

Message in a Bottle

A Biographical Series on Tyler County Folks

by Michael G. Maness — Maness3@att.net

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Lt. Colonel Paul Miller – Gooney Bird Pilot

[Part One](#) – published 9-15-11, 6A

A resident of Tyler County, Paul Miller has been to some unusual places throughout his 89 years.

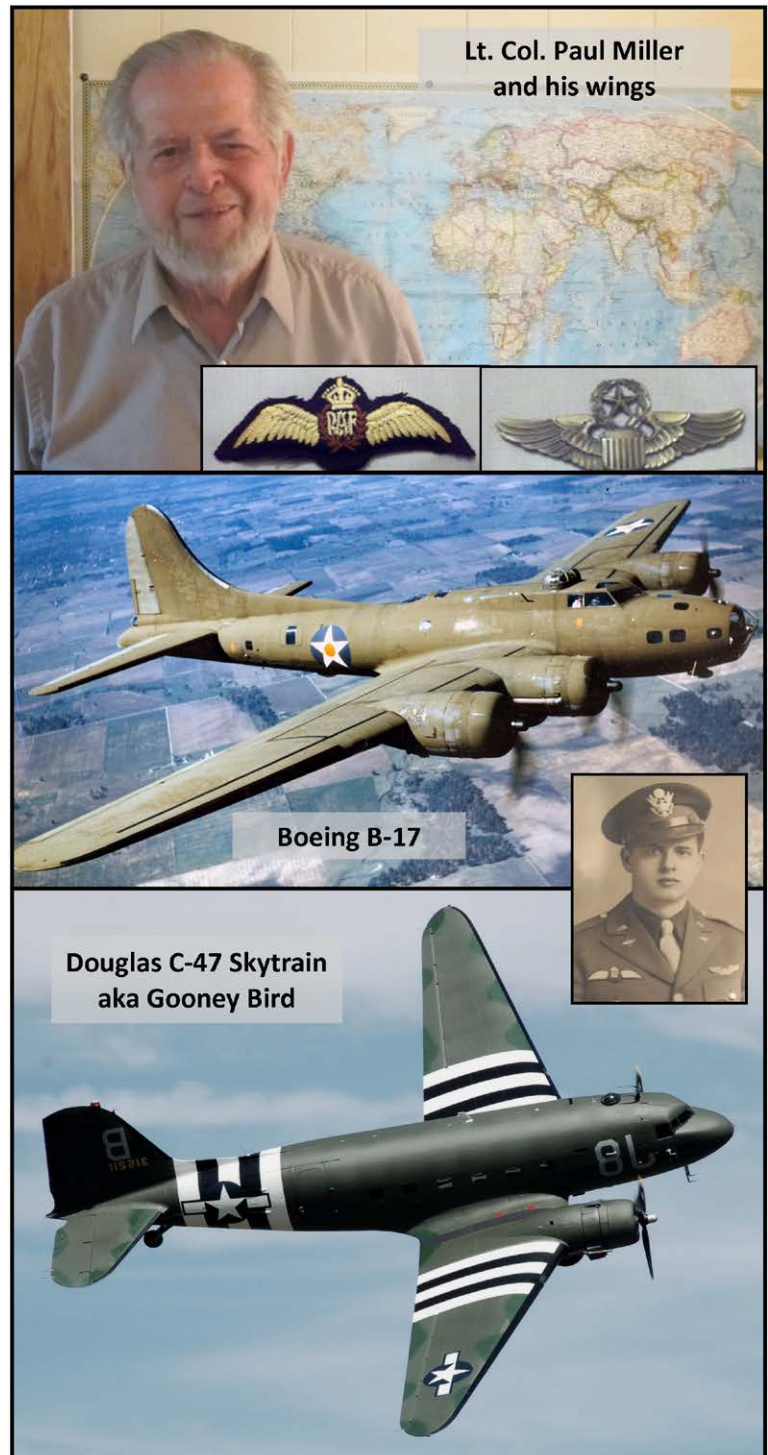
He even has some Indian blood in him, as his great grandfather led a wagon train that was attacked by Indians, forcing the great grandfather to live with the Indians for eight years and marry into the tribe.

Paul was born in north central Missouri during a snow storm with no doctor in attendance. After high school, he got a job at a steel mill, then went to college for two years.

He got a job at Aircraft Accessories in Kansas City, Missouri, which made radio transmitters for the U.S. Army and watched it grow from 11 to 1,100 employees.

When it became apparent that the U.S. would enter WWII, and was woefully short on pilots in 1939, the government started the Civilian Pilot Training program (CPT). Always eager to learn, Paul forged his father's signature on the permit to fly and began flying and, it seems, he did not touch down for about fifty more years.

Toward the end of his time with Aircraft Accessories, Paul was in charge of 200 employees on the production line. With his pilot's license in hand and 40 hours of flying time, he enlisted in the Army Air Corp in October of 1942 – a mere 20 years old.



“People have been so good to me all of my life,” he reflected and repeated, as he never had trouble finding a job or getting the job done. His motto has been, “I would work a job for six months. If I felt like I did not want to stay there all my life, I would quit.” He guesses he has had a dozen jobs he cannot remember today.

“I’ve always been a rebel,” he seriously notes. As his story unfolded, what he actually meant was that he was a bit loose when it came to picking superiors. Paul flew independently of the bureaucrats and was quick to note dishonorable or dangerous behavior. And he still does.

President Roosevelt called up 10,000 Air Corp reservists in January of 1943. Preparations were haphazard at best. At Jefferson Barracks Army Air Corp Base near St. Louis, Missouri, a blue northern had arrived. “We had no cold weather clothing or bedding,” Paul recalled. “The tar-paper huts could not keep out the cold and we wrapped newspapers around ourselves to keep warm. Since I was the only one who could keep the old WWI conical stove going on coal (it was made to burn coke), I became the official fireman, often being wakened when it needed stoking, and so I chose not to do any other barracks duties.”

While on guard duty at Jefferson Barracks, Paul was approached by “a 90-day wonder” duty officer and his assistant, the term used for those the Army made officers after 90 days and who often knew little more than the men under them. Army regulations demanded that the duty officer *request* to see his weapon first, before inspecting it. But this officer just tried to grab the weapon from Paul’s hands! Bad idea. Paul quickly swung the rifle butt around smacking the duty officer solidly in the head, knocking him out. The assistant yelled, “You killed him, you killed him, you killed the duty officer!” Paul said, “No, he’ll be okay.”

Reflecting on that night, Paul said, “I never did like that officer anyway.”

When it was time to be checked out for the trip to the Pre-Aviation Cadet Training Base in San Antonio (now Lackland AFB), Paul had a fever. Knowing he would fail, he held the thermometer between his teeth. Not sure that would work, toward the end the line, he asked a buddy if he could trade their thermometers, and in the nick of time he passed his physical.

Next stop – the British ran a Royal Air Force (RAF) pilot training program near Terrell, Texas. During this program, he experienced one of several true miracles in his life.

One day and for no particular reason, “I woke up scared of flying.” An anxiety attack – he had never had one before, as few things really disturbed him. He went on sick call and the doctor let him off. At precisely five minutes to 11:00 AM, the bad feeling left. “I ran out to the flight line,” he said, about a fifty yards, and demanded, “Give me a plane.” But his plane was already gone. On the way back to the barracks, Paul heard sirens and saw the meat-wagon (ambulance) racing by; he knew there had been an accident. Paul found out that two Stearman bi-planes had collided, killing three persons. “The next day,” Paul said, “I found out that one of the pilots had died in *my plane*.” He asked about the time of the crash – exactly five minutes to 11:00 AM.”

A miracle!

They trained on PT-17 Stearman bi-wing planes and moved up to the 610 horse power AT-6s. And Paul got his RAF wings, a real honor in those days and on the international scene to have those wings next to his U.S. wings.

“I loved to fly,” he said, “particularly acrobatics.”

The Army Air Corp assigned him to flying new B-17s from Boeing's aircraft plant in Seattle, Washington, to modification plants in Great Falls, Montana; Cheyenne, Wyoming; Kearny, Nebraska, and other places. After delivery, he would take a civilian airline back to Seattle or Great Falls, or wherever they needed him.

On one run from Seattle to Great Falls, Paul wanted to check out the belly gun turret of the B-17. On the ground, the guns had to be pointed level with the plane. To get down into the gun turret, the guns had to be electrically rotated downward while in flight, which opened the hatch for the gunner to climb down into the turret. While in flight, and to get the feel of operating the guns, Paul left the plane in the hands of a novice co-pilot and climbed down into the belly turret and played around a while. A circuit breaker blew, and the turret remained stuck in a position that prohibited re-entry into the plane. Paul, the pilot, was stranded in the belly turret.

When they got close to their destination, Paul instructed the crew to tell the tower they were going to practice instrument flying for a bit. Meanwhile, the flight engineer tried to find the blown circuit breaker, so they could get Paul back into the cockpit. He did get back into the pilot's seat in time to land the plane.

He flew B-17s, B-24s, B-25s, B-26s, C-46s, C47s, C-119s, C-124s, and other aircraft. Seems like he could fly anything.

The C-124 was the largest cargo plane at the time, with three decks and capable of carrying 200 fully outfitted soldiers. Thirty-five feet from the cockpit to the ground, it was a monster affectionately nicknamed "Old Shaky" because its fuselage skin rippled in flight. It was so large, a grown person could get to its four engines from inside the wing. One time they had engine trouble. After shutting one inboard engine down, letting it cool, Paul and two others went through wing to replace a fuel pump while in flight!

"On one B-17 run from Cheyenne to Kearny, Nebraska, I took a nap," Paul said. "When I woke up, I found the co-pilot and engineer asleep too. Thank God for the auto-pilot. When I turned the ADF (automatic direction finding radio) on, I found we had *passed* Kearny about 35 miles. We turned around and flew back. As we came in, the tower operator asked, 'Have a good flight?'"

"Sure did," Paul said.

"Did you see a B-17 around? One just flew by at about 4,000 feet."

"No ... I missed that." That was the truth, too, Paul had *not* seen any B-17s flying by.

Two Army airlines were set up during WWII, "Snowball" running up and across the northern Atlantic via Newfoundland and Iceland to England and "Fireball" running to South America and across the Atlantic to Africa and India. Paul was transferred to Fireball and flew converted B-24s from Miami to Puerto Rico and down to Belém, Brazil, then about 1,400 miles east of the South American coast across the Atlantic to Ascension Island, and on to Accra (largest city in today's Ghana) on the coast of Africa continuing to India by one of two routes, either through Marrakech (or Marrakesh the "red city") in Morocco to Cairo, or up the coast to Dakar to Casablanca in Morocco and to Cairo. From Cairo, they would fly to Abadan in Iran and would have to wait for sundown to take off for India. Because in the summer the daytime temperature could get to 130 degrees, the ground crew would not fill the planes with fuel until it was cooler. Good reason to be called Fireball airlines.

Another miracle happened off the African coast in the Gulf of Guinea at Accra which Paul said was "the most beautiful beach in the world." "I had swum far out with my surf board,

waiting for a good wave. The sea suddenly got very rough with waves 12 to 15 feet high. I missed the next wave, lost my board, and drifted farther out to sea. About 12 or 14 of the African lifeguards came after me. The lead one with a rope in his mouth, then one followed, one after another, until they were strung out a distance of about 100 yards apart, all to reach me. The rope was used to pull me and them back in against the fierce ocean current. I remember very clearly the first one getting about 20 feet from me before I passed out,” Paul said shaking his head. They pulled him in and resuscitated him back to life. Any longer, and he would have died in Accra on that beautiful beach.

Another miracle!

While on the Fireball run at an overnight stop in Puerto Rico, Paul, his crew, and some passengers went into San Juan to do the hot spots. The Seventh Fleet was also in town and sailors were everywhere. Paul and his friends entered on elaborate bar and noticed that most of the crowd drifted upstairs. Soon Paul was nearly alone at the bar. He ordered a fifth of Puerto Rican rum and sat watching the people and sampling the rum.

There were some things here and at many places that he did not want repeated. “I have a good reputation in Tyler County,” Paul said, and even after sixty years he was still concerned about some of his rebellious ways.

After time in that rather posh bar, and thinking about some family problems, he climbed the stairs to admire the tropical furnishings and decorated walls. A lone woman followed him. As he listened down the long hallway, he could hear through the thin walls what was going on – no doubt about the entertainment there. The woman showed him *her* room, but he was not interested in the entertainment, and finally just told to her to “get lost.” He wanted the room to himself for a while as he was pondering some family struggles: “I just wanted to take a nap,” he said, entering the room and sitting on the bed.

As he sipped the rum, a thought struck Paul that made him laugh out loud. What if a fire broke out? Beginning at the far end of the hall, he proceeded toward the stairs yelling, “Fire! Fire! Fire!” while pounding on the doors on one side and striking the doors on the other side with his bottle of rum.

At the end of the hall, Paul stopped and watched as men and women started coming out of the rooms, of every race and color imaginable and mostly naked.

At the bottom of the stairs the bouncers grabbed Paul and escorted him outside. By the time the fire truck arrived Paul was being put into a paddy wagon, laughing his heart out ... as semi-clad and naked men and women – as “naked men and women of every color” he emphasized – were pouring out into the street.

In the paddy wagon, Paul bribed the officers and was released down the street. What a way to forget one’s troubles, and, of course, Paul was still laughing. (See the grin on his face in the photo.)

One had to complete six Fireball trips to India and return for a complete “tour,” and Paul completed two tours.

After flying with Fireball, he was stationed in China, but *not* because of the incident in Puerto Rico!

One senior officer in China had taken over Paul’s jeep. Paul had spent a lot of time restoring the wrecked piece of junk, even getting fellow pilots who flew “the hump” over the Himalayas from India to ferry critical parts back to him in China. The wrecked jeep had been deleted from inventory anyway. After Paul had fully restored it, his CO commandeered it and

gave it to another officer on the base. Not surprisingly, a few nights later, the empty jeep rolled off a cliff, returning to its original condition.

“I was always a rebel,” he recollected, though he did deliver a lot of planes and hauled a lot of people to some obscure places. Even to this day, he is reluctant to share some things, guards his honor, yet still gets a kick out of some of his own stories where a particularly knuckleheaded individual needed help or correction. Paul has always been ready to help there.

In July of 1947, the Army Air Corp was renamed the U.S. Air Force with new blue uniforms.

After China and about six months in the states, Paul was transferred to Europe to fly the Army version of the civilian air routes until the U.S. air lines established European bases and were set up to take over. Without clear thinking, the Army set such high standards of performance, experience, total flying hours, etc., that only sixteen of the approximately 200 U.S. pilots in Europe were able to qualify as First Pilots. Paul was among the sixteen.

Paul came to this elite flying corps after having spent some time in France with some C-47 instrument flying. “I did not see the ground for ten weeks,” he said, referring to how good one had to be to take off and land a plane solely on instruments. He got very good at it.

During one month, the sixteen First Pilots were put through a series of tests. Who was the best all-around pilot in all aspects of flying the C-47 in Europe? Paul came in second. (His modesty prevented us from sharing how he might have been first.) He was never obsessed with being first or the greatest, though he did come in first many times.

“We First Pilots would meet and decide among ourselves who would fly which routes for the next month,” he said. “We did that a lot. I flew the run from Frankfurt to Paris to London, and for a couple of months stayed overnight many times in each city. When I got tired of London, I would switch to a Frankfurt-London-Paris run, and spend more time in Paris. Spent about 40 or 50 nights in London and about the same in Paris. Lots to do there.” If higher authority objected to our flight plans, one or two of us would go on sick call causing cancelled flights and embarrassment to the staff. After a couple of those, if a superior objected to our chosen routes, all the First Pilots had to do was threaten a sick call, and before long they just let the pilots make and keep the schedule going. And they did – they were not called *First Pilots* for nothing.

When the U.S. civilian airlines took over, Paul was assigned to fly V.I.P.s (very important persons) like generals, congressmen and other officials on tours of Europe. One such person was Under Secretary of War Peterson who outranked a five-star general. A specially built C-47 was assigned to Paul, which could feed and sleep six comfortably. On one occasion, we were escorted by five Russian fighters from Vienna over Russian controlled territory to Berlin. “The Russians were taking no chances,” Paul said. “They did not want anything to happen to Mr. Peterson.”

“I got paid to do what I would have done for free,” Paul said.

Paul earned his wings seen in the photo. The star meant he had flown at least 10,000 hours and included a given amount of instrument flying. The wreath over the star meant that he was a Command Pilot with his own clearance authority.

Paul was among the elite with over 1,500 hours in the B-17 and about 12,000 hours in the C-47 Gooney Bird, not counting other planes. The Douglas C-47 Skytrain Military Transport, aka the Gooney Bird, was developed from the Douglas DC-2 and DC-3 airliners. Like the

Albatross, it was a little ungainly on the ground but graceful in the air, and so the affectionate and universal nickname came to be the “Gooney Bird.” General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe, said it was one of the most vital pieces of equipment used in winning the war (see www.Boeing.com/history/mdc/skytrain.htm).

Back in Texas at Randolph AFB near San Antonio, he met Clellion Marshall who had grown up near Woodville, Texas, and would become his wife and the love of his life. They shared 53 years together. She was a nurse at Brooke General Hospital in San Antonio. Her nickname was “Bill,” something carried over from her childhood as her father gave all the girls male nicknames.

In the armed forces, all the equipment, vehicles, etc., must be signed for by some individual. Paul was responsible for all of the aircraft at Randolph, hundreds of them, and he had to sign off on each one. Since “he owned them,” as Paul put it, he frequently took trips. He flew his beloved Clellion all over the U.S. for trips to Kansas City, Denver, Beaumont, and more.

“I loved to fly,” he repeated.

Part Two – published 9-22-11, 4B

In Part One, we traced Paul’s career from Kansas City, Missouri, through his extensive flying for the Air Force all over the world, including the early development of the B-17 and then the C-47, aka, the Gooney Bird. Now we move stateside for the latter half of his life.

After a period as a squadron commander at the newly activated Las Vegas AFB, Paul was assigned to fly Air Sea Rescue operations up and down the Aleutian Chain of islands in a specially outfitted B-17 with a sea-worthy 38-foot lifeboat attached to its belly. The 10th Air Sea Rescue Squadron was headed by Norwegian ski champion Brent Balkun, the only civilian made a U.S. citizen by an act of congress. Paul participated in several rescues before returning to the states.

When he requested relief from active duty the 10th Rescue informed Paul that his B-17 would be flown to Cheyenne, Wyoming, for maintenance later that month and that Paul could join the flight as a crew member. This would save considerable air fare. However, the Air Force shuttle plane would land in two days at Adak, the westernmost municipality in the United States and the southernmost city in Alaska, on its way back through the Aleutian chain to Anchorage. Paul was in a quandary. Should he leave now or wait two weeks for a free trip to Central U.S.A.? Again, the Lord took over and Paul rode the shuttle and commercial airline back to Kansas City, Missouri, which meant someone else would fly his B-17 flight onto Cheyenne. Five days after Paul boarded the shuttle, the B-17 that had been assigned to him was reassigned to another pilot to make a night bad-weather departure from Adak with eight persons aboard (doctor, nurses, corpsman, and crew) for an emergency injury on Shemya Island (or Simiya) on the western edge of the Aleutian chain. The plane crashed on big Sitka Mountain immediately after takeoff. There were no survivors. Paul shook his head and said, “I had made several Adak departures under similar weather conditions without incident. I have often wondered that if I had waited ... would that crash have occurred?”

After returning home, he reluctantly accepted a job with Tom Slick’s Slick Airways the next day. Slick flew C-46s from coast to coast and north and south to the borders and was one of the first cargo airlines. The C-46s with their two 2,000 hp engines were nearly twice the size of the C-47s with their 1,100 hp engines.

Paul flew mostly from Chicago to New York and back. He got to “enjoy,” he said with a touch of irony, “all the icing, bad weather, and heavy traffic of the northeast.”

On one cold day in New York City, he was navigating the icy sidewalk when he noticed an older lady about 60-plus years of age was struggling on the ground. She was about a hundred yards ahead him. As he drew near, Paul could see that she had fallen and was struggling to get up, but the ice was too slippery. He continued down the street and noticed that no one bothered to help her. As he got to her, he steadied himself and helped her to her feet and to her bus stop. With a tear in his eye Paul said, “My father would have whipped me black and blue if I had passed that lady by and *not* helped her!” Paul was still upset at that incident, and said, “That helped me decide that I would never live in a city like that.” And we in Tyler County lucked out.

After several months of mostly laying over in New York or Newark between flights, Paul heard that Slick had equipped a Loadstar (smaller passenger plane) replacing the stock 800 horse power engines with 2,000 horse power engines, extra fuel capacity, and other modifications for a trip to the Himalayas to look for the abominable snowman. Paul immediately requested the pilot’s job for that trip and got approval to go to San Antonio for an interview to fly the Loadstar.

“I had plans to interview for the job of flying Slick,” said Paul, “But my oldest daughter got so sick, thought she was dying, so I put everything off. When she got better, I headed for San Antonio and Slick’s headquarters. But the job of hunting for the Snowman was taken.” He would have really liked to have flown that trip.

Tom Slick inherited a fortune from his father, Tom Slick Sr., and invested much and set up flying freight. Slick planned many expeditions to find creatures of doubtful existence and even sponsored some mind-over-matter research institutions, some that still exist today investigating paranormal activity. Slick hunted for the Loch Ness Monster, Sumatran rhinos, and Trinity Alps’ Giant Salamanders, but his most famous hunt began in 1957 for the Abominable Snowmen, the Yeti of the Himalayan Mountains or its North American counterpart the Sasquatch. For more read Loren Coleman’s *Tom Slick and the Search for Yeti* (1989), and therein one will find that Tom Slick was far *less* grounded than the pilot Paul Miller.

Since he was already in Texas and had not finished college, Paul entered Texas A. & M on the G.I. Bill majoring in agriculture with 20 hours. He maintained a 3.54 grade-point average and was exempted from the finals, when Dean Shepherd called Paul in and advised him to quit school; the dean said Paul was wasting his time.

With a wife, two daughters and a full schedule, their living was very austere with only \$108 allowed on the G.I. monthly allotment, and for a time he supplemented that with work at a local garage.

When asked about her father for this article, his oldest daughter Donna was speechless, at first. Lots of memories. She was a bit of a rebel, but quickly conceded that her father was “very, very hard working. My grandfather too.” A little hesitant, because of her respect for him, she finally said, “He raised us to think we could be a success at anything we put our minds to.”

Wanda, Paul’s second child, said, “We were taught by example how to treat other people, to show respect and consideration.” It was a struggle to find the words of respect she had for her father. Wanda continued, “I could not expect every male to live up to those expectations

and high standards. Comparing him others was not quite fair because he had so much experience. He always set the example by taking us to church and taking care of responsibilities. I was a little slow to see that. Nowadays, he has slowed down some.”

After the school semester was over, Paul gladly accepted a job dusting cotton. “I never dusted more than three hours a morning or made less than a \$100 a day. Pay day was a blessing. But, believe me, crop dusting is not for the faint of heart,” said Paul. “Each one of the other pilots had clipped a wire, fence, or phone line that summer. But I did it up brown. I tangled with some hot wires and 4,800 volts and had to hide from the utility company for a few days.” Two of the wires cut through portions of the wing and fuselage. As the plane lost its ability to fly, Paul guided it down into a field, with a portion of the power line stuck in the plane and whipping through the cockpit, hitting and cutting his leg. “I still carry a couple of scars from that day.”

Paul next flew for Trans Texas Airways for a couple of years. Scheduled routine flying got boring, so for twice his salary he accepted a job as a pilot for Stanolind Oil and Gas in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Stanolind owned three B-26s, a Dove (eight passenger English plane), a Loadstar, and a twin Beech. Paul flew them all, but mostly a B-26, often with Mr. Bullard, president of Stanolind, or Mr. Prior, president of Standard Oil of Indiana as passengers. “Both were fine gentlemen,” he said.

During his time with Stanolind the company required him to get physical exams, two on the same day from a company doctor and an outside clinic. He failed the electrocardiogram by the clinic. After a sleepless night, Paul informed Stanolind of the problem. Further examination found the heart monitor was inaccurate. Paul’s heart was okay.

After much thought, Paul decided to give up flying entirely. Any future physical disability would ground him with no income. He quit flying and moved to Woodville, Texas, for a long vacation. If it was too cold to fish he would roam the woods near his wife’s parent’s home. During this time their third child was born, Mike, on October 25, 1952, perhaps the first baby delivered by a new doctor in Tyler County, Dr. Gayle Burton.

When cash got short, Paul drove to Beaumont and got a job with National Cash Register, first repairing machines, then selling cash registers and billing machines and more. He seemed to have a talent for sales too, even taking a turn at selling encyclopedias and moving up to selling VW’s, both legitimate and illegal VW’s that needed modifications to be legal (like replacing amber tail lights with red ones). They would leave that to the new owners who rarely made the changes.

Randy was Paul’s youngest son, and when asked what came first to his mind about his father, Randy blurted out, “Surprising!” Randy laughed. “It took a lot of years to appreciate certain aspects. You hear the stories over and over, like when he was flying the ‘hump’ into China.”

Randy often remembers a time when he was about nine, his father took him along to collect payment for tools he had sold while working for Snap-On. “One Saturday, we went to collect at a place out in the country where there were chickens and guineas in the yard. A little boy, with what appeared to be a fat belly, stood across the yard and stared at me as I sat in the car while my dad talked with the fellow at the door of the house. After a short while, dad came back to the car. ‘Did you get anything?’ I asked; knowing that if collections were good, my dad would take me to get a hamburger, and maybe even a milk shake. ‘No,’ he said sort of drawn out, ‘they need it more than we do.’ Somewhat confused, I said, ‘But that boy

looks kinda fat; they must be doing OK.’ That was when my dad explained to me that the boy wasn’t fat, but instead bloated from malnourishment. Years later that same man came along and paid my dad what he owed.”

Randy recalled, “I’ve never forgotten that trip. It taught me a valuable lesson about caring, perspective, and integrity that I’ve tried to pass on to my own family.”

Curious about the oil business, Paul got a job with Halliburton, the foremost oilfield service company at the time. After much hard work, long hours (103 hours one week) and low pay, he sampled other jobs like selling home sites, autos, and serving as shop superintendent for Spindletop Buick.

While operating a concrete plant for the Texas Highway Department, he helped design and batch the concrete for Interstate 10 overpasses. While in that position, he replaced a drunken Farmsworth and Chambers superintendent and supervised the pouring of eight columns that day. Mr. Frazier, the vice president of Farmsworth and Chambers, witnessed part of the operation and later hired Paul for construction at Sharpstown in Houston. Working in Sharpstown for several years, Paul’s crews constructed eight small bridges, several miles of paving, and more than 32 miles of underground utilities, water, sewer, and drainage pipes.

“I really did not do too much,” he said. “I had about twelve to fifteen foremen, all experienced in their lines of work, about 200 laborers and access to all the equipment I needed.”

During the construction of the Phillips Petroleum Refinery in Pasadena, Texas (which exploded and burned several years ago), a labor union of workers threatened to strike and wanted Paul to join the union. Paul refused to join and was transferred to construct the underwater works for the Pelican Island causeway drawbridge at Galveston, Texas.

Same situation arose with the union, and Paul left construction and entered the insurance business with Equitable Life in Houston. He met a Chinese grocer who had connections with over 300 Chinese grocers. Paul ended up being invited to Chinese-only grocers meetings. Equitable also made home loans, and at one house warming he was the only Occidental there. To his surprise, one guest was the sister of Chiang Kai-shek’s wife. Paul sold a lot of insurance to those grocers, so much so, that Equitable made Paul a district manager in Beaumont, Texas. But Paul did not like changing hats all the time, from manager to sales, and back again, as that job entailed. He enjoyed *missions* more than mere managing.

A friend of his was over the city of Beaumont Public Works. Paul was hired as Street Superintendent, demanding a contract that allowed him to do his own hiring, which was not how the city normally operated. But to get Paul, the manager relented. Paul supervised a crew of 149, 7 Caucasians and 142 African Americans. Because of Affirmative Action, one bureaucrat called on him one day and *told* him he was “going to hire” a certain minority person to run a backhoe. And Paul was “going to train” that person too. Paul told her that he had already trained a man for that position. When pushed, he said he was not going to hire or train the person. Paul got his way.

After a few days, Paul called that bureaucrat back and asked her, “We are supposed to be involved in this Affirmative Action thing, aren’t we?” “Yes, we are,” she replied. Then Paul said – and you can see his grin in the photo – “Well Beaumont is made up of about 50% black and 50% white. Since I have a crew of 149, and 142 of them are African Americans, does that mean I have to fire 70 of them?” When Paul left, about 100 of them gave him a farewell dinner.

She hung up on him. Paul did not hear from that person for an entire year.

Leaving employment with the city of Beaumont, Paul went to work for Texas Industrial Maintenance on a commission basis, at his own request. Carrying out a planned schedule, Paul secured maintenance contracts for many companies, including several oil and butane refineries and Goodyear Rubber, including Texaco and Gulf, increasing his company's monthly income to over \$100,000 and number employed from 65 to 425. How? He cultivated the receptionists, getting to know them and their families, sometimes buying them small inexpensive gifts, like a pen or cheap perfume. They would in turn inform him when contracts came up for a bid. It was not unusual for some company officials to manipulate the bidding process, if just a little, and one time it paid off for Paul. Through the receptionist at Texaco, he found out a bid was forthcoming, though the "official" at the company had said there was not. Paul wrote a letter to the president of the company who was in Beaumont at the time, got the letter hand carried to the president, who responded with a letter hand carried to Paul. Paul got into the bid process, and won the bid, adding another \$32,000 per month to Texas Industrial's business. When the owner Bill Childs offered management of the company to Paul, he refused and decided it was time to watch the sunset.

That increase in Texas Industrial Maintenance allowed Childs the success and capital to start Precision Tune, a quick auto tune-up business that franchised nationwide. Later, Childs sold it for \$27 million.

Mike, Paul's third child, had a lot to say. "I was 40 years old before I realized that he (Paul) never told us everything and that most of *how* he lived was, simply, just 'an old soldier' taking care of business." Mike remembers his father taking him to work and helping people along the way, Mike as the gopher: an old lady needed her lawn mowed, "Mike, go mow her lawn," or stopping when a little black lady had a flat tire, and saying, "Mike, change that tire." I did what he told me to. Mike bubbled up accolade after accolade: good parents, great dad and mom, they put us first, we were in front. Mike remembered asking his dad about war stories and how his father may have pulled in old favors to get him a job.

Reflecting on his beloved father, Mike choked up and a couple of tears dropped. "He's about the most honest man I have ever known. *We knew* he loved us." Mike choked again. "If I can be the kind of dad that my dad was to me ... if I can get anywhere close ... it is high mark."

After doing his own thing for about 40 years, cutting a pretty wide swath, Paul decided to give his guardian angel a well-deserved rest and live the remaining years the way God wanted him to. Paul retired at 62 in Woodville with his wife Sandy. He is a member of the Gideons, the Woodville Lions Club, the VFW, and gets around town in his Chrysler 300. At 89 years old, he has lost some quickness on his feet. But a few years ago, after he had bought his new Chrysler, Paul told one this writer that he "really liked it ... it had quite a punch to it."

Apparently, Lt. Colonel Paul Miller still has some punch left too.