

John Putnam-World War II Memoir

I was 17 years old-out of high school and all my pals were either leaving for the service or are ready gone. I bravely marched myself to City Hall-(the draft board) and volunteered to serve. As a required part of my accepting an interim job at the Maynard Ammunition Depot, I was told by a gruff old Dr. that I had high blood pressure-he refused any further information since I wasn't paying for the required physical. Thus I developed "white coat syndrome", which I haven't to this very day. I was drafted immediately after my 18th birthday and flunked the physical-high blood pressure. I immediately reapplied and was on the bus back to Fort Devens when I met Nippy Weston, a classmate who had graduated with me the previous June. Nippy boasted that he would never be accepted as he was a diabetic and would not pass the physical. Alas, as we passed in our urine samples together, Nippy reiterated his confident boast. I was deemed 4F again (a diabetic). Nippy went off to serve our country-our bottles were mixed up my Dr. assured me that evening they could not have been a diabetic that morning and have been right miraculously cured within the same day. Back to the draft board and finally accepted on October 12th, 1943. During all of this mishmash I had applied to become a naval air pilot-took a mental and I.Q. test and had been accepted. My mother refused to sign(I was 17 at the time) as she felt it was too dangerous-my brother was already in the Army during my experiences that followed, I often wished for the security of an aircraft carrier and the safety of a plane.

So I was in the Army and I was training with the 16th armored division at Camp Chaffee Arkansas. As an 18-year-old kid from Boston I remember the many times I was awakened by a drunken fellow soldier (named "Bluebird", and American Indian) who would tip me out of the top of my two tiered bunk, and smile and say: "say it". I would shout, "Harvey Barker parked his car in the Harvard Yard." Bluebird, who could open to beer bottles simultaneously with his teeth, would roar laughing and I would put my bed back together and try to get some sleep. My best buddy, Dick Stebor, and I seem to be constantly out of step and pulled an inordinate amount of KP duty. One day we were assigned the lowly task of taking the ruts out of the company's parking area-this required moving vehicles on occasion. Stebor, not an experienced driver, had a slight "mishap" and later explain to the 1st Sgt., "I drove the captain's jeep into the captain's tank-there was no damage to the tank, however." Needless to say, the two of us served many hours paying for that little incident. Stebor and I volunteered for overseas duty-we truly felt we would miss the war. So off we went-cross the Atlantic in the slowest ship in a 60 ship convoy. We got on that crummy ship in New York late one night and went below to a room that looked like a cafeteria-long tables and benches. After four or five hours we asked a common with the bunks were-alas there were none-you slept wherever you could. We sneaked up on the deck and slept in a rope locker and thus avoid the stench of seasick GIs, which was everywhere below deck.

I suffered from bad dreams for a long time afterward as we had been told that a convoy would not stop for a man overboard, and thus, we were not allowed up on deck. As a pretty fair swimmer, I would dream of treading water as the 60 ships disappeared over the horizon-the thought still gives me chills, but during the 14 day voyage I never slept below decks.

Two weeks later it was Liverpool, then a train to Portsmouth and finally, a ship across the English channel to Omaha Beach.n we slept on the high ground above the beach near a sign that read, "this area not cleared of land mines". We went through several Repo Depos in France before Stebor and I went our separate ways. (I've never had contact with him since). I ended up in Company C. 630th Tank Destroyers Battalion. Our crew had 10 men, a 76 mm gun and a half track vehicle that pulled the towed gun. At the time I joined the company we were using the gun as an artillery piece and my first impression was that this war was kind of fun. While one could hear distant shellfire, our life consisted mostly of sitting around a campfire. This sitting around was at times enlivened when someone (many times me) would throw an unopened K. or C. ration (can't remember which after 55 years) can

of cheese into the fire. The heat would eventually cause the can to explode, spattering hot cheese over those assembled. We tired of this eventually and someone (not me) through a bowl it in, which exploded and hit one of the guys in the ear.

While I never met him, our lieutenant was disliked by one and all. I was asked to donate a buck for the pool which would go to the guy who would shoot him, but I would not go along with that idea. After a week or so, we moved out and suddenly the distant shellfire became much closer. We moved into the Hurtgen Forest under heavy shellfire and spent the first night rather safely in a farmhouse. At dusk the next day we moved across the street (up a slight incline to the crest of a hill) and set up our 76 mm gun in a field next to the barn. (We didn't get back to the gun for 21 days). I had become friendly with Don "Duck" Hight and he and I were bunk mates. Donald had no fear and while I was with him neither did I (he was 20 and I was 19 years of age). The barn sat atop the hill and had been hit by shells before our arrival. In the barn was a dead pig, which attracted a large number of rats. Eight members of our crew dug foxholes in the rear of the barn-Don and I made our sleeping quarters in a stall up front-facing the German guns and quite close to the pig and rats. The rats scurried over us at night, but Don was stubborn and I went along with his "We're not moving". The Germans shelled us constantly from atop the next hill, particularly if they saw any movement. Don and I took a walk every afternoon, which caused much discontent amongst our fellow crewmembers. We would sneak out the back of the barn as the German 88 shells would come zinging in. Don would say, "over-no sweat-show a-no sweat-this one's close, duck," as we would scrounge around the back side of the hill. This was my introduction to the war-dead bodies-dead animals-being scared and seeing all sorts of morbid destruction and desecration. It was a dead white course that attracted me and I used to jump up and down on his back legs-why are a member that I have no idea, but teenagers do strange things around the horrors of war-and I am certainly not proud of that. There were a number of dead bodies and I remember bringing a real nice German blanket back and giving it to our most squeamish crewmember. He used it until he left us, never knowingly had taken it off a dead Kraut.

Guard duty was not a popular pastime so when the 3rd Ranger Battalion came upon the scene Hight and I elected to skip our turn. We slept peacefully that night thinking the Rangers were alert. When we awoke there was a potato masher (hand grenade) at our feet-it was faulty and not exploded but the Germans had infiltrated all the way to our barn and the Rangers evidently were counting on us to stand guard. Henceforth, Hight and I pulled our stint of guard duty. The Rangers, who were noted for living on the edge, never did.

Each morning at dawn we would watch the German tanks lumber up to the top of their hill-watch their gun barrels recoil and hear the shells come slamming in. Somewhere around the 7th or 8th day we were in the bar-a shell hit the stall where Don and I had made our sleeping quarters-a piece of shrapnel burn in my little finger and I kept it for souvenir (since lost). Thus, the barn had a large hole in the wall forcing us to move to the back with the rest of the crew. This time Duck selected a spot at the base of a 20 foot cobblestone wall and all was bliss until a German shell hit the barn roof dislodging a couple of the topmost bricks. They hung precariously 20 feet over our heads. I suggested to Don that we move to a safer location-he responded that no damn German was going to make a move. I stuck with Don until the 13th day at which time I crawled into a foxhole with the guy to whom I'd given the German blanket! This was the only time I stayed in a foxhole during the war (willingly-sometimes you ordered to). Donald had a philosophy that if there was a German shell with your name on it, it would get you whether you were in a hole or not so why did a hole? So long as he was near me I bought his thinking 100%. Incidentally, he never moved from under the hanging brick and we stayed in that barn for 21 days.

The very first day we were in the Hurtgen Forest, staying in the house, I met Whitey (also fearless). He came bounding into the house and happily announced that the pole rewarding worker shot the lieutenant was to be returned. The lieutenant had been wounded by shellfire and therefore there would be no payoff! Whitey told the

story about himself leaving a bar stool in Reno Nevada and saying to the bartender, "save my seat. I'm going to join the Army." He listed his civilian occupation as hobo. When Don and I found he had not signed up for G.I. insurance we remedied the situation, making ourselves the beneficiaries.

After suffering heavy losses in the Hurtgen Forrest in early December we had been pulled back to a 27 mile holding line in the area where Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany meet. The skies were completely overcast and it snowed and rained constantly. We evacuated the hill under darkness that night and we dragged that damn gun off to a town where life was tranquil. It was a safe place to quiet our jangled nerves and get washed up. I remember going to a shower station-you got undressed (30 days in the same clothes, shirt collars that were actually black, terrible underwear, but nice clean socks-we always got a daily supply of clean socks, cigarettes, Hershey bars, Wrigley's gum-no matter what)-you showered and got clean clothes (all wrinkled) at the other end. From the shower station we hit a bar where I heard Glenn Miller was dead-truly I was shocked as it was the first time I'd heard a radio since I landed-I was a big Glenn Miller fan (funny, the things you remember)

back in the little town (can't remember the name) we started retraining. Thus, we lived in houses, but said our guns on a hill a half mile out of town behind a row of haystacks overlooking the one road that led into town. We had dug machine-gun foxholes on the forward side of the haystack and tucked the 76 mm slightly behind the haystack. Three guys would sleep on the hill (guard duty) and the remaining seven in the house. We were in a holding line 27 miles long in the Ardennes's area and reports from our reconnaissance company said there were large numbers of German troops just over the hills that bordered the town. Eventually, we left the house and all slept on the hill. At dawn on December 16, one of our crew, Doban by name-he was a large, obese regular army guy (not a draftee) woke me and told me to lay still as a convoy of German tanks was coming up the road. I asked, "Who's on the gun?" He replied, "Hight and Corporal Blizzard but don't move, you'll draw shellfire." I bravely arose (don't know where all this bravado came from) punched Doban in the face and said, "it takes three guys to fire the gun." I left Doban in the machine-gun foxhole and scurried over to the big gun where Blizzard said, "it's a Kraut tank-let's try 600 yards." I loaded a shell and Hight fired the gun. Blizzard said, "we went over-I'll try 500 yards," and we got a hit he held, "let's do it again." We did.

A German soldier leaped from the tank, which was now on fire-the German crewmen also ablaze ran back toward the second tank in the convoy and Blizzard said, "let's put him out of his misery." I loaded an anti-personnel shell, rather than an armor piercing shell, and we tried twice but I don't think we ever hit him. We next tried to get the second tank but could not traverse our gun that far to the right because of the haystack. The German convoy had to turn around and retreated a quarter of a mile behind a farmhouse and barn a lieutenant drove up in his Jeep and said, "great shooting, but you just hit an English tank." At that point the Germans began shelling our hill and everyone but Hight and I hit their foxholes that had been dug as part of the training exercise we gave blow-by-blow reports to our fellow crewmen "the haystack's on fire-the machine-gun just got blown up-the half track got hit and is burning, etc." It was a chaotic scene-three of the crew fled (one ran his trench knife through his hand and yelled, "I 'm wounded!") After the intense shelling I couldn't find Don Hight-he had crawled out to the tank we hit and reported back that it was a German tank with a swastika on its side. I was always puzzled that the other guns on the Hill didn't fire at the Germans. At any rate our unit was part of a Distinguished Unit Citation issued on February 14, 1967 (which I recently learned about) and I know of only three guys out of a whole hill full that did their thing. At dark that night we got another half track (from where I don't know) and pulled the gun out-put out a whole bunch of landmines and took off from that hill. We traveled about for 10 days staying a night or two in a town which we would encircle (like the covered wagon days). We picked up guys from other units who were shell shocked and lost-they would be with us a while and wander off Germans who could speak English were parachuted into our area and parts of our own parachute battalions joined us. It was a wild scene. The weather was overcast and freezing cold.

I pulled guard one night with Hight -it had drizzled all day and then got freezing cold-we did our three hours and Don went back to wake the next shift. Without Hight I started to hallucinate and saw paratroops land-almost shot at nothing-started to shiver-almost shot the two guys that replace me on the next shift, and when I finally got back to the house I stood my overcoat in a corner as it had frozen solid. The next morning we went out to start the half track-the engine started fine, but the tracks were frozen solid in the mud-we pushed, chipped, kicked and did all the logical things to get it out. Finally, a bright idea (either Don's or mine) a bit of gasoline poured around the tracks would solve the problem. We blew that half track up unfortunately and again, somehow, got another-rather amazing as we were cut off from any of the troops at the time. No cigarettes or dry socks as we had prior to the Bulge.

At one point during the Battle of the Bulge we were in a house where Donald suspected subversive activity. (God knows where he got that thought). At any rate, we reaped a bit of havoc with our trench knives looking for trip wires, booby-traps, hidden bombs and the like. Out of the blue comes in American officer who read us the riot act that some civilians who complained of damage to their home and the expense our country would incur-baffling when one thinks we were cut off from the rear lines. After the lieutenants dressing down, Don sought revenge. We went to Mike the medic. (Mike always carried two hand grenades in his medical supply kit. He said he wasn't completely dedicated to caring for the wounded). We obtained from him a supply of Brown bombers (a laxative known only to Army veterans). We cut them ground up the bombers into fine particles and sprinkle them freely in the tea and pepper that we found the cupboards. Alas, God was to even the score when I record the raisin caper later in these memoirs

Things became rather grim one a guy who had fake dead at the Malmedy tragedy, joined us a day or so after it occurred. The Germans were so frustrated by being delayed, they took 75 prisoners and turned the machine-gun on them in the center of a little town called Malmedy. We had been in Malmedy a week or two before. The Malmedy Tragedy reinforces something that I have always suspected, or I just known, that some of the Germans were using some kind of drugs during the Battle of the Bulge. Donald and I, in our scrounging, had found needles and vials on dead Germans. When the Bulge was over we retook some of the territory that had been lost-in his foraging, Don came upon a cellar where three mothers and several babies and small children had been killed. The mothers had been split up their middle; the children held by their feet and bashed against the cellar's rock walls. We presume that these women had fraternized with first the Germans and then the allies and thus were brutalized when the Germans returned-rather doubt that this would have happened had drugs not been involved. To this day, I cannot recall the Donald or I informed anyone-by then we were rather hardened to death.

The sun finally came out and the Battle of the Bulge ended. The sky was filled with Allied planes for two days, which broke the German resolve and cut off their supplies. It was an experience that I'm glad I lived through, but would never want to do it again. My opinion, after all these years, is that we Americans are pretty good at attacking but not so good at retrieving and that 18, 19, and 20 year olds make the best soldiers.

Don and I developed an approach when we took over a new town-we went from door to door and announced, "Photo opera and boom-boom verboten."We thus developed quite a collection of pistols and cameras. Don enjoyed them-I never had an appetite for either, but then again, he was a leader and I was a follower.

We were finally back with the 28th division after 30 odd days. However, we were quickly moved south and became attached to the First French army in the Alsace Lorraine area. The French had a large element of the Algerian troops who crept around at night like snakes and slit the enemy's throats with their knives. While it was nice to have them on our side, it also drove around at night in their jeeps with the headlights on. This drew German

shellfire, which was very unpleasant. We would gather rocks and when they passed our area we would try to knock out the headlights-they would wave and honk their horns. It is kind of humorous in retrospect.

We finally took our major objective-the city of Colmar in western France. As was our usual habit, we looked for an inviting cellar to sleep in. What we found was a cellar that had been the former German command post-a section of the cellar was protected by chickenwire-the remainder had bunks and straw areas for sleeping. We found within the chickenwired area a large supply of bottled wine as well as a supply of fine wine glasses. We innocently started with a toast to our good fortune, which led to many more toasts. This led to throwing the wineglass against the stone cell wall after each toast. As we warmed to party activity, Snyder (the guy to whom we gave the blanket and who now had combat fatigue), we said to Don Hight, "I think I'll slit your throat." Donald responded that he doubted that Snyder would do a neat job. Snyder then took a full wine bottle and hit Donald over the head. Total collapse. Doban (who I had punched in the face of the Battle of the Bulge) grabbed my Thompson submachine gun (being a tanker, not a tank destroyer replacement, I was the only one issued this weapon). He said, "I'll take care of Snyder". I again punched Doban in the face and raced outside and threw the gun as far away as I could saying, "you shoot this gun and it will kill us all with the ricochets in a stone cellar." John Sahagen, a teetotaler, leaped from his upper bunk and subdued Snyder. However, he tipped over a candle in doing so and soon the hay was ablaze. At this stage, Hight had turned purple. It took a while, but order was restored-Snyder got locked in behind the chickenwire and passed out. The fire was put out and Hight slowly was revived later that night, Don and I went to the captain and pleaded our case. "Get Snyder out of here or we will." Snyder left the next day-never to be heard from again. Don and I had a heart to heart three guys that ran during the Battle of the Bulge. We let them know that we didn't like pulling their guard duty, etc., and that they would never make 200 yards if they did it again. We had the Thompson machine gun.

We took another small town a few days later and Donna and I went off on our "photo opera and boom boom verboten" kick. We pounded on one door at the most prestigious house in town and it was opened by a German soldier-inside they were 30 or so German officers who were dressing in preparation for formally surrendering their command. The humorous part of the story was the fact that Hight and I had neglected to carry our own guns so we smile politely and made a hasty exit. We ran like mad to our Lieutenant and told him that he'd best go to the house and do the surrender but formally.

Another funny memory was finding a case of German hand grenades (they resembled and were called potato mashers). We had accepted the Germans surrender of the town and things were pretty quiet. Don said, "let's go fishing" and so we found a pond not too far out of town. I remember sitting against a stone wall and leisurely tossing hand grenades into the water, which caused the dead fish to float to the surface. The lieutenant and a bunch of guys came charging up thinking that a pocket of German resistance had ignited. Needless to say, Don I got a dressing down from the Lieutenant.

This brings to mind another humorous Don Hight episode-where it happened I don't remember, but Don approached me carrying a 5 pound box of raisins that he had snatched from the company kitchen. The two of us sat down and polished off the entire box. Rest assured, nature took its course and we were extremely ill for several days. Another humorous incident was the time the sergeant's jeep driver ran into and killed a cow. The cooks featured steak that night. There evidently is some processing needed to tenderize stake as what was served was not chewable. I can still picture 100 guys sitting on the side of a hill-no conversation-each guy chewing and trying like heck to enjoy this rare delicacy.

Our next move was to pull back to get brand-new self-propelled vehicles. Tank destroyers are basically a tank with the top of the turret open-we put logs on the top to protect ourselves from shrapnel from air timed mortar

bursts. These new vehicles had a 90 mm gun versus the 76 mm we had been towing with our half tracks, thus we were on a more level playing field with the Germans 88 mm guns. These tanks are fairly easy to drive except on cobblestones where the steel tracks have no traction. Charles Witkowski, an assistant driver and radioman, told a funny story. We were in a convoy going through a little village one night-Charles was in the tank in front of the one I was driving. We came to a sharp turn in the road. Charlie's tank went directly into a house. Charles said they sat there in darkness half in half out of the living room-a little man with a candle started down the stairs from the second-floor. He wore a striped nightshirt and matched sleeping hat. He looked about his partially demolished living room and shyly waved his one hand in greeting. Charlie and his driver returned the wave-closed the hatches on the tank-backed up and the house fell down. I could not see what went on inside the house but I can attest that Charlie's is a true story.

Descendent of my memoirs makes me wonder how the Allies ever won the war. Company C. of the 630th Tank Destroyer battalion was ordered to Bordeaux, France, which is close to the border of Spain, to clean up a pocket of Germans that still remained there. Since we were in Germany at the time, this entailed our loading the tank destroyers on railroad flat cars and traveling across France. We slept on the flat car floor near the tanks. Each time we hit a railroad station much bartering was done with the locals for wine and cognac-a goodly number of the guys were left at these various stations as they got into their wine. When we got to Bordeaux we were told, "We want Company C. from some field artillery outfit-not tank destroyers. Thus we started the long trip back. Don and I were sitting in driver and assistant driver seat in our tank-the tanks faced to the rear of the flat car, when Don suggested we get ourselves a cup of hot chocolate. (We had scrounged blowtorches and could make hot chocolate almost instantly in our canteen cups.) Unfortunately, as I stood up after getting up on the outside of the tank, the train passed under a bridge. Had I stood up a few seconds earlier I would have been knocked off the flat car and under the wheels of the next car. I had straightened up while passing under the bridge. I was conscious, but bleeding profusely-on my hands and knees on the floor of the flat car. Donald said some inane thing, "I know what to do," and proceeded to take a 5 gallon water cannon and pour it all over me. This served little purpose other than to get me soaking wet. Fortunately, we were entering a station and I was whisked away to an aid station where very friendly medic's gave me a ton of Novocain-stitched me up and sent word back to the train that I couldn't be moved. Our Captain sent word back that we had lost so many guys along the way he was not about to give up one more. There were several jeep trips with messages back and forth-the medics told me it was a great town and I'd have a ball but, alas, the Captain won out and I was returned to the train. However, now I've rode in the passenger car with our officers and the train conductor. I remember having a horrible headache and couldn't sleep through the night I watched the French conductor steal all my cigarettes, but I could've cared less when we rejoined the rest of the 630th I had to have the bandage changed and got Dr. Waring (the brother of Fred Waring, a well-known chorale director). Dr. Waring was teaching some new recruits and got kind of swept away in bandaging my head. I looked like an oriental man (eyes all pulled up) and there must have been 75 yards of bandage on my head. I did however get the good doctor's okay that I would not have to wear my steel helmet (it weighed a ton)

We were to go into action the next day in the Ruhr pocket. If one is sane, one does not going into battle with one's head adorned with 75 yards of white bandage as one would draw all kinds of enemy fire. I went to Mike the medic (he of hand grenade fame) and he removed all the bandages and put some kind of plaster of paris stuff on. It worked fine until we had to take it off. As I recall, we kind of check it off (very painful). I remember being a radioman in that attack and we were to keep radio silence allowing the Capt. to direct the tanks. Out of the blue came the voice of Snake Fur-he had been my sergeant since the Hurtgen Forest, but had been going downhill ever since. Snake was now a private and suffering from combat fatigue. At any rate, he came over the radio network with a, "this is Cane Able 1-can you read me?" And repeated several times and he gave us his rendition of, "The Block Island line is the line to drive" (Snake's favorite song). Since he drank coffee 24 hours a day, we always

wondered if it was combat fatigue or caffeine syndrome. Alas, we never saw Snake again after that attack.

The whole attack was rather humorous as it occurred in the Ruhr Pocket-the Germans were completely encircled and miles from the front which was close to Berlin. Thus we rolled through each town with no resistance-many German soldiers with hands above their heads were bypassed on occasion a large German soldier dressed in youthful shorts and suspenders would be bypassed as he tried to pass himself off as an innocent teenager. We ended our combat experience on a rather low note with no German resistance.

From this point, most of our tank destroyer crews went home as they had far more points than I who had put in less time and saw less combat. Replacements came in to keep Company C. at full strength. The most memorable was Earl Torgeson, who we eventually played first base for the Boston Braves and ended his baseball career with the New York Yankees. Earl and I became buddies because he liked to sing and I could harmonize. Earl played first base in minor league ball in the Pacific Coast League-but drafted-didn't like it and went AWOL and became a pitcher under an assumed name until he was found out. He was a gifted athlete. He told a humorous story about his Army experience. He got into an altercation with an officer and punched him out, which led to his being put into solitary confinement. Being athletic and in extremely small cell, he found he could extend his arms and walk up the walls, ceiling and floor. The guards looked through the peep hole and found Earl winking back at them upside down. As a result, he was hospitalized for psychological evaluation. He took several hard-boiled eggs from the hospital cafeteria following breakfast one morning as he went to his appointment with a psychiatrist. Since Earl was kept waiting, he reached into his bathrobe pocket and started to practice his skills as a juggler. When the doctor entered the room Earl was given a choice of going overseas or going into an institution. He elected to go overseas-he never talked to me about any combat experience.

We were guarding a bunch of Germans who had been wounded and Earl was recreation director. We had the worst soccer team in the league as each player had but one leg. Earl handled his job with much good humor and I did get to see him when he was a major-league ballplayer after the war. He was the same guy I knew way back then. One thing I remember of Torgie was his winning \$4000 in the never ending poker game that took place on the ship home. He came to me with his winnings. I advised him to get some sleep and get out of the game. He did the first, but unfortunately went back to the game and was broke when we landed in New York.

Another memory of Earl was his stealing a jeep from another rather famous athlete, who was a boxer-a sparring partner for Billy Conn, a heavyweight contender, who I think fought Joe Louis. This guy took offense and came over to our barracks and challenged Earle to a fight. Unfortunately, Earl lost his glasses (he had very poor eyesight) and took a terrible beating. When he regained consciousness Earl went to the quarters of his opponent and sat outside his barracks door. After three days the boxer came out to face or a (now with glasses on). Earl beat this professional boxer to a pulp-he was truly a natural athlete who could do anything and with a sense of humor. I have fond memories of Earl, who really liked to sing. (In 1998 I visited Snohomish Washington and found that Earl had died).

From New York, I went to Fort Devens, Massachusetts and was discharged with a notation that I had high blood pressure. A cousin from Clinton Massachusetts drove me home to mom grow since we had no car. My mother had problems dealing with me, at times, I would stay out late. She still thought of me as an 18-year-old kid and I was a 21-year-old combat veteran. I am rolled in the 52/20 Club (the government paid us \$20 for 52 weeks while we became acclimated to civilian life) I spent that time planning the family home, burying the ensemble as they passed on and having a ball at Hampton Beach during the summers of my friends were going to college (which was free if you were a veteran so I left it to give it a whirl).