



Frank Pulaski (AGR-4, 1958-61)

This is a true story that occurred in 1961. The Searcher was at a liberty port in Key West Florida and the crew enjoyed swimming in the warm waters and taking liberty in Key West. This really helped us to put up with the boredom of picket duty.

Two of us in the ET shack were scheduled to be discharged while the ship was in Key West, Bill Borthwick (everyone had a nickname and we called him Charlie) and myself (Ski). We had to be in Davisville, RI within two days of each other to be discharged. Of course, back then we never had much money and it was safe and easy for a sailor in uniform to hitchhike. Charlie departed two days before I did, alone, hitching rides back to Davisville. I don't know what path he took, but I left hitching also and wound up at an Air Force Base in Georgia...can't remember the name.

My goal was to get to the base and hitch a flight up north. All I remember about the place was that those "Flyboys" lived pretty good. I was given a berth to spend the night and it was a room with a double bunk and was very comfortable. The galley was open around the clock and the food was good. The next day I did catch a hop on a two engine "Puddle Jumper" that was headed to an Air Force base in New Jersey. I remember sitting on storage

crates, as this was some sort of a cargo plane. The Captain allowed me to sit in the cockpit for a while and actually handed the controls to me. I had only ever been in a plane once before and certainly never at the controls. This was fun.

We landed in New Jersey and with my sea bag over my shoulder I headed out to the highway to start hitching a ride to Davisville. It didn't take long and I was soon in a car that, with luck, was headed to Rhode Island. Not too far down the road I spotted a sailor in the distance who was also hitching a ride with a sea bag. As I got close, I couldn't believe my eyes....it was Charlie. Of course we pulled over and completed our ride to the base at Davisville together. I wonder what the odds would have been to have this happen since we had never discussed which route we were going to take to get back to Davisville.