

A FLASH OF GREEN

MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR II

CHARLES S. McCANDLESS



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A FLASH OF GREEN

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Charles Sprague McCandless in 1944.

Foreword

I CAN STILL PICTURE MY FATHER SITTING IN OUR LIVING ROOM READING. Nearly every evening, he would settle into our couch and read to me after to me about war, particularly World War II. As a teenager, I wondered why he didn't read books on other topics—or fiction by notable authors. I now understand that he was trying to put himself in the context of the events that occurred around him during his years in the Pacific Theater. My dad was walking to his duty post at Pearl Harbor when he saw the U.S.S. *Arizona* bombed, he was shot down during the Battle of Midway, and he was a frogman at Iwo Jima; but it wasn't until many years later that he understood how these experiences fit into the overall strategies and chain of events in World War II that we read about today. And it wasn't until he wrote this book that any of us in the family even knew about his role in these historic battles.

In 1987, Dad told me that he had written a memoir and asked if I would help him shape it into a book. He gave me a typed manuscript and said he'd like about twenty copies—just enough for family and a few friends.

I was in publishing at the time and started reading the manuscript, red pencil in hand. The book started with my dad's descriptions of his life before the war, and I enjoyed learning about my father as a young man: his first jobs after graduating from college in 1939, his decision to go to Hawaii in the early 1940s, and his first flying lessons. But as these stories led to his wartime experiences, I had a mix of feelings—amazement, surprise, pride—and a deepening sense of just how much his experience in the war shaped him.

We knew that my dad had been at Pearl Harbor. But he rarely spoke of these experiences, even to my mother. We had no idea that he had been a dive bomber pilot at Midway, crashed his plane at Guadalcanal, or served as a Seabee in Ulithi Atoll, Peleliu, and Saipan. We did not know that he was a frogman at Iwo Jima, or struggled to get out of the Philippines after the Japanese surrendered in 1945.

Sometimes, I felt as if I was reading a good war novel; then I would remember that I knew the main character and the action wasn't fiction. For the first time, I had a small window into what it was like for my dad to live through the war.

After reading his memoir, I asked my dad why he ended his story in 1945. He explained that when he finished writing about the war, he had nothing else to say. It was those experiences that profoundly influenced his thinking, shaped the fearlessness with which he started and ran two successful businesses, and solidified his decision to go from being a devoutly religious Christian to an atheist. It was a piece of his life that he had kept largely to himself, and he thought it time to share the experiences that had so greatly affected him with his children and grandchildren.

Thirteen years after his death, I feel it is important to share my dad's stories with a broader audience. This slice of one man's journey provides a glimpse into both our country's history and the realities of war. History books can relay the facts of each battle and analyze the strategic decisions of the leaders at the time, but it is only through the sharing of individuals' unedited stories that we see the texture and detail in the threads that make up that larger tapestry.

It is these personal stories that remind us of the extraordinary things that ordinary men and women do during times of war: they take risks, win struggles, and witness losses that most of us cannot even imagine. While these experiences are often too terrifying to explain to those who weren't there to share them, they are important for all of us to hear. Without these stories, we cannot fully understand or consider the consequences of being at war. Nor can we appreciate the courage, strength, and sacrifice it takes to safeguard the freedom and security that we experience everyday in the U.S.

My dad's memoir fills in a piece of the World War II tapestry that he spent so much time studying. As I read it again, I feel an everlasting sadness

that he is no longer here, but I am thankful that he took the time to record his story for his children and grandchildren. It is an engaging and remarkable story—we often joke that my dad had nine lives. But it also provides a first-person perspective on the important events of the war. By publishing it beyond our family, I hope to bring this piece of history alive for those who were not there to live it and inspire others to tell their own stories for future generations.

—*Sandra McCandless Simons*



COLLEGE MEN WANTED

(GRADUATES, SENIORS, JUNIORS, SOPHOMORES)

to be Naval Officers

You want to serve your country. Why not serve where your college training will do the most good? Read every word of this announcement, whether you are now at college or have already graduated.



DECK AND ENGINEERING OFFICERS

The Navy needs 2000 lieutenants now in college, or College Graduates, as prospective officers. Men who enlist today will not be called to active duty before next June. They will then have time to graduate.

In addition, the Navy needs 9000 men now in their fourth year in college as prospective officers. If you enlist today, you may complete your education and graduate in 1943. Meanwhile you will be called to active duty only during the period your college is closed next summer.

After graduation, you will receive a 30-day preliminary training course. If found qualified, you will then be given further training at Midshipman, U.S.N.R., at \$60 per month plus allowances. Upon successful completion of this training you will be commissioned as Ensign, U.S.N.R., at \$125 a month and allowances.

All applicants must be native born citizens of the United States, unmarried, and between the ages of 19 and 27 inclusive.



NAVAL AVIATORS

The Navy needs 11,000 men now in their Senior, Junior or Sophomore years in college as prospective Naval aviators. Men who enlist today will not be required to commence training until the completion of their present college year. Graduates or other qualified candidates will be called for the first training class in which they can be accommodated.

After 3 months preliminary training as aviator, second class, they will, if qualified, be ordered to flight training at Annapolis, Md., in a course requiring approximately 7 additional months to complete Aviator Cadet pay is \$25 per month. Upon successful completion of the course they will be commissioned as Ensign, U.S.N.R., and see their Navy "Wings of Gold." An Air-Budget Naval Aviator's base pay will be \$200 per month plus allowances.

All applicants must have been United States citizens for at least 30 years. They must be unmarried and between ages of 20 and 26 inclusive.

**FOR FURTHER DETAILS GO TO THE
NEAREST NAVY RECRUITING STATION TODAY**

CONDENSED COLLEGE WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT (SCHEDULE) TO ALL INTERESTED STUDENTS
IN THE WORLD: WASHINGTON, D. C. 20304, AT 11:30 A.M. AND 6:15 P.M.

Navy recruiting poster aimed at recent or soon-to-be college graduates.

ONE

Graduation and the First Construction Job

STANFORD UNIVERSITY IS LOCATED ON LAND WHICH was originally a horse farm. It was the summer home of Leland Stanford, whose hobby was raising horses for carriage racing and thoroughbreds. Because Leland Stanford called his country place The Farm, many students and even the newspapers also refer to it as The Farm. President Herbert Hoover, one of Stanford University's first and most prestigious graduates, gave it another name, The Country Club, because it was a small, expensive university in a beautiful country setting and had a golf course, stables, and polo fields.

The forty-eighth annual graduation commencement of the Stanford Country Club was to take place June 18, 1939, in the Greek Amphitheater on campus. I was to be one of about 800 seniors to graduate that year, and it was a large class considering the entire undergraduate school enrollment was less than 3,600.

On Saturday night the week before graduation, I went to the senior ball with a lovely girl named Betty Crawford. I wore a white tuxedo, and she was dressed in a beautiful white formal and wore the orchid corsage I had sent her. We went to dinner at L'Omelette with a gang of friends, drank

too much champagne, danced until 2:00 a.m., partied some more at a friend's house in Menlo Park until 4:00 a.m., and then drove up into the hills to watch the sun rise over Mt. Hamilton, still drinking champagne. On Monday morning after the dance, I had to go to work on my first professional job as a construction surveyor. Earl C Thomas, Professor of Highway Engineering at Stanford, had contracted to perform all the surveying for the construction of what is now the Permanente Cement Plant in the hills behind Cupertino. To accomplish this, Thomas hired six of the twenty or so graduating civil engineers to fill out the skeleton crew of more experienced professional surveyors. One of the requirements for getting the job was that we had to start work a week before we formally graduated. Finals were over so there really wasn't a problem. We'd just miss some good parties.

The regular working week was six days. The pay was excellent and we could work overtime. My job was particularly interesting as my party of five was assigned to lay out a mile long conveyor system which would bring new limestone down the mountain from the quarry to the plant.

From where we were working, we could look down on the beautiful Santa Clara Valley—hundreds of acres of neat, green orchards extending from Los Gatos to what is now Fremont, San Jose, and Palo Alto. Most of the little towns, such as Sunnyvale and Campbell, were nearly obscured by the fruit trees. The Diablo Mountain Range stood in the background. When I first started, I carried the lunches and heavy bundles of wooden stakes and was in charge of all other portable paraphernalia. Another one of my jobs, which I later came to regret, was to grub out the poison oak.

This was my first surveying job, and by the time it was over I had pretty well learned the trade. Not all was sweetness and light, however. The party chief was Ike Stage, an old pro who thoroughly disliked college men, especially if he believed they were taking a job away from an unemployed professional surveyor.

When graduation day arrived at the end of my first week of work, the weather was beautiful. My Grandfather and Grandmother McCandless, Grandfather Sprague, and my mother attended the ceremonies. Unfortunately, Grandmother Sprague, who was eighty-five, was in poor

health and to her great disappointment and mine was unable to make the trip. With all the pomp and tradition, the graduation ceremonies were impressive, and the day couldn't have been more perfect, with one exception—I had a bad case of poison oak all over my body. I was terribly uncomfortable! However, on the Monday following graduation, I was back on the job, still in charge of portable paraphernalia and still itching.

A couple of weeks later one of the men was transferred, and Stage was forced to promote me to a rear chainman's job. Stage never did stop bitching. He screamed and swore at me the whole time, nicknamed me Bub, and kept complaining about lousy college men and how unlucky he was to have them. Fortunately after six weeks, Stage was transferred. My classmate, Bud Cameron, became chief of party and immediately appointed me his instrument man. From then on everything was fine except that the job terminated at the end of September.

The old Permanente Cement Plant is still operating (1988). Today when I drive between Los Gatos and Sunnyvale, I look up at the mountain behind Cupertino and see the conveyor zigzagging up the hill just as we laid it out forty-nine years ago.

At the end of September, 1939, when the job was over, I loaded my Ford, said good-bye to my friends, and headed for Los Angeles. I had planned to stay home with my mother and grandparents because I hadn't seen them to any extent since I graduated from high school and because my Grandmother Sprague was eighty-five and failing. I had always had a very close relationship with Bidy Sprague and felt that under these circumstances I should stay around for awhile. The family was very pleased to see me and have me stay with them. The first thing I had to do was to get a job. My friend, Henry Layne, a structural engineer from Stanford, had opened his own shop in the Architect's Building near City Hall in downtown Los Angeles, so I went to see him. Sure enough, Layne had engineered the Sears-Roebuck high rise, and Ford Twaits, the contractor who had just obtained the contract to build it, needed a good job engineer.

I applied and got the job. It consisted of all field surveying and layout, checking all dimensions of the work daily, calculating and ordering all materials, developing and keeping track of construction costs, and

maintaining “as built” plans plus miscellaneous charts. I loved the job and knew then and there that I’d be a building contractor someday. One thing that made it more attractive than highway construction was that you could live in the city, and I always liked the city better than the country, probably because I was brought up in the city.

The superintendent was a Swede named Oscar Ericson, who was a good boss to work for. One of his dictums was that when I calculated and ordered concrete, sometimes two or three hundred yards, I’d better be right. If I were five yards off, I had to buy him a new hat, which could get expensive since a hat cost five dollars and I only earned a dollar an hour, the same as a carpenter. In eight months, I think I bought him three hats.

Soon after buying Ericson his third hat, I was called into the head office of my boss, Mr. Ford Twaits. He said his company was entering into a joint venture with McDonald-Kahn, Morrison-Knudsen, and some others to build Fort Ord just north of Monterey. The Fort was to accommodate 30,000 men and serve as a major west coast marshaling camp for the purpose of training recruits and forming new army divisions. He offered me a job as staff engineer, which was a considerable promotion since I’d also be chief surveyor for the entire project. This was a chance for me to be involved in the design and layout of streets, sewer, water systems, and drainage for virtually a medium sized city - all from bare land.

It was June 1940, and I had been in Los Angeles eight months. I’d had a good time in L.A. I’d made several friends at work and some old high school friends were still around, including Harry Smith, Bill Bernstein, Frank Gifford, and Jack Dixon. Besides, when you live on the edge of Hollywood, there’s no end to the single girls, three of whom I dated regularly, although I can’t remember their names. We went to parties, dances, and to the beach almost every weekend. I liked to dance and was a reasonably competent surfer. Furthermore, I’d purchased a beautiful silver-colored, one-year-old Packard convertible, which didn’t hurt my social position one bit. I’ve always had a love affair with flashy cars, and that car was one of the best. I had a lot of fun.

TWO

Fort Ord, Monterey, California

IN JUNE 3, 1940, I KISSED MY GIRL FRIENDS AND FAMILY good-bye and loaded my belongings in the silver Packard. The next morning I put the convertible top down and headed for Carmel, California. It was about an eight hour trip along the coastal route, Highway 101. It started out to be a beautiful warm day, but as I approached Salinas the weather began to cool and the sky became overcast. I pulled into a gas station to fuel the car and put the convertible top back up. I remembered that the coast in this part of California fogged over during the summer. It turned out to be a long, foggy summer and an unusually rainy winter. The sun hardly showed itself during the entire eight months of my stay on the Monterey peninsula.

I arrived in Monterey about 4:00 p.m., settled in a hotel, and telephoned the contact I'd been given. It turned out to be James McClary, a Stanford civil engineer who'd graduated a year before me. Since our last names both started with "McC" and because of the penchant Stanford professors had for seating students according to the alphabet, I sat next to Jim in a number of classes and knew him well.

"Hi, Mac, I've been waiting to hear from you." He said and then invited me to his home for dinner that night, where I met his wife Jane. It turned out that Jim was a nephew and male heir to the Morrisons of the Morrison-

Knudsen Construction Company, the biggest contractor in the United States. Jim was to be Chief Engineer of the new project and I would be in charge of all field surveys. It was to be a fast track job, the construction would be carried out concurrently with the design, which would be only a few steps ahead. I was to report to the job office in Monterey the next day at 0700. My pay was to be \$2 per hour for the first eight hours and \$3 per hour for all overtime. We were to work forty-eight hours regular time and twelve hours overtime a week - \$132 a week. This was a bonanza! A good apartment was \$30 a month; a four bedroom house was \$50 a month; and the best steak dinner in town was \$1.50. I could save \$400 a month and live like a king. I surely was in luck.

The next day I reported to work and was asked to figure out how many surveying parties and what equipment I would need initially. Then Jim asked me how long it would take me to make him a topo map of the 1,000-acre property. I studied the matter awhile and told him I'd like to split the property into four areas. Then once we started, I could give him the field data for one area per week, providing I could work seven ten-hour days. He was to have an office crew under my direction plot the field data daily. I could work three six-man crews on a 250-acre area at one time. I didn't think we could go any faster and still be sure the data was accurate because each day's plot had to be rechecked by me, personally, in the field.

Jim gave me a surprised look and said, "Jeeziz Christ, there's no way you can go that fast."

I bet him a steak dinner for four people at any restaurant the winner chose that I could. I didn't have the fourth person for dinner, but I figured I could find a date even though I had no days off. Jim took me up on the bet, and I could see he was pleased because he said, "Mac, you're my kind o' guy!"

I replied, "Thanks, Mac!"

I found my date more easily and sooner than I had expected. In the personnel office I was interviewed and signed up by a cute, freckled, red-haired young lady. I checked her left hand and, seeing no wedding band, confessed to her in a dejected, unassuming way that I was lonely, bored, friendless, and worried about my new job. I asked if she'd have dinner with me that night to add a little cheer to my very dull life.

She looked me straight in the eyes and replied, "I don't believe a word

of it. I think you're a wolf, but I can handle wolves. I'll have dinner with you."

I was a little set back by her cosmopolitan reply, but very pleased. Her name was Martha; she was fresh out of Radcliff; and she shared a house in Carmel with a friend. That was about all the dope I had on her, but it was enough.

When I went back to the engineering office across the hall, Jim was smiling and said, "I happened to notice you talking to Martha Twaits. Nice girl, huh? Did you know her in L.A.?"

"No! Is she Ford Twaits' daughter?" I asked. "She sure is," Jim replied.

Boy, was I in luck. I hit gold twice: a Stanford friend for a boss and the daughter of the big boss for a date. I was going to like this job just fine. From then on things went very well. I moved from my apartment to a four-bedroom furnished house which I shared with three other single engineers from the job. We hired a housekeeper and cook for \$4 a day, had most of our meals at home, and worked hard. We were up at 5:30 a.m., to bed about 10:00 p.m., and worked six days a week, sometimes seven. We didn't socialize a great deal because of our schedule, but I managed to go out to dinner once a week with Martha. She went out with other people, but I didn't have much time to look around for any other company.

Carmel was a very small, quiet, picturesque, seaside town populated mainly by retired people, but there were also many weekend cottages. The town was clustered around one main street which sloped from the highway to the beach. The whole area was heavily wooded with Monterey pine and cypress trees and was very beautiful. Nearby were some golf courses, the 17 Mile Drive which was quite new, and Carmel Valley, which was primarily ranch land. The main entertainment spots were a host of tea rooms run by little old ladies and two or three bars that served dinner. If one wanted anything fancier than that, he had to go to the larger town of Monterey. Monterey was a beach community of predominantly one- and two-story wooden buildings with a bleached waterfront look and an industrial district of fish canneries supplied by a sizable fishing fleet. The cannery district also included a large red-light district with all the usual peripheral entertainment and bars. Because of the cannery, the whole town smelled fishy. Monterey did have one very nice place to go—The Del

Monte Hotel. It was a large, first class, expensive hotel located on the edge of town and situated in a beautiful wooded setting. This was generally where we went to dinner on Saturday nights because of its overall quality and a very fine swing dance band.

On October 16, 1940, the United States put into effect the National Selective Service Act, the draft, which required every able-bodied man over eighteen years of age to make himself available for induction into the armed services. By now anyone who read the papers realized that the United States was preparing for war, but this draft really punched the matter home. Things were getting serious! However, before I went to the selective service office in Monterey to sign up, McClary asked me to request a deferment on the premise that I was working in a civilian job vital to the best interest of the United States. Good civil engineers were in short supply and would be even harder to find now that we had a draft. It ended up that Jim, myself, and the other crew members under thirty all received a six-month exemption, which could be renewed as long as we were working on a job that affected the military.

In November my Grandmother Sprague died at the age of eighty-five. I received a telegram the day of her death. I took leave and drove to Los Angeles to console my grandfather and mother and, of course, attend the funeral. We had the service in the chapel at the Hollywood Cemetery, where she was buried in the family plot next to her son, Harold. The Episcopal service was conducted by the Reverend Hershey from the St. James Cathedral, the family church.

I returned to Monterey a couple of days after the service and found that something new had happened: the first troops had moved into several sections of the partially-completed barracks. One section was "Officer's Country," living quarters for officers only. It turned out that the officers were the activated Reserve Officers Training Corps graduates from west coast colleges, including Stanford. I went over to the barracks to see if I could find anybody I knew. When I got there, I found that all the officers were second lieutenants and were dressed in World War I outfits—Sam Brown belts, riding breeches, and boots with spurs.

The Stanford contingent were almost all members of the horse-drawn field artillery, while a few were ordinance officers. At Stanford the

R.O.T.C. had been popular with students who were horsemen because they could use army horses stationed on campus as polo ponies. The problem now was that there were no horses for any purpose. It also became apparent that the Army had paid no attention to their reserves during peace time, since about 200 second lieutenants varied in age from 21 to 50. In the years between graduation and mobilization, no training had been made available; thus no promotions were made. I found out later that the horsemen were all ordered to Fort Bragg and turned into tankers and heard that there were more tank commanders from Stanford in Patton's third Army than from any other university - including West Point. I don't know if this is true or not, but my friend Bob Fullerton, a tank commander in the third Army who came home without a leg, said it probably was.

When Christmas, 1940, came around, I decided to take a week off and spend the time with my Grandfather and Grandmother McCandless. They were living in a construction camp at Keen, California, a tiny community located between Bakersfield and Tehachapi, where Dad (Grandfather McCandless) was superintendent of a highway reconstruction project. I drove down in the rain. When I arrived, I gave Bidy Mac a box of candy and Dad a box of cigars. On Christmas, we again exchanged gifts and had a good time.

As usual, I was very careful not to antagonize Dad in any way because of his bad temper; so all we talked about was construction. Since he was an expert with explosives, he was always assigned jobs which involved heavy blasting and cutting and filling with power shovels and trucks. Consequently, he was very interested in my job, where this type of equipment had been replaced with huge self-powered caterpillar scrapers called carry-alls. Of course, we were working on relatively flat land and rolling dunes, not mountainous terrain. After that visit, I was not to see my grandparents again until November, 1942.

By February of 1941, I had been on the project for over eight months, and the initial job was almost completed. In fact, the major surveying work was completed, and I was working in the office designing underground pipeline systems for a second military job. I was getting restless and bored. Even fast promotion and pay raises didn't carry the old-time psychological lifts. What had once been exciting was now dull city. It was time to move on.



The beach at Waikiki, with the Moana Hotel in the background, circa 1940.

THREE

Hawaii

BECAUSE I HAD ALWAYS WORKED DURING MY COLLEGE vacations, I hadn't had a real vacation for five or six years. I decided that I would use the \$2,500 that I had saved to take a long vacation. I would then join one of the armed services, since I would be drafted sooner or later. I discussed my plan with Martha over dinner at the Del Monte Hotel one evening, and she thought it was a good idea. She agreed that I should go some exotic place before I was drafted and then look over the various military programs and volunteer for the one of my choice. She even suggested that before I quit my job, I renew my six-months draft exemption to be sure of six months free. I thought about going to Europe, but they were all at war there.

It was then that Martha came up with the idea of going to Hawaii. "I'm going to Hawaii for a month," she said. "Why don't you go over at the same time, and we can date while I'm there?"

We agreed to both book passage on the *Lurline* for the March 7 departure. She would go first class; and I, in cabin class to save money. The price for me was \$85 one way, about half the cost of first class. What I didn't know then was that cabin class was completely sealed off from first class and that there was considerable difference in the amenities between the classes. In

first class they dressed for dinner (tuxedos and formals), danced, had more elaborate food, and much nicer cabins—not that cabin class on the Lurline wasn't nice. It was.

I gave the company notice that I was leaving March 1, sold the Packard to one of the engineers, and took a bus to San Francisco on the night of February 28. I stayed there three or four days with a friend, then took a coastal steamer to San Pedro, where I transferred to the pride of the Matson Steamship Line, the luxury-liner Lurline.

There were 250 passengers booked in cabin class and probably 750 in first class. The first class passengers had use of the forward three-quarters of the ship and all four promenade decks. The cabin class passengers had use of the aft one-quarter of the ship and two decks: the main deck, including the fan tail, and a second platform deck above it. The outside passages leading forward from the cabin class areas to first class were barricaded by metal mesh fences. The inside passages were secured by locked doors. There was no apparent way first and cabin class passengers could mix. This arrangement seemed to completely thwart the plans Martha and I had made to see each other. Had I discovered this situation before I purchased the ticket, of course I would have gone first class. The fact that there were two classes should have alerted me to the situation, but it didn't.

Fortunately I had made arrangements to get in touch with Martha when we were all aboard. We shoved off from Los Angeles Harbor about 5:00 p.m. I went to my cabin, sat on the bed, and read all the literature I found on the bureau concerning the Lurline. The booklet contained instructions for use of the ship's facilities in both classes. It described the amenities, rules and regulations, safety drills, specified a dress code, and definitely warned passengers to stay only in the spaces assigned to them. The dress code in first class required tuxedos to be worn after 6:00 p.m. in the saloons, which included cocktail lounges and dining rooms. The booklet also included a detailed map of the ship.

As I studied the map, I noticed that the first class and cabin class had connecting kitchens. Then I got to thinking: What would happen if a cabin-class passenger wearing a tuxedo walked into the kitchen after dinner? Wouldn't he be asked to go back to first class? Also, after the dancing was

over at 12:30 a.m., there was a midnight supper. It followed then, that there must be a small kitchen crew working very late, or maybe all night, and that very possibly a tipsy passenger not wearing a tuxedo, walking into the kitchen at 1:00 a.m. looking for the rest rooms, would be requested to go back to the cabin class area. The trick was not to let the entry into the kitchen be observed, to be sure to have some money in my pocket in case some cook did see me and decided to call the concierge, and to carry a suit bag. The next problem was finding a way to contact Martha.

Just then there was a knock on the door. It was a cabin boy with a message from Martha. She had discovered the same problem. The note instructed me to meet her at the separating fence in the left-hand corridor on the main deck at 6:30 p.m.—in fifteen minutes. I immediately took off for the main deck and headed up the left hand side of the ship. Sure enough, there was Martha coming to meet me. Talking to her through the fence made me think of visitor's day in a jail as depicted in the movies. After an excited greeting and an attempted kiss through the fence, I explained my plan. "It sounds like Cinderella in reverse," she said. She then proceeded to solve the clothes exchange problem by suggesting that we could pass the clothes on hangers through a slit in the side of the fence, right where we were standing. Assuming I managed to get into first class, I could change clothes in her cabin. One thing was paramount. We had to eat dinner at our respective assigned tables and seats because if the waiter discovered a vacant seat, the ship was searched until the missing passenger was located. This procedure assured the captain that no one had disappeared overboard. We also agreed that we should see that our dinner hour was the second seating. We chose this time because after the second seating, confusion would reign while the last diners departed and the tables were cleared from the dance floor. My hours in first class would be from 9:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. This way we could dance and partake of the midnight supper for four consecutive nights, providing of course, that all went well.

The plan worked better than we ever hoped. The first night at 9:00 p.m. when I walked into the kitchen with a cocktail glass in my hand, wearing a black tux with a gardenia in the lapel, nobody paid attention. Finally, a

head cook spotted me and came over. I smiled and told him that I was a little seasick and disoriented and that I was trying to find a restroom. He very politely showed me the door to first class and gave me directions to the rest room. I then trotted between the waiters moving tables and into the bar, where Martha, looking like a queen in a white formal, was waiting for me.

That evening we danced, drank champagne, and ate at the midnight buffet. She gave me her state room key and directions to her cabin. I changed into a sport coat, left the tuxedo on the bed, and headed for the kitchen door. When I entered the kitchen, practically the same thing as before happened.

The head cook, a different one, came over to me. I smiled, and said that I was drunk and disoriented and was trying to get back to my cabin. He politely guided me to the cabin class door.

The next night I repeated the performance, but this time the head cook recognized me and immediately knew what was going on. I explained the situation truthfully, gave them each ten dollars, which was a whole day's wages, and they managed to ignore me for the rest of the trip. One cook told me that if I should be caught by a head waiter, I could probably make the same arrangement.

The trip was beautiful and smooth, one of the most memorable voyages I've made. The band was great and played currently popular swing, dreamy ballads, and well-known Hawaiian songs. During the midnight suppers we had a hula floor show, the first I'd ever seen.

As we approached the islands the weather got warmer, the sunsets more tropical, and sea life more numerous. First, the flying fish appeared and schools of dolphin accompanied the ship; then the phosphorescent foam appeared in the ship's wake. Finally, on the fourth day, in the distance appeared Kauai, then Oahu, then Molokai, all with billowing clouds covering their volcanic peaks. For me, it was love at first sight.

We approached Oahu Island from the west. The great ship swung down Kauai Channel just outside the reef, passed Makapuu Head, Koko Head, and Diamond Head, and sailed into Mamala Bay. First we passed Kapiolani Park with its polo field, then Waikiki Beach with its three hotels—the large

white Moana, next to the pink Royal Hawaiian, and a little beyond the low Halekulani—then Fort DeRussy, the yacht basin, and a long green strip that was Ala Moana Park. Finally we took a swinging right hand turn into Honolulu Harbor Channel, at the end of which stood Aloha Tower. In front of us the city clustered around Fort Street and Nuuanu Avenue. It had the ant-heap look of all downtown cities.

But what a setting! Behind the ant heap, climbing the shoulders of the mountains, were the profuse multicolored houses of the suburbs with their windows glinting; and above them, the solid, unchanging mountains stood, their tropic greenness dripping down the valleys and ravines in among the houses. Crowning the mountains were the ever-present billowing white clouds, hiding the mountain peaks and framed by the blue sky behind. From the ship one got that expansive, far-vista look that one gets only on the sea or from a mountain top. There was no truer picture of Honolulu.

As the ship slowly maneuvered alongside Aloha Tower, a band began to play Hawaiian music, beginning with “Aloha.” Suddenly, dark skinned girls and men dressed in colorful Hawaiian costumes appeared on deck. The girls began kissing the passengers and placing flower leis around their necks, while the men passed out trays of mai-tais with large pieces of fresh pineapple on little sticks.



The McCandless Building, Honolulu, Hawaii, circa 1920s. Originally built by in 1906 by the McCandless brothers to serve as an office building. It is still used as an office building today.

FOUR

Sunny Jim McCandless

I WALKED DOWN THE GANG PLANK, INTENT ON FINDING the baggage pick-up station, and pushed through a milling crowd of shouting, waving people. The ship would forward baggage to any destination requested. Since I didn't have a hotel yet, I just decided to ask the baggage department to hold my luggage until otherwise notified. I was carrying the personal effects I needed for the first couple of days. When I went to the baggage window, I caught the eye of a dark little man who looked Filipino and was dressed as a chauffeur. As soon as he saw me, he asked if I were Sprague McCandless.

It turned out that he was the chauffeur for Sunny Jim McCandless, who was waiting for me in his car. I had known that my Grandfather McCandless was a relative, friend, and correspondent of James McCandless, who lived in Honolulu, but I didn't know that he had written ahead and told him that I was coming. It was a pleasant surprise. The chauffeur led me to a black Lincoln in which sat James McCandless. He was a medium-sized, stocky, grey-haired man in his late seventies. He looked like he could be my grandfather's brother. He greeted me with both enthusiasm and cordiality. After the chauffeur arranged for my baggage to be delivered, we took off for the McCandless residence, a large estate in Maunalani Heights which

was a beautiful, exclusive residential area located on the mountain behind Diamond Head. The estate overlooked Diamond Head, Waikiki, and most of West Honolulu. The scene was breathtaking.

James lived alone except for his staff—the chauffeur, a cook, housekeeper, maids, and a number of gardeners. The estate covered about twenty acres of land, terraced and landscaped with lawns, native trees, and large beds of exotic flowers. In the middle of the estate, which gently sloped down the mountain toward the ocean, sat the main house surrounded by little houses for the hired help and their families and stables that had been converted to garages.

The residence was three stories. On the first floor were several living and game rooms, a library, a trophy room, a large dining room, and a kitchen. The second floor contained a number of bedrooms and bathrooms, and the third story was a ballroom and bar. The house was furnished with beautiful antique furniture, paintings, trophies, family pictures, and ancient native Hawaiian artifacts including feathered head dresses and costumes, enormous surf boards, tapa cloth, and spears. It was a small museum.

That evening at dinner, James began telling me about his wife and family, and we continued this talk for most of the time I spent as his guest. He and my grandfather were some kind of cousins. James and his two brothers, Lincoln and John, had come from Pennsylvania to the Islands in the late 1880s, when they were young men. They came to Hawaii principally to drill water wells and build irrigation systems for pineapple and sugar cane plantations.

At that time Hawaii was a native kingdom. The reigning queen was Liliuokalani. In 1893 she was deposed by white residents who set up a republic. The McCandlesses were involved in the revolution and served in the legislature until 1898, when the Islands were annexed to the United States as a territory. Over the years the three brothers prospered, married, and accumulated ranches, plantations and other business interests. During the 1920s Lincoln served as the Hawaiian delegate to the United States Congress. Lincoln and John died during the 1930s, but Lincoln's widow was alive and well and resided on an estate similar to Sunny Jim's.

James' stories were fascinating. Not only did he tell of his family and



James "Sunny Jim" McCandless
(1855—1943)

the history of Hawaii, in which the McCandlesses had been very much involved, but he also introduced me to the culture and folk lore of the native Hawaiians. He took me on sight-seeing excursions to the Iolani Palace and several museums including the Bishop and the Queen Emma. We drove over the valley, down to the Blow Hole, and around the island. He played recordings of authentic Hawaiian music, which is quite different from the contemporary version. He showed me tons of family photographs, explained his collection of native artifacts, and described the great parties held in his big ballroom in the old days.

He confided to me that he really didn't need so many servants and gardeners; however, they had worked for him for thirty-five or forty years, living on the property with their families, and were now friends. He felt that he owed them a retirement.

On Saturday he invited me to go to the McCandless Office Building, located by the Aloha Tower, where he said he had business that needed attention. The office building was three stories and constructed of brown lava. It was headquarters for all the family operations. “McCandless Building, 1906” was engraved above the street entrance. We went up to the second floor where Jim had an office with roll-top desks and electric lights with green reflectors hanging from the ceiling on wires. I’m sure nothing had changed in that office since 1906.

When we arrived there were several little old Hawaiian women, dressed in muumuus with the usual flower lei around their necks, waiting on a bench outside his door. He went over to his desk, unlocked a drawer, and withdrew a handful of twenty dollar bills. He gave one bill to each woman. They smiled, thanked him, and left.

“These are friends from my younger days, before I was married—very old friends. They come to see me every Saturday morning,” he said with a smile. I guess he owed them retirement like his other employees. I had been with James for four days and felt that I should not impose upon his hospitality much longer. He had his chauffeur drive me over to the Makiki Hotel on Piikoi Street, which he said was an excellent, reasonably-priced, garden hotel. Sure enough, it was great. Each accommodation was a separate cottage in a beautiful garden. The hotel ran an excellent kitchen, and the dining room had a marvelous view of the city. I arranged for a cottage for about forty dollars a month, including breakfast and dinner. This was not cheap in those days, but it was something I could afford. The next day I gave Jim a box of his favorite cigars and moved to the Makiki Hotel. After that, I visited Jim frequently, and we maintained a warm relationship until I left Hawaii in 1942. He died sometime in 1943.

I only saw Martha a few times during her stay in Hawaii. She was the guest of an Army officer and his family, who were stationed and living at Schofield Barracks, the principle U.S. Army post in the central Pacific. Her hosts managed to see that she was flooded with invitations and dates with second lieutenants; and since Schofield was thirty five miles from Honolulu and I didn’t have a car, seeing her was very inconvenient. I didn’t much care anyway because I had so much to do.