

Getting on With Life

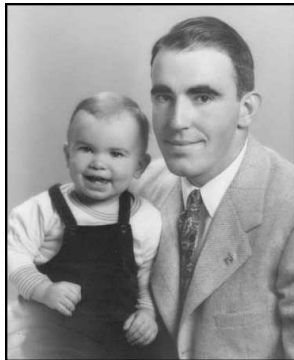
October, 1945 – August, 1949

I returned to the States on or about October 2, 1945 aboard the USS Christobol. This was a so-called “banana boat” used, as I understand it, primarily in the Caribbean and between North and South America. It was seaworthy, but not did not provide the “luxury” of my 1944 trip to Europe on the Kungsholm. I really don’t have much recollection of the landing or disembarking. I do remember that one of the first things I wanted was a milk shake. We did not generally have fresh milk while in Europe. It was against regulations to drink the locally available milk.

I traveled by train to Indiana and Camp Atterbury, where I was “Separated” from the service. (See Pages 191-193)

I also went to Ravenswood to see my parents and, after a short stay there, headed for the destination I had been seeking for months – Moline, Illinois. Not that Moline meant that much to me, but Lou and Dick were there!

I would say that the reunion was joyous, but after a separation of almost two years,



*Dick and me, Fall, 1945
Lou doesn't recall why she
wasn't in the picture*

a little “getting reacquainted” was required. In the first place, I was just now meeting my son, Dick, who was 16 months old. The excitement was too great for him, I guess, because on the way home he had a small accident which was hard on the crease in my trousers. In a scene that was probably repeated country-wide, when asked “Where is your Daddy?”, Dick pointed to a photograph of me on a chest in Grandma Peterson’s living room.

There I had another of those feelings like the one in Lawton or in that provincial German farm yard, when I knew that things would never be the same. I no longer had troops to command or be responsible for. I was also unemployed and maybe unemployable. Gunnery was not a civilian occupation. I was married, had a son, and had lived a life that gave me new expectations far beyond what I had experienced growing up in Ravenswood. The life style of my parents and their friends there would no longer be acceptable. I knew that in spite of my lack of interest in school back in the 1930s, college was going to be a necessity. Fortunately, a grateful Government (or a politically

savvy one) provided the GI Bill of Rights. It provided tuition at the college of the veterans choice, books and a generous allotment for supplies.

I didn’t start in college immediately as I was looking around Moline for employment there or deciding what college to attend. Mostly I think I just sat around. The inactivity and eating soon brought me well above the 186 pound weight at which I had left the Army. I think Grandma Peterson wondered why I didn’t get a job. I felt that anything I started would be very temporary because of the likelihood of going to college somewhere.

Lou’s long-time friend Anna Brandyberry had attended Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. She touted it as high class college. I’m sure it was, but when Lou and I visited there we came away with the feeling that it was too “stiff” a place. For example, the college rules would inhibit the show of affection in public even by an old married couple like us. We finally decided that Butler University in Indianapolis would be the place for me - and they would admit me! With my high school record that was no small accommodation.

Thus, sometime before Christmas of 1945 we moved to Indianapolis to 40 West Saint Joseph Street where we rented a three room apartment on the second floor of a private home. It wasn’t much of a place, but housing was extremely hard to find because of the returning veterans, many of whom had families which had not maintained residences while the soldier or sailor was away. Our apartment had a living room, bedroom and, across the hall, a kitchen. We paid \$40.00 per month rent. This place was less than one mile from the center of Indianapolis and, hence, in the Indianapolis of those days, dirty. I don’t remember what we lived on before the GI Bill income started; probably my terminal leave pay. The building no longer exists.

Our apartment did not include a bathroom. We shared the only bathroom with the family that owned the house. They had a teen-age daughter. Her practices in the bathroom led to conflicts and forced us to seek other quarters. An apartment on Fletcher Avenue on the near south side was available but there was a condition that we buy a house being built by the owner. We decided this would be a good idea and signed up to buy. In August 1946 we moved to 808 Fletcher Avenue. The building no longer exists, having been razed as part of building an Interstate Highway.

Travel around Indianapolis had been by foot or street car. The street cars were driven by electricity which flowed through the motor from rails in the roadway, on which the cars ran, to an over

head wire. The current was conducted by a trolley that slid along the wire. The ride was not rough, but there was a lot of side-to-side motion. The motion of these vehicles was bad for both Lou and Dick; both suffered from motion sickness. Frequent trolley rides were to Broad Ripple, where my mother met us with her car to take us to Ravenswood where we attended that little church where I “preached” before the war. We seldom made one of these trips on one street car. Dick would get sick; we would get off and then catch another car.

Lou suggested that we might buy an automobile. The idea that I could drive it to my classes at the university proved to be conclusive. It was also difficult to buy a car for the same reason as housing was unavailable – the returning veterans. We were able to buy a used 1941 Chevrolet from a Butler classmate. This relieved us of travel by streetcar and the associated motion sickness problems.

While these housing and transportation activities were going on, in January, 1946, I entered Butler along with a few smooth and rosy cheeked 18 year olds and a host of grizzled veterans. Lining up in the book store for books and supplies, I inadvertently moved into a vacant spot in the line, not realizing that others behind me were there first. (Incidentally, I have always abhorred gaps in waiting queues and the people who make them.) I was immediately accosted with a line that Bill Mauldin could have had spring from the mouth of GI Joe: “And what was your rank in the recent conflict?” Past rank hath no privileges. I found the end of the line.

The GI Bill provided tuition, books and supplies all paid directly to the university. The supplies were so generous that I still (1997) had some graph paper left. At the first we got, for subsistence, \$90.00 a month from the VA and later \$120.00 a month (maybe after confirming Dick’s existence). This was a lot of money (a teacher I knew at Butler was earning only \$2800.00 per year after twenty years of teaching), but it wasn’t enough. I got a job mopping floors at night at the local Coca Cola bottling plant. This was such exhausting work that I had no strength left for studying. I left that job after about two weeks. Then Lou got a job making Addressograph plates. It was also hard work and at night, but her typing skills enabled to do as many as 500 per shift at \$0.01 per plate yielded \$5.00 a night or \$25.00 per week. While she worked, I studied and kept Dick.

One night, while Lou worked, I decided to surprise her by baking some cookies. A recipe called

for 1/4 cup of milk. I was going to make a half batch. Four divided by two is two, isn’t it? I put in 1/2 cup of milk. Imagine what my cookies were like with that much liquid. Adding enough flour to give them form didn’t improve the taste. At Butler, I majored in Mathematics and later got a Ph.D. in that subject.

Shortly after leaving the Coca-Cola job, I called on my old colleagues and bosses at the Indianapolis News and found that the job of managing the Dispatch Department was open. They gave it to me. This was ideal. The work started after school hours and the real work was usually over by six or seven o’clock. I had from then until eleven o’clock to study. I described the function of this office in the *Teen Years* section.

The Dispatch Office was adjacent to the composing room where the printers and linotype operators cast the lead to make up the forms for the printing presses. One night I inadvertently demonstrated to some of the printers the lasting effects of the war’s conditioning. An electrical storm was taking place outside and, in spite of the noise of the linotypes, one could hear the thunder. Suddenly there was an enormous thunderclap. By instinct, I dropped to the floor seeking shelter from the bombs! It was a bit embarrassing.

While I was working nights at the Indianapolis News, Lou was working days for Remington Rand helping to set up a billing system for L. S. Ayres and later for mailing statements for Fletcher National Bank. Later she was employed directly by the bank. She recalls that her salary was higher than employees who had already been working there. When this leaked out there was a little consternation, but she didn’t suffer because of it. Dick spent his days at a nearby child care establishment. A little later, Dick had some continuing bouts with sickness and Lou felt she should resign her job at the bank. Her boss offered to fire her so that she would be eligible for unemployment pay.

Although I knew that college was necessary, I didn’t really know what sort of career I wanted. I didn’t want to study biology or chemistry as I didn’t want to face the question of Evolution. I doubted the literal interpretation of the Biblical description of Creation. So I told my advisor, Dean P.M. Bail of Butler’s College of Education, that I probably would like to be a journalist or a high school math teacher. He started me on a program that would allow branching either way.

A course, Introduction to Education, an orientation course for prospective high school teacher, revealed the importance of clichés (shiny doorknobs, the teacher called them), and the read-

ing revealed the great satisfaction teachers got from their profession in spite of long hours and poor pay. I guess I wasn't altruistic enough for that to sell me. So High School Mathematics teaching did not seem to be my way to the American dream. That left Journalism.

In the Fall of 1946 or the Spring of 1947, the *Butler Collegian*, the student newspaper carried a story about Bill and Lou Fuller being named Parents of the Year. We had no knowledge of this, so I inquired at the paper and discovered that a friend had written the story as a class project – totally fiction, of course. Somehow it had seemed like a good story to the editor, and would have been were it true, and ended up the paper. When I asked the sponsor how this could happen, her response was: "I don't see why you are upset. After all, it is good publicity, isn't it." So much for journalism!

By this time I had found out that I did like mathematics for itself. A new Department Head, Dr. Harry Krull, recognized that I had some talent and encouraged me to seek a career in mathematics. He wasn't always gentle, however. Once when I asked the meaning of the line integral, he responded: "It's the limit of a sum, you idiot." Of course, he was right, but I was seeking some geometric or physical meaning. Later, I discovered what this was.

I also studied French at Butler and found that I had some talent for languages. Actually, I had already observed that in my acquisition of conversational German in my Burgermeister days. My French teacher, Miss Renfrew, encouraged me to go to graduate school in French. A career there seemed remote so I didn't follow up on it.

My program of study at Butler was more than year round. Butler offered pre-Summer sessions, Summer sessions, and post-Summer sessions in addition to the regular semesters. The pre- and post-Summer sessions overlapped the Summer and the adjacent regular semesters. This made it possible for me to "catch-up" a bit. After high school I had worked for more than three years and then spent three years in the Army, so I was behind that much. Using all of these sessions, I was able to graduate from Butler in August of 1948.

Between family, study and work there was not much time for the usual campus activities. I didn't miss them, because I was older than the typical student. I was invited to join a fraternity, but declined. I did join a Campus Activities Honorary: the Utes. The initiation involved wearing an "Indian" blanket to class. My instructor, Mrs. Juna Lutz Beal seeing me thus attired,

commented: "Oh no, not you, too, Mr. Fuller."

At Butler, I had a double major – Mathematics and Physics. was member of the Math Club, and at one time, it's president.

In physics, I learned about angular momentum. Although I had sworn off "practical jokes", this knowledge was useful at picnics, where there was a carousel that the riders got going by running along side and then jumping on. The angular momentum came into play as follows. When we had a physics naive person on board, we would call "conserve angular momentum" at which time we would pull into the center. The laws of physics caused the wheel to rotate faster in order to maintain angular momentum making it difficult for the unlearned to hang on. This, of course, is the principal skaters use to increase their rotational speed by pulling their arms in to their sides. A trivial recollection, but because of the camaraderie remained in my mind.

I also participated in the greased pole climb at homecoming. Generally, my college years were just work and study. The Pole climb and the Utes were about my only frivolities.



In spite of my poor High School record, I apparently had learned quite a bit. It enabled me to master the material at Butler and graduate *magna cum laude* with majors in both math and physics in August of 1948, two years and eight months after starting. Because of my scholastics achievements, I was invited to join the Butler Chapter of Phi Kappa Phi, a national scholastic honorary. This invitation came from Faye Cantrell, the Secretary, in a letter dated April 5, 1948 and a story about it was carried in *The Butler Collegian* on April 16. All of this was a source of amazement to my old high school principal, K.V. Ammermann.

There were two more tasks to be completed before I graduated. For the degree to be awarded *magna cum laude*, more than grades was required. A special research paper had also to be written. I chose to write on non-Euclidean Geometry. One

of the most interesting sources was the translation of a book by a Girolamo Saccheri (Died 1733) entitled *Euclides ab omni Naevo Vindicatus* (Euclid freed of all blemish). In which he tried to establish that Euclid's Fifth Postulate must be "true." His method was to introduce alternatives and show that they resulted in untenable results. This is a standard method of proof called *reductio ad absurdum*. He actually proved some theorems from what became Non-Euclidean geometry. He had missed realizing the importance of axioms in determining the "mathematical" world.

Here I also made an interesting discovery about the popularity of this subject. Most of the books about it had been last taken out of the library by Miss Juna Lutz in 1924, 24 years earlier. I had known her as Mrs. Juna Lutz Beal, one of my teachers at Butler.

Finally, I came into August, 1948, one credit short of the requirements for graduation. My advisor arranged for me to earn this credit with a special project. I read six months of the three Indianapolis Newspapers and assessed their journalistic contributions to the cause of education and wrote a report on these. With this I completed the requirements for the BS and graduated in August, 1948. (See Page 250)

During this time I received an "oath of office" form as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Field Artillery Reserves. I think both Lou and I thought this was mandatory so I signed and returned. Reading years later revealed that it was probably optional. This mistake caused me to interrupt my graduate studies a few years later when the U.S. was involved in the Korean "police action." (See Pages 195, 196)

As my time at Butler wound down, Harry Krull pointed me toward the University of Illinois (his *alma mater*) for graduate study. I was admitted there but when I was unable to find housing, Harry hired me to teach at Butler that year, 1948-1949.

The completion of the house we agreed to buy as part of the 808 Fletcher deal was delayed time after time. At the same time the prices of house were escalating. In an act that characterized my financial acumen, I decided that prices had gone too high and there was sure to be a crash. We asked to be released from our deal. It was agreed upon. Of course, we were also thinking of the graduate school possibility.

A couple of weeks later the house was completed and sold substantially above the price we were to pay! Backing out on the deal meant that we had to vacate 808 Fletcher. We moved to 1572

East 72nd Street in Ravenswood. This had been the home of my boyhood friend Lee Whalin, whose father had objected to our playing with the Socialist's kids.



1572 East 72nd Street, Ravenswood

At Butler, I took to teaching rather naturally, having outgrown my high school reluctance to speak before people. However, among other things I was sometimes horrified to hear some of the grammatical constructions that came out of mouth. This enabled me to correct my usage. Teaching College Algebra and Trigonometry, Harry Krull and I, to the disapproval of Mrs. Beal, challenged each other to cover everything in the book we were using.

Harry really wanted to be an astronomer. He frequently took some of his students to astronomy seminars at Indiana University, Bloomington. We also went to the IU observatory near Bean Blossom, Indiana. These activities took place during the year I taught at Butler.

During that year I applied to Purdue for a teaching assistantship. Harry wrote a recommendation for me, characterizing me as a "competent student of mathematics." He also commented that my thesis, required for the *magna cum laude* degree, had been well received from the Honors Committee and that my teaching during the year had been well received by the students who were "enthusiastic about the lucidity of his presentation and his patience in helping them."

In a letter dated 21 March, 1949, Ralph Hull, Head of the Department of Mathematics at Purdue offered me a graduate assistantship at a salary of \$1200 a year. I still had over a year of GI Bill eligibility left, so we could make it financially. Also, Lou worked as a secretary for a professor in biology for some time. Having fulfilled some technical details, I received notice from Dr. E.C. Young, Dean of the Graduate School, that I was admitted for a major in Mathematics. This came on May 24, 1949.

Housing in West Lafayette remained a question until a note from Professor H.S.F. Jonah on

August 22, 1949 informed us that we had been assigned a two bedroom apartment in university FPHA housing. The rent for this apartments was \$40 per month with an additional \$8.50 for utilities. The apartments were unfurnished except for a small gas space heater and a refrigerator.

To be honest, I did not know what I would do with an advanced degree in mathematics and the idea of being a university professor had never entered my mind, but I accepted the offer! After all, it did put off seeking a real job!

With demands of working and studying, there wasn't much time for travel. There also wasn't much money for it. Naturally, we made several short trips to Moline to visit Lou's mother and at least one trip to Nashville to visit Holy and Fran and their children.

For most of 1948-49 Lou was pregnant with Theodore Daniel Fuller. Ted was born on August 11, 1949, just before we moved to West Lafayette, where I entered graduate school in Mathematics at Purdue University.

The months that passed were seventeen,
Before I met my son,
And held sweet Lou my arms between,
Of more, I wanted none.

I had a lot of catching up,
So far I'd lost six years
Work and war did life disrupt,
Career was in arrears.

We cast about, did Lou and I,
On how to make good happen,
And Butler U did catch our eye,
There I became a freshman.

I also got a paying job.
back at the Indy News,
My day was full; my head did throb,
Work, study eat and snooze.

The truant of Broad Ripple days,
Was now a full grown man,
Three now depended on my ways,
And thus real life began.

The G.I. Bill, plus full time work,
Bought food enough to eat,
My studies now I did not shirk
I had a goal to meet.

When three-two months at last had past,
I donned a new costume,
Degree requirement I had passed.
For BS, Magna Cum