

In Memory of My Brother Fred Penix



The Lord was speaking to me at the February 23rd Emmaus Gathering with the 4th day testimonies given. The Lord is helping me with my family's loss. At first, I thought I should go up at the Gathering, but I found it impossible to reduce down 65 years to 15

minutes. (I was getting hungry) ☺

My brother Fred went home on evening of February 4th, 2014 after intense complications from Diabetes passed away from a coma at a hospice facility after 24 hours there. Just 3 weeks before, he was alive and no signs of illness. He had been a diabetic for years but managed it well. I am still having hard time with this as he was 1 year younger than me. See ...I thought I was the one that would



be telling our mother to fix, from scratch, chocolate cake with chocolate icing. He being a Vietnam Era Vet as I am was buried with full military honors for he was a life time member of the VFW.

We were born and raised on a farm outside of Winfield, Ohio in Tuscarawas County. Being a year older than he, we fought like brothers, and were as ornery as brothers could be and very good at it, sometimes together and sometimes separately.

Has anyone ever been 8,000 miles from home and have his brother or sister 3 miles away and NOT able to see or contact them? My wife Sue has given a talk about this incident, but tells it from her view. She only lived the after effects upon me. This is to tell it from my view and the challenges that faced me and my brother. I found this out 2 ½ years later after I finally saw him a day or so after he got out of the Navy and I getting out 6 months prior.

Back in 1970 (approximately August or September) as I finished up moving some Polaris Missiles and their Nuclear War Heads. Exiting out of the crane cab (about 80 Or 90 feet of the water) of the 47 ½ ton



Missile Crane I saw a very large ship on the horizon. As it came closer I identified it as an Aircraft Carrier. After going through my Decontamination Film Strip Check for radiation I went down to the quarter deck

of the USS Holland Sub Tender and asked what Carrier that was. The Officer of the Deck told me he was informed it was the USS Saratoga and she's in a hurry.

I knew that my brother Fred was one of the Yeomen in the Air Attack Squadron 75 Commander's Office aboard the Saratoga. So I immediately started attempts to get out to the Saratoga. All our small boats, (LCM's, UT Boat's and smaller craft) were being put into the water. Knowing what was about to happen for I saw the Saratoga drop anchor outside the Cadiz Bay Break Wall of Cadiz, Spain about 3 miles from us. Her draft being too deep to come into the bay let alone the Rota Naval Base to the piers where I was.

I first went to the Duty Boatswain Mate for that day and asked if I could hitch a ride out the Sara. He said NO, no room in any of the boats after the base supply stores are loaded in them for the runs out. I asked if I could relieve one the crew on any the craft (for I was a qualified Boat Coxswain from the LCM's Down to the smallest small boat.) He said to try but said ...remember you're not on Duty Status, but Open Gangway in port for you're a side cleaner when not in a crane and hanging over the side. The guys in the boats have their say. It was late in the day and my liberty had already started. Getting no cooperation from any of the boat crews I went to the Signal Bridge for the Sara and my ship had been "Signal Flashing" for over an hour way before she anchored out. I wrote a message that stated: "To Fred Penix Yeoman Air Attack Squadron 75 Commander's Office. You have been an uncle since August 17th 1970. It's a boy. If you can hop one of your Hughie's to meet me at the Tarmac, I'll be waiting there. Reply to this message priority." Waiting for about 20 minutes(A life Time), I decided to get to the Enlisted Men's Locker Building, change to civvies and hop onto my motorcycle and get to the air station as quickly as I could without paying a large speeding ticket. I got there and he had not shown. The Hughie's were running mail bags and I knew they'd have a few touch and goes. I waited for a complete cycle of choppers and no Fred. So I wrote another note with the same text

and asked one of the pilots if he could let me jump out there and back on the next trip. He said NO NOT ALLOWED! So I asked him if he'd get this note to my brother's Squadron's Commander's Office and told him who he was and I was his older brother. Waiting for a few more touch and goes, that same chopper never returned to tell me he delivered the note. I asked one of the other choppers where the number such and such chopper was and he said the pilot and crew went to chow and would NOT be back for he was on his last hop then and so am now and, away Sara goes. ☹️ ☹️

Really discouraged of this ...I got on my motorcycle and went to the apartment off base where Sue and I lived. I told her why I was late, and started to tear when I told her I failed to contact Fred. I would not see him for about another 2 years as least. Around 2 ½ years later, after I'd been out of the Navy 6 or so months Fred's service was up and he came home. We talked about that day to great detail. It seems he was trying the same things I did and after they got underway he was taking out the trash to feed albatross, he noticed the note addressed to him. He as ecstatic with the news and yet sad that **we were not allowed to see each other 8,000 miles from home and 3 miles apart.**

Here is something of a lighter note about his first experience of flying in an F-4 Tomcat Fighter Jet. He was in the 75th Attack Air Squadron.

I remembered this story at the funeral for quite a few people including relatives wondered what he did in the Navy since he was in a fighter jet flight suit, mask draped over his shoulder and helmet in hand. I told them of his story about his first ride on his first rotation out to the Saratoga. At the least, Fighter Jets are rotated out at sea for port safety. They are armed, fully fueled and ready. A hazard if the rotation happens in port.

Fresh out of Boot Camp One morning a fighter pilot came into his office and told Fred

to go with him to the Master at Arms for Fighter Suit Fitting. He brought his new attire back to his locker and the next morning the same pilot came and told him to suit up and go

with him to the tarmac. So doing as ordered, the pilot and Fred walked out the pilot's F-4 Tomcat Fighter Jet. Still not really knowing what was going on, (his being fresh out of boot camp) but knowing better not to ask but do as instructed he climbed up and got into the



rumble seat WITHOUT touching anything. (Back Seat) ☺ He was hooked up to everything needed by a Plane Maintenance guy who was chuckling the whole time while the pilot was getting in the front (his) seat. The pilot said over the radio to him in his helmetthere is ONE THING you may touch The Ejection Handle, BUT ONLY WHEN YOU HEAR ME YELL: "EJECT, EJECT, EJECT!" then close your eyes and mouth until you are wet!! Got it?? Fred repeated it and they were off to a thrill flight of a lifetime for my brother Fred. Fred said the take off was Very Cool and NOT like a commercial flight either. He was pushed into the upholstery stitching of the back of his seat and what seemed to be straight up like a rocket. After they leveled off he was at awe, as to how much higher he was than a commercial flight and felt like he was inside the Head of an Eagle in flight.



About 10 minutes went by of his awesome experience and noticing they were getting closer to the earth suddenly the pilot initiated a steep right turn that caused his head to feel like it was pushing into his seat and trying to get further through. The pilot said to look down to the right and see old Sara. He looked down and noticed she was only ½ the size of his little finger nail. As he was

about to ask "when are we to land", never getting that out but a 10 second scream and they were slamming on the deck and hooked that threw his eyeballs into the dash as he was throwing up his last 3 meals into his oxygen mask, helmet, new flight suit and the seat. ☺☺

There's more.As he was getting out and still gagging, the flyer that usually sets in that seat yelled: I WILL BE BACK IN 1 HOUR to inspect MY SEAT!! I expect NOT to set in anything, smell anything, OR SEE anything that is YOUR'S GOT IT!!! ☺☺ He was also told to go over to a gear locker and there he'd find disinfectant, Soap and HOT Water and a means to apply such. After that he was instructed to take his suit to laundry, with the left over water and disinfectant to clean his mask, hose and helmet. And, all this time, the pilot was rolling around on the deck with laughter. ☺ And still the rumble seat flyer was yelling. ☺ The next day after at his normal work, but on board the Saratoga's Attack Squadron's office, the pilot came in and asked if his helmet mask and hose were clean. Fred said he answered ...uuhh yea sir?? ...thinking he was going to fly again that day. The pilot said he just needed the helmet and would return it the next day. The next morning

the pilot brought in the helmet ...with Fred's Call sign on it. ☺☺ He never really talked over the radio other than to the pilot during the following years of rotations, but all knew him as Pukie. He kind of liked it and the attention according to him. He actually had a call sign and he was NOT a pilot. ☺



These are the things I experienced and the things he experienced as we lived our lives during, Serving our Country during Vietnam.

One additional Note ...as Fred told me of the Sara being in a hurry that day ...she was on her way to stand off the coast of where the PLO High Jacking of the Commercial Jet liners were in 1970. He went to Combat Status for that. It suddenly occurred to both of us that we BOTH were on the same mission for the 2 Subs that got underway with 2 replaced missiles each were an underwater escort beneath the Destroyer escort for each disappeared as soon as they



passed the break wall near the Sarah. He also told me of a special chopper that had a special marine security perimeter around it below decks and no regular navy personnel were allowed in that area.

He and I are Viet Nam Era Vets for we were everywhere but Nam. **9,087,000 Severed During the Viet Nam War Era from August 5, 1964 to May 7, 1975.**

3,582,000 Served in Viet Nam and many died. Also, many were killed over there and died over here ---cause: AO.



Charlie, Fred, Rich Penix 5th G Grandsons of Thomas Penix ~ 1748-1825

Revolutionary War, - Private in Capt. Bond's company of the Harford County [Maryland] Militia Volunteers in 1775.

Signer of Association Of Freeman, Upper Spesutie 100 [Maryland] 1776.

Rangers Of The Frontiers, -1778-1783 Westmoreland County PA. Marched with Col. Crawford on the Upper Sandusky Expedition in May of 1782.

5,505,000 Served Support for Those in Viet Nam. I and my brother Fred were two of these during the Viet Nam War. Military History has run in our family.