had an intelligence role—we gathered all sorts of information useful to the U.S. government and specifically to the Air Force. In that role, I reported to General Keegan, the Air Force Chief of Intelligence. I had a somewhat related role in which I reported directly to the Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, and to his national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft. No one else in the embassy knew what that involved except Gail, my secretary. Finally, I was part of the ambassador's country team, reporting to the team on matters relating to foreign air forces and

to any intelligence we might pick up. It was an interesting job! I was also the mission

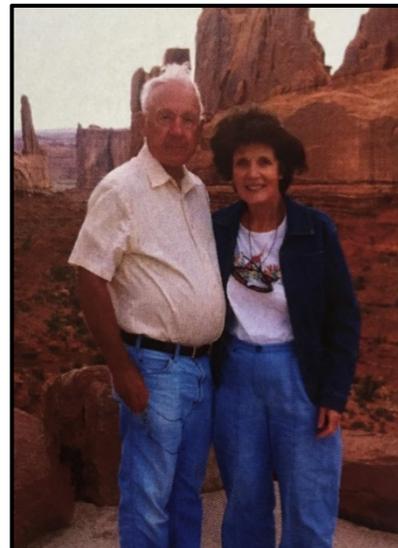


president's executive secretary. The mission president was Jack Fuller—a fellow missionary from earlier days, and I handled reports and paperwork for the mission.

Left: Dick and Alix with their son-in-law, Kevin Frye, in St. Petersburg, Russia, in May 2003. Left: Ginnie and Kevin visited Dick and Alix while they were serving on their mission in France in 1992. Here they are standing in front of Chateau de Chambord, the largest in France. Top right: Dick and Alix in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in fall 2005. Above: Dick with two of his grandsons, Eric Huber (left) and Clayton Huber (right).

We went to a lot of parties and dinners—probably 2 or 3 cocktail parties a week and that many dinners a month. The subject of why we didn't drink came up frequently early in our tour—less frequently as we became better known. When we explained why we didn't drink,

the subject of our church nearly always arose—most of that group had heard of Mormon-



Top left: Dick and Alix with their grandchildren, Rob and Alix Frye, in France. Top right: Dick and Virginia Above: Dick with his daughters Alice and Virginia, and his granddaughter, Alix Wilcox, in 2010. Middle: Dick and Alix in Arches National Park, Moab, Utah, in 2011. Right: Dick and Alix with newborn grandson, Richard Oveson, on the day he was blessed in February 1998.

ism and always associated it with polygamy. We explained all the facts (briefly) and the subject changed. As people came to know us, we found that they accepted us and respected our beliefs. We had friends among all the international community—including many among the Moslem group and certainly with the Israelis.

Teaching at BYU

Merrill Bateman, who had been a good friend for many years and who had become



Top left, left to right: Dixie, Rob Oveson, Dick, Alix, Miriam and Dale “Zeke” Zabriski in 1996. Top right: Dick on his 90th birthday with Merrill, his wife, Andrea, and his granddaughter, Lindsay Oveson, on January 5, 2019. Above, left to right, back: Dick, Alix, Clayton, Phil, Alice, and Eric; front: Maren and Jane Huber. Dick’s children and grandchildren have followed his example and have been faithful members of the church, many serving missions. Right: Dick in 2005.

president at Mars Inc., was named dean of the Business School at BYU in 1975—I was nearing the end of my tour in Paris and I was considering several options. The dean of the Air Force Academy faculty was a friend and I felt I had a chance to go back to the academy as department chair of the econ and management department. I felt that I also could join the National Security staff in Washington. We had a visit from the Vice-Chief of the Air Force in early 1976 and I told him that I was thinking of retiring. He told me that that was probably a good idea—to either

decide to stay and go as high as I could in the Air Force or to get out now while I had



Top left: Dick with his mother in December 1984. She lived to be 101 years old. Top right: Colonel Oveson presenting flower wreath during ceremony. Middle: Dick and Alix dancing at the wedding of their grandson, Rob Frye, in 2009. Above; Dick in 2009. Right: Dick with Steve, Mary, and Joan on January 9, 2010.

a chance to build another career in another field. I got an offer from Merrill to come to BYU and that seemed like a good idea (two weeks later I got a note from the AFA asking if I was interested in the department chair job, but I had already told Merrill I would come to BYU). We felt that it

was time to bring some stability into the children's lives and so in August of 1976 we left

Paris and headed to Provo. When we decided to come to Utah, we felt that Alix needed to



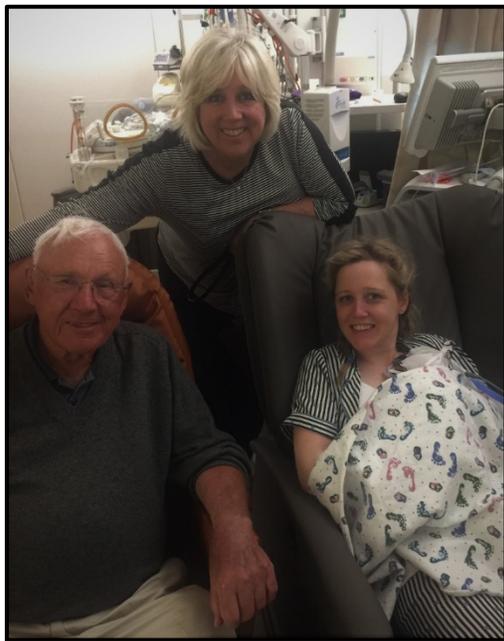
Left: Dick putting and setting up to drive the ball. Golf has been an important part of Dick's life for many years. Weather and circumstances permitting, he plays about four times a week even now (2021) in his 92nd year of life. Top right: In 2020, Dick visited his old school in Moro, Oregon, where he went to school from kindergarten to 12th grade. Above: At the age of 91, Dick still enjoys driving.



go to Provo and find us a place to live. She did—and found a new home in the foothills of northeast Provo. We bought the home for \$90,000 dollars—It took all we had to make the down payment, but the payments were covered by my AF retirement and I figured I could feed us on my BYU salary. We weren't rich, but we were

comfortable. I retired on the 12th of September, 1976 after 21 years in the Air Force. The Air Force was very good to us—we generally had interesting assignments, the Air Force

paid for my entire graduate education at Harvard, and we made many good friends—and I



didn't get killed as did so many of our good friends. I retired as a full colonel, so my retirement has been more than adequate.

I began my BYU teaching career in the fall semester of 1976. I had been somewhat imposed on the econ faculty by Merrill and I was given a rather mixed welcome. The other faculty members are all now good friends and they were helpful, but I was very much a new and junior member of the faculty, which, after having been a full colonel in the Air Force, was something of a comedown. I went to work and taught my classes—econometrics and other econ classes—primarily in the MBA

Top: Dick was honored by the BYU ROTC during a BYU football game for his service to his country on November 17, 2018. **Left to right:** Jensen Riley, Amanda Rawlins, Army Chiddister, Sarah Pettit, Eric Huber, John Pettit, Alice and Phil Huber, Ginnie and Kevin Frye, Richard Oveson, Dick, Andrea and Merrill Oveson, John and Brittany Frye. **Left:** Dick with his granddaughter, Christine Burton, who is holding one of her twins in 2013. **Above:** Dick with his mother in 1996.

and MPA programs. The students were wonderful—bright and eager to learn and I enjoyed



This page: Ceremony honoring Dick Oveson at BYU on November 17, 2018. Above: Dick with two of his grandchildren, John and Sarah Pettit. Left: Dick with his grandson, Riley Oveson, on his 90th birthday.

teaching. I began teaching an applied micro-economics class to both the MBA and MPA

students and I also did some consulting (which was not always favorably received by the other faculty members, since publications were more encouraged). I felt that the business

world was the laboratory of the business school and I was anxious to tie my teaching to



Top left: Dick and Alix at the Provo Temple in 2005. Above: Dick with his granddaughter, Christine, and her husband, Todd Burton, with their twins on the day they were blessed, August 11, 2019. Dick's 90th birthday was a special event for everyone. Top right, left to right: Eric Huber, Noah Riley, Maren, Jane Clayton, Phil, Alice, and Jens Huber. Right, left to right: Phil, Kevin, Alice, Ginnie, Dick, Merrill, and Andrea Oveson on January 5, 2020.

real world problems. In the course of this activity, I met Dennis O'Brien—a former senior VP of Data Resources. Dennis and I talked about a company which would gather data and analyze it in a way which would be most beneficial to the client. Dennis wound up founding such a company and I wound up taking a yearlong sabbatical and moving the family to Boston to help with the company.

Shortly after our arrival in Provo, Merrill had asked me to be one of his counselors in the



Top, left to right: John and Brittany Frye, Alix Wilcox, John and Sarah Pettit, Christine Burton, Kevin and Ginnie Frye, Dick holding his great-grandson, Brooks Frye on his 90th birthday. Above: Dick with his granddaughter, Lindsay Oveson, and son, Merrill Oveson, on January 5, 2020.

BYU First Stake presidency. That proved to be an interesting assignment, although it in-

involved leaving Alix to get the children to church each Sunday, since I had early morning

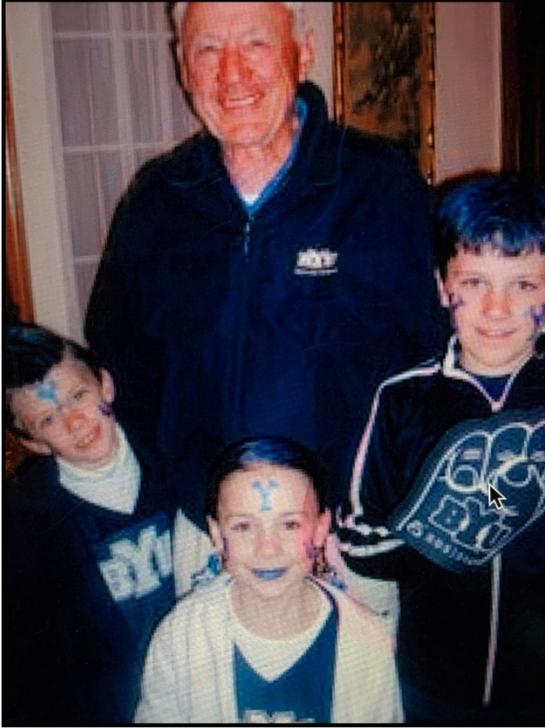


Top left: Dick with his grandchildren, Richard, Riley, and Lindsay Oveson on his 90th birthday on January 5, 2020. Top right: Dick and his grandson, Clayton Huber. Middle: Dick with Virginia and Alice in November 2020. Above: Dick with Alice in November 2020. Left: Maren Huber, Alex Holmes (family friend), Clayton Huber, Eric Huber, and Jane Huber.

meetings and usually got home about four or five in the afternoon. She was wonderful, as always, and the kids stayed active!! That assignment continued till we left for Boston in May of 1980.

The move to Provo proved to be a blessing to our family. Merrill in particular felt like he had been let out of jail—our home was in the foothills of Provo and the development was just beginning—consequently, Merrill could roam to his heart's content. Virginia had a more difficult transition—she had flourished in Paris. She had been a cheerleader at ASP, traveled Europe, skied in the Italian and French Alps, and made many close, interesting friends. Provo was something of a letdown—she knew no one at Provo High and to find herself a senior with no close friends and few acquaintances was hard. She made the best of it and did the best she could, but we all decided that her high school career had about

ended—so at Christmas she had completed her required courses (she was way ahead after



Top left: Dick with three of his great-grandchildren: Riley (left), Richard (right), and Lindsay (middle). They were on their way to a BYU basketball game. Top right: Dick with Richard Oveson, who wrote this caption on the photograph of Dick doing pushups at the age of 90 on July 4, 2020. Above: Dick with his great-grandson, Will Wilcox, on Christmas Day 2020. Left: Lindsay Oveson lighting the candles for her grandpa.

ASP) and she began her college career at BYU in the winter term of 1977, which lasted until April 28, 2018—her graduation date! (Interrupted by marriage and six children). Alice was in second grade and adapted just fine—lots of new friends and a much closer ride to school.

Our year in Boston was something of a homecoming, since we had spent almost three years

there in graduate school. This time, however, we moved into a family home in Boxford,



Top: Dick on a boat on Lake Powell about 2010. Middle: Kevin, Ginnie, Brittany, Christine Burton, Alix Wilcox, and Sarah Pettit in January 2020. Above, left to right, standing: Todd Burton, Merrill, Dick, Alice, Eric, and Clayton Huber; sitting: Kate, Spencer, and Christine Burton in 2021. Left: Dick, John, Brittany, Brooks, and Wells Frye in 2021.

north of Boston. We rented a home from Reid and Diane Wilcox (later president of the Bordeaux mission and now president of the Church College in Virginia). We were active in the Boxford Ward and I wound up in the bishopric—the business was okay, some of the friends of Dennis were sure they could run the business better

than Dennis could and that caused some lack of focus—anyway I was not sure the business



Above: Dick and Alix in 2007. They were blessed to have each other for almost 61 years.

was going anywhere and we decided to return to BYU, but not before some very significant events occurred within our family. In the fall of 1980, Virginia decided to go on a mission. She completed all the paperwork, we went with her to the Washington D.C. Temple and she left for the MTC, by way of Napa, California, to see Kevin before she entered the MTC. Shortly after her arrival in Napa, we received a telephone call from Virginia telling us that Kevin wanted to get married—I told Virginia that the decision was hers, but that we would support what she decided. When we hung up, Alix said in so many words—we better meet this young man, so Alix left on a plane the next day for Napa. When she returned, she simply said that we had better do all we could to see that this marriage took place, and so Virginia was married in July in the Salt Lake Temple to a wonderful man, who has been all that a parent could wish for a daughter. My father, who had steadily grown weaker in the past few years, died in early July of 1981. His funeral was in Arizona, where the folks

had many friends and we brought him home to Castle Dale to be buried in the little cem-



Right: Formal mission photograph taken just before Dick and Alix left on their mission to France in 1992. Above and lower right: Dick and Alix at the Mission Training Center in Provo, Utah, in 1992. The couple on the left is Gene and Dorothy Bramhall.

etry with his parents and siblings. No son ever had a better father—a faithful man who kept his covenants and taught his children the gospel. My mother moved up to Provo soon after, and then lived for 24 more years before dying at the age of 101.

Everyone who came for the funeral stayed for the wedding. Ginnie and Kevin left for a honeymoon and then returned to Napa where Kevin and his brother had started a printing and blueprinting business—now 40 years old! Alix and I with Merrill and

Alice returned to Provo. I resumed teaching at BYU, principally in the MBA and MPA programs. In the 11 year period from 1981 (when we returned from Boston) to 1992 when we left for our mission, I was called as a branch president at the MTC, as a bishop of a young marrieds ward at BYU, and as a counselor to Gene Bramhall in the BYU 9th stake. The MTC call came first—Joe Christensen and his wife Barbara (both old BYU friends)



were there, Joe as MTC president. At that time the MTC was organized by languages and



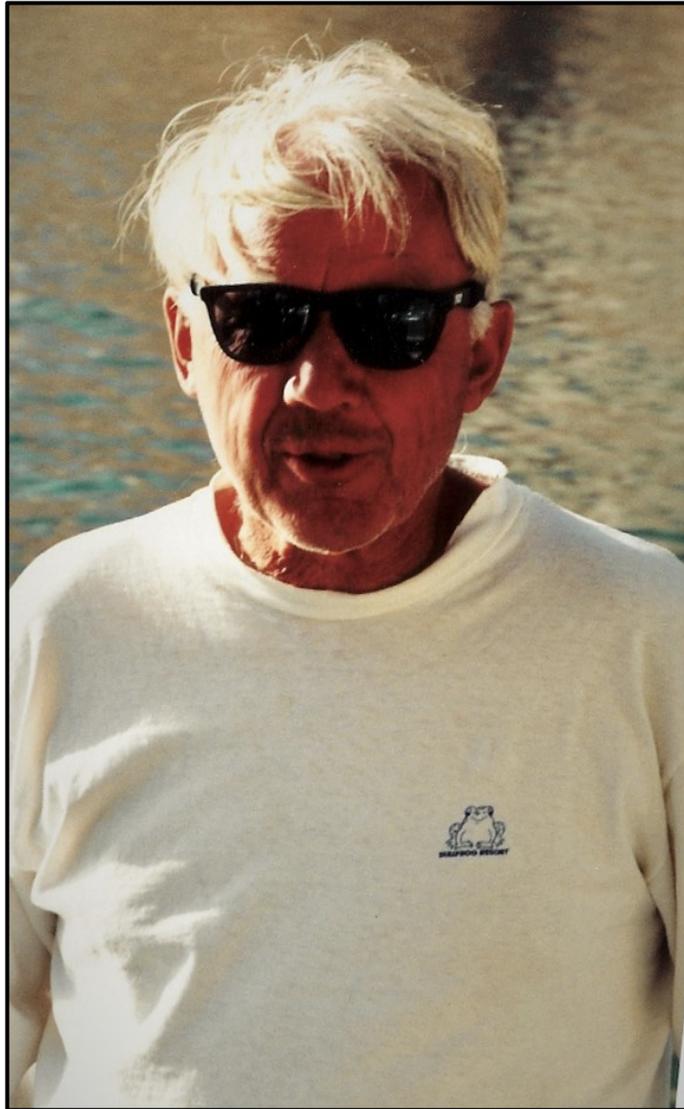
Top left: President and Sister Oveson at their mission office in France in 1992. Left: Virginia visited her parents while they were serving in France. Top right: Dick's mother and sisters saw him off at the Mission Training Center. Above: The France Bordeaux Mission was the largest in area of the five French missions in the 1990s. It extended from the Spanish border to Le Mans on the north, to Orleans on the north-east, and to Limoges and Toulouse on the east. President and Sister Oveson drove over 100,000 miles on church business during their three year mission.

I had all the French speaking missionaries, so I had one of the larger branches. We had prayers in French and we tried to incorporate as much French into the ward meetings as seemed feasible. Alix was supportive, but Merrill and Alice were still at home and needed to go to our home ward and participate in youth activities. That call lasted three years, and I was released in 1984, just as Merrill graduated from high school. He did well in school and he started as a defensive end for the football

team. Merrill went to BYU for a semester and then left on a mission to Portugal in January

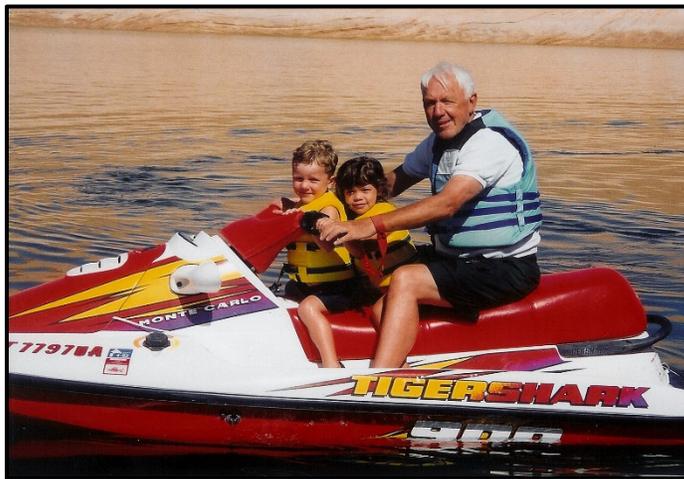


Right: Dick Oveson at Lake Powell. (This is one of my favorite photographs of Dick because he looks rugged.) Above: Dick wearing a tux with his grandson, Mark Frye, on December 28, 1991. Lower right: Dick on a jet ski with two of his grandchildren: Richard Oveson and Sarah Frye in 2001.

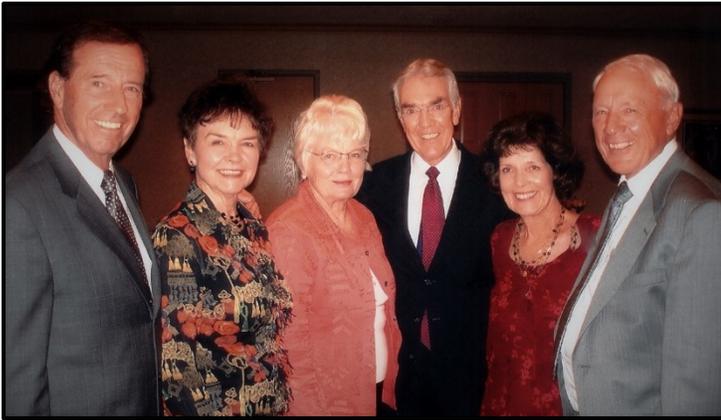


of 1985. He served for almost two years and returned home in time for Christmas in 1986.

Meanwhile, Merrill Bateman had left BYU and started a consulting business involving commodity price forecasting, principally in the cocoa and sugar markets. I had done some work with Merrill and in 1985 he invited me to join with him and another friend, Rod Jackson, in forming a company (Bateman, Jackson and Oveson, or BJO). This sounded exciting and so I took an early retirement from BYU and began what would be an interesting and challenging time in a new venture. This enterprise continued for about seven years, when Merrill (Bateman) was called as a general authority and Alix and I were called to preside over the France Bordeaux mission. That call began with a visit from Elder



Perry to assess our availability and finished with a more formal call issued by President



Dick served in the Provo Temple Presidency from 2004 until 2007. Top, left to right: Carl Bacon, Carolyn Bacon, Ann Lambert, Neil Lambert, Alix and Dick, in 2005. Above: They are pictured later with Elder Merrill Bateman (born 1936): Neil and Ann Lambert, Carl and Carolyn Bacon, Merrill Bateman, Alix and Dick. Top right: Dick is arm and arm with his son Merrill and two grandsons Richard Oveson and Riley Oveson at the boy's Lacrosse game on April 21, 2015. Middle: Dick standing beside the casket of Alix Wells Oveson. She was 84 years old when she died on August 21, 2018. They were married for almost 61 years. Right: Virginia "Ginnie," Alice, and Merrill with Dick.

Hinckley. During that interview, Alix kept pointing out reasons why she was not the best person for such an assignment and President Hinckley kept telling her that "You will be just fine, Sister Oveson." She was, and then some—she was wonderful in all aspects of that calling.

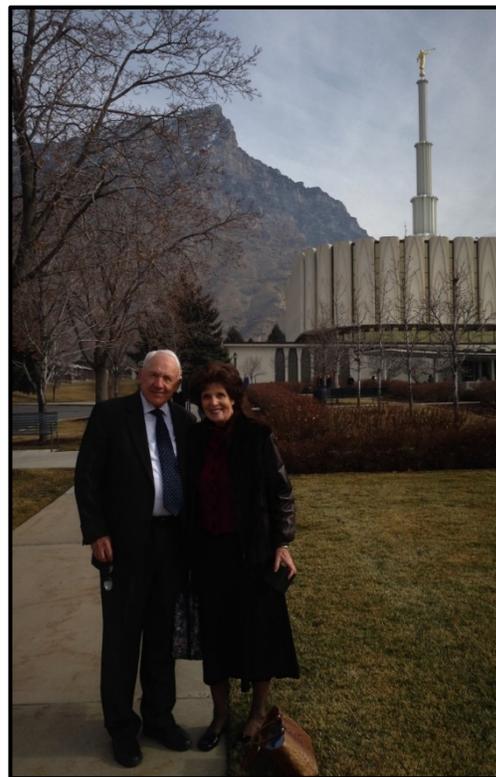


Earlier, in September of 1989, Alice left on a mission to the Geneva, Switzerland, Mission

(French speaking). She served for 18 months and came home at the end of March in 1991.



Above: Dick with Virginia and Merrill at the grave of Alix Wells Oveson (1934-2018) in East Lawn Cemetery, which overlooks Provo and Orem, Utah, in spring 2019. Dick will also be buried here. Top right: Dick next to a portrait of Alix that was displayed at her viewing. Right: Dick and Alix at the Provo Temple on January 29, 2015, when she was sealed to her parents. They skied, golfed, worked, and served together all of their lives. They had an ideal marriage.



She started dating Phil Huber soon after and they were married at the end of December 1991.

President of France Bordeaux Mission

We left for France the last part of June in 1992 in order to begin our role on the first of July of that year. We replaced President (now Elder) Neil A. Anderson who had just played a major role in forming the Bordeaux Stake—the first in the mission. We had a nice, but brief, meeting with the Andersons during which he told me where the lawnmower was and

how to turn on the furnace and very little about the mission—as he was instructed! I



The extended Oveson family at the graveside service for Alexandra Campbell “Alix” Wells Oveson (born July 14, 1934, in New York City; died August 21, 2018, in Provo, Utah) on August 26, 2018. Left to right, standing: Eric Huber, Clayton Huber, Alix Wilcox, Kevin Frye, Virginia Frye, Phil Huber, Alize Huber, Merrill Oveson, Andrea Oveson, Dick Oveson, Lindsay Oveson, Richard Oveson, John Frye, Brittany Frye, Christine Burton, Todd Burton, Sarah Pettit, John Pettit, and Heidi Frye; sittings: Jens Huber, Jane Huber, Maren Huber, Aubrey Frye, Riley Frye, Taylor Frye, Rob Frye, Eric Frye, Trish Frye, Mason Frye, Kjerstin Frye, and Mark Frye.

suppose the brethren have found that it is best to let the new president learn for himself about the missionaries and the members and not (with very few exceptions) be biased by the experiences of his predecessor. There were five missions in French speaking Europe at that time, and the Bordeaux Mission encompassed the southwest corner of France, extending to the Loire valley on the north and to about the middle of the country to the east. Geographically, we were the largest mission in Europe, with a compliment of roughly 180 missionaries. In total we had about 450 missionaries during our three years there. We traveled a lot—we tried to see every missionary every month, but that proved to be impossible, so we managed to see everyone about every five weeks. We received new missionaries every month, so we spent that week in the mission home, but then traveled the other three weeks—we got a new car shortly after arriving and we passed 100,000 miles about a month before we came home—about three thousand miles a month. It was wonderful to visit the missionaries and the members in the mission and to see so much of southwest France. It was a unique and wonderful experience, and we are grateful to have been granted that opportunity. We felt like we had 450 more children when we came home—although we have kept track of only a few—they have moved on to live their lives as we have, inexpressibly blessed by that experience.

Life in Provo

We came home to the house we had built in 1986-87. The family to whom we had rented

the house had taken good care of it and there was very little adjustment—although I needed a job! Not desperately—we had our Air Force retirement and social security, so we were



Above: Dick holding onto a ski in Lake Powell. Right: Dick Oveson at Halloween time in October 2021. He has been blessed with good health, looks great, plays golf as often as he can, and is active at 91 years of age. He is a blessing to his family and everyone that knows him.

comfortable, although I was only sixty five and it was too early to retire. In the fall of 1995, Merrill and I went to work for Dennis at Faneuil Research, 1995-1999, with an office in Provo. When the backing for that enterprise fell through, we were again looking. Meanwhile, Merrill had met Andrea Ault in the summer of 1995 and after dating for about a year they were married in December of 1996.

Mark Sumsion, a friend, called in 2000-2001 and asked me to serve on the board of his company, Strategis Capital Management. Merrill also went to work for this company and we were involved in money management for the next couple of years.



Provo Temple Presidency

The father of one of our missionaries, Eric Loveland, had founded a company which facilitated the pricing of construction and restoration projects nationwide. They contacted me about consulting on pricing methodologies and thus began a delightful (for me at least)

relationship which ended as I turned 80 in 2010. My consulting did slow when we were called to serve in the Provo Temple presidency in 2004. Carl Bacon was called as the temple president and I was a counselor. Alix was called to be an assistant to the matron (Carolyn Bacon). Ray and Jeanette Beckham served as first counselor and assistant to the matron for about 6 months until Ray was diagnosed with prostate cancer and it was decided that the temple assignment was too demanding while undergoing treatment. Ray and Jeanette had a long history of service at a very high level. I became the first counselor and Neil and Ann Lambert (close friends of ours) replaced Ray and Jeanette. This assignment continued until November of 2007—it was a special experience. I have continued in the temple as a sealer to the present time.

The last ten years has passed quickly. Alix and I have played golf, visited the children and enjoyed our home. Virginia and Kevin have raised six children (three boys and three girls), and are the grandparents of thirteen (soon to be fourteen). Merrill and Andrea have three (two boys and a girl) while Phil and Alice have three boys and two girls. The girls were both born in China and have been a joyful addition to the family.

In the late summer of 2018 Alix got out of the shower one morning just as I entered the bathroom. I looked at her and exclaimed “Alix, you look like you are pregnant!” We both knew that was highly unlikely—she was then 83 years old, but she did acknowledge that what I had said was true. We made a doctor’s appointment and after a few test Alix was operated on to remove an ovarian tumor which weighed 6 ½ pounds and was malignant. She recovered quickly and we continued life as usual—playing golf and visiting the kids and going to church. About a year later, she began having some kidney problems and tests revealed that the cancer had spread throughout her abdomen and was impinging on her kidney area—and was determined to be inoperable. She had no other symptoms (typical of ovarian cancer) and we played golf two weeks before she died on August 21, 2018.

Conclusion

Letter to my posterity: I want to write and tell you a few of the reasons for my testimony that Joseph Smith was a true prophet and that the Church is true and that our Heavenly Father and His Son love us. I have always been attracted to the intellectual aspects of the Gospel. I know that a spiritual witness is essential (and available to all who ask), but I find that the Gospel as restored by Joseph Smith is the most rational, coherent, and intellectually consistent explanation for who we are and why we are here that exists anywhere (or has ever existed) on earth. Let me begin with who we are. Men have always sought to find an explanation for our existence, and within the Judeo-Christian heritage the commonly accepted doctrine has been that God, a supremely powerful and all-knowing being, created all things and we are His creation. This commonly accepted belief has inherent within it several serious problems which have plagued philosophers and thinkers throughout recorded history. First is the concept of free agency. The thing created is certainly the product of the creator. If I am created by God, then I must act as I was created to behave. If I behave badly, whose fault is it? This kind of thinking led directly to the doctrine of predestination (still a pillar of some Protestant denominations), which essentially states that God created

some for glory and happiness and some for eternal damnation, and how we behave is simply an indication of where we have always belonged.

Into this unhappy, but long-lasting, discussion came Joseph Smith—a young man of 27, poorly educated by our standards, who wrote in the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses 29-31: “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man.” Joseph Smith further enlarged upon this doctrine in a funeral sermon called the King Follet discourse, found in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and other places.

Briefly, in Joseph’s view (revelation) we are all eternal beings, with no beginning and no end. God, having progressed further than we, has discovered a path to eternal happiness and desires his fellow beings to experience it also. But we must choose that path to happiness ourselves. We are literally His children and He loves us beyond our understanding, as does our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ. But we are responsible for our own destiny and we are agents unto ourselves and always have been. It seems to me that if Joseph Smith is not acknowledged as a prophet, then he must surely be the most remarkable religious philosopher of all!!

Second, consider the Book of Mormon. A truly remarkable book, detailed and complex and, according to Joseph Smith, of divine origin. It speaks for itself—but consider the alternative. Read the very first books in the Book of Mormon and ask yourself if these are the thoughts of two young men intent on perpetrating a fraud. Publication of the book certainly did not make Joseph a rich man—but it has enriched the lives of millions of people who have had their lives changed by its message of redemption and the mission of Jesus Christ.

Finally, as one who has done some work with probability theory, I have always been struck by Pascal’s Wager. Google it and see if you find it thought provoking. Let me add my observation that during a long life it has been evident to me that those who have lived the Gospel have been at least as happy and successful as those who have chosen another path. As Pascal reasoned, if God does not exist, we have lost nothing. If He does (and I testify that He does), those who follow His commandments will inherit all that our Father possesses, thanks to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Part II: Dear Grandkids, Here are some more thoughts—I’ve wondered, given the doctrines I talked about in the previous letter, just how our Heavenly Father got so far ahead of us, given that we are all eternal beings. We get a glimpse of the reason in the 19th verse of the third chapter of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price: “And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all.” Our Heavenly Father is more intelligent than we are, and, happily, he has discovered the secret to happiness. All happiness is based on unselfishness—kindness, interest in the well-being of others. This is not just a nice way to live—it’s the only way to

happiness! It's so counterintuitive that a large number of our brothers and sisters rebelled against this idea and embraced a more obvious choice—that if we don't look out for ourselves first we will be taken advantage of and furthermore we'll miss all the fun. It turns out that this is an illusion—we can search down that path, but we'll never find what we are all looking for! Experience has taught me that every commandment that the Lord has given is designed to make our lives better—either by acts of kindness, which fill us with joy, or by things we are advised (commanded) to avoid which either bring unhappiness to ourselves or to others. Our Heavenly Father wants to give us all that He has (as do all parents), but He will not allow us (in the eternities) to use the gifts He gives us to harm or misdirect others. Anyway, I love you all and want you to be happy and fulfill your destiny as one who has many gifts and great ability. I pray that you will carefully consider the important choices lying before you here in mortality. Take care!!—Grandpa Oveson

(The two letters that Dick wrote to his grandchildren were recorded on April 6, 2022, when he was 92 years old. The same day he played 18 holes of golf! He is a remarkable man and a blessing to his family and everyone that knows him.)

