

Mike's Stories

Before I Begin

These are stories about my career as an oilfield engineer and are mostly humorous and light-hearted. These are not stories about my childhood, family, girlfriends, wives, or kids. In my stories, I will be careful not to describe my personal relationships with others in order to be kind and to prevent any misunderstandings. Nor will I try to justify and explain the mistakes I made in any great detail. I made many mistakes, both technical and personal; I think about them often and think about how I could have prevented making them. That is what sometimes keeps me awake at night when I remember those days. I have used real first names in my stories and, in some cases, real last names to praise certain individuals.

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Blacksburg, Virginia Autumn 1974

Job interviews at Virginia Tech took place in the autumn of my Senior year. Researching the companies that were interviewing on campus, the strangest one was called Schlumberger; pronounced 'Slumber-jay' or 'Shlum-burger' by non-French speaking Americans. It was described as an oilfield services company, but none of us from the East Coast knew what kind of work that was nor had ever heard of the company. This was the first (and last) time Schlumberger interviewed at Virginia Tech and they did so in 1974 due to the sharp increase in the price of oil due to the October 1973 Yom Kippur War in the Middle East and the resulting Arab Oil Embargo which lasted into March 1974. The oil price increase caused the oil companies to increase exploration activities and therefore the demand for oilfield services increased dramatically meaning Schlumberger needed more engineers quickly. To me, the description of the Schlumberger work and lifestyle, especially the overseas assignments, were strongly attractive because that is how I grew up. At the time, I believed my father worked for the State Department and, during my youth, we lived in four foreign countries for several years at a time: Saipan, Pakistan, the Philippines, and West Germany. I signed up and was assigned an interview on a Wednesday afternoon in October 1974.



I was on track to obtain my BS degree in Mechanical Engineering in 5 years because I was in the Cooperative Education Program where I worked for the US Navy for a Quarter (3 months) then went to school for a Quarter. That gave me real engineering work experience and the Navy helped

pay for my college education. In December 1973, I went out to California as part of the team to run a series of tests of a new propellor designed by my boss, Terry B. Terry was the first person ever to achieve a PhD in Propellor Design; we called him Dr. Propellor! We put the propellor onto a Destroyer Escort, the USS Barbie, and sailed back and forth between Long Beach and San Diego at night. It was a great adventure but experiencing the life on board a Navy ship significantly reduced my enthusiasm for such a career. In particular, I was mistreated mentally by the sailors as being a young, long-haired civilian who could never make his bed correctly each morning. Although a small thing, it had a large impact on my future as I was supposed to work for the Navy after graduation and planned to do so. Afterwards, I wanted to interview other companies to see what other opportunities were out there. It turned out to be the decision that defined the answer to “What would I be when I grew up?”!

Our cadre of Co-Op Student Engineers who were on the same Quarterly rotation schedule were close knit and almost all were good friends. Sadly, two of our ‘Co-Op brothers’ were in the same car when they ran off the road and both were ejected from the vehicle. Ned was badly injured, but Frank died at the scene. Frank’s funeral was attended by all of us, but it was held on the Wednesday afternoon of my Schlumberger interview. I requested a new interview slot so I could attend Frank’s funeral and, very disconcertingly, the only slot I could get was the slot that Frank had signed up for; it was the morning of his funeral. When I met the Schlumberger recruiter, he asked if I was interested in working internationally (Room A) or domestically (Room B); I chose to go to Room A. At that fateful moment, I had chosen my future career, almost without planning it; I was very excited, and I did well in the interview.

In December, the company requested that I travel to their Houston Headquarters for the ‘Big Interview’. They flew me to and from Washington, DC in First Class and they paid travel expenses; they succeeded in impressing me mightily. I arrived on the evening of 20 December, watched a movie in my hotel room in downtown Houston, and splurged on a six pack of Budweiser with my room service pizza; they even paid for all that beer. In my interview at HQ, things went very well, and they made me a verbal offer for employment internationally and I immediately accepted. I still wonder if Frank would have gotten a job offer as well, had he lived, perhaps instead of me, or if we would have attended the same training school? When I flew home, the drinks were free in First Class and I arrived pretty ‘high’. My Dad said they must be a pretty good company to do that; this French company turned out to be better than that. On December 27, Schlumberger Overseas made me a definite employment offer as a Field Engineer. My starting monthly basic salary was 990 US\$ multiplied by a geographical coefficient varying from 1.1 (France) to 1.75 (Nigeria) depending on my country of assignment.

Blacksburg Spring 1975

My Schlumberger International Staff manual arrived by mail on 24 February 1975. I was extremely excited to start the first assignment of my new career and I was feeling a bit too proud of myself about landing a great job so early in my Senior year. So much so, that I made some rash decisions. In my relationships with friends of both sexes, I made mistakes that still bother me today. In my college classwork, I should have worked harder than ever, but I became overconfident and lazy and my final grades suffered. Looking back, the conclusion is that I should have left all relationships behind in a friendly, neutral state and packed very, very lightly for my trip to Paris, France and onwards into the world. I effectually did the opposite and paid the price later in several ways. I should have committed myself to learning the French language and culture and applied myself to working as hard as I could on the job.

Since I was supposed to work for the US Navy after graduation, I sent in my letter of resignation in February 1975. This was fairly risky since I had to successfully graduate from the Schlumberger 3-month Basic Training Course and then be promoted to Field Engineer after 3 more months of field experience. Also, since the Navy had paid for much of my college tuition, books, and fees, I was indebted to them for 555 US\$. It turned out that my first paycheck on 30 June 1975 was 840 US\$; so, no sweat paying back the Navy.

Paris, France Summer 1975

I graduated from Virginia Tech on Saturday June 7, 1975. I arrived in Paris on Thursday June 12. The group of young graduate engineers that I was to join in our great adventure all came together on Friday the 13th at 42 Rue St. Dominique, Schlumberger World Headquarters. Because it was a superstitious date, our first surprise was that our Start Date was recorded as June 12; we had already earned a day of salary! The second surprise was that we received a raise to 1205 US\$ per month over the starting salary of 990 US\$ that we had been given when accepting employment. The geographical coefficient for France was 1.1 thus my pay started at 1326 US\$. Wow! We all felt lucky and rich already; but just wait. My Employee Number was 3330 which apparently meant that I was the 3,330th employee Schlumberger had hired since incorporating in the late 1940s.



The 'first rendezvous' for 'us lucky few'!

Friday morning, those of us in the Hotel Residence Orsay on the rue de Lille (the 18 'lucky' new hires were spread out in three hotels) gathered in the lobby before walking to Headquarters; we took no taxis to save money. First, we were introducing ourselves to each other; there were likely 6 of us in this hotel. When a Frenchman with blond hair and beard (#5 in the photo below) introduced himself to me (#4 photo), he said his name and we shook hands, but I did not understand his name. He said "hervecolin" so fast that I could not get it right. I asked him his name again, then again, and finally he said very, very slowly "Har - vey Col - in" – oh I felt stupid! I will feel very stupid many, many times in my Schlumberger career. Then Peter Windsor (#17 photo), a British engineer, introduced himself to me as "Pee – Tah Win – Zah". Peter was incredibly quick witted and wickedly funny. I will include Peter several times in these stories; he passed away many years ago way too early in life.

Since we had been paid an extra day already, we all felt like celebrating with the ‘bonus’ money, estimated to be \$30; a large amount in 1975! So, the newly rich tourists to Paris, mainly the Americans, decided to go see Les Folies Bergère Cabaret on Saturday night having to buy the tickets at the door for no discount. Peter commented that the show was not worth the money and the cost of drinks at the bar were astronomical. He decided to have a quiet night after a good inexpensive meal with wine instead. He sure was right; the show was long and boring entertainment and a rip-off for drinks. Peter was much more mature than many of his fellow students as he had worked on the Concorde Supersonic Transport Project prior to signing on with Schlumberger. We should have listened to his advice early on, every time, and often! Funny, I would fly on his Concorde soon enough.

Bookmark the Hotel Residence Orsay for your own trip. In an amazing coincidence, twenty-one years later my future wife Kathryn also selected this hotel for her first long weekend in Paris when she worked in London. It’s in a great location to walk to all the big sights. I wouldn’t recommend the Folies Bergère, however.

Pau, France Summer 1975

On Sunday, we all checked out of our hotels and boarded the train from Paris to the Training Center in Pau, France near the Spanish border; it was not a fast train! Because I had packed way too many clothes for my trip overseas, including a steamer trunk, I was embarrassed to find myself having to make several trips and ask for help from others to get it all into a taxi and onboard the train. One of our classmates was not in the hotel to check out and we wondered if something may have happened to him. However, he showed up at the train station and announced that he had lost his hotel room and had to switch hotels. Peter immediately quipped loudly “awfully silly of you to be unable to find your hotel room.” Another example of Peter’s quick and cutting humor! On the long train ride south, Peter produced a deck of cards and various card games of all types were played; I’m not sure if he won most of the money.

made to resign from the Navy in February was definitely a risky one. One of the JFEs pictured that also graduated from Virginia Tech was let go at the end of the summer and had Schlumberger 'blacklisted' as being too ruthless in hiring practices; I don't believe they were ever allowed to interview there again. Somehow, I made it through the next 6 months and achieved the almost unheard-of milestone of 11 years. It wasn't easy, and I made a lot of mistakes, but these stories are mostly about the strangest, funniest things that happened to me.

Early on, about a dozen of us would have lunch every day at one particular small café near the town that had only one item on the menu each day at a very low-price: maybe only a \$1 with wine. About the third week of the course, we started to tire of the simple cuisine, but Peter warned the group of us about the consequences if we suddenly quit having lunch there without warning the owner. Sure enough, when we did not show up one day, the proprietress called up the ATC Manager and made him pay her for the meal we skipped out on! I got the impression the French guys in the group received some sort of tongue lashing and had to pay something too!

Port Harcourt, Nigeria Autumn 1975

I managed to graduate from ATC 21 in September, but not with flying colors. We were given our first assignments; I was going to Port Harcourt, Nigeria, West Africa, in the former Biafran War Zone. I had to wait a few weeks for my Nigerian work visa, so I chose to return to my parents' home in Northern Virginia. The ATC Manager advised me not to go back to the US due to the expense (on me) and the complexities of getting my visa in Washington, DC. I made the mistake of going anyway and soon regretted it. Another mistake that I made is, because I had brought so much stuff with me to France, I had to have it shipped by air freight to Nigeria, one of the most corrupt nations on earth; half of it never arrived in Port Harcourt and no insurance was ever paid. We all took the train back up to Paris to do the necessary paperwork except the guys who were fired. A lot of them decided to 'see France' as long as Schlumberger was paying the trip home. I should have just stayed in Paris until my work visa was ready as my expenses would have been paid by Schlumberger and there was a direct flight to Lagos, Nigeria every day with a quick connection by small plane to Port Harcourt. Had I done this, I would have seen more of Paris and France, learned more French and its customs, saved money, maybe reduced the loss of my belongings in the air shipment by hand-carrying it, and someone would have known when I was arriving in Nigeria and assisted my entry into the country.

However, one good result of going home was that, when I was all set to fly over to Nigeria, my Dad came up to me to say goodbye and he gave me a piece of paper with a foreign telephone number on it and said, "If you run into some trouble over there, call this number and someone will help you." I asked him what that meant, and he said that he works for the CIA and that number would get me in touch with an American official in Africa. The official could also get a message to my Dad from me. Wow, I never knew until then, at age 22, that my Dad worked for the CIA! The

number didn't do me much good because, when I got to Port Harcourt, I found out there weren't any telephones.

Sure enough, obtaining the work visa in Washington, DC was difficult, and I was unable to fly out on the agreed-to date. Eventually, I flew from Washington, to New York City, to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, then to Lagos, Nigeria. I arrived in Port Harcourt on a Sunday in late September when no one expected me. I managed to find my way to the Schlumberger Base where the watchmen weren't sure what to do with me. I did find a driver who took me the nearest Field Service Manager's (FSM) house; Regis M. was as shocked as everyone else to see me. They were having a Sunday House Party, something of a regular occurrence there, and they gave me a few drinks, took me water skiing on the Niger River, then sent me off on a three-hour drive to "see a job" in progress at Midnight. I never made it as I passed out in the car from the jet lag and the evening's festivities. Not a good start, except the Management was impressed that I had managed to arrive on my own at all; a good quality in a Schlumberger engineer.

The experience going through Customs and Immigration the first time (and every time) was stressful and unreal. You had to 'pay' for everything; e.g. giving them your bags to take through Customs and then to get your bags back after Passport Control. This bribery was quasi-official and called 'dash' as in "dash me mister (or sometimes master)". Anything being done in Nigeria required dash. Schlumberger never briefed anyone on dash because, officially, it didn't exist, and they didn't reimburse us for it even though all of us paid it many times. The national currency, the Naira, was said to be worth one British Pound at the time, but in reality, it was worthless except for inside the country; you couldn't exchange it on the international currency market. So, having to pay dash, helped use the Naira we were forced to take as a small percentage of our salary every month. There were ways to exchange some Naira on the black market through the Lebanese merchants, but mostly we just used ours up buying liquor for the bachelor house bar and gambling in the back of the Chinese restaurant downtown. If you were unlucky and won more Naira at the roulette wheel, you had to buy the next dinner at the Chinese for whichever Schlumberger engineers showed up.

Port Harcourt Winter 1976

I began my field training being sent out with senior engineers on big offshore and swamp barge drilling rigs. These rigs were in the Niger River delta and we had to take helicopters to reach them. These helicopters were ancient Sikorsky H-34 models that had been flying in Vietnam and many of the pilots had flown in Vietnam too. There were few safety rules and once we flew with the doors open and no seat belts; just hanging our feet out the door! Life on a rig in Nigeria also had fewer safety rules in those days. For example, we could wear jeans, even shorts, and used the old metal safety helmets (until someone was electrocuted and they were banned). One part of the acceptable routine was that all Expats (Expatriate foreigners) on board, not actually on duty, would

congregate one hour before lunch and before dinner for 'small chop'. 'Chop' was the word for food or a meal in Nigeria and 'small chop' was alcoholic drinks for the Expats (cocktail hour) before 'big chop' which was the main meal. Each rig, depending whether it was run by Total (French), Agip (Italian), or Shell (Dutch) would have beer or wine available at every meal; a limit of two drinks per meal, but the drinks for 'small chop' had to be provided by the oilfield service companies. This meant that I would fly out to every job with a couple of bottles of Scotch whisky in my bag. It was all very European and civilized and I don't recall anyone abusing alcohol if they were scheduled to work later. To become promoted from Junior Field Engineer (JFE) to Field Engineer (FE), I had to perform a big logging job myself with a manager observing. I happen to have my logging test over New Year's Eve 1975 to 1976 on the swamp barge Lutèce (the ancient Roman name for Paris). Because this important job was ongoing, the Company Man (the oil company's person in charge) decided to delay the holiday feasting a few days, but they flew in fresh oysters, patés, French bread, steak, even champagne from France for the celebration. It was quite a party and would never happen on a rig in today's safety culture!

Port Harcourt Spring 1976

I remember the horrible traffic with too many vehicles on terrible roads washed out with giant potholes, littered with grisly wrecks, sometimes with dead bodies, and broken-down trucks (lorries) everywhere. When a truck broke down, it stayed on the road blocking the lane and the only warning was a broken tree branch placed only 10 feet behind the vehicle; incredibly dangerous for collisions, especially at night. We weren't supposed to drive at night, but with our jobs, it couldn't be avoided. Furthermore, the best way to drive over all the potholes was to drive at 140 kilometers per hour (90 mph) to 'fly' over the depressions instead of falling into them!

There was a particular intersection where some corrupt official decided to have one short section designated as one-way traffic only, likely to extract traffic ticket 'dash', but nobody ever obeyed the sign. However, as I was driving through this section heading to a job following all the other vehicles doing the same thing, a police car pulled me over and arrested me, particularly because I was white, for disobeying the one-way road sign; obviously they wanted dash! They took me to the local jail nearby and said I had to spend the night making me miss the job on the rig! Well, I figured doing my job was more important, so I 'dashed' the chief with all the Naira I had and drove off carefully going the right-way down the road. I actually tried putting the dash on my expense report, but the District Manager refused it. I used up some useless Naira at least.



The Twenty Naira Note and the Murdered General / President.

Since I passed my FE logging test in January, I was allowed to plan my first set of Days Off out of the country; bachelor engineers received two sets of Days Off and one vacation every year of service in Nigeria. Another perk for working in the tough conditions found in Nigeria was the Country Bonus Multiplier was 1.7 times my Base Salary; quite a bonus! One of the very good reasons for this bonus pay was well illustrated by what happened next. I planned my trip home for early February, but we awoke on the 13 February, 1976, to the news on the radio that the President, General Murtala Mohammed (pictured on the 20 Naira note), had been assassinated in the presidential limo by a couple of Air Force Colonels after they had been drinking champagne all night. The Colonels took over the National Radio Station and proclaimed a country-wide curfew from 6 am to 6 pm; what the heck, we could only go out at night? On the radio we then heard lots of commotion and what sounded like machine gun fire. Well, the Army stayed loyal to poor, dead Murtala, they attacked the radio station, and killed the leaders of the coup d'état. Unfortunately, the Army re-announced the curfew correctly this time, from 6 pm to 6 am, which effectively stopped all our jobs in the country, and they closed the international airport in case some more coup d'état folks tried to leave the country too.

For two weeks, I had to lounge around waiting to be allowed to go on my Days Off, just working in the Base. Finally, the day arrived when I was told the airport would be opening the next day, so I scrambled onto the small plane from Port Harcourt to Lagos and stayed the night. One small problem is that my US Passport had been sent to Lagos for a special exit visa (this would happen to me again in a different country). The day of departure, I had to wander around the airport trying to locate the company agent who had my passport; I didn't even have a plane ticket and didn't know which airline I was supposed to be flying out on! The trouble was that there were hundreds of expats just like me trying to get out of the country at the same time, so how was the agent going to recognize and find me in the chaos? I decided to stand in one place near the European Airline desks and keep rotating around looking for a Schlumberger sign or something.

Someone tapped me on the shoulder and, before I could turn around, slipped an envelope under my armpit. It was my Passport and a ticket to Zurich, Switzerland on Swissair! I raced over to the departure gate and managed to get a seat on the over-booked plane; I wisely only had a carry-on bag as there was no way to get luggage on board before departure. Then the nerve-wracking wait began with all of us expats in our seats on the plane just sitting on the runway waiting to be cleared for takeoff. Rumors were flying around that we would all have to disembark and be re-checked by the authorities and would have to pay a fee (dash, again). When the pilot came on the announce our imminent departure and the door was closed, everyone one on that plane cheered and the flight attendants started pouring drinks even during taxiing out to the runway! Upon arrival in Zurich, I decided to buy a ticket home to Virginia (turned out to be a mistake) as I had not made any plans to travel in Europe and visit friends due to the coup d'état. I spent my first night of civilized freedom in the airport hotel, bought some new clothes, a large chunk of paté de foie gras avec truffles, and a box of miniature cigars.

I spent a little less than two weeks in Virginia at my parents' home, visiting friends at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, then flying to New York City to visit my college roommate, Kevin C., before continuing on to return to Nigeria. Kevin was working as an intern to make some money before starting his master's degree in Nuclear Engineering in the Fall. He rented a small, unfurnished apartment and I slept two nights on the floor while we toured NYC; significantly, we went to the top of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center; destroyed on 9/11/2001. Then I went to JFK Airport to board my Pan Am (now gone in the Pam Am 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, on 12/21/1988) flight to Lagos, Nigeria. At the check-in desk, the agent pulled out a telex message from Schlumberger Paris HQ telling me I couldn't return to Nigeria right now as all US and British work visas had been cancelled. The Nigerian Army was blaming the CIA and MI6 spy agencies for the coup to reduce international embarrassment! I flew back to my parents' house and was forced to take vacation, unable to go anywhere, just waiting to be able to return. I didn't get back to Port Harcourt until May 1976. The mistake I made was, if I had taken my Days Off in Switzerland, I would have been able to spend a lot of extra time in Europe, paid for by Schlumberger, and possibly even getting a temporary assignment in Italy or France.

Port Harcourt Summer 1976

Some of the more memorable adventures I had after returning to Port Harcourt included an afternoon bathing and picnicking on the Azumini River, the only fast-flowing, clear water, and disease-free river in the Niger Delta. Another event was the birth of two all-black kittens which we adopted at our bachelors' house; we named them Black Sabbath and Miss Budweiser. One particular Sunday afternoon, Jeanette, Regis M's wife, living in the bungalow across the street, called on me to protect her from her house servant. She had accused the fellow of stealing and fired him, but he was threatening her; I had to make him leave the Shell camp.



Outside the Port Harcourt bachelors' house after a game of squash (racquetball).

On Sundays in the Shell Camp, the only item on the Clubhouse menu is curry. Our bachelors' house chef always had Sunday off, so if you came back from a job on Saturday night, you either had to eat curry at the Shell Club or fix something yourself. I had started finding curry very disagreeable by now after more than a year of it, so I looked around the cupboard and found a can of tuna and some bread; I was going to make tuna fish sandwiches, but I didn't have any mayonnaise. After helping Mrs. M. with her errant servant, I thought I could go over to ask her for some mayonnaise. Her husband, Regis, answered the door and told me they had no mayonnaise, but if I was a Frenchman, I would know how to make my own with eggs and oil! I think I sat down and ate the tuna on dry bread. Later, Mrs. M. apologized for her husband and gave me her own recipe in a big jar that lasted me until I left the country.

After a company party at the District Manager Jean Philippe L.'s house, I got into a drag race with Tom R., a fellow engineer, but I was unable to make the 90-degree left turn at the end of the straightaway and crashed into the Port Harcourt Zoo sign; it was still unrepaired when I left the country a year later! I also had a couple of regrettably bad job experiences, losing an expensive tool in the well and causing a large amount of 'lost time' for the client. However, on July 4th, 1976, the Bi-Centennial celebration of US Independence, I remember getting on the radio with my fellow American engineer, Mike L., while we were both performing perforating jobs with high explosives; that was our fireworks celebration!

Another strange happening during my tour in Port Harcourt occurred while I was driving down in the city for the first time, inching along ever so slowly in the heavy traffic. Nigeria had been a British Crown Colony until independence in 1960. The local joke was that the new government decided to switch from driving on the left side to driving on the right side of the road, but that cars would make the switch first, then trucks the next day! As I approached the British style roundabout, I noticed that no vehicles were behaving like it was a traffic circle and there was a traffic policeman standing on a pedestal in the center of the circle waving, shouting, signaling, and blowing his whistle. I stopped to study his movements trying to figure out when I could turn left. He figured out that I had no idea what his signals meant, so he jumped down and approached my drivers-side window. He made the 'roll the window down' motion which I did, and he shouted, "What color am I?" I cringed inside thinking that if I say he is Black, he will arrest me for racism! I said nothing. Then he proceeded to wave his arms wildly saying, "When I do this, I am Red, when I do this, I am Yellow, and when I do this, I am Green!" He was the Traffic Light!

Port Harcourt Autumn 1976

I remember thinking I was going to see all kinds of African animals in the Niger River Delta area, but it turned out that the local people had eaten all of them during the Biafran War which ended in January 1970. In those days, short wave radio was the only means of communication between Schlumberger bases and its effectiveness was dependent on atmospheric conditions. One often had to shout into the microphone over and over again to get even a simple message through. One day, I overheard Peter, the same engineer named Peter from ATC 21, who was working in Warri (Whiskey), Nigeria, a nearby Schlumberger base, speaking on the radio using radio etiquette with an engineer named Roger in Port Harcourt (Papa) who was requesting the loan of a Schlumberger logging tool. **Roger shouts – "Whiskey, Whiskey, Whiskey, Papa (pronounced papaaa). Peter shouts back - Papa, Papa, Papa, Whiskey (meaning communication established). Roger shouts - Whiskey, this is Roger, request a FIT tool, a toi ('to you' in French, meaning 'over'). Peter shouts - Roger, Roger (affirmative), Roger, a toi."** Peter was always quick with his razor-sharp wit!

In 1976, I visited Peter near London after we completed a training seminar in Paris from 11 – 22 October. He showed me around his hometown of Windsor for an afternoon. He had just been transferred to Libya or as he put it, from the 'armpit of Africa' (Nigeria) to 'the asshole' (Libya)! While in his favorite pub, I asked how he got his last name 'Windsor.' He said he was a 'royal bastard'. His usual humor, or the truth? The seminar in Paris was part of our training program called Regional Instruction of Schlumberger Engineers (RISE). Eight of us attended, all that remained of the 18 new hires from June 1975. This particular seminar turned out to be the best example of what working in the oilfield back in those days promised: very difficult working conditions rewarded by a week in Paris with 'boot camp buddies'! My Test Evaluation for the RISE Seminar contained comments like "you are weak in electronics" and "you have poor maintenance experience"; yet I finished with a Rank of 4 out of 8; I wonder what the #8 guy's comments were?

Of particular note were the group dinners. After training all day, we would all meet at the hotel bar around 6 pm for drinks and conversation, then pile into taxis to go to the restaurant. We attended one such grand Parisian meal on the Ile de la Cité, an island in the middle of the Seine, which included about 12 courses and at least that many alcoholic drinks of every kind. The 'war stories' about our recent adventures in foreign lands also flowed freely. A second special memory was at a little restaurant near Headquarters called Leo le Lion; we took over the whole place and feasted in the best French style. Thirty-two years later I would take my wife Kate to dinner at Leo le Lion in July 2008. It took us three circles around the block to find the tiny, below-ground restaurant, but the meal was worth it. They even asked us how we managed to find the place as they rarely had any tourists; I told the story. On the way back to our hotel we passed by the old Schlumberger Headquarters office at 42 Rue St. Dominique where I had signed my contract so many years before, it was under renovation, but was still the Schlumberger HQ.



Logging truck tricking the villagers.

Back in Port Harcourt and pursuing my Senior Field Engineer (SFE) promotion, I sought out a special cased-hole logging job with Rod T. as my mentor in a remote location far from base and not often traveled to. Apparently, the local villagers had been trying to obtain more 'dash' from Shell, the oil company, which wasn't forthcoming, so they decided to blockade the access road to the oilfield each day at dawn. The first day, we were stopped and had to turn back. Waiting a few days for negotiations proved fruitless, but meantime, we had to swap out our logging truck with another due to some servicing issue; it was not a good move. Rod then came up with a brilliant plan to head out to location after Midnight to get through the roadblock hoping the villagers had gone home to bed for the night and it worked; we arrived on location and performed the rig up in

the morning. Then Murphy's Law kicked us really badly. We discovered that the 0.22" outer diameter monocable on the truck we had been given was spooled onto the cable drum horribly and it started caving into the middle of the drum on top of itself as we ran the cable and tool into the well. We had to use all of the black electrical 'Scotch' tape we had to prevent a knot so difficult to unbind that we would have been unable to move up or down. We had to clamp off the tool already down in the oil well and spool off all 22,000 feet of cable onto the jungle ground, then re-spool the cable onto the cable drum before resuming the logging job. Oh yes, we were also now trapped on location for the 18 hours each day that the villagers were blockading the road. I was designated to drive out after Midnight each night with a local operator to obtain 'chop' and oilfield supplies; and to give a report on our progress. To top off the number of Murphy's Laws being obeyed, I came down with a virulent, nasty influenza that left me nearly prostrated each day.

On the 16th November 1976, I was asked to go out and relieve the engineer, Sam G., who ran the workover swamp barge called the Calabar Queen. Sam was going on a long vacation over the Holidays. The Calabar Queen (CQ) was a floating barge with the accommodations on it attached to a fixed platform by a 'widow maker', essentially a gang plank that moved with the weather. Men had been known to be thrown into the water and drowned, hence the nick name. The rig package was positioned on top of the platform with cranes and cranes had to be used to move everything around and were constantly in use. Therefore, unlike many other rigs in Nigeria with local crews, the crane operators on the CQ were still expats, a couple of party-hearty Scots.

The first thing I found out upon arrival on the barge was that, along with the two bottles of Scotch a Schlumberger engineer always brought out to a rig, the crane operators expected a case of European beer. I had to radio into the Schlumberger Base and order a box of 'special electronic equipment' (beer) to be sent out ASAP if I wanted anything moved by the crane operators. Another special request I also received was for a new set of darts to replace the worn out set on the rig; darts were really big on board. In fact, during my month on the CQ, I learned how to play darts the European way, to play a Louisiana Cajun poker game called 'Boo Ray', and to like American country music. I lost money but gained an oilfield education.



The Niger River Delta by Chopper.

Whenever there was a problem with a well, all the expats would get together for 'small chop', drinks in the Company Man's lounge, and each of us was asked what our solution might be. The question would be "Schlumberger, what do you think?" Or "Baker Oil Tools, what do you think?" In this case, the Baker hand was a very old guy, to my eyes, and his name was Jack Baker! But when asked the question, Jack stated "I don't know, but I think I'll go lay down and worry about it (take a nap)"! I was on the CQ until December 15th and took the river tugboat back to Port Harcourt, which took two days, so I laid out on the helideck, read trashy novels, and got a suntan.



Similar to the Calabar Queen logging unit, but that's not me at the rail.

Port Harcourt Winter 1977

On my 24th birthday, January 22, 1977, I was asked to go out and do two jobs at the same time, a few kilometers apart on land. Both were mobile mast truck operations with no rigs involved. I had just met with the Africa Region Personnel Manager and was told that my request for a transfer out of Nigeria was likely to be approved soon and I felt more upbeat than I had in a while. As I had never trained for a mast truck job, I was dependent on my Nigerian Operators to get rigged up and running on the wells. It actually happened that one of the crew teams were named Sunday, Monday, and Friday; what a hoot! Another interesting situation was that that team were all of the Ibo People and the second crew were all of the Calabar People. It wasn't wise to mix these folks up as they had fought on opposite sides during the Biafran Civil War which ended in 1970 with the Ibo starved out and defeated. You could tell these Peoples apart by recognizing their facial scars (not tattoos). I had to drive back and forth between locations to run the logging tools over the next 24 hours, so I didn't sleep for two nights, but all went well. When I got back to Port Harcourt, my Field Service Manager (FSM), Horst G., gave me some praise for the good work, something I hadn't had in many months, and he said I would be promoted to SFE on March 1st! When I met the District Manager, Jean-Phillipe, in the office, he shocked me too with a "Merci" and said I could go on my Days Off as soon as I could arrange the flights, wow!



It's getting dark, but I am wearing my University of Maryland (UM) t-shirt.



Here's the other simultaneous mast truck job.

Well, since I had just earned a good Job Bonus (1% of the jobs invoiced to Shell), and this might be my last set of Days Off from Nigeria, I decided to splurge, so I headed home to Virginia! I booked the small plane flight from Port Harcourt to Lagos, then the big jet flight to London. On January 27, 1977, I flew on the British Airways Concorde from Heathrow to Washington Dulles. I missed being on the inaugural flight by only 2 weeks! The flight took only 3 hours and 12 minutes and flew faster than 768 mph (Mach 1), the speed of sound, for about one hour. There was a special Concorde Lounge at Heathrow in those days where I enjoyed champagne, caviar, and a cigar! The inside of the Concorde is very confined, but the complete plane is First Class service. I remember noticing how tiny the lavatory was; I don't think many people today could fit in one. My parents and my girlfriend met me at Dulles, and it gave us all a nice thrill to experience the landing! I enjoyed my two weeks off, Jan. 25 – 10 Feb., then returned to Nigeria for my last few months there.



The flight direction is incorrect; should be London – Washington!

I went offshore Nigeria in the Bight of Benin for the first and last time. I paired up with Hans Peter R., a very experienced Swiss engineer, to perform logging in production wells on unmanned platforms that had nothing but wellheads on an open steel deck. We operated from a manned production platform nearby flying in a small Bell helicopter each day at dawn. A small supply boat ferried the crew of Operators and our equipment around. It was a very strange feeling to be out in the ocean all alone counting on being picked up at the end of each day.

After the first two wells on one platform were logged, Hans Peter became very ill with Malaria; so ill, he stayed in the sick bay on the manned platform instead of flying back to Base. I had to move everything to the next platform to be logged. There is a Motto in Schlumberger, "if you've seen it once, you're an expert." Well, that was the situation I found myself in this time. I had to run the small crane on the platform to offload the crew and our equipment from the boat. There was a one-man sized logging cab and to develop the logging film, there was only a black box because there was no dark room in the tiny unit; you didn't know if the film was finished developing before exposing it to light, ruining it. After a very long day in which I managed to get one well logged, I reloaded the crew onto the boat with the crane without incident and waited for the chopper. It flew in with a new pilot I hadn't met before and as we climbed up into the air from the helideck, he offered to let me take the controls and fly the chopper myself. At the age of 24 years, I wasn't going to refuse such an opportunity, but as I took the controls and tried to fly the thing, as the pilot shouted out directions, the chopper started to sway and dip! I immediately removed my hands and feet from the controls while the pilot laughed; the unique adventures kept coming.



My one attempt to fly a chopper; note the tilt and direction!

One of the strangest incidents I experienced occurred as I was rigging up on a workover rig somewhere in the Niger River Delta. As a result of the Biafran Civil War, my Nigerian crew were always on the lookout for food. Typically, before my crew would start working on a rig site, they would want to be fed. This usually entailed me saying “let’s get working” when we arrived on location, then the crew chief would say “oh boss, me no go for work, my belly gone for empty”! So, I would send him off in my car to the nearest food establishment while I persuaded the rest of the crew to help me get ready for the job. Well, because this time we had arrived late for the job, there was no time to get my crew fed. As we were rigging up with the help of the rig crew, there was a high-pitched cry and suddenly all the Nigerians onsite run off into the Bush (jungle)! Typically, on these small rigs, the Company Man and the Tool Pusher were white guys. Imagine the looks we gave each other when all our crewmen ran off; maybe we were under attack?

Then we three realized that we were the only guys left to operate the rig! We quickly decided we had to keep the hole full of mud to prevent a blowout. To keep the hole full, we had to run some drill pipe back into the well. So, being the youngest with the least experience in handling drill pipe, naturally, I had to ‘work the chains’ – wrapping a chain around the pipe after setting the slips in the rotary which rotated the pipe to screw two joints together – i.e., becoming a Roughneck hand. After some quick learning the hard way, we managed to run several joints of pipe into the hole and start circulating drilling mud to keep the well safe. Just about this time, the whole gaggle of local crew came marching back out of the Bush carrying a very large wild pig, almost a boar, on a pole! This pig was promptly slaughtered and roasted for the whole crew to feast on, including my Operators. So, the job was delayed awhile longer until everybody had eaten because we three white guys realized that because these men had been starved so terribly during the Biafran War, they always considered food to be the most important activity of each day; especially free food.



The trainee roughneck after the 'wild' pig feast.

Port Harcourt Spring 1977

I was in a much happier mental state now that I had just been officially granted approval on Jan. 4, 1977 to depart Nigeria and transfer to North America somewhere, sometime in 1977. So, when I was told to go out on a workover barge called Anini 1 for a week's work, I was happy to do it. This rig worked during daylight only and was staffed 100% by Nigerians; I would be the only white guy on board. I was cautioned to bring out several bottles of scotch whiskey for the company man and tool pusher (rig managers) and some beer for the camp boss! When I arrived on board by river launch and checked in with the camp boss, he asked me what I was going to eat. He said, "we don't have any 'oibo' (slang for white man) food for you" – 'oh brother' I said to myself. So, I asked

“Do you have any potatoes? Any baked beans? Any eggs?” He said yes to all, so I ended up eating omelets, chips (fries), and baked beans three meals a day for a week!

Since we shut down operations every day at dark, after supper, the rig managers would get together to drink Schlumberger’s whiskey and play Scrabble, of all things. Since I brought the Scotch, they invited me to play. It being their rig and their country, it was bound to be their rules; it certainly was their spelling! One of the more memorable incidents during play, was when the company man played on the board “mistary”. I challenged him on the word, and he exclaimed it was completely legitimate (it was “mystery” spelled the way he pronounced it)! Okay, I took another drink of whiskey. It was an interesting week; but no worries except I was put off eating eggs with baked beans for quite a while.



The whiskey supplier and Scrabble loser; omelet, beans, and chips never again!

The tradition in Schlumberger is whenever an engineer is transferred out of a country, the engineer pays for the Going Away Party as he is the lucky one who gets to leave; especially from a difficult country to a nicer one. In Port Harcourt, the tradition was to have the party at the airport to make sure the engineer didn't miss the plane due to partying! My transfer had been approved and I was on my way to Paris to receive my new assignment which I thought would be somewhere in North America. So, every Schlumberger engineer in town and some of the wives came out to the airport to see me off with champagne. Recent arrivals in Port Harcourt were Alan and Tove Harding; Alan had been one of my Instructors at ATC 21 in Pau, France. Spoiler Alert: I would meet the Harding's again in 2015 in Stavanger Airport; 38 years later! Kate and I were walking ten feet behind them and I recognized his walk(!). Catching up in the Stavanger airport, Alan would divulge that Management had requested that the complete Class of ATC 21 be flunked out and fired as there was a glut of new engineers at the moment, but he and the other two Instructors prevailed on them to keep a few of us; wow! My wife Kate and I have now been the guests of the Harding's at their Swiss chalet and their Scottish house and count them as great friends.

Arriving in Paris on May 19, 1977 and going to the Schlumberger International Headquarters at 42 Rue St. Dominique, I was brought into a meeting with a number of the Management and was strongly 'requested' to forget about a transfer to the States. I was asked to go to Aberdeen, Scotland instead and I agreed; it turned out to be a very good move and, upon arrival, it would feel like going from the 'armpit of Africa' to the 'friendly hands of the North Sea'! While in Paris, I had my first physical exam since going overseas; I clocked in at 148 lbs.! Also while there, I met up with Bernard D. (#6 in the class photo), he was on his way to his next assignment in Tunisia. He felt it was a better destination than Aberdeen, as he disliked cold weather; I was about to find out that I tolerated North Sea weather rather well.

Aberdeen, Scotland Summer 1977

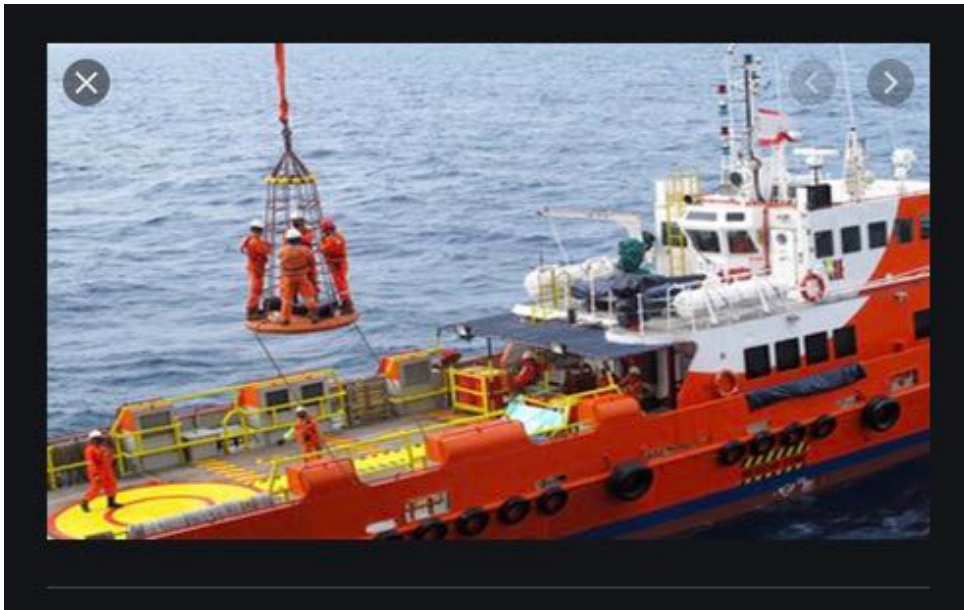
Upon my arrival in Aberdeen on a Saturday evening in May 1977, around 8 pm, I was met by the Security Guard at the Schlumberger Base (at least I was expected this time), he gave me the keys to a right-hand drive car and a hand-drawn map to my flat in town where the keys were unnecessary as it would be unlocked with the keys inside. I could have crashed the car as soon as I hit the first round-about having to go clockwise but driving in Nigeria prepared me for driving in any direction and surviving. I found my flat at 97 Union Grove Road in old town Aberdeen, found a parking space up on the curb, likely illegal, and dropped my bags into the go-down (under street level) flat.

I had just managed to get this 24-year-old American inserted into life in the Old Country (I'm more Irish – English – Viking), so I'm in the mood for a beer, food, and to meet some Scots! I walked down the street towards a pub in the distance. I don't remember the name of the establishment, but I walked in and faced a very crowded bar; maybe 10 people deep. As I worked my way

towards being close enough to ordering a pint, a red-headed young Scots woman smiled at me nearer the bar and shouted, “do you want a pint of lager?” (actually, more like ‘de ye ken a pint o lager’). I smiled “Yes” and was really impressed with the friendliness all around me. I decided I had happily changed the next few years of my life.

As soon as I found my way back to the office / base the next morning, my new FSM, Tom S., told me to go back to my flat and get my offshore gear as I was going offshore today. Many times, we had very little time to prepare for a job, so we had to depend upon our extensive training to be successful. I was issued a bright orange survival suit and some other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and off I went. Oh yeah, I did get to meet my two Scots Operators, Alan G. and Jim O., briefly at the heliport; it turned out they were good at their jobs. Off I flew in my first of about 100 North Sea helicopter flights over the next three years. Sadly, there were several fatal crashes, but I saw very few problems and lived to tell these stories.

A Schlumberger engineer was actually treated as one of the assets rented to the rig for the oil company because rig time and helicopters cost much more than engineer ‘rental’. In this way, most engineers tended to rack up 16 to 21 days offshore per month; usually in one go. My assigned rig was the Drill Master, a Forex Neptune Drilling Company (French) Pentagone Rig working for Texaco on the Tartan Field appraisal wells; she was a five-legged beauty! Arriving on board, we were told to rig up for logging immediately; we hadn’t time to get a room or some food. How I figured out how to complete that first high technology open-hole logging job in the North Sea, I no longer remember. My Scots Operators must have strongly assisted me, but at the end of the operation, I felt very successful; no way was this like easy-going Africa! Then I discovered that this rig was chosen as the training rig for the Norwegian Drilling Company, Statoil – can you believe there were two catering companies on board; one for the French and one for the Norwegians; the food was magnificent, and we ate four meals a day, because the midnight meal also included a ‘blue movie’ – okay, you can guess what that is.



The man basket!

The second call to go log on my rig, Drill Master, came during a very foggy period when no choppers could fly. So, they put us on supply boat at the Aberdeen docks and we sailed to the rig, for 15 hours; even in mildly rough seas, we were all seasick upon arrival. Next, the rig crane operator lowered a rope basket called a man basket down onto the back deck of the supply boat. Because of the rough water, the basket kept moving up into the air several feet then collapsing onto the deck. We had to throw our gear in the basket, then time our leap to grab the ropes as we shot up into the air. The crane operator then decided to have a little fun with us and hoisted us very slowly allowing us to swing freely in the wind.

By the time we arrived on deck, we were sick, tired, dizzy, and pissed off! Of course, we had to rig up our equipment right away and start into the well. Murphy's Law kicked into play and the tool then became stuck in the wellbore. To remove the tool, we had to perform a cut-and-thread 'fishing' job. All in all, we ended up working a miserable 3 days, catching sleep on the floor of the tool house called the 'doghouse' when we could. Lucky we were all in our twenties!



A Pentagone Rig with Schlumberger unit (blue & white) to the right of the derrick.

Another 'emergency' job, they all seemed to be designated that, sent me and a different crew to an infamous platform called Piper Alpha. This platform had two drilling rigs on it working simultaneously, with two Schlumberger units, two sets of tools, but only one Schlumberger crew assigned to work it. The platform was also still under construction, so there was a floating rig moored next to it, a Flotel, to provide the needed beds and catering. However, when there was bad weather, which was often, the walking bridge was retracted, and we could not get to our beds. So, during those periods, we had to 'hot bed' on the platform; meaning the bed was in constant use by someone, for three eight-hour periods, all the time, and the sheets were NOT changed!

As we were getting set up to work on the well drilled by Rig 1, Rig 2 was finishing 'fishing' for the broken cable and tool in the second well. The client had forced the previous engineer to overpull on the cable to free the tool and the cable broke and fell down the well. This caused three weeks of painful and very expensive 'fishing' operations. The client then 'ran the engineer off' the rig as if

it was his fault! So, I arrived on board, and the Company Man of Rig 2 ordered me over to witness him retrieving the lost tool. He was pulling the cable out by hand thinking he had the tool with it; what an idiot! About 10 feet of broken cable came out and that well had to be abandoned. Meanwhile, my Operators came over to ask me to check out the cable on Rig 1; something strange was going on. I checked it out and there was no connection in the cable that we had just finished confirming there was electrical continuity. We retraced the length of the cable and found that the rig welder had cut the cable in half on deck; we weren't quite sure if he had done it on purpose.

Once again Murphy's Laws of the Oilfield came into play, and both drilling rigs were ready to be logged back-to-back, with just the three of us. Both jobs were successful, and we didn't need to 'hot bed' because we just caught some sleep where we stood over the next 72 hours! Luckily, there were two sets of equipment as I had to deal with several failures by swapping out tools. We were sent back to shore as soon as we finished both jobs which did not allow us to recheck the equipment for the next job. I had a feeling even back then that the 'cowboy' attitude of this client and the chaotic way they ran the operation could lead to trouble. Eleven years later while I was working on the North Slope of Alaska, on July 6, 1988, due to a series of fatal mistakes, the Occidental Petroleum Piper Alpha caught fire and exploded, killing 167 men in the worst disaster in the modern oilfield.



The Piper Alpha tragedy in July 1988.

One of my Scottish Operators, Jim O., persuaded me while offshore day after day that I 'needed' to use my Job Bonus to buy a Triumph TR6+ convertible sports car. We drove up north together to Elgin, near the Lossiemouth Military Base, purchased the British Racing Green TR6 from an Airforce Officer, and I drove back to Aberdeen. The clutch was so strong, I stalled out almost

every time I tried starting from a stopped position and I had to quickly figure out how to shift the gear stick with my left hand.

The last job I performed from the Aberdeen side of the North Sea was actually in the North Atlantic Ocean 100 miles off the west coast of the Shetland Islands. It was the final appraisal well on the Claire Field discovery for Esso who later sold the field to BP, another coincidence as I ended up working for BP 26 years at the end of my career. The crew and I took a charter plane from Aberdeen to Sumburgh in the Shetlands where the heliport was located. New rules had just been put in place about alcohol, this being Scotland a lot of guys were arriving to go offshore drunk. Crews going offshore were breathalyzed at the heliport and the bar was closed for them; if you failed the test you got sent back to Aberdeen. The bar was not closed for the crews coming back from offshore!

The final logging job lasted from 1 – 3 September 1977; I was awake for three days straight. Usually right after the job, I had to prepare all the film records and make multiple paper print copies of all the logs to send to town to the client's office, but the company man told me there was no chopper scheduled and to go to bed; with great relief, I passed out. In what seemed like one minute later, I was being shaken awake by the rig site Geologist saying a special helicopter was on its way to pick up the field prints. I had only been asleep for 2 hours which left me in a complete fog of mind from exhaustion. I raced to complete the task, blessing for the first time the ammonia used to make the prints as the strong acrid odor aided in keeping me awake. As I handed over the field prints to the Company Man, the chopper was announced, he apologized for the 'fire drill', and thanked me profusely for my efforts; that rarely happened with most company men. Twenty-three years later, in September 2000, I was in Aberdeen again, now working for BP, and a contract geologist who turned out to be Regis M., the FSM that took me water skiing on the Niger River on my first day in Nigeria, said he was re-evaluating them. He asked me about those logs because he said some calibrations were missing and do I remember performing them? I told him the story and said I had no idea what happened to the records, but I assured him the calibrations were done (I hoped!).

Stavanger, Norway Autumn 1977

I went on vacation so quickly I left my Triumph TR-6 at the Aberdeen airport parking lot planning to have one of my Operators go pick it up to stop paying the daily parking fees. It took a lot longer than I hoped to move the car back to the Schlumberger Base and I owed a lot of Scottish Pounds for that error. I flew home to my parent's house in Springfield, Virginia and went right to the oral surgeon to have my four Wisdom teeth extracted; they were impacted, and my mouth was a mess for many weeks. I had earned a large amount of bonus by performing all those huge North Sea logging jobs, so I bought real estate, a new townhouse. During that exercise I met my future first wife, Kathleen. My gold VW Beetle that I had purchased during my forced vacation in 1976 due to

the Nigerian Coup was still in the family, so I drove around the state visiting friends. I even flew out to Abilene, Texas to visit one of my college roommates, Rusty D. who worked for Schlumberger USA; that's when I was 'attacked' by Hare Krishna Monks in the Dallas airport. Touring the Operating Base for North Central Texas, I was shocked to find out that Rusty did nothing on the wellsite but run the logs; he didn't carry tools, put in the radioactive sources, arm the explosives, or develop the film and make the field prints. I secretly thanked my decision to work Internationally where I had to supervise and perform most every task; the job Rusty was doing appeared a little boring. My wife Kate was a wellsite petrophysicist for SOHIO in the 1980s in the US Midcontinent and she remembers that the Schlumberger engineers did do more tasks than I witnessed.

On November 3, 1977, I was informed that my rig, Drill Master, had been transferred to the Norwegian side of the North Sea and I was to return quickly. I flew back to Aberdeen, picked up my gear and some belongings, paid the parking bill for the Triumph and flew onward to Stavanger, Norway. There were very few hours of daylight and even fewer rays of sun in Stavanger in November. There wasn't any available housing for me, so I had to 'hot bed' in other engineers' flats while they were offshore. This had a hidden advantage because I was able to listen to all their rock music and many of the artists were new and exciting to me. I discovered Electric Light Orchestra, Fogelberg, Dire Straits, and Warren Zevon for just a few.

I performed several more monster logging jobs on my rig and learned how to run the Repeat Formation Tester (RFT) which would become one of my specialties in my next assignment. A real wild adventure awaited me when I was sent out to relieve an engineer on the Frigg platform which was run by the Italian company, Agip. I was to perform a series of Cement Bond Logs (CBLs) which was a new requirement of the Norwegian government. The new rule hadn't been quite thought out completely and we were required to log all the way to surface. The only problem was the Sonic tool could not measure in large diameter casings, but we had to log as required producing rubbish data yet charging the client anyway.

One day late in the evening I was awakened by the Frigg Company Man in my cabin which was unusual for them to leave their office and he asked me "Can you log in 60-knot winds?" This calculates to be 70 miles per hour wind speed; a Gale Force 10 strength (74 mph is a Hurricane). I replied that I knew of no Schlumberger policy about that, so we decided to go ahead and try. At this wind speed, it is very difficult to go down a staircase without pulling yourself hand-over-hand. To rig up our equipment on the rig floor took all the crew on shift to just hang on to the cables and guide the Sonic tool into the wellbore. It was all quite exhilarating, and we felt pretty good once we started down into the well until the Company Man rushed into the unit like the excitable Italian he was and shouted, "Get out of the well, the rig derrick is taking too much strain!". Sure enough, the drill pipe stacked in the derrick was catching the high wind like a sail and it wasn't designed for these wind loads. We certainly rushed back out of the hole and every man available helped rig us back down. I went back to bed after eating the midnight meal.

The Autumn gale subsided enough to start flying helicopters to the platform, but the wind speed was still fairly high. There were a lot of folks who had overstayed offshore due to the storm and wanted to get home, including me. When the chopper approached the helideck, it couldn't land and shut down power, so it hovered a few inches off the helideck actually 'flying' into the strong wind. This took a lot of skill by the pilots and from the passengers too. We had to 'crawl' along the deck with our bags flung out behind us in the very stiff wind then climb carefully into the 'moving' chopper. Norway was one of the first countries to allow women to work offshore and one of them was trying to fight to get into the chopper but was too light in weight and kept falling backwards. Finally, two big roustabouts had to pick her up and put her into the chopper like a piece of cargo.



An Autumn gale in the North Sea.

Stavanger 1978 – 1980

In January 1978, I was told that my temporary assignment to Norway was now an official transfer, I was staying for the next 2- 3 years, so I made a quick trip to Aberdeen to pick up my belongings and my TR6 sportscar. While in Aberdeen, I met up with my old District Manager from Port Harcourt, Jean Phillippe L. and I was very surprised when he thanked me for over-staying my assignment in Nigeria instead of transferring to the USA when I could have. The next day, I bought a miniature stereo system which fit perfectly in the boot (trunk) and drove down to New

Castle, England, to take the ferry to Stavanger. It took 13 hours in a freezing rain to make the drive down the motorway and the convertible roof was of no use. Getting off the ferry in Stavanger, I realized I had just brought an English right-hand drive convertible sportscar to rainy, cold, winter-darkened Norway where they drive in the right lane with left-hand drive cars.



The Triumph TR6 in need of a battery jump-start, as usual.

I had become engaged to be married to my first wife Kathleen from Virginia and the date set was April 8, 1978. I had several months to work until then and it was easy to become distracted by human doubts and emotions, etc. When I was sent offshore to the Eldfisk Platform without much warning, I was unable to finish preparation for the job I had been scheduled to do on the Valhall Platform; that came back to haunt me. With only 2 weeks to go before I was due to fly to the USA for my wedding, I was sent on a job on Eldfisk Alpha. I did some jobs, then a French engineer came aboard to supposedly relieve me and he said I was supposed to relieve him! I said no as I was leaving to get married, he got angry and it was then that I got the call to go to Valhall after all. I reminded the FSM, Jean G., that I was leaving to get married soon and he said not if the job demands you stay. I said no way was I going to accept that, but he said I will have to if I have no chopper to come home on. So, with little sleep I was transferred directly to Valhall by chopper.

Arriving on Valhall, I discovered that the tool kit that I had started preparing was not the one now onboard, but I was so angry I assumed it was correctly prepared and I didn't check it. Instead, as I went to bed to catch up on some sleep, the Catering Boss woke me up to ask if I could come

repair the movie projector. These were the theater type of projectors with large 12-inch reels of 8mm film. Well, unless you want only bread and water for your meals onboard an offshore rig, you try and repair the movie projector. Strangely enough, I wandered into the theater in a daze and managed to get the projector fixed; I still don't remember how. Then I fell sound asleep in my bunk. The next day, the production packer job yanked me back out of bed, but when I tried to put the packer setting kit together, the tools didn't match up. The Company Man asked me if the packer would set like this and I bravely said "No." He then said, "You're run off, get on the next chopper!" Unfortunately, that meant I had to wait until tomorrow and when you've been run-off a rig, everyone treats you as a 'dead man'.

The next day, I avoided going out of my cabin even to eat breakfast, but then I heard the 'Tannoy' (Intercom) yelling "Schlumberger to the Company Man's Office"! How embarrassing! So, I made my way there and into his office where he said "How come you didn't tell me you were American? I heard you fixed the movie projector last night. Your Operator said you did not prepare the tool kit even though your manager said you did because you were called out to another job on Eldfisk. If you had been French, I would still have run you off, but now you can stay on board and when the new kit gets here finish the job." I was famous on that rig for a while! I was sent back to shore one day before I flew home to Virginia to get married.

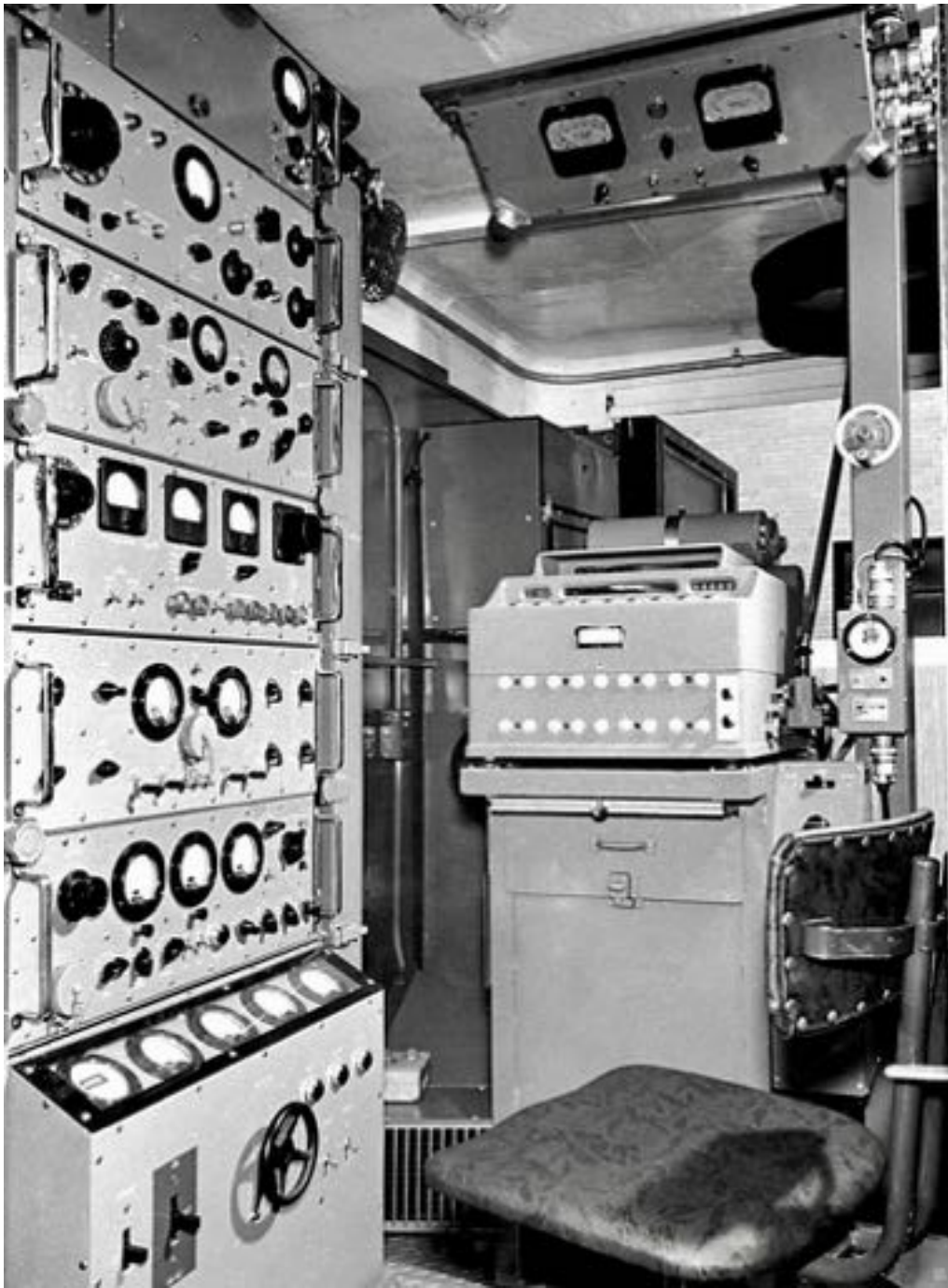
Still on my assigned rig, the Drillmaster, I was offshore 24 days in June 1978, and was logging the well a total of 117 hours operating time from June 2nd to the 11th. I was awake for over 48 hours straight and made \$272,000 revenue for Schlumberger and \$3450 in job bonus while my monthly salary was only \$2156. A few months later, I performed the final appraisal well logging job to confirm and sanction the Gullfaks Field discovery. This huge job would prove to be the last time I worked with panels; most later jobs were performed with the computerized Cyber Service Unit (CSU). The Gullfaks Field was fairly far north of Stavanger, so we had to fly up to Bergen to take the chopper from there. The flight was only about 30 minutes long, yet my two crewmen managed to drink six beers each in that short amount of time! Luckily, they weren't breathalyzed before boarding the chopper.

Because this logging job was going to involve several extra services and runs into the well, a second engineer and crew were sent to join us. It was a damn good thing they did as Bruce B. and I found out that every time we ran the Repeat Formation Tester (RFT) into the well to sample the formation fluids, the tool got stuck. The safest method to retrieve the RFT and sample was to cut and thread the cable through the drill pipe. Statoil, the Norwegian oil company wanted six samples which meant we had to fish the RFT six times and cut in half six logging cables. We had to call the Schlumberger Manager and request "every cable he had in Norway"! Bruce and I split the crew into two teams, and we worked back-to-back for almost seven days straight. However, that did mean we split the job bonus but there was plenty to go around. That December, my first son, Tommy, was born on the 27th in Virginia; it was a mighty fine year!

Finishing up my vacation in Virginia after learning how to feed my son in one end and change the diapers on the other end, I received a letter from a fellow engineer in Stavanger, Peter W., requesting me to purchase an electric guitar for him and bring it back to Norway. It was much less expensive in the US without Value Added Tax (VAT) and I could get one guitar through Customs as a personal item. So, I bought him a Fender Stratocaster in February 1979 for \$500. I saw Peter a few years ago and he said he still had the guitar, and it was probably worth \$25,000! After arriving in Stavanger alone, my wife and son would come a month later, I was sent to Diepholz, West Germany for Cyber Service Unit (CSU) training. We called the Schlumberger Base 'Deep Holes'. I had been in Frankfurt, West Germany with my family after graduating from Annandale High School, but the only German I now remembered was 'Ein och bier bitte' or 'one more beer please.'



The CSU with the logging modules tray pulled.



The fully analog logging panels and venerable galvanometer camera. Nice chair.

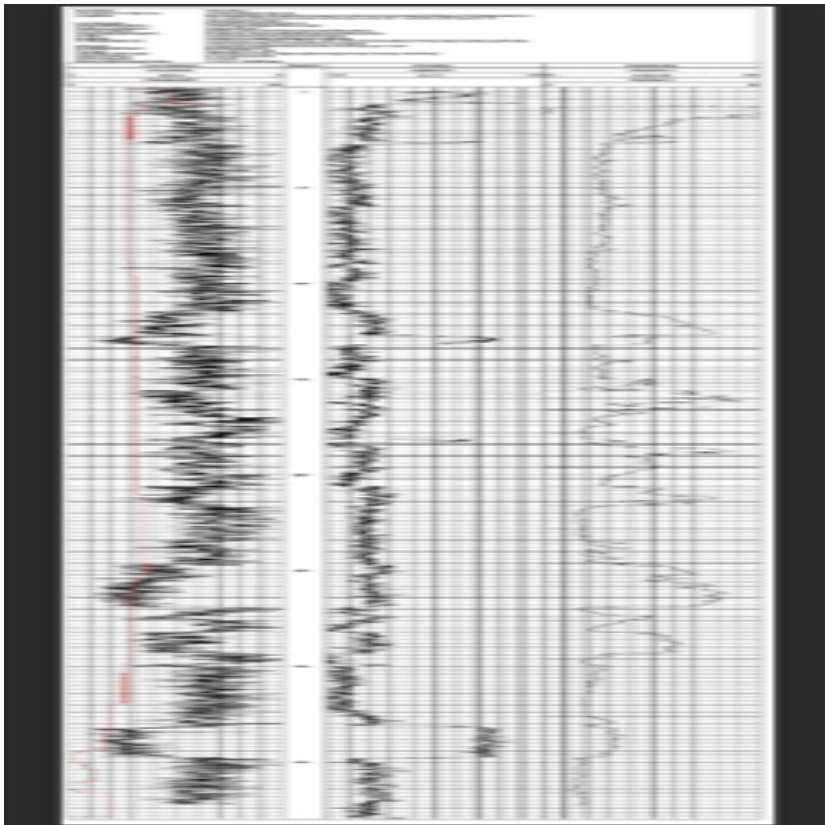


The Triumph TR6 in Flekkefjord, Norway.

On May 30, 1979, I was promoted to General Field Engineer (GFE), the top rank in the field, about one year later than I should have achieved this; my monthly salary was increased to \$2355. I think my record number of hours for being rigged-up and working straight-through, not just awake, was over 72 hours in my career. I ran logging tools like the induction resistivity, micro-spherically focused resistivity, dual laterolog resistivity, sonic, neutron, gamma ray density, natural gamma ray, high resolution dip meter, explosive formation sample taker, and the electro-hydraulic repeat formation tester. The data was captured on large rolls of photographic film which I developed in the dark room and on magnetic reel-to-reel tapes.

(The following paragraphs are the combined stories of my fellow engineer and friend, John McClean, so he gets most of the credit, but some are my own). In the mid 1970s, there were no computers. Analogue graphical results on photographic film would be enough for us to help make the oil company's expensive decisions. Every time I developed one of the rolls of exposed log film, which could be over six feet long, I always checked – Developer is closest, Water wash at center, Fixer is farthest. Get that order wrong and the log would have to be rerun. Tens of thousands of dollars' worth of extra rig time plus the chance of getting our equipment stuck down hole in the

uncirculated, thick drilling fluid and rock chippings. I always prepared our unit's tiny, one-person darkroom myself. 'D-W-F, near to far'! Some engineers left this preparation to their crew with economically tragic results.



The developed film of a Schlumberger wellbore log.

During calm summer conditions when the North Sea is like a mirror and the setting sun is on the unobstructed horizon, it can feel surreal to be out there. Despite the constant dull drone of the diesel generators and the clanking of the rotating drill string being slowly driven down with its diamond-tipped drill bit, through solid rock miles below the surface, looking out over the deep blue sea and sky all around gave me a sense of calm and privilege. One hour and twenty minutes flight time from our company base in Stavanger, Norway, I alone was responsible for accurately running the wireline logs that would allow the geologist and company men aboard to decide to keep drilling or cement-up the hole and seek a better location to explore.

One story that was funny but could have been deadly was that every Sunday, except in bad weather, which was almost all the time, we had to practice boarding the rig lifeboats; probably stemming from some Law of the Sea based on the Titanic Disaster. So, on Sundays offshore, we would all be 'whistled to our lifeboat stations' as if we were in the British Navy at war and load ourselves into the boats with our full survival gear on. On this Sunday in the summertime, the sea was very calm, and the air was too warm for survival suits; although if any of us had fallen into the

North Sea, we wouldn't live long without those suits even in summer. Because it was so calm on this Sunday, it was decided to actually lower the lifeboats onto the sea surface and actually sail around the rig. One lifeboat crew managed to stop lowering halfway down to the surface, we managed to get all the way down and actually drive around, and one boat nearly avoided a deadly fall from height. It was a complete fiasco for sure because our boat couldn't figure out how to be retrieved by the lifeboat davit cranes and hours later, we were finally hoisted up by the rig crane and a report had to be made. We missed Sunday dinner and everyone in our boat was upset but luckily not seasick.



An exploration drilling rig in the 'calm' North Sea.

When helicopters ditch, they usually catch a still rotating rotor blade in the sea, which drives the craft onto its side. The high-mounted, heavy engines and rotor assembly complete the job of a full capsizing of the craft and men in seconds. Now upside down in cold, dark water eighteen struggling bulkily survival-suited men would scramble to open the one large passenger door and stairs against gravity and water pressure. Was I a nervous flyer? Three Norwegian Sikorsky S-61s crashed during my assignment in Stavanger – with no survivors; some with no known cause. This particular windless morning allowed a smooth ride towards the platform for a regular flight offshore. Noting the take-off time, I watched the minutes tick by on my vibrating Omega Sea Master chronograph watch (a present to myself as a reward for completing my first successful thirty-six-hour logging job).



A helicopter ditched in the North Sea.

At one hour and ten minutes, the helicopter captain came over the cabin speakers "We are near the rig, but we do not have visual sighting of it. I'm going to descend to sea level, and everyone keep a lookout for the platform legs." Can you imagine, we hadn't been flying that high, but now we were crawling slowly forward maybe ten feet above the North Sea. The downdraft from the rotor blades blasted the surface out in a massive circle of spray. After a few minutes, the chopper surged a hundred feet upwards, traversed right over the helideck, and plonked down for a landing. I never saw a thing. The pilot braked the rotors to a stop. The five blades drooped down in the still air. The whine of the two jet turbine engines replaced by the thrum of the gas-driven rig generators. I was last to disembark of course, glad to be alive one more time.



A Sikorsky S-61 helicopter.

The Summer Intern Report: The Schlumberger Way. *For one month in July 1979, Schlumberger brought in an engineer studying at Princeton University named Robert R. to Stavanger for vacation training. (Note, this is not my story, but I did have a conversation with this young man. Another strange coincidence is that I had been accepted to Princeton but couldn't attend because my father couldn't afford the expense.) I have quoted here several excerpts from his training report to express a young student's fresh point of view of The Schlumberger Way.*

Quote - Schlumberger is a tough company. It demands much of its engineers, requiring them to accept a fast-paced, twenty-four hour, seven-days a week job. In return, it offers high pay, excitement, and the chance for satisfaction with one's work. I leave this fascinating vacation training highly impressed, partly with the technology, but mostly with the people who make Schlumberger the "best in the business".

During my job interview at school, the recruiters emphasized that Schlumberger is not just a job, but a lifestyle. I now begin to understand that statement. Schlumberger requires complete dedication, a willingness to give up many other interests in order to provide the best services possible in the North Sea. The various aspects of the job require the engineers to be wellsite advisor, electronics expert, public relations man, and manager, as well as a thorough, highly trained logging engineer.



The flight home after the fog lifts.

Schlumberger is hands-on engineering at its best, for the engineer not only makes the careful calibrations and recordings of the log plus interpretations of that log for the client, but he also repairs as much of his own equipment as possible. When an electronic cartridge for a tool failed, the engineer found the circuit diagram and isolated the problem. When a control panel failed, the engineer rewired it. During the logging process, drilling and oil company personnel continually asked the engineer to justify his decisions, which required that the engineer fully understand each problem as it arose or that he exudes enough confidence in his ability to locate the problem to convince the client that all was under control.

To develop a stereotype of the "Schlumberger engineer" would be naïve; each man with whom I worked approached the job in a unique way. Some standard characteristics seem to exist, however since the situations with which the engineer must deal are common to all. First of all, the nature of the job demands complete dedication, for the engineers often work weekends and long hours offshore.

Perhaps more than dedication, the engineer must love an adventuresome life. Almost to a man, the engineers in Norway disdained an 8:00 to 17:00 job. They seemed to enjoy the excitement and uncertainty of continual movement and split-second decisions. On the job, the engineers impressed me with their self-confidence. Even with the company man on his back and a tool

failure, the engineer maintained a calm appearance, thus communicating non-verbally to the company man that all was under control.

When asked why they enjoyed the job, several engineers responded, after suitable wisecracks, that they enjoyed the independence and responsibility. Each engineer, while backed up by an excellent organization, operates essentially on his own on the rig. Thus, when he makes a mistake, he takes the full blame, but likewise, when he jury-rigs a tool and finds that it works, or successfully completes a job, he can take much credit, for the success of the job is his success. Unquote - (Please note, that in 1979, women were not yet allowed to work on oil rigs in the North Sea; except offshore Norway as caterers.)

Robert's training report mentions that the Schlumberger engineer was expected to solve and fix tool failures on the wellsite to save the client rig time and money. Engineers had to report this as 'Lost Time' and it was a major performance measure used in an engineer's annual appraisal. Many times, the cause of the tool failure could not be determined onsite or it would increase the Lost Time to trouble shoot. More often than not, the engineer would try and 'fix' the problem in a quick and easy fashion by shaking and shoving the control panel, disconnecting the tool cartridge, pushing on the connector pins or swapping out the equipment if there was a spare onsite. The all-time, most-used method of trying to get the equipment working again was to spray the connectors with WD-40 (water-displacing, anti-rust lubricant); many times, that did the trick!

During my Schlumberger years I received quite a few electrical shocks. Today, I hate working with electricity of any kind. In Nigeria, I absent mindedly grabbed the electrical head of the Dipmeter tool I was checking on the shop floor and received quite a jolt of voltage in my hand; luckily it was DC voltage and just scared me. Offshore Aberdeen in the North Sea, I was out on another engineer's rig and went to check out the Auxiliary Power Supply (APS). When I loosened the bolts and started to remove the waterproof access door, I was blown backwards by a very large electrical shock. That really frightened me and was another brush with death. I've been extremely shy around electricity ever since.

Personally, I heard the news while on vacation in Virginia that an oil rig had capsized in the North Sea on the 27th March 1980. There were many oil rigs in the North Sea, but when the oil rig was named, the Alexander Kielland, it was a rig I had stayed on several times. It was the one I was sleeping on only three weeks ago before my vacation. If I was still in Norway, I may have been on it. A chill came over me as I remembered the five-story high accommodation units stacked on the deck of the exploration rig to turn it into a 'flotel' – a floating hotel. The tall drilling derrick hadn't even been removed, making the Kielland top heavy and slow to right itself in a big sea. I hated sleeping on it. Everyone had to cross a bridge with a sliding gangway to get to the actual oil platform where we worked. That was okay in a calm sea, but with a wind and a swell, it was scary.



The Alexander Kielland 'Flotel'; another Pentagone rig.

The wind was gusting to 40 knots with waves up to 12 meters high. Minutes before 18:30 hrs. those onboard felt a 'sharp crack' followed by 'some kind of trembling'. Suddenly the rig heeled over 30 degrees and then stabilized. Five of the six anchor cables had broken, the one remaining cable preventing the rig from capsizing. The list continued to increase and at 18:53 hrs. the remaining anchor cable snapped, and the rig turned upside down.

I imagined the crowds of men trying to get into lifeboats or just get outside during the 14 minutes before the Kielland went from a 30-degree list to fully capsizing. Normally, you had to step into a room to let someone else pass by, the corridors were so narrow. Seven men swam to the nearby Edda platform and were taken from the sea by crane. Our company had one crew member on board (it might have been me) and I knew the one who was plucked out of the sea; a true Viking man, Bengt B. He told me many years later that he never went offshore again. A total of 123 men of the 212 on board died that night. I felt survivors' guilt for weeks after the tragedy. The newspapers covered the aftermath and the eventual towing of the rig into a fjord to recover the bodies. Perhaps, even though I was still in my 20s then, I was becoming more aware of my own mortality. Expose yourself endlessly to a dangerous environment and one day it could kill you. Well, in my case, there is a story to follow later on just that subject. *On the Internet, it is possible to fully research the sacrifice these men made. For example, you can view a recent 2019 YouTube video produced by the Norwegian Safety Authority at: <https://youtu.be/KmbLvzPMuRI>*



The Alexander Kielland tragedy; the fifth leg is missing.

Saudi Arabia Summer 1980

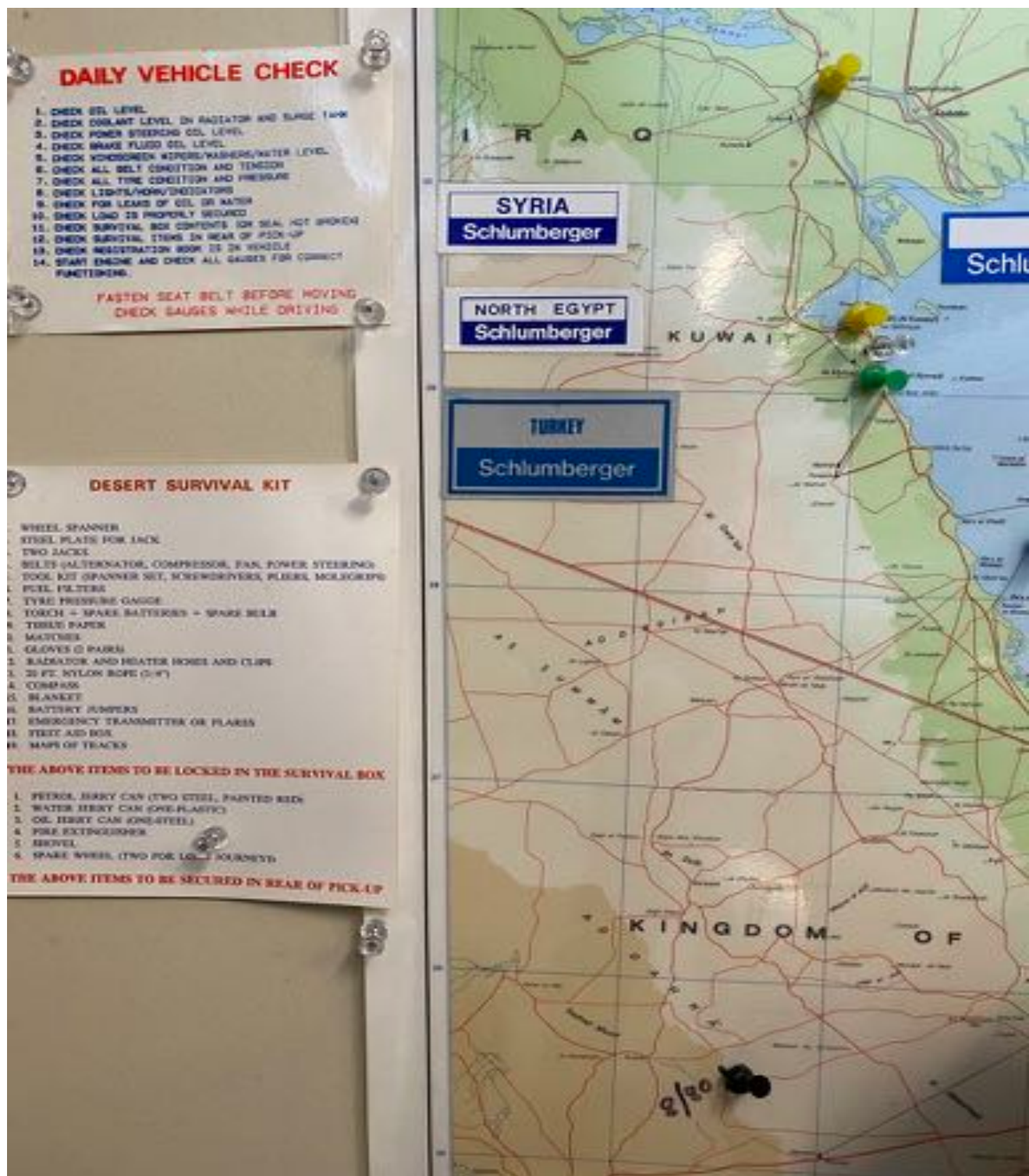
I was transferred to Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, arriving on July 5, 1980. The Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan, where everyone must fast during daylight hours, started a few days later. It meant that expats had to hide when putting anything in their mouths; and it was hot, as in 125 F. at Noon. At the time, the Saudi Aramco Oil Company was still populated by many Americans and they preferred American engineers, not French ones. Thus, I was made the specialist engineer for the Repeat Formation Tester (RFT) and Stuck Drill Pipe Services (using explosives to 'Back-Off' the pipe stuck in the wellbore) because the 'Yanks' wouldn't work with 'Frogs'. In mid-August I was called out to go to a remote exploration rig north of Riyadh, the capital, which had their drill pipe stuck in the well. I was given a Lebanese operator named Munir to drive me as I had no idea where to go, but he didn't speak English. We headed out for the rig after dark ahead of the logging truck, left the blacktop road a few hours later and headed west into the sand dunes. The hand-

written directions included “turn southwest onto the sand track at the camel carcass”. Well somehow Munir and I missed the camel carcass in the dark and eventually realized we were lost, then we plowed into some deep sand and got the pick-up truck stuck; completely.



Similar to where I was stuck in the sand and lost in Saudi. This guy is not stuck or lost, but of no help to me.

It was about midnight and we couldn't dig out the overloaded pick-up to get back onto the hard pan track. I discovered that the only thing we had to drink was one can of Diet Dr Pepper. We did not have a desert survival kit, we weren't given any special desert survival training, and there were no protocols in place for the rig staff to report us as being overdue and for a search party to be dispatched. The only survival rule I knew of was to stay with the vehicle as the search party always kept looking until they found the vehicle. They didn't always keep looking for people who walked away. So Munir and I climbed to the top of the highest sand dune near us, always keeping the pick-up truck in sight, and thought we espied an electric light on the horizon. As Munir didn't speak any English, he basically decided on his own to strike out across the sand towards the light; there was little I could do about it. I returned to the pick-up and hoped for the best but didn't get much sleep.



The new Desert Survival rules coming from my close-call experience.

The temperature was still a little cool at dawn but climbed quickly to be very hot around Noon. I couldn't sit in the pick-up and all shade had disappeared, but I wasn't going to drink that Dr Pepper yet. I decided to climb to the top of the sand dune again just to do something before my body prevented me from doing anything. At the top I looked back at the pick-up and noticed that the sand had already covered up my footsteps; oh, just lovely. About then I heard a vehicle engine noise somewhere but did see anything near me until a white Toyota pick-up truck literally roared over the opposite sand dune and hurtled down towards my vehicle and stopped. It was Munir and a Saudi Bedouin (a Bedo) and when they didn't find me in my pick-up, they looked and saw me on top of my sand dune and started gesticulating. They jumped in their truck and climbed straight up the face of the dune and started yelling at me angrily because I had left my vehicle. I got in, they handed me a bottle of Souhat mineral water, and we drove back down to the stuck pick-up.



The Dr Pepper 'survival kit' (the copper plate is from a later assignment in Azerbaijan).

Munir and the Bedo, whose name was Mohammed no less, then removed the sand from around the wheels and reduced the air pressure in the tires to about 10 psi. That surprised me as the pick-up was heavily loaded with equipment and explosives (which I am glad Mohammed did not recognize). Mohammed then started driving my truck away and Munir drove his truck in pursuit with me as the passenger. Mohammed the Bedouin could do incredible things driving a vehicle in deep sand; I wondered how he would have done in deep snow? Eventually we reached a petrol station and refilled my truck tires with air. I then offered all the Saudi money I had, Mohammed

easily accepted, and then drove off. Munir and I then drove to the unsuspecting drilling rig where, upon informing the Aramco Company Man of why I was late, he asked why I hadn't followed my logging truck to the rig site; "because my Management said to leave ASAP" I stated. Anyway, he said, I was no longer required as the drill pipe was free to move again and I should return to the Al Khobar base.



The Saudi rig site I almost did not live to see.

On the journey home, only in daylight, I did follow the logging truck until we found the highway and I think I spotted where Munir and I had taken the wrong turn the night before, but never saw the camel carcass. When I had a chance to speak with the Schlumberger Management, I carefully damned them all and made sure they knew they nearly had two fatalities on the job. That got their attention as Safety statistics were a big part of their annual performance appraisals. The rig did get stuck again and I had to go back out there, but in convoy and not at night. I noticed a lot more road signs had been put up to direct vehicular traffic to the rig plus I now had the new Desert Survival Kit in the pickup. The new Safety Procedures, such as scheduled communications with the rig, were also put into practice. I tried to put the payment I made to the kind Bedo, Mohammed, on my Expense Report, but Schlumberger did not reimburse me as they did not have a Cost Code for such a thing. I may have died in Saudi Arabia at the age of 27; many thanks Munir and Mohammed!



The desert logging truck which didn't get lost.

I nearly had a second chance in two months to confront death on the job; this time offshore Saudi. On Oct. 2, 1980, the Ron Tappmeyer jack up rig blew out on the Hasbah 6 exploration well. Poison H₂S in the natural gas killed 19 men and over 100,000 barrels of oil was spilled into the Arabian (Persian) Gulf. The well was 'killed' by the Boots & Coots Well Control Company, and the flow stopped on Oct. 10th. I was sent out there to relieve the very shaken French engineer and be ready to run cement bond logs. Once on board, I had to immediately shave off my beard and learn how to use Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) to be able to work safely around the well.



Cleaning up the oil from the Ron Tappmeyer Blowout.



The Winch Driver's panel and the logging cable (note the oily window).



Running the CSU (Cyber Service Unit) on the Ron Tappmeyer. Note the clean-shaven face to be able to wear SCBA emergency air-supply equipment.



A letter about the Ron Tappmeyer Blowout typed on October 14th 1980.



The Black pins indicate the Blowout and the Lost in the Desert locations.

Saudi Arabia 1981 - 1982

The Schlumberger Base in Al Khobar was a very large walled and landscaped compound with single family housing for married engineers, bachelors' quarters, a swimming pool, exercise and game rooms, and a recreation club. The second bathroom was ALWAYS converted into the wine and beer room 'brewing' room. It would be full of 'jerry cans' (five-gallon gas cans) full of beer, white, or red wine-making recipes and resealable glass bottles. You could purchase all the ingredients you needed at the grocery store even though alcohol was dangerously illegal in Saudi. Every few months the concoction would be decanted into the bottles and sampled. I failed miserably at making beer, but my wines were drinkable. In the summer of 1981, I tried to bring in some special beer and wine-making yeast hidden in my socks. Saudi Customs found them, confiscated my luggage and my US Passport and put me into a locked room at the airport for 5 hours. When I was brought before the Customs Chief, he asked me in perfect English what the packets were for. I realized that lying was useless, so I told the truth. He just smiled, gave me back my passport, and said "Thank you." I had the impression that he was going to keep the yeast for his own use!

In those brew bathrooms lots of folks bought the local white lightning called 'Sadiqi', meaning 'my friend' in Arabic, and placed all kinds of additives into bottles of the stuff to add flavors. For example, many put BBQ-grill oak chips into the alcohol and let it soak for many weeks, turning the color brown and lending a bourbon taste to the white lightning; it was called 'Brown'! Some put in

mint flavored syrup to create a crème de menthe green liquor. The sadiqi was usually about 100 Proof when consumed. In my next location in Kuwait, it was called 'Flash' in honor of the distilling process. When I was travelling through Singapore one day, I suddenly came upon a fellow engineer who also worked in Khobar, Aussies Trevor R. and his wife Maureen, sitting at a bar. I asked Maureen what she was drinking, and she said Jim Beam American Whiskey neat (no mixer). I asked her why and she said it was the closest thing to 'Brown' she could find!

In March 1982, my Dad visited us in Al Khobar during one of his inspection trips of US Embassy and Consulate installations in the Middle East. He was the Head of Station for the Communications Division of the CIA based in Athens, Greece. During his visit, he took me to the US Marine Corps Officers Club in Dammam where we were served a cocktail made with real liquor by their Saudi bartender! Marines guard US installations around the world and I have also had the honor of drinking in their bar in Islamabad, Pakistan. The highest honor of all is that my younger son, Robert, is now an Artillery Captain in the US Marine Corps. Just as unusual, that evening there was a heavy rain and because all the sewers were full of sand, the city roads were flooded, in the Saudi desert!

I now had a third chance in two years to confront death on the job in Saudi. I was selected to work with the Saudi Military police to destroy the old, junk explosives that had finally over-filled the storage bunkers. Old explosives can be safely destroyed by carefully burning small amounts in steel 'burn' barrels. We loaded up several truck loads and went into the desert amid high sand dunes, far from any habitation, with a police escort. The first day went well with cool overcast weather, but the second day was burning hot and windy. Around Noon, the Saudi Police Captain decided he had had enough of burning small batches of primacord (detonating cord) as it was taking too much time. So, he took the full box of explosives and threw it into the metal 'burn' barrel. Immediately the cry went up "RUN for your lives"! All of us including the Captain started running up and over the crest of the nearest sand dune. Imagine trying to run and climb in deep, soft sand; many of us were down on all fours, finally rolling over the crest of the dune. There was a large, sharp 'crack' as the explosives blew up and then the immensely scary sound of metal shrapnel from the barrel slicing through the air just over our heads. No one was injured but nobody wanted to continue with that assignment, and it was cancelled.

After two years surviving life in Saudi Arabia, my family and I were granted "Exit Visa Only" stamps in our US Passports which gave us permission to leave and never come back! (Well, I did return in December 1983 for a specialist job). My first wife, Kathi, was pregnant with our second child and flew back to her parents' home near Vienna, Virginia appropriately early for her pregnancy. I had to stay until the very end of May 1982. During that period, one more incident put me in great peril. I was driving in Dammam when a Saudi driver veered across my lane on the highway and almost struck my vehicle. I became very angry and waved my fist at him as he sped away. A mile or so later a vehicle suddenly swerved in front of me again and stopped! It was the same Saudi and he had attempted to cause me to rear-end him on purpose. I swerved out of his path and barely

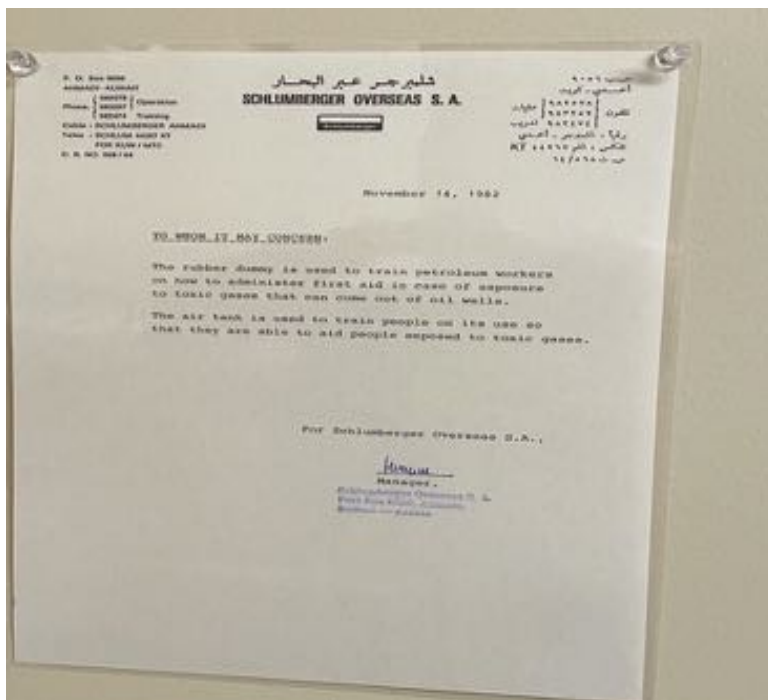
escaped down an exit ramp. If I had struck him, I would have been thrown into a Saudi jail and would have not been allowed to leave the country for weeks, maybe much longer. I would most certainly have missed the birth of my second son Robert on June 18th.

Kuwait 1982 - 1983

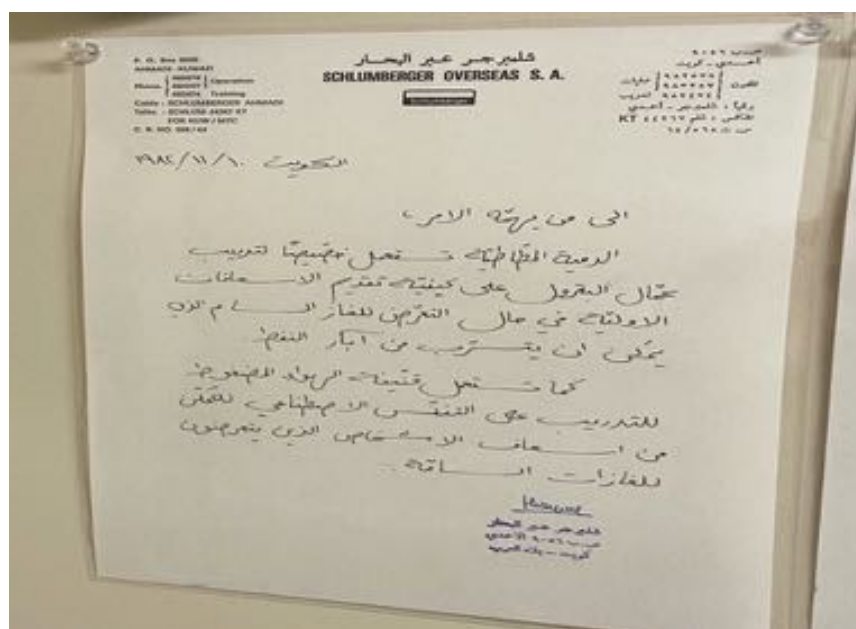
My next assignment after Saudi was in Ahmadi, Kuwait at the Middle East Training Center (MTC). After teaching my first Schlumberger MTC Curriculum in the Fall of 1982, I seemed to have caught the attention of the Middle East Division Technical (Technique in French) Manager, Francis T. Usually in Schlumberger that means something scary or difficult is coming; for sure. I was requested to drive from Kuwait to Iraq to verify the safety of the high-pressure control equipment and to train everyone on H₂S poison gas safety and CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation). In December 1982, I prepared to go into the Iran – Iraq War Zone which was started in September 1980 by Saddam Hussein invading Iran. This was a Sunni Muslim versus Shia Muslim religious war and, after terrible losses on both sides, now static trench warfare was in play. Muslims do not allow the female body to be exposed in public and Muslim women are covered head-to-toe, yet I was sent with a CPR dummy called Resusci-Annie, a plastic female doll used for practicing the life-saving techniques. Imagine showing this (flat-breasted) doll to the border authorities? Well, even with the ‘official explanation’ in Arabic, the authorities were unsure what to do, but they finally let me into Iraq, yet they did say “why isn’t the thing a little boy?” – no comment on that connotation about the Muslim male culture. A few years later the Industry would come out with a Resusci-Andy male training doll.



Resusci-Annie – not very feminine.



Resusci-Annie's 'passport' into Iraq.



In Arabic, but still not very effective.

I arrived at the Basra Sheraton Hotel just before dusk and was met by the local Schlumberger engineer; our company had a strictly followed Esprit de Corps and every one of us would do anything for the next one of us; we were 'brothers' without any need of meeting beforehand. So, I was sitting on the balcony of the Sheraton restaurant drinking a real beer, a Schlitz I think (we didn't have real beer in Kuwait), looking over the front-line trenches of the Iran - Iraq War; it had been a very long day. After doing the equipment checks and CPR training in Basra, I drove up to the base in Baghdad. Directions were very difficult to follow in Iraq, especially in Baghdad, because there were few street signs. I had a tourist map, but it was too idealistic and more like propaganda than reality. I found the Schlumberger base and performed my assignment before driving up to northern Iraq, to Kirkuk, in Kurdish homeland territory.

I arrived just before dark and found the small base un-occupied. The engineer and crew were out on a job and the house staff apparently didn't know I was coming. I found a beer and some meat in a tin can for dinner and fell asleep, exhausted. Deep in the night, I thought I heard a telephone ringing and ringing, but was too comatose to respond; I found out the next day it was the local engineer calling to ask for some advice. He seemed peeved at me, but he hadn't any excuse to be angry as he hadn't prepared for my visit as instructed; this cost me extra time which put me in a bad situation later. I had to spend a second night and only completed my assignment by Noon the third day.

Now I had to race down the road to be in Baghdad before dark, but I felt I had a cushion of a couple of hours. Murphy's Law then stepped in and I had to pull over to fix a flat tire with the car only halfway off the road and trucks roaring by threatening my life every time. After this delay, I

found myself in real trouble when I approached Baghdad; I couldn't find the base in the dark. After several attempts, I pulled over to a wider spot on a city street, probably a bus stop, but none were running at night, and I wondered what to do. I sure didn't think it wise to sleep in the car in a city with a war on. There was at least one streetlight working nearby, although why it wasn't turned off to prevent the Iranians from shooting at it, who knows. When a teenage fellow walked up to the driver's side window and smiled; somehow, I wasn't scared. I rolled down my window and said "Marhaba (Hello)" and he responded in good English "Good evening, may I help you?" What a stroke of luck, or even better? We agreed that he knew where the base was, and he got into the car to guide me there. As we approached the gate, I thanked him three times (good manners) and offered him money. He politely declined (more good manners) and walked off into the evening leaving me safely with the Schlumberger night watchman. I believe today that he was my 'Angel of Baghdad'.



Baghdad tourist map from December 1982.

I had a nice meal and a good sleep in the base and got on my way at dawn the next day; I needed to be home in Kuwait tonight. Driving west on a different, newer highway to bypass Basra, I noticed I was travelling parallel to the train tracks. Every train I saw go by heading east had huge lumps under camouflage covers, car after car. I deduced that these were new armored vehicles (tanks) for Saddam Hussein. An hour or so down the highway, I was stopped at an Army

checkpoint. I had to get everything out of the car and had another hilarious time trying to explain Resusci-Annie to the Iraqi Lieutenant. Once convinced, he then ordered four soldiers with weapons into my Chevrolet Impala. It crossed my mind that maybe I was being arrested for seeing all those tanks on the railcars. I drove down the highway for a while seeing nothing but tall swamp grass as we were in the Euphrates River delta area. With no warning, a soldier shouted, and I decided he meant “Stop”. He then got out, and disappeared into the feature-less swampland; how did he know where he was?

This happened three more times with the other soldiers until I reached the border with Kuwait. Apparently, the Iraqi exit guards were clued-in to Resusci-Annie from my earlier pass-through and I reached the Kuwaiti side with little trouble. The Kuwaiti guards read the documents and quickly let me through (smarter?). I had missed the Company Christmas Party, but was home after a successful and adventurous journey. My travels between Thanksgiving and Christmas had also taken me to the Schlumberger bases in Turkey in Diyarbakir, Ankara (where I bought a Hereke silk prayer rug), Luleburgaz on the European side of Turkey and Kamishly in eastern Syria. After the New Year, I took my family to Mauritius for Days Off and I purchased a wonderful wooden ship replica of the French 74-gun ship-of-the-line from the Napoleonic Wars, Le Superbe, for my 30th birthday present. It was crafted with child labor in Mauritius and is still with me today, undamaged.



The wooden model of Le Superbe built by child labor.

Upon returning to Kuwait, I was informed that I was the new Manager of the Middle East Training Center; it seems those trips with Resusci-Annie may have paid off! I started teaching only my

second Training Class of Junior Field Engineers (JFEs) just after my 30th birthday. On the first day of Orientation, one of my two fellow Instructors, Jorge A., from Brazil, said to the JFEs “it is going to be TUFT” (Portuguese pronunciation of tough) to a bit of laughter! He was correct.

Unfortunately, there were four JFEs that I had to fire for poor performance at the school. Then one of the visiting Guest Instructors, Frenchman Jean Marie K., told the Class “You must FUCKUS on this material” (French pronunciation for Focus)! There was huge burst of laughter this time. A fifth JFE was good but quit because he said he was suffering from loneliness, but today I would suspect it was a racist attitude towards him from the rest of the Class; he was from India. One of the JFEs I fired told me that I could not do so as he was a former French paratrooper. I told him he had had plenty of chances to prove how tough and smart he was but didn’t. He said he was going to my boss, who was also French, to reverse my decision. My boss, Joe K., the same guy who sent me into Iraq, backed me up and told the fellow that he did not make the grade to be a Schlumberger engineer, au revoir. At the completion of the class my MTC Manager’s Merit rating was ‘Good’.

Dubai, UAE 1983 - 1985

I was transferred to Middle East Region Headquarters as the Cased Hole Technique Staff Engineer in August 1983. This took me from Kuwait to Dubai; a wonderful change of assignment and living conditions! The whole Middle East was now my region of responsibility. In the early 80s, there was only one tall building in Dubai, the Dubai World Trade Center (WTC), and Schlumberger had its offices on the 9th Floor. Today, the WTC is like a short toothpick amongst the tallest skyline in the world! I lived in a two-story villa near Jumeirah Beach on ‘Behind the Pagoda Street’; physically right behind a large pagoda-like residence for a wealthy Emirati. In 2005, I would return to Dubai for my wife Kate’s 50th Birthday. We stayed at the Ritz Carlton on the same Jumeirah beach I used to drive my 4WD Isuzu Trooper up and down; geez.

Peter Windsor, my classmate at ATC 21, was my new boss. He was a smoker then and I had just quit a few years earlier, but working for Peter, I started smoking again as part of his team. In those days in the Middle Eastern winter months, it could get chilly, and Peter and I both wore sweater vests and long sleeve dress shirts; Peter started it (or maybe his wife Angela did). Anyway, one day we drove down the ‘Suicide Highway’ from Dubai to Abu Dhabi together to see some clients about Tubing Conveyed Perforating (TCP) services. When Dave K. in Abu Dhabi saw us sitting in the car smoking with our vests on, he remarked that we had on the MEA Technique ‘uniform’ and that we looked like we were the comedy routine The Blues Brothers (John Belushi, Dan Ackroyd, 1980). I forget what Peter quipped back, but it was good!

My special assignment in the Middle East was the introduction of the Schlumberger version of TCP. I performed the first jobs for this technology in Oman, Saudi Arabia, offshore Abu Dhabi, and the Syrian Western Desert. In June 1984, I was asked to teach at a TCP Seminar at the

Schlumberger Indonesian Training Center in Medan, Sumatra. The night I landed in Medan and went to the hotel, I went down to dinner a little late and was the only one in the restaurant. This was to happen again in Baku! I asked for a bottle of Blue Nun Liebfraumilch white wine from Alsace, Germany. When the waiter poured it into my glass, it was brown! I said that this bottle was bad and to please replace it. He said he would not. I tried to explain to him that it had 'gone off', but he said I had ordered it and I had to drink it. I asked him to taste it and he said he would not as he was a Muslim. I then asked to see the Manager and he stated he WAS the Manager. I gave up and ordered a second bottle which was just fine and paid for both. I should have requested that the first bottle be used as the vinegar in a vinaigrette on my mixed salad! After the seminar I continued flying home across the Pacific Ocean to the US for vacation in Virginia. After vacation I flew onwards back to work in Dubai completing a full circle of the globe. On those long flights I was seated in the Smoking Section right behind the curtain and the cigarette smoke made me miserable. So, I quit smoking for the second time and haven't smoked since.

I was asked in November 1984 to accept a promotion to Field Service Manager (FSM) for the Abu Dhabi Land (Bu Hasa) clients. It would have been a good career step upwards and I had earned it, but it meant moving from Dubai to Abu Dhabi. My first wife refused to move to Abu Dhabi saying I should be offered somewhere nicer to live than there. I had to turn down the job offer, but in Schlumberger you're allowed to say "No" one time only to a job they want you to do. So, when I was asked about a management position in either Ventura, California or Aberdeen, Scotland, I said that both were fine, but they insisted I pick one, so I chose California. What I received instead was a demotion to a sales engineer position in Casper, Wyoming; it felt like I was being punished for refusing the Abu Dhabi FSM job. With hindsight, it turns out that refusing the Abu Dhabi job finally led me to a job in Anchorage, Alaska and a great career with BP; Life is strange!

My transfer was scheduled for the summer of 1985, so I still had many more months to work in Dubai. I was sent out to the Western Desert of Syria for a two-week job, flying to Damascus in 1st Class on Syrian Airways. The plane was a Russian-built replica of a Boeing 727, a Tupolev, but of lesser quality. I was the only passenger in 1st Class, but the stewardess never seemed to come around; I only hoped that the engines and the pilots were of higher quality than cabin and the flight attendant! Driving to the drilling rig from Damascus, I was confronted with the most irritating aspect of the desert, the black flies. These flies were so numerous, you had to drive very fast with the windows down to get them out of the vehicle. They were drawn to any moisture and aggressively attacked any part of your body that sweated like your eyes, nose, mouth, and the back of the neck. When you were outside, there were always ten or twenty flies around you and when you went to get some sleep in the rig camp, you had to crack open the cabin door and spray a whole can of bug poison called Shell-Tox into the room. You then come back an hour later, rush in, close the door, then sweep the dead flies off your pillow and bedding before trying to sleep in the odor-filled poisonous atmosphere. I was to run into these horrible flies again in the Sahara Desert in Algeria years later.

Another adventure occurred when I was sent to Cairo, Egypt to speak with clients about Schlumberger technologies. I met up with my old friend from Nigeria, Hans Peter R., the guy who had Malaria, and had lunch with he and his wife at their flat. From there, I stopped in the huge open-air bazaar on the way to the airport and bargained for three very large copper pots called bean pots; they were once used to store and transport vegetables like beans. Because the copper had become old and blackened, it was difficult to say how valuable these bean pots really were. In Egypt, like many Middle Eastern and African countries, you also had to pass through Customs Control at the Departure area of the airport, not just at Arrivals. The Customs official questioned me on my unusual luggage, the pots were not packaged at all, just tagged. I gave him the equivalent of \$50 in Egyptian Pounds and the pots went on to the plane as they were. Upon arrival in Dubai, at baggage claim, each pot came rolling down the baggage chute like a bowling ball and I had to catch them to prevent damage to them and the other passengers. When I got them home, the house cleaner was given an extra month's salary to scrape and polish the pots; they were gorgeous.

The final escapade of my Schlumberger career in the Middle East involved 'liberating' (saving) an old Powered Gamma Panel (PGP) from the pre-computer days that was being junked. I even managed to collect the power cords for it so I could turn it on and have the indicator lights work. Twenty-eight years later, I donated this PGP to the Schlumberger Museum in Creve Coeur in Normandy, France; now I can say my name is in a Museum.



The PGP in Houston. Both Charlie and Karen were ex-Schlumberger engineers.

Casper, Wyoming 1985 - 1986

I arrived in Casper with my older son, Tommy, to get him started in the 1st Grade. Tommy had already completed the 1st Grade in the British School in Dubai, but we felt he should get a strong start in the American School system. He was 6-1/2 years old, so this would make him a little older in his High School Graduating Class of 1997. There were no negative effects with this decision as far as I can tell. We stayed in a motel until our new home was ready to move in to, picked up a new Jeep Cherokee, and enjoyed watching the movie, Red Dawn, on the motel TV while eating Domino's pizza for dinner; all very American at last.

My Schlumberger career came to an end in Casper. The price of oil crashed again and the number of operating drilling rigs I was supposed to sell services to fell from about 50 a month to 1 or 2! I hadn't been very happy with the sales methods they were forcing me to use. They asked me to try and sell the clients on services that we didn't have tools for and the customers became very wary of me. Schlumberger kept cutting their workforce until on Monday, June 9, 1986, my sales manager, Charly D., came up from Denver and laid me off at lunch. I requested that he change the date to Friday, the 13th and to my surprise he did. This then was exactly 11 years to the day from when I joined the company in Paris! Another bit of revenge I savored is that I had finally gotten my most difficult client, Diamond Shamrock, to go to lunch with me on Tuesday. So, I treated them to an expensive and beery meal and told them that I had just been fired; there was a lot of laughter and they expressed their newfound respect for me, nevertheless.

I had taken a large pay cut coming from Dubai to Casper, from \$6000 per month to \$4000. I sold the house in Casper at a loss, put everything in storage there, and cashed out my Profit-Sharing Retirement Savings in order to survive until I could find another job in the very depressed oilfield job market. I flew the family back to Virginia and drove the Jeep across the country in 3 days. In those days, job hunting consisted of looking in the Want Ads of newspapers and industry publications, then sending a resume in the mail into the 'great void' and hoping for an interview.

To pass the time and to allow my older son to play Youth Soccer, I was pressured into being a head coach for 9-year-olds in the Vienna (Virginia) Youth Soccer (VYS) League. We named our team the Cobras and I used my father-in-law's early technology Commodore computer to make the team roster before every game. I this handed out to all the players' parents and said that was the plan and I wasn't going to change it. I made sure that every player was in the game the same amount of time no matter their skill level. I was at every practice 3 times a week after school; the parents were amazed by my dedication. The Cobras finished the season in First Place and I finally explained to the parents that I had been unemployed the whole time.



Fall 1986 Vienna Youth Soccer First Place!

After six months of unemployment, living in my parents-in-law's house in Oakton, Virginia, I finally received a job offer. During the interview in Houston in December 1986, it was mentioned that I may not be happy with the job location. I asked where and they said 'Alaska'. I almost felt insulted that they would think that would scare me off; I said, 'when can I start?' My soccer players and their parents were apparently saddened by my departure!

The North Slope of Alaska 1987 - 1996

I was hired by the Nalco Chemical Company to be the Sales Engineer in Prudhoe Bay for the two major oil companies operating on the North Slope of Alaska, Arco and BP. The Oil Field Specialty Chemicals I sold and serviced were stuff like scale and corrosion inhibitors, emulsion breakers and biocides. I was based in Dead Horse, a two-hour flight from where I lived in Anchorage, the largest city (only 200,000 folks). It was while working for Nalco on The Slope that I experienced some of the most extreme weather records ever observed up to that time: the lowest temperature, the lowest wind chill factor, and the highest wind speed.

PRUDHOE BAY OFFICIAL WEATHER STATISTICS

The following information is submitted for your interest from the weather records of the Prudhoe Bay Tower/Weather Observing Department:

THE LONGEST DAY at Prudhoe Bay is: 63 Days, 23 Hours, 40 Minutes.

Official Sunrise: 0026AM (3 minutes past midnight) 20 May.

Official Sunset: 1148 PM 22 July.

THE SHORTEST DAY: 1 Hour, 3 Minutes.

Official Sunrise: 1124AM 24 November.

Official Sunset: 1227PM 24 November.

THE LONGEST NIGHT: 54 Days, 22 Hours, 51 Minutes.

Official Sunset: 1227 PM 24 November.

Official Sunrise: 1118AM 18 January.

THE SHORTEST NIGHT: 26 Minutes.

Official Sunset: 1142 PM 19 May.

Official Sunrise: 0026AM (3 minutes past midnight) 20 May.

June 21 is the SUMMER SOLSTICE - the longest day in the lower 48.

On June 21 at Prudhoe Bay, we have 24 hours of daylight...

December 21 is the WINTER SOLSTICE - shortest day in the lower 48.

On December 21 at Prudhoe Bay, we have 6 hours and 4 minutes of daylight...

THE HIGHEST TEMPERATURE RECORD AT PRUDHOE BAY: 42 Degrees "F" July 7, 1975.

✓ **THE LOWEST TEMPERATURE RECORD AT PRUDHOE BAY:** Minus 62 Degrees "F" January 27, 1989.

✓ **THE HIGHEST WIND SPEED RECORDED AT PRUDHOE BAY:** 95 Knots (108 MPH) 8:11PM 25 February, 1989.

ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE RECORDS - EXCEEDS 31.00 inches of mercury:

✓ **Altimeter Setting Indicator** exceeds its limit of 31.00 inches of mercury...This extreme high pressure has been recorded on: 2, 3, 4 and 5 January, 1970 - the highest reading obtained was 31.43 inHg. from a mercurial barometer. This extreme pressure was recorded again on 2, 3 and 4 February 1988 - the highest recording obtained was 31.22 inHg...Again on 30, 31 January, 1989 and 1 February, 1989 the pressure exceeded 31.00 inHg - the highest reading was not extrapolated at that time.

✓ **THE OFFICIAL RECORD LOW CHILL FACTOR:** Occurred 26 January 1989, with a temperature of minus 54 degrees and wind of 31 Knots (36 MPH). This gave us a **CHILL FACTOR OF MINUS 135 DEGREES**.

Data for the above statistics taken from Prudhoe Bay Weather Records 1969 to 1989.

Submitted by M. E. Woodard (Woody) and Fred Blair
Tower Operator/Weather Observer
Prudhoe Bay, Alaska March 25, 1989

3/26/89

QUIT NALCO!

North Slope Weather Records: I personally experienced the ones checked.

I thought I did well for Nalco, making them a lot of money: \$1 million in 1987, \$1.5 million in 1988, and \$928 thousand by May 1989. Their two senior salesmen in Alaska were jealous of my bonuses and Ken B. and JD D. convinced the Nalco Manager Fred M. to forcefully transfer me to the Kenai Area where the other two salesmen worked. This would reduce my bonus by a large amount and force me to move my family to a rural area; the bonus made up one-half my total annual salary. On March 17th, St. Patrick's Day 1989, I walked around the block in the Fish Market

Area of Seattle with John W., the CEO of Visco Chemicals, but he refused my request to at least share my sales territory instead of taking my sons out of school in Anchorage. I quit on the second walk around the block and he wasn't sure what to make of that, but I did the right thing.

Once again, world events stepped in to steer my career path. The Exxon Valdez ran aground one week after I quit Nalco in Seattle. I soon had an interview with BP Alaska as they needed chemical buyers to clean up the oil spill. I was hired on May 30, 1989 as a Buyer with a huge cut in pay, but with a great benefits package and a stable career future; well actually not so stable as it accelerated upwards! It didn't really matter, but I was actually buying heavy equipment, oil boom, oil absorbent, and even medical supplies and commemorative knives for oil spill executives. I didn't care what I bought; this was a new start and things were going to get much better in my career! Anchorage was a great little city to raise two sons, and their mother Kathi, my first wife, had a successful real estate career there. Holidays were especially wonderful with lots of snow falls on Christmas Eve, firecrackers on the ice at New Years Eve, months of skiing for my kids from Halloween to Easter, and fishing and camping in the long daylight hours of the northern summers. Baseball season was terribly uncomfortable due to the rainy, cold days, but football season was glorious and crazy snowy, cold. Both my boys were defensive stars on the Service High School Cougars teams that won three state football championships for each.

One of my successes as a Buyer was to return a big snowplow and road grader to the manufacturer that the North Slope management did not want. It was a difficult negotiation, but I gave it my best and was recognized for it. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in the summer of 1990 and the price of oil started to rise quickly, BP Alaska started a program to increase oil production quickly to increase profits by hydraulically fracturing hundreds of Prudhoe Bay wells. This in turn required more North Slope Petroleum Engineers (NSPE's) to perform the frac jobs. It was called 'the frac for Iraq' and once again I was in luck. I had gone to a party where I met a NSPE, Barry L., who alerted me to apply for one of the new jobs because of my Schlumberger experience; Barry himself was ex-Schlumberger. Today, fracturing technology has expanded into hydrocarbon basins worldwide. The shortened version of fracturing became known in news publications as a 'frack' or 'fracked', but we oilfield engineers still prefer to spell it 'frac'.

Another strange 'circle of life' occurred in 1994 when I was on a business trip from Anchorage to Aberdeen to talk about new technologies we were putting to use on the North Slope. In the old BP Office in Dyce, I spotted a rather large plastic model of the first floating oil production platform in the North Sea named the Buchan; the model filled half a room. It looked very familiar as it was a Pentagone rig design. I was shocked to discover that the Buchan was in fact a makeover of my old rig the Drill Master which I knew had been decommissioned as a drilling rig in 1978. I was seeing the Drill Master once again, 16 years later.

The luckiest part of becoming a NSPE was that I met my present wife, Kate Humphrey, on the North Slope. One of her injection wells required stimulation work and in January 1992 I was

assigned to perform the job. Eventually we would meet again in Houston in 2000 and we were married on July 3, 2002 in Mineral, Virginia. We now live in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, happily retired. I believe that Kate's knowledge and experience in the oilfield has contributed greatly to our compatibility as a married couple and to our loving relationship. We have lived and worked together in Houston and in Azerbaijan these past 20 years, several times side by side.



The lucky guy on a frac job as a North Slope Petroleum Engineer.

Cupiagua, Colombia 1996 - 1997

After working for BP since 1989, I was transferred to performing rotational work in Colombia, South America, spending every three weeks on location in the jungle of the Eastern Foothills of the Andes Mountains, then off duty for three weeks. My rotational partner who worked the other three-week shift, my 'back-to-back', was Barry Luecker who also lived in Anchorage, Alaska like myself. Here's a story Barry tells in his own way, but it mirrors my same experiences there.

BP was testing an exploration well called Cupiagua 3 that was up on the side of a mountain in the Andes Eastern Foothills near the town of Yopal. There was great difficulty in digging a flare pit in this location and we unearthed a section of rock that was extremely hard right in the middle of the

pit. Given the space limitation, there was no place else to move the pit, so it was completed with the huge boulder, at least 10' x 20' and 15' high, in the middle of it. To further complicate matters, it was decided that there were no trucks in the entire country of Colombia that could safely transport produced oil condensate fluids, so we were forced to flare the condensate along with the gas. This would make the flare very much larger and hotter than was typical for a well test and would challenge the safe capacity of the flare pit even without a boulder in it.

As we started working on the location, I had a pair of binoculars with me and I spotted a group of people way up the mountainside observing our operation. Closer inspection proved them to be armed rebel guerillas slowly making their way closer to the well site. I informed the Colombian Army Captain in charge of our protection of this development and, true to expectations, he moved his troops down the mountainside away from trouble; basically, placing my location between the rebel guerillas and his forces. Given the circumstances, as we were not going to be evacuated, there was not much to do, but to continue with the perforating and testing program. Things progressed fairly normally in a negative way and, after multiple failures of pressure testing the equipment and a couple of miss runs with the perforating guns, we really started to hit our stride (of mishaps). Because we had aimed the flare tip to miss the big rock in the middle, we were constantly burning up the vegetation and trees outside of the pit; not good. The problem was getting progressively worse as the well continued to flow at higher and higher rates as we opened up more reservoir intervals. I could see this was not going to allow us to finish the job without burning up the mountain, so in my brilliance, I decided to aim the flare tip directly at the big rock in the middle of the pit, hoping that it would slowly dissipate the heat source being directly aimed at it.

After about 24 hours of flowing the well, my plan wasn't working as hoped. The boulder was dissipating the intense heat by exploding pieces of rock off its top giving us quite a firework show. As the rock pieces exploded into the air, they fell into the pit and emitted red and green tracers of light. Life was good or so I thought, but those pesky people on the mountain above us were getting closer now, after 3 days, and I could now tell that they were all rebel women. I started thinking that this could be bad, and that I was about to embark on a deep immersion class in Spanish. This could be good as well as I might lose a few pounds as I was told that the guerillas were constantly on the move in these mountains.

Things went from bad to worse the next night. We had just completed a perforating gun run and had the pressure control lubricator off the well when an earthquake struck, sending the lubricator swinging crazily all around. The boulder started exploding and now, rather than sending little 1 – 3-pound projectiles into the pit, it was launching 20 - 40-pound rocks into the air 70 - 90 feet, before coming down on location. The fireworks were now approaching a USA 4th of July event level. Hopefully, the guerillas thought that the military were firing mortars at them! We shut the well in, but the rocks kept cooking off. I assumed that we had finally heated whatever moisture was embedded in the rocks and it had reached super-steam status and a corresponding pressure.

There was nothing that could be done now, but to hunker down and make sure no one was in a position to be exposed to the rain of rocks pelting location.

I had been up for several days at this point and I was in pickup truck thinking about the earthquake, the rock bombardment, and wondering where my lady guerilla friends were, when I noted that I hadn't seen the army boys in some time; then a red dot appeared on my chest. I had seen enough movies to know that this was a laser target scope attached to a rifle or pistol and someone had decided to shoot me. My heart stopped. I wondered if I would see my dog Bogie in heaven. I wondered if I should sing "This is the End" by the Doors and what a bullet would feel like. Turns out that George, the Schlumberger engineer, had a newfangled hand-held laser pointer and he thought it would be nice to see if it would wake me up if it was targeted on me. I loved my job. Thanks Barry!



This is not the Cupiagua 3 flare pit with the big rock; no pits were the same.

The first production well we hydraulically fractured and tested was Cupiagua A-01. While moving in and locating the equipment on location, the crane we were using broke a stabilizer leg and tipped over. I spent a whole week begging for a replacement crane, but when it arrived on the 'lo-boy' transport trailer (cama baja), it was not low at all; it was a high trailer with no way to get the crane off onto the ground. Eventually, after calling the two drilling rigs nearby, they drove their cranes down to our location and those two cranes picked up the third crane and set it down. This was a typical oilfield SNAFU (situation normal all fouled up) in Colombia! We got back to work.



Two cranes to get the third crane off of the 'high-boy'.

The second well on the schedule to perforate, hydraulically fracture, and test was Cupiagua Q-06, just over the mountain from A-01. As I arrived back on location to relieve Barry and get back to work, I started feeling very ill. I functioned as long as I could by using my Assistante, Jaimie A., to give orders, but when I could no longer even give my morning radio report to my manager, they decided to send out a medical doctor on the helicopter (nobody around to relieve me?). The lady doctor and Jaimie came to the Company Man's trailer, but he kept outside, not taking any chances. She came in and examined me on the bed and said in very good Spanish, "I think you may have

Dengue Fever”. She asked me to try and stand up, which I managed, and she gave me an injection of antibiotic and/or something. The shot burned through my thigh and into my spine and I collapsed onto the bed. The next morning, my fever was much reduced, and my appetite was returning. I love my job!



The Company Man and the Assistante.

The Sahara, Algeria 1997 - 2000

Arriving in Hassi Messaoud in Algeria for the first time in October 1997, having just transferred from Colombia, South America, I was greeted by my own private black fly. This fly will stick with you during your entire stay in the Sahara when outside and return to greet you for every three-week hitch. I was very excited to join the Exploration and Appraisal Drilling Team working at the BP camp in Hassi on the In Salah Gas and the In Amenas Condensate Projects. I made a lot of new friends, most of whom were British. The camp had great facilities with a bar that served beer and wine, a swimming pool, workout facilities and a basketball court no one knew how to use except as a cricket pitch. We had a British Pub style 'Quiz Night' every Friday night. The 'commute' from Anchorage, Alaska to Hassi Messaoud was long and complex yet amazingly, I always managed to stay on schedule and relieve my back-to-back on time. After being up all day on a Sunday in Anchorage usually doing chores and paperwork, I would board the Continental Airlines (now United) red-eye flight to Seattle after Midnight; arriving at SeaTac Airport just before the Business Lounge opened at 6 am Monday morning. After a couple of hours, I boarded the flight to Newark, New Jersey, waited a couple of more hours, then took the flight overnight to London Gatwick. Arriving early Tuesday morning, I walked to the Gatwick Airport Hilton Hotel. After a few round trips, the Hilton Staff began to know and expect me every three weeks and they would usually have a room ready even at 8 am. I would catch some sleep during the day until dinner time when I would join my fellow shift workers at the bar and then a meal. On Wednesday at 4 am, I would check in for the Charter Flight to Hassi, arriving in time for lunch with my black fly, ready to start my next three-week duty schedule; approximately 2-1/2 days travelling each way. I always tried to stay at the Gatwick Hilton on the trip back from Hassi to Anchorage as well.

Another 'opportunity' to be killed in the line of duty came in August 1999 as I was in a company car being driven from the airport to the BP Headquarters in Algiers, the capitol city of Algeria. Brian B., Chuck T., and I had just flown in from London to open the bids for the well testing project on the In Amenas Fields in the Sahara near the Tunisian border. We were to work all week with our Algerian counterparts from Sonatrach, the national oil company. While in the car on the divided highway into the city driven by two Expat security gentlemen, usually former military, there was a commotion behind us. As we looked back, we were shocked to see that the second BP car with all our luggage being driven by two Algerian staff had left the highway and was rolling over in the median sand strip between the two lanes.



The Saharan Desert flying into Algeria.

Just as we slowed down and pulled over to the side of the road, a strange car pulled right in front of us, then one more pulled in right behind us, blocking us in. We had all seen enough of Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan movies to know that this was a classic terrorist move to trap us and either take us as hostages or worse. The two security guys in the front seat rolled down their windows and stuck their hands into their coat pockets. The three of us just looked at each other and prepared to bail out of the car if it offered a chance of survival. As two of the fellows from the car in front of us approached the driver, they shouted in French that our friends were in an accident behind us and they would help. After digesting this message, we all jumped out and ran back to assist, but luckily our guys were uninjured due to the deep soft sand and, later we discovered, even the wine bottles in our luggage survived!



Posing in front of the landmark 'jebel' (hill) nicknamed "Alan's Tit"!



The sand sea of the Sahara on the road to the In Amenas test site.



The well test site with the flare going behind my left shoulder.



The 'Company Man'.



The Expats in 'the bar'.



Exchanging hats with Mr. S., the Sonatrach Representative.

Very sadly years later, in the terror attack on the In Amenas Production Facility between 16 – 19 January 2013, 67 died including 37 Expat hostages, 1 Algerian security guard, and 29 terrorists.



The farewell photo of the Drilling Team in Hassi Messaoud. L to R: me, Jimmy, Trevor, Mike, Beatriz, Juan, Willie, Graeme, Fergie, Brian, Toufiq.

Baku, Azerbaijan 2005 - 2008

Arriving in Baku in April 2005, I took the position as Senior Well Intervention Engineer for the Chirag Platform Asset. This was a true area of expertise for me as I had been intervening, going into oil and gas wells with various tools, for over 30 years. Well interventions are used to obtain data on a well's performance and to attempt to repair or improve the performance of the well to produce more hydrocarbons. Chirag was a Soviet-built platform which transferred over to Azerbaijan after the fall of Communism. The technology used to construct and operate Chirag was not up to the high standards of western-built installations and BP spent a lot of effort and funds to upgrade the platform; the wells were prolific but troublesome. My wife, Kathryn Humphrey, rejoined BP so we could work together in Baku from 1 April 2005 to 30 June 2008. She became the Production Manager for the newly commissioned giant Shah Deniz Gas Field.



The gas flare for the Shah Deniz SDX-1 discovery well test.

Strangely, I had worked on the well test of Shah Deniz SDX-1, the discovery well that sanctioned the project that my wife would someday manage. I was sent out to Baku in June 1999 for a month to relieve an engineer whose wife was having a baby. Back then, Baku was still struggling to build infrastructure after decades of deterioration under the Soviet Union. For example, each day BP had some dry and boring sandwiches catered into the office for lunch. After a few days of this fare, I went into the Old City area called Fountain Square and purchased some mayonnaise but more importantly I found a street vendor who had about 20 cans of Pringles potato chips. I bought every can he had and made his day. For the rest of the month, I had to lock up my store of Pringles to prevent them from being eaten by the rest of the staff.

Another funny story involved an Italian restaurant built into the Old City walls called La Dolce Vida. I went there during a weekday night, walking from my guesthouse a few blocks away. Being American, I was early as usual for dinner in contrast to European late-night diners, so I thought nothing about being the first and only diner in the restaurant. There were four waiters and a string quartet in the dining room: and me. The quartet turned out to be very Russian in character, but

everyone seemed happy to see me. I ordered a bottle of wine from the menu, but they didn't have it, so I got what they had while the musicians started playing. I couldn't communicate with anyone except to point to the menu and to smile. After I began eating my starter dish, drinking my wine, and listening to the music, I noticed there was still no other diners in the place. I became suspicious; maybe the food was lousy? My main dish was quite edible, I had one of the best versions of tiramisu I ever tasted for dessert and the quartet played decently, but I was still the only diner in the restaurant. I paid my bill and had to tip all four waiters and the whole quartet myself. I found out later that that restaurant was too expensive for locals to dine at, that the rich Azeris only ate there on the weekends, and that the Expats felt the food quality was very hit or miss.



In 'the alley' in oldish Baku.

In September 2005, my wife Kate and I attended our first ever Ex-Schlumberger Reunion which are held every two years in an attractive destination in Europe. This Reunion was in Budapest, Hungary and was well attended. We mingled with a couple I knew from my Stavanger, Norway assignment and another from my Saudi Arabia assignment. The tours of the city and countryside were very pleasant, and we attended a Medieval banquet in a castle where I got to try shooting a crossbow. One funny incident occurred on the tour bus as we boarded to take our seats. As we began to sit in two seats at the front of the bus, we were told they were reserved for an elderly German couple. The speaker whispered that they were so old, they were probably 'Nazis'!

At the second Reunion we attended, in October 2014, we were together in Caen, Normandy, France. My old District Manager from Al Khobar was attending with his wife. In another 'circle of

life' occurrence, the wife of my ATC Classmate and boss in Dubai, Peter Windsor, attended. Sadly, Peter had passed away and Angela was now attending the Reunion as a Schlumberger widow. The highlight of the Reunion was visiting the Schlumberger family home called Val Richter in Normandy. They had an 'original oil-painted copy' of the portrait of George Washington that hangs in The White House! The paintings and the library books had all been hidden from the Nazi officers that commandeered the house during WWII. We had a wonderful catered dinner in the Schlumberger Museum in Château de Crèvecœur in Lisieux, France where some of my photographs had been accepted for display. This is the same museum where the PGP panel I donated, to save it from the junk pile ,was located. The Curator of the Fondation Musée Schlumberger is Alix Alduc-Barbat today. www.chateaudecrevecœur.com

In July 2006, I flew offshore from Baku to Chirag by helicopter for a well intervention to reduce water production in the well by setting a mechanical bridge plug above the water producing zone. During the operation to run the bridge plug into the well, the plug became stuck. After evaluating the situation, it was decided that the plug could be set where it was stuck and still provide some benefit. I instructed the Schlumberger logging engineer to 'fire' the explosive charge to set the plug and release it from the logging cable. In natural adherence to Murphy's Laws, the explosives failed to fire, and the cable was still attached to the stuck plug. After checking with Management onshore, they accepted my recommendation to pull tension on the cable and break the built-in weak point to detach the cable from the plug. By retrieving the cable, the operation in the well would be complete and the well placed back on production. When I requested the Schlumberger engineer to break the weak point, he said he did not know how to do so. I told him that I had 11 years' experience with Schlumberger and had broken weak points several times (some not on purpose). He said it was not allowed for me to operate the cable winch as I was not a Schlumberger employee. This caused further delay and waste of expensive rig time, but I finally convinced the Schlumberger management and BP's, that I was fully capable of doing what had to be done.

With the young Schlumberger engineer standing to the side, almost crying with fear or embarrassment, I calmly proceeded to pull harder and harder on the cable to cause fatigue failure of the weak point. This was quickly accomplished, and I handed the cable winch operation back to the engineer, left the Schlumberger logging unit for the last time in my career, and walked back to the drilling office where the Company Man and all the BP staff laughed and cheered. When I returned to the office in Baku, I was told that no one else had ever heard of a BP engineer taking over from a Schlumberger engineer and executing his own orders! On my last trip offshore ever, near the end of my career, I accomplished a feat of well intervention that few have ever heard of.



My Soviet-Built Platform in the Caspian Sea – Chirag (The Lamp).



A supply vessel in the Caspian Sea.



Towing out the new construction Azeri platform offshore Baku.

An amazing geologic phenomenon can be found south of Baku near Gobustan in Azerbaijan. We called it the Earths' 'Tube of Toothpaste'. It is located in the same area as are the Mud Volcanoes of Azerbaijan which are similar to those found in Yellowstone National Park in the US.



What Is This Thing?



It's the Earths' Tube of Toothpaste.

Also associated with the oil and gas deposits in the area there were the famous 'burning rocks' of Yanar Dag, on the Absheron Peninsula on the Caspian Sea near Baku the capital of Azerbaijan, where natural gas seeps from the cliffs have caught fire. These may be the source of the ancient Zoroastrian religious worship of fire. For our friend Dirk Bodnar's Fiftieth Birthday around November 2006, a party of us had pizza and rum and Cokes near the Fires.



The Zoroastrian Fire Worshippers.



The Toyota Prado barely fit under the railroad bridge.

At the end of our assignment in Baku, my wife Kate and I went home via Paris where we celebrated our 6th wedding anniversary. We went to dinner with friends from Baku, escaped a fire on the Paris Metro, had a contact lens emergency the next morning, ran to the Eiffel Tower as the Metro was not running, rode Segway Transporters for the first time on a Road Tour of Paris,

'bowed down' from above Napoleon's Tomb, then encountered the ugliest American ever. We had contracted a private bus service to pick us up very early in the morning on the day we flew from Paris Charles De Gaulle Airport back to Houston. The instructions were very specific as to "Be ready outside your hotel all checked out at your assigned time. The bus will NOT wait for you!" We were picked up second and sat in the first row in the back with one other passenger, next to the side door. The next two hotel pickups filled the bus except for some backrow seats. At the last stop we waited and waited, then the driver went into the hotel, then returned visibly upset. Finally, 30 minutes late, the American family of four came out. The husband was vocally complaining to his wife and children about losing their camera. The rest of us passengers were silently upset that these people could be making us late for our international flights. The husband said to me, "Hey buddy, how about you get in the back!". I became angry but stayed cool at this and stated, "No way BUDDY, take your seat, you've delayed us all long enough!". He grumbled something and once he sat down in the back row said to his wife "I can't believe you lost our camera." As she was in the row right behind Kate and me, we heard her say under her breath "It's a wonder I haven't lost my mind!". I would say he was the definition of 'The Ugly American'.



On an Offshore Platform in the Caspian Sea.

How Disasters Molded My Career

Large world crises and disasters seem to have given me my best job opportunities over my 40 years!

- 1974 Arab Oil Embargo due to 1973 Yom Kippur War – first hired by Schlumberger
- 1976 Nigerian Coup d'état – transferred to the North Sea one year later
- 1980 Alexander Kielland disaster – transferred to Saudi Arabia
- 1982 Iran – Iraq War, 'tour' of Iraq - promoted, then transferred
- 1986 'Oil Price Crash' – fired by Schlumberger, then hired by Nalco
- 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill – quit Nalco, then hired by BP
- 1990 'Frac for Iraq' – transferred to the North Slope of Alaska
- 2001 September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center Towers, the Pentagon, and Flight 93 – made BP North American Well Evaluation Tracking System (WETS) Coordinator
- 2010 Deep Water Horizon disaster and the Macondo Well Blowout – made BP well integrity technical authority

2001 September 11th Attacks

The terror attacks on 9/11 caused BP to go into reorganization mode in North America. I ended up working in a new team managed by an old acquaintance from Casper, Wyoming named Mick W. My new boss was once the Amoco engineer I had tried to sell Schlumberger services to in 1986; 15 years earlier! Life is strange!

2010 Deep Water Horizon

The Deepwater Horizon Disaster and the Macondo Well Blowout started on April 20, 2010 in The Gulf of Mexico; there were eleven fatalities. We returned from a cruise and I immediately began working on the Source Control Emergency Response Team to design and perform the 'Top Kill' Operation to shut off the flow from the well. Many books were written about the incident and one of the best is titled The Simple Truth by J.A. Turley. A decent movie was produced by Hollywood in 2016 titled "Deepwater Horizon" starring John Malkovich, Mark Wahlberg, and Kurt Russell. If I had starred in that movie, I would have been the Schlumberger Engineer told to go home because the BP Company Men decided not to run the Cement Bond Log (CBL). In real life, my small team was tasked to determine if there were any "magic bullet" technologies we could throw at the well to reduce or stop the uncontrolled flow of oil and gas. We located a small company in Aberdeen, Scotland that offered 'platelets', like blood platelets, that could flow into the leaking area and stick to each other to reduce the hole size just like blood clots in the body. It did not work because the

hole size was too large, but we did manage to take over the entire company's staff and product production for one month!



The 'Top Kill' Operation on Macondo in the Gulf of Mexico.

One amusing incident did occur during a logistics meeting with Management. The general rule was you just stated what you needed, for example a big pump from Australia, not what the reason for the request was. But when asked if something was needed in the effort, one Team responded that they couldn't work 24/7 on the failed equipment on the rig. They were asked why not which was against protocol. The Team said because they only had one lawyer on board and he was required to witness all operations because this was a fatal incident, but he went to bed after working only 8 hours each day. The Management responded with great excitement and harsh language "Get me two more lawyers now!" That is something no one in the Oil Industry ever heard a Drilling Manager say before.

Travel Log 1975 - 1986

For tax purposes, I kept a list of countries and dates that I visited or lived in during my overseas Schlumberger years. I offer this as a perspective on those active years.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Depart</u>	<u>Arrive</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
○ USA	6/10/75		
○ France		6/11/75	Training School in Pau, via Paris
○ France	9/21/75		
○ USA		9/21/75	Work Visa, Days Off
○ USA	9/28/75		
○ Nigeria		9/29/75	Transfer, Work in Port Harcourt
○ Nigeria	2/26/76		
○ USA		2/28/76	Coup, Days Off, Visa Cancelled, Vacation
○ USA	5/09/76		
○ Nigeria		5/13/76	Work, via Paris
○ Nigeria	8/02/76		
○ USA		8/04/76	Days Off, via London 2x
○ USA	8/17/76		
○ Nigeria		8/19/76	Work
○ Nigeria	10/11/76		
○ France		10/22/76	Training in Paris
○ France	10/22/76		
○ Nigeria		10/23/76	Work
○ Nigeria	1/25/77		
○ USA		1/27/77	Days Off, via Concorde from London
○ USA	2/11/77		
○ Nigeria		2/13/77	Work
○ Nigeria	5/14/77		
○ France		5/15/77	Briefing in Paris
○ France	5/19/77		
○ Scotland		5/19/77	Transfer, Work in Aberdeen
○ Scotland	9/08/77		
○ USA		9/08/77	Vacation
○ USA	11/03/77		
○ Scotland		11/04/77	
○ Norway	11/05/77		Transfer, Work in Stavanger
○ Norway	12/11/77		
○ England		12/11/77	Training in London
○ England	12/18/77		

○ USA		12/18/77	Days Off
○ USA	12/27/77		
○ Norway		12/28/77	Work
○ Short Trip to Aberdeen to transfer TR6			
○ Norway	4/02/78		
○ USA		4/02/78	Days Off (married)
○ Trip to US Virgin Islands			
○ USA	4/15/78		
○ Norway		4/16/78	Work
○ Short Trips to Copenhagen, London, Paris			Training, Days Off
○ Norway	12/18/78		
○ USA		12/18/78	Vacation (Tommy born)
○ USA	2/01/79		
○ Norway		2/02/79	Work
○ Norway	2/08/79		
○ Germany		2/08/79	Training in Diepholz
○ Germany	2/15/79		
○ Norway		2/15/79	Work
○ Short Trips to Brussels, London, Paris			
○ Norway	2/01/80		
○ USA		2/01/80	Vacation
○ Short trips to Bahamas Club Med, Florida			
○ USA	3/30/80		
○ Norway		3/31/80	Work
○ Norway	6/24/80		
○ Via Denmark, Germany, Holland			Driving
○ Greece		6/30/80	Briefing in Athens
○ Greece	7/04/80		
○ Saudi Arabia		7/05/80	Transfer, Work in Al Khobar
○ Saudi Arabia	11/05/80		
○ Greece		11/05/80	Days Off in Rhodes
○ Greece	11/23/80		
○ Saudi Arabia		11/23/80	Work
○ Saudi Arabia	2/01/81		
○ Seychelles		2/02/81	Days Off
○ Seychelles	2/10/81		
○ Saudi Arabia		2/11/81	Work
○ Saudi Arabia	4/19/81		
○ Greece		4/19/81	Visit my parents in Athens
○ Greece	4/28/81		
○ USA		4/29/81	Vacation

○ USA	6/09/81		
○ Saudi Arabia		6/10/81	Work
○ Saudi Arabia	9/29/81		
○ Ireland		9/30/81	Days Off
○ Ireland	10/15/81		
○ Saudi Arabia		10/15/81	Work
○ Saudi Arabia	3/03/82		
○ Greece		3/03/82	Days Off, Visit Corfu
○ Greece	3/18/82		
○ Saudi Arabia		3/18/82	Work
○ Saudi Arabia	5/28/82		
○ USA		5/28/82	Vacation (Robbie born)
○ USA	7/10/82		
○ Short Trip to Singapore			Training
○ Kuwait		7/17/82	Transfer, Work in Ahmadi
○ Short trips to Iraq, Syria, Turkey			Work
○ Kuwait	1/04/83		
○ Mauritius		1/05/83	Days Off
○ Mauritius	1/20/83		
○ Kuwait		1/21/83	Work
○ Kuwait	5/27/83		
○ USA		5/29/83	Vacation
○ USA	7/16/83		
○ Kuwait		7/17/83	Work
○ Kuwait	8/30/83		
○ UAE		8/30/83	Transfer, Work in Dubai
○ Short trips to Oman, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan			
○ UAE	6/23/84		
○ Via Singapore, Djakarta, Medan			Work, Flew Around the Globe
○ USA		7/01/84	Vacation
○ USA	7/29/84		
○ UAE		7/31/84	Work
○ Short trips to Turkey, Syria			Work
○ UAE	12/07/84		
○ USA		12/14/84	Vacation
○ USA	1/12/85		
○ UAE		1/14/85	Work
○ Short trip to Bahrein			Work
○ UAE	8/03/85		
○ USA		8/04/85	Vacation
○ USA	9/08/85		

○ Wyoming		9/09/85	Transfer, Work in Casper
○ Wyoming	6/13/86		Made Redundant by Schlumberger (11 yrs)
○ Virginia		8/13/86	Final Transfer, Jobless

The Best Was First

I worked for Schlumberger for the first 11 years of my 40-year career in the oil industry and it was absolutely the best part of my career. To this day, the majority of my dreams at night involve something about my adventures with Schlumberger. There is an old, out-of-print book I have, titled “The Schlumberger Adventure” by Anne Gruner Schlumberger. That’s exactly how I feel about those 11 years; I had the time of my life! In Ms. Schlumberger’s book, on pages 34 – 35, she states, **“Other than ‘good looks’ and an acceptable diploma, what these budding prospectors had to have in common was a taste for strange places and life in the open air, and – most important – a desire to be engaged in work not organized on traditional lines but work in which individual initiative and resourcefulness marked the road to success.”**

Schlumberger marked the road to my success in my career and my life.



My “Career Trophy Case”



The Retirement Gift from BP on April 3, 2015, sums it all up! The carved figure is titled 'The Engineer'.

MURPHY'S LAW

IN THE MATTER OF OIL AND

GAS NEWS Murphy was an optimist.

VIGIL INTERVENTION
NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED.
UNREPAIRABLE THINGS WILL NOT BE.
WILL WEAR LEAKPROOF SEALS—WILL.
SELF STARTERS—WILL, NOT.
INTERCHANGEABLE PARTS—WON'T.
THERE IS ALWAYS ONE MORE BUC.

SUBVERSIVE NATURE IS A MOTHER.
A CAR WILL, AT
DON'T MESS WITH MRS. MURPHY!

90% OF EVERYTHING IS CRAP.
(THE ONLY PART OF THE CAR THAT ISN'T)
IF YOU'RE FEELING GOOD, DON'T
WORRY, YOU'LL GET OVER IT!

AS SOON AS YOU GET TO IT!



ANYTHING THAT CAN GO WRONG, WILL GO WRONG.
ON XMAS EVE AT MIDNIGHT!

OIL

YOU WILL ALWAYS FIND ~~THE~~ IN THE LAST PLACE
YOU LOOK.

THE CHANCE OF A PIECE OF ~~SHIT~~ FALLING WITH THE
SAFETY BELT DOWN IS DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO
THE COST OF THE ~~SAFETY~~.

NO MATTER HOW LONG OR HARD YOU ~~WORK~~ FOR A ~~WHEEL~~,
AFTER YOU'VE ~~DRIVEN~~ IT, IT WILL BE ~~SOMEWHERE~~.

NO ONE'S LIFE, LIBERTY, OR PROPERTY ARE SAFE WHILE
THE OTHER ~~WHEEL~~ ALWAYS MOVES FASTER.

IN ORDER TO GET A ~~WHEEL~~ YOU MUST FIRST PROVE YOU
DON'T NEED IT.

ANYTHING YOU TRY TO ~~DO~~ WILL TAKE LONGER AND COST
50% ~~MORE~~ MORE THAN YOU THOUGHT.

IF YOU POOL AROUND WITH A ~~WHEEL~~ FOR VERY LONG YOU
WILL SCREW IT UP.

A ~~WHEEL~~ WILL PROTECT A ~~WHEEL~~ FROM BEING
BLOWN FIRST.

IF IT JAMS—FORCE IT. IF IT BREAKS, IT NEEDED
REPLACING ANYWAY.

ANY TOOL DROPPED WHILE ~~WORKING~~ WILL ROLL
AND INTO THE ~~WHEEL~~.

THE ~~WHEEL~~ WILL NEVER HAVE SEEN A ~~WHEEL~~ UNTIL
LINE WORKS BEFORE.

WHEN A ~~WHEEL~~ IS DEMONSTRATED FOR THE
FIRST TIME, IT WILL WORK PERFECTLY.

EVERYONE SHOULD BELIEVE IN SOMETHING—I BELIEVE
IN THE ~~WHEEL~~.

IF EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE GOING WELL, NO ONE KNOWS
WHAT THE ~~WHEEL~~ IS DOING FOR YOU.

IF YOU CAN'T SEE THE ~~WHEEL~~, IT'S PROBABLY FOR A
REASON.

IN CASE OF DOUBT, MAKE IT ~~WHEEL~~.

IF YOU WORK ON A ~~WHEEL~~, IT WILL NEVER WORK
ON ANY OTHER ~~WHEEL~~.

AND BLOOM'S YOUR BOSS!

JOB POSITIONS

ALL WARRANTIES EXPIRE UPON
PAYMENT OF INVOICE. ~~CANCEL~~ UP NOT.

WHERE YOU STAND ON AN ISSUE
DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU SIT ~~IN~~ NOT.

NEVER EAT PRUNES ~~IF~~ WHEN YOU ARE ~~PRUNED~~.

FRIENDS COME AND GO,
BUT ~~PRUNES~~ ACCUMULATE.

IF YOU TRY TO PLEASE EVERYBODY ~~ANY~~,
NOBODY WILL LIKE IT.

A ~~WHEEL~~ IS THE LONGEST
DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO POINTS.

ANYTHING THAT CAN GO WRONG, WILL GO WRONG.
ON XMAS EVE AT MIDNIGHT!

YOU WILL REMEMBER THAT YOU FORGOT TO TAKE OUT
THE ~~WHEEL~~ WHEN THE ~~WHEEL~~ TRUCK IS TWO ~~DAYS~~.

THE ~~WHEEL~~ IS NOT ALWAYS TO THE SWIFT NOR THE ~~WHEEL~~.

THERE'S NEVER TIME TO DO IT RIGHT, BUT THERE'S
ALWAYS TIME TO DO IT OVER, ~~I.E. MOC~~!

WHEN IN DOUBT, ~~WHEEL~~. WHEN IN TROUBLE, DELEGATE.

ANY ~~WHEEL~~ GOOD IN LIFE IS EITHER ILLEGAL, IMMORAL, OR
FATTERING.

IT IS PROBABLY WRONG TO ALLOW ~~WHEEL~~ TO KEEP
THEIR ~~WHEEL~~.

A ~~WHEEL~~ IS SAFER THAN ONE OVERHEAD.

MURPHY'S GOLDEN RULE: WHOEVER HAS THE GOLD
MAKES THE RULES. ~~PARENTS' GOLDEN RULE~~!

EVERYTHING EAST OF THE SAN ANDREAS FAULT WILL
EVENTUALLY FLURGE INTO THE ATLANTIC OCEAN, BUT TO
NATURE ALWAYS SIDES WITH THE HIDDEN FLAW.

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL IS ~~THE WHEEL~~.

CELEBRITY IS NOT HEREDITARY (~~WHEEL~~ TO THE ~~WHEEL~~).

NEVER ~~WHEEL~~ WITH ANYONE CRAZIER THAN YOURSELF.

IF EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE GOING WELL, NO ONE KNOWS
WHAT THE ~~WHEEL~~ IS DOING FOR YOU.

IF YOU CAN'T SEE THE ~~WHEEL~~, IT'S PROBABLY FOR A
REASON.

IN CASE OF DOUBT, MAKE IT ~~WHEEL~~.

IF YOU WORK ON A ~~WHEEL~~, IT WILL NEVER WORK
ON ANY OTHER ~~WHEEL~~.

AND BLOOM'S YOUR BOSS!

IF YOU CAN'T SEE THE ~~WHEEL~~, IT'S PROBABLY FOR A
REASON.

IN CASE OF DOUBT, MAKE IT ~~WHEEL~~.

IF YOU WORK ON A ~~WHEEL~~, IT WILL NEVER WORK
ON ANY OTHER ~~WHEEL~~.

AND BLOOM'S YOUR BOSS!

These rewrites of Murphy's Laws came from my experiences!



The 40th Year of 'Good Looks...as a Budding Prospector'.