

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Table of Contents

Forward	2
Chapter 1	3
Chapter 2	5
Chapter 3	7
Chapter 4	11
Chapter 5	13
Chapter 6	17
Chapter 7	19
Chapter 8	23
Chapter 9	25
Chapter 10	27
Chapter 11	30
Chapter 12	32
Chapter 13	37
Chapter 14	42
Chapter 15	44
Chapter 16	47
Chapter 17	49
Chapter 18	51
Chapter 19	53
Chapter 20	55



He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Forward

This is a short story of an ordinary man, who grew up in a time of extraordinary circumstances. This is the story of my father, Merrill Harry Faegenburg, a former U.S. Naval Aviator, who received his wings on November 3rd, 1943. His generation saved our world.

I have always thought that every human being deserves to have their story told in some form or fashion, especially in this age of the Internet. Every being's life is precious and special. Millions of stories go untold. That does not make their lives of any less importance.

When Dad told me many years ago that he was going to write his story, I thought how cool is that. At that time, he was in his mid 80's. The fact that he learned how to use a computer just simply amazed me. But then, my Dad ALWAYS amazed me! He was the toughest son-of-a-gun you ever met.

I had read this short memoir a couple of times before, but it had not dawned on me until recently, that I could share this story with the rest of whomever in the world might want to read it.

After building my website (which I run myself, and which will not likely exist after I die), I thought here is way I can get a few people to read my Dad's short story of his life.

My Mom and Dad, have been my true real-life heroes. Mom was a Navy Nurse and Dad, a Navy Pilot. My Dad's one wish when he started pilot training (as was all of his counterpart's wishes as well) was to be assigned to a fighter wing and see combat action. Can you imagine that? We must never forget our heroes who were and are our protectors of FREEDOM.

My Mom (Rosemary Faegenburg) passed away on September 23rd, 2006 and my Dad (Merrill), passed away on December 5th, 2013.

I have taken the liberty to edit this story just as far as spelling or punctuation changes. I have tried to use my computer skills to bring it to life a little bit.

In loving memory of Rosemary and Merrill Faegenburg.

G.F.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 1

I HEARD THE WORDS BUT THEY DIDN'T SINK IN FOR A MINUTE OR TWO. " I THINK YOU HAVE LUNG CANCER " HE SAID.

The doctor was standing at the side of the hospital bed and had just come in with a clip board in his hands." When we looked at the X Ray, we thought you may have had a respiratory infection however after the C Scan we determined it was cancer". I know he continued to talk but I'm not sure what he said. I had asked Rosemary to go home prior to this exchange because I didn't want her driving after dark, so I was alone with my thoughts. In a little while, another doctor came in and proceeded to tell me what my options were. After many many questions, I decided to have the cancer cut out and a surgeon was mentioned. When Dr. Richter was named, I recalled him as being the surgeon who had operated on me for my hernia and said he had the bed side manner of a snake and was told he was about the best doctor around for my problem. I overcame my objections and agreed to have him do the surgery. This was early December and because of the pending holidays, it was determined I would have the surgery on the 9th of January 2001.

We arrived at the hospital early the morning of the 9th and as I was prepped for surgery my mind began to recall my life up to that time.

The summer of 1926 in Atlantic City, N.J. and times were good as I recall them. My Mother and Father were still together and we were vacationing at the shore. My Grandmother was there and so was my Aunt Fannie with 2 of her daughter's. One night, my parents and aunt went out leaving Grandma babysitting. She fell asleep almost as soon as they left leaving Sally and me alone. It didn't take long for us to explore our bodies but were too young to do anything radical. It must have made a lasting impression on me because that is one episode of that summer I recall vividly. My next recollection is about one year later when my father took me for a train ride to Milton, Delaware to visit a "friend" of his. This was my first meeting with the woman who would one day be my step mother. It was also the first time I met my future step brother, Lee. I was much too young to fathom what was going on but when my mother quizzed me after the trip even

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

in my young mind I knew something wasn't quite right. The relationship with my mother and father went downhill fast after that.

I was about 13 or 14 when my mother and I moved to Atlantic City. The reason was supposedly because I had Hay Fever and the air there was going to be better for me. As I see it now, the reason I was moved was to get me further away from my father and his new life. The apartment we lived in was on the boardwalk across from Million Dollar Pier. Every 2 or 3 months I was allowed to come to Philadelphia to visit with my father and "Aunt Helen" and Lee. He and I got along very well I think mainly because he was as much in the dark as I was but not as deeply. At least he was where the action was. The fact that Lee was only one year older than I, we had a lot in common. I recall when I was 15 and he 16 my father had just gotten his World War 1 bonus and "Aunt Helen" and my father went to Bermuda for 2 weeks leaving the two of us alone with little or no money. Somehow or other, we managed to weather the storm and when they returned I was presented with a pocket knife. I suppose this was to compensate for the fact that we were left alone for so long and didn't commit a crime. I didn't know this while it was happening, but with almost everything in the way of gifts, pleasures, or clothes, I always came out second best. I think I noticed for the first time when we were presented with new watches. Lee got a gold Elgin and I got a white metal Waltham. If I didn't buy my clothes with money I earned, I got hand me downs, but Lee got new stuff. Unfortunately, I was not smart enough to understand what was happening.

I was about 17 when on one of my week-end visits, I told my father that I was going to leave home because I couldn't live like I was any longer. That is when Helen insisted that he get me out of there. In a very short time, we were on our way to Atlantic City for my things. Because Helen and Dad were not married at the time it was decided that I was to go to Wilkes Barre and live in the Sterling Hotel with my father until I graduated from high school that June.

Entering a new school in my senior year, I thought, was going to be somewhat difficult, however it was not. The people there were great. They accepted me as a new member of their society. For the first time in a very long time, I was at peace with myself. I found it a pleasure not to have to connive or lie to get along. I had a girlfriend who was very nice and we had a prom date. My father lent me his car for the night and he asked me not to go to Harvey's Lake, but needless to say I did. On the way back, I had a head on collision. Luckily, no one was badly hurt but the car was total wreck. What money I got for graduation was taken by Dad for the car. Of course it did not cover the cost and I'm not sure if the insurance paid for it. Now that I think about it, I'm sure it did. The very next day we moved back to Philadelphia. I didn't even get the chance to say goodbye to my friends. A new era was about to begin in my life.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 2

At this point in this narrative, I would like to say that all names with exception of family names have been changed in order for the people involved to keep their privacy intact.

(September 2019 Update – Since most of the people mentioned in Dad's story have passed away, I am taking the liberty of changing to real names of people who I know Dad was actually referencing. Dad's story is a truth based account of his life and I doubt the cast of people in this account would mind having their real names mentioned.)

It wasn't too long after arriving back in Philadelphia, I managed to acquire a job in a large bank. As a messenger, I got to know almost all the officers of the bank and one of them took me under his wing. He convinced me to go to school to major in money and banking. With help from the bank, I enrolled in Wharton School for night courses. It was no doubt the smartest thing I ever did. Unfortunately, my mentor retired and I lost my leader. In a short time some of the other officers who had resented the attention I was getting from my mentor, decided I was not the fair haired boy anymore and blocked some of the promotions I should have gotten. Because of the hostile atmosphere, I began to shop for another job and it wasn't too long before I secured a job with a larger bank with a little more money involved.

The new job was going quite well and to my pleasure, a girl was also employed in the same bank. When I saw her, I was instantly smitten with her and made it my business to go out with her. One day, I just walked up to where she worked and asked if she would like to go out to the Homecoming on Saturday. Much to my delight and surprise, she said yes. It wasn't long after that we were going "steady". I did not own a car, so very often we double dated with my friend George and his date who later became his wife. George's family was very well to do, far far out of my league, but it never affected our relationship. Through George's dad, I was able to get season tickets to the Penn State football games and of course, Polly came with me. In the summer, we went to Ocean City N. J. and after a few times the lady who owned the rooming house we stayed in would unlock the door dividing the two rooms.

Life was, for the first time in my life almost perfect. Life at home was tolerable. By this time, my father and "Aunt Helen" married and I began calling her Mom. Lee was going steady with a girl but we very seldom went out together. At this point in time, I don't

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

know why. Maybe because we liked different things. He had his circle of friends and I had mine but we got along extremely well. I was still second best in the family. Whenever the conversation was about family, my father always referred to Lee as his number ONE son and it always gave me a little shot of envy.

Polly and I were beginning to talk of getting married. I had the impression that her family would not object too much and I was sure my family would, but that was not going to be a factor. I gave her my signet ring until I was going to be able to get her an engagement ring. We were quite happy.

On a Sunday morning, George called and asked if I wanted to throw a football around for a few hours. I agreed and he came to pick me up to drive over to Upper Darby High School football field. We played around for a few hours and when I got home, my father told us about Pearl Harbor. Like millions of people, this changed our lives completely.

Both Lee and I were in the draft and Lee decided to get married with the thought that he would not be drafted if married. That theory didn't work because his call came soon after his marriage. When he was called, I decided that I didn't want to live in the mud, so I decided to enlist in the Army Air Corps. They rejected me because I told them I had had Hay Fever, so I went down the block and enlisted in the Navy V 5 program. (The Navy Air Corps) and I was accepted. They didn't call me for some time and each day, my father tried to convince me to join the Army because the Navy Air Corps was "for the rich and powerful" Thank God I rejected his urging because I was finally called and began what would become the turning point in my life.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 3

The day I was leaving for Chapel Hill, N. C. for preflight school, on the ride to the train station, my father informed me that he was sure I had made a mistake and would never complete the training. He believed this with all his heart mainly because he was afraid I might succeed therefore doing better than Lee. I must admit, this was always in the back of my mind as the training continued. At the time, the cadets were treated worse than slaves. We were fed very well and the housing was adequate but the personal treatment was brutal. We were not allowed to walk any place during the day. If we had to go to the bath room, we had to find someone else to form a platoon and run to the lavatory. We were awake at 6 A.M. breakfast at 6:30 and on the field at 7 A M seven days a week. I weighed about 135 pounds at the time but it was determined that I should weigh 150 pounds, so I was assigned to a special chow hall table along with some other cadets and ordered to consume a least 5000 calories per day. This was more food than I had ever tried to eat but eat, I did.

I recall one day at the class for boxing, the cadet I was to box was about my size and weight. I didn't know him so when we met in the ring I said something to the effect that if I wouldn't hit him too hard maybe he wouldn't hit me too hard. This went along fine for about a minute until I accidentally hung one on him. I noticed a sudden change in his face and that was the last thing I remember. He hit me in places I didn't know I had. I later learned he was a GOLDEN GLOVE fighter and had won his weight class. This training went on for 16 weeks. The last day was the supreme test: "THE DREADED STEP TEST". We wore a back pack with 2/3's of our body weight. The step was 18 inches high and we had to step up on it then step down every second for 5 minutes. To make matters worse, there was a drum beat each second. Believe me at the end of that 5 minutes, each of us were ready to kill anyone who got in our way. We were also issued our dress blues for the first time. Putting that uniform on was worth all the torture we endured for the past 4 months. My orders were for Glenview, Ill. Primary flight school.

The train ride was something out of this world. It took 4 days to go between Chapel Hill, N. C. and Glenview, Il. The poor conductor on the train almost went mad because every time the train stopped, we had pooled our money and someone was assigned to dash off the train, buy whatever booze he could find and return. While this was going on, another group armed with anything sharp would find the blocks of ice they used for the dining cars. We would chop it up to carry back to our cars. We made a cooler out of one of the

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

rest rooms to cool the beer, soda or anything that needed cooling. When the conductor tried to get into the rest room, we always had someone in there using it.

When we finally arrived in Glenview, we were pretty ripe not have a bath for 4 days. As soon as we got to our assigned billets, we quickly took a long and very hot shower. It felt wonderful.

It was at Glenview that I first saw the 'YELLOW PERIL'.

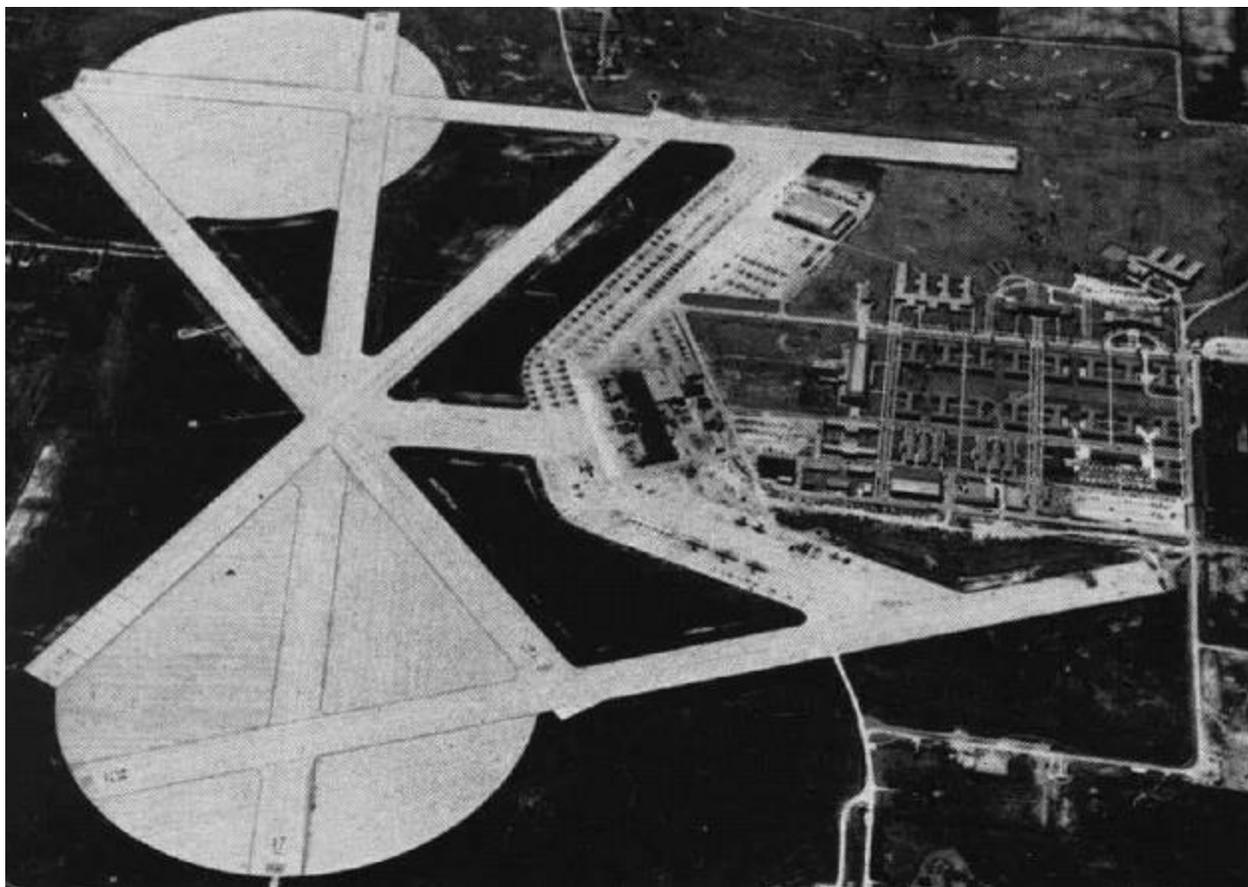


He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)



The Control Tower at the former "Glenview Naval Air Station".

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)



Overhead picture of former “Glenview Naval Air Station”.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 4

The experience we had gotten at Bloomsberg, Pa. came in mighty handy when we first got to fly the N 3 N. My instructor was a full Lieutenant in the Navy and disliked the duty he had with a passion. He had already been to sea and saw some combat flying but had an accident which caused his transfer to Glenview. The fact that he had some time with the fleet, indirectly was in my favor because he insisted I do everything absolutely correct. The airplane was a dream to fly. If properly executed, you could do almost any acrobatic maneuver known at the time, including an outside loop. Of course when you did that, your eyeballs almost popped out of your head.

After about six hours of instruction, I was ready to solo the airplane. When the instructor got out of his cockpit and told me to take it around the field and land, I almost burst with anticipation. The thrill is almost indescribable. In what I considered a powerful airplane, I was at the controls all by myself. The takeoff was standard. The turn around the field was near perfect and the landing was just like the book says. I greased it on the runway for probably what was the best landing I ever made.

The training went rather smoothly and the treatment of the cadets eased off quite a bit. And of course, there was Chicago.

Our first liberty was to Chicago and we discovered the SHERMAN HOTEL BAR. Cadet uniforms had a star on the sleeve but no bar. This is the same insignia a Rear Admiral has. To this day, I'm not sure some of the people didn't think we had all that rank. The general population treated us like royalty. It was almost impossible to spend any money because people were always buying us drinks. Needless to say, we very seldom turned them down. The bar became our base of operation when in town.

The N 3 N is an open cockpit airplane and it gets a bit cold in the Chicago area in the winter. Some times when flying over Lake Michigan, it got so cold, we would get frost bitten on the nose or cheeks of our faces. When we had NIGHT FLYING, we would orbit the outdoor movie screen until some idiot would decide to make left hand turns when everyone else was making right hand turns. The flying was wonderful and the life was getting to be enjoyable. The traditions of the Navy were beginning to become embedded and we were passing all flight checks.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

As we neared the end of primary training and our next worry was where we were going to be assigned for further training. Of course, we all wanted FIGHTERS and we knew not all of us would be lucky enough to get them. Our fears were a bit premature because we forgot that intermediate training preceded all selections.

The final check came and I passed with flying colors. In fact, I covered the entire course without one down check. I'm proud to say that not too many cadets were able to do that.

The day after the final flight, we all gathered around the flight board to see where we were to get our next station.

The group of guys who seemed to be more friendly as a group consisting of FRANK FLOOD, DANNY GLASS, ANDY, DUANE , STAN AND ME were being sent to Kingsville, Tex. Little did we know then that it was to be a very long assignment.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 5



As luck would have it, the six of us were assigned to the same training unit. Our friendship grew into something hard to describe unless you were in the same situation. We genuinely cared about the other guy and went out of our way to protect or help one another. When we flew together, we got to the point where we could almost anticipate what the other was going to do.

The VULTEE was a low wing monoplane with fixed landing gear. It had a radial engine with a variable pitch propeller. The top speed was about 170 knots, very agile in the sky and quite easy to fly. The training consisted of mastering the airplane and putting it into positions that would simulate air combat. The navigation course was the hardest part of all. Many times, cadets were all over the skies of Texas, trying to find the home field.

Our social life was uneventful in that when we had liberty, it was a long trip to Corpus Christi and Kingsville had just a few bars with not much going on in them. The Mexican restaurants were good and it is in them that I learned to like Mexican food. I also learned to drink some of the worst grade of liquor ever produced. Our pay scale was quite meager hence we had little to spend on anything, and being a cadet, we were the lowest rate in the Navy , (LOWER THAN WHALE SHIT). All in all, life wasn't too bad.

After about 12 weeks, we finished intermediate training and it was then we held our breath, waiting for the next phase. Would it be fighters or bombers? The six of us lucked out and we all were being sent to advance training at Kingsville for fighter training in S N J's.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)



The S N J was a dream to fly. The gear came up after takeoff and it was the fastest airplane I had ever flown (as well as all the other guys). The instructors were very hard on us and everything had to be perfect. It was at this point in the course that most of the cadets washed out. The plane was a little tricky to land in that the landing gear was narrow which if not careful could ground loop when not being watchful. During the entire time, when things got a little hairy, I would remember what my father said and I would try that much harder.

We were doing well and one day we were to practice “DOG FIGHTING“. The last thing the instructor said was: “Do not go into the sun“. Well when you have two pilots with about the same ability and the same airplane, it is almost impossible for one to defeat the other. You have to out think him. Needless to say, I decided to do a half roll and climb up into the sun. Unfortunately, John had the same idea as I at the same time. At the very last second, I saw him but it was too late and we hit. Luckily, my hatch was open. I flipped the safety belt and was ejected from the plane as it rolled over. I have no memory of the descent with the parachute, but I remember gathering the chute for fear the Navy was going to charge me for it and the airplane.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

A farmer saw me land and thankfully came over to see if I were still alive. He offered to take me back to the base for which I was most grateful. When I got back, the stupid Marine on the gate wouldn't let me in because I did not have a liberty card. Just then, the officer of the day came by, saw what was happening, put me in his Jeep and took me to the dispensary. The doctor was surprised I hadn't had a heart attack because my heart rate was off the chart. Nothing was broken, so he told me to report to the flight line. When I walked in, John, who was able to fly his plane back, was sitting there thinking I had been killed, looked up and exclaimed in a shrill voice: "YOU ARE DEAD YOU SON OF A BITCH, YOU ARE DEAD"! I assured him I wasn't and we reported to the skipper. We told him what happened thinking that would be it and we would be washed out, but he said he was glad we were both alright and told us to go down to the flight line, take a plane around the field once or twice, land and then go into town and get drunk. When I told him I didn't have any money he reached into his pocket, took out 2 twenty dollar bills out, gave one to each of us and said, "Now get the hell out of here". There was a great guy. Both John and I tried to pay him back the next pay day but he refused the money.

The final flight test was really involved. My instructor was very eager and had me do everything that was ever taught in flight school. When the flight was over, he explained that when he was at sea, he had a wing man who wasn't a very good pilot and it almost cost him his life, so when he became an instructor he vowed to not have any more pilots like his former wingman go to the fleet again. I understood why then.

Graduation day was probably the best day of my life up to then. I had achieved what I was told I couldn't do and did it with class. I never had a DOWN CHECK. I do not know for sure, but I bet not many cadets can say the same thing.

The GOLD WINGS were something to be proud of, and I for one was proud as could be.

We were given 30 days leave with additional travel time to go home. The train situation in Corpus Christi was deplorable, so being who we were, we went to the civilian airport, found a guy who had a plane, and hired him to fly Frank, Danny Andy and me as far north as he could. I think he got us as far as Knoxville, Ten. Where we got a train to Philadelphia for Frank and Danny and me. Andy went on to New York. I got a cab at the train station for the ride home and to this day, I don't understand what in hell my hurry was.

My father said hello, and my step mother was seemingly happy and offered to fix me something to eat. My father went back to bed. The next morning Dad had gone to work and I talked with my mother for the best part of day.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

I must say, she was interested in what I had to say. I knew Lee was a German prisoner and of course she was concerned about him.

While he was confined, both parents got two gifts, one from me and one from Lee, which I took care of. I can't recall ever being thanked for the gesture. It amazes me at how stupid and unaware I was then concerning my parents. All the signals were there, I just didn't read them.

The leave went by very fast and I was on my way back to Texas with the thought that I would be assigned to a fleet unit. Danny had come down to Philadelphia to return to Texas with me and when we checked in we found Frank and Andy waiting for us. We immediately went over to the operation office to get our orders. We were devastated. We were to be instructors at Cudahy Field. What a letdown that was. Checking into the B O Q was like the first day in college. We were assigned rooms and the guys already there were as friendly as could be. Another new life phase was about to begin.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 6

The first few days were spent getting acquainted with the general area in which we would be flying and the flight course we were to teach. After about a week, we were given our first student for instruction. My mind flashed back to when I was in the same position as this cadet and was extra careful to get him to relax. We were flying Vultee airplanes and after an exhaustive pre-flight lecture we were ready for takeoff. I told him that he was to take the plane off the ground and fly to an altitude somewhere around 5000 feet.

Surprisingly, he did quite well and I was relieved. I asked him to do some simple turns and other maneuvers which he also did well. The hour passed very quickly so we headed home. When we about to land he somehow allowed the plane to flare up and we almost stalled. I took the stick and steadied the plane and landed. Aside from the faulty landing, my first student did fairly good and I gave him an up-check. There were hundreds of cadets after that and some of the flights were worth remembering. One for sure was when the student froze the stick in a steep dive, wouldn't let go and the ground was getting closer by the second. After several urgings to have him let go, I told him I was getting out. I undid my seat belt and decided to try one more time. I got my foot behind the stick and kicked as hard as I could and as luck would have it the stick came loose. I pulled up at around 900 feet. We landed at a small outlying field, offered him a cigarette and asked him what happened. He didn't know. I asked him if he wanted to try again and he said yes. I thought hard and long before getting back into the airplane with him again but in the end I did. When he took off, I told him to climb to 8000 feet. At altitude, I told him to roll the plane on its back and dive to 5000 feet. I was prepared to bail out if there was a repeat of what happened before. This time, he did very well and we returned to base. I put a note in his flight jacket describing what happened just in case an other instructor had the same experience. I never found out if that cadet ever got his wings.

Life and times at Cuddihy were good. The officers club opened at 4:30 P M and if we did not have the duty we were there for the opening. It was here that I acquired my love of Scotch Whiskey. I also acquired a taste for Martini's. As a matter of fact, there were very few drinks I didn't like. When we were given liberty, we were able to go to Corpus Christi for the week-end and most often we spent almost all our money. There were lots of women and surprisingly, not much hanky panky going on. Maybe it was because we were a little naïve or we didn't know how. I kind of doubt the last statement. By this time, I had somehow drifted away from Polly.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

We wrote to one another but the passion was beginning to cool. Not so much on my part but I sensed it on her part. I must admit, I didn't seem to be too upset about it, thinking all would settle down once we saw one another again.

The war was always in our minds. We felt that things were passing by and we were going to miss the big show. The cadets were coming and going at a fast clip. Lots of them were being washed out because the quality of people was getting lower. Some of the cadets couldn't understand some of the ground school curriculum or understand some of the flight instructions. We felt that to lower the standards was unfair and unpatriotic but most of all, if and when we went to sea we didn't want those eight-balls flying with us.

Finally, it was orders time and we felt sure that this time we would get our sea duty orders. When they arrived, not one of us would get to sea then. We were being sent to Kingsville N A S (Naval Air Station) to be instructors in advanced training. The airplanes were S N J's. Like I said before, this was a great plane but still not a front line fighter. The move to Kingsville was uneventful and the fact that our entire group was together, we had no trouble fitting in. So still another phase of Navy life was to begin.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 7

We had all been cadets at Kingsville so we were very familiar with the base and the area. The officers club was a good one and the mess hall was also very good. Surprisingly, the food was excellent with a wide variety of things to eat. We were able to buy all the booze we wanted as long as we also bought some rum, gin or vodka. Then there was the flying. The cadets were not as bad here as they were at Cudahy. By this time most of the marginal fliers were weeded out and the so called cream were being tested. The flight course was much stricter and we as instructors were lot more demanding.

Several of my students were very good and I gave them the opportunity to display all the talent they had. Sometimes they would scare the hell out of me but all in all, they did well.

Being senior Ensigns, we had a little more latitude than before, which allowed us more liberties. We were able to have more time off and that meant going into Corpus Christi more often for fun and games.

After about six months, I received a disturbing letter from my birth mother saying that she was interested in attaching some of my pay for her support. I was completely confounded with this and decided to call my father for help. Much to my surprise and delight, he did do something, I don't know what, and then wrote and said that he and my step mother were coming to Kingsville for the Christmas holidays. I made arrangements for a place for them to stay in town and they arrived a day or so before Christmas. There was a gala party at the officers club Christmas Eve and of course I had them attend. They had been to the base the day before and marveled at the quality of our food and when they were at the party, my father questioned whether we knew there was a war going on. Little did he know how it was to have cadets fly you all over the sky and not know what they are doing. When the party was slowing down it was decided to transfer to the Nurses quarters to finish the evening. One of the nurses was a gal from Ashley, Pa., A suburb of Wilkes-Barre, Pa. I had told her I lived at the Sterling Hotel for a while but I don't think she believed me at first but after speaking to my father she came around. In the course of the night, my dad told me that Rosemary was going home on leave and he told her I would fly her out of Texas because it was so hard to get train service. When he told me what he had done, I was very upset because I wasn't sure I wanted to take the time to go that far.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

I didn't say anything to Rosemary about my displeasure but did ask her if she would go with me for the New Year's Eve party and she agreed. On the way to the party we were in the rumble seat of a car and the conversation was outstanding. I don't remember what we talked about but it was great.

She came down to the flight line ready for a flight to St Louis where I intended to get her to. I had her put on my heavy flight jacket and the parachute. Thank God we didn't have to bail out because she would have fallen through the jacket. About 30 minutes into the flight I noticed the fuel gauge moving faster than it should and decided to look for an alternate landing field . Austin was the best place to land because it had an Army Air base there. When we landed the army guy thought Rosemary was the pilot but I corrected him and told him T thought there was something wrong with the engine because we used a full tank of gas when we should have only burned about half. He told us there were hotels in town and we went to town. We stopped at the train station, got her a seat on a train leaving the next morning and checked into a hotel. I have to admit, I tried all night to get into her pants but couldn't. The next morning, I took her to the station and I went out to the field to see if my plane was fixed. They told me that some part had broken and the gas was just running out and I was lucky that the plane didn't catch fire. I'm glad Rosemary wasn't there to hear that.

The next 30 days were the longest 30 days I had ever experienced. When I figured she was due back, I kept watching the pathway to her quarters. Then one day I saw her rounding the path. Impulsively I started to run toward her and she to me. That was it. I knew that I had found the woman I was looking for.

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This was some time in February. We talked every day and decided to get married on the 2nd of March, 1945.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)



Her co-workers helped her get things she needed and I had the dilemma of selecting my best man and someone to give the bride away. Our parents were unable to come to Texas for the wedding. With the flip of a coin, I chose Danny to be the best man and Frank to give Rosemary away. She chose Belinda, a fellow nurse for her maid of honor.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)



(September 2019 update – From left to right: Danny Glass

An interesting note is due here. When Rosemary invited the skipper to our wedding, he inquired about who she was going to marry. When she told him it was me, he started to shuffle through his desk for some papers. When he found them he told her that I was about to be passed over for promotion because I had had some, as a matter of fact, quite a few discipline problems. As a wedding present he gave me my promotion to Lt. J G.

When she was thirty five minutes late for the ceremony, I thought she changed her mind. I later found out that she wanted to get married with the clock on the up swing. Aside from that little to do the wedding was perfect. We had a reception at the home of one of the senior officers and we went to San Antonio for our one night honeymoon.

When we got back we managed to find a room in town and that became home for the rest of the time I had in Texas.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 8

We were very happy with our way of life. Needless to say, we were hopelessly in love and didn't care what the rest of the world was doing. Rosemary went on duty each day and so did I. In the evenings, we went to the "O" club for fun and games. This went on for a short time when orders finally came. Danny, Duane Stan and me were being sent to Florida to train in Corsairs a top of the line fighter plane. Leaving Rosemary was like ripping my heart out and we devised a way for her to resign her commission. I was given a 30 day leave but she could not get one at the same time.

Danny and I decided to drive North in the car Rosemary and I had purchased , a 1939 Ford business coupe. The car was used to going on aviation fuel so we were not sure it would run on regular gas. The tires were marginal so it wasn't long before we had flat tires on an hourly basis. In a little town in North Carolina, we stopped at a garage, told the guy we needed tires and he told us we needed coupons. Not having any, we flashed our Navy orders, telling him it was in the war effort and we got the tires. I dropped

Danny

off at the train station when we got to Philadelphia and I went home.

I didn't know this before but Lee had been rescued from the prison camp and was home on leave. Somehow or other, my father convinced me to sell our car to Lee, so like a fool, I did for the same amount I paid . I could have gotten twice that amount if I had driven it to Florida. As part of the deal, my father allowed me to use his car to drive to Ashley to meet Rosemary's family.

When I arrived, Jerry, her young brother came out of the store front to greet me. With him was the biggest dog I had ever seen. When I got out of the car, the dog put one paw on each of my shoulders and his face was inches from mine. I was convinced he was going to eat me. Then when Jerry smacked him on his rump, I thought sure the dog would eat him but all he did was get down and slowly walk into the building.

That night, Mother and Dad Mangan had a party in my honor. I don't recall how many people were there but there were quite a few. At one point in the evening, one of the aunts said to Mother Mangan, "what's it like to lose a daughter?" And she said "I didn't lose a daughter, I have a new son" I got off my chair, walked across the room, kissed her and we were buddies for the rest of her life.

As time went on, I cared more for that family, who showed me what family love really

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

was, then my own, who did not know the meaning of family love as far as I was concerned.

The 30 days went by without much ado. My father was a bit upset because I told him I had designated Rosemary to receive any benefits if I were to get killed. He had already used a good deal of what money I had for what, I don't know.

Danny came down from Harrisburg and we boarded the train to Florida. The Jacksonville Naval Air Station was huge. In a day or so, we were sent to Green Cove Springs to begin our Corsair training. The airplane was dream to fly but a monster to conquer.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 9



The first time getting into the cockpit of the Corsair was a time to remember. The fourteen feet of nose jutting out in front of you was like looking down a long tunnel. When the engine was started, it sounded like the world was coming to an end. My first plane had a three bladed propeller. Some later one's had four blades. It didn't matter much which propeller it had, it flew like a bird. Anything I wanted to do with the airplane it would do and do it gracefully.

After about three or four months, Rosemary's release from active duty came through and she flew down to Florida. Needless to say, her arrival was more than welcome. At first, there were no quarters for married officers on the base, so we lived at the "Qui Sesana" Hotel in Green Cove Springs until quarters became available. I don't remember how long it was but after a while we were able to move to what were mobile homes that were designated as housing for married officers. Not ever living in something like this, we were like kids with a new toy. One time we decided to have a dinner party, invited several people, was trying to prepare pasta but the water wouldn't boil because the

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

propane stove couldn't get the water hot enough. We ended up having Jello and several bottles of whiskey. We had a ball. Another time and I'm not too proud of this, we were going to have steak for dinner. Rosemary tried to make something that was supposed to be soup. It was terrible so I told her I was going to the officers club for dinner. Rightly so, she was very upset and I acted like a jack-ass. The bathrooms were a sort of communal arrangement. A building with a line of toilets and a door for each. You never knew if one was occupied until you opened the door. Many times, you were greeted by someone in need.

The flying was good, the living was good and we knew that time was NOT on our side. The war in Europe had ended and the invasion of Japan was the topic of conversation. We felt that the Japs would fight to the last person making the invasion a long and arduous job. The unspoken rule was not to discuss what was about to happen, then, God bless Harry Truman, we dropped the atomic bomb and the Japs gave up. To this day, I am convinced that if this country had not dropped those bombs, I and many of our friends and relatives would not be alive today.

The government soon devised a point system for being relieved of duty. We learned that Naval Officers would not be given discharges but would be released to inactive duty. At the time this did not disturb me. I calculated my points and I was able to get out rather quickly. There was never a question in my mind about making the Navy a career. I wanted out as soon as I could get it and I did.

The checking out process was not too involved. They calculated how much money I was due and where I was supposed to return, and I was on my way with my wonderful wife and the beginning of a life I would never have guessed in a million years.

The month was November, I was in a summer uniform and when we landed in Philadelphia, I almost froze to death. It was then I learned that my father had given away all of my clothes thinking I would not be returning. I should have had an inkling of what was to be, but I admit I was slow and stupid. The next several years were, for want of a better expression, interesting.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 10



We stayed with Lee and Betty Jane in Betty Jane's mother's house for a few days until we were able to find a place to stay. We found a room in a private house thinking it would only be for a short time. Little did we know it would be at least 9 months. I went back to work at the bank and Rosemary spent her days looking for a place to live. She finally found an apartment and we asked my father if he could help us get some furniture and rugs. When he saw the apartment he said it made him sick and suggested we buy a house. At the time I was 23 years old and for the first time in my young life, he gave me good advice. The house we bought was being built and would be ready in about 4 or 5 months. We agonized about the payments. We used Rosemary's G I bill of rights and with no down payment the mortgage was \$7200.00 with payments of \$49.00 monthly. In 1946, this was a huge amount of money. We had no trouble getting the mortgage because my job was paying a big \$50.00 per week. We still had our mustering out money so we were in clover.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

At the time it seemed like it took forever to complete the house but the day finale arrived. We purchased a house full of furniture and most of the kitchen utensils in a matter of days. When we applied for our electric and gas and telephone the clerks didn't believe we had not borrowed money from anyone and we had to show receipts to prove our story. Move in day came and we were as happy as any two people could be. In a very short time, we had a gala house warming party and devised a guest list. We bought many bottles of liquor lots of goodies and started to prepare. You won't believe this but Rosemary filleted six cans of sardines because she didn't like the bones. The party went over very well with several overnight guests staying the week-end.

We then settled into being a happily married couple. My folks lived in Camp Hill, Pa. Every once in a while my father would come to Philadelphia on business and of course he would stay with us because Lee was still living with his mother-in-law. Like a fool, we gave him a key to our house which gave him the opportunity to come and go as he pleased. Little did we know that our lives were being exposed beyond our belief.

Our social life was quite active. We had become very friendly with Jack and Jane Calder and every Saturday night we would go to a local pub, drink ale all night then end up at Linton's restaurant for a late breakfast. We had more fun with little or no money to spend.

Jack was able to borrow his uncle's car and we went to Lake George for a week after Labor Day. The reason for the dates was because after the holiday the rates were very inexpensive. We each had one half of a duplex cabin each with a fire place. On the way up to the lake, we stopped off to buy some refreshments, apple jack being one of the refreshments. It wasn't long before we became friendly with the owner of the resort and we pretty much had the run of the place. He even let us use the speed boat and the sail boat by ourselves. I learned to water ski there but never got used to swimming in frigid water.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Our neighbors were all ex-service people so we had lots in common. The communal parties were great and in most cases lasting the entire week-end. Time was going by and we were trying to conceive a child with no results. We consulted doctors, had a zillion tests, told all was normal, get drunk and have a good time all with no results. We talked about adopting a child and decided that if we did, we wanted an infant. We discovered that because we were of different religions we presented a problem. We applied to the Catholic Charities and to a secular agency. About the middle of May in 1949, Rosemary got a call that a child was available and we could have him on the 31st of May. He was born on the 26th of May. The 31st was the day they called. She called me at the bank, told me what was up and I flew home. I think I broke every traffic law in Philadelphia that day but we got to the Catholic Charities before it closed. When the nun brought our baby out for us to see, we looked at the most beautiful child I had ever seen. On the way home he fussed a bit but that didn't bother us too much. We stopped at the furniture store in Darby and bought a crib so that he could sleep that night. We selected the name of Donal Paul, no D at the end of his name. We liked the sound of the name. His arrival was the beginning of still another phase of our life.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 11

Our lives changed with the new baby with us. Rosemary was so eager to do everything right, she almost put herself into a state of collapse. The pediatrician we took Donal to, was quite gruff in his manner and in no uncertain terms told us to back off and allow Don to grow.

My friend Jack Smith who worked at the bank with me was a photographer on the side and he and his lady friend would visit often. He must have taken hundreds of pictures of Don as an infant which we proudly displayed all over the house. He was the person who got me interested in photography and helped me purchase my first good camera. To this day, those photos are a prized possession

My father and step- mother came over every Saturday not necessarily to see Don but to watch the baseball games on the T V. We were the first people in our circle of friends and relatives to own a T V. Of course, when they had something else to do they would not show up for which we were very happy. The day Don was baptized, my father made a big fuss because I said the T V was not to be turned on, so he sat in his car at the curb to listen to the ball game. I was so mad I could spit but kept my cool because I didn't want to mess up the big day that was Don's.

When Don was about five years old we drove to Miami Beach, Fl. on vacation. The hotel we stayed at was very nice and there was another guest, a single man, who fell in love with Don. He would play with him at the pool most of the day and sometimes would ask if he could take him for walks in the evening. Back in those days one didn't fear having people being kind to our children. Like all vacations, it flew by quickly. One day we noticed a sign in the lobby stating you could have your car driven home for a relatively small amount of money. We talked it over, decided we could afford it, made the arrangements and were able to stay a few more days. When we got back to Philadelphia, the car was there all safe and sound.

Sometime prior to that time I had left the bank and became a salesman with a floor covering wholesaler. The people who owned the business were related to the mills owner so we had merchandise when no one else had. I decided that I liked being in that sort of business and made it my business to learn as much as I could about it. I read anything concerning carpet and linoleum and tried to keep it in my mind. It was something I enjoyed and I looked forward to going to work every day.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

It was about this time that we were talking of having another child. We started the routine again and the quest was just as tedious as it was before. After what seemed like forever, we got a call that a little boy was available and did we want him? We sure did and we went to Scranton, Pa. to pick up our beautiful little boy who we named Garry Alan. Again we had the most beautiful baby you will ever see.

The house we had had built in Shavertown, Pa. was about to get too small. At the time it was being built, I did not know how to read blue prints so each time the builder put a new board on it, it got smaller. We looked and looked for a new or different house within our budget. We hired a real estate broker who was doing business with a builder in Dallas, Pa. I looked at the new house he was building and told the broker we would buy the new house if he was able to sell the existing one. He told us that he would take it in trade at the price we agreed on and we bought the new house that cost more money than we wanted to spend. The house was huge. We had a 30 foot living room, a big eat in kitchen, a formal dining room and 4 bed-rooms with 2 ½ bathrooms. The basement was divided into 4 rooms and to top it off, we had an extra-large 2 car garage. There were 4 levels to the house and I loved it. I don't think Rosemary ever liked it as much as I did and the two boys did. We had a humongous housewarming party that lasted an entire week-end.



He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 12

I had joined the Kiwanis club in Dallas, Pa. sometime before and the people in that club became the nucleus of the group of people who became our best friends. For reasons I don't know, I became very good friends with two men in particular. Joe Treat and Joel Gardon. Joel was a salesman and covered the same territory I did and many time we would travel together to save gas and hotel expenses. Aside from which, we enjoyed each other's company. Joe had a business in the area and he and his wife, Mary, hit it off very well with Rosemary and I. Another good friend was Bill and Ruth Guyette. They owned a business in Dallas but lived in Tunkannock, Pa, about 15 miles north of Dallas. We had many good and happy parties with this group. One night, we had an outdoor barbeque and we started to run out of fire wood so we proceeded to breakup our lawn furniture to keep the fire going. Needless to say, we wondered what had happened the next morning.

The library in town had an auction each year to cover the expense of the library. This was a community affair encompassing the entire region. I became interested in the operation, worked for several years on the project and then became the chairman one year. This job was a year long task, the hardest part being the job of keeping egos from clashing among the workers who were the icons of the area. I'm pleased to say that the year I was the chairman, we had a very good year for money brought in.

Our two sons were growing up and by and large were a pleasure to Rosemary and I. Sure there were times we would have sold them for a dollar in Confederate money but all in all we were very happy and proud parents. Don and Garry were bright and had the ability to grasp things in a hurry. Christmas time was a gala time for us. While still in the "Santa Claus" era, Christmas morning was hectic because I had to have the movie camera all set before the boys could see the tree and the gifts. The joy and expressions on their faces is still a source of joy to me each time I think about it. One year we gave Don an electric guitar for Christmas. For unknown reasons he never was interested in mastering it but Garry on a whim, picked it up one day and proceeded to play with it. In time Garry taught himself to play and went on to play the bass with some well known bands. I remember telling him when he practiced on his bass that I didn't think he could play until he could play Honeysuckle Rose. One evening while in his room I heard the song being played and as he stood in the doorway said: "WELL"? He had taught himself to play the Spanish guitar also.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

When Don graduated high school, his marks were very good and he had earned some scholarship money. He wanted to go to a college in Indiana because a friend of his was going there. We wanted him to go to a school closer to home but he had his way. This developed into a big mistake. About this time, I had started a new business with Bill Summers. For a while it was going fairly well however because we were under financed and had different business ideas, we failed. I was flat broke and in debt up to my eye balls. One of the hardest things I ever had to do was go back to my former company and ask for a job. As I look back on it now, I realize they gave me the job out of sheer kindness. The job was in Philadelphia so I rented a room from a wonderful kind lady and would commute Monday to Friday and come home Friday and leave first thing Monday morning. I had made arrangements with the bank to pay them so much each month until the debt was paid. My friend and lawyer pleaded with me to go into bankruptcy but I was too proud to do that.

This situation went on for the best part of a year until one day a fellow salesman who I had known for many years recommended me to someone interested in starting a business in the Wilkes-Barre area. The main office was in Trenton, N. J. and I went to talk to them. I can't say what gave me the courage to say what I did but I acted like I really wasn't interested in the job and in turn asked for more money than I figured the job was worth. Much to my surprise, they accepted. I told my friends at the company what had transpired and they were delighted for me and I suppose for themselves because they needed me like another hole in their heads.

Of course we were still in debt but the problem became easier to cope with. It was about this time that Don decided to leave college and hitch hiked to Florida to my father's place. What a monumental mistake that was.

The telephone call from my father was something I would rather not recall. All I heard was how much money he had spent on Don in the short time he was there. I assured him that I would reimburse all he had spent but to please put him on a plane back to Philadelphia with no stops in between. I drove down to Philadelphia to pick him up. In the ride back to Dallas I don't think he said two words. Each time I asked a question, he just stared out the car window. Our money situation was a little better than it was but still not in clover so I had to be careful as to what I could do for him. We told him that if he would go back to school he could and we would take care of the expense. No answer from him. In a few days, he informed us that he had enlisted in the Marine Corps. This was a real blow to Rosemary and I but later thought the discipline would do him some good. It still was a bad time for us in not knowing what was going to be. The Vietnam war was raging and we were sure he was going to be involved in that mess.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

After his boot camp training, he was about to be transferred some place when he accidentally struck his knees on the rail of his bed, badly enough to hospitalize him. In that interim, his unit shipped out and he was sent to computer school because he tested so well. That was the best thing that could have happened to him because that training became the basis of his future.

After his schooling, he was sent to Kansas City, a Marine base and computer center, where he polished his craft. In what seemed like a very short time he informed us that he was in love and was going to get married. The girl was from Olathe, Kan. We drove out to Kansas for the wedding, met the bride's family and came back a little up-set because his in-laws convinced him to renounce his religion which he readily did.

After about a year he called and told us that Chris was going to have a baby. We got weekly reports and the day she delivered the baby, he was on the phone most of the day talking to his mother. Lance was born on 3rd of August and Rosemary called me at my office with the good news. I said we would wait for a few weeks and then go see our first grandchild. Well when I got home from work that day, I told her to pack because we were leaving in the morning. Garry was already out there visiting Don so we didn't have much planning to do in order to get ready and off we went. As a matter of fact, we got there the same day Chris was released from the hospital with the baby.

There was organized confusion the whole time we were there in that Don was overly protective of his baby and was reluctant to allow anyone to hold the baby beside Chris his mother and father and himself. When the Klinefeldt's visited, he put Lance in his crib and that was it for the time they were there.

Rosemary, Garry and I left for Dallas after about 10 days and on the way back ran into a blizzard like snow storm. I wanted to stay in a motel until it blew over but Garry told us he had to be back because he was going out for the baseball team and he had to be in school to sign up. We plowed through the storm somehow and got home with the snow up to our ears. The irony of that little tale is that Garry didn't make the team because he refused to cut his hair and that was one of the requirements for getting on the team.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Life was beginning to be enjoyable again. Our social life was good and we were finally out of debt and were able to save a penny or two. Business was fairly good and I was making some extra money with the increased business. We had joined a swim club and on the 4th of July, we were at the pool for the day. When we got home, the phone was ringing and when I answered it got the shock of my life. My warehouse was on fire and the fire company could not put out the fire. I raced down town and when I got there I was sick. The flames were 50 feet in the air and the fire hoses were as effective as a spit in the ocean. Bernie, my office man, had arrived shortly after the fire started and was able to get into the office and get our books out but that was it. The building and its contents smoldered for 6 days and each day the fire company came over to put more water on the mess. When I called Trenton to tell them what happened, they were in shock and arrived in a few days to see the damage. We were insured for the whole thing with the exception of business interruption for more than 3 months. When the 3 months were up it was decided that they did not want another investment as before and we would work out of an office with inventory in Trenton. I told them that I didn't think this would work and I was right. We tried it for about 6 months and I knew the writing was on the wall.



He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Rosemary and I talked it over and came to the conclusion that we would sell the house and move to Florida. At the time I did not have a job there but felt I would be able to secure one long before we ran out of money.

It didn't take long to sell the house because the hurricane Agnes devastated the area and houses were at a premium in the Dallas area far from the flooding. A mammoth garage sale disposed of a good deal of our odds and ends , we got an apartment in St Petersburg, Fl. and moved in July of 1972. Garry was understandably upset because we had him leave high school for his senior year. Thus another phase of our lives was about to begin.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 13

While still in Pennsylvania, I had contacted a floor covering company in Miami, Fl. about working with them. At the time, they told me that they were thinking of opening a branch in Tampa, Fl., but they had someone in mind for the job however, they ask me to give them my name and to let them know when I was moving to Florida.

The day we left Dallas, the weather was as bad as it could be. The rain was coming in solid sheets and the visibility was terrible. I was driving my car and Rosemary with Garry were in her car. We got to Harrisburg, Pa. and decided to look for a place to stay the night. I found one in the phone book, got a reservation and proceeded to go.

Unfortunately, getting out of the parking lot, we became separated. I didn't think of it at the time but Rosemary had little or no money with her and if we didn't find one another, she would be in a big mess. When Rosemary asked Garry if he had any money, he told her he had some for himself but not for her. Luckily, we found one another along the road and proceeded to the motel. When we arrived the kitchen was closed and the only thing available to eat were some old sandwiches. Needless to say it was a very bad day all around.

After that fiasco, we decided that Garry would drive Rosemary's car and she would ride with me. He was not good company all the way to Florida and as I look back on the time, I can't blame him too much.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)



When we got to St Petersburg, we stopped at my parents place and we were welcomed like we had the plague. Our furniture was not due for 2 days and they became the longest 2 days of our lives. Finally the furniture arrived and we moved into a 2 bedroom apartment. This was quite a change for us coming from a huge house into an apartment that was about 975 square feet. The first several weeks of Florida living was an adventure for us. We enrolled Garry into the high school that was next to our apartment complex and we proceeded to become Florida residents. While doing this, we became somewhat familiar with the area but managed to get lost at least once a day.

My father and step mother were living like they were waiting to die. He would not use the air conditioning because according to him it cost too much. The result, their apartment was like an oven whenever we went there. Thanksgiving that year was a disaster. I had suggested they come to our place but they preferred to go out. I told them that was one holiday we liked to be home and offered to cook the turkey but Mother said she would do it. As it came about, they bought the bird already cooked and it tasted like shoe leather. A bad day that was. There were many bad days when I think back on that time and for the life of me I don't understand what took me so long to come to my senses.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

On a whim, I decided to call the company in Miami to see if they had had any change in plans. When I called they said that they had tried to contact me with no results and was glad I called. They asked if I would fly over to Miami for an interview and they would pay my expenses. Of course I said I would and went the next day. We had an excellent meeting. The man they had was unhappy in the wholesale business and wanted out and this was right up my alley. They also were in the contracting business and I told them I didn't know much if anything about that phase of the business but I was a quick learner. They told me that I had the job and could I start in about two weeks. I agreed and when I got home they called that evening and asked if I could start the next day. I did and it was one of the best moves I have ever made.

It didn't take me long to learn to read blue prints and to get dimensions from them. I soon found that I could make more money in the contracting end of the business than in the wholesale end and I proceeded to call on developers of condominiums and housing projects. It was then that I started to make some important money. Being broke for so long, we were careful not to go too far overboard but after about a year we decided we needed a break and made arrangements to go to Italy.

Our trip to Italy was our first to Europe and it was wonderful. Italy was like a huge museum. Every place you put your eyes, there was a treasure. The tour we used was extensive in that we got to many places that some of our friends did not get to. I must have taken a zillion pictures and still enjoy looking at them when I am in the mood.

Not long after returning from Italy, we were informed by my step mother that my father was supposed to have cancer of the bladder. I went to the doctor with him on his next visit and the doctor told me that in all probability, he would live his normal life span and not to be too concerned. I told my mother this but she did not believe me. The doctor had not told Dad he had cancer and I told the doctor that when he had colon cancer, he handled that problem in fine order so I was sure he would do it again. I was wrong. When I told him about his cancer he decided that he was finished and proceeded to die. My mother accused me of hastening his death by telling him the truth. When his brother came to Florida to see him, Mother called and told me Morris was there. I had had a little problem with him sometime in the past and didn't feel I was obliged to dash over to see him. This upset my mother and she decided not to communicate any more. In the mean time she put my father in a nursing home thinking the cancer could be contagious. Needless to say, he didn't last long in there. One evening, when I arrived home from work, Rosemary told me that my father had passed away. We immediately went over to my mother's place but she would not let me in because she didn't want to be upset. Before I knew what was happening, she had taken his body to Philadelphia for burial and to this day, I have no idea where it is.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

It was about this time that Don, who had gotten married again, was living in Clearwater Fl. We thought his marriage was doing well but found our information was incorrect. When he found his wife fooling around, it bothered him to a point where he had a breakdown. He lost his ability to think straight and took up with a girl who was not a very nice person. The result of this caused him to quit his job, convert all his savings into a cash account and proceeded, with her help, to spend every dime he had. He disappeared for a long while and we finally found him some place in the western part of the country. He then went back to Pennsylvania where he contacted my friend Bill Guyette. Bill kindly helped him find a place to live and in turn, Don found a job that worked out very well.

Rosemary kept in touch with my step mother as time went on but I didn't. After many conversations, Rosemary convinced me to bury the hatchet and call her. I did and we went to see her. The meeting was very cool and when I inquired about my father's ring, that I was supposed to inherit, she told me she had given it to Lee because she wanted to "KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY" There are no words to describe how I felt when I heard that and at that moment lost any and all affection I ever had for her and I had lots before.

It wasn't long after that, Lee decided to move her back to Philadelphia but what she did not know, to be placed in a nursing home. Rosemary drove her to the airport after buying her some clothes for the trip because she did not have suitable clothing for travel.

I never saw her again and I must admit am not too concerned about it. There are no descriptive words I can think of to relate how I felt that night. I try not to think about it but in the back of my mind, it is always there. After 50 plus years, I was not a member of the family.

But life went on for us and the life was pretty good. We traveled often and extensively. We visited almost all of Europe and South America and had great times.

There were changes in the company, subtle as they were, but never the less, changes. One day one of the bosses came over from Miami and told me I had to change my way of doing business. I told him that I was not comfortable doing things like he wanted and he told me that that was the way it was going to be. I told him, there were only two things I had to do and that was to pay taxes and die. My next statement was that I resigned. Frankly, I don't think they were too angry about me leaving because they were retrenching and I was a big expense to them.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

The day all this was happening, one of my accounts, Sandy Hall, came in to place an order for some carpet he was using that I had sold at one our projects. When I told him he would have to talk to one of the people in the office because I was leaving he was stunned. A day or two later the phone rang and it was Sandy asking what I was planning to do. I told him I had not made any plans as yet and he suggested I come talk to him.

The next day I went over to his place and told him I was never interested in the retail business and he assured me he was not a retailer but had an interior design business and did mostly contract work. This sounded very much like what I had been doing before. I told him I would try it for a short while to see if I fit in. We discussed the commission and I told him that we would settle that when I made the decision to stay or leave. I didn't leave until I was ready to retire.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 14



Sandy and I had instant rapport. He was working out of a small office with a make shift area for small items. In a short time I landed the biggest account either one of us had ever had and the business took off. One day, over lunch, Sandy asked if I didn't think we should build a building to be a show room and warehouse. He asked if I would lend him some money to help with the building and after talking with Rosemary agreed to lend him the money at no interest and I was to own 20% of the building.

A friend of ours, who was a contractor, was engaged to build the building. Sandy more or less designed it and it was truly a wonderful place. When the building was completed, we had a magnificent party to celebrate the happening. The business was going like gang busters. Sandy and Jo, his wife, and Rosemary and I went all over the country to trade markets with lots of free time all paid for by the business. Whenever we made a small sale in the show room and the customer paid cash, we would put the money in what we

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

called our "PUSHKE" That money paid for a delightful time in Jamaica for the four of us.

About the beginning of the '80s, business began to slow down a bit. I asked Sandy to retrench a bit on the expenses but he would have none of that. When money became a little soft, he remortgaged the building not once but several times. It was about this time that I was beginning to get tired and did not have the vigor I once had. Rosemary and I were in Greece and met a very nice couple from Wilmington, Del. He had been a chemist with Du Pont and had just retired several months before we met. One evening, both wives wanted to do something, so Tom and I went down to the bar and I asked if I could pick his brains for a while. He extolled the virtues of retirement to a point that I almost felt it right there. On the flight back to the United States, some place over the Atlantic Ocean, I asked Rosemary what she thought if I were to retire. Without hesitation, she said "GO FOR IT" When we got home, I proceeded to review our finances and to look at ways to restructure them. I figured it would take about a year to do what we wanted to do and started our plan.

When I told Sandy and Jo what I had decided to do, they were somewhat up set and wanted me to wait for them to sell the building. Through our accountant, we had had a good sale but Sandy turned down the sale thinking it was not enough money I told him it was more than enough but he wouldn't listen. The end result was that after I retired, he lost the building to foreclosure by the bank.

I retired at age 62 almost 63 on March 1, 1983. Everyone I knew told me I would go crazy doing nothing but to this day I have not gone crazy and am as busy as I can be doing nothing.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 15

Retirement suited me just fine. Not once did I become bored and aside from getting up very early in the morning, I became a man of leisure. I set up a card table in our second bedroom and I proceeded to build model airplanes most of which I had flown at one time or other. I installed shelves in the room and put the models on them. There was quite a collection of models because I had flown quite a few different planes when I was in the Navy. I also began to catalogue and grade my coin collection. This became a job that took the best part of two years to complete. When all my coins were graded and listed I decided that the safe deposit box was getting too heavy to get into and made arrangements to sell everything except the mint sets and the proof sets. I called a dealer who came to the bank to look at the coins, he gave me a price which after a little haggling we agreed on and they were gone. I must admit, I probably could have gotten a few more dollars but I was more interested in getting rid of the collection as soon as possible.

On a cruise through the Panama Canal, we met a delightful couple from Oregon. We became very friendly to the point where we arranged for another cruise up the Amazon River. They flew to Florida and we flew over to Miami to board the ship. We were going to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary on board. On the 1st of March, we had been in the jungle all day and when we returned to the ship, docked in Belem, Brazil, we went up to the Lido deck for a drink before getting dressed for dinner. I walked over to the ship's rail to take a picture or two and noticed a hose coming onto the ship and they were filling the swimming pool. When I got back to the table, over the loud speaker came the announcement that we were taking on water and it was not a drill. I stupidly said, "hell, they're filling the pool." I no sooner got that out of my mouth when the captain announced the ship was taking on lots of water and life jackets were to be put on. It was then that we noticed the ship listing and we were headed for land. The ship was grounded but we were still a distance from shore. The bottom 5 decks were already flooded. They told those of us who were on the higher decks that we could go down to pack our things and to be quick about it. With no lights and only candle light, we pushed our belongings into our suit cases and were lead up to the lido deck by some of the crew men. They, the crew, were wonderful. They were calm and kept the passengers calm. A car barge was brought along side and we came down the sea ladder onto the barge. It was then ferried to another barge so that we could come ashore. The plank we had to walk on was no more than 6 inches wide. It was dark, very slippery and moving sideways and up and down. Again the crew did a fantastic job and everyone was evacuated with no casualties.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Buses took us to one of the most beautiful hotels we had ever been to. Rooms were assigned with little or no problem and they told us that whatever we wanted, ask for it and sign the check. Rosemary and I took a hot shower, came down to the lobby and found the bar. The bartender told me he didn't have any scotch and I told him he better find some a find it soon. He did. By this time it was our anniversary, so we had a party to end all parties. I can't remember how long the party lasted but I do know, we almost ran out of booze.

In a day or two, the cruise company had chartered a plane to fly us back to Florida. Our friends came with us because they had reservations for a later flight back to Oregon. They had had a lower cabin, hence lost all their things. The only thing they were able to salvage was their cash because they had put it in the purser's office. We arrived in St Petersburg in the evening and went to a local store for them to buy some clothing and things to enable them to live until they returned home. The store management was very kind in that they stayed open until they finished shopping.

As it turned out, the fact that they came home with us, helped us recover from the accident. Our adrenalin was rushing and the fact that we were able to talk about what happened helped us return to normal.

In a short time, we received in the mail, papers stating that we would be able to book passage on any future cruise if we booked it within a year. Aside from that, we received a full refund for the aborted trip. All in all, we thought the company was doing the honorable thing and had nothing but praise for them.

On this same cruise, we met and became fast friends with two men who we later learned were gay. At first we were a little stand offish but in time we became close friends. All during the disaster they were very helpful with whatever any of us needed with the result, the friendship grew. When we separated to go our separate ways, they both wanted assurance that we would stay in touch. We told them it would be our pleasure to do so.

The next year, Rosemary and I found a cruise up the Amazon River on a ship we had been on several time before. We called our friends in Oregon and our two men friends to see if they were interested. They were and we all booked the trip. It was a 30 day cruise and it was out of this world. No disaster this time, just lots of fun and many many good times.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

About a year later, I noticed a cruise to Australia starting in Bali. I remembered the discount papers we had gotten and wondered if they would honor them even though it was longer than a year. I called the company and was told the "DISCOUNT LADY WAS OFF THAT DAY AND TO LEAVE MY NUMBER AND SHE WOULD GET BACK TO US" When I hung up, Rosemary and I had a good laugh saying they would forget about the call. Sure enough, the next day, the discount lady called and agreed to honor the 50% discount on the Australian trip. I called our friends and they were eager to go. Unfortunately, one of the men had cancer and was dying and our Oregon friends were having marriage problems. We decided to go anyway. We made arrangements to fly to Los Angeles the day before to break up the flight the same coming home but found that being in the air for 18 hours at a time is much too long. The layover was like a spit in the ocean.

When we got to Bali, we were so beat, we slept for the first 24 hours and I'm sure we missed seeing some things we should have seen. For the first time in our travels, we did not meet anyone we thought we could become friendly with. Aside from this little thing, we had a great time seeing things I never dreamed I would ever see. Ayers Rock was all it was supposed to be and the hotel in the middle of nowhere was super posh. Sidney harbor was beautiful. We took an excursion ride around the harbor and saw the old gun emplacements used in the war. Even with the discount, the trip was somewhat expensive but we had a ball.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 16

We managed to do one big cruise every year and in between time we had the usual health problems. At various times, I had a hernia repaired, a non-malignant growth removed from my bladder, a prostate repair (also non-malignant), many skin cancers both frozen off and surgically removed. It was determined that Rosemary had developed an aneurysm on her Aorta and we have it checked every 3 months. The fact that we are both well past 80 years, we look and act like we are considerably younger even if I say so myself. That is until that awful day in November of 2001.

Another wonderful happening was the birth of our first granddaughter. We were in North Carolina, attending the wedding of the son of my former business associate. When we got home there were at least a dozen messages on the phone minder from Garry. We called immediately to learn that Ashley was born 6 weeks premature and was finally doing alright. We didn't learn until a year or more later that it was somewhat nip and tuck for a little time after she was born but thank God she pulled through and has developed perfectly. That Christmas, Rosemary and I went to Lake Zurich, IL., where Garry and Lori live to see our new granddaughter. Needless to say, she was beautiful.

The following Thanksgiving, we visited Don and Cheryl. In January of 1999, Don and Cheryl were married. When we received the invitation, it surprised us somewhat because Don was having one of his "no talking periods" at that time. In spite of this, we went to the wedding and things returned to normal, whatever that can be. We have visited Don and Cheryl several times and each visit has been very enjoyable.

The last cruise we have taken was to the Caribbean for 14 days. Sandy and Jo came with us and we later learned that they did not enjoy the trip nearly as much as we did because they were bored. We think it was because they have difficulty relaxing and are not as interested in seeing new and different things as well as we do.

It was shortly after that trip that my world changed and the change was monumental. I had gotten what I thought was a cold but it lingered on for several weeks. Finally, one morning, I was having great difficulty breathing and told Rosemary to call 911 which she did. In no time at all, the paramedics arrived, performed a brief examination and said they were going to take me to the hospital. For the first time in my life, I did not object.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Several times in the past, when 911 was called for me, I refused to go to the hospital. These happenings occurred after me passing out from what was later described as a form of heart failure. When I got to the E R the people there were very swift in assessing what was my problem. Rosemary had followed the ambulance in the car and she was there with me until late in the afternoon and I became concerned that she might have trouble getting home if it was dark, so I insisted she go home and assured her I would be alright. The X Ray results were somewhat hazy I was told and they ordered a C Scan. After that was read, they ordered an M R I. After reading this last test is when the E R doctor came in to tell me I had lung cancer. I always thought I was pretty tough when it came to my physical problems but I admit, this threw me quite a bit. They suggested I be admitted to the hospital for them to treat the infection I had and the stream of doctors began arriving to arrange for the surgery. Of course I called Rosemary and told her the news and was sorry she had to be alone when she learned what was going on. I suggested she call the boys and let them know what was going on and they both called that night to my hospital room. The timing was not the best because it was just a week or two from Christmas and that is not a good time to be admitted to a hospital for major surgery besides, the surgeon would not be available until the 9th of January, 2001. So I waited. It was without a doubt, the longest period of time I ever lived through. And like life itself, the time finally arrived and early on the 9th of January, Rosemary and I drove to the hospital for the big event.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 17

It didn't take long to prep me for surgery and I was ushered into the operating room. I remember telling the nurse that I was cold but after that the next thing I remember was waking up in the intensive care unit and asking for my teeth. Of course, Rosemary was there and so was my friend Sandy. I always thought it was great of him to be with Rosemary in this disturbing time. The nurse in charge of the intensive care unit was superb. There was not one thing that I ask for or wanted or needed that it wasn't with me instantly. When one of our sons called to see how I was , she assured him that I was O K and she would see that I was well taken care of. She even came in on her day off to take care of my needs.

I was transferred to a room in the hospital after three days in intensive care. The pain was being managed by an epidural unit in my back, In a day or so, a doctor came to tell me that he had to remove the unit because prolonged use of the apparatus could cause infection. The instant the thing was removed, the pain set in and when I say pain, I mean it was like nothing I had ever experienced before .Medication that was supposed to last four hours was useless in one hour. The nurses were more than sympathetic and sometimes gave me morphine long before I was supposed to get it. I had tubes coming out of me in four places and at one time five places. They would take an X Ray every day, for what reason I don't know, and the procedure was torture. When the doctor would come to my room, he would always complain to the nurse that the dressings were incorrect and would rip them off and the pain almost took the top of my head off. I did not have much of an appetite and the food was not the best, the result, I was losing lots of weight.

After about 10 days, the doctor told me I could go home. I was concerned for Rosemary trying to take care of me after getting home. Luckily, at this time, my brother-in-law Gerry, was visiting and he helped Rosemary get me home. I managed to get to one of our big chairs in the living room and that became my place for the next two months. The only time I left the chair was to go to the bathroom. Nurses came in every day to clean the wound and for some therapy and that was torture also .One little nurse came to help me take a shower. When it came time to undress for the shower I got down to my shorts and stopped. She walked up to me, pulled them down and said, "If you've seen one, you've seen them all". After that we had no problem and she was a gem. She scolded me because I called for Rosemary one day to do something and she said that when she was here she was to take care of all my needs.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

I never had reason to doubt the love Rosemary had for me and me for her, but these times proved without a doubt that the love was very deep. I would not be alive if it weren't for her. Whatever I needed she was there with it and I know she wasn't in the best of health herself.

My recovery was, in my opinion, slow. To this day, I still have pain in the rib cage area. I'm sure this is due to the fact that when the doctor spread my ribs to get to the lung, he must have broken some of them and they haven't gotten back to where they belong. I have trouble taking a shower because when I do, I run out of air because of the moisture in the air. Bending over is a chore along with walking any distance but all in all, I'm still here and it sure as hell beats the alternative.

After about three months of recovery, it was time to get back to living again. One Saturday night, Sandy and Jo and Rosemary and I went out to dinner. Sandy drove and it was one of the best nights I have ever had. The fact that I was able to get out was an accomplishment and I was grateful. My return to normal life will never be complete but what we are able to do is satisfying for now.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 18

Getting back to normal living was slow at best. When I would forget about the chest area and move a bit too quickly, the stab of pain would remind me in short order. I learned to move much slower than I did before and my movements were carefully calculated. On the weekends, we went out for dinner with Sandy and Jo but during the week we went down to the swimming pool and I started to swim again.

We knew our daughter-in-law was pregnant again and knew the approximate due date but on the day of my birthday, 15 April, 2003 at about 6 A. M. the phone rang. It was Garry. He started with, "This is one hell of a birthday present Dad, but Lori gave birth today and we have another little girl who we are calling ANNA" Needless to say we were absolutely delighted. Both mother and child were well and healthy, THANK GOD.

The fact that I was progressing fairly well, we decided to visit Garry at Christmas time. We knew that Don and Cheryl were coming to Florida for Thanksgiving so our holiday time was going to be wonderful. Don and Cheryl arrive a few days before Thanksgiving, we had our usual "Brandy Alexanders" Thanksgiving afternoon and the visit went by in a flash. About a week before Christmas, we left for Lake Zurich to see our beautiful grand daughters. When Garry picked us up at the airport, he had Ashley with him and we were amazed at how much she had grown. She was still a little shy but soon warmed up to both of us. Anna was a doll. She was on the verge of standing up by herself and seemed to like being held by Rosemary or me. Christmas day was a blast. Ashley was opening boxes as fast as her little hands would move and Garry was taking pictures of all the events. The visit was too short as far as we were concerned, probably not for Garry and Lori, and we headed home. Either we got it on the plane or it was because of the cold weather, we both caught something and we were sick for two months after getting home. That convinced us that we would not venture north in the winter time ever again.

In March of 2004, in a routine checkup, after an M R I the doctor told me that he thought he saw a shadow in the area of my chest that I was complaining of having constant pain. He recommended a P E T scan and an appointment with a thoracic surgeon. Between the oncologist and the new surgeon, it was decided that the problem was not a new cancer growth but a trapped nerve in the scar tissue. The relief in learning that is immeasurable. I had several blood test after that as a follow up and it was determined that there were NO cancer cells living in my body at that time. Learning this, made the constant pain in my side less troublesome and more tolerable. It's amazing what the body can endure when the mind cooperates with it.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

The pulmonologist keeps telling me that I am in good shape and if I'm cancer free for 5 total years I'm in clover. He also inflates my ego when he tells me he hopes he's in as good of shape when he gets to be my age without the cancer.

The bout with the M R I was an ordeal and I admit it took a little of the swagger out of me but I am slowly recovering. We continue to talk of another cruise but want to avoid an airplane ride, so we have to find one leaving and returning to Tampa and good ones with that amenity are very few.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 19

When Don and Cheryl left after the Thanksgiving of 2003, it occurred to me that our entire family had not been together in many years and in 2005, Rosemary and I would celebrate our 60th anniversary. After the Christmas and New Year holiday, I composed a letter to Don and Garry asking if it would be possible for them and their families could come to St Petersburg the last week of February and the first week of March of 2005 to help us celebrate our anniversary. It seems that as soon as they received the letters they phoned and said they would come. I had stated that we would pay all the expenses including fares and living facilities. We were delighted with the news and proceeded to make the plans. The most difficult part was finding a place to have the dinner that was somewhat secluded. We finally found a place and everything was set. We also contacted our grandson, Lance and asked if he and his wife Jessica could come what with him being in the Marines might present a problem. He told us that he would make the party without question. He also made a request to have all the men wear jackets and ties because he wanted to wear his " Dress Blues ".Of course, I told him it would be so.

The year was somewhat uneventful in that we didn't go any place and we didn't do much other than go out for dinner whenever the spirit moved us. Most time when we went out, our friends, Sandy and Jo were with us.

One day while using the E Mail on the computer, I mentioned to my old Navy friend and former best man, Danny, that we were going to celebrate our anniversary and told him the date. Much to our surprise and profound delight he wrote back and told us he was going to make the party. His new wife couldn't come because of a prior commitment but he would be here. I managed to get a motel room for him, gave him instructions on how to get here from the airport and we were all set.

The arrangements were that Don and Cheryl were going to stay with us, Garry, Lori and the two girls were to have a two bedroom apartment and Lance and Jessica would have a one bedroom apartment both at Coquina Key where we live. The set up could not have been any better.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Everyone arrived on schedule and for the first time in over 25 years the entire Faegenburg family was under one roof. I must say, it was one of the best feelings I have ever had, the same for Rosemary. There was not one hitch in the affair. The dinner was perfect, the children were wonderful, the food was good and the service was great. Not many things in my life have ever gone this perfectly and I was thrilled. I only hope, the two boys and their families had as good a time as Rosemary and had. I know, Danny had a good time because he has told me over and over, that he did.



He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

Chapter 20

Much has been left out of this narrative, some because I have forgotten the happening or it might have been too painful for me to recall it. There were lots of things that were very good that I have omitted for no reason other than I forgot them. At age 84, I know I am on the downhill side of life but I hope I will be around to write a follow up to this story ten years from now. Unfortunately, we have just learned that we will have to move after living here for 30 years. The owners of the apartment complex have sold the property and our lease is due soon. This being one of the most desirable buildings in the complex, they will start renovation with this building. The search for a new place will be hard on us but like life itself, we will manage.

One thing I can say that not many men my age can, I have had the love of a wonderful woman and have loved her with all my being for the best part of my life.

THE END

(September 2019 update)

Unfortunately, Dad never got the chance to update this story any further. He passed away on Thursday, December 5th, 2013.

My mom Rosemary had passed away 7 years prior to that on Saturday, September 23, 2006.

Interestingly, after mom had passed away, Dad quite naturally was quite lonely. His former business partner Sandy Hall had passed away in 2007 (if I remember correctly) and Dad and his wife Jo had kept in contact since. Jo also was lonely and around 2009, he and Jo decided to marry. Dad moved in to Jo's house in Valrico, Fl. And lived there with Jo until his passing in 2013.

I was NEVER happy with the fact that Dad remarried especially after learning that he rewrote his will so that all his money now was under her control. She was flat broke when he married her, as she and Sandy her former husband spent money like drunken sailors. She was borrowing money from her wealthy son Sandy Jr. just to be able to live in her house in Valrico. When Dad moved in with Jo, he wrote Sandy Jr. a check in excess of 30,000 dollars to pay her debt off to her son.

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

After the marriage, Dad changed his will so that all assets went into a REVOCABLE Trust, meaning that should either Dad or Jo pass away, the other could change the terms of the trust at any time, regardless of what the beneficiaries were supposed to receive at the time of its initial writing. All property assets were to be given to Jo's son Adam. All cash assets were to be given to my brother Don and I. Those were the terms before Dad's passing.

Since Dad's passing, Jo has refused to send a copy of the will. She has no legal obligation to do so because it is a Revocable Trust. And I GUARANTEE you, it has already been revoked and rewritten! That's why she has refused to send a copy. Not that I really cared about Dad's money because it is not something I need. But the first thing she did after Dad died, was sign a mortgage for her deadbeat son Adam who had to file for bankruptcy several years prior to Dad and Jo marrying. You see, he and his wife spent money like drunken sailors too, since they learned how to do that from their parents. That means that all the cash assets that may be left after Jo dies, will be taken to pay for Adams mortgage because she will be dead in less than a decade no doubt. My wife and I smelled that rat coming long before it ever happened. We had that discussion BEFORE Dad ever even told us about the change to the will. The worst part of the whole thing for me is that there is a person on this planet, carrying the Faegenburg name, who is not deserving of that name whatsoever! I can only hope she will change her name back to Jo Hall to restore the honor of the Faegenburg name which my mom and dad worked so hard to preserve!

And then there is the matter of my brother Don. I remember the day that I called Don to tell him that Dad had died. His exact words were: "That is a GREAT weight lifted from my shoulders"!

I was quite stunned to hear this actually. But since Don had ALWAYS blamed mom and dad for having such a miserable childhood growing up, it didn't SURPRISE me. What is really strange though, is I have tons of photographs that my mom and dad have taken over the years, and you won't see a single picture of an unhappy kid. That goes for me too! We had a great childhood.

And remember, Don and I are BOTH adopted! We owe everything we have in our lives because Merrill and Rosemary Faegenburg took us in from the parents who didn't want us! They worked their asses off to provide for us to give us the foundation and skills to succeed in life.

Well, the great weight lifted from my shoulders is the fact that I will NEVER be speaking to my so called brother ever again. His comment was a slap in the face and a disgrace to the Faegenburg name!

He Told Me I Couldn't Do It (*The Merrill Faegenburg Story*)

And not only is he a disgrace to our name, he is a disgrace to our country, because it is my firm belief, that his so-called "accident" in Marine Corps boot camp, just before he was about to get sent to Vietnam, was the act of a coward! He was too chicken shit to go to war. He was all mister big shit by going against my Dad's wishes to join the military, but in the end, he had no balls to live up to the Corps and join his fellow soldiers on the battlefield, and engineered his little accident to get out of harms way.

And that is the God's honest truth. I am happy that my Dad is not here to see what happened after his passing. When he was with Jo, he had refused to give financial support to Jo's son Adam. He knew that doing so would only further enable his poor spending habits. If he knew, his ashes would float out of the box they are in on my desk!

If he knew what his worthless fucking son said about his death, he would come back to life just to choke the living shit out of him. I'd rather do that myself!

As long as I am alive, I refuse to allow the truth to be squashed. My Dad instilled in me that the truth is the most important story that you will ever recount to someone. I should know, because I used to lie about EVERYTHING to my mom and dad when I was a kid. Dad used to take a belt to my ass, NOT because of what I had done wrong, but because I refused to tell him the truth! I ruined my Dad's coin collection because I used to steal coins and go down to the corner store and buy bubble gum cards and candy and soda pop. I was the only kid in the house most of that time, and yet would bold face lie to my Dad when he would ask me if I stole the coins that were missing.

So you can take my story as factual. I don't leave anything out even when it makes me look bad. It is REQUIRED! I would rather be judged as being an asshole who told the truth regardless of the consequences, than an asshole who had nothing to show in his life but a huge stack of lies upon lies!

Thank you Rosemary and Merrill, for instilling in me honor and truth as foundational elements in life. I miss you every waking moment in my life, and have NEVER forgotten you. I only hope that one day we will meet again in whatever lies beyond this life on earth!

Amen!