

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF DON HASSLER AUGUST, 1988  
(current as of June 6, 1992) Edited in June 2011 by DEH

My name is Donald Earl Hassler. I live in Phoenix, Arizona and I'm 59 years old. I'm preparing this information for my children and their children so that there will be some kind of written information about my family history and its accomplishments and other memories that I'm proud of. These recollections will not necessarily be exact but they will be things that I consider milestones in my life. I hope that my children will read these and accumulate them with other family documents so that information about the Hasslers will continue to be available to future generations for many years into the future.

## 1. MY PARENTS

I was born in Kansas City, Missouri on June 6, 1929. My mother is Frances Ruth Howland Hassler. Her parents were Paul Barbee Howland and Amanda Mercer Howland.

My mother was born in Kewanee, Illinois on June 15, 1908. She grew up and lived in Northern Illinois until she married my father and moved to Kansas City. Our family eventually settled in Oklahoma. My mother's family lived for most of her childhood on the SW side of Chicago in the Morgan Park/Beverly area. This area is roughly within a 2 or 3 mile radius of 95th St. and Western Avenue. My mother has one brother, Paul Barbee Howland Junior, who is younger than she. Uncle Paul lived with the family until his graduation from Morgan Park Military Academy in the mid-1930's, an event which was a big one for the family. Uncle Paul was a lifelong employee of Swift & Co., meatpackers, and eventually settled in Florida. He and his wife, Eleanor Jean, now live near Tampa.

My father is Earl Leeman Hassler. He was born in Douglas, Arizona Territory, on January 18, 1909. My father's parents were Jasper Ole Hassler and Zetta Ward Hassler. They were both born in Butler County, Missouri and lived there on farms near each other. After marriage in about 1907, the Hasslers moved to Douglas where grandfather was a high school math teacher and coach of the football team. It's also known that grandfather worked at the old Phelps-Dodge smelter during the summer vacation to earn extra money.

My father had three brothers, Donald Eugene, Raymond and Norman. Donald died when he was about 10 years old, in the late '20s. Norman lived until about 1970. He was a very skilled electronic engineer and worked for several large companies in the East, the last being Sperry-Rand in NY. Norman and his wife, Elmeta, never had any children, although I believe they wanted children badly. Elmeta was a school teacher and apparently very much enjoyed working with children.

Uncle Ray is only 7 years older than I, so he was almost like a big brother. We managed to do things together when I spent time in Norman, especially in the summers. Ray went into the Air Force in 1941 and we corresponded often during his time in the service. We even played chess by postcard until the military censors made us stop. The chess moves looked too much like a code!! Ray married his first cousin, Dorothy Fox, daughter of my grandmother's sister Verna, and they eventually settled in St Louis. Ray and Dorothy have four children, my only first cousins on the Hassler side. There were 3 boys, Mark, Dale and Carl, then they adopted a daughter, Jan.

Much of the information about my families will be found in the genealogy papers

in my files which Dad worked on and developed between 1935 and 1960. The Hassler genealogy papers consist of dozens of interviews, letters and conversations with various family members in Butler County, St Louis and Oklahoma. These papers have a good description of my family's early years and several events important to the family history are mentioned there. I just don't remember everything, especially from my baby years.

## 2. EARLY YEARS

My Mother and Dad lived in a small apartment in Kansas City when I was a baby. Pictures exist in some of the family albums from then. Mother started a "baby book" then which tells in much detail my life through about age 12.

Dad worked for the Telephone Co. until about 1932 when the Great Depression hit hard and he decided to return to the University of Oklahoma for his Masters in EE. The family moved to a tiny house at xxx N. Flood Street in Norman, OK and lived there until 1934. My Dad has his diploma for that MS in EE and has displayed it proudly for many years. My Dad also received a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science. During our years in Norman the great dust storms of the 30's were on us. I remember huge black clouds sweeping across the skies. Dust was so prevalent that it seeped right into the house. Mother tried to stop it by stuffing towels and rags around window and door cracks but to little avail. The dust was everywhere.

These were the years when the Great Depression created problems for families everywhere. My Dad was a research assistant at the Univ. and brought home a tiny income. We bought eggs from our next door neighbors at 10 cents a dozen and the house rent was less than \$25 per month.

I remember that the old house on Flood was a small, white frame house that stood on the far outskirts of town. Two more blocks north brought you to the end of the street and the section line (Robinson St.). Right behind us, where Norman High School stands now, was a cow pasture. Today the area where we lived is the middle of town. The US Navy bought a huge chunk of property (about 800 acres) N. of Robinson to use as a flight training center, and then, after WW 2, gave the whole thing to the University of Oklahoma (OU). It's called the North Campus.

After Dad got his MS (1934), we moved to Enid and Dad worked for Champlin Oil Co. on a seismograph crew. There I had my first look at a real, working oil field. It was awesome to a 5-year old. Dad's work on the crew was quite dangerous as they were working with dynamite which had to be exploded for measurement purposes. Oil exploration was performed this way and the resulting reports helped show geological formations at great depths in the earth. Of course, Dad was an EE, so this work didn't quite fit with his training. The oil fields around Enid were big and hot, and much of the energy was supplied by steam in pipes that ran everywhere. I burned my leg ozone of those pipes. Other experiences there were not so memorable, other than the neighbor's fish pond which I probably fell in. I was also a friend of the neighbor's daughter and we used to play together quite a bit. This was prior to kindergarten which started a year later when we moved to Okla. City.

We lived on NE 16th St. in "the City". I was still not in school but I believe after living there for a year I started kindergarten with Mrs. Gibson as my first teacher. That name sticks with me for some reason. My mother has preserved a picture of that class, showing 15 or 20 scrungy little kids, including me. I remember enjoying school. I felt

challenged by it. I had friends there and in general, all of my school experiences were good ones.

### 3. TULSA AND GRADE SCHOOL

After kindergarten, summer of 1936, we moved to Tulsa at 15 S. Zunis and I started first grade at Whittier School. It was in this place that my sister Barbara and I first met a lifelong friend, Peggy Mae Barnes Wilcox. Peggy lived right across the street from us and was our age, so we became fast friends. We played together in the summer, we read books together, we did lots of stuff. The Barnes and Hasslers both belonged to 2<sup>nd</sup> Presbyterian Church, just 2 blocks up the street. Mrs. Barnes and mother both sang in the church choir. The years in Tulsa were wonderful years and they began right there on Zunis Street.

An interesting sidelight to the Zunis years: our neighbors two doors away were the Gowans family. Mr. Gowans was superintendent of Tulsa Schools. One of the boys, Ed Gowans, became a pianist and years later (1947-8) at Stillwater we played together in Jimmy Baker's dance band on the campus at Okla. State University (but then they called it Okla. A & M. That's just one manifestation of how my friends have come in and out of my life over the years. Early experiences have been enhanced by later experiences with the same friends.

After two years on Zunis, our family bought its first house, at 222 S. Jamestown. This was farther west in Tulsa. We lived there from 1937 until 1941. I went to school at Sequoyah Grade School which was 8 blocks from our house and stayed in that school from late second grade until sixth, probably the longest period I attended a single school. I went for a year at Cleveland Jr. High before we moved to Okla. City in July 1941.

### 4. MY SISTER

And now some important words about my sister, and only sibling, Barbara Jean Hassler Tuttle. She was born in Okla. City on Oct. 28, 1930 when we lived there for the first time, having moved there from K.C. My sister is 16 months younger than I and we grew up together and went to all the same schools together until 1946 when I started in college at OU. Right now Barbara resides in Norman and is Executive Secretary to the Board of Regents at OU. She is married to Arthur Tuttle, her second husband and they live in the Brookhaven area, west of Norman.

Because Barbara and I were so close in age, we had some great moments and a few unpleasant ones during our childhood years. I was her big brother, no doubt bullying her around at times. I remember some paddlings from Dad that were caused by my arguments with Barbara. As her big brother I took unfair advantage of her and it was the dumb stuff that kids often do. The good parts about the childhood years were the common friends and similar school experiences. In Tulsa, there was a group that were pretty close buddies and we hung around a lot together. One of those buddies was Peg Barnes whom I mentioned earlier. We lived next door to Bobby Cochran and played as a group all the time. He had the best collection of Big-Little Books for miles around.

Peggy Mae's family moved out west in Tulsa about 1938 after we moved to Jamestown. Because Admiral Street was close by we saw each other frequently and all went to Sequoyah which was sort of between our two houses. We all used to hang around the Crown Drug store at Harvard & Admiral and bought lots of penny candy and

comic book at the little grocery a block away where the school crossing was. In Tulsa the streets are named alphabetically so you know that Harvard (H) was 2 blocks from Jamestown (J) and Admiral was the N/S dividing line.

There was an old gas station at the corner of Jamestown and Admiral where we could get cold pop and candy bars. I was fun to go down there. We used to hang around there a lot in the summer, not doing much, waiting for the country to get back on an economic upturn. Gas was about 15 cents a gallon then (1938) and it was dispensed from a hand pumper that stored 10 gallons at a time in a big glass tank. This device let gas into your tank by gravity. Nobody ever thought to get more than 10 and that was plenty to fill most tanks.

My Dad was back working for the SW Bell Telephone then and for several years he worked on Installation crews. I saw him a few times as he climbed poles, strung cable and did other things that a Masters graduate might not be expected to do, but we're talking about Depression times when lots of folks were lucky to have jobs. During those years Dad also taught at night school downtown to supplement the family income and he also was an Auditor for the Bell Credit Union. Some of our other friends in Tulsa were the Farrimond family who lived next to Cochran's and the Shurtleff family on our N who had two of the meanest chow dogs I can remember. I can't remember our neighbors to the rear, but I do know that there were lots of grade school kids in the area and we did lots of stuff together.

There was a creek that ran sort of n/s about 1-2 blocks west of us. Down near the park, 3 blocks south, there was a wonderful rope swing hung from a big elm tree limb that allowed us to swing from bank to bank. We used to hang around there in the cool shade, splashing around, catching "crawdads" (crayfish) and generally whiling away the late '30s summers. Another thing we did was read Bobby Cochran's Big-Little Books. A Big-Little Book can be described as a small piece of fiction about some comic strip character that was about 1" thick and about 3" x 4". No doubt the entire paperback industry started from Big-Little Books. I really envied Bobby Cochran's library of them. We literally sat around and read them by the hour. Examples of the heroes were Dick Tracy, Smilin' Jack and Terry and the Pirates.

Our years in Tulsa were spent growing up in neighborhood full of kids like us. We had pop stands, went on trips with our parents and had lots of fun. Our family wasn't particularly well off then even though we did own a house. Dad bought a green Fordsedan in 1937. I still have the dark green wooden box that Dad made for that Ford to go on the back bumper for picnics. We used to take those picnics at Turkey Mountain in E Tulsa.

As of today that old green box is 51 years old and counting. I think Dad built it to last for at least 200 years, a heck of a lot longer than any of us or the old Ford. Hey, kids, keep that old green box for all its memories. It took my books to college, it carried my music, it went to Natl Guard camps with me and it's a great storage box even today.

Another memory from Tulsa days was the badminton court in our back yard. It wasn't just any badminton court, either. Dad spent hours lovingly grooming the Bermuda grass lawn so that it would be a smooth surface for the game. The court markers were lines of white tape that were held in place by discarded gas engine valves stuck in the ground down to dirt level. The tape was strung around these valves in a way that finally outlined the court. What an ingenious arrangement! Mom and Dad and all their friends

played badminton from spring until fall for 3 or 4 years. The parties were great...made greater by the fine quality of homemade beer that Dad was producing in the basement.

I also remember the beginning of construction at Will Rogers High School while we lived there. I would have been a student there had we stayed through the '40s. Our family had some great times swimming in the municipal pool at New block Park. That's where I learned to swim (Barbara too, I think). It was quite a way to get there so any visit was a day-long trip. The highlight was always our visit to the ice cream parlor on the way home. A double dip cone was about 10 cents and boy were they good.

The admission to the pool was probably about 25 cents, so we could have a great family adventure in the late '30s for \$2 or \$3. Not bad at all. That's the way it was. My year in the 7th grade at Cleveland was a good one. I got on the Student Council and actually prepared a welcoming speech for new 7th graders at the end of that year(1941). I still have a copy of that speech somewhere.

## 5. OKLAHOMA CITY & BOY SCOUTS

In the summer of 1941 I joined the Boy Scouts, went to Camp Kickapoo, moved to Okla. City and got the mumps, in that order. Actually, 1941 was a very eventful year. Because mumps are usually accompanied by a fever, I had one. One complication after the mumps was that I apparently got pleurisy or some sort of problem with my lungs that lasted off and on for a couple of years. Of course moving to a new home in OC was slightly traumatic for a 12 year old. However, I found new friends, transferred to Troop 48 at Harding Jr. High and started in the 8th grade at Harding that September.

This is a good place to talk about my experiences in Scouting. The Hasslers have a very long record of Scouting service starting in Norman during the '20s. Grandfather was very active and eventually won the Silver Beaver award, a very high award, for his many years of service. My Dad and his brothers were active Scouts with Dad having earned an Eagle scout badge with at least one palm which means he qualified by passing 26 merit badges. That's quite an accomplishment.

I started in Cubs while we lived in Tulsa and spent about 3 years at it with Mrs. Benedict as the Den Mother. She was the church organist. When I turned 12 Troop 37 was at the church so I joined it along with several buddies that I already knew. That was a very short membership because of the move to OC when Troop 48 became my interest until music started to occupy my time. I got enough merit badges to earn a Life badge but was about to leave Scouting so didn't get the actual award. I was a Patrol Leader and I think quartermaster of the Troop. Anyway, one of my earliest friends was in the Beaver Patrol, Bolar Garrison, now an MD and living in OC. Bolar was also a good clarinet player and we were in bands together for about 5-6 years. He married Martha Frye, also a clarinetist.

## 6. CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES

Since I was talking about mumps just above, the list of all my other childhood illnesses may be interesting. I was allergic to many foods as a baby and Mother kept me on a strict diet, limiting such items as eggs, wheat bread and certain forms of protein. The allergies showed up as asthma. Looking back now, I think it was as much caused by stress or overexertion than anything else. I also had chicken pox, measles and whooping cough, which were common in the '30s. My sister also came down with scarlet fever in

1939 and we had to be quarantined for several days. Today a shot of penicillin would knock just about any of these out.

The asthma gradually disappeared as I grew older. The final attack that I can remember occurred during National Guard camp in about 1954 at Camp Grayling, Mich. After I moved to Phoenix in 1970 I went to an allergist for tests and decided to start taking desensitization shots. I started out with shots twice a week and am now down to maintenance at once per month, after ten years. These shots have worked very well.

I forgot to mention that when Barbara had scarlet fever we were all in the house except Dad who had to stay away. But he did bring us the music for a hot new song called "Three Itty Fitties in an Itty Bitty Pool" written by Saxie Dowell. That was a big hit in 1938.

As you may know, scarlet fever is a strep infection and there wasn't much you could do for it then by lie there until you got better. Actually, what they did was quarantine the house. That meant no one could come in or out. Today a couple shots of penicillin or antibiotic will knock it right out.

So much for diseases and for Tulsa, OK. In the summer of 1941 we moved to Okla. City where I spent the rest of my childhood until I left for good in 1948 to Chicagoland and Northwestern University.

When we got to OC we lived at 120 NW 28th Street, just a block from the Santa Femain line between Chicago to Texas. Edgemere Park was only 2 blocks away and there was another park near 23rd St. on Robinson where I started hitting tennis balls in the summer time. That was my first experience with tennis (1942 or 43). I wasn't very good, but I did learn to hit the ball. During those years and slightly later I was able to play some tennis with Uncle Ray at OU in Norman. The courts in Norman are gone now, giving way to the ongoing expansion of Sooner stadium, actually Owen Stadium.

I forgot to mention above that Uncle Ray and I bought the very FIRST issue of Action Comics in 1938 when Superman was born. It was plenty exciting to read. Too bad I didn't keep that one. How was I to know it would be worth a few HUNDRED dollars in 1988?

## 7. HARDING JR. HIGH SCHOOL

From the Fall of 1941 right on through my adolescent period my life entered a new phase. In the summer of 1941 I was 12 years old and starting to enter PUBERTY, the results of which were both disastrous and also positive. When I went to Harding Jr. HS in the Fall of '41 of course I had to find a whole new group of friends. We weren't involved in any local church then because we had just moved to town. We eventually joined the First Pres downtown at 9th & Robinson. The friends that I made at Harding tended to be either from the Scout troop or from the Harding band in which I played clarinet.

Playing in the band was a great part of my life, starting in 6th grade in Tulsa and continuing right on through college. At Harding I had a year or two of experience but wasn't very good. The band wasn't very good, either. Our director was Eric Parham, a nice guy who did the best he could with the material at hand. Mr. Parham was also a clarinetist, as I recall.

Besides band and Scouts, I can't recall any other special activities I was involved in. We did used to have a lot of fun on Friday nights because every Friday in the school

auditorium there would be a comedy movie show. The school had two good 35 mm movie projectors. We had movies by the Three Stooges, Laurel & Hardy, Chaplin, Buster Keaton, all the comedy greats from the 30s. My favorite was the Three Stooges. I can still remember sitting there in the auditorium, waiting for the lights to go down. I think the admission was only a dime. All the kids who came to the movies walked to the school so they carried flashlights to find their way home. Never mind that there were street lights and good sidewalks. Also, of course, we could find our way anywhere in that neighborhood after dark. The reason we had flashlights was that before the movie we could shine them on the dark screen. Just imagine 200 dancing flashlights from 200 fidgety 12-14 year olds. That's how I remember it. What a blast!!

In December of 1941, while I was in the 8th grade at Harding, Pearl Harbor was attacked by Japan. It was a Sunday and my memories seem very vivid. The day after Pearl Harbor was a Monday and the entire school was gathered in the auditorium to hear President Roosevelt's speech. The United States entered WW2 and everything changed. Gasoline became scarce and rationed, tires were unavailable, auto production switched to tanks, many foods were rationed and we had to get along differently. Even cigarettes were scarce. Although I wasn't a smoker, some of my buddies had to get along on brands like Wings, Kools, etc. The famous commercial of the day was "Lucky Strikegreen has gone to war"...referring to the green color on Luckies packages (presumably gone for camouflage paint).

One of the things I did on moving to OC was get a job distributing the morning Advertiser newspaper. It was a free paper, something like the Phoenix Pennysaver, that came out on Wed. and Sun. AM. I had to get up at some unGodly hour like 4 AM and meet the other guys at the supervisor's house to get my papers and fold them. I became an expert in the triangular fold that could be sailed backhanded unto a front porch something like you throw a Frisbee. After folding, we stuffed them into the bags on our bikes and took off into the semi-darkness to deliver them. It was a tough job and especially in the winter it was the "pits". I do remember my dear Mother, God Bless her, who always got up on cold mornings and made sure I had a warm breakfast. That was wonderful! It would have been plenty tough for a 12 or 13 year old to handle that route in the winter without that support.

## 8. YOUNGS BLVD. & CLASSEN HIGH SCHOOL

After two years in Harding I was ready for the BIG TIME...Classen High School. In early 1943 we moved to 2320 Youngs Blvd. where I lived until leaving OC for good in 1948. I took the bus to Harding for a few months until June. Youngs Blvd. was far on the W. side and out of the Harding district but I stayed in school to finish. Actually, the kids around us all went to Taft, but both Jr. Highs fed into Classen, so it was great. Right across 23rd Street, at our corner was the root beer stand where we used to hangout and also Sheperd Lake which was a farm that had also been a summertime amusement park or at least a swimming lake. I used to wander around all over the Sheperd property and spent many a fine spring or summer day walking or shooting frogs with my bee bee gun or just fooling around.

In the summer of 1943 I got a job as a soda jerk at the Veazey Drug store, corner of Classen Blvd. and 18th street. That's right about where Classen and Western cross and one block from the old Victoria theater and from the street car station. We had a real

soda fountain with a marble top. We mixed up sundaes, sodas, chocolate phosphates and we had a grille to cook hamburgers, grill sweet rolls, and we were even allowed to serve 3.2% beer. Here I was 14 years old and able to serve beer legally. The manager of the soda fountain was a guy only a year or two older than I. Between the two of us we had a great time together. I worked there all summer and maybe into the Fall, when I entered high school. The Veazey Drug was only 3 blocks from Classen so it was sort of a hangout for school kids.

## 9. THE SAXOPHONE

Right after my entry into 10th grade and into the Classen Band, I decided to take up saxophone. I cannot remember what stimulated my interest. It may have been that I knew sax players. Maybe I just got interested from hearing dance bands. Anyway, that was when music entered my life in a serious way, and it has never left since. I remember that in the Fall of 1943 I shopped around diligently to find a saxophone to play. I finally ended up in a pawn shop down on Reno Street where I located a good Buescher sax, good condition and the price was around \$50. My Dad fronted some of the money and I had earned some during the summer.

I bought that sucker and learned it very easily. My clarinet playing was never easy up to then but practicing the sax didn't seem to be a problem. About the same time I started playing in Phil Shadid's dance band maybe in the late fall or winter of 1943-44. It was an incredible experience for me. I could read music pretty well, but I had never read a stock dance arrangement. They're all done in alla breve (cut time) which is 2 beats to the bar, so I read it that way, not knowing that it is all four beat music. So I played some very funny notes and ended up finished way before the band, the recipient of some funny looks. It took me about an hour to learn what was happening. After that, it was a piece of cake. It worked because I was a pretty good sight reader and could handle most of the notes well. My concert band experience certainly helped there.

We always had problems getting good drummers. I got to know Mel Conner because we played in groups together for about three years. Mel is still a friend and now lives in New York. We recently started skiing together in Salt Lake City. He stops there on his way to and from LA. In fact, Mel went to Northwestern in 1948 when I did and graduated from there a year later.

## 10. WORKING IN CHICAGO

In the summer of 1944 I went to Chicago to live with my Grandparents in Western Springs and to work at Granddad Howland's law offices in the Loop, Hopkins, Sutter, Halls, DeWolfe & Owen. That was a very big event. I was almost independent at the age of 15. I spent money on jazz records and spent many hours in Grandparents basement listening to Goodman, Dorsey, James, Kenton, Herman, etc. I also took my clarinet and the new saxophone so I could practice...which I did a lot.

The experience getting there on the train in 1944 was plenty exciting. WW2 was still on and there was seldom enough room for everyone to sit, so I rode most of the way to Chicago in the vestibule of that train. The Vestibule is the small area at each end of the cars where the door to the inside of the coach is. Outside, in the vestibule, there is no ventilation and the doors to the outside, as well as the couplers between coaches are there.



I'll never forget D-Day (June 6, 1944). I was in Chicago and riding on the suburban Burlington train with Grandpa Howland when we opened the evening paper and saw the news. It was also my 15th birthday.

Grandpa and I used to walk down to the Western Springs Burlington station, ride the train to Chicago and then walk over from the Union Station to Madison & LaSalle Streets. The law office was at 33 N. LaSalle. All those walks to and from train stations were very good for mine and Grandpa's health. He lived to be about 88. He died in his sleep while living with Mother and Dad in Okla. City.

There were two more visits to Chicago to be with the Grandparents: 1946 and 1948. It was wonderful to go to the big city and enriching to feel the cultural pulse there. I felt much encouragement from the family when doing this and remember that Mother and Dad always supported me in these plans. My Grandparents were also very supportive. Grandmother Howland was a fine musician: a singer and pianist. She let me practice without complaint and Grandpa was a rock. Always ready to walk to work and very informative about life in general. He loved to work the evening crossword puzzle in the newspaper on the suburban train home.

It was also very good to meet new people at the law offices. I was exposed to many new thoughts and ideas while there. I also found friends that I have kept contact with for over 40 years.

While I was in Chicago I really learned the Loop. The job was basic "go-fer" work but easy for me. I had no big financial responsibilities. I got to like Chicago. Now, summer is over, and back to school, fall of 1944.

## 11. MORE MUSIC

So after starting alto sax in the dance band I convinced Oakley Pittman to let me play alto in the Concert Band. I was a much better alto player than clarinet player. So Oakley put me in the sax section and I became friendly with the fellows who were playing in the school's dance band, the Sooners. Guys like Dudley Conner, Joe Cerney, Buddy Lindsey were all there.

The Sooners was actually a music course, elective, that you could take at 7th hour, the last period of the day. It was excellent training for future musicians. Not everyone got to play in the Sooners. Pittman had to select you and then you signed up for the "course". The fellows selected for the Sooners not only got great training but played dance jobs all over the state during a time when regular bands were somewhat unavailable because most young musicians were in the armed forces. We probably made \$6-\$8 per night but that was great money when gas was 16 cents, hamburgers .25 and Cokes were a nickel. The going rate for student part-time help then was about .35/hour.

I didn't enter the Sooners until the Fall of 1945. During the period until then I was learning to play the alto and tenor. I was getting better & better. I was practicing a lot. I was in some other bands for the money AND the experience. My interest in music as a career also developed then.

## 12. SUMMER OF '45

In the summer of 1945 (age 16) I worked at Banta Const. Co. fixing roads and streets around Oklahoma county and Cleveland county. The work was plenty hard but the experience good. I earned enough to buy an old Model A Ford from one of the guys

and I still have the sales slip. The work at Banta consisted mostly of shoveling hot asphalt for major street maintenance. We worked several weeks in Midwest City, near Tinker Field and then also in Norman. The big job in Norman was at the Navy South Base, just being vacated, unloading two gondola cars of gravel and using them for repair, along with asphalt.

Imagine the effort in Oklahoma 105 deg. summer heat. It was great for my body and I probably stayed in better shape doing that than by doing anything else. Of course, the big thing that happened was I earned enough money to spend \$50 for a 1929 Model A Ford that was owned by the guy I worked with. The car was in pretty good shape and I spent some bucks to keep it that way. Also, I had transportation for school that year, my Senior year.

In those days I was playing in a couple or three bands and would get work when I could. Phil Shadid's band was the one I started in. Phil used to drive some of us to the job in his family's grocery delivery truck, a panel job. That was great, esp. if we had dates and had to ride in the back! Lying on the blankets was good and there was some heavy duty necking going on some of that time.

I also played in Doug Klusmeyer's band. Doug became some kind of preacher but I heard, sadly, from Kendall Falk this year that Doug died recently. He never left Okla. City, and I now realize that many of my schoolmates never went elsewhere. Perhaps 50% of them are still there. I was in several other bands then but my real interest was finding a spot in the Sooners. I knew that they were the premiere group in the state, and during the war, got lots of work because the regular musicians were in the armed forces.

In the spring of 1945 several of the Sooner players, including Dudley Conner and Buddy Lindsay, were graduating. My chance was just around the corner. Joe Cerney also graduated, but he stayed on to play for another year, and went to OCU music school.

### 13. THE SOONERS

As it turned out, I joined the band in the fall of 1945. Bob Freeman was first alto, Buddy Lindsey and then Bill Harrah on third alto; Cerney and me, playing tenors. Bill was just a freshman, but a good player. His brother, Tom, was in the band several years earlier and Bill was a natural for the job. He went on the OU and I saw him just recently at an alumni activity just before the CU-OU football game in 1987. Had a brief but cordial chat.

Those four saxes were good. Maybe we were the original Four Brothers!! We played all the hard stuff copied right off records from the big dance bands: Dorsey, Basie, Miller, Ellington, Thornhill, James, Herman, you name it. And we had a few originals of our own, mostly written by Gene Midyett, a friend of Oakley Pittman.

We played jobs at both state universities, service facilities and dances, theaters and almost all of the school dances. In my Senior year I must have played 40 or 50 dance jobs at \$6-\$8 apiece, which isn't much for today, but then gas was about 15 cents and you could get a great hamburger for 20 or 25 cents.

We played at the Silver Glade room in the old Skirvin Tower and the Mirror Room at Muni Aud. and Blossom Heath out on 39th St very often. I'll never forget one dance at the North Base in Norman, probably in the spring of 1946. Many of the sailors were going home and when we started Les Brown's "Sentimental Journey" IT WAS

HEAVY. The whole place practically dissolved in tears. It was nostalgic.

My musical horizons broadened enormously in 1945-46. Late in the Fall of 1945 Oakley bought a musical aptitude test called the Seashore test. He decided to give the test to any members of the Band or Orchestra who would like to take it. The purpose was to see how our musical talent and abilities were. Naturally, because I was interested in music as a career, I took the Seashore test along with a bunch of other kids who were interested. I scored very well. All my auditory senses (or musical) tested near the highest percentile. So, that was it. I decided on music as a career with my other choice (chemical engineering) pretty much discarded.

#### 14. BACK TO CHICAGO

Because of my interest in music I decided to go back to Chicago in the summer of 1946 and work at Hopkins, Sutter and also to take sax lessons. I studied twice a week at Chicago Musical College and my teacher was Domenic DeCaprio. He was a pretty darn good sax player. He really worked me. He gave me new books and I practiced like a fiend. Late in the summer of 1946 I happened to pick up the Chicago Trib and in the Sports Page was an ad asking for musicians to play in the annual College All-Star/Pro football game at Soldier Field. Tryouts were in Evanston and the band was run by none other than Glenn Cliffe Bainum, director of bands at Northwestern Univ.

#### 15. EARL MORTENSEN

Even though I had to go way up to Evanston for my audition I was anxious to do it. I made the trip, made the band and started on a lifetime odyssey with music in Chicago and Northwestern Univ.

During the rehearsal for this gig I got acquainted with another sax player named Earl Mortensen and formed a lifetime friendship. Earl and I did the All-Star thing and then started correspondence when I went back to Okla. for my freshman year at OU in the fall.

Earl and I have done lots of playing in the same groups and at the same times. We were in school at NU for 2 years until I graduated. We played in Don Johns dance band while there and also other bands: Dick Marks, Johnny Palmer, Phi Mu band, NU Concert Band, NU Orchestra, chamber groups, etc. etc. We studied composition from the same teacher at NBC during those years. Earl now lives in N. Calif. but we contact each other on a regular basis.

#### 16. COLLEGE AT OU

When I got back to OK I started in the Music School at OU. The courses were easy and I did fairly well. I played in the OU Band and also in various music groups at the Music School. It was in Holmberg Hall, where the Univ. auditorium also was. I have many fond memories of Holmberg Hall, going back to the late '30s when my sister and I used to go down there and fool around. I loved to get in one of the Organ practice rooms and play nonsense on the organ. The sound was pretty awesome in a small room.

#### 17. JIMMIE BAKER BAND

Although I played a few dance jobs at Norman, the big break came in early 1947 when I was invited to play with Jimmie Baker's band at Stillwater. It happened because

several of my buddies from Classen (and the Sooners) were already playing with Baker. They were Dick Shadburne, Bob Freeman and Joe Cerney. The band had an opening for a tenor sax player and I jumped at it.

Now, it wasn't easy going to school in Norman and playing rehearsals and jobs in Stillwater. I had to take the bus every Thurs. night to Okla. City, and then Stillwater. I took the same bus home again that same night. Or sometimes I would stay in Stillwater for weekend work. One class had to go: that was Military Science. I flunked it...and maybe wouldn't have graduated if I had stayed in Okla.

The Baker band was really professional. The book was great, with arrangements by Ed Gowans, Buddy Joseph and Gene Midyett. We played all the good places in the state and the musicians were first rate; mostly vets who had already been playing in service groups. We got a review in Metronome during late 1947 which I still have a copy of. It was a wonderful experience, playing in the best band in the state, along with several of my buddies from high school days. Most of the rest of college just flew by as this was happening. The sax section included Joe Cerney and me on tenor, Bob Freeman and Tommy Pace on altos. What a section!

I forgot to mention my experience with the oboe. I played it for a year in the Classen band and studied some with J. B. Rivers who was the regular oboe player. J. B. was good enough to sub with the Okla. Symphony and eventually went to Eastman in Rochester. I also played the oboe again in 1948 for the opera "Tales of Hoffman" at OCU. I wish I had kept contact with J.B. Guess he's still living in OC.

#### 18. BAKER IN OKLA. CITY

During the summer of 1947 the Baker band was quiet but by August I learned that we were going to play on weekends at the Silver Glade Room of the Skirvin Tower hotel in downtown Okla. City. Because of this, I decided to stay in OC, live at home and enroll in the music school at Okla. City University (OCU). This was another turning point in my early career.

A highlight of the Skirvin appearance was a weekly airshot on WKY, direct from the ballroom. Joe Webster, the band singer, has copies of those tapes and I now have one to listen to. The band sounds great. Those airshots turned our band into the big celebrities of pop music in the state.

In the Fall of 1947 I enrolled in the Music School at Okla. City University..and for a very good reason. Because the Baker band would be playing every weekend at the Skirvin I had a great income assured and a chance to improve musically very quickly. Also, I was able to live at home, which kept expenses down. The band quickly became statewide celebrities. In the spring of 1948 Metronome magazine published a national review of local bands. The Baker band got a very good write-up. My year at OCU was very exciting, musically. I found a nice girl friend in Carol Nielsen, who was a wonderful musician and also graduate of Classen..and also the daughter of Prof. James Neilsen.

Carol Neilsen and I saw each other quite often for several years. When I went to Northwestern, she went to Michigan. After graduation, she moved to New York, married David Wilder, and settled in Dutchess county. Carol sang at Radio City Music Hall and taught speech therapy at Columbia Univ., where she got her doctorate. We kept up occasional correspondence and contact for many years. Carol died of cancer in 1989 and

I feel a great sense of loss.

A big question during the year at OCU was where did I want to finish my college career. I had been in correspondence with Earl Mortensen and he was telling me about his studies of the Schillinger system of composition. I was also impressed with Earl's comments about the Northwestern University Music School. In addition to letters to Earl, I initiated contact with Uncle Bob's son, Damon "Bud" Hassler, in California. At OCU, Jimmy Neilsen was a strong positive influence. He was a tough but fair director and very influential in national college band activities. Jim had Dr. Wm. Revelli of Michigan come for a clinic in April of 1948. That was the year I went to the regional college All-Star Band in Colorado.

While at OCU we put on the opera, "Tales of Hoffman". It was a lot of fun and I played the oboe in the orchestra. That was my last serious experience with oboe. As Danny Kaye once said, "The oboe is an ill-wind that nobody blows well"!! Besides the opera, everything at OCU was great...small classes...small school..lots of social activities and musical doings.

## 19. FAREWELL TO OKLAHOMA

After much correspondence, and thought, I applied at and was accepted by, Northwestern Univ. for the Fall of 1948. Chicago was a great place for a young musician, where lots was happening. So in June of 1948 I left OK forever and went to Chicago to work in Grandpa Howland's law office for the summer and then started at NU in the Fall. I took sax lessons all summer from Domenic DeCaprio at Chicago Musical College. I played in the College All Star band again, with Glenn Bainum. And when the draft (National Selective Service for the Korean War) hit, I joined the 33rd Division Band, Illinois National Guard. If I hadn't joined up I might have been drafted for active duty.

During that summer I studied the Schillinger system from Gene xxxx at NBC Radio in the Merchandise Mart. He was a trombone player there. The Schillinger system is a mathematical approach to music composition developed in the early 1900s by a Russian composer. It was a fad for a while in the '20s and '30s. George Gershwin use it to develop jazz themes and some of the melodies for his pop songs. It depends on use of recursive techniques and repetitions of themes with changes. Most of Schillinger is fairly intuitive and by summer's end I was pretty well finished with what I wanted to learn. It got me to Chicago.

My decision to move to Chicago was strongly influenced by my lifelong friend, Earl Mortensen, whom I met in 1946 in the College All-Star band. Earl and I have played in bands together, corresponded, and generally kept each other up on new ideas for almost 50 years. He was studying Schillinger. He decided to enroll at NU. He started with computers about the time I did. And so we have been an influence on each other's lives all these years. Earl was an usher at my first wedding. We still see each other often..whenever I get to N. Calif. or he comes to AZ.

During the summer of 1948 I met Ken Manley for the first time. He was at the law office and played tenor sax. Later Ken married his wife of many years, Lucilla, who also worked at Hopkins, Sutter as a legal secretary.

## 20. MILITARY SERVICE

As a new private in the 33d Division Band I was required to attend 2 weeks of summer training in 1948. I actually went down in the advance party to receive vehicles and drove a truck from central IL (Macomb vicinity) to Chicago and back to transport the troops and material. This is a good place to tell about my years in the National Guard and US Army Reserve.

I joined the Illinois National Guard as a private in June of 1948 in Chicago at the Armory on North Avenue & Belmont. I finally resigned my commission as a 1st LT (Radio Program Officer) in 1965 in Los Angeles, CA. During that time I was always in the Reserves but never on active duty.

I started out the 33d Div Band and became a Master Sergeant, then a Warrant Officer, Bandmaster in 1951. I was a Co Admin in a Tank Co for a little while in 1953-54 before moving to Los Angeles in 1955. I then joined the USAR, 63d Division, and organized the 63rd Division Band in 1955. During most of the Los Angeles years I was Bandmaster of the 63rd Division Band. We did our summer training at Camp Roberts, CA, near Paso Robles every summer for about 8 years. The Band rehearsed and trained at the Western Ave. armory in central LA.

During the time in LA the Band reached full strength and actually cut an LP record of marches for the Army Overseas Radio Network. In 1963 the entire Div HQ moved to S Central LA to a new location and at about the same time I was granted a 1st Lt commission in the AG Corps.

I still ran the band as Bandmaster. Eventually going to weekly rehearsals required an hour's trip each way on the freeways and was such a drag that I left the 63d Division and became a Radio Program officer for the 208th AORS (Army Overseas Radio Station).

That unit trained in Balboa park. I was only a few minutes from home. Another advantage was summer training at Fort MacArthur in San Pedro..a darn sight better than Camp Roberts. Anyway, it all came to an end in 1965 when I resigned my commission and went on inactive status. Army reserve training was just one too many activities on the agenda already full with family activities and traveling for Concord Electronics.

## 21. NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Pardon the digression. Now, back to Northwestern and the Fantastic Fall of Forty-Eight. From this period to date I feel a definite division. There was something the final two years of college at NU and my subsequent work in Chicago that was really the start of adulthood. My musical career actually peaked at about this time as I was playing all the time and also studying. The biggest deal in the Fall of 48 was the NU football team. They played a fantastic season under coach Bob Voigts and tied with Illinois for the Big 10 championship. Because Ill had just been to the Rose Bowl, NU was picked for the 1949 Rose Bowl game, to face Cal. And, of course, the Band also went. It was a great Band and we supplemented the fine football games with our halftime stuff under Director Glenn Cliffe Bainum. We traveled to Madison and to Ann Arbor for away games. I'll never forget the gigantic stadium in Ann Arbor (seating for 104,000). It's mostly below ground and doesn't look like much from ground level. But as you march in, the entire space just unfolds, and most of the crowd is rooting for the OTHER team. An awesome experience.

Our band was the premiere band in the Big Ten. Only the Michigan Band was as

good and that was due to the great Director, William Revelli. And Michigan had a student body 3 or 4 times larger to draw from.

## 22. THE ROSE BOWL

NU's Rose Bowl selection is hard to understand based on today's team. But we had a few returned WW2 vets and a great coach. That game is the one and only time NU has ever played in Pasadena. In the 1940's NU still had the football tradition left over from Pappy Waldorf and Otto Graham of the late 1930's.

We took the Union Pacific RR to Calif., marched in Las Vegas on the way, marched in the Rose Parade and the Rose Bowl and took the train back. On the return trip there was a blizzard in Wyoming and our train, plus several others, was stuck in Cheyenne, WY for three days. The trip on the train was a major highlight but the three day party in Cheyenne was even bigger!! What a great experience for a 19 year old just starting out in life. I have a small collection of Rose Bowl mementoes that can tell most of the rest of the story. The train actually parked on a siding in Pasadena and that was our Home in CA.

NU beat Cal 20-14 in the game. Our band totally outclassed the Cal band. I have the newspaper clippings to prove it. When we arrived back in Evanston, after our 3 day delay, the team actually MET US at the station. It's usually the opposite..but the team got to fly out and back.

For Homecoming in October, 1988, NU featured a 40th Reunion of the Band & Football team. I was there, along with about 40 other Band members. We all had a great time and a very nice dinner party one night. I formed friendships from the Rose Bowl trip that have endured. Friends like Bob Krueger, Dick Davis, Floyd Peterson, Don Whitaker and Dale Anderson were all in that band. John Paynter, who was on the Band Staff for that year has been Director of Bands at NU for 40 years and has an anniversary to celebrate.

One big result of the trip to CA was the realization that I wanted to live there. I just couldn't see spending the rest of my life shoveling snow in the winter and sweltering in the midwestern humidity during the summer. I couldn't wait to move out to Calif. It took 6 more years, a marriage and two kids before my dream came true (April, 1955). During the summer of 1949 I suspended my music for a few weeks and went to Lake Taneycomo, MO to be a counselor at a boy's camp, Camp KE-MO. It was sort of fun, like combining a vacation and working. I especially remember the 3 day float trip we took down the James River. We were all in canoes and camped out on the river bank at night. Some of the fellows even tried fishing. And that summer my sister got married to Bob James, who was studying Podiatry in Chicago.

## 23. SENIOR YEAR AT NORTHWESTERN

After that summer, I was back at NU for my senior year. By then I had started the bassoon, as a good double, and more fun for classical work than the clarinet. I played in the NU Orchestra, the NU Chamber Orchestra, the Berwyn Symphony, the Evanston Symphony and the Chicago Businessmen's Orchestra. I was also still in the 33rd Div Band and by then a Sergeant. By 1952 I became a Master Sergeant and then applied for my Warrant to become an Army Bandmaster.

The years 49-50 were very active in school. I learned how to sing in small groups

and I sang in the Episcopal church up on Sheridan Road many Sundays just for the experience. That year I also helped organize WNUR, the campus radio station. I was responsible for all the music on the station for the rest of my senior year and actually had a minor specialty in radio and TV production. One of my teachers was Bob Banner, who was afterwards a nationally prominent TV music show producer. I did considerable music programming, wrote scripts and helped produce musical programs. My major interest for a career was radio & TV production.

I graduated in June, 1950 with a big ceremony at Deering Meadow in front of the library. I was just approaching my 21st birthday. My dear family was all there, including parents and both sets of Grandparents and my sister, Barbara with her husband, Bob. Afterward, we had a big family picnic at Brookfield Zoo.

#### 24. INTO THE WORKPLACE

I seriously considered staying at NU to study for my Masters degree. The Music School offered me a scholarship (they needed bassoon players), so money wouldn't have been a problem. With a Masters I might have continued at NU with a teaching position, to work on a Doctorate. Who knows how that would have come out? Anyway, I looked at all the alternatives, including a wonderful letter from my Dad pointing out the key issues. Because I had already started to work at WMAQ in Chicago, and because I decided a life in "Academia" was not for me, I moved into the business world. I applied for a job in the record library at radio station WMAQ, in Chicago. Because Homer Heck, the Program Director, was a former student of Grandfather Hassler at OU, I got a first class recommendation. As I reflect on the big moments in my life, it is amazing how often actions happen because of a mutual friend, relative, or because of some event in the past. I believe the lives of everyone are guided by the quality and strength of their relationships with family, friends and business contacts.

I also went to NY in June of 1950 to see about work at the big ad agencies there. While there, I stayed with Norman & Elmeta and they showed me a great time, as usual. The telegram arrived while I was in NY to report back to WMAQ in Chicago, so I was on my way.

Since my graduation from NU I have taken a few post grad-type courses. But leaving NU was really the end of my educational career. I do bear mentioning that I spent 2 weeks at Syracuse Univ. in the early '60s at the Sales Management, Int'l course in Marketing and Sales Management. This was a crash course of working executives, dealing with everyday marketing issues from the real world. That study was very worthwhile, including the contacts I made. In the first week we were there we had some heavy experience with developing friends. Two "political parties" were organized and we campaigned for positions as class officers. Our party won and I was elected V-P of the class. A great experience. We also had some great fun playing softball.

Most of my activities since 1950 (age of 21) are well documented by the photos and memorabilia I have gathered. Here are a few of the highlights, and I will leave this list open as more will occur to me as time passes. I have finished this document on March 20, 1992 in Phoenix, AZ

1951:Promoted to head of record library, WENR Radio

1951:Married to Jane Louise Lambert, Harvey, IL



1953: Thomas Eugene Hassler born at St. Lukes Hospital  
1953: Joined Capitol Records as salesman  
1953: Appointed as Warrant Officer Bandmaster, IL Natl Guard  
1954: Mindi Ruth Hassler born in Blue Island, IL  
1954: Built house at 15029 Myrtle in Harvey, IL  
1955: Promoted to A&R Dept at Capitol Records, moved to CA  
1956: Richard Paul Hassler born at CA. Hospital, Los Angeles  
1956: Moved to own house at 6572 Mary Ellen, Van Nuys, CA  
1956: Organized 63rd Infantry Division Band, USAR  
Promoted to Chief Warrant Officer, Bandmaster  
1957: Moved to Sales & Marketing at Capitol Records  
Opened Capitol Tower at 1750 Vine Street  
1958: Elected President of Hollywood Jaycees  
1959: Moved to 16221 Moorpark Street, Encino, CA  
1961: Joined Transis-Tronics as Marketing Manager  
1962: Joined Concord Electronics as Marketing Manager  
Developed business to \$10 million in 3 years  
1961-65: Spent various time in Boy Scouts and Indian Guides  
1965: Resigned from Army Reserve  
1965: Moved to Park Lane Circle in Bel-Air  
1966: Worked three months for "Mad Man" Muntz  
1966: Joined Mike Stobin Co. as Vice Pres.  
1969: Moved to 6551 Petit Ave. in Encino  
1970: Moved to Phoenix, AZ and joined Audio Specialists  
1970: Married Paula Jean Runge Muster  
1971: Bought Audio Video Specialists and building at 333 E. Camelback.  
1971: Bought house at 5714 N. 21st St. All kids eventually lived there.  
1972: Helped produce Phoenix Hi-Fi Show  
1974: Bought Hassler's TV and took over fulltime management.  
1974-85: Became active in Phoenix Symphony Assoc., Better Business Bureau,

Phoenix

Ad Club and COMPAS and held various offices and directorships in those orgns.

1988: Sold all businesses except building at 333 E. Camelback  
1989: Resumed active performance on clarinet and saxophone  
1991: Began working in computer software business. Starting at Forob, Inc.  
Co-founder of Network Systems Software.  
1993: Buyer of our businesses files bankruptcy, causing us to lose assets of about \$80,000 and leaving empty building.  
1994: Sold building at loss and forced to pay mortgage company for resulting deficiency. Building worth about \$500,000 in 1988 now sold at about \$235,000.