

## James Stillman Free's Partial Biography (covering the years 1908-1949)

By James Stillman Free, as told to Elissa Blake Free, 1996

Jim was born on November 5, 1908 in white wood frame house in Gordo, Alabama on the road to Reform. He was delivered by his uncle Dr. Stillman Bell. The house had a well off the back porch, an outhouse in the backyard and it was next door to a church that was used by alternate denominations on alternate Sundays.

Jim lived in that house in Gordo until the family moved to Tuscaloosa when Jim was about six, in 1914. His maternal grandmother, Senith "Etta" Kirk Bell was part of the household from Jim's earliest memories. For about three or four years, Jim's first cousin, who was about two years older, Robert "Buster" Kirk Bell lived with the Free's in Gordo after his mother died. The two boys were like brothers and had many adventures together. Jim began his formal education as a first grader when he was almost six at the Gordo school.

Because of his father's lumber business (purchase of timberland near Tuscaloosa) the family moved to another wood frame house in Tuscaloosa. The address was 2702 Seventh Street. Jim was admitted to the second grade when he was almost seven, which put him in the class with others a year or two older. One of those classmates was his older first-cousin "Buster".

A little over two years later, the family moved again, to a larger house at 1104 Greensboro Avenue and this resulted in a change from the West End School to the Stafford School where he entered the fourth grade. The house was large with two-stories and a wrap around front porch with a swing. Jim remembers seeing and feeling lightning strike a tree only 15 feet away from where he was sitting in the swing. It peeled a large strip of bark off the tree.

At his new school, Jim was to meet his longtime classmate and friend George Burke Johnston. They remained classmates through high-school and college and lived together for one year while attending graduate schools in New York City ( Jim was best man at Burke's wedding and is Godfather to his daughter, Elizabeth Johnston Lipscomb.) They remained friends until Burke's death in Lynchburg, Virginia in early 1995.

Next, Jim attended Tuscaloosa High School where he earned average grades (B-/C+), and was to become the president of the his class and captain of the football team in his senior year. He was also on the varsity basketball team and leader in two school debates. Jim is grateful to had three outstanding teachers at Tuscaloosa High: Mrs. E.D. Thames, English; Matt Clinton, History and Clara L. Verner, the Principal who took an advisory role in student organizations and affairs. In his senior year the High School moved to a new building that was larger and had better facilities such as an indoor basketball court. His Senior class held the first class dance in the new auditorium.

When Jim was 16 he was enlisted in the Warrior Guards, a brigade headquarters company of the Alabama National Guard with an armory in the Tuscaloosa City Hall. This was an elite company with its recruits enlisted by a vote of the membership, with three adverse votes automatically rejecting the candidate. It collected dues from the drill pay of the members and used the funds for an annual company dance during the Christmas holidays and summer camp activities with wives and girlfriends. Jim rose from a Private to the rank of First Sergeant in his final year in the Company.

Also, during Jim's senior year of high school his father died from complications from diabetes. He had lost one of his legs many years before and had to have the second leg removed shortly before his death. Jim, who was 16, was with him the day he died at the Druid City Hospital in Tuscaloosa.

In the fall of 1925 at age 16 Jim enrolled at the University of Alabama in his hometown of Tuscaloosa. He lived at home and drove to the campus. Jim started out as a pre-medical student (based on advice by a visiting psychologist who recommended a career in law or medicine.) After one year of pre-med Jim switched his major to English literature. He had difficulty with German and chemistry which were required for pre-med. (chemistry was a complete puzzle.)

Jim founded the first freshman tennis team at the University. He was the team captain and manager. That experience lead him to become manager of the varsity tennis team for the remaining three years of college. Jim began playing tennis at about age 15, playing his first game on the campus of Stillman College in Tuscaloosa. Jim lead a successful campaign to add more tennis courts to the four existing on campus. After much lobbying, the University began adding 15 additional courts in Jim's senior year.

Jim enrolled in ROTC right away in his freshman year. In his senior year, Jim was the Cadet Colonel of the ROTC, the highest ranking student officer. In the summer after his Junior year, Jim was the First Sergeant of the National Guard Company during its two week training camp at Ft. McClellan.

During his sophomore year Jim successfully tried out for the Blackfriars Dramatic Club. One of the plays he was in was a one-act play in which Bryant Sells was another member of the cast. Bryant Sells went to New York after his graduation in 1928 and within a few months had lucked into the leading part in a Broadway production of Camille, starring Helen Hayes. Sells success inspired Jim to move to New York City and enroll in acting school after college.

At the University Jim was a member of Phi Kappa Sigma (a social fraternity), Jasons and Omicron Delta Kappa (honorary fraternities based on student leadership and extra-curricular achievement.) In his senior year, 1929, Jim was elected president of his ODK chapter and presided over its national convention which was held in Tuscaloosa in the spring. (The convention was held at the same time of the inauguration of President

Warren Harding. Jim's duties to ODK prevented him from going on a trip to Washington to represent his guard company in the inaugural parade.)

Having no specific career aim after graduation, Jim followed his classmate's example, and decided to try acting. Jim traveled to New York City via a Clyde Liner steamship sailing out of Jacksonville, Florida. Once in New York City, Jim enrolled in the Theodora Duncan School of Theater. The six week program was run by Theodora Duncan out of her upper west side apartment. Jim lived at the International House on 125th Street. While making the rounds of the theatrical agencies after graduation, Jim was "spotted" in the hall by a couple of actors who cut a deal with him directly to avoid agency fees. They thought Jim would be suitable for a third male role in a Vaudeville act called "What Women Want".

When they saw him in the hall, Jim heard one of them say, "maybe he'll do." "What Women Want" starred a singer-dancer who sang a song of that title after being courted briefly by the three men. The first was a mother's boy type, the second, which was played by Jim, was a jock-athlete type, and the third was a handsome straight man who employed constant flattery. Part of the lyrics for the song "What Women Want", were as follows, " It isn't strings of Pearls that gets the girls, it's Apple Sauce." Later, the skit signed on a for a national tour, at which point Jim decided to drop out. He was getting bored and didn't see himself with a big future in Vaudeville.

Jim resumed visiting theatrical agencies and soon was offered a minor role in a production in rehearsal in Hoboken, New Jersey called "Cradle of the Deep". It was based on a best-selling autobiography by Joan Lowell who was born on an ocean going sailing ship of which her father was captain. Jim played the role of a crew member. He pulled up sails and said "aye-aye" and in one scene delivered some curse words. After three weeks, the play was booked for a national tour and again the novelty of this atmosphere was wearing off and Jim saw no future coming out of the road trip.

Two friends and one cousin from Alabama were planning to attend graduate schools at Columbia in the fall. Jim and his mother decided to join up with them and live together in a large apartment near campus. Jim would enroll in the school of Journalism program. Those two friends were Burke Johnston and Robert Little. The cousin was Lois Bell. Jim's mother, Nettie Free, cooked, kept house and looked after the four students. The apartment was just off Amsterdam Avenue, about two blocks from the campus.

Because Jim had a college degree and experience on his college newspaper, he only had to attend one year of the normally two-year journalism program for a B.L. degree. Jim hit it off with Charles Cooper, who was a former managing editor of The New York Sun, and ran the working assignments course.

Through the Columbia University student employment agency, Jim got part-time work (every Saturday afternoon for about 3 months) as a dancing partner of daughters and

grand-daughter's of Mozart Society members at the Astor Hotel. The pay was \$5.00 per day, which was good money back then.

Another part-time job was returning books to the library stacks in the Columbia University Library. This paid fifty cents an hour. The librarian was Mr. Urb.

To learn the city that year, Jim made a point of traveling on every subway line to the end. The fare was only a dime. Jim also frequently attended the theater as tickets at Joe Le Blang's discount agency were only fifty cents plus ten cents fee for seats in the second balcony.

After graduation in June, Jim was promised a job on the Bergen Record in Hackensack, New Jersey to begin the following September. About five weeks later, Jim received a telegram in Alabama telling him because of worsening economic conditions, they were cutting staff and there would be no job.

From this point on, because of the Depression, Jim had a series of jobs and adventures until he landed a steady job with The Birmingham News in 1935. During this time he worked briefly for The Tuscaloosa News at \$15 a week and was expected to solicit newspaper subscriptions as a part of his reporting job.

He gave it up when he discovered that the only other reporter on the paper was making \$25 a week because he was not living at home. Jim departed Tuscaloosa when he was offered a job at \$50 a week, selling group insurance on the Yazoo and Mississippi Rail Road, starting north from New Orleans.

Jim and his colleagues operated a pump railroad handcar, going from working gang to working gang, trying to sell them insurance. The railroad officials would assemble the gangs and instruct them to sign the insurance applications, so Jim and his colleagues had no selling to do. Each worker knew his failure to sign up would result in discharge. This relatively high paying job ended when the insurance company was found by state authorities to be operating in Mississippi without a proper license.

With the money earned from the railroad insurance job, Jim returned to New York City and worked at whatever odd jobs were available. One of the best was the job of "rope man" at Schraff's Restaurant (he would man the rope that held customers back while waiting for tables.)

Through the Columbia University employment agency Jim had a series of jobs that included being an instructor/guardian to the 10 year old son of the head of the Starett Construction Company on a Long Island estate. Jim's main job was to keep the child out of his parents' hair and play ball with him. Jim was not invited to join the family at the dinner table until his last week of the one month-long job. This was in the fall of 1930.

The University agency also sent Jim, along with others from Columbia, to grade true and false examination papers at St. John's Law School in Brooklyn. This was in late 1930 - early 1931.

In early spring of 1931, Jim was offered a job in the circulation department of The New York Times which had opened a branch printing plant in Brooklyn and was striving to increase its home delivery circulation in Brooklyn, Bay Ridge and Bayside. The biggest problem in this job was preventing the newly hired delivery workers from dumping wholesale lots of the Times in alleys and behind sign boards instead of delivering them. Getting rid of these balky delivery people was impossible because of red tape.

Meantime, Jim had written and sold two articles to the magazine, "Tennis", then published by the U.S. Lawn Tennis Association and the editor offered Jim a position as his only assistant, aside from his secretary. He gave Jim the title of Associate Editor, Circulation Editor, and Advertising Manager! He did this in order to concentrate on writing and editing and dished out to Jim all the activities he did not want to perform himself. His name was Dan Ellis and he had been hired from the Spaulding Sporting Goods Company and returned to their fold when economic disaster closed the magazine in the spring of 1932.

As the magazine was folding, Jim responded to an ad in the Columbia University newspaper, The Spectator, offering a two month sailing cruise in the Caribbean for \$250 under the direction of a twenty year old George Washington University student named L. Ron Hubbard. (Later the founder of The Church of Scientology).

Hubbard, the son of a Navy supply officer, had an option to lease a four-masted lumber schooner based in Baltimore. Hubbard hired Jim to carry out his suggestions for classified advertising in several New York newspapers. By late spring Jim had signed up more than thirty - mostly young - men for the cruise in June. Jim met Hubbard for the first time in Baltimore as they looked over the lumber schooner which Hubbard had contracted, cleaning out and installing folding cots and temporary cooking facilities in a lower deck.

The only motor on the schooner "Doris Hamlin" was one to help raise the large main sails, otherwise it moved only with the wind. It had no refrigeration and young Ron said he would put the ice and perishables on a pile of sawdust and keep them cold under a heavy coat of ice. When Jim asked about the need for passports and other travel papers, he said all the passengers aboard would be listed as members of the crew!

Also, to protect the management from damage suits, Hubbard had incorporated in Delaware as "Wanderers Incorporated" naming Jim as one of the company officers. It turned out that Jim had sold some two thirds of the tickets. It turned out also, that Hubbard had retained most of the other third of the passengers in some non-paying or

part-paying arrangements and Ron and Jim were on thin financial ground before they sailed.

With light wind, it required five days to get out of Chesapeake Bay and another week to get to Bermuda, where they were forced to replace a blown-out main sail and faulty third-hand communications equipment. The stormy weather and communications failure so frightened about ten of the passengers that they departed for home before the "Doris Hamlin" could renew supplies.

The money shortage inspired young Hubbard to sell shares in the enterprise which included splitting the profits he expected to get from a Pathe News Reel cameraman from the sale of movies about pirates, underwater wrecks etc. Hubbard paid the cameraman \$1,500 bringing the enterprise to near bankruptcy before leaving Bermuda.

They were only three days out of Bermuda heading generally south before entering the Sargasso Sea, which is a near-windless area where they were stuck for four or five days. The passengers were not happy. The only entertainment was swimming, a chess tournament and fighting amongst each other. The food supply was dwindling, all fresh food had spoiled. Most food came out of a can. When random winds blew them out of the Sargasso, they picked up trade winds and had a wonderful cruise that wound up about a week later in Martinique.

Very soon it was apparent, aside from an unsaleable film about a cock fight, there were no other movie sale possibilities and Hubbard's finances were depleted. He sent a cable back to Baltimore telling the schooner's owner that if he wanted the "Doris Hamlin" back he would have to send money. After the money was received and the schooner was repossessed, it sailed north for St. Thomas but blew out another main sail and was forced to go with the wind to Ponce, Puerto Rico.

Since Ponce was not a free port and passengers would have to pay customs fees on alcohol, there was a concerted effort to consume as much of the alcoholic spirits aboard as possible, before the tax man hit. There was massive intoxication but no injuries before reaching Ponce!

At that point, a few of those aboard including Jim and Hubbard had arranged for receipt of enough funds to return home. They went their separate ways -- never seeing each other again.

Jim traveled back to Tuscaloosa by way of New Orleans on a cargo ship with a friend made on the schooner, Bob Johnson, a son of Owen Johnson, a popular novelist of the period who wrote "Stover at Yale" and other works of fiction. Hubbard went back to college and in a few years was known as the most prolific writer of pulp fiction in the country. It did not surprise Jim because Hubbard had the most vivid imagination he'd ever encountered and could not describe a walk on city streets at night without making it a tale of unknown hazards.

Soon after arriving in his hometown, Jim had an opportunity to buy a one-third share in a weekly newspaper, The Tuscaloosa Warrior, for \$500. Its publisher had run into debt and was in dire need of quick relief. Jim took over the editorship on the condition that his \$500 would only be spent for current, pressing expenses and not debt hanging over from past weeks and months.

The deal was arranged because its small printing plant could also turn out the University of Alabama weekly paper on a Thursday night prior to the Friday night printing of its own weekly. After about two months the publisher, a slick salesman, was offered a lucrative job selling automobiles which he took, and at the same time, the third partner, who had been titled general manager left also to join a family enterprise.

This left Jim as the sole owner. Luckily Jim's contract had specified that he would not be responsible for back debts. Later he learned that the publisher had signed up the University newspaper printing contract with the aid of a \$10 a page kick-back from the business manager of the university weekly.

With the aid of the university payments and the newly hired circulation manager who collected farm produce and other items for his personal use, to pay for the mostly rural subscribers, they were able to survive and publish the weekly newspaper. Jim's main satisfaction with owning the newspaper was the opportunity to defend his friend, the county district attorney Edward deGraffenreid, in print, from charges that he had burned his house to collect the insurance money. The real reason was that he was drunk!

In February of 1933 the owner of the printing equipment raised the rental price so high that Jim was forced to give up the business. Jim arranged to sell the university printing contract and the Weekly Warrior to the man who had been successful in bartering enough farm and general produce to keep them going. He took over the paper in late February, 1933.

Bob Johnson, who had been acting as advertising manager, joined Jim in purchasing an old Dodge passenger car and they planned a trip through Mexico to end of whatever road lay beyond.

They paid \$50 and with recapped tires and about \$10 worth of mechanical work, the car was ready to roll. They set out for Texas in late February, crossing the border of Mexico at the beginning of March on the day that President Franklin Roosevelt closed all the banks in the U.S. because the financial crisis. They were lucky because their traveler's checks were American Express and in one corner bore the words "payable in gold", thus they were able to cash their checks in Mexico!

In Mexico City at a cheap rooming house where meals were available at one dollar a day, they met two men who would be valuable on a trip south. One was a weather beaten adventurer calling himself A. L. Trail, the initials standing for A. Lone trail (he spoke

primitive but understandable Spanish). The other was a young unemployed but skilled mechanic who could quickly fix most any auto problem.

All four started south in the Dodge (it had a rumble seat). It was the dry season, so they had no trouble crossing creeks that would have ordinarily been troublesome. In route to Oaxaca, their late evening procedure was to go to small hamlets and Trail would invite the Mayor to show them the sites in the Dodge (one of them would get on the running board and give the Mayor a seat.) They would ride around town blowing the horn, exciting chickens and children.) Then after buying the Mayor a drink or two, and buying their own dinner at the lowest priced food source the Mayor recommended, they retired to their canvas hammocks (sometimes placed directly on the ground) for the night.

After a day or two in Oaxaca, where they met some local officials at parties, they were advised that the stories they had heard about a highway being passable to the south to Guatemala, were false. A story that had appeared in several American magazines about the road being passable all the way through were wrong. The authors of that story had driven to Salina-Cruz on the west coast and had their car lifted on a small cargo ship which sailed them to a port in Guatemala. Jim and company took the good advice of one state official who offered to buy the car and fix it so there would be no fiscal penalty for not returning the car to the U.S.

They then arranged mule-back transportation that took five days to cross the mountains to a railroad that took them to Guatemala City. This is where Jim went to jail for the second time (first time was in college for speeding)!

Checking their finances, looking ahead to proceeding to Honduras, the recommended route was throughout the east coast by train and then a short sea ferry hop to a port in Honduras and then by train to Tegucigalpa. They did not have enough ready money to pay for the full rail and ferry trip for four so they decided Bob Johnson and the young mechanic would take the rail ferry route and A. L. Trail and Jim would get off the train where a United Fruit Company spur railroad ran south to a small river to the border between Guatemala and Honduras and they would walk the few miles to the river and cross to another United Fruit Company spur rail line that came to the other side of the river. The walk was eight miles.

As they walked toward the river with their light baggage, they came to a small house alongside the track which had bars on the windows, and, to their surprise, three locals with police badges came out to meet them.

They invited Jim and Trail into the small house which had a sign identifying the building simply as "Eskimo". Once in, the police locked the door. Jim and Trail explained their travel plans but the police wanted to know whether they had cleared the plan with authorities in Guatemala City. They showed them passports with visas for Honduras. The police said they saw no specified and approved point of departure in Guatemala or point of arrival in Honduras. They demanded to know what they were carrying.



They searched Jim and Trail and appeared shocked that they carried no drugs or valuables. The police could not understand why visitors from the United States would take such a remote and unusual walking route. They voiced suspicion that the visas were false, and said they would hold Jim and Trail in that one-room jail until they could get confirmation from Guatemala City that the visas were authentic. They kept saying "nobody travels like this!" Luckily confirmation came in about an hour.

Once safely across the river, Jim and Trail continued on through the jungle, sleeping one night out under the stars before reaching San Pedro Sula. From there they caught a train for a long ride to Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

In a small world situation, the Consul at the American Embassy, Mr. Ackley, was the son of the people who lived directly behind Jim's homeplace on Greensboro Avenue in Tuscaloosa! This made for an instant friendship. Ackley even invited Jim and Bob Johnson (the other two traveling companions had gone their separate ways) to accompany him and his wife for the weekend to a vacation resort leased by the American Embassy and run by Germans on the Pacific coast.

Jim and his friend Bob Johnson stayed in the capital city of Tegucigalpa for three months, renting a house on a hill overlooking the city. It was very inexpensive, having no furniture except for in one bedroom. During his time in the capital, Jim tried unsuccessfully to edit a daily page in English in the local Spanish daily. There was not enough demand. As the roads were poor, Jim and Bob made few trips around Honduras.

In November of 1933, Jim and Bob took a freighter to San Francisco and proceeded via Chicago back to their respective homes. They never saw each other again and failed to keep in touch.

Back in Tuscaloosa in late 1933, Jim found no permanent job prospects. He had a friend whose stepfather, Richard Pearson Hobson Jr. (son of a famous Spanish-American war hero), was clerk of the Circuit Court in Tuscaloosa. He hired Jim to help him organize his campaign for re-election. Mostly Jim kept lists of prospective supporters and contributors.

In the spring of 1934, Jim and his friend Robert Little signed up to conduct a WPA (Work Progress Administration) project called Suburban Subsistence Living. It required them to make a study of the economics of the local people growing or interested in growing their own food. It took about six weeks.

Then, along with an unemployed photographer friend, Ed Rice, they signed up for a TVA (Tenn. Valley Authority) project, studying the nearby community of Gorgas. The three of them, in conjunction with two University of Alabama psychology professors surveyed the town to make a general report on a rural community that was thriving. As part of the study, they were directed to make note of colorful characters in the community.

Toward the end of 1934, Jim asked the President of the bank in Tuscaloosa, John Persons, and the President of the University of Alabama, George Denny, to write letters of recommendation to the head of The Birmingham News for a reporting job. Jim went up to Birmingham for an interview and was told a couple of weeks later that he could start the first Monday in January of 1935, taking the place of a reporter who was leaving for a job with the secret service.

On the first Monday in January 1935, Jim reported to The Birmingham News to begin work as a reporter for \$20 a week. In Depression days this was not a bad salary, because the entire staff had been reduced in pay by 25%. Jim recalls that a new governor, Bibb Graves, was inaugurated that day and Jim was kept busy taking dictation from news reporters in Montgomery, the state capital.

Jim's early days were spent mostly in rewriting obituaries and other stories carried over from the morning paper, The Agee-Herald. Soon he began getting assignments from the city desk. Apparently they were satisfied with his work, for he began filling in on the days off and vacation periods of the reporters assigned to beats.

Jim covered police, district courts and federal agencies. He lived in a group house managed by a friend from his college days, Harvey Terrell, just off Highlands Avenue. Terrell, who later became president of The First National Bank in Birmingham, had played on the same varsity tennis team as Jim. Jim produced a wide variety of stories, even contributed a few editorials and found his favorite beat was covering the federal building.

At the end of the first year, Jim received a pay increase of \$2.50 a week. This was discouraging because he realized with the depressed economy, it would take a long time to get an adequate salary.

Jim began looking for other job opportunities and was impressed by reading in Time Magazine that The Richmond Times Dispatch had become the first newspaper in the United States to begin printing stories in specific portions of the paper in the same manner that Time Magazine was doing.

It so happened, that he was planning a vacation in a few weeks, so Jim wrote the managing editor of the Richmond paper a letter outlining his experience. He also told him that he was driving north on his vacation and would appreciate an opportunity to come by and talk with him. The editor's name was Leon Dure and he and Jim seemed to hit it off well. When Jim returned from vacation there was a letter from Dure promising Jim a job to fill an opening in about two months.

Jim left The Birmingham News for the job in Richmond in April of 1937. He started as a general assignment reporter and lived in a rented room just off Monument Avenue. Jim liked The Times Dispatch, but found that his working hours (usually 1pm - until

completing his assignments, usually by 7 or 8 o'clock, sometimes 10pm) prohibited any regular social life.

That first summer Jim met Ann Cottrell (to become his wife in February of 1950), a student at Barnard College in New York City and Richmond native, who had a summer job on the Woman's Page of the paper. That department was a paneled off section but Jim was impressed the first time he saw Ann walking through the city room. They began dating. On their dates they frequently dropped by to see two other staff members, Margaret and Howard Leonard, who had an infant daughter they called Bunny. They dated the two summers Ann worked at the paper.

When Virginia inaugurated a new governor and the State General Assembly began a session in early 1938, the reporters who had been covering the governor and the legislature were shifted to exclusive coverage of the two legislative bodies, and Jim was assigned to replace the one covering the governor's office and the state office building. Virginia politics were new to Jim but he got an exceptional break in reporting on appointees by the incoming governor, James Price.

Price had broken with the Byrd machine and was replacing virtually all the incumbent top officials. One day Jim complained to a minor official, who ran the office of the Virginia Sheriffs Association, that he was having poor luck getting reliable information on prospective appointees. The official, Russell B. Devine, said perhaps he could help. He had been largely ignored by the competing reporter on the Richmond News Leader, a columnist named Mike Houston.

Devine told Jim one day that a certain man was going to be appointed to a top agency the following day. Jim frankly didn't take him seriously but the prediction came true. Next time Devine gave him a forecast, Jim consulted Dure, the top editor. Dure advised Jim to write that the man Devine mentioned was one of the leading candidates for the appointment. The next day the man was appointed and Devine helped Jim hit it on the head for a half dozen appointments that followed.

Not until eight years later when Jim had moved on to Washington did he discover how Devine came to be such a fantastic source. Jim received a wedding notice announcing Devine's secret marriage to Miss Jeannie Lapsley, who was personal secretary to Governor Price and his predecessor in office, Governor George Perry!

While Jim enjoyed his work in Richmond, the working hours continued to be a problem and the pay had increased to only \$42.50 a week. So Jim sent clippings of some of his stories to The Washington Star, including series he had written about Virginia's mental health hospitals, some of its leading industries, wars between two Richmond Bishops, (one an Episcopalian, the other a Catholic) and an internal dispute that split the top Richmond Presbyterian church into two separate churches.

Jim sent these stories to Ben McKelway, the managing editor of The Washington Evening Star, the Washington afternoon newspaper with more agreeable hours for off-duty social activities. In reply, Jim was told to report to The Star the following month (April 1939.) The pay was only \$45.00 a week but he thought the future prospects were better.

Jim did general assignments and filled in for beat reporters during the early days on The Star but also wrote a series of articles on charity racquets and a series on Greenbelt, Maryland, a federal government experiment to build a more livable and inexpensive community.

In early 1940 Jim was assigned to cover the War Production Board, which headed the national effort to improve the country's defense forces and civilian capacity to support a larger fighting force. There was no question President Franklin Roosevelt was preparing the nation to enter World War II on the side of the Allies fighting for survival against Adolf Hitler and his aggressive forces.

Two Star reporters left the paper in 1940, one to join the Army and the other, the Navy. Both told Jim that the U.S. entry in the war was certain and that the country was building up its officer personnel as fast as it could find suitable applicants. Jim checked with the Army to see if they could give him any credit for being an Army Lt. through ROTC training in college. They said no and showed no interest in giving Jim a commission.

Jim then applied to the Marine Corps and was told that a hole in his middle nose septum, caused by a surgeon's error in a nose operation, would disqualify him. Then the Navy reported that partial color blindness prohibited consideration for a Naval commission.

In the late fall of 1941, Marshall Field announced plans to start a new daily newspaper in Chicago to be called The Chicago Sun. It turned out that Ann Cottrell who had come to Washington to work for Newsweek Magazine had been assured a job in the new paper's Washington's bureau and she urged Jim to check into possibilities of joining the new bureau. He did so and was accepted to cover the war preparation effort as he was doing for the Washington Star.

The bureau assembled in the National Press Building in late November of 1941 under the leadership of bureau chief Bascom Timmons. The new paper began publishing dummy editions for a week beginning in late November and the first distributed copies appeared on December 3, four days before Pearl Harbor was attacked. Ann and Jim were among the staff members who rushed into work on Sunday, December 7, 1941 after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

Jim was assigned to cover the War and Navy Departments, a challenging assignment. The War and Navy Department buildings stood side by side on Constitution Avenue; the Pentagon was yet to be built.

Press briefings and conferences were frequent and the news in the early weeks was mostly bad. Jim had stories on page one nearly every day and he and all of his colleagues kept busy. Meanwhile, Jim had drawn a moderately low draft number and the bureau had applied for his accreditation as a war correspondent. Jim was drafted in April of 1942 and sent with other recruits to Drew Field, Florida near Tampa for basic training in the Army Air Force.

Few experienced officers and non-commissioned officers were available for training the recruits. The company Jim was assigned to was technically run by a Second Lt. but in reality the boss was a Master Sergeant. When they were taken out on a drill field for calisthenics for the first time, the Sergeant squirmed around for a full minute and then said, sheepishly, "did any of you guys ever give calisthenics?" There was a long silence, and when no one spoke up, Jim finally held up his hand and was called on to lead the troops in exercises.

When they returned to the barracks the Second Lt. called him in and asked Jim about his military experience. He then asked Jim to serve as company clerk, to make out the payroll and to teach the soldiers how to march. While Jim held the rank of Private, most of his time was spent preparing company records and the like.

On May 23, 1942, Jim received a well-traveled letter from the office of Naval Officer Procurement advising him that the physical qualifications for a commission in the Navy had been eased on partial color-blindness and inviting Jim to accept a commission as a Lt. JG. Ironically, Jim had just been told that his color blindness would preclude him from attending Officers Training School in the Army.

When Jim showed the letter to his Army boss, the Lt. said it was too bad that the letter came too late and that the Army would not release him. On his way out of the office, the Master Sergeant called Jim over and said, "that dumb Lt. doesn't know that the articles of war specifically state that an enlisted man in either the Army or the Navy is eligible to accept a commission in either force."

Jim telephoned a Major in Washington whom he knew from his war coverage, explained the situation, and was told the matter would be handled promptly. Jim was discharged honorably from the Army and traveled as a civilian to Washington to accept the commission.

With orders to report to the 10th Naval District in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Jim traveled to Norfolk and was told he would be shipped out on the USS Pastores. Jim was told to stay nearby and telephone at noon daily. Jim went to Virginia Beach and on the second day he called, he was told to report to the Pastores the following morning, June 4th, 1942.

The Pastores turned out to be an old United Fruit cargo ship taken over by the Navy. It was built for transporting bananas and its cargo holds were enormous with only a couple of giant bulkheads separating the hold's cargo space. This was an important detail, for it

meant that if a torpedo or a cannon shell penetrated the hull, so much water could flow in that it would be impossible to keep the ship afloat.

The Pastores, sailing alone, was called on to pick up survivors from German submarine sinkings three separate times on the way to Puerto Rico by way of several other Caribbean islands. In San Juan, Jim was assigned quarters at the San Geronimo Hotel which has long since become a rebuilt portion of the Carib Hilton. Jim was assigned to Travel Control. This consisted mainly of interviewing passengers passing through Puerto Rico by commercial air. He wrote reports on all passengers and sent them along on any passengers with any record warranting further investigation before being admitted to the United States or allied countries to the south.

The work was pleasant but living in San Juan with its wide-open gambling, no black-outs and a lively social life did not seem appropriate during war time. Aside from good ocean swimming, there were nearby tennis courts and at one point Jim was chosen to join the base tennis team which included Admiral John Hoover and to go to Guantanamo Bay for a match with that Naval base.

When, in the early fall of 1942, there was a notice that volunteers were being sought for duty in Trinidad, a much more active submarine warfare area, Jim applied for transfer. Things were buzzing in Trinidad where the base facilities and housing were being expanded swiftly. In fact, since no Navy quarters were available, Jim was assigned with three others to a small private house in the backyard of a home owned by a family of German descent in Port of Spain. After a few months, the Naval Officers quarters was completed as part of the Navy headquarters in a public park on the waterfront in Port of Spain.

Once again, Jim's assignment was Travel Control but this time, it consisted more of ship boarding. Specifically, they would go aboard transport vessels in a convoy on their arrival in Trinidad. Almost without exception, every one of these convoys had been attacked by German submarines and few convoys had escaped without a few ships being sunk. An intelligence officer would board each passenger or cargo ship in the convoy to get details of the attack. With each ship captain providing facts observed during attacks, a fairly accurate picture could be assembled from all the individual details.

Jim had two interesting experiences, one with a suspected spy and the other with a mysterious disappearance of a large piece of vinyl machinery from the submarine base in Trinidad.

They received in the first instance a report that a man in a U.S. Naval officer's uniform, which was not entirely authentic in detail, was traveling around observing military and Naval operations on the island. Taking an armed Marine Sergeant with him, Jim began tracking down the suspect. On the second day, they found him in a Chinese restaurant in Port of Spain and telephoned the local authorities to join in arresting the suspect. On questioning, it turned out that the suspect had almost correctly assembled his uniform and

had not seriously attempted to obscure his travels around the island. He denied any spying activities and it turned out that none of the persons who had said he acted suspiciously could report any personal observation of spying activity. He showed them some identification as a British seaman, and said he had used the piecemeal Naval uniform only to help him cash checks. He was deported by Trinidadian authorities within a couple of days.

In the case of the missing machine, the personnel at the Navy repair facility reported only that one morning the machine had simply been missing when shop opened. For two days Jim interviewed various personnel at the base but no one could provide an answer.

On the third day, a chief petty officer approached Jim and asked to meet with him privately at another location later. He inquired if Jim's primary mission was to arrest some guilty party or to recover the machinery without questioning the source of the information. Not having the authority to make this decision, Jim took the question to the executive officer at Navy headquarters. After a minute's thought, the executive officer said the choice would be to get the valuable machine back.

On assurance that his name would not appear in any reports about the missing machine, the petty officer told Jim that the machine could be found in a submarine base in Hawaii, which it was. He also said that the machine was separated into several smaller parts and transported aboard a U.S. submarine that operated out of the Hawaii base. Jim never heard if the machine was in fact returned to the Trinidad submarine base.

It turned out that Futchie Noftnagle, the oldest son of the family of German descent that owned the leased quarters Jim lived in when he first came to Trinidad, was a top tennis player on the island. He invited Jim to join the Tranquility Square Tennis Club which Jim did. Since Jim started work in the early morning, and usually completed his reports by early afternoon, he was often through by 4pm and it was nearly always too hot to play tennis any earlier. This meant he had time off early most days for tennis and some swimming in the bay on the Naval property. Another hardship post!

Port of Spain had a fairly lively social life and there were a number clubs there. Over a period of several weeks, Jim, through his tennis connections, was invited to join the Trinidad Country Club, The Marine Square Tennis Club (within walking distance of Jim's living quarters) and the Springville Club. The advantage of these multiple memberships was that one could always find an open tennis court at one place or another. And the membership fees were very modest. In 1943 Jim was a runner-up in the doubles open tournament at the Tranquility Tennis Club. His partner was Desmond Vihaus, a Trinidadian of Dutch descent.

The high point of Jim's posting to Trinidad came when a German submarine, captured uninjured in the ocean by a Naval task force under Admiral Dan Gallery, was brought to Trinidad for debriefing of its crew. A boatload of heavily armed American sailors had been able to get aboard the submarine in time to prevent its crew from scuttling the vessel

and it was the first time an intelligence breakthrough of this kind had occurred during the War.

A contingent of German speaking intelligence officers was flown in to do most of the interrogation but a fair number of the German crew spoke pretty good English and Jim was able to help with the debriefing. Jim recalls that the Germans were very clean cut and seemed shocked to have been captured. This submarine capture operation had been carefully planned with the sub to be forced to the surface with depth bombs and the boarding crew waiting nearby for a swift-moving seizure attempt.

In late 1943, Jim was assigned to a six-week advanced intelligence school program at the Henry Hudson Hotel in New York City. He best remembers the experience because his roommate was an old friend and fellow student at the University of Alabama. His name was Percy Fountain and he had been the United States Attorney in Mobile, Alabama. Near the conclusion of the school's physical fitness program, a test was conducted to check on the results of the daily exercise program. They assigned two officers to test each other and Jim's friend Percy was his test partner. The next day the executive officer called Jim in and looked at him with surprise. He said, "You don't look like a man who could rate so high in every category of these tests". Just why Percy chose to turn Jim into a superman in every exercise on the list, Jim will never know. When Jim asked him why, Percy laughed and said, "why not?"

When, at the end of the training course, Percy was asked by the Navy for his preference for his next duty assignment, he said "I don't give a shit." The executive officer thought this was too undignified and refused to accept that answer. After efforts to persuade Percy to change his mind, which he would not do, the officer said "oh hell, I'll just write down 'has no preference'!"

On his way back to Trinidad Jim had an overnight stop in Miami. He went out on the town and in one of the larger hotel bars he met an attractive young woman, who appeared to be on the prowl. They decided to go to a night club bar a few blocks away, and in route, the young woman recalled that she had to go by her rooming house for a mission she had overlooked. After about an hour in the second bar they agreed to go to a nearby hotel. The room they got was on the fifth floor. During their stay she went to the bathroom and apparently took a good look at the hardware on the door. Later, when Jim went to the bathroom, the door suddenly slammed behind Jim and he found himself locked in.

There was no telephone in the bathroom so Jim opened a window and soon saw two Marines walking somewhat wobbly down the sidewalk across the street. Jim yelled to get their attention and they came over his side of the street. Jim told them what his predicament was, and gave them the room number. He asked them to get a key from the hotel desk and come to his rescue. They did so, and once Jim was dressed, they set off for the rooming house, where his wallet snatching companion lived.



Although the man who came to the door, when he knocked, claimed the woman Jim was looking for was not there, Jim did not believe it. In an effort to persuade her to come to the door, Jim called out her name and demanded that she give back the wallet she had stolen. The two Marines liked this approach and they joined in a three-man unified yell, "Give the Lt. back the wallet you stole!"

After about four or five minutes, of the loud pleas, she finally came down to the street level and produced the wallet. Jim was pleased to see that his various identification cards and \$60 in cash were intact.

With intent to insult her, Jim pulled out a \$20 bill and tossed it in her direction, turned and walked away. The Marine helpers said they were willing to call it a night and Jim felt the same way, so Jim proceeded back to his hotel.

While he had written reports on the activities of dozens and dozens of German submarines, and sinking ships in this area of the South Atlantic, the first German sub Jim saw in actual combat operation, was on a brief vacation visit to Barbados. Jim caught a ride on an older U.S. surveillance plane. They took off on a heavily overcast morning. Visibility was severely limited and they had to fly low. The plane's mission was to search for submarines over a triangular route from Trinidad to Barbados to Martinique and back to home base in Trinidad. About halfway to Barbados a crew member spotted a German sub about 800 yards to one side. The pilot instantly turned in its direction and tried to close the distance swiftly but it was a slow plane and by the time they did close in, the sub was fast disappearing under the surface. They dropped a bomb but it fell short. By the time they could turn around, the submarine had escaped.

Seeking to outguess the sub commander, the pilot turned, planning to stay away for about 15 or 20 minutes and returned to surprise the sub. The sub commander was not to be fooled. Although they circled around and sought to catch him on the surface three different times, he was not to be fooled. These futile maneuvers took up just over an hour. Deciding the quest was hopeless; the pilot turned to the navigator and said, "Where are we?" The navigator gestured at the overcast skies which prohibited any sightings for a precise location, replied "damned if I know".

They didn't know where they were other than the fact that there were not likely to be any islands to the reachable east. The normal procedure in such cases is to fly east or to where are known to be islands. In about 40 minutes they sighted an island that they identified as Martinique and they proceeded to Barbados once they got their compass bearings.

In the late spring of 1944, Jim received orders to a "Transport Scout Intelligence School" six week program at the Naval base in San Diego, California. Told on arrival that due to lack of space on the base, the command had arranged to lease a half-dozen large motel units at the San Diego Zoo. It turned out that the Navy had been disturbed by the successful attack by a Japanese swimmer who managed to attach a bomb to a combat ship and anchor during the battle for Tarawa.

This school was commanded by Col. James Roosevelt, son of President Franklin Roosevelt, who had led a bold and successful raid by a Marine contingent on a Japanese-held island in the Pacific. The purpose was to train a group of 25 physically fit officers in numerous scouting activities. This included handling of small boats, electrically propelled rafts that ran silently, map making, how to use underwater explosives and various information gathering activities. The daily assignments were strenuous and part of the program consisted of playing touch football, volley ball and a twice daily swimming session. Jim thinks he was chosen because his success in tennis tournaments in Puerto Rico and Trinidad had been inserted in his records.

They handled a lot of explosives and near the end of their training with them at Camp Pendleton, California; they had a big surplus still unused. The Sergeant at the Camp dreaded turning the explosives back in and having to make numerous reports about them. So he decided that the day after they left he would get rid of the whole batch with a series of large explosions in a distant corner of the base. The trouble was, the big bang ruptured a water main, and the last Jim heard, the Sergeant was fighting off a court martial.

One of the training assignments was to get aboard an LCVP (landing craft) in a remote section of San Diego harbor in the black of night, alone, and take it back to base. Another was to participate in an assault landing at night on an uninhabited island off the coast.

Then the trainees were ordered to Pearl Harbor for transfer to various attack transports in the Pacific Fleet. On August 9, 1944, Jim was ordered to the USS Pierce (APA 50), an assault transport, capable of landing 500 troops on a beach. It would be located in Guadal Canal in the Pacific.

They took on a contingent of troops and in a few days joined a large task force on its way to assault the Palau Islands held by the Japanese. The target was a small island in the group called Angaur. The biggest part of the target was the larger island of Peliliu where a long and bloody battle was fought. The beach chosen for the attack was relatively small, about 200 yards in a semi-circle and it was studded with gun emplacements. One of the most capable Lts. was chosen to be beach master for their sector, and he asked Jim to be his assistant.

The landing craft were loaded with soldiers climbing down webs of roped ladder, then after the old battle ships with their big guns blast the enemies' defense points, the initial waves of the landing craft put heavily armed men ashore to clear out Japanese positions and kill or drive back enemy snipers near the beach. On September 15, 1944 Jim went in a third wave landing craft to the island Angaur in which one soldier was shot through the arm when he rose above the crouching position. The job of the beachmaster is to set-up radio communications with the command ship and key leaders of the forces hitting the beaches.

They were told to dig foxholes on the beach and remain in them during counter-attack periods. They also designated to the incoming troops the less dangerous lanes across the beach. In mid-afternoon an Army captain came in with a map found on a dead Japanese officer. It looked important and Jim was instructed to take it immediately to the command ship which Jim did, and return to the beach within an hour.

When darkness came, the foxholes were more attractive. Jim dug another foot to make his foxhole more secure and comfortable. The instructions were for everyone to remain in their foxhole that night unless ordered to do otherwise. A warning was issued that everyone out of their foxholes during the night could be considered as an enemy. In fact, one soldier was shot when he apparently woke up and forgot his instructions.

When this operation was over, Jim's taskforce proceeded to New Guinea, just off the city of Hollandia. General Douglas MacArthur located his headquarters on a mountainside above the city. Its furnishings and buildings, while not luxurious, were the most spacious and comfortable available to U.S. forces in the Pacific.

In early October of 1944, they picked up troops further west along the coast of New Guinea at Sansapor and proceeded to join the fleet headed for Leyte in the Philippines. Since there were few protective land features near the beach, the Army troops crossed the beaches with relatively little resistance, with General MacArthur wading ashore from a landing craft as soon as the beach area was clear, saying as he waded in, "I have returned".

Their assault group had no mission in the beach landing and joined the ships anchored off shore to await developments. They knew that the Japanese had split their entire fleet into several sections and were sending them to counter-attack the Leyte invasion from several directions.

On the third day of the action, October 23, 1944 the *Pierce* was at anchor with no cause for any special alert and most of the officers were gathered on deck outside the brig. Someone saw a combat plane dogfight in the distance and they all moved to that side of the ship to watch. Gradually, they worked their way toward the *Pierce* and eventually Jim could see two U.S. fighters trying to close in on a Japanese MIG. It was a gripping sight and no one seemed to sense danger. But soon, the combatants moved rather swiftly in the ship's direction and the Jap plane developed a smoke trail and was obviously in peril. Suddenly it turned in the direction of the *Pierce* and it looked like the pilot recognized he had lost and had decided to crash kamikaze-style into the ship. When it appeared he was going to crash and explode on the *Pierce*, one of the American planes swept in and landed some shots in the Japanese plane's tail steering gear. All the members of the gathering on the deck side made a rush for the door to the bridge and most of them made it inside in the scramble.

But the tail damage to the Japanese plane took away the pilot's control and he was unable to crash into a vital part of the ship. Instead, it only scraped down the side of the ship and fell into the ocean, having done only minor damage.

Later the captain, a man named Frank Adams, from Mobile, Alabama, berated them for what he called a panic rush to safety. One officer replied, "What good could we have done by staying on the outer deck. We had only handguns and they have no effect."

Captain Adams was a generally capable commander, but he had some quirky ideas. They had heard that Tokyo Rose had mentioned the *Pierce* among the American ships that the Japanese would soon sink but none of them had heard that particular broadcast. Adams asked Jim why he was not familiar with her program, "You're the intelligence officer aren't you?" Next time Jim saw the captain, Jim told him that one of his duties as the assistant communications officer precluded him from monitoring Tokyo Rose and that it probably require special orders for Jim to attempt it. Adams growled and moved away.

Later when they had returned to a harborage at the island of Manus, the ship's engineers and several others began to assemble and build an 18 foot sailboat for the captain, who had expressed a keen interest in sailing and had been yearning for such a boat. The task required several weeks and was completed during hours of relative calm.

Not long after his boat was completed Adams began taking two or three shipmates on short sailing cruises when the *Pierce* was anchored in the large harbor. Late one afternoon he was on such a sail when he was becalmed with virtually no propelling winds. The executive officer offered to send a landing craft to pull him back to the ship but the captain spurned the gesture. He somehow believed that if he could get his boat back by skilled maneuvering, however long it took, it would convince all aboard that he was a marvelous sailor. He made such slow progress that the time for the nightly movie on deck arrived and a capacity crowd was gathered to watch it. But the show could not begin without the captain. The impatient gathering had over an hour's wait before the movie could start.

Just as the first pictures were flashed on the screen someone hit the captain in the back of the neck with a large tin foil pellet and he roared in anger. The movie was delayed another five minutes before the captain cooled off.

After the Japanese surrender the *Pierce* sailed back to California. Captain Adams reportedly was trying to get Navy permission to take his sailboat back to his home in Alabama.

From Leyte they proceeded east to Guam, which had been captured only a few months earlier and picked up an Army battalion to take it to the peaceful and beautiful island of New Caledonia for rest and recreation. Jim was of course looking forward to this peaceful island himself. But when they were only about two days from the destination, they received a message to turn back and bring the troops to the Philippines where the

war had intensified considerably and an attack on the main island of Luzon was set for Jan. 9, 1945.

The mammoth Naval force participating in the Luzon invasion overwhelmed the defending Japanese at Lingayen with unexpected ease. The *Pierce* had put its troops and cargo ashore and was at anchor in relative peace on a bright sunny afternoon (probably Jan. 10th). Without any advance warning, those on the *Pierce* heard a terrific explosion as a Japanese bomb struck a landing craft no more than 20 yards from the ship's side. The three men in the boat disappeared underwater and the boat was a mass of floating debris. What had happened, Jim later learned, was that a Japanese kamikaze had maneuvered so he could swoop down directly under the sun and pick his targets. Apparently the pilot got greedy and decided to drop his big bomb on one ship and veer off and crash his plane into a second ship. Fortunately, his eagerness affected his aim.

After the Luzon invasion the *Pierce* and a large number of other Naval vessels went back to Leyte Gulf to await the completion of plans for future operations. On January 25, 1945 Jim received orders to report to the Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Area (JICPOA) in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Jim's transport plane took off from an airfield with a runway of steel wire matting. It took four days to get to Pearl Harbor, stopping at night at Pelelin, Guam, and Johnson Island.

Jim was assigned to the staff of *Weekly Intelligence*, a secret publication on Japanese military activities and other general intelligence. The bulletin was sent to all U.S. and Allied commands in the Pacific. It was supervised by Captain Jasper Holmes, who was a key figure in the breaking of Japanese codes during the early part of World War II. After the war, he contributed a number of Naval fiction stories to *The Saturday Evening Post*.

After a couple of weeks in the Pearl Harbor officers quarters Jim learned that he could get a quarters allowance and move into Honolulu. Jim did so with three other officers and rented an apartment at Waikiki Beach only two blocks from the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Jim commuted to Pearl Harbor with a Lt. who had purchased a jeep. This Lt. named Fred Hodgson had been an executive with the Coca Cola Company. The Navy had taken over the hotel primarily for submarine officers but all Navy personnel could use its beach, its tennis courts and other facilities. The two top managers of the hotel were from Richmond, Virginia and made things more pleasant for them. Hodgson and Jim swam off Waikiki Beach most every day and Jim frequently played tennis. Yet another hardship post!

When the war ended Jim had enough points for overseas duty to be among those eligible for early discharge. On September 5, 1945 Jim received orders to come back to Washington for discharge. Assigned to ship transportation, to Jim's surprise, he was sent on to the "*USS Pastores*", the converted banana cargo boat on which he had departed from the United States in June of 1942 for duty in Puerto Rico!

With no hazards and open port holes, the first he had seen in well over three years, the journey back to San Francisco was most pleasant. On arrival in San Francisco, Jim was informed, with apologies, that no temporary Naval quarters were available and they were compelled to order Jim to the Piedmont Hotel, the best hotel in the city!

A Naval roommate had been assigned to this same room on the hotel's books and there was a big, heavy, loaded suitcase in one corner but Jim never saw the gentleman with the assignment over the two days before he was given a train ticket to Washington.

In another week, Jim was back in The Chicago Sun's Washington bureau.

A word about The Chicago Sun and Marshall Field II, its founder, is in order. He owned and operated the large store in Chicago established by his father, a multi-millionaire. His primary objective was to counterbalance Chicago's dominating paper, The Morning Chicago Tribune. The Tribune was run by the arch-conservative Col. McCormick, who hated President Franklin D. Roosevelt and all of his liberal policies.

Naturally, The Chicago Sun reflected Mr. Field's liberalism. This was an important factor in the competition between the respective Washington bureaus of these newspapers. It turned out to be a decided plus for those who wrote for The Sun. In Jim's case, he was fortunate to be assigned to a newly created beat covering labor and management relations. This included the growing problems of wage and price stabilization. By the time 1946 rolled around, the big unions and the big corporations were fighting each other tooth and nail. 1946 turned out to be perhaps the most bitterly fought war between unions and corporations in American history. There were nation-wide strikes in the automobile, mining, railroad, farm implement and other industries.

In a single week during this period Jim was cited by The Sun's executive editor for breaking two banner-lined front page stories on his beat. One concerned a strike of meat packers union which is particularly big news in Chicago. The strike was bitter and drawn out and a federal commission had been established in an effort to settle it. The Commission had its offices in the Labor Department building.

One day Jim and two other reporters, one representing The Washington Star and the other the International News Service, dropped by the Commission's office on the way to lunch. To their surprise no Commission personnel were in the office. They decided to take a quick look at the chairman's desk. To their surprise, a proposed strike settlement memo was on top of the desk. They took a look and began copying down as much detail as possible in a hurry. They got everything of importance correct except one figure for wage increase per hour as 16 cents instead of 19 cents due to the figure 6 and 9 being read upside down.

Since The Star could only print a brief story in its final afternoon edition and the INS did not have a client newspaper in Chicago, it got scant attention. But it was whopping news in all editions of The Sun in Chicago.

In the same week, the Railroad Brotherhood's union was engaged in a bitter struggle that threatened to shut-down the nation's railroads. President Truman was determined to keep the vital railroad system operating. Searching around for a possible inside source, Jim noted that one of the Cabinet officers in a White House emergency meeting was Robert Hannagan, the Postmaster General. Recalling that the Deputy Postmaster General Gael Sullivan was good source of Washington news of interest in Chicago. Jim telephoned Sullivan on the off-chance of help.

And could Sullivan help! He told Jim that Truman was preparing an executive order calling for federal seizure of the entire railroad system. Jim broke the story in a banner headline, the next morning.

The Chicago Sun was a dramatic success as the first daily newly established newspaper in an American city in many decades. But it had been a costly creation in early December 1941, when machinery, office space, and qualified personnel were all in short supply and very expensive. By 1946, Fields had lost well over 20 million dollars on this publishing business. His financial advisors said it was imperative that he reduce costs or face bankruptcy in his newspaper venture. He was persuaded to buy the Chicago Times, a tabloid he could have purchased in 1941, at far less cost than in 1946. At length he gave up his dream of establishing a full-size paper. He vowed to turn it into The New York Times of the mid-west and combined his purchase into The Chicago Sun-Times, a relatively modest tabloid sized newspaper.

The new Sun-Times operated at a much more modest expense level than the full-sized Chicago-Sun had done. The Sun-Times Washington bureau was reduced from a staff of twenty to a staff of two. And Jim was one of the eighteen looking for new employment in the closing months of 1946.

The Sun's Washington bureau had been run by Bascom Timmons, who had also been representing newspapers in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Timmons offered Jim the job of covering Washington for The Raleigh News and Observer in North Carolina. A few weeks later, Jim received a telephone call from Leon Dure, who had been executive editor of The Richmond Times-Dispatch when Jim worked there in the late 1930's. Dure had moved on to the post of executive editor of the Winston-Salem, North Carolina newspapers, The Journal and The Sentinel. Timmons agreed that Jim could add the Winston-Salem papers to his coverage, since there was little conflict between their circulation areas.

Early in 1947, The Birmingham News retained Jim for its Washington coverage, and again, there was no circulation territorial competition. This meant a pay increase to \$150 a week but the two state news sources put a heavy load on Jim's work schedule.

But the real overload problem arose when The Richmond Times-Dispatch, for which Jim had worked in 1939, sought Jim for its Washington coverage. And while he was hesitant about it, Timmons wanted to add the Richmond paper to Jim's package.

This three-state coverage for five newspapers stretched Jim's newsgathering talents too far. Within a few months the Winston-Salem and the Richmond coverage had been terminated because of the overly shared work-time of one reporter.

The Birmingham News also had disliked the shared-time Washington coverage. In 1948 they asked Jim if he could arrange to report exclusively for them. The pay would remain \$150 a week, the same as it was when Jim was working for five papers. This change meant leaving the Timmons' bureau and working out of the Capitol press galleries and from home. Home was an apartment at Cathedral Mansions, across the street from the national zoo at 3000 Connecticut Avenue, shared with Bill Lawrence of The New York Times.

Jim first encountered George Wallace at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia in 1948. Wallace was a strong supporter of Alabama Governor James Folsom and a delegate to the convention. When a majority of the Alabama delegates walked out of the convention in protest of the convention's movement toward approving a liberal civil rights plank in the Party platform, Wallace stayed in the convention hall. He joined with Alabama Senator Lister Hill and a few others who stayed in the convention and backed Georgia Senator Richard Russell for President.

Wallace had been a Folsom supporter and broke with him when Folsom refused to give a Wallace friend a state appointment.

As a circuit judge delivering public speeches, Wallace found that he drew the most applause when he criticized liberal actions of a national democratic leaders. When he drew loud applause for fiery denunciation of a federal judge's liberal ruling, Wallace would pause and murmur to himself: "Listen to 'em." He relished the favorable comments about his anti-civil rights stance and it was in this period that he resolved to become a vigorous opponent of the civil rights movement.

In 1949 Jim joined the newly formed Naval Reserve Officers public information company in which he was active until his retirement from the Reserves in 1968. During his time in the Reserves, Jim rose from the rank of Lieutenant to Captain. He participated in its weekly unpaid meetings and most of the annual two-week reserve training periods. Highlights in the Reserve include: co-writing a book designed to encourage Naval officers to continue service in the Navy, serving as a public information officer on the carrier "Intrepid" in a NATO operation in the North Sea in the mid 1950s. Jim also served as the company's commanding officer in 1956.