

## **FORT GORDON, GEORGIA**

I received my new orders. I was being assigned as the chief of Plans and Programs at the United States Army Military Police School at Fort Gordon, Georgia. This would be my third tour of duty at Ft. Gordon. It was like going home. I called Agnes and told her about my new assignment. She was pleased. She liked Augusta. I gave her my departure date from Vietnam. I would be flying out of Saigon, across the Pacific Ocean to Edwards Air Force Base in California, and on to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. She and Pam planned to drive down from Connecticut to pick me up. I had been granted a month's leave before reporting for duty at Ft. Gordon. Of course, they were excited about my homecoming—so was I. I could hardly wait to see Agnes and Pam. I told Agnes I purchased a brand new Dodge station wagon through the U.S. Army Post Exchange Service in Vietnam. It was being shipped to some dock in New Jersey. I would pick it up after I returned home.

The war went on in Vietnam. I was anxious to leave the place. The Viet Cong would, now and then, fire a rocket at the Tan Son Nhut Airport, causing a shutdown of flights. Luckily, we managed to get airborne and flew away from Vietnam. Our plane was full of officers who had served a tour of duty in Vietnam. There were no cheers—only muted silence. I'm sure, like me, most of the officers were thinking of friends who would never fly home to their loved ones. Vietnam had been a hellhole!

There was always some anxiety moving a family to a new station, but going back to Ft. Gordon and Augusta, Georgia, was like going home for Agnes and me. I knew we would have to

rent or purchase a house in Augusta. Military quarters were limited on post. Agnes had furnished our cottage that she and Pam lived in during my stint in Vietnam. We discussed the possibility of renting out our cottage fully furnished. All our other furniture had been stored at three different storage depots by the Army Quartermaster Corps from our three previous moves. We felt we needed no less than a three-bedroom house.

We still had friends in Augusta. Phil and Marian Garbow still lived there. Pappy and Iris Bird had retired, and so did Wayne and Johnny Rouse. Nevertheless, I was certain that we would still know some of the military families at Ft. Gordon. I had 27 years of active military service and was thinking of retirement. We had lived a gypsy's way of life. We bounced around the world and really never set our roots in one place. Pam would have to be changing school systems again. There was a lot to think about.

We made our usual plane stops at Guam and Hawaii to eat a hot meal and refuel. We spent the night at Edwards Air Force Base in California. I did manage to call Agnes and let her know I had arrived safely back in the States. I gave her my estimated time of arrival at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. She assured me that she and Pam would be there when my plane landed. The next morning after breakfast, I was assigned to a flight flying to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey along with a new group of officers headed in the same direction. Flying across the United States always filled my heart with thankfulness. I thanked the Lord for this wonderful place called the United States of America. A place worth fighting for to maintain our freedom and wonderful way of life. There's no place like it on Planet Earth. Just the very thought filled my eyes with tears.

Our plane finally landed at McGuire Air Force Base. We deplaned and were transferred to a bus that took us to a nearby building for a debriefing, before we could meet with our families. Pam later said she had recognized me on the bus. I can't recall what our briefing was all about. I just wanted to get with Agnes and Pam. As soon as we were dismissed, we entered a large reception area, where we were greeted by our loved ones. There were a lot of hugs, kisses, and tears of joy. God, it was great to be alive and back home with our families. Agnes and Pam looked like a million dollars, beautiful and well-groomed. I felt lucky to be loved by them. Pam had grown a few more inches since I last saw her. Because of my frequent absences, I missed several of her growing years. Agnes was a loving and caring mother. I was proud of the way she "kept the home fires burning."

There was much to talk about on our way home to Connecticut. Her brother Edward and his wife, Ann Marie, and the three children, Peggy, Holly, and Timmy, were all well. Her oldest brother, Floyd, and his wife, Zenida, lived in a house on the family compound. My mother and sister Rudi were doing fine. Agnes and Pam had visited with them frequently for Sunday dinners. From all reports, the rest of my brothers and sisters were okay. I knew that during the time I would be home, there would be many family gatherings.

In preparation for our move to Augusta, Georgia, we knew we had to purchase or rent a house, preferably one near a school for Pam. We didn't relish the idea of her busing to school. I got in touch with Phil and Marian Garbow to let them know I was back from Vietnam and assigned to the military police school at Ft. Gordon. Phil and I had been Regular Army master sergeants. He had been promoted to a warrant officer when I was commissioned as a second lieutenant. Phil originally came from Bridgeport, Connecticut, and since I came out of Waterbury

