

# LIVES AND FATES



**BLAKE MACZKA**

# **Lives and Fates**

## **A Family History**

**Blake Maczka**



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# Preface

This book began when a piece of my history slipped away. In 2021 my beloved grandmother Jackie's dementia progressed, and she was no longer able to tell me her stories. I resolved to preserve, as best I could, what remained.

At its heart, this is a book about my grandparents. I didn't want to retell the stories I already knew. I wanted to capture the tales only they could tell me. I began with their journeys and traced back through their parents' and grandparents' lives.

The book is organized into two parts—first the Maczkas, then the Gibbs. It moves generation by generation, with overviews, individual biographies, and thematic sections on broader currents such as World War II and life in the Old South.

# Acknowledgements

This work is a collective achievement. I stand as one small contributor upon the shoulders of those who plumbed the archives, kept the records, and pieced together the stories of our past.

First and foremost, I thank each of my grandfathers—Frank Maczka and David Gibbs. Frank and David began the legwork that made this possible decades ago. Working from a blank slate, they pulled on the many strands of memory, checked them against the records, recorded the family tree, and passed it on to the next generation. It is impossible to overstate the debt that this work owes them. Each was generous, offering their time, energy, and wisdom towards this project. Without them, most of what I've recorded here would be lost.

Alongside them, I thank my late grandmothers—Bernie Maczka and Jackie Gibbs. In my earlier years, they did the often-thankless work of keeping the family together. With loving service, boundless hospitality, and gentle nurturing, they demonstrated what it meant to be part of the family. In their final years, they passed on what they could of the family lore.

I would also like to give a special note of thanks to the late Jack Olive. His memoir *Jax Trax* proved an invaluable resource, and without it we would have little record of the Olives. Beyond the historical record, his memoir provided a window into Jack's mind and worldview, which allowed me to paint a far more vivid image than would otherwise be possible.

I thank Natalie Kastner for her tireless help in the editing, design, and writing of this work.

Next, I thank my parents Mike and Laura. Their love and support gave me the confidence to embark on this project in the first place.

Finally, dear reader, I thank *you*. By giving your attention and care to this work, you help those recorded herein to live on. I am humbled to act as their messenger, and I appreciate you taking the time to read their stories.

# Dedication

*For those who gave me the greatest gift of all—life itself*

# maczka

**Walenty Maczka**

B: 1871, Poland  
D: 1959, Maryland

**Anielka Goetka**

B: 1875, Poland  
D: 1959, Maryland

**Stanislaus Patro**

B: 1885, Poland  
D: 1950, Maryland

**Mari Ann Drega**

B: 1881, Poland  
D: 1942, Maryland

# Family Tree

**Frank Walter  
Maczka**

B: 1906, Maryland  
D: 1954, Maryland



**Vincent Maczka**

B: 1908, Maryland  
D: 1967, Maryland



**Frank Walter  
Maczka Jr.**

B: 1934, Maryland



**Rosalie Patro**

B: 1906, Maryland  
D: 1993, Maryland



**Franz**

**Sandkuhler**

B: 1849, Germany  
D: 1929, Maryland

**Anna**

**Brockschmidt**

B: 1865, Maryland  
D: 1922, Maryland

**Bernard  
Aloysius**

**Sandkuhler**  
B: 1898, Maryland  
D: 1977, Maryland



**Mary  
Sandkuhler**

B: 1882, Maryland  
D: 1960, Maryland



**Joseph**

**Kazmierczak**

B: ~1868, Poland  
D: 1943, Baltimore

**Catherine  
Novak**

B: 1874, Poland  
D: 1953

**Anna**

**Kazmierczak**

B: 1902, Maryland  
D: 1982, Maryland



**Bernadetta  
Anna**

**Sandkuhler**

B: 1936, Maryland  
D: 2023, Kansas



# Introduction

To tell the Maczka family history is to retell a tale that every American family has some version of—the immigrant story. The first generation is born into an oppressive life in their homeland. They live hard lives, hand-to-mouth, and they decide to make a great leap into the unknown—they uproot their lives and go across the sea to America. They come here in spartan conditions, with little formal education and nothing to their names beyond the clothes on their backs and a suitcase. Despite their poverty, they persist in the project of building up the family, and they thrive. They have children, they build homes and careers. They start businesses and participate actively in their communities. We the living owe a great debt of gratitude to these pioneers. Without their bravery and vigor, without their willingness to take on great personal risk, none of us would be here today.

The next generation is born around the turn of the 20th century. These are the family's first native-born Americans. They are fully assimilated, deeply patriotic, and they come of age in a time when their country asks much of them. The First World War rages as they are children, and they live through a period of rationing and endless war-bond drives. A few decades later in their middle age when World War II strikes, they heed the call. The men serve in the armed forces and build ships for the Navy, and the women keep the peace at home. Despite their trying times, this generation builds on the work of their fathers, growing the family and establishing its place in America.

The third generation, after surviving the horrors of the Great Depression and World War II in their childhood, sets about establishing security and prosperity above all else. They value education, work in advanced technical careers, and follow in their fathers' footsteps by proudly serving our armed forces. They disperse from the enclaves that the previous generations clung to, moving around the country in search of the best opportunities. Their work is fruitful, and they achieve wealth and success while growing the family. While they push ever onward, they also begin to look back into the past and reflect on their roots. They study and document our family history, and this research forms the bedrock knowledge of our ancestry that this work attempts to build on.

What follows are the stories, as best I can tell them, of the Maczka family over three generations from the middle of the nineteenth century up until the writing of this document in 2025.

# The First Generation

## When

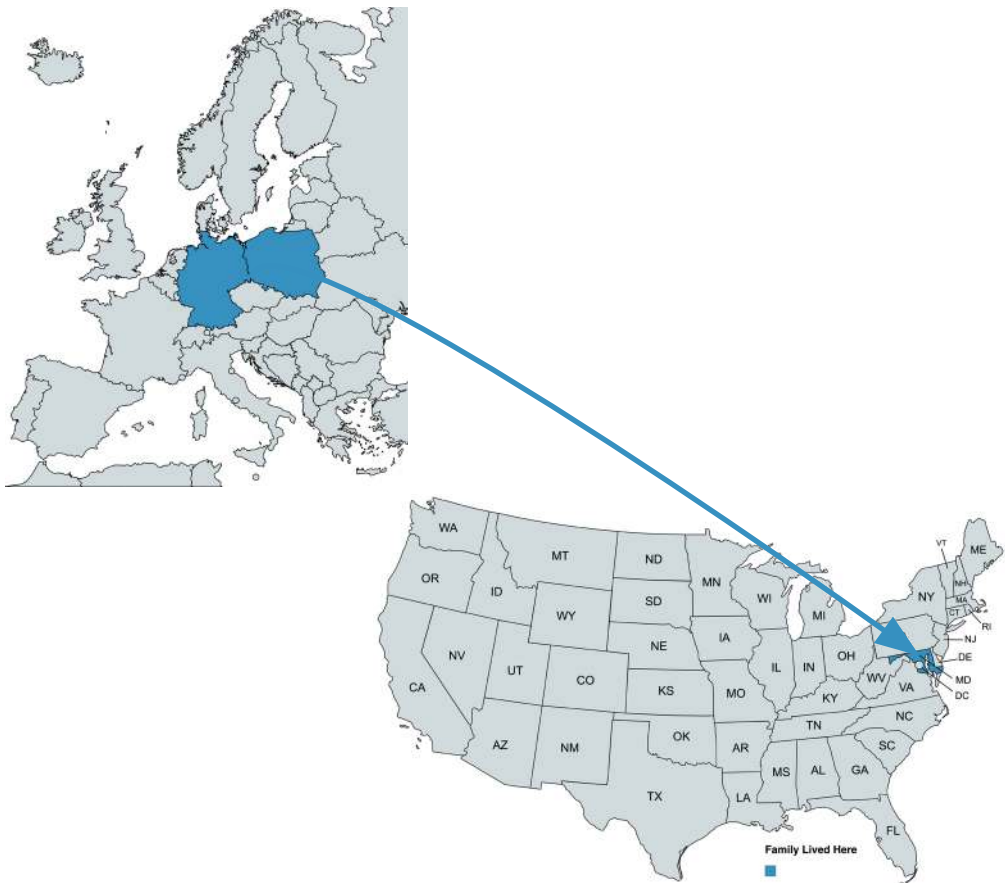
1849-1959

## Who

These are my great-great grandparents, or my grandparents' grandparents.

We have four married couples in this group - Walenty and Anielka Maczka, Stanislaus and Mari Ann Patro, Franz and Anna Sandkuhler, and Joseph and Kate Kazmierczak.

## Where



# Cast

| Name               | Birth                                 | Death                                 | Marriage            | Children  |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Walenty Maczka     | April 4th, 1871, Poland               | March 2nd, 1959, Maryland, age 87     | Date Unknown        | Peter, Stella, Joseph, Vincent, Louis, Frank, Raymond, Walter, 3 others |
| Anielka Goetka     | September 29th, 1875, Poland          | December 15th, 1959, Maryland, age 84 |                     |   |
| Stanislaus Patro   | January 10th, 1885, Sanoszirow Poland | March 19th, 1950, Maryland, age 65    | March 14th, 1905    | Joseph, Walter, Edward, Stanley, Louise Rose                            |
| Mari Ann Drega     | May 13th, 1881, Golzsow Poland        | December 14th, 1942, Maryland, age 61 |                     |   |
| Franz Sandkuhler   | January 29th, 1849, Germany           | January 20th, 1929, Maryland, age 79  | 1906                | Mary, Augusta, Emma, Frank, Clara William, Bernard, Agnes, Rosa, Regina |
| Anna Brockschmidt  | 1865, Maryland                        | 1922, Maryland                        |                     |   |
| Joseph Kazmierczak | ~1868, Poland                         | 1943, Maryland                        | November 11th, 1895 | Anna, Joseph  |
| Catherine Novak    | 1874, Poznan, Poland                  | 1953, Baltimore                       |                     |   |



## Biographies



**Walenty Maczka**

Walenty, known as Walter in America, was the proprietor of a wicker-making shop that sold wicker baskets and swinging doors for bars. The shop was on the first floor of the family home. The business failed during the Great Depression. Walenty immigrated to America from the Austro-Hungarian portion of then-occupied Poland with Anielka and their two young sons on November 9, 1904 on a boat from Germany. He lived in Rudnik, Poland before he immigrated.<sup>1</sup>



**Anielka Goetka**

Anielka, known as Alice in America, raised eleven children with Walenty. Anielka never learned English and never changed her ways from those she held in the Old World. She cooked beef stew constantly over a wood-burning stove, even in Baltimore. One of the few English words she knew was “eat” and she would lovingly serve her grandchildren endless bowls of the stew, constantly extolling them “eat, eat”.<sup>2</sup>



**Walter and Alice in the 1950s on Essex Street in Baltimore**

### **Stanislaus Patro**

Stanislaus, known as Stanley in America, ran a grocery store on Eastern Avenue in Baltimore with his wife Mari Ann. After her death, Stanislaus became an alcoholic and fell apart, moving in with his daughter's family. After WWII he moved in with his unmarried sons.<sup>2</sup>

### **Mari Ann Drega**

Mari Ann ran a grocery store on Eastern Avenue in Baltimore with her husband Stanislaus.<sup>2</sup>



### **Franz Sandkuhler**

Franz, who went by Frank in America, was the maker of Weiss Beer. Coming from poverty, he crossed to America in the hold of a ship from Germany and fulfilled his dream of seeing the Statue of Liberty. The trunk he carried his possessions in on that journey is still in possession of the family with his grandson Frank. Once in America he got work in a saloon, and went on to start his own saloon and brewery. The Weiss Beer he produced was highly popular and the brewery was a success until Prohibition killed it in 1920. Franz was offered the Coca-Cola franchise for Baltimore but he held out hope that the government would overturn Prohibition until shortly before his death in 1929.<sup>3</sup>



### **Anna Brockschmidt**

No anecdotes are known of Anna. She is the sole member of this generation to be born in America. She died young, only 57 years old. Her parents were German immigrants who came over sometime in the mid 1800s. She had an older sister Mary and two younger brothers William and Henry.<sup>4</sup>



**Joseph Kazmierczak**

Joseph worked as a carpenter, including for a time at the Stieff piano company. A devout Catholic, he built an elaborate altar for the family home with built-in holy pictures and alcoves for statues. In a period of particular poverty, he brought the family to Mississippi to pick cotton in the fields for the season. In his granddaughter's words Joseph "had piercing eyes under thick black brows and a Hitler mustache".<sup>2</sup>



**Catherine Novak**

Catherine came to Baltimore when she was sixteen to live with her older married sister. While coming over on the boat, alone, she met a Russian man with whom she fell in love. When she arrived, she told her sister of this wonderful man she'd met, but her sister objected to her marrying a non-Pole. Catherine complied with her sister's wishes. After some time, Catherine took a job as a live-in servant for a wealthy family. During her employment, her mistress noticed her talent as a seamstress and milliner, and Catherine began designing clothes and hats for the lady of the house. During this time she met Joseph, who had good character, a stable job, and above all, was Polish. Even

though Joseph was not the love of her life, she married him because he could provide her with security and a good life.

After marrying Joseph, Catherine worked in brutal conditions in a job peeling tomatoes and shucking oysters. It got so bitterly cold during the winter months that she and the other workers had to stuff newspapers under their clothing for insulation.

Catherine was known as an incredibly sweet woman. The strongest words she was able to muster were “for pity sake”. Though she had little formal education, she was fluent in Polish, German, and English. The first word she learned in English she learned from the street vendors in East Baltimore where she lived - the word was “bananas”.<sup>5</sup>

## The Old World

This generation came over in the first major wave of Polish immigration to the United States: the decades between the American Civil War and the First World War. In this time, approximately two million people left their homeland in Poland in search of a better life, in a wave known as *za chlebem*: for bread. These millions were largely peasants, coming from a life of poverty and often on the brink of starvation.<sup>6</sup> Among them were the ancestors of the Maczkas.

## Crossing Over

Of the crossings to America, of which there were at least four, we know all the specifics of only one. The Maczkas immigrated to America from the Austro-Hungarian portion of then-occupied Poland with their two young sons, leaving November 9, 1904 on a boat from Bremen, Germany<sup>1</sup>. We have tales of other crossings though. Franz is the lone German of the bunch, and the poor bloke came over in the hold of a ship (also out of Bremen<sup>7</sup>)—this method of travel was reserved for the most impoverished and downtrodden, and Franz no doubt had to contend with cramped, poorly ventilated, and unsanitary conditions. That didn't stop him though, and he completed the journey, fulfilling his dream of seeing the Statue of Liberty. It isn't hard to imagine how moving it must have been for young Franz, who'd journeyed halfway across the Earth, alone, in hellish conditions, to finally see that symbol of freedom and opportunity lighting his way into New York Harbor. Notably, the family still has the trunk which housed all of Franz's worldly possessions on the voyage.<sup>2</sup>

## The New World

After making their journey, all of these immigrants wound up settling in Baltimore, Maryland. That is no coincidence. Baltimore was the central hub of the Polish diaspora in America. Poles had been migrating to Baltimore en masse since the 1870s when many fled the Franco-Prussian War. The Poles who came over were largely poor, uneducated, and considered unskilled labor. When slavery was abolished in 1865, farmers lost a large source of cheap labor, and many thousands of Poles came to Maryland, among other states, to fill this need.<sup>6</sup>

The Polish community in Baltimore was strong, and the families

enjoyed Polish social clubs, Polish churches, and even Polish-language newspapers, which must have come in handy for Anielka Maczka, who spoke Polish all her life and never learned English despite living here for more than 50 years.

By the time the Maczka clan made the journey, the Polish population had come to establish itself in Baltimore. Eastern Avenue in southeast Baltimore came to be so densely Polish and successful that it was known as “Polish Wall Street”. Pop Pop’s maternal grandparents - Stanislaus and Mari Ann Patro - operated a grocery store on Eastern Avenue. Frank Jr’s other grandparents - Walter and Anielka Maczka - owned a wicker shop. The ground floor of their home was the shop floor, and the family lived in the top two levels. They sold primarily wicker baskets and swinging doors for bars. Sadly, the Great Depression forced Walter to close the shop.<sup>2</sup>

On Bernie’s side, the Sandkuhlers owned Weiss Brewery, where they made wheat beer until it was shut down during Prohibition. Franz began by opening his own saloon at McElderry Street and Montford Avenue, where he set up a small brewery in the back. Ten years later in 1895, he expanded the business, moving into larger quarters at 109-111 North Collington Avenue. The family lived in the ground and upper floors, and the basement was used to ferment, bottle, and store the beer. A smaller building next door is where they brewed the beer. Almost everything was done by hand, the one exception being an electric pump that transferred the beer to the cellar for fermenting. Otherwise a team of ten men did the brewing—an eight-foot-tall steel vat was used to mix the water and barley malt while the men agitated the mixture with wooden paddles as it cooked. The beer was allowed to age for four days before being transferred into eight-ounce bottles. After a week or so of aging in the bottle, it was ready to drink.

It retailed at five cents a bottle, and at only 2% alcohol it was served alongside sarsaparilla and other soft drinks. During Lent, it was popular local custom to abstain “from anything stronger than Weiss Beer”. Some got around this restriction by adding a charge of kummel (a sweet liqueur) to each bottle of Weiss. Once found out, the maxim was changed to “nothing stronger than Weiss Beer, and nothing added”.

When Prohibition began to become more and more of a certainty, Franz was confident that it wouldn’t go through. So confident in fact, that he bought up various lots of brewery equipment and supplies from businesses that were closing in anticipation of the new law. In 1920, Prohibition came through, and the brewery was forced to shut down. Franz held out hope that the government would come to its senses, until the end of the decade when he finally gathered up the many cases of empty bottles he’d saved, and used them to fill up an abandoned well behind the family house.<sup>3</sup>

## Sources

1. U.S., Naturalization Records, 1840-1957; National Archives and Records Administration (Nara); Washington, D.C.; Naturalization Petitions of the US District Court For the District of Maryland, 1906-1930; Microfilm Roll: 35; Microfilm Serial: M1640
2. Interviews with Frank and Bernie Maczka
3. Weiss Beer Being Bottled in the Basement article in the Sun Magazine by Frank Sandkuhler. May 12, 1974 issue.
4. United States Federal Census Year: 1870; Census Place: Baltimore Ward 2, Baltimore (Independent City), Maryland; Roll: M593\_571; Page: 265B
5. Dolores Groppe Family history (Catherine Novak and Joseph Kazmierczak sections)
6. Wikipedia: History of Poles in the United States
7. Baltimore, Maryland, U.S., Passenger and Immigration Lists, 1820-1872. Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Baltimore, Maryland, 1820-1891; Microfilm publication M255, Rolls 1-19; NAID: 17027507; Records of the U.S. Customs Service, 1745 - 1997, Record Group 36;
8. All photos courtesy of Frank Maczka



# The Second Generation

## When

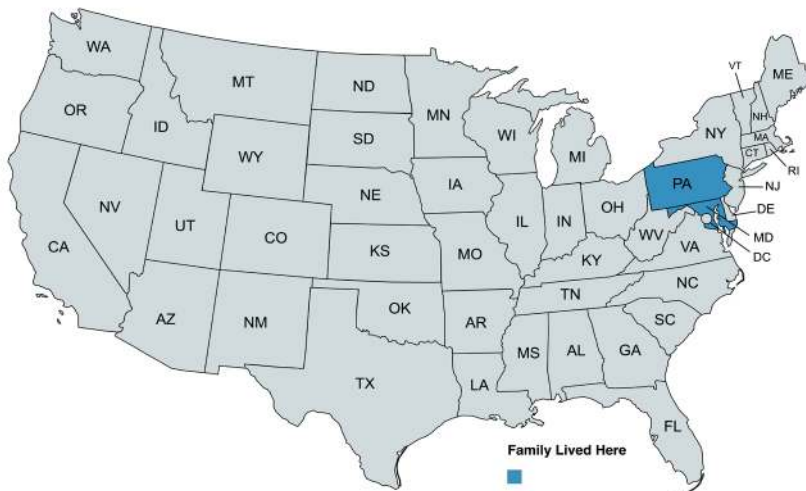
1898-1993

## Who

These are the great grandparents - my grandparent's parents. I've also included information on an uncle, Vincent, who was particularly close to my grandfather Frank, and an aunt, Mary, who was close with my grandmother Bernie.

## Where

All of this generation were born and lived most of their lives in Maryland. Frank Sr. and Rose spent some time in Philadelphia for a job early in their marriage.



# Cast

| Name               | Birth                          | Death                                | Marriage                  | Children                 |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Frank Maczka Sr.   | July 13th, 1906, Maryland      | March 29th, 1954, Maryland, age 47   | Date Unknown              | Frank, Angela, Ronald    |
| Rosalie Patro      | August 10th, 1906, Maryland    | June 24th, 1993, Maryland, age 86    |                           |                          |
| Vincent Maczka     | March 25th, 1908, Maryland     | July 7th, 1967, Maryland, age 59     | Daisy Evans, date unknown | Alice, Vincent Jr., Rose |
| Bernard Sandkuhler | February 19th, 1898, Baltimore | October 4th, 1977, Baltimore, age 79 | June 17th, 1931           | Bernie, Kathleen         |
| Anna Kazmierczak   | February 20th, 1902, Baltimore | May 10th, 1982, Baltimore, age 80    |                           |                          |
| Mary Sandkuhler    | August 1882                    | April 30th, 1960, age 78             | Never married             | None                     |

## Biographies



**Frank (left) with brother Jim and Rose (center) on their wedding day**



**Frank and Rose on their wedding day**

**Frank Maczka Sr.**

Frank Sr. was a tall man, just under six feet. During the Great Depression, he and Rose lived in Philadelphia for about a year because he had a job there. Once he got a job in Baltimore the couple moved back and remained there.

Mechanically minded from a young age, Frank left high school at fourteen to apprentice at a shipyard. He eventually gained a role as a ship fitter, which was like being a carpenter with steel—he'd mark pieces of steel, put them in place, and then they'd build the ship piece by piece. During WWII, Frank worked his way up to manager of the shipyard during the night shift. Despite the opportunity to join management, Frank declined—instead opting to stay in the union for job security.

Frank loved to fish, and would often go fishing on the Chesapeake Bay near Baltimore. On weekends, Frank, his brother-in-law, Frank Jr., and a few others would go on fishing trips out on the Bay—leaving Friday night and

sleeping out on the boat until Sunday.

Frank was also a semi-professional boxer, which intersected with his union membership in one memorable incident. After WWII, the union went on strike for higher wages. Frank ended up getting into a fight with a scab who crossed the picket line. The scab pressed charges for assault, and since Frank was a boxer, this was a felony. Frank decided to head out of town, going a few hours down the road first to Philadelphia then to New York City, with young Frank Jr. in tow. Frank Jr. remembers a great two days. They ate breakfast at an automat—a completely coin-operated diner—in New York. Meanwhile Frank Sr. was making calls to the other union members who were ‘convincing’ the scab to drop the charges. All ended well—the charges were dropped, and Frank Jr. got a fun trip out of it <sup>1</sup>.

Frank Sr. tragically passed at the age of 47 due to complications from asbestos he was exposed to in the shipyard <sup>2</sup>. He was survived by his wife Rose and his children Frank Jr., Ronald, and Angela.



**Frank and Rose with their son Ron**

### **Rosalie Patro**

Rosalie, who went by Rose, was the last of her generation in the Maczka lineage. Rose married Frank despite her parents' objections - they wanted her to stay and keep working in their grocery store instead.

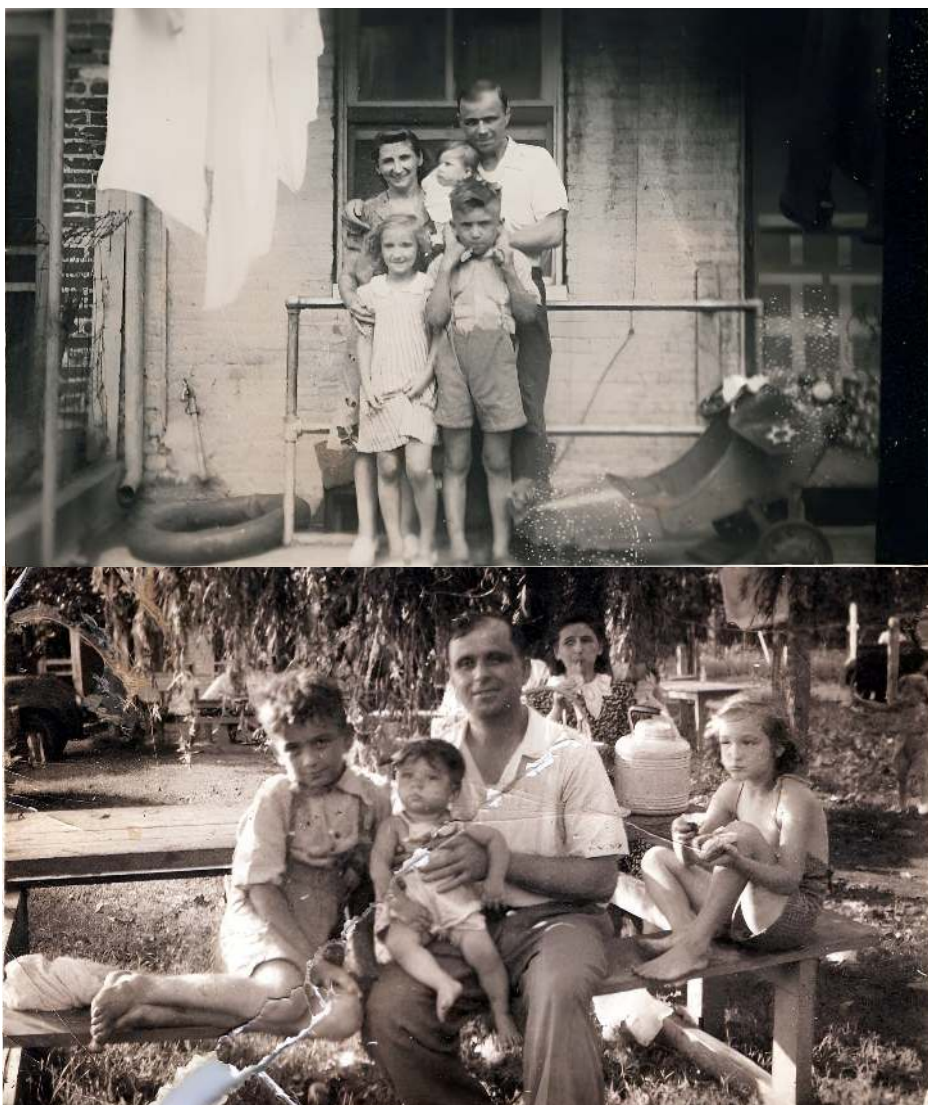
Frank and Rose loved movies and would take the family several times



per week after supper. Rose particularly loved westerns. Roy Rogers and Gene Autry were the leading men of the day. Around 1948-49, the family became one of the first in the neighborhood to have a television. Despite only having three channels, the family spent many hours together watching shows like The Ed Sullivan Show and Texaco Star Theater.

Rose never finished high school, and never learned to drive. She was extremely devoted to her family - she raised the children and took care of the whole family. She taught Frank and his sister how to bake cakes and pies.

Rose outlived her husband by 40 years. In the years after his passing she took a job as a cleaner for the public school system in Baltimore, looked after the family, and spent time with her close friends in the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>



**Portraits of the young Maczka family**



**Frank with children**





**Rose with her children**





### **Vincent Maczka**

Vincent's army discharge records list him at 5'6, 150 pounds, with blue eyes and brown hair.<sup>3</sup> Vincent is Frank Sr.'s younger brother. Vincent was very caring and family oriented. When Frank died, Vincent helped to look after his brother's family. Vincent especially took Frank Jr. under his wing - once, Frank came back to Baltimore for Thanksgiving without money to return home and Vincent paid for his flight back.<sup>1</sup>

Vincent was a medic in World War II and served in General Patton's Third Army, 'Lucky Seventh' Armored Division, 17th Tank Battalion, 77th Armored Medical Battalion. The Third Army was a storied unit that landed at Normandy, liberated Paris, fought decisively at the Battle of the Bulge, ultimately defeated Nazi Germany and liberated concentration camps in Eastern Europe<sup>2</sup>. The Third Army took 1.2 million POWs, inflicted 1.8 million losses for the Nazis, and took 140 thousand casualties itself.<sup>4</sup>

Before the invasion of France, Patton gave a famous expletive-laden address to his soldiers in the Third Army, that he concluded<sup>5</sup>:

*Then there's one thing you men will be able to say when this war is over and you get back home. Thirty years from now when you're sitting by your fireside with your grandson on your knee and he asks, 'What did you do in the great World War Two?' You won't have to cough and say, 'Well, your granddaddy shoveled shit in Louisiana.' No sir, you can look him straight*

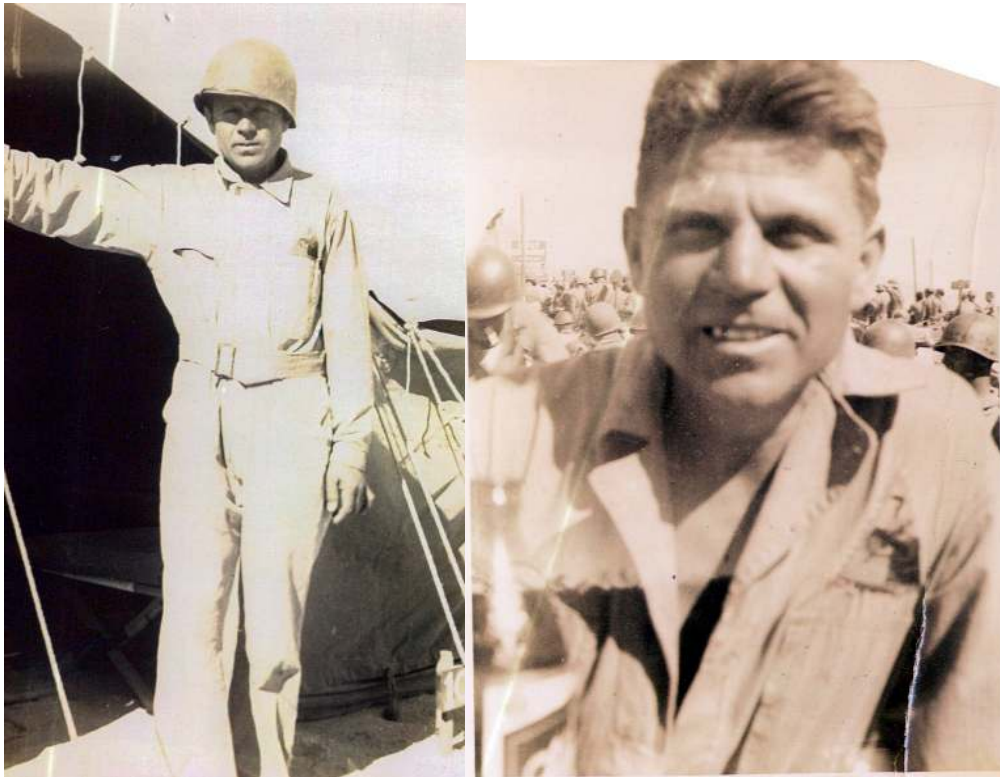
*in the eye and say 'Son, your granddaddy rode with the great Third Army and a son-of-a-goddamned-bitch named George Patton!'*

Well, more than eighty years later, Vincent's great grand-nephew sure is impressed. All of us living today should take a moment to appreciate our ancestor's bravery and heroism.

Vincent received a Bronze Star for his actions in France<sup>6</sup>. His division had taken a town in France before pulling back for fear of bombing, and he stayed behind with the wounded. In the end, the Nazis shelled the retreating soldiers instead.<sup>6</sup>

Vincent was eventually wounded in a jeep accident and was sent back home to recover.

Tragically, Vincent died young alongside his brother Frank, succumbing to stomach cancer at 59.



**Vincent in uniform in the European theater of WWII**





**Bernard Sandkuhler**

Bernard went by Ben. His WWII draft records list him at 5'10, 160 pounds, with blue eyes and blond hair.<sup>7</sup> His half-sister Mary (17 years his senior) lived with him on account of deathbed promise he made to his father. At just eight years old, Ben served as pallbearer at the funeral of a well-known Reverend.<sup>8</sup>

Ben was a policeman by trade, although by all accounts he didn't enjoy police work. He was an artist at heart - he drew charcoal sketches, played the tuba in the police band, and was trained to be a landscape architect. He designed a major portion of the landscaping at the Holy Redeemer cemetery in Baltimore. He stored his tuba in the bathtub, and young Bernie (his daughter) fondly remembered sneaking into the bathtub to blow the horn when no one was watching. He also enjoyed making scale models of landmarks like Camden Railroad station and houses he admired. He placed them with trains in a Christmas garden that filled half the basement of the rowhouse on Pelham Avenue.<sup>1</sup>

**Bernard, with  
Kathleen (left)  
and Bernie**







**Bernard as a baby**



**Bernard at his first communion**



**A young Bernard**



**Bernard on his wedding day**



**Anna Kazmierczak**

Anna was the middle of three daughters, and in fourth grade she was taken out of school in order to care for her little brother. Before marrying Bernard, she worked in a cigar factory and as a waitress. She was known for being beautifully dressed.<sup>1</sup>



**Anna as a baby**



**Anna at her first communion**



**Anna as a teenager**



**Anna (right of center) having dinner with the Maczka family + Kathleen**





**Anna with her grandchildren**





**Anna, Bernie, and Bernard on Bernie's wedding day**

### **Mary Sandkuhler**

As the oldest child in her family, Mary was expected to forego marriage to help raise her ten brothers and sisters. At their father's dying request, Bernard took her under his wing after he died, though Mary still did plenty of caregiving herself. Mary acted as midwife at Bernie's birth, later remarking that she 'shot out like a cannon'. Once Bernie and Kathleen were born, Mary helped take care of them - waking them before school, washing their clothes, packing their lunches, teaching them manners, even writing their absentee notes and comforting them after being scolded by their mother. On Sunday mornings after 6AM mass, Mary would bring home jelly donuts, apple turnovers and crumb buns from the Vilma bakery for the children to have after the nine o'clock service.<sup>9</sup>



**From left to right:  
Mary, Anna, Kathy, Bernard, Arnie**

## **The World at War**

The Great War took place while this generation was still by-and-large children (the one exception being Bernard, who had to register for the draft<sup>7</sup>). The US entered the war in 1917, and from that time until the armistice in November 1918, there was massive mobilization of all Americans to aid the war effort.

The men were registered and conscripted for fighting, the women had to run the household as efficiently as possible, growing victory gardens and taking part in efforts like “Wheatless Wednesdays” and “Meatless Tuesdays” to reduce the use of scarce resources. Even the children were expected to take part, selling war bonds and stamps to aid the war effort.

## **The Great Depression**

The Great Depression was the economic calamity that befell the globe from 1929-1939, beginning with the crash of the Wall Street stock market in October 1929. Coming into adulthood during this period presented immense challenges for this generation, and had a major role in shaping their worldview. Jobs were hard to come by, and job security was placed at a premium. When Frank Sr. found a job in Philadelphia during this time, he had no choice but to leave Baltimore for the opportunity. As the economy improved in the following years, the lessons learned during this era were not soon forgotten, and for the rest of their lives this generation lived with a strong sense of frugality and resourcefulness that they went on to instill in their children.

## **The World at War, Again**

Coming off the heels of the Great Depression, the US was reticent to get directly involved in another major war. Despite that, the US was heavily involved in supplying Allied forces. As part of that, it launched the Emergency Shipbuilding Program in 1940 to quickly build cargo ships to carry troops and materiel to allies and foreign theaters as the British fleet was being sunk by German U-boats faster than they could be replaced. The Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation, where Frank Sr. worked for many years (and Vincent worked for some period as well), took part in this program, and built important repair, oiler, and landing-craft ships that saw service in the war.

When Japan launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, everything changed. The next day, the US formally entered the war.

Six months later, uncle Vincent enlisted. When the Allies invaded France in Summer 1944, he took part as a medical technician, earning multiple decorations<sup>6</sup> as his unit fought its way across the Western front, before being wounded in a jeep accident that sent him back stateside.

Another Uncle, Walter, also fought in the Pacific theater in WWII. He was a Navy Seabee (Construction Battalion). They built airfields and everything the Marines needed when they took over a Japanese-held island. He fought at Guadalcanal and other battles during the Pacific war. After the war he suffered from PTSD before it was recognized by the VA as a service-connected disability.

The women took on the important role of managing the home front during this period. Rose and Anna managed their households through the challenges of rationing, contributed to the local Polish-Catholic community life, and took care of everyone through the enormous stress the war inflicted.



**Walter**



**Walter (front and center) in the Pacific theater**

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# The Third Generation

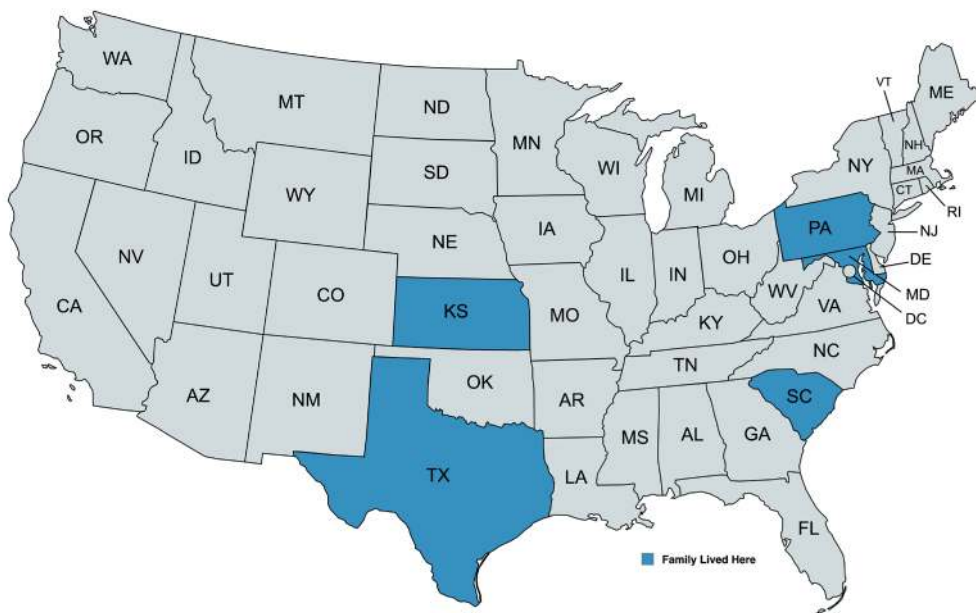
## When

1934-present

## Who

Frank and Bernie Maczka - I know them as Pop Pop and Grandma.

## Where





# Cast

| Name                  | Birth                          | Death                            | Marriage        | Children                 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Frank Maczka Jr       | July 26th, 1934, Baltimore     |                                  | June 30th, 1956 | Helen, Chris, Beth, Mike |
| Bernadetta Sandkuhler | February 22nd, 1936, Baltimore | June 10th, 2023, Wichita, age 87 |                 |                          |

## Biographies



**Frank Maczka Jr**

Frank grew up in Baltimore, where he was part of the tight-knit Polish Catholic community. Frank fondly remembers childhood trips to Gwynn Oak Park on Sunday afternoons, and a family trip via streetcar to the amusement park at Sparrows Point in the summertime.

Frank attended Baltimore Polytechnic Institute for high school, taking two buses each way, where he graduated second in his class. Polytechnic was an all-male, specialized technical school, and Frank had to study hard to do well, doing two plus hours of homework each night. On the weekends, he worked in his uncle Vincent's junkyard. Vincent would tell Frank "I need a generator off a '39 Ford", and young Frank would go find it, take it off and give it to him. This role developed his keen mechanical sense that would later serve him well during his time in the Air Force and his career.

Frank's father passed when he was only 19 years old, which had a dramatic impact on young Frank's life. He started college his freshman year at the University of Maryland. In his second year, as his father grew sicker, he transferred to Johns Hopkins to be closer to home. Because his mother never learned to drive, Frank would drive his father to his doctor's appointments.

Frank Sr. passed away in 1954, leaving enough life insurance money to take care of his mother and younger brother Ronald, but not enough for Frank to continue school. He entered the Air Force in June of that year in order to support himself, and to send some extra money home to his mom. After his father's passing, Frank's uncle Vincent helped look after the family.

Frank met Bernie at Cahill Recreation Center in Baltimore at a weekly dance. Frank went with a friend from high school, and the friend walked Bernie home afterwards. Thankfully for me and the rest of their descendants, Bernie liked Frank better, and the feeling was reciprocated. Their courtship lasted for about two years. Frank says he knew she was the one, when one day in 1955, Bernie asked "Frank what are your intentions?". It wasn't long before Frank asked her to marry him, and, after a long pause, Bernie said yes. They were married June 30th, 1956 at Little Flower Church on Belair Road—Bernie's home parish.

After his father's untimely death, Frank entered the United States Air Force as a navigator. He did his basic training in San Antonio, Texas, then did a further year of training in Brownsville, where he did a combination of classroom work and flying. They'd start out with classes, then take several flights practicing that technique, and then they'd do a test flight where they'd be graded. They were taught trigonometry—how to map the 3D world onto a 2D map. They learned several navigation systems: using books and charts, or stars in the night sky plus a sextant, or radar in order to navigate. Frank made good grades, so he got his pick of assignments, and he ultimately chose to go to Charleston, where he was assigned to the one squadron on the base that flew C-54s. The WWII era plane was nearing the end of its service life and functioned as a "tramp steamer", wandering from port to port, offering Frank the opportunity to travel far and wide. He worked from the navigator's dome, giving views of natural marvels: the Milky Way among innumerable stars, bright in the black sky, extraordinary lightning as the crew navigated around storms, the northern lights, and St. Elmo's fire—an intense glowing plasma that would show up on the wings of the plane.

After the Air Force, Frank went back to college and got his degree in electrical engineering. After graduating, he started at Westinghouse Aerospace in their management program, in Pittsburgh for training. He was slated to make electronics for the P-70 Program which was ultimately canceled. Frank soon became bored and quit, taking a new job at Bell Telephone in Baltimore.

This too was a false start, as Frank decided he wanted to do engineering instead of management, and he quit that job too.

He next went to work at Aircraft Armaments, specializing in training systems and simulation, where he worked on laser-based tank-aiming technology that is now used in laser tag. Frank finally found a good fit, and he worked here for more than half a decade. One of the things he worked on was a submarine trainer, where he was tasked with developing the interface software for the hardware he built. He wrote the programs in assembly (a low-level programming language that serves as a symbolic representation of the machine code that the hardware runs), which he wrote out on punchcards and ran during his assigned time slot.

After this stint, Frank moved on to Scientific Data Systems, which he describes as the best job of his career. He worked on adding special hardware to scientific computers at their systems division in Washington DC. Times were different then—he got the job, which he held for 15 years, by writing them a letter, leading to an interview. While there he got a Registered Professional Engineers Certificate. Five years into his tenure, the company was bought by Xerox and renamed Xerox Data Systems. Years later Xerox decided that they didn't want to be in the computer business. They closed the subsidiary down and took a billion-dollar write-off.

After his tenure at Scientific Data Systems, Frank moved the family to Houston where he took a job as head of engineering for a word processing company. The family spent about a dozen years in Houston.

Next Frank took a job in Wichita with a company that sold computer systems to small newspapers, which sadly went bankrupt after he'd spent two years there. Finally, he started his own business repairing personal computers.

With their move to Wichita in 1991, Frank and Bernie had found a lasting home. The couple spent more than three decades there. They watched the family grow during this period, welcoming nine grandchildren - Luke, Brooks, Blake, Bennett, Kenzie, Gavin, Veronica, Gregory, and Theresa. Each new addition brought fresh joy to their lives, and they delighted in their role as grandparents.

Frank is a devout lifelong Catholic, as was Bernie. From their childhood in the Baltimore Polish community through their many homes throughout the country, faith was a mainstay. Frank considers himself a 'cafeteria Catholic'—rather than blindly accepting everything the Church decrees, he picks and chooses what pieces to accept. Frank prayed daily for Pope Francis, and especially admired the Pope's emphasis on practical everyday solutions over rigid dogma.

When asked what was most important to him in the Christian teachings, Frank emphasized Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount:

to love everyone, including those who have wronged us, to live with humility, to maintain integrity, and to serve our fellow men. This philosophy of love, service, and forgiveness has guided Frank throughout his life, shaping his relationships with family, colleagues, and community.<sup>1</sup>

In 2024 Frank moved to Richardson, Texas to be closer to family.



**Frank enjoys a snow day**



**Frank and Bernie decorate the tree**





**Frank in uniform**



**Frank with the family**



### **Bernadetta Sandkuhler**

Bernadetta, known as Bernie, grew up in Baltimore. Her aunt Mary lived with the family throughout her childhood, and in her later recollections, Bernie often felt as close if not closer to Mary as she did with her own mother.

In her teen years, Bernie's older sister Kathleen developed psychiatric issues and began to display manic behavior that the family struggled to manage with their modest budget. Despite this struggle and the turbulence it caused in the family unit, Bernie in her later years recalled this period with fondness—her father playing on the home piano, running errands with her sister, her aunt Mary bringing the girls treats on Sunday mornings.

After marrying in 1956 when she was twenty, Bernie was the steady hand that kept the Maczka family thriving through all their transitions. As they moved from Baltimore to Pittsburgh, then to Houston, Bernie created warm and stable homes for their four children: Helen, Beth, Mike, and Chris.

Bernie and Frank would often go stargazing together—she had a particular love for astronomy that dated back to their early marriage, when they would spend evenings identifying constellations together. She was also a film buff, with a particular fondness for epic films like “Bridge on the River Kwai.” The appreciation for cinema was something she shared with Frank, as both grew up in families where movie-going was a cherished ritual.

A natural teacher and nurturer, Bernie was determined that her children would have all the opportunities in the world. She herself had harbored dreams of adventure in her youth—she once imagined she would pilot her own helicopter—and she encouraged similar bold aspirations



in her children. When she finally learned to drive herself, it was an act of determination: she simply decided she “wasn’t going to walk anymore,” earned some money, and went through driver’s education.

Through all the family’s moves and changes, Bernie remained the anchor, creating stability and warmth wherever they went. She had a talent for making each new house feel like home, drawing on the strong sense of family and tradition she had absorbed growing up in Baltimore’s tight-knit Polish Catholic community. Whether in Maryland, Pennsylvania, or Texas, Bernie’s steady presence and caring nature helped the family navigate the challenges of corporate transfers and new beginnings with grace.

Bernie inherited a deep artistic sensibility from her father Bernard, who was himself an accomplished artist working in charcoal sketches and landscape design. As a child, she would sneak into the bathroom where her father stored his tuba, delighting in making music when no one was watching. This early exposure to the arts through her father’s influence shaped her own creative expression throughout her life.

That artistic spirit manifested in various ways as she raised her family. She brought an artist’s eye to homemaking, turning each new house into a carefully crafted home.

Later in life, Bernie went back to school to hone her craft as an artist. She attended Wichita State University where she took painting, journalism, and communications classes, and actively participated in student life - she was a student orientation leader, received numerous recognitions and ultimately graduated in May 1996, fulfilling her lifelong dream of graduating from university.<sup>1</sup>

Bernie passed away in 2023 due to complications from a stroke she suffered in 2022. She is dearly missed.





**Bernie as a baby**





**Kathleen and Bernie in September 1959**



**Bernie enjoys a snow day**





**Bernie with Frank and Kathleen on Christmas**





**Bernie in the golden years**

## Appendix: Through Bernie's Eyes

Bernie left behind much of her artwork, including writing, photography, and watercolor painting. What follows is a selection of her work across the three mediums.

She wrote most of the below later in life, when she was in college and afterwards. Much of it centers on her family growing up in Baltimore in the 40s and 50s. Her writing is frank, funny, and sometimes sentimental—just like she was. Her distinctive voice really shines through in her writing, and I hope you, like I, will hear her presence in them.<sup>2</sup>

On her Aunt Mary:

*“As the oldest child of a prosperous German immigrant, Aunt Mary was expected to forego marriage to help raise her ten brothers and sisters.*

*Aunt Mary was Dad’s half sister...Surely Dad’s memory of all the things Mary did and did without for his sake influenced his keeping his father’s deathbed decree to look after her...*

*It was Mary who woke Kathleen and me for breakfast and sent us to school wearing uniforms she had washed, starched and ironed, with lunches she packed, and fresh gym clothes fastened in a department store bag, closed at the top with straight pins from her pincushion. She wrote our absentee notes to teachers on nice stationery enclosed in envelopes.*

*After 6:30 a.m. mass on Sunday mornings she brought home jelly donuts, apple turnovers, and crumb buns from the Vilma bakery for us to have...*

*I remember most nestling in her pillow lap after being scolded by my mother...*

*A gaping hole where [her] doorknob should have been invited me to look in when she closed it for privacy. I remember great bare breasts and padded buttocks the color of marble statues in the sanctuary of my Polish grandmother’s church.*

*Aunt Mary taught us manners. Not that she was stuffy; she just knew what was proper: where to place the knives and forks when setting the table...*



*Aunt Mary claimed to treat us girls impartially, but I felt she favored her godchild, Kathleen. Yet, there was a special bond between Aunt Mary and me.*

*When I was in high school and the grownups no longer discussed birth in hushed tones, I learned that she alone assisted at my delivery in Mom's bed while Dad was out in a snowstorm to fetch the doctor.*

*"You shot out like a cannon" was the way my mother put it. I wondered how my maiden aunt handled the ordeal but she offered no comment."*

On her sister Kathleen's escalating mental illness:

*"In her preteen years Kathleen began to display compulsive behavior always aiming for perfection. We'd go to confession on Saturday afternoon and she'd turn around on the way home and want to go back.*

*"I forgot to tell him something" she'd say.*

*"Tell him next time," I'd answer.*

*She might comply but then stew over it all afternoon.*

*If she saw a piece of glass on the sidewalk, she felt guilty if she failed to pick it up so no one would get cut.*

*Mother worried that Aunt Mary was influencing her fanatical behavior. She took Kathleen to the family doctor and beseeched him to recommend that Aunt Mary get out of the house. None of this made sense to me. I heard the same things Aunt Mary said I didn't act like Kathleen.*

*Kathleen was asking directly for psychiatric help but with no funds or insurance to cover it, Mother compromised and let the family doctor see her regularly to try and help her. Deep depression set in and Kathleen sat through the sessions without speaking. This infuriated Mother.*

*"You've got to snap out of this" she'd say to Kathleen. "What's wrong with you?"*

*I sure didn't know what was wrong. I wanted my old sister back. I pitied the stranger who shared my room.*

*Manic periods were the worst of all. Kathleen would play the recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade" loudly and over and over. She needed little sleep. No one else got enough...*

*The issue of money to pay for help for Kathleen was a big one. Mother persuaded the doctor to send Kathleen for shock treatments at St. Joseph's hospital...She came out very confused, looking like she'd had a swift kick in her personality. She didn't remember where she was or why she was there. I wondered the same thing too. What had they done to my sister and why? In subsequent days she was easier to manage but continued to seem lost. Gradually the sad side effects of the treatment seemed to wear off."*

On her father Bernard:

*"For 30 years my dad was a patrolman on the police force in Baltimore—a choice made in search of financial security during the depression. But his soul was that of an artist and musician...*

*His hobbies were making scale models of landmarks like the Camden Railroad station and houses he admired. He placed them with trains in a Christmas garden that filled half the cellar of the row house on Pelham Avenue.*

*Dad played tuba in the police band and light classical selection of Victor Herbert and Siegmund Romberg on the piano at home."*

On her first meeting with Frank:

*"During my senior year of high school I met Frank at a Saturday night dance at Cahill Recreation Center...He came with a friend who happened to know my friend Pat. We thought Frank was good looking. I guessed he was Italian because he had dark hair and skin and his name ended in -a. Had I known he was Polish, I probably wouldn't have shown any interest in him. My prejudices against my own Polish ancestry were still strong"*

And finally a few lines from various writings:

*"I suspect too that Mother had a lot of shame and anger over the church's stand on contraception...I believe she had her tubes tied after I was born. I wonder if Dad knew. He believed the only purpose of sex was procreation. Did they abstain the rest of their lives?"*

*“[Dad] had made a deathbed promise to his father to take care of Mary. That was before he met and married mother. Although it caused a lot of dissension in the marriage, he wouldn’t go back on his word. Growing up I always knew I was supposed to love my mom best but I realized I liked Aunt Mary better. I will never make a deathbed promise”*

*“Dad liked to tell the story of how [cousin Ida] arranged for Dad and Mother to meet and go out for the first time. She told Dad who knew no Polish to ask Mother “Dame bouge?” (Give me a kiss). “Oh, Bernard” mother protested when he’d go on to say how eagerly she obliged.”*

*“Daymyw bouchee” was one of the few phrases I learned in Polish, along with “gene doubeyeh” (good day), “da blonnetz” (good night), several expletives Mom used when she was very mad, and the Guardian Angel’s Prayer.”*

Following is a collection of Bernie's photography:

















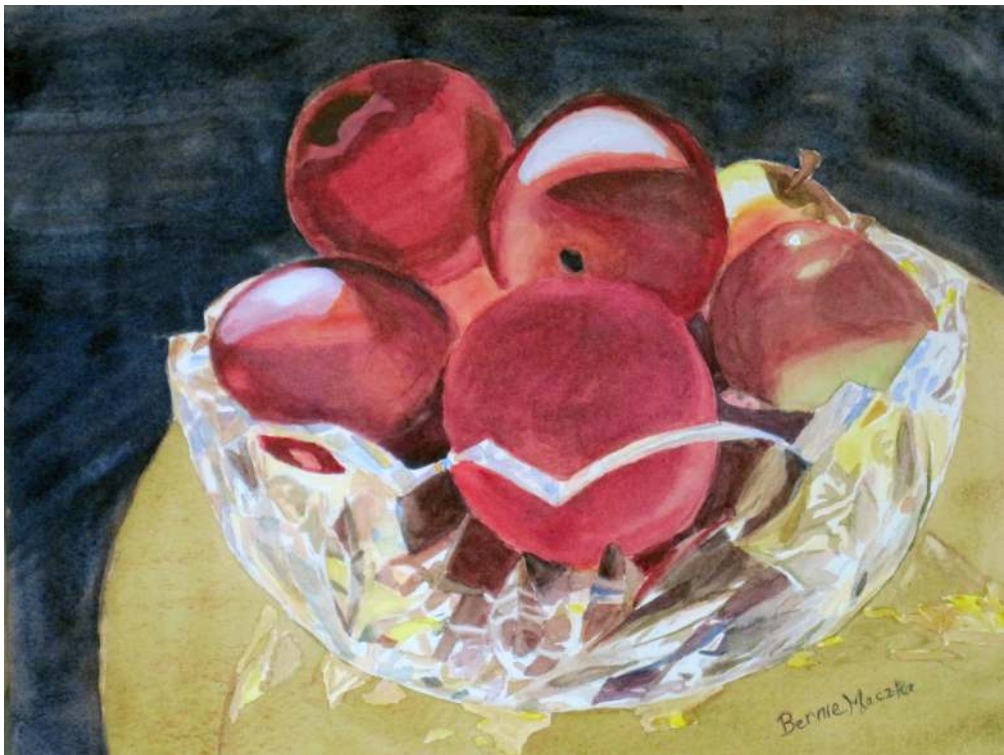
Following is a collection of Bernie's paintings:





Nick, the Maczka family dog, reclining on a favorite chair











## Sources

1. Interviews with Frank and Bernie Maczka
2. A box of Bernie's writing, notes, and photography
3. Additional photos and artwork courtesy of Frank Maczka

**Gibbs**

# Family Tree

**Edward Thomas Gibbs**

B: 1864, Missouri  
D: 1946, Missouri

**Evaline Sarah Jesse**

B: 1868, Missouri  
D: 1946, Missouri

**George Franklin Pitman**

B: 1890, Texas  
D: 1939, Texas

**Alpha Thyrza Long**

B: 1894, Texas  
D: 1921, Texas

**William Lark Wright**

B: 1886, Alabama  
D: 1949, Texas

**Una Belle Gray**

B: 1889, Texas  
D: 1980, Texas

**Hill Watson Olive Sr**

B: 1886, Georgia  
D: 1970, Georgia

**Jade Foster**

B: 1891, Georgia  
D: 1970, Georgia

**Washington Caffee**

B: 1877, Kentucky  
D: Unknown

**Maggie Caffee**

B: 1883, Georgia  
D: 1957

**David Raymond Gibbs**

B: 1904, Missouri  
D: 1941, Philippines



**Cora Margaret Pitman**

B: 1911, Texas  
D: 1989, Texas



**W.G. (Ted) Wright**

B: 1910, Texas  
D: 1983, Texas



**Hill Watson Olive Jr**

B: 1913, Georgia  
D: 2001, Texas



**Buela Faye Caffee**

B: 1920, Oklahoma  
D: 1997, Oklahoma



**David Edward Gibbs**

B: 1938, Virginia



**Jacqueline Louise Olive**

B: 1939, Oklahoma  
D: 2023, Texas

# Introduction

The Gibbs side of the family tree does not fit into the same clear narrative arc that the Maczka side does. The origins are murkier—to find out where we came from, one must look back several centuries. There is not the same clean sweep of forward progress, with the family going from poverty and persecution to success and stability in just a few generations.

Despite the murkiness, the saga of the Gibbs clan does not lack for intrigue, or for great stories. There is tragedy, there is heroism, there is mystery. Some of these ancestors triumphed over their circumstances, some failed time and again, others fell victim to cruel twists of fate. Members of this clan were at times outlaws, others worked for the law. This branch is in many ways very homogeneous, and despite that they contain the multitudes of human experience.

By the time I pick up the narrative in the mid 1800s, every branch of this family tree had been established in America for well over a hundred years, and more often closer to two hundred years. With few exceptions, these folks lived where their parents, and their grandparents, and their great-grandparents did. The first generation I'll cover, my great-great grandparents, lived humble lives, working the earth for their subsistence. They could read and write, but they seldom had more than an elementary-school education. They were by and large devout Christians of varying denominations. They lived relatively stable lives and were in their later years when World War I broke out.

The second generation, my great grandparents, came of age in a time of great upheaval. Their childhoods were marred by the Great War, and by adulthood they were faced with the Great Depression. Then came the greatest challenge of all—World War II, which profoundly upended their lives. Everyone was called upon, and one member of this generation made the ultimate sacrifice for his country. Those who survived the war went on to live long lives and enjoy the rapidly improving living standards in a nation that was growing enormously wealthy.

The final generation is the one that I know firsthand. Like on the Maczka side, they value education highly and work in technical fields. They establish security and prosperity for themselves and their children, and spend their later years enjoying the fruits of their labor.



# The First Generation

Author's note: The 'first generation' moniker doesn't make quite as much sense on the Gibbs' side as it does on the Maczka side where this generation all immigrated to the US, but I've kept that convention here to give me an easy way to refer to this group.

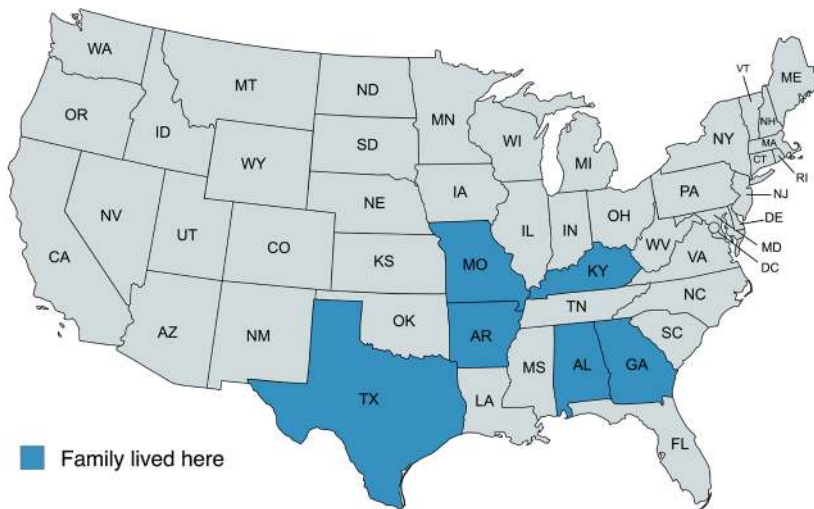
## When

1864-1980

## Who

These are my great-great grandparents, or my grandparents' grandparents.

## Where



# Cast

| Name                   | Birth                                       | Death   | Marriage     | Children  |
|------------------------|---|---|--------------|---|
| Edward Thomas Gibbs    | April 20th, 1864, Callaway County, Missouri | October 14th, 1946, Missouri, age 82                | 1889         | Lula, Minnie, Laura, James, David, Mary, and Jessie |
| Evaline Sarah Jesse    | May 8th, 1868, Benton, Arkansas             | June 17th, 1946, Missouri, age 78                   |              |   |
| George Franklin Pitman | June 17th, 1890, Gainesville, Texas         | July 30th, 1939, Texas, age 49                      | 1910         | Cora, George Jr., James, Max, and William           |
| Alpha Thyrza Long      | October 1894, Gainesville, Texas            | 1921, Fort Stockton, Texas, age 27                  |              |   |
| Hill Olive Sr.         | October 12th, 1886, Columbus, Georgia       | May 10th, 1970, Decatur County, Georgia, age 83     | 1906         | Bob, Skeet, Jack, and Louise                        |
| Jade Foster            | 1891, Georgia                               | February 3rd, 1970, Decatur County, Georgia, age 79 |              |   |
| Washington Caffee      | 1877, Kentucky                              | Unknown   | Date Unknown | Neville, Glen, Olen, Lester, Carl, and Buela Faye   |
| Maggie Rodgers         | 1883, Georgia                               | 1957, age 75  |              |   |
| William Lark Wright    | July 30th, 1886, Alabama                    | May 11th, 1949, Savoy, Texas, age 62                | Date Unknown | Ted, Maerene  |
| Una Belle Gray         | September 14th, 1889, Texas                 | January 19th, 1980, Denton, Texas, age 90           |              |   |

## Biographies

### Edward Thomas Gibbs

He was a farmer by trade. He had an eighth grade education. In 1940 the census recorded the value of his home in Mexico, Missouri as \$1,300 <sup>1</sup>.



**Evaline with her Grandson David**

### Evaline Sarah Jesse

She had an eighth grade education. She had at least six siblings<sup>2</sup>. Beyond census records and death and marriage certificates, we have no knowledge of Evaline or her husband Edward. Their son, DRG, was killed in action in WWII while DRG's own son David was only three years old. As a result, we have few stories from this side of the family other than that they were Missouri farmers.

### George Franklin Pitman

Early in his career George was a horse trader, and later in life he swapped horses for cars and became a used car salesman. Tragically, George took his own life with a pistol in the used car dealership, leaving no note or known motive. Local newspapers at the time questioned whether there might be more to this case, but no arrests were ever made in connection with George's death and it was officially ruled a suicide.<sup>3</sup>

### Alpha Thyrza Long

She was only sixteen when she married George. Alpha's ancestry includes English minor nobility such as Lord John IV Payne and Lady Katherine Elizabeth Buchorn. Lord John IV Payne, secretary to King Henry

VIII, is on Alpha's paternal grandmother's side.<sup>4</sup>

### **Hill Olive Sr.**

He was a master machinist and he passed this trade down onto all three sons. Hill had a great talent for mechanical design and frequently built prototypes and working models for his employers. One such device was a bottle rinsing machine that ended up being used in the bottling industry.

Hill's first car was a Master Six Buick. He was a speedster until he rolled it with a bunch of buddies in the car on the way to a poker game, killing one and sparing the rest. Apparently he calmed down behind the wheel after that.<sup>5</sup>



**From left to right: Skeet, Jack, Bob, Hill Sr, Louise Olive**

### **Jade Foster**

She was known as Jadie. She married Hill when she was fifteen. Her parents split up under mysterious circumstances and her father remarried when she was in her early teens.

She cooked on a big wood-burning stove. Each morning she would fix a breakfast of grits, unsmoked bacon, eggs, and a pan of sixteen biscuits for the family. Each afternoon she fixed dinner (dinner was served at noon) consisting of fresh produce served by the surrounding farmland.<sup>5</sup>



**W.C. and Maggie**

### **Washington Caffee**

Known as W.C., he was a farmer by trade. He was a devout member of Pentecostal church and disapproved of cinema and the use of tobacco.

W.C. was memorialized in Hill Olive Jr's Jax Trax, as a stern, deeply-involved father figure, scandalized as Jack courts his fifteen-year-old daughter Faye against W.C.'s wishes. The day she turned sixteen, old Jack asked Faye to marry him with a ¼-carat diamond ring. W.C. asked just one question - "was it bought at the dime store?". It was in fact bought on credit. W.C. relented though and did not object to the marriage.<sup>5</sup>

W.C.'s ancestors were relatively homogeneous Virginia stock, almost exclusively from the British Isles in the 1600s and 1700s, and one known line coming from France.

### **Maggie Rodgers**

Maggie was memorialized in Hill Olive Jr's Jax Trax as a loving, supportive mother - supporting Faye when her husband strongly objected to her love interest, spending a month with the Olives each time Faye gave birth to help take care of her, organizing family get togethers for the siblings then well into adulthood.<sup>5</sup>



**W.C., Maggie, and two of their sons**

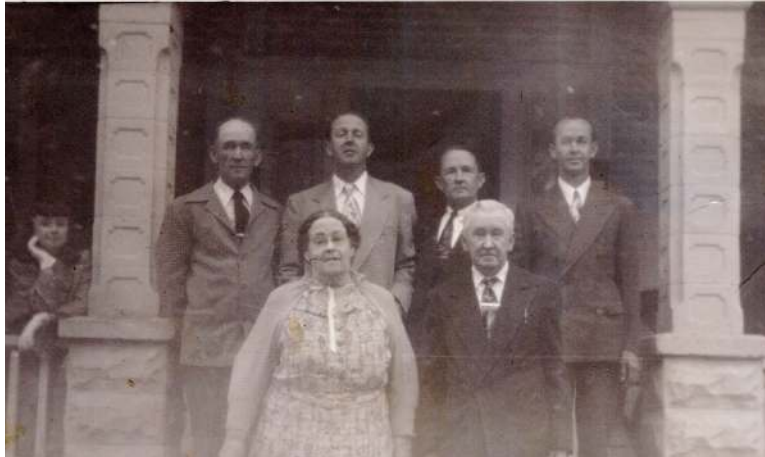




**Caffee Family Photo**



**Maggie and W.C.**



**Maggie and W.C. (front row)**



**William and Una Belle**

### **William Lark Wright**

The few details we have about William paint a clear picture. William, like his wife, was a devout member of the Church of Christ. He was a farmer, a good, irascible farmer in the mold of Thomas Jefferson's ideal yeoman. He was fiercely independent and self-reliant. Fannin county where the Wrights lived swung strongly against Teddy, voting four-to-one against him in the 1904 Presidential election. William decided to name his infant son Ted.

When David Gibbs lived with the Wrights, he remembers William treated him like his own grandchild. He remembers the thrill of watching William kill one of the hogs he raised.<sup>6</sup>



**Una Belle with her grandchildren David and Sally in Lake Texoma**

### **Una Belle Gray**

Not much is known from Una's early life. Her later life however is filled with fascinating details. Una made wine from wild Texas plums. She took up painting in late life and was an accomplished still life and nature oil painter. She enjoyed fishing the many waterways local to Savoy.

Una was a devout member of the Church of Christ, and when a young David Gibbs moved into her household during WWII, the Episcopalian sprinkling David had received for his holy baptism would no longer do the trick. She insisted that David, then around ten years old, receive her personal baptism in Lake Texoma. As he remembers it, she nearly drowned him in that lake while she administered the holy rite.

Una outlived her husband by more than thirty years, and lived to hold her great grandchildren Laura and Whip.<sup>6</sup>



**Una with Laura and Whip**

## The Old South

I would be remiss if I did not prominently discuss some of the horrors that our ancestors were a part of. The generations discussed individually in this book were too young to fight for the Confederacy or own slaves, but their parents and grandparents did. Of the eight military-aged men in the family four generations back (my great-great-great grandparents), seven fought for the Confederacy. One, Isham Olive, is confirmed to have owned slaves<sup>7</sup>. Others may have as well, we just don't have record of it. This generation grew up in a deeply racist environment, in a time where black people were segregated and harshly discriminated against.

## The Varieties of Religious Allegiance

This generation represents a fascinating diversity of Christian religion. We have devout members of at least three different denominations, all with strongly divergent beliefs and worldviews.

First, we have the dominant denomination in this place and time in American history—the Southern Baptists. The Baptists were the evangelical mainstream at this time, and the dominant denomination among Southern whites after splitting with Northern Baptists over slavery in 1845. Worship typically featured piano/organ hymns, and services ran less than ninety minutes. One of the key beliefs of the church was the believer's baptism - a full-body immersion to take place only after a personal profession of faith. Another was biblical inerrancy - that “The Scriptures... are truth, without any mixture of error, for their matter.”<sup>8</sup>

Next we have the Pentecostals. Pentecostals embraced a very different dogma from that of the Baptist mainstream. Worship looked different - loud bands, lots of clapping and dancing, and bouts of ecstatic prayer filled services that could stretch for hours. The key Pentecostal dogma that set it apart though was the belief in Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Recalling the Pentecost (the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the first Christians) this church believed that all Christians should seek this firsthand religious experience. Baptism with the Holy Spirit was believed to be accompanied by a sign - usually speaking in tongues.<sup>9</sup>

Finally we have the Church of Christ—a sober, ascetic congregation strongly devoted to biblical literacy. In addition to regular Sunday worship (which featured no instruments but did have four-part a cappella singing of hymns) all members were expected to attend an additional Bible study on both Sunday and Wednesday evenings. The Church of Christ held the



sacrament of Baptism to be of the highest importance. Baptism by immersion was seen as the necessary moment when sins were washed clean.<sup>10</sup>

## American Origins

When I started this project, I set out to write the histories as best I could tell them of the three generations of my family spanning from my grandparents to my great-great grandparents. On the Maczka side, this oldest one is the generation that immigrated from Poland, so it makes for a clear jumping off point to begin the narrative. It isn't so simple on the Gibbs side. To understand this side of the family, I dug into more ancient generations.

When I started learning what I could find about this branch's roots, I hoped I'd find a clean narrative arc—something I could tie up neatly like I did on the Maczka side. What I found was very different. To tell the story of how we came to be here, you must look further back. Much further back. I went through the genealogical history where available and found a few key things:

We have genealogical records for 26 of the 32 possible people in the generation seven generations back on the Gibbs side. Of the 26 on record, not a single one was foreign-born. The most recent immigrants we have on this side are at least ten generations, and in some cases up to seventeen generations back.

Of the immigrants we do have record of, they came almost exclusively from the British Isles. A large majority from England, with a few Irish, French, and Scottish mixed in. Within England, they seem to be concentrated around Kent and the Southwest of England.

A large portion came amongst the very first wave of European settlers in the mid 1600s, who generally came to escape religious persecution. By 1750, nearly every line of the family had already crossed over to America.<sup>11</sup>

## Family Names

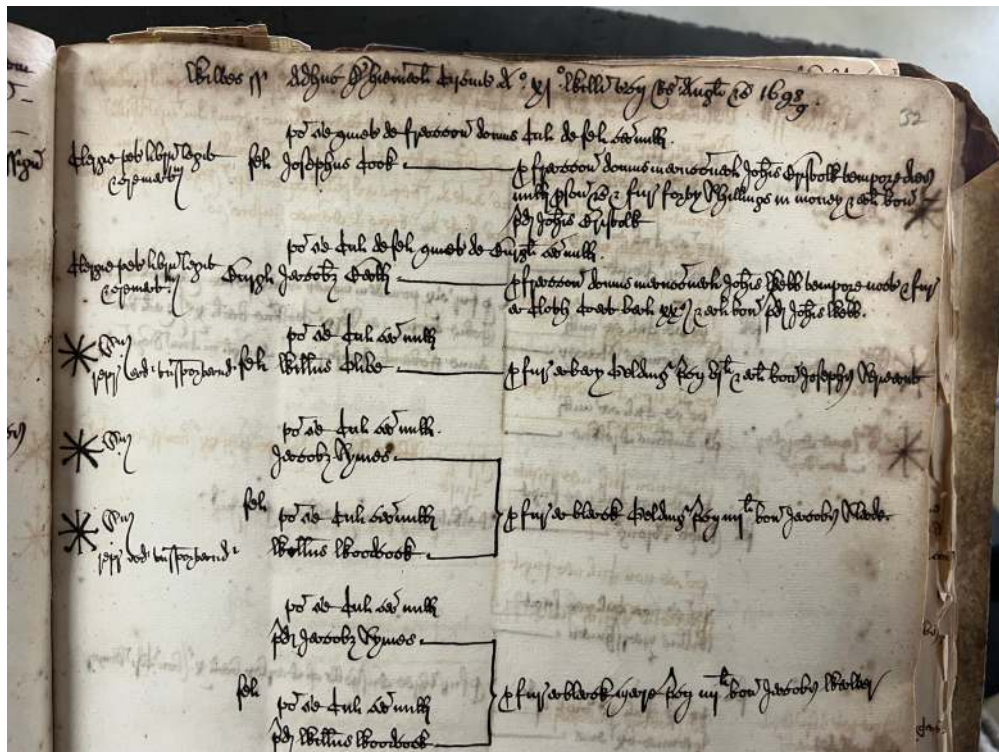
I've compiled some information on how far back each family-name-line has been in either the United States or the American colonies.

We have records all the way back to the original immigrant in two cases:

The Gibbs' American line goes back four generations before Edward. John Gibbs Sr., an English slaveholder, emigrated to Virginia sometime in the early 1700s. The Olive line goes back seven generations in America. William Olive, an English slaveholder, appears to have immigrated to Barbados in bondage (meaning he came as criminal convict as reprieve from hanging)



in 1699, and made his way to Virginia sometime after that. I traced back the criminal records, and found that he was convicted “For stealing a bay gelding, worth £6, and other goods”.<sup>12</sup>



**William's is the third entry, the first with a \* mark next to it**

It isn't clear exactly how far back the Jesse, Pitman, Long, or Foster families have been on American soil, but generally we have record of at least three American generations before this 'first generation'. The one exception is the Foster line in which nothing is known beyond Jade's parents. It seems just about all of the ancestral stock of this side of the family came over in Colonial times and had been Americans as long as America has existed.

## Sources

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2. United States Federal Census, 1870; Census Place: Salt River, Audrain, Missouri; Roll: M593\_756; Page: 592B
3. Newspaper article 'El Paso Salesman Found Shot Dead On Garage Floor' article in unknown newspaper on or around July 31, 1939
4. Via ancestry.com I trace the path back starting from Alpha as: James Long, Louisa Crittenden, Nathaniel Crittenden, Hannah Guyton, Nathaniel Guyton Sr., John Guyton, Margaret Underwood, Anthonii Underwood, Mary Wilder, M (Higgs) Wilder, Sarah Payne, Lord Robert Payne, Father Lord John Payne
5. *Jax Trax* by Jack Olive
6. Interviews with David Gibbs
7. United States Federal Census, 1860 - Slave Schedules; Series Number: M653; Record Group: Records of the Bureau of the Census; Record Group Number: 29
8. Encyclopaedia Britannica: Southern Baptist Convention
9. Encyclopaedia Britannica: Pentecostalism
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12. Wiltshire Assize records; ASSI 23/4; Assizes: Western Circuit, Gaol files; 1698-1712
13. Photos courtesy of David Gibbs

# The Second Generation

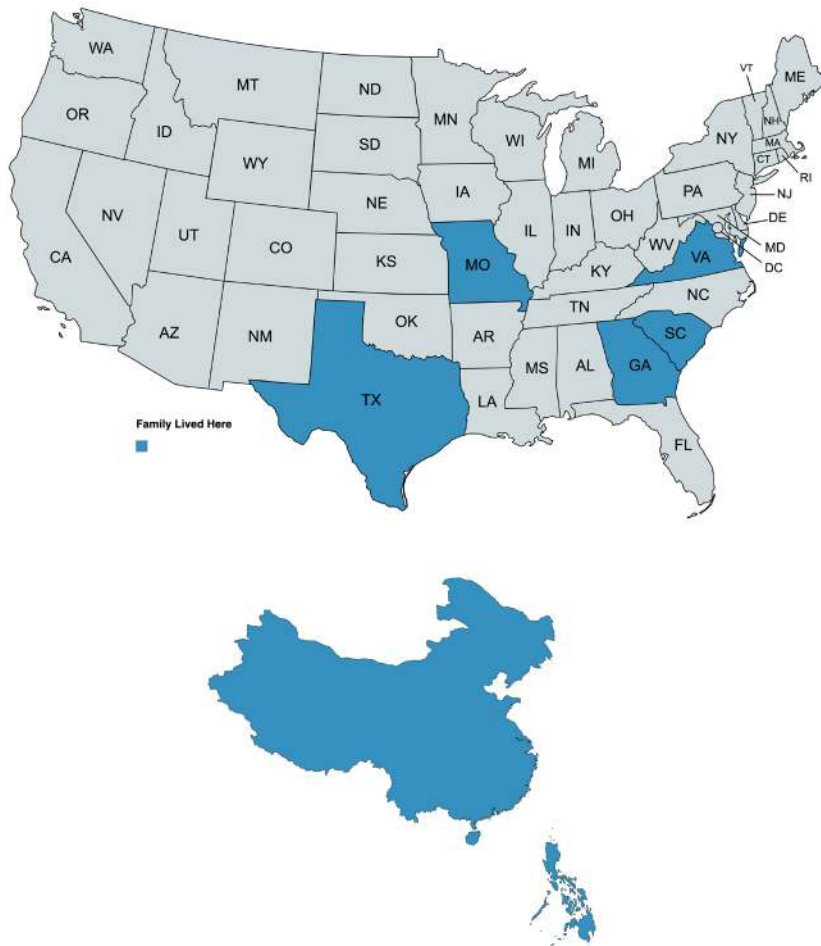
## When

1904-2001

## Who

These are my great-grandparents - David and Becky Gibbs, and Jack and Faye Caffee. I've also included information on Ted Wright, who was an adoptive Father to my Grandfather David after DRG died.

## Where



# Cast

| Name                 | Birth                                   | Death  | Marriage  | Children        |
|----------------------|---|--|---|-----------------|
| David Raymond Gibbs  | October 9th, 1904, Wellsville, Missouri | December 12th, 1941, the Philippines, age 37 | November 30th, 1930, Alamogordo, New Mexico   | David           |
| Cora Margaret Pitman | June 7th, 1911, Gainesville, Texas      | November 21st, 1989, Midland, Texas, age 78  |   |                 |
| Hill Watson Olive Jr | April 22nd, 1913, Columbus, Georgia     | January 3rd, 2001, Arlington, Texas, age 87  | January 24th, 1937, Sebastian County, Arkansas  | Jackie, Shirley |
| Buela Faye Caffee    | November 8th, 1920, Oklahoma City       | November 14th, 1997, Oklahoma City, age 77   |   |                 |
| William Gray Wright  | November 15th, 1910, Savoy, Texas       | April 19th, 1983, Midland, Texas, age 72     | March 27th, 1937, New Design, Virginia to Elver Wade<br><br>June 14th, 1944, Reeves, Texas to Cora Pitman | Sally           |



## Biographies



**David Raymond Gibbs**

I'll refer to him here as DRG to make it easier to refer to his son David later.

Not much is known of DRG's early years. We know his father was a farmer, and that they lived in Mexico, Missouri ~100 miles from St. Louis. DRG was the fifth of seven Gibbs children.<sup>1</sup>

From these humble origins, DRG was quickly identified as exceptional. At seventeen, he was accepted to West Point, where he graduated in 1928. His yearbook entry provides a nice snapshot of what he was like. He served for four years on the Committee of Joy, the social committee devoted to esprit de corps. He was a strong writer with a literary bent, and served as associate editor of *The Pointer*, a student humor and art magazine. Everyone called him Don for Don Juan. He participated in *Hundredth Night*, a student-written musical/variety show staged exactly 100 nights before graduation. He was remembered as an avid outdoorsman - skating and bobsledding in the winter, and lounging near the Delafield Pond in the summer time. Finally, he was remembered as a man who got things done, the exact remark being "one need never fear that what he sets out to do will not be well done."<sup>2</sup>



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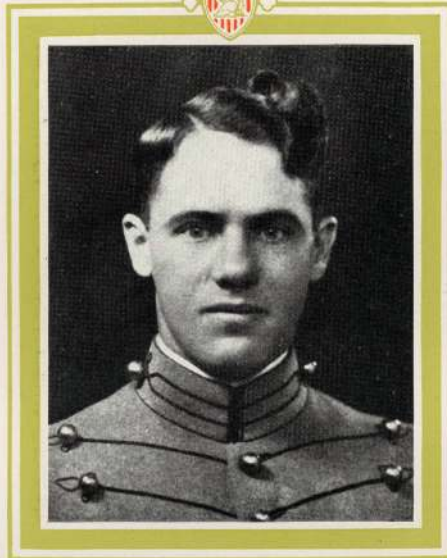


ROBERT H. KELLY  
*Honor Editor*



POINTER ASSISTANTS

*Front Row*—BEAUMONT, COLEMAN, CURRAN, GIBBS  
*Back Row*—TALCOTT, GUENTHER, O'NEILL



DAVID RAYMOND GIBBS

9TH DISTRICT MISSOURI  
MEXICO, MISSOURI



UT of the fastnesses of Missouri came this amiable comrade of ours. Another desertion from among the ranks of the mule skinnners—but the climate and life at West Point agreed with Dave so that he has for four years remained the F Co. representative on the Committee of Joy. As a plebe Dave tortured us continually with his jokes—some good, and most, not so good—through the medium of the Pointer. If he ran out of jokes—which infrequently happened—he trained editorials and inflicted them on us. And so our hero rose to associate editorship, from which eminent position he more than ever commands our literary enjoyment.

Come winter—and Dave gets out his skates and the bob-sled. We always like to see him on the latter, however, for there he looks so much more safe. Come summer—and one finds him in a bathing suit lounging in the vicinity of Delafield's limpid waters.

Although he is always doing something athletic, nature compels Dave to select the most convenient method of accomplishment. Despite this constant leaning toward the least troublesome, one need never fear that what he sets out to do will not be well done.

SERGEANT I POINTER STAFF 2 I HUNDREDTH NIGHT 4 3 2 I MACHINE  
GUN SHARPSHOOTER PISTOL MARKSMAN

**David's Year 4 yearbook entries: Committee of Joy, the Pointer assistant editor, Hundredth Night, outdoorsman, sharpshooter**

After West Point, every young would-be Air Force officer was required to do two years of “ground duty” before the War Department would pay for flight training. DRG served his in the cavalry branch at Fort Bliss in El Paso. As a 2nd Lieutenant at that time, he was taught how to fight on horseback, acting as the eyes and ears of a field army: scouting ahead of an infantry column, screening flanks, relaying messages. This is where he met Becky.<sup>3</sup>

After his two years were up DRG went straight to flight school in San Antonio. Once DRG had his wings, he went all over: to fly O-1 and O-19 spotter biplanes at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, to fly an early experimental version of the B-17 Flying Fortress in Virginia. He was one of twelve pilots chosen for a 10,000-mile round-trip to Buenos Aires demonstration of the B-17 Flying Fortress.<sup>4</sup>



(Above) DRG on the far left



(G19-917C-17)(5-19-41-12A) - OFFICERS AND CREWS-B-17D DELIVERY FLIGHT-COAST TO HAWAII





**DRG second from Left**



**DRG piloting a B-17 Flying Fortress**



DRG atop the wing of his B-17



**David climbing into an unidentified plane**

By the late 1930s, DRG was stationed in China where Becky followed him. Becky became pregnant here but went back stateside to have the baby - David Jr. was born on the Fourth of July 1938. With young David in tow, Becky went to Asia to live, but after the Sino-Japanese War worsened, Becky and David were forced back to the US again.

In mid October 1941, DRG left Marin County for Hawaii as the United States prepared for its increasingly inevitable entry into the conflict raging across Europe and Asia. Over the next two weeks he flew a series of long segments across the Pacific—Hawaii to Midway to Wake Island to New Guinea to Darwin, Australia to Clark Field, the Philippines.<sup>5</sup>

We have a series of letters DRG wrote to Becky along this journey. They reveal an anxious father clearly aware of the perils he faces while trying to comfort his beloved the best he can. From Midway he writes her "I feel now, honey, I am really on my way to where there is no turning back... Please miss me a lot but don't worry". From Darwin he writes her "Just a note to tell you here we are 'down under' on the other side of the world. What a place this is. Hot, dry & dusty."



**"A beautiful field but otherwise just a sand pile" in DRG's words**

Once DRG made it to Clark Field by the end of October, things began to escalate quickly. After the US Navy dispatched an official war warning on November 28th (Philippine time), DRG wrote November 30th "all Air Force units were placed on a 1 hour readiness and no one, officer or enlisted, can leave the post until further notice."<sup>5</sup>

Veterans of the group recall a story circulating from the early days of December of a daring reconnaissance mission DRG carried out - flying low over Taiwan (then called Formosa) and finding installations stacked with trucks, planes, tanks, and guns.<sup>6</sup>

Then on December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was devastated by a surprise Japanese attack. DRG's commanding officer Col. Eubank (who went on to become Major General Eubank) was dashed away to headquarters in Manila.



DRG became the temporary commanding officer.

As President Roosevelt prepared his famous Day of Infamy speech which thrust the US into immediate all-out conflict, DRG prepared for imminent attack. Clark Field was a prime target for Japanese bombing, and it seemed inevitable that they'd soon be hit.

Memoirs of the event paint a glowing picture of the then-37 year old DRG - *"I can see him now, trim, alert, boyish-looking for his rank and years-if he'd lived out the war he would surely be a brigadier general by now. He was as shrewd as he was modest. It was his second tour of duty out East, and he knew the lay of the land."*<sup>7</sup>

DRG addressed his men, telling them *"if they've hit Hawaii they can't miss hitting us. I can't tell you when it will come, but it will come. However, I can tell you where it will come from. It will be from right over that hill"* as he pointed North to the hill overlooking Iba Field.<sup>7</sup>

Not but a few hours passed before DRG's prophecy was fulfilled. The Japanese launched another attack, a V-formation of 54 Japanese Mitsubishi bombers coming over the hill DRG had pointed out. The fleet was devastated, with over 200 casualties and over 100 aircraft destroyed, including most of what was the largest arsenal of heavy-duty bombers in the world of that time.

DRG jumped into action, surveying the casualties and damage even as additional Japanese fighters rained fire on the base, and another round of 26 bombers arrived seven minutes later. He immediately ordered every surviving pilot on the base to evaluate their aircraft and to *"get everything that will fly into the air and orbit"* in order to avoid further attacks. He remained calm while surveying the base on foot directing fire-fighting and launching of surviving bombers under continuous strafing. These actions and his extraordinary heroism earned him the Distinguished Service Cross for conduct above and beyond the call of duty.

With Eubank still at HQ, DRG was confirmed as the active commander of the 19th Bomb Group on December 10th. Expecting another attack, DRG ordered the squadron to take temporary shelter in a cane field nearby the ruins of Clark Field. DRG again addressed the squadron, telling them *"the situation is tough and will get tougher. A large number of our men have already been killed, and a great many more will be as the war progresses. We have a job in the meantime though - and that is to keep our field clear and salvage everything we can"*<sup>7</sup>

That evening, a squad of B-18s was dispatched from Clark Field. Bombardier Al Youngs recalls that he was all set to take off with his crew when DRG hurried to his plane and said to Al *"Sorry, but I'm going to take your place. I need to see what's going on"*. The crew never returned, and was never found; the men were presumed dead December 12, 1941. His men recall

“the 30th Squadron lost one of the most beloved and respected commanding officers it was ever to have”.<sup>7</sup>

Thus concludes the tale. David made the ultimate sacrifice for his country. It pains me to know the great promise, the great man that was lost that day, long too soon. By all accounts, DRG was an incredible and modest person, and I have no doubt he would have gone on to tremendous things. His loss represents the awful sacrifice America made in that war.



**DRG on RnR**







**Cora Margaret Pitman**

Cora was known as Becky. Little is known of Becky, and that's how she liked it. She was an intensely private woman, to the point that even her own children did not know her legal name was Cora until they were going through documents after death. Likewise, the children never learned why she went by Becky.

What we can infer is that Becky had a hard upbringing. She was one of five children, and at some point, she moved from Gainesville to West Texas to be under the care of Mrs. Rose. As best I can guess, Mrs. Rose knew that the Pitman household was a bad situation for Becky and took her under her wing.

Despite her tumultuous upbringing, things improved for Becky. She married David Raymond and moved with him to the Philippines and later to China when she was pregnant with David Edward. After David Raymond tragically passed during the war, she attended his military funeral.





**Becky at DRG's Awards Ceremony**





Her escort on this occasion was a strapping Texan named Ted Wright. They soon married and had a daughter, Sally. Despite Ted's desires, Becky would not allow Ted to legally adopt her son. The Rose family likely had something to do with this - they thought Ted was arrogant and lacked the manners that Colonel David possessed. This animosity continued to the point that the Rose family broke ties with Becky entirely over her union with Ted.

Becky volunteered for the church, played golf, and occasionally hunted. She traveled far and wide, spending lots of time in Asia including China and Japan. She had a great sense of fashion and always presented herself well.<sup>3</sup>





**Becky through the years**







**Becky and David Edward (far left), with her sisters and their children**



**Left to right: Jack, Faye, Jackie, David, Becky, and Ted at Jackie and David's wedding**





Becky with Jack and Shirley





**Left to right:**  
**Top: Ted, Becky, Unknown, Jackie**  
**Bottom: David, Laura, Doug**



**Becky with her grandkids Laura and Whip**



### **Hill Watson Olive Jr**

*Author's note:*

*I must confess I feel a special kinship with Jack for two main reasons. For one, he is my namesake. Though he didn't use it himself, his first name Hill is my own middle name. For two, Jack gave me and my family a great gift. Dubbed Jax Trax, he composed a memoir of his life into the late 1990's. From this, I know more of Jack's story and personality than anyone in this book, save for my living grandparents.*

Hill Jr. was known as Jack. Hill got the nickname Jack when his family moved to Bainbridge, Georgia and a neighborhood girl who took a liking to him named him after her recently dead cat Jack. For whatever reason, it stuck and he went by Jack for the rest of his life.

In his own words, Jack was just a poor boy from Georgia with a strong desire to succeed. He grew up in the segregated Deep South and came of age during the Great Depression. Despite little formal education, he went on to a successful career and eventually started and sold his own business. He was a man of vigor and curiosity, and never seemed able to stand much idle time. The third of four children, Jack grew up as part of a well-oiled machine that he was expected to contribute to. The family home was heated with a stove, and his mother cooked on a wood-burning stove. Each morning before Dad's workday began at 6:30 AM, the boys were expected to have wood, coal and kindling in place for Dad to start the fire that Mom would cook breakfast over.

As the country emerged from World War I automobiles began to become available, and Jack remembered fondly his first time sitting in a model

T that a neighbor bought. The Olive family got their own car for the first time in 1920, a Master Six Buick, and Jack was driving it as soon as the old man would let him.

Bainbridge, where Jack spent most of his childhood and youth, was a town of about five thousand people, about 20% of whom were black. Bainbridge was strictly segregated, with separate railroad cars, drinking fountains, restrooms, schools, churches, and even jobs. Jack noted in Jax Trax "I am glad I lived to see this custom changed for it was a sad and bad situation".

The Olive men as a whole were exceptionally mechanically minded. Hill Sr. made his living as a machinist building and repairing things with a lathe. He passed on this skill to Jack and his brothers, and machining was the primary source of income for the Olive men for a century.

Jack was a mediocre student, receiving mostly Cs and a few Bs in school. Halfway through tenth grade his bad study habits caught up to him and he was failing multiple classes. After asking his dad for permission, he dropped out of school, never to return.



**A young Jack Olive**

Now a working man at the ripe age of fifteen, Jack went to work in the machine shop where his dad was employed. He worked six ten-hour shifts per week at a rate of twenty cents an hour, for a total take home of \$12 per week. Of this his only major expense was the \$5 room and board his dad charged him as a working man. The rest of it went mostly to Coke, cigarettes, and chewing gum. Times were good.



Soon though the stock market crashed, and the Great Depression followed. After being laid off from his job in the machine shop Jack took any work he could get, including making bricks out of mud, where he was paid \$1.25 a day for twelve hours of backbreaking labor. Jack felt fortunate to have this job. Hill Sr. kept his job, but his salary was cut in half. The family responded by cutting all expenses other than those absolutely necessary. That meant no more use of the car, so the boys began to walk to town for groceries. No one complained as they were much better off than a lot of other folks in town.

After working in the brickyard for a while, a man came into town looking for a slot machine repairman. With his mechanical experience, Jack was capable of this, and after a quick demonstration of his skill, the owner offered him a job in Thomasville, about 50 miles away. There was no discussion of salary, Jack would do just about anything to get out of the brick making business. Half an hour later Jack was packed and on the road towards his period of “living on the shady side of the law” as he termed it. It turned out that job was at a speakeasy. Georgia was dry then, and the owner split the proceeds with local law enforcement, allowing him to operate openly (the sheriff was a regular patron). Jack ended up becoming a manager, running liquor for them, and generally becoming involved in the operations. Things got messy and he quit after about a year working there.

After this adventure Jack’s luck began to turn. His brother Bob called him and told him to come to Oklahoma City immediately, there was a job open in a machine shop. Jack went at once and got the job. He shared a room with Bob and they ate all their meals in a cafe near the machine shop. About a year later, the cafe hired Faye, a pretty blonde girl just fourteen years old.

Jack and Faye soon began dating. She came from a strict Pentecostal family though, and her father disapproved of the relationship, in part due to the seven year age gap. Slowly though Jack won over the rest of Faye’s family who all lived nearby in Oklahoma City. A couple of years later, on Faye’s sixteenth birthday, Jack gave her a diamond engagement ring, and she agreed to marry him.

Faye soon became pregnant with their first child Jacqueline. While she was pregnant, Jack decided it would be a good idea to buy 25 chickens (“like all good country folks”), and put them up in their single bathroom. Needless to say, this arrangement didn’t last long and Jack was made to construct an outdoor enclosure for the chickens to reside in.

After Jackie was born, it was found that she had a deformity in one of her feet. They sent her to see a specialist who happened to be one of the foremost experts in the country in athletic medicine. He was as kind as he was excellent, and when Jack told him he couldn’t afford to pay the full price,

the doctor told Jack “he would fix my baby’s feet if he didn’t get a dollar”. They made an arrangement to pay about \$300, still a considerable sum for that time, and the doctor agreed to do the treatments.

As the world waltzed inexorably towards another global conflict, the Olives saw the coming wave and moved to get ahead of it. All three Olive brothers moved to Charleston where they could get jobs in the Navy Yard using their skills as machinists. Prior to the move, they sold their house for \$250 cash and packed up the car with all their belongings, including their disassembled washing machine. It must’ve been quite the scene, according to Jack “we looked just like the Okies in the movie *The Grapes of Wrath* with all the stuff we had tied onto the outside of the car”.



**Jack's shot of the SS Louisiana**

With their prior experience working in machine shops, the Olive boys quickly started working up the ranks in the Navy Yard. They worked doggedly, six days a week prior to Pearl Harbor and seven days a week afterwards. During the year of 1942, Jack recalled that he was off the job eight days in total - including Sundays, holidays and all. Despite this, he says “I liked my job, I liked my work and enjoyed every day of it”.

This period included without a doubt the most dramatic and heroic event of Jack’s long life. With Faye out of town visiting relatives but due to return the following morning, Jack went into work like any other day. His supervisor told him to pack up his tools and get ready to do a repair on a ship in the harbor. As excellent a husband as he was a machinist, Jack immediately suspected he may not be back home in time to pick up Faye from the train station. As soon as he saw the ship he was to board, his suspicions were confirmed. In his own words:

“When they started putting our gear aboard a ship this size I knew we were going to sea and not just the harbor. I knew Faye and Jackie were due in and I was going out, I had to do some fast thinking. I set my tools down and went back to the carry-all and told the driver that my wife and child were expecting me to pick them up at the train and to please deliver a message for me. When he got back at the Navy Yard to go to the machine shop and look for the biggest lathe in the shop. The man running that machine would be my brother. He knows my wife is coming in and also when her train will arrive. Tell him I have gone to sea and for him to please meet my wife and take her home for me. This kind man did as I had asked and Skeet met Faye”

With the problem of picking up Faye resolved, the real drama began. Jack and a crew of five other men from the Navy Yard boarded the ship, a converted ice breaker, and soon sailed beyond sight of land - the first such voyage in Jack's life. After more than a day's journey, they reached their target - the “Oldham”, a freighter, the ship they were sent to repair. Due to the ongoing battle in the Atlantic, they were forced to treat it as if it had been captured by enemies and was waiting to sink its savior, circling round and round closer each time until they were a quarter mile away. At this point a small boat was sent to retrieve the first mate from the Oldham. This went fine and the Oldham was soon in tow.

The next task was to get the six repairmen, plus their hundreds of pounds of tooling, aboard the Oldham. Due to rough seas, they decided the boat that was used to retrieve the first mate was too small, and instead they'd use a larger whale boat with an oar crew. Again in Jack's words:

“The first trip would carry the First Mate back along with all our men except me... The small boat, riding the waves, rose faster than the sailor could move the oar, drove the oar right through the bottom of the row boat. It was taking on water fast. Quick thinking in releasing the hoisting ropes on the hooked end kept everyone from being dumped into the ocean. It was hooked on the next try and hoisted back onto the deck. All were put into another boat just like that one and put over the side and launched without mishap. I had missed all the excitement of not being on the first trip but my time was coming.

On the return trip to get me and the supplies the seas had gotten worse. The Navy Ship was dipping water with both decks, rolling and pitching too. The row boat was tied with a line and kept at a distance by the oar crew. I was not hoisted down, I was told to swing off the rail of the ship at command. I was cautioned that I must drop on command, if not the roll of the ship would surely kill me. I wasn't afraid of hitting bottom if I missed the row boat, they told me it was five miles deep right where we were and if I landed in the water, they would get me out.”

This went off without a hitch and Jack was safely aboard the Oldham in no time. After a quick meal, the men were brought to inspect the breakdown. The shaft that drove the propeller was made up of sections all bolted together, and all the bolts save for one had broken. Had that last bolt broken, repairs at sea would have been impossible.

The crew selected Jack as leader, as he had the most repair experience, and he quickly began planning how they would fix the shaft. Lacking for tools, they had to build the needed tools themselves. They had no spare steel, so the ship's chief engineer told them they could cut what they needed from the deck of the ship. The ship had an old lathe that fortunately Jack knew how to use, and he immediately got to work. Once more in his own words:

"It took me thirty hours to make the boring bar and tooling and show the outside machinists how to use it. I rebores one hole and made a bolt to fit it. After we had the shaft secured I went to a bunk and went to bed with instructions to call me in eight hours. This is the only time I was in a bunk or bed during the entire trip which lasted six and one half days."

The work was slow, but they knew what they were doing, and they were treated well. The crew gave them everything they wanted in terms of food and cigarettes, and about a week later the repair was done. The crew treated them to a couple of cases of beer, and they were told to shower and get some rest before a test run the following morning. The job worked perfectly and they were soon back on the original ship headed back to Charleston.

About 36 hours later they were back home, having been lavished with praise by their superiors and the Navy, and given 24 hours a day of overtime pay for the period they were Shanghaied. When he got back home, Faye fixed him a T-bone steak. I'll bet he slept pretty damned well that night. After a single night off, Jack was back at work. No hero's welcome, nothing out of the ordinary. This was total war, and Jack, along with millions of other Americans, was absolutely committed.

Things calmed down relatively after this episode, and the Olives spent the rest of the war working and growing. Faye had another little girl, Shirley, and Jack's brother Skeet and his wife had children of their own at this time, so the families were very close.

As the war drew to a close, the thought of what was next came to everyone's minds. Skeet and his family moved back to Bainbridge, Georgia, and brother Bob moved back to Oklahoma City. It was boom time in America, and everyone had ideas of improving their circumstances. Both Skeet and Bob planned to start their own machine shops, and both wanted Jack to join them. After weighing his options, Jack decided to put his lot in with Bob, and the family moved back to Oklahoma City, where the brothers opened Olive Machine Works.





### **Inside Olive Machine Works**

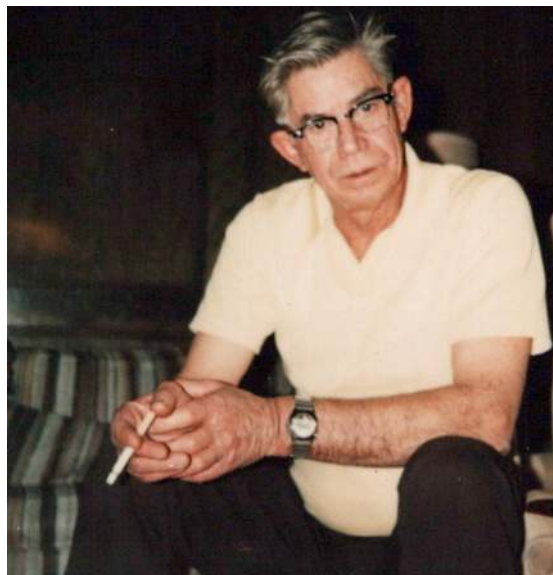
The brothers rented a space for their shop, originally without any sort of heat or even a bathroom. They worked twelve to fourteen hour days, mostly doing repair work for oil derricks and ice plants that were common in the area. They made a good living, though they never struck it rich. They were in business together more than thirty years when tragedy struck in 1977 and Bob died suddenly of a heart attack. At that point, Jack sold the shop to a couple of investors and came on as a 'temporary' consultant. That temporary gig ended up lasting for about a decade, with Jack largely running the shop until he finally retired in the mid-eighties.

Outside of the shop, Jack found time to pursue other interests. He was a photographer going back to the days before he married Faye. He would take the pictures and develop and enlarge them himself. He slowly upgraded his equipment through the years, in part financed by his work as a volunteer fireman where he served as photographer and eventually he had a professional setup. He was an avid gardener, and an officer in the American Rose Society. At one point, he had 200 rose bushes at their home in Oklahoma City to tend. He was a 32nd degree Mason. Jack was a man who pursued his interests with passion.



**A shot from Jack's work as a volunteer fireman**

In his later years, Jack enjoyed spending time with his children and grandchildren, and made the trip down to Dallas (where his children lived) from Oklahoma City as often as possible. He also compiled *Jax Trax*, the memoir that inspired this book you are reading. He lived to see the new millennium, and to see six grandchildren born, before he passed away in 2001.<sup>8</sup>





**Jack and Faye in front of one of Jack's famous rose bushes in Oklahoma City**



**Jack and Faye (center) at the Gibbs' house on Stratford in Richardson**



**Faye with Jackie and Jack**

### **Buela Faye Caffee**

Buela went by Faye. Faye was the youngest of nine children, seven of whom lived into adulthood. The Caffee family was a strict Pentecostal one where even movies were looked down upon. She was small of stature, slight, and blonde. She had two children - Jacqueline and Shirley.

Intelligent and always good with numbers and figures, Faye always managed the family finances. She worked a number of jobs in her career, beginning as a waitress at the Cafe where she met Jack, when she was only fourteen. She went on to work as a cashier for an auto-supply store, a credit-office clerk and eventually office manager for a number of jewelry stores, and finally as a loan officer and bookkeeper for a number of banks.

An independent spirit, she often traveled unaccompanied, sometimes quite long distances. Once when the girls were toddlers, she took them cross-country from Charleston to Los Angeles to see family (several of her siblings moved to Southern California during WWII) while Jack worked in the Navy Yard.<sup>8</sup>





**Jack and Faye**





**Faye and Jackie**



**Left to right: David, Jackie, Jack, Faye, Shirley, Bob**



**William Gray "Ted" Wright**

William went by Ted, referred to as "Texas Ted" several times in print. He married Becky after her husband David Raymond died in the war, had one child (Sally) with her, and acted as a father figure to her son David.<sup>3</sup>

Ted was an excellent athlete - he was an All-American football player and scored high enough in the decathlon to qualify for the Olympics but wasn't able to compete due to lack of financing. In college he earned letters in football, track, and basketball.<sup>9</sup> He also played quarterback for the Boston Redskins who became the Washington Redskins and now the Washington Commanders, and played baseball in the Red Sox farm system.<sup>10</sup>

When World War II broke out Ted volunteered to go to flight school. Base commanders found out of his athletic abilities and put him in charge of physical training at various bases as a ploy to coach baseball and football for the Air Force bases. At one point, the football team he coached beat UCLA in a scrimmage. UCLA went on to win the Rose Bowl that year 41-0. In baseball he coached against Joe DiMaggio and again came out victorious. In 1981, Ted was inducted into the North Texas Athletics Hall of Fame.<sup>9</sup>

He got a law degree from William and Mary and worked as undersecretary to Sam Rayburn. Rayburn went on to become Speaker of the House of Representatives where Ted followed him as secretary. At one point Mr. Rayburn suggested he could make money by opening up a restaurant/bar near Lake Texoma assuming Grayson County would vote wet. Grayson County never did go wet. Ted went back into law leasing mineral rights for oil companies, an endeavor in which he was very successful.<sup>3</sup>

Ted was a fiery, intense man. He was highly competitive and would fight over checkers. Before he married Becky, he was engaged once. The

couple had a spat and Ted took the ring and flung it into the river. He didn't show up to his only daughter's wedding because he didn't like the groom—her brother David gave her away instead. Despite this, Ted is remembered as a good father and husband. He treated both Sally and David well, and wanted to adopt David even though Becky opposed it. He encouraged both children and only disciplined them when it was well deserved.<sup>3</sup>



**Ted with Laura and Whip**



**Shirley, Jackie, David, and Ted at Jackie and David's wedding**





**1934-35 Boston Redskins including Ted 3rd  
from right in the front row**



**Ted in uniform**

## Sources

1. United States Federal Census, 1910; Census Place: Upper Loutre, Montgomery, Missouri; Roll: T624\_800; Page: 4a; Enumeration District: 0112; FHL microfilm: 1374813
2. *The Howitzer* (West Point yearbook, Class of 1928)
3. Interviews with David Gibbs
4. B-17 Flying Fortress: destino Buenos Aires – Parte 1; Pucara Defensa
5. Letters from David Raymond Gibbs to Becky Gibbs 1941: I-VIII
6. *They Fought With What They Had*: the story of the Army Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific, 1941-1942: Edmonds - 1951
7. *Queens Die Proudly* W.L. White 1944
8. *Jax Trax* by Jack Olive
9. North Texas Athletics Hall of Fame (<https://meangreensports.com/honors/north-texas-athletics-hall-of-fame/ted-wright/13>)
10. Article in Unknown Newspaper Titled "Wright Carved Lasting Niche in NTSC Grid Lore" by Bill Mims
11. Photos courtesy of David Gibbs

# The Third Generation

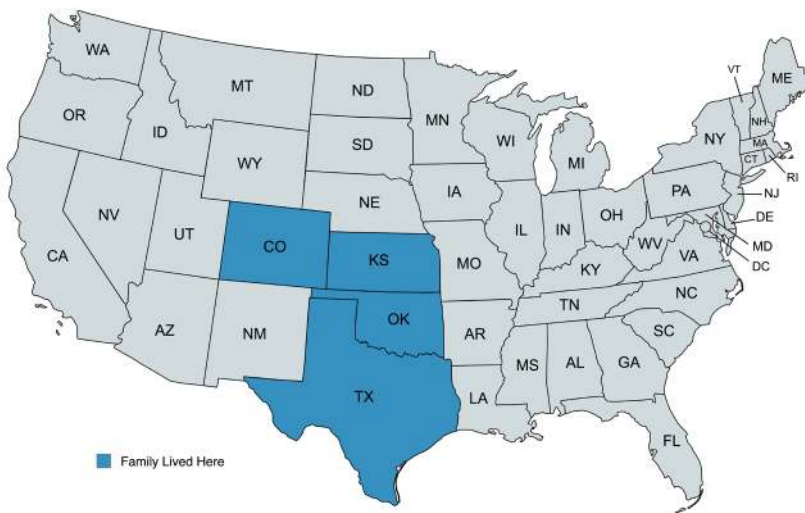
## When

1938-present

## Who

These are my Grandparents David and Jackie. I know them as Granddaddy and Nana.

## Where



# Cast

| Name                    | Birth                                  | Death                      | Marriage                       | Children    |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| David Edward Gibbs      | July 4th, 1938, Newport News, Virginia |                            | May 27, 1961, Norman, Oklahoma | Laura, Doug |
| Jacqueline Louise Olive | August 2nd, 1939, Oklahoma City        | December 3rd, 2023, age 84 |                                |             |

## Biographies



**David Edward Gibbs**

David believes he was conceived in China where his father was stationed. While his mother Becky was pregnant with him, the war raging between the Chinese and Japanese grew intense. As a result, Becky was sent back home to a base in Virginia. True to form, always highly patriotic, David came into the world on Independence Day.

When David was just three years old, his father David Raymond was killed in action in the Philippines. At the military funeral service for David Raymond, his mother was escorted by a strapping young Texan named Ted Wright. Becky went on to marry Ted, and the Wright family took in the Gibbs



as their own. During the war the family lived with Ted's parents in Savoy, Texas.

Ted treated David as his own son, and David even went by David Wright in grade school up until the night of his graduation from high school. David's mother Becky and the family who raised her (the Rose family) strongly disapproved of Ted legally adopting David. They had intense loyalty to Major David Raymond and wouldn't allow for his son to go by any name other than Gibbs.

The family moved to Denison, Texas where David attended grade school and high school. In high school he played football, golf, and ran track. He had a paper route in junior high, and later on he worked in a hardware store plus he maintained two paper routes—he made enough money to buy a TV set for the family.

After graduation he went off to study Petroleum Engineering at the University of Oklahoma. Ted was in the oil and gas business and encouraged this line of study. At OU, David describes himself as a loner (none of his roommates were Engineers) and a mediocre student until his Junior year when he finally learned how to study. His senior year he made the Dean's Honor Roll.

Thankfully for our lineage, David wasn't totally a loner at OU. Before a western-themed dance at the student union, one of David's roommates had a sister named Jackie. Jackie didn't want to attend, but her roommate insisted and Jackie agreed in order to shut her up. They met at the union, and David recalls Jackie was wearing cowboy boots. At the dance, Jackie's roommate told her David was rich. At the end of the dance, David asked her to coffee and she said yes. The next day at coffee, David didn't spot her at first and she walked right out. He convinced her to stay, they hit it off, and soon began dating.

After some time, while Jackie was nearing the end of her time at OU, she started to get a bit antsy about getting engaged. She finally gave him an ultimatum and told him it was time to commit. David went to Oklahoma City where Jackie's mother worked at Zale's to buy a ring. The jeweler brought out a tray of rings and David told her it was for Jackie Olive - the jeweler's jaw dropped. She said "this is junk" and brought back a new tray of rings. Ring secured, David got permission from Jackie's father Jack, who agreed wholeheartedly to the union.

With everything in place, David gave Jackie a call that he wanted to meet her behind the Alpha Gamma house where she lived. Though busy studying, she agreed, and David got down on one knee and asked her to marry him. Jackie gave him an enthusiastic yes. She was so overjoyed that she skipped straight past David and rushed back into the house to show the girls. The couple was married during finals week - May 27, 1961 in Norman.



**David and Jackie on their wedding day**

Having been an Episcopalian since birth, and Jackie a lifelong Baptist, the couple had to decide which church to attend. Reluctantly, Jackie agreed to attend Episcopal service. David was an acolyte, busy helping the clergy, so she was alone. Two gentlemen sat down on either side of her. One was the head of the English department at OU—Jackie being an English major was impressed. On the other side sat a tall, broad man—none other than Bud Wilkinson. Bud was a legend in Oklahoma - as head coach he led the Sooners to three national championships, and at one point his squads won 47 straight games, a record that stands to this day. In addition to her neighbors, Jackie was wowed by the pastor, and after that, the family became an Episcopal one.

With American involvement in Vietnam rising, though not officially at the point of war yet, David was to be drafted into the army. Fortunately, a reserve officer worked at the oil company where he started his career, and told him that he would get him a spot in the reserves. This allowed David to defer basic training until a year after he started working.

After a year of work, David shipped off for basic training in Bakersfield, California for the reserve forces. After receiving an invite in the mail that was sent to the wives of everyone in the company, Jackie decided to come visit - she got a plane, car, hotel, and showed up at the base with David none the wiser, surprising and delighting everyone.

Once training was complete, the reserves were a weekly commitment.

David was in the infantry, in a cadre unit (a unit that instructs other soldiers). He first taught riflery, then moved on to bigger subjects like defense and night operations. The reserves had 'summer camps' where they instructed recruits in the basics. David was offered a chance to be a commissioned officer in the reserve forces, which he declined because he wanted to work in his chosen industry of petroleum engineering.

The Summer after his freshman year at OU, David needed to make some money so he signed on to work a wheat harvest. Despite never having driven a car before, he was given a tractor to drive around in a field until he got the hang of it. He did eventually get the hang of it, and he drove that rig all the way from Frederick, Oklahoma to Colorado, through Montana and up to Canada. He recalls that he made \$600 or so for the affair, and slept in a bus for the duration.

After his stint on the wheat harvest, David went on to oil and gas work, working for two different oil companies doing summer work, including Rocket Oil. The Summer before his Senior year, David worked for Panhandle Eastern in Liberal, Kansas. They liked David and they offered him a full-time job once he graduated. He ended up working there for fifteen years. Five years in, his boss wanted him to take the professional engineer's exam. He crammed, took it, and passed, which gave him the ability to testify in court on the company's behalf. So Panhandle sent him to courts all over.

After Panhandle, David took a job working for Texas Oil and Gas, which brought the family to Richardson. He worked for them for twenty years before they were bought by US Steel. The takeover would have sent him to Houston, to which Jackie told him "have fun commuting" so he resigned. He took one more oil job with Harken Energy, who again were moved to Houston, leading him to resign.



**The Gibbs' family home in Richardson**

A week after this last resignation, the Bishop of the Episcopal church asked David to come work for him managing the business side of things. The diocese oversaw 68 parishes, and David was responsible for managing finances, insurance, accounting, and ‘operational problems’ (problems between people). The jack-of-all-trades nature of the role suited him well—at one point he was tasked with running funeral services to alleviate the workload on a rector overburdened with running both a mausoleum and a parish at the same time. Another time he was tasked with helping resolve financial issues in a certain parish. When he arrived on the scene, he was told that a nearby Lutheran parish was similarly struggling. David’s creative solution was to merge the two churches, with services alternating between Episcopalian and Lutheran by week, which ended up being ultimately successful. The only hiccup was that the Episcopalian hymns were so much better than the Lutheran ones that folks complained about having to listen to them on Lutheran weeks—in the end, they moved to a permanent diet of Episcopalian hymns. David stayed in this role thirteen years before retiring.

Not content to spend his time idle, David went on to spend many years working as a volunteer patrolman with the Richardson Police Department.<sup>1</sup>



**David in uniform as a volunteer patrolman**



One Christmas when the Gibbs still lived in Liberal, Jackie's parents came in town to celebrate the holiday together, driving up from Oklahoma City. Just before they made it to Liberal, they burned out a wheel bearing. Jack was worried about being able to get it fixed considering the holiday, but David told him "Enjoy Christmas and we will get it fixed one way or another". The day after Christmas David called a friend who managed an auto parts store, borrowed tools from him, and drove to Panhandle Eastern Pipeline Co.'s building where another friend used the overhead hoist to lift the car to remove the wheel that was in need of repair. After getting the wheel off, they went to the auto parts store, got a new bearing, went to their shop and pressed the new one onto the axle. Half an hour later, David and the friend had the axle back in and the car running perfectly. When the dust settled, old Jack was only billed for the new bearing, everything else was a favor from a friend. This story perfectly displays David's unique blend of mechanical and interpersonal skills—very few people have both the knowledge to make such a repair, the social capital to get it done nearly for free the day after Christmas, and the attitude to do it gladly. David has all that in spades.

After learning to drive the hard way himself, David wanted to ensure that his own children were prepared for anything. Living in Texas, they didn't get much opportunity to learn to drive in wintry conditions, but when the opportunity came, he made sure they took advantage of it. Decades later, both Laura and Doug recall it with a mix of horror and humor. All morning long they drove around on the ice despite groans, stalls, and perhaps a tear or two.

On the day that David married Jackie, David went over to his soon to be father-in-law's house to get dressed. Naturally, that only took a moment and there were hours to kill before the ceremony. Jack suggested that the two get drunk—David replied that although it was a good idea, the two might end up dead, so it was best to abandon the notion.<sup>2</sup>



David is a talented woodworker and had a full shop in his garage in Richardson. He made grandfather clocks, tables, and anything else the family could think up. His daughter Laura recalls picking wood furniture she liked out of magazines and bringing it to David to build a replica of.<sup>3</sup>



**The Gibbs**



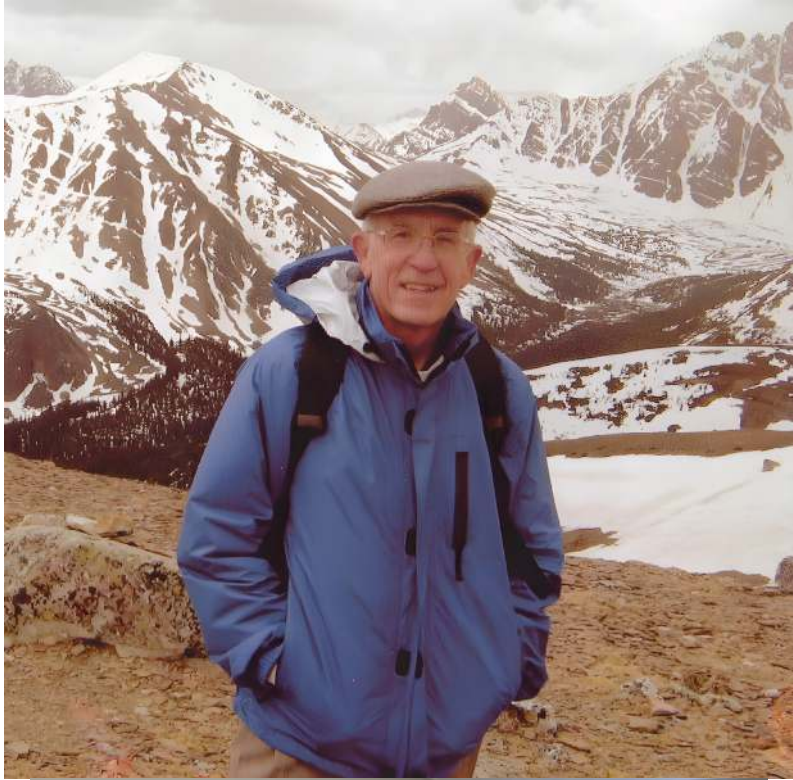


**David and Laura**



**David and Jackie**





**David and Jackie**





**Jacqueline Louise Olive**

Jacqueline, known as Jackie, was born at home, the firstborn of the Olive clan. When she was a baby, she was diagnosed with reversed club foot—in layman's terms, the achilles tendon that lets you point your toes was too long. Thankfully, the family doctor referred her to a specialist - Dr. O'Donahue, who went on to become one of the foremost doctors of athletic medicine in the country. Jackie's parents couldn't afford to pay him his usual fees, but the doctor gracefully agreed to treat her at whatever cost the family could afford. Jackie was put in a series of plaster casts on both feet up to the knee. The heel cord then shortened and Jackie's feet were again healthy.

When Jackie was three, her younger sister Shirley was born, and the pair remained very close for all of Jackie's life. Both girls helped their mom out at her job at Zales Jewelry, and were paid for their help. When Jackie was old enough to drive, her parents went 50-50 with her buying a used Chevrolet. Once she had her license, Jackie would drive Shirley to school at Taft Middle School on her way to high school at Northwest Classen.

After high school Jackie enrolled at OU, just down the road from the family home in Oklahoma City. At OU she studied home economics and English and was a member of the Alpha Gamma Delta sorority where she became chapter President. She was still dating someone from high school, and it was serious enough that he would join the Olives on family vacations. Fortunately for us, they broke up, and she met David through a roommate.

The two attended a Western dance together and soon began dating. On weekends, Jackie would work at Zales near the family home. David would ride in with her and spend the day at the Olive house while she worked, helping Jack tend his many rose bushes or doing other yard work.

By the end of Jackie's senior year, she announced that she and David were planning to marry in Norman the weekend after she graduated. Just before the wedding Jackie sold her car and gave her mother the money she received for it. She and David didn't need more than one car so she wanted to help pay for her wedding expense and the car was sold. The pair were married at Saint John's Episcopal Church on May 27th, 1961 by the Reverend Joseph Young.<sup>2</sup>



**Jackie on her wedding day**

After graduation and the wedding, Jackie moved with David to Liberal, Kansas where she took a job teaching English to junior high students in the public school system. In 1970, Jackie was asked to head the census effort for Seward County, which she did.

In early 1964, Jackie announced to the family that she had a baby on the way. On September 19th, Laura Louise Gibbs was born. Two years later on September 27, 1966, Jackie gave birth again, this time to David Douglass

Gibbs, who we all know as Doug. When the nurse brought the baby for Jackie to see for the first time, she told her it was a boy. None too sure, Jackie told the nurse “show me”, and the nurse had to take off his diaper to prove the Gibbs family finally had a boy. Once the Gibbs had finally settled for good in Richardson, Texas, Jackie spent much of her time tending to the family, reading, and playing bridge. She volunteered in the schools that her children and eventually grandchildren attended.<sup>1</sup>



**Jackie with her grandkids**



Once Laura and Doug were off to college, Jackie decided that she wanted to start working again. She went to work for a local aviation insurance company only a few blocks from the family home. She started off as a file clerk and worked her way up to becoming an underwriter. She commonly flew in small planes with her boss to various small airports to talk about aviation insurance, and as a result she decided she needed to figure out how to get the plane down if the pilot were to have a medical emergency. She went to flight school and successfully learned how to pilot small aircraft, but never decided to try flying solo.<sup>2</sup>

Jackie was an excellent homemaker, and is remembered for the delightful meals and desserts she made. Some of her signature dishes were lasagna, pies of all kinds, and molasses sugar cookies. When her grandchildren were growing, she would host them, sans-parents, for dinner each week. During holidays, the bar for pie-making was so high between Jackie and Shirley that any member of the family who wished to bring a pie to the gathering had to first prove their mettle by baking a test pie that the two experts had to approve.<sup>3</sup>

Jackie and David made a close group of friends in Liberal that became known as 'The Posse' who remained friends after the Gibbs left for Richardson. A second "Posse" was formed from friends at Christ Church Plano. That Posse traveled far and wide together, including trips to the Grand Canyon, Michigan, a cruise of the Hudson River, the Panama Canal, Spain, and a tour through Eastern Europe - from Warsaw to Krakow, Vienna, Prague, and Budapest - that is remembered as a highlight for the group.<sup>1</sup>

Jackie passed away in 2023 after a long battle with dementia. She is deeply missed.







**The Second Posse in the Gibbs' home on Stratford**



**Jackie with the Posse in Hawaii**



**Members of the Posse in various far-flung locales**





**Jackie and her sister Shirley in their  
younger years**







ALPHA GAMMA DELTA  
 "DAD'S DAY" - NOVEMBER 20, 1959  
 Mel Newsom Party Pics

**Jackie and her father Jack at Alpha Gamma Delta "Dad's Day" 1959**







Jackie through the years



## Sources

1. Interviews with David Gibbs
2. *Jax Trax* by Jack Olive
3. Interview with Laura Jordan
4. Photos courtesy of David Gibbs and Laura Jordan

## Appendix: DRG's Letters from the Pacific

Following are the compiled transcripts of six letters David Raymond Gibbs wrote his wife Becky from the Pacific Theater in WWII before his untimely death. Dates are those written on the originals; I've kept uncertain words in brackets.

*Wed night — Oct 22 (Midway)*

*Sweetheart,*

*Just a note to tell you here we are at Midway. What a place! A beautiful field but otherwise just a sand pile. Broadhurst & Wheelers didn't get off this morning so I only have seven ships with me. I hope they catch up tomorrow.*

*I had planned to leave Honolulu Tues but couldn't due to high winds here. Tonight it is blowing about 30 miles an hour but I think the ships will be O.K. I surely hope we all get off O.K. tomorrow. All of the other ships got into Honolulu yesterday except Kenny & he got in this morning. They are going to follow me as soon as possible.*

*Last night Chas Caldwell & Col. Brody came into Hickam on their way to Manila. Brody is to be Gen. Brereton's chief of staff and Chas is to be the A-3. We had a long talk last night.*

*The flight here was fair; about 2 hours of bad weather but the rest was O.K. I surely hope we get a break tomorrow. I had dinner Monday with the Gadds [Godd's?] and lunch with the Robbins; drinks last night with the McBeths. However, I was glad to get out of Hickam because if we have to go I want to get going.*

*News is scarce, so will stop. I am writing this at the Marines Club sitting at a table with Fallon, Sig, & Heidger. We are having a night cap & then to bed.*

*I feel now, honey, I am really on my way to where there is no turning back. I don't like it but what can I do. We are just the 1st of many. I surely miss you & David & it is going to be terribly grim looking forward to not seeing you for a long time. Please miss me a lot but don't worry. I love you,*

*my sweet, with all my heart.*

*Goodnight to you both,  
Don.*

*P.S. Thanks for the laundry.*

---

*Sunday Oct 26 — Wake Island*

*My two babies,*

*Here I am in the middle of the Pacific and for the time being no place to go. We arrived Fri afternoon and should have gotten away last night but that is a long story.*

*I started to write to you yesterday but decided not to as I was really in the dumps and anything I could have written yesterday would have been with a black brush. It is seldom I get sea-blue but yesterday was an all-time low.*

*As I said we arrived Fri without too much trouble. Yesterday I got up feeling like a million as I had slept well listening to the waves beating outside my window. I went to the mess and ordered a hearty breakfast but before a bite could be eaten a man came in to tell me a marine truck had backed into my airplane and wrecked an aileron & possibly a wing. Honestly I just got sick at my stomach. Honey I could have just sat down & cried I was so mad. To nurse and baby a plane for 2 months so it would fly safely & then have that happen! At first everything looked hopeless for at least a month as the part would have to be shipped from H[onolulu] by boat but we later decided to fix it. Pan Am had some material & Mr. Peters, the construction foreman, put his shops at our disposal and even tho he has only tractor tools & parts it looks as if we might get it fixed. At least I just came by the shop and it looks as if we might get away late tonight. I want to test it thoroughly first as I will take our entire ship papers first before I will start across the equatorial storms with a damaged plane, so don't you worry about me beyond my getting disgusted and going on a binge.*

*I sent six airplanes on last night in charge of Schwanbeck as we expect Col. Eubank in tonight with nine planes & there is only room here for so*



*many. Schwanbeck, Coats, Kutz, Adams, Cox, and Green went on and I should get a message soon on their arrival. Macaulay is here with me and Wheelers is at Midway with a blown tail wheel. Broadbent had to change an engine in Honolulu. Al Hapgood took off last night for Honolulu. He was coming from Moscow and as we said, it was a hell of a place to meet at Wake. He had "Monti" (Aerodrome) with him.*

*I am staying here with Mr. Peters who is in charge of a 2-billion-dollar construction program here. He has a beautiful cottage on the beach with every modern convenience. His wife is sick in the hospital so I haven't met her yet but I will try to go by & pay my respects before I leave.*

*Mail from me may be scarce now as this is my last direct contact with the States but just remember no news is good news. How is David? I surely wish you were both here and then I wouldn't mind at all waiting on my airplane. Even Marcy would probably enjoy it as there are 1500 men here & no women except about 4 wives. I surely hope both of you are well and happy as you can be. Tell David not to worry about his daddy & don't you worry either.*

*All of my love,  
Don.*

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*Tuesday Oct 28 — Darwin, Australia*

*Sweetheart,*

*Just a note to tell you here we are "down under" on the other side of the world. What a place this is. Hot, dry & dusty. However we are comfortably taken care of and everyone appears to be quite happy seeing what this part of the world has to offer.*

*I took off from Wake Sunday night with Wheelers and Maddox for Port Moresby. My aileron was fixed about 5:30 P.M. so we got off at 8:30. The Clippers had just gotten in with Gen. Brereton & crowd & they didn't think we should go but as the weather was getting worse we went. We hit a terrific equatorial storm which Wheelers says he's gone thru but something happened to Maddox and he went back to Wake. I never could find out his trouble but I guess it was serious as he was at least 80 miles*

*out when he turned back and the last report we got his radio operator was frantically radioing for a bearing. We got a message this morning that he was O.K. which was all I wanted to know.*

*I went into Moresby on instruments and I was really glad to get on the ground. I had no [NDB] to show how high the mountains were & they have no beams as we know them here. I homed in and hoped for the best. Wheelers couldn't find the field in the soup so he finally landed on an auxiliary field on the beach. Why he didn't crack up no one knows but he got down. Coats took the ship over to the other field & after I got a shot of tea seven of us came on over here.*

*We arrived about the middle of the afternoon and was I tired. I had flown 18 1/2 hours out of the last 22 and I was dead. I went to bed right after dinner and today I feel fine.*

*I am staying with the Group Captain Hood who has a very nice tropical home. It was really swell this morning to send my uniform to the laundress & already it is back washed and ironed up. His place is closer to the equator than Manila & this is their hot dry season as you know how it is.*

*The ship appears to be in good shape & the weather looks good so we plan to shove for Clark tomorrow. I really feel like it is a downhill flight from now on. I have 8 airplanes and only 2,000 more miles to go which isn't much. My aileron is O.K. as I think it will take anything after the storm we went thru the other night.*

*I now have with me Wheelers, Coats, Schwanbeck, Adams, Coz, Kutz & Green. Col. Eubank had to turn back to Honolulu for engine trouble. Ten airplanes are at Wake.*

*I am going to mail this here even tho my plane is the fastest way to get it started to you; David might be a stamp collector and would like to have a stamp from his daddy on his first trip to Australia.*

*I surely wish you & David were waiting for me in Manila & then the trip would be complete. I am really going to miss you terribly but maybe I can get along with a lot of hard work.*

*Must stop now as I have a meeting of my gang in a few minutes. I love you*

*my sweetheart so you take good care of yourself & David for me. All of my love,*

*Don.*

*P.S. British joke: The female factory workers here are on strike for better tools and shorter periods. You are now supposed to laugh.*

---

*Sunday Nov 2*

*My sweet,*

*I hope you got my cable O.K. so that you knew it and that I'm safe & sound.*

*We got in Wed in good order and the next ones didn't get in until today. Kenny, [Cronin/Crumminger?] & Mueller got in tonight; but I think a large crowd including the Col will be in tomorrow. I will surely be glad when they all get here.*

*I let my gang off until tomorrow as we are all rested now, relaxed and ready to go. I am staying with Col. Maitland until facts here [settle] & then we will decide about quarters. I think I will get a set of quarters to share with 4 other officers but most of the boys will have to live in temporary barracks that they are building now. They won't be so bad but a house will be better.*

*This place has really changed. There are 255 officers on this field & that doesn't include the main post. Construction is going on everywhere.*

*I went to Manila for the weekend & it hasn't changed much. I stayed with Tom [Farley] & we had a time. Saw Van Sickle & his wife, Irving [Sheppard] & Lois [Funk?], Otis Parker & of course scads of officers. They all asked about you & said to tell you hello. I tried to see Frank Henry but missed him. I intended to see a lot of others but got mixed up with this gang & didn't get any further. They had a big Halloween party at the A & N Club & for the most it was like old times. However there was a great preponderance of men about, most of them getting very tight.*

*About the only thing new is a Jai Alai Club where everyone goes to*

*gamble. It is a beautiful place and very popular; won five pesos by sitting at the bar and taking the gang's tips. Also Dewey Blvd goes clear to Nichols Field which makes a beautiful drive. Otherwise the town looks about the same.*

*I still hope to be able to go down about once a month but I don't know what the set-up will be. Gen. Brereton intimates I might be put on his staff but I hope not as that means I would move to Manila. I think I can better stay within my allowance if I live here. John Farley is being transferred up here. Nichols is busy as Gen. [Clagett's] aide. Saw Col Drake at the A & N Club with some good-looking nurses. The nurses are very popular here as they are the only white females around. In Manila of course there are a lot of civilians, but here it is just all of us men. [Myles/Igles] Merrill has promised me a house as soon as I get squared away.*

*I think my best I will join the gang here on their schedule of writing to their wives, i.e. write one day each Clipper, so you will hear from me quite often.*

*I surely do miss you honey and I must admit I shed a few tears when I get to thinking how sweet you & David are. You don't know how much I love you two and it surely is discouraging to think how long I may be gone. I surely hope it won't be long.*

*I am going to stop now and go to bed. As you can imagine I lost a little sleep last night & tomorrow I have a physical check. Good night darling & the sweetest dreams. All of my love to my sweets,*

*Don.*

*---*

*Sunday P.M. Nov 16*

*My darling,*

*How are my babies today? I surely hope that both of you feel fine and that both of you love your daddy. You can be assured that your daddy misses you terribly.*

*This has been a very lazy weekend. The 30th Sq is on the alert and so far*



*all we have done is sit. We have to keep one Sq alerted at all times and this weekend belongs to the 30th. I think we are going to work out a system of having every 3rd weekend from Fri nite to Monday noon off so that will give everyone a long weekend without all [anyone] at C[amp?] every 3rd week. However as this has just started we are not certain just what the schedule will be.*

*We still haven't gotten into our house. There is some delay in everyone getting moved and in addition they are not absolutely certain who will go to the Service Command. I still think I will stay with the 19th which I am temporarily commanding.*

*Col. Eubank left for Australia on an inspection trip and is not certain how long he will be gone. However it won't be long as Gen. Brereton is with him and I know he won't be away very long with so many things to do.*

*You can tell the boys in Rosies that I will enjoy collecting a bottle of whiskey from him. You remember he bet me that we would have more than 2 planes strung across the Pacific and we didn't. We did have 2 but no more and one of those was only a day late. McDonald isn't here yet as he had to change an engine & when they got that he broke there the runway & bent a prop. He should be in in a couple of days.*

*The rest of us are all set up and in business and carrying on. The 14th Gp is assigned to us so once more we have a full strength group.*

*I went to Manila yesterday morning to cable you some money but it was one of those funny Philippine paydays and everything was closed. I am going down again Tues., and I surely hope this hasn't worried you too much.*

*All of our youngsters have moved into their barracks. All they have is a little room, a piece built of bamboo or sawali wall up between just higher than your head. The outside walls are the same, the wall just running up a little way and then a wide over-hanging eave.*

*Did you ever get my letter from Australia? I gave it to a chap to mail and I wonder if he ever did. His wife was from Shelbyville, Kentucky which is close to Paris and she knew Anne's family slightly. Again we may pay a small [wager?]. Anyway I hope you got the letter?*

*About the only amusement here is the movies. We have a theatre at Clark and it is packed 3 shows daily. They are building a new theatre but it won't be ready for several weeks. The Club had a floor show the other night and it stunk. I actually felt sorry for one of the dancers as I was sure she would fall on her face before she could finish the pirouette. That is going to be one of our worst worries here i.e. amusement for officers and men. There is athletics and movies and that is all.*

*How is the car running? I hope you are having no difficulties with it as I know how annoyed you will be if you start having trouble. Why don't you go down to Mother Robey's for Xmas just to get out of being alone. The nine officers coming home should get there just in time for Xmas if all goes well. I surely wish I was one of them.*

*If you get time write a card to Mother when you hear from me and tell her I am O.K. I haven't been sending air mail letters to her. I am going to send Mother Rose a note or a card in time for Xmas.*

*I have read one of Thorne Smith's books this week and am now starting Peking Picnic. My plans are to read some light literature as well as some military books. As you know the A & N Club has a pretty good library as long as you don't expect anything new. I can pick up a book when in town and then send it back by someone if I don't go in.*

*News is scarce and all else I have to tell you is something you know: I love you & love you and love you. Must stop now.*

*Yours only,  
Don.*

*---*

*Sunday Nov 30*

*My babies,*

*What a lousy R & R weekend this has been. We were all set to take Manila apart, had a table for 50 reserved at the Club and everything was well in hand when the axe fell. Fri, all Air Force units were placed on a 1 hour readiness and no one, officer or enlisted, can leave the post until further notice.*

*Yesterday the situation became more tense and we spent last night digging trenches and fox holes for the men and officers, just in case. We wear iron helmets and carry gas masks and I go to the movies. Gene says I must send you a picture of myself in an iron hat because I am a sight to behold. However don't worry, honey, as I think we have the situation pretty well in hand.*

*Naturally all of our activities are very restricted. We send certain reconnaissance missions and otherwise we stand by for something. I surely hope the tension clears soon as I feel very much like going to Manila and pitching one soon. Gene got back from Australia Wed. The 26th is now assigned to the 19th. Gene is at present both the bomber commander & the group commander.*

*I went to Del Monte last Mon and came back Tues. They have a field there now for B-17's and rumor has it that some of us may move. I enjoyed bringing back a load of fresh pineapples which we have been having continuously, so much for shop; even our letters must be censored as I can write you no "shop," and my social activities are nil, so that leaves only a note to tell you I love you with all my heart and I don't have to be actually fighting to agree with Sherman because just being away from you two is hell.*

*Schwanbeck was going to bring my Xmas packages to Albuquerque but his orders were cancelled, so I had to mail them. Your present had to be cancelled as they ran out of [something]; I grabbed what I could. I got you [the earring?] at Wake Island. Marcy's little gift wasn't ready so I told them to mail it direct. I hope they all get there O.K. I mailed Xmas cards to Mother, Rose, [Fern], [Averacks/Averackes], O'[Hara/O'Hanes], [Forrester], Brownings & Twitchells.*

*The last time I was in Manila I ran into Phil Cowan. He and Dorothy have a new home, a 2-yr-old girl & what have you. I didn't see Dorothy but I have a standing invitation to occupy their guest room. I haven't been to Manila for a long time so news from them is nil. Charlie C. was there last Wed & he said tell you hello.*

*I went to my first dinner party last week. May Vance & Mrs. Ketchum invited some of us up to have Mexican food before a farewell party for Lew King who is being transferred to Manila. You may remember Sandy*

*Ketchum from Ft. Clark and Vance was on all of the parties when you & I went back the first Xmas from S.A. The Mexican food was really good and it was a very good party. The next night we had to go to a reception for Gen. Wainwright who is to be C.G. of North Luzon. We don't come under him but he lives at Ft. Stotsenburg. I have played golf twice but with our present orders we can't even play golf now; I did fairly well each time if I left my woods in the bag. I hope to soon start playing regularly as I must have my exercise. If we stay on this status too long we are really going to have trouble keeping the men contented as well as the young officers.*

*Col. [Eubank/Enbank] & Cece & I haven't taken our house yet, pending instructions on our move. I really hope we stay here as I am tired of moving.*

*I have only gotten your first letter but I guess I will soon begin hearing from you regularly as I presume you have written regular mail? Honey, how about writing air mail? I will save the extra six pesos somehow and then I will hear from you when the news is fresh. Until war actually starts; if it does, the clippers will run much more regularly than boats, so how about switching to air mail, my sweet.*

*This is about all the news so will stop. I surely do miss you, honey and it gets worse instead of better. Maybe it won't be so bad when this tension and inactivity is over with. I surely hope David is fine and that he is being a little man for you. I surely do miss you two and I love you more than ever, if that is possible. I'm half-asleep; it is just morning now, so a waking-up kiss to each of you.*

*Your Don.*

*P.S. My new address on the envelope.*



# Sources and Methods

Over the span of four years I interviewed my grandparents, collated their records, corroborated and expanded on them with my own research, and compiled it all into a single framework. The research supporting this work started out simply. I called my grandparents with a list of questions and asked them about their lives, then asked them what they know of their parents' lives, then their grandparents'. We started with the basics—where everyone lived, what they did for work, what their dispositions were. Over about a dozen sessions I wrote down every detail and every story that could be remembered. That was my starting point.

Fortunately, both of my grandfathers had already completed a lot of family history research themselves, and they handed over everything they had—boxes of documents, photos, and their own written accounts. Each had already traced pedigree charts for their side of the family back through their own grandparents' generation. I collated what I could of this, read through the documents, sorted through the photos, and tried to line everything up with what I'd learned in the interviews.

There were a few key sources in this lot. On the Gibbs side was *Jax Trax*, the memoir that my maternal great grandfather wrote. This filled in a lot of history on his side of the family, and gave me a deep look into the life and times of that generation. On the Maczka side a key source was Dolores Groppe (a cousin of my grandfather)'s family history which included sections on Catherine Novak and Joseph Kazmierczak. The writings of my grandmother Bernie Maczka also provided a wealth of details on her side of the family.

At this point I had a strong understanding of the most recent two generations that I was covering. My grandparents obviously knew their own stories well, and had a good grip on their parents' as well. The final generation I hoped to cover though remained elusive. Outside of those covered in one of the written family histories, I knew almost nothing of this generation outside of when they were born, when they died, and who they married. So I turned to the internet to glean what I could.

Ancestry.com proved an invaluable resource. I found census records, birth, death, and marriage records, military enlistment and draft documents, as well as the odd newspaper record of an obituary. From these I was able to fill in a lot of gaps and get at least a basic understanding of the people in this oldest generation.

Another major source was military records. Veteran's separation documents were my starting point. These gave details on exactly where and when the men served. For those who served in World War II, this was a segue into an extremely interesting window of history. Vincent Maczka's 7th Armored Division published a two-volume history of the group as they made their historic campaign from Normandy to Berlin. This includes photos, maps, and detailed day-by-day accounts of the fighting. For DRG, who died at Clark Field, there are numerous sources. Some of the men who were there with his division in the Philippines wrote *Queens Die Proudly*, including a dramatic account of DRG's final days amidst the start of the war. They even quote him repeatedly. Due to the connection with the catastrophe of Pearl Harbor, Congress published a 1,000-page report that includes detailed accounting of the events at Clark Field. Life magazine wrote a cover story about the events at Clark Field and spilled ink discussing DRG's heroism. Other firsthand accounts attesting to DRG's final days abound in print and online. The sheer volume of ink spilled is a testament to the significance of the moment in history young DRG was caught up and ultimately killed in.

In researching the generations that precede the ones covered in this text, I found an intriguing clue about the original immigrant in the Olive branch of the family. He was listed as a passenger on a transport of men in bondage sailing from England to Barbados. I enlisted the help of professional genealogical researcher and historian Susan Moore in the UK to chase down the lead. She was able to pull records confirming that William Olive was indeed convicted of the crime of stealing a horse and other valuables, sentenced to be hanged, and eventually granted a reprieve of indentured servitude in the New World instead.

With my sources compiled, I finally had enough to start writing out a cohesive narrative. As I wrote, I identified gaps in my knowledge and turned back to both my grandparents and the internet to fill in what I could. Gaps still remain, and sadly many of those gaps are probably lost to history for good. What's left I've done my best to compile and document here.

# Afterword

In taking on this project I set out to answer a few key questions: Who are my ancestors? Where did they come from? How did they live? What might I learn from them? After four years of research and writing, I finally have my answers. I can tell you tales of the dead, but the most valuable thing I've gained from this project is a deeper connection with the living. Writing this book gave me a reason to spend many hours talking with my grandparents about old stories. They generously opened up and told me everything I wanted to know. They shared their research, documents, photos, and more. Bit by bit I formed a deeper understanding of the events, forces, and people who shaped their lives.

My favorite moments in writing this were twofold. First were the moments of connection with my grandparents. Hearing their stories, asking them things I'd never had the opportunity to discuss with them before. Second were the moments when I felt a glimmer of the presence of loved ones who've passed. Whether in their own writing, or a photo that captures their essence, or even in the telling of a story about them from someone else's point of view, I took great comfort in these reminders of them. I hope with this work I'm able to preserve some piece of their natures for future generations. I offer this not as the final word, but as another link in the chain for the generations yet to come.

To anyone reading this, I urge you—record your history. Ask your elders about their lives. Write down your stories and the stories of those you love. Organize and safeguard the records, the photos, the remembrances. You are the only thing standing between those memories and the dustbin of history.

# Notes



# Notes