



J. C. and brother, Pat Brown's Enrollment Story

Born in Sedan, Kansas May 28, 1929, we came to Texas two years later when my father was employed by the Sun Oil Co. during the East Texas oil boom. We lived in Sun Company's camp, which was off highway 80 four miles east of Gladewater, and ultimately consisted of approximately 40 houses. We attended school at White Oak through my freshman year when, in 1943, Sun Co. sent us to Hebronville – a town of 1500 people fifty miles east of Laredo. Our graduating class of 1945 was the largest in school history (J8) with eight Anglo boys – no girls. Five of us checked in at A & M the following fall where I met an NTAC graduate who told me about the school's Industrial Aviation Engineering course. That sounded like what I was looking for, since I had always been an aviation enthusiast, so I left in December and enrolled at NTAC in January.

At that time total enrollment was about 2500 with most of those being commuters (Day Dodgers), including veterans on the G.I. Bill, so the number of students living in Arlington was small and close-knit – everybody knew everybody. The PMS, Colonel Keltner, had been

a POW in the Philippines with the well-respected General Wainwright who paid us a “promotional” visit. The Sam Houston Rifles was reborn with David Sullivan elected commander — myself executive officer — and the unit represented the school well with our appearances in the “Battle of the Flowers” parades in San Antonio and our impressive burial team that presided over the final internment of KIAs from WW-II. Ray Price (before Cherokee Cowboys) was on campus in a naval aviation program, Morgan “Doc” Woodard (“No Eyes” in movie Cool Hand Luke) sang with us in the bass section of the choir, which also toured. In the dorm we had Dick Scott who is an accomplished senior citizen athlete, Dick Cavasos, Willard Latham, and Elmus Ussery who became generals, so NTAC, to be so small, cranked out some big successes.

My brother Pat enrolled in the fall of 1948 after my May departure. He and some other cadets subsequently joined the Marine Reserves to make some easy money, and then came Korea and the Reserves call-up in June. I drove from Silver, in West Texas, to Dallas Naval Air Station (Grand Prairie) to “see him off” and, upon hearing they had an empty slot in their unit – I filled it.

In August the unit (VMF-III) flew to El Toro, California where we were dispersed to bring various squadrons up to operational level. Pat, being a line mechanic, was sent to a fighter squadron and I, having no M.O.S., talked them into assigning me to the Combat Information Center in a radar outfit. Considering my oilfield experience, they wanted to put me to operating heavy equipment. I countered with the reminders of my aviation education and pilot’s license and, luckily for me, they relented.

In October orders came to send everybody who hadn’t been, to boot camp. Our platoon in San Diego consisted of 70 reserves from nearly every state, including Hawaii. After asking for people with R.O.T.C. experience the Drill Instructor chose a guy from Virginia Military Institute, Pat, me, and one other, for squad leaders. After three weeks at the Recruit Depot we moved north to Camp Matthews – rifle and weapons range. One day a few of us were ordered to report for interviews in a Corps-wide search for the most “Gung Ho Marine”. Since Pat joined for the money and I had just gone to visit and say “Adios” our candidacy probably never got off the ground. The interviewing officer (a Reservist also) turned out to be a petroleum engineer for Exxon and worked about 30 miles from my job with Sun Oil Co., so we had a friendly chat. He noticed in my bio that my father’s name and address was the same as the previously interviewed Brown. He said “Are you brothers”? Until now only the “boots” in the platoon knew the answer – not even the D.I.s. We had kept it quiet to prevent possible separation. He was amused by this, and then suddenly turned serious. He asked what I knew about the “KKK” – I said “nothing”. He said your brother’s bio includes ‘KKK’ as one of the organizations of which he’s a member”. I smilingly explained that the Kampus

Kadets Klub was a local campus organization — not national, like fraternities — and shouldn't have been on the biography. He was checking my story against Pat's, I guess.

Pat had quarterbacked Hebronville's football team for a couple years, so on the day we went to hand grenade familiarization, he threw the grenade (like a football) over the pit and the opposite berm – out of sight. The instructor, surprised at the distance, asked why he threw it so hard. His reply was "He didn't want to be close to it when it went off". Maybe an overdose of adrenaline?

We returned to San Diego and subsequent graduation. Our platoon was designated the "Honor Platoon" of the class and Pat and I were designated "Honor Men" of the platoon. Normally there is an "Honor Man", so this novelty was probably prompted by the potential P.R. that might be gleaned. All the N.T.A.C. cadets in the platoon left their mark on the Ohio D.I., and he was grateful.

We returned to our squadrons and ours was transferred to Camp Delmar (near Oceanside) where, in May, I was one of fifteen survivors of the capsizing of an Amtrak during a training exercise. We lost five. I volunteered for duty in Korea after which I was released from active duty in August 1952 – Pat in February 1952.

He returned to Arlington and became Corps commander. I went back to my job for about three years, then hired on with Baroid Well, logging and drilling fluids for eleven years, working in eight different states between here and Washington in the first twenty months. The remaining years were spent on the Gulf coast and offshore. I joined Union Carbide in 1965 and spent the next 22+ years at their Seadrift (TX) plant, retiring there.

We've lived in Port Lavaca since 1961 and took up RV camping in 1965, having since covered the U.S. mainland and Alaska. Now most summers are spent near Rocky Mountain fishing lakes.

We have a son, a daughter, five grandchildren, and a great-grandson. One grandson went through Army airborne and ranger schools, did a tour in Korea, and Bosnia, and is now a civilian in Germany. Two grandsons are in the Air Force. Our only granddaughter, Ginny Leigh King, just graduated in architecture at UTA – she is our guide when we visit the campus since I can't find the campus I left. But the memories are still there.