

William S. Chambers (1921-2014)

I graduated from MIT on June 9, 1950. My first job after graduation was as Assistant Marine Superintendent with the Ward Line Steamship Company in New York City.

LIFE IN CUBA

We arrived in Cuba in December 1950. I do not remember the exact date, but it was on a Tuesday
York arrived in Havana on Tuesday
Cuba before the end of the year in order to avoid paying U.S. income taxes for the year 1951, i.e., you had to be out of the country for the full year to escape taxes.

All new American arrivals stayed at Miss Ross' Boarding House when they first came to Havana. It was located at Calle 3 and C in Vedado. It was just done. The company had made all the arrangements. That is where your mother met Daisy Gonzalez worked at Miss Ross' Boarding House and was in charge of the kitchen. Like all Cubans, they had a pig in the yard in late December to be eaten at Christmas. We had Christmas dinner at the home of Anne and Doug Singer. The other guests were Dr. Carlos Figuredo and his wife. He was Secretary of La Compañía Terminal Cubana Americana where I was going to work and handled all the paperwork for our permits to stay and work in Cuba. I often wondered what happened to him.

We moved from Miss Ross' Boarding House to an apartment in Miramar which was then located in the municipality of Marianao, just outside the City of Havana. The address was Calle 10, # 25 and it was about a block or so away from the Blanquita Theater. We moved to Calle 10 in Miramar probably in late January 1951. Our apartment in

Miramar was unusual in that it had two floors with a marble staircase going up to the bedrooms. The maids' quarters were in the rear over the garages. It was there that we met the Browns who lived across the hall and the Joneses who lived downstairs. The Godinezes lived around the corner. Incidentally, Max Jones had lived at Miss Ross' house when he first arrived, too.

I believe that Emelina Hernandez, the maid we had in Miramar, also worked for us at the first house in Biltmore for a short time. I believe Dellis Gray joined us there after we moved in address of that first house escapes me completely, I understand that Dellis Gray recently told you that it was located on Calle 197, entre 17

5

. That may be so, but I don't know for sure. I have been trying to

y 19

remember the address for years with no luck. All I know is that it is the house in the picture with the four of us sitting on the front lawn that we used as a Christmas card in about 1954. In that house, the maid's quarters were built up a narrow set of stairs over the kitchen. I believe the owner was named Martinez-Fonts and I believe his first name was

1

. All Ward Line ships from New

2

Alfonso, but that is all I can recall.

Our second house was at Calle 204, # 1309, entre 13 y 15,

6

. It was a small one-story house with two bedrooms and one bath. The maid's quarters in

Biltmore

that house were in the front off the kitchen. We had a large cistern outside the kitchen that collected rain water that was pumped to a tank on the roof where it was heated by the sun. Of course, you couldn't drink the water. We had bottled water delivered to the house. We also had a gardener named Domingo who took care of the yard and lawn. A manicurist and an ironing lady used to come to the house on a regular basis as did the milkman, eggman, and a knife sharpener among others. The province we lived in was Havana Province which was one of six provinces. Going along the coast to the west of the Almendares River was the municipality of Marianao. Miramar, Biltmore, and other places were part of the municipality of Marianao. For some reason, out where we lived, the new developments were called "repartos" hence we lived in Reparto Biltmore, Marianao. The Godinezes lived about a block and a half away in a house they had built with a 20 x 40 foot pool where we used to go swimming. The Nuñez and their children lived on one side of us and Rodriguez-Faura was the name of our neighbor on the other side. He had caged squirrels and other small animals in his back yard. He also had a watch dog named Titan. He was an assistant editor of some sort at the El Mundo newspaper where Tony Bernabei worked and he had a piece published in the newspaper to commemorate your 11

shortly after the advent of Fidel Castro. I believe he moved out abruptly after the revolution and the Prairie family moved in from the Hotel Nacional where they had been staying since their arrival in Cuba shortly before Castro took over. I seem to recall Rodriguez-Faura leaving early on New Year's morning of 1959 to hide his car and his advising us to do the same.

The obstetrician who delivered your sister was Dr. Vautrin. His first name escapes me at the moment. Cindy was born in the evening - 10:50 PM on March 5, 1953. That's the same date that Stalin died in Russia. I, of course, had taken your mother to the hospital, but the details are not clear in my mind. Getting to the hospital also seems to be a blank except that I now recall that your mother's water broke at home to start things off. The doctor was called and, on his instructions, I took your mother to his office. After an examination, I took her directly to the Anglo-American Hospital. I do remember sitting in the hospital room with your mother who was in bed, but not yet ready for delivery. I recall counting contractions and the like until someone decided it was time to go to delivery. The doctor who had the duty that night was Dr. Schapelles (phonetic spelling) who had been our neighbor in our house in Miramar. I further remember that while your mother was in the delivery room, I was sitting outside the room by myself. It is true that the nurse came out of the delivery room carrying Cindy and handed her to me for a few minutes while she went about some tasks. Probably only for a few minutes. Dr. Vautrin assured me all was well. As I recall, they put Cindy in the room and a short time later your mother was brought in looking a little the worse for wear. She was knocked out by that time and not talking so I went home after a bit on advice of the doctor.

When I came back in the morning your mother was awake and
th birthday party
holding Cindy. Cindy was banged up. Her face was bruised black and blue. Her forehead was pushed in so that her hairline met her eyebrows and then slanted back from her eyebrows to a peak on top of her head. Her eyes were bloodshot for about three weeks. Dr. Alberto De

Cordoba, the pediatrician, said she would be fine as pointy-headed kids always rounded out eventually. Even though Cindy was all black and blue, I don't remember her being in danger, although she was very sick later on with chicken pox and something else. After the birth, they were both in the hospital for quite a few days, but that was customary in those days, I suppose.

Cindy was born in the Anglo-American Community Hospital.

It was in Vedado, a section of Havana. It was run by the "ABC

colony", a general expression used to refer to the English-speaking community - American, British, Canadian - in Cuba. The

hospital was in a good sized house in what had been an elite neighborhood of big houses. It was a large house with large stone steps going up the front to the entrance and first floor. As I remember, there were three floors with an inside balcony or walkway on the second and third floors with the hospital rooms around the walkway for patients.

Surgery and delivery rooms were on the third floor. There were usually several American, British, or Canadian nurses on the staff, but the doctors were Cuban many of whom were trained to a varying extent in the United States.

Shortly after Cindy was born, I went to the American Embassy and registered her birth and obtained a U.S. passport for her. All the official papers concerning her birth are in my safe deposit box.

In Cuba we attended the Methodist Church in Vedado

where Cindy was baptized

Presbyterian Church in Princeton

sometimes went past the aquarium store as we had a tropical fish tank at home. You, of course, had your horses that you loved to ride. Your sister was too young to ride so every afternoon Dellis would dress her

all in white and take her for a walk. I know Cindy says that she hated those PM walks with the scratchy petticoats. She remembers the ice-man giving her ice and getting free chocolate milk every day from the milkman. She remembers us going out one night and throwing stones at the huge land crabs and us going to the drive-in where they came out and hooked a tray onto the door of your car and served you hamburgers.

We had any number of visitors in Cuba. My father and mother came down before he died. They came over on the small passenger ship "Florida". Later, my mother came alone. At any time my mother was there, she stayed with us. That's for sure. Actually, I believe that she was there when Batista fled the country. Your Aunt Florence and Jo-Ann came down at least twice, I think, maybe more. She also came once with Ed Smith shortly after they were married. They probably stayed at a hotel I would guess even though I don't think there were any hotels in the Biltmore area. On your mother's side, her parents came down together a couple of times before your grandfather died. After that, your Grandmother Freda came down alone. Your Uncle Gene, Aunt Edith, Aunt Della, Aunt Julia and Uncle Mike, Yolanda, and Robert and Dottie also came down at one time or another. I think everyone stayed at our house, but where they all slept I don't know.

Cindy says she remembers us taking your Aunt Edith out to dinner at

10

. You, of course, were baptized in the First

11

. After church on Sunday, we

Rancho Luna one time. Apparently, Cindy hid some chicken in your Aunt Edith's straw shell purse (the one with the flaps on top that made

it look like a small picnic basket) so she could take it home to Dellis.

Other than birthdays and Cindy's birth

events that would have been in the newspaper. Although there may

have been some notice in the newspaper when my father

brother died

Of course, if we gave a party of any size, maybe once or twice a year,

that was always in the newspaper, but I have no idea of any dates.

Your mother and her gang had a big fund raising affair for the Havana

Creche to raise money for abandoned children, but I don't know the

22

date

. There is a clipping around with a picture of your mother and

some others. If I find it, it may have a date. I also have some other

newspaper clippings that appeared in The Havana Post while we lived

in Cuba. One clipping is dated August 17, 1951 about our departure on

the Oriente. Another is dated September 21, 1951 about our return to

Havana on the Siboney. I have another article, undated, may be about

August 1956, regarding my joining the United Fruit Company. The

article appeared in The Times of Havana. There's another clipping

about our 6th wedding anniversary on January 25, 1952.

There were a number of clubs and organizations for English-speaking people living in Cuba such as the American Club, the British

Club, and the Rovers Golf Club (which was British). Anyone could

belong to these clubs if you applied and were accepted. There was

also, of course, the Mothers' Club and the Women's Club and the

Havana-Biltmore Yacht and County Club to which we belonged. You

and your sister both attended Ruston Academy which was a private

school owned by the Bakers

children to Ruston Academy which was one of two English-speaking schools in Havana where people sent their children. The other school was Lafayette. There was also a very small organization in Havana that took care of single and widowed women in a retirement/nursing home. When we first moved to Cuba and lived in Miss Ross' Boarding House for some weeks there was a single woman living there named Miss West. Apparently, she was a retired British teacher who tutored children in the English language. A few years later, she was unable to live alone and "the colony" put her in a very small nursing home. How that all worked and who paid is beyond me.

I only had two jobs in Cuba. The first was with the New York and Cuba Mail Steamship Company which was known as the Ward Line in Cuba. The Ward Line was a subsidiary of the New York and Cuba Mail Steamship Company, but the name was not used in the United States as the Ward Line owned the ill-fated passenger ship Morro Castle which was burned at sea off the Jersey Coast on a return trip from Havana in 1932 or 1933 with some loss of life. The ship was beached near Asbury Park and the burned-out hulk remained there for years. It may still be there. The press and radio had a field day with that one.

Having said all that, I can now say that I actually worked for neither of those two companies as I believe the Ward Line was non-existent in my day except on the Cuban waterfront. Actually, I worked for La Compañía Terminal Cubana Americana which was a subsidiary of the New York and Cuba Mail Steamship Company. For an American to work in Cuba, he had to be an officer of a Cuban company

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 and when your mother's father died

. Some well-to-do Cubans also sent their
and be on the board of directors. At first, I was the Treasurer of the
company. I was paid out of New York and my check deposited in
Princeton. I paid Social Security taxes in the United States and not to
the Retiro Maritima because I was an officer of the company and not
covered by the Cuban retirement fund. I later became the Traffic
Manager for Cuba, but stayed on the board of directors.
Later, about 1956, the New York and Cuba Mail Steamship
Company sold out to a Cuban company. I was asked to stay, but I was
also asked to join the United Fruit Company as the Operations
Manager. I took the job and moved down the street
that after a year or two breaking-in, I would become Manager of the
Havana Office and all the ship operations in Cuba. The incumbent
Manager of the Havana Office was to be shifted to Oriente Province
and take over the finances of the two sugar plantations and sugar mills.
The problem was that by the time I was ready to take over Fidel Castro
was on the loose in Oriente Province and the Office Manager's wife in
Havana refused to move to Oriente. I guess she was right because in a
couple of years we were all at liberty to look for a new job.

Both your mother and I spoke Spanish to some degree. Your
mother spoke what the Americans called kitchen Spanish. That meant
she could speak to the maids, go to the vegetable market with no
trouble, talk to repair men and gas station attendants and, in general,
she could get along in the city, ride the buses and so forth. I could
speak a bit better as did most of the men. I could get along in the
office, visit and speak to the shippers as long as I had one of the
Spanish speaking cargo solicitors with me. Of course, I could get

along pretty well with the longshoremen on the piers. I don't think they spoke much better Spanish than I did. What neither one of us could do was carry on a conversation with educated Cubans. One reason was that they didn't want to speak Spanish. They were all for practicing their English. The only ones of our friends who could speak Spanish well were Mel Brown and Sam Capizzi. Max Jones thought he could, but he was not very good at it.

It was common talk in Havana that the Mafia was behind the spurt in hotel building to some extent at least. Most of the new hotel builders or owners were the Las Vegas crowd and they were quite well behaved in Havana. The Hollywood performers were the same as in the United States. Meyer Lansky apparently was the top dog in the Jewish-Mafia at the time. The Jews had taken over to some extent from the Italians with guys like Meyer Lansky, Dutch Schultz, and Bugsy Siegel, et.al. Incidentally, I saw Lansky walking about the casinos and glad handing every body any number of times. George Raft was also a manager at one hotel. Nice guy and always glad to see you. I may have mentioned it before, but I once found myself sitting beside Errol Flynn at the bar in the Hotel Nacional. We said a few words about the weather. At this time, a few movies were made in Havana. Mel Brown had a speaking role as the coroner who examined a dead body. I saw it on TV once. The Godinezes and a couple of other people we knew were extras in a movie filmed in one of the casinos. They walked around and said "Oh, here she comes now".

As I recall, Batista held elections in late 1958 and his puppet (Rivero Aguero) was elected. He became President-elect and lived at the corner of our street. After the election, guards were always on duty outside his house. This was good in a way as no one could enter our

street from either end without being checked out by the Army. We just drove past and waved.

I mention this because your mother and I went to the Brown's house for a New Year's Eve party on December 31, 1958, and on the way home as we entered our street there were no police or Army guards, no people, and no lights in or around the President-elect's house. What was wrong? We had no idea. At the other end of our street, where an Admiral lived, there were no guards and no lights either. We were so dumb it never occurred to us that Batista and his cohorts flew the coop. In any case, that was the end of the Mafia in Cuba.

As I recall, my mother was visiting us when Batista took a powder. I don't think your other grandmother was there at that time. Of course, I am not sure of any of these events. There was no marshal law after Batista left. In fact, there was no law. Some of the police department was around to keep order and you may remember that the students from Villanova University were active and around with their armbands sporting some date or another. They were stopping cars on the main street passing the school and looked for guns. No one was really in charge for the first week or so. It took Castro a week or so to come up from Oriente Province with the barbudos who began to set up guard posts and restore some order. I think your Grandmother Freda came down a bit later, but I am not sure. The first year or so a provisional government was set up by Castro and he appointed all kinds of good guys to run the various Cabinet positions and so forth. Everyone wanted to give Castro a chance, etc. Of course, all the bad guys were shot after a fair two-hour trial.

We left Cuba in mid-March, 1960

more where we stayed for the last few weeks before we left Cuba. In fact, I hardly remember the place other than it was a two bedroom furnished apartment close to our house in Biltmore. I think it was in the La Playa area. We flew Pan American Airlines to Miami and then National Airlines to Philadelphia. No one knew we were coming.

All our possessions were left on the United Fruit Company pier in Cuba. Our household goods arrived in the United States on the S.S. Arctic Gull V9 on August 17, 1960, at the Port of New York, North

27

River

. They arrived on the last United Fruit Company ship to sail from Havana before the company was taken over by the Cuban Revolutionary Government. The two lift vans containing our belongings were not on the cargo manifest and it created a minor problem with U.S. Customs when the United Fruit Company tried to deliver them to us in Princeton, so I had to go in to New York to explain what it was all about. The man in Havana who ordered our furniture loaded on the Arctic Gull was named Pepe. He was President of the Longshoreman's local that covered the section of the waterfront which took in the Ward Line and the United Fruit Company. I knew him as he worked as a pier foreman for the Ward Line. If it weren't for Pepe, we probably never would have received any of our things.

LIFE AFTER CUBA

After we left Cuba in March 1960, we lived briefly with my mother at 1606 S. 53

rd Street in Philadelphia where we temporarily

enrolled you and your sister in Mitchell grammar school so that you

could finish out the school year. During the summer of 1960, we moved to Princeton, New Jersey, where we lived with your other grandmother at 630 Princeton-Kingston Road. In September, after our furniture arrived from Cuba, we moved to a rented house on Clover Lane in Princeton.

The fall after we returned from Cuba was really the first exposure you and Cindy had with a heavy leaf fall. You both played in the leaves in front of your grandmother's house in Princeton. You used to bury Cindy completely in leaves. Also, that heavy leaf fall was followed by a very heavy pre-Christmas snow fall which was the first snow that either of you had ever been able to play in. Later, in the winter of 1961, Cindy came down with scarlet fever and you had pneumonia. She was quarantined at home at the same time that you were in the hospital.

SOURCE CITATIONS

1. The following news stories concerning our arrival in Cuba appeared in the newspaper:

News Story. The Havana Post, Tuesday, December 19, 1950, p. 5.

OFF THE GANGPLANK

Arrivals from New York today on the "Siboney", of the Ward Line, are Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Randall, Dr. and Mrs. Americo Grimaldi, Mr. and Mrs. William Chambers and son (sic); Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Salerno.

News Story. The Havana Post, Saturday, December 23, 1950, p. 5.

OFF THE GANGPLANK

W. S. Chambers came in as passenger from New York to Havana on the "Siboney" of the Ward Line, this past Tuesday. He is to be in for some time for the Cuban American Terminal Co.

Douglas Singer is the president of the firm.

2. Shipping News - Departures. New York Times, Saturday, December 16, 1950, p. 29 says that the Siboney departed on December 15, 1950, for Havana. Apparently, the Siboney, which belonged to the Cuba Mail Company (aka Ward Line), sailed from Spring Street in New York City and carried mail and parcel post for Cuba as well as passengers and cargo.

3. In an e-mail dated July 22, 2000, Estela (Gonzalez) Barry, 1714 Evelyn Drive, Rockville, Maryland, 20852-4127, said that her maternal grandparents were John and Lillian Ricketts. Lillian Ricketts, was born in Grand Cayman and moved to Cayman Brac where her three children were born. Her husband, John Ricketts, worked for an American shipping firm. At that time, the Caymanians' worked mainly as seamen. John Ricketts was offered the opportunity to move to the United States since his company sailed out of Mobile, Alabama. John Ricketts liked the idea of living in the United States and accepted the offer, but Lillian Ricketts refused to come to live in the South of the United States. She knew about racism in the United States and was not interested in living under those conditions.

John Ricketts took his son, Chesman, to Mobile where he enrolled him in a boarding school in Alabama. After that, Lillian Ricketts moved to Cuba with her two daughters (Daisy Ricketts who was about 7 years of age and her older sister, Minna Ricketts, who was

about 9). Many years later, Chesman Ricketts decided to come to Cuba where he stayed with his mother, Lillian Ricketts. Estela is not sure in what year her Uncle Chesman got the job with the Caribbean Sugar Company at Central Macareño in Camaguey, but Estela says that her grandmother, Lillian Ricketts, used to go almost every year to Central Macareño to visit her son, Chesman. Estela would accompany her grandmother on these trips to Camaguey. She loved it. They would ride the train. The country side was beautiful. That is where Estela met Dellis Gray. Years later, the Administrator at Central Macareño, Samuel Meigs, retired and Estela's Uncle Chesman moved to Daytona Beach, Florida, with the Meigs family.

Meanwhile, in Havana, Estela's mother, Daisy Ricketts, married Luis Manuel Gonzalez, a musician, who was born in Camaguey. He played the trumpet in the big bands in Cuba (theater musicals, dances, and casinos including an exclusive nightclub called Sans Souci and the Tropicana Nightclub in Havana). Their daughter, Estela, was confirmed at the Iglesia del Espiritu Santo and had her first communion at the Iglesia de Nuestra Senora de la Merced, both historic Catholic Churches in Habana Vieja.

Daisy (Ricketts) Gonzalez was the chef and manager of Miss Carolyn Ross' Boarding House in Vedado. Miss Ross always relied on Estela's mother to hire (and sometimes fire) workers. The boarding house was very well known for its food among foreign diplomats and business people (American, British, Canadian, Dutch). Based on its reputation, Ernest Hemingway (and maybe his wife) came to be a guest at the boarding house. It was there that Estela's mother cooked for Ernest Hemingway. He was particularly fond of a curry dish that

Estela's mother prepared especially for him.

While Estela doesn't know exactly when her mother arranged with Dellis Gray to go to work for my parents, she knows that her mother had met my mother years before when we stayed at the boarding house. It seems that Estela's mother came in contact with many people while she worked at the boarding house, so she was always helping people find workers or she was helping find jobs for people who needed to work.

Daisy (Ricketts) Gonzalez also worked for Carmen and Joseph Butler (Esso Standard Oil of New Jersey) while they lived in the suburban section of Havana then known as Country Club. After the Revolution, Daisy (Ricketts) Gonzalez and her husband, Luis Manuel Gonzalez, left their residence on Calle Jesus Maria, # 117, entre Damas y Cuba, Habana Vieja, on June 6, 1959. They eventually settled in Washington, D.C., where their daughter, Estela (Gonzalez) Barry, had lived since 1952. Daisy (Ricketts) Gonzalez died in 1986.

4. In a conversation with Dellis Gray on June 11, 2000, at her quarters in Old Havana, (Calle Cuba, # 507, entre Teniente Rey y Muralla, Habana Vieja, Cuba), she told me that she was born in Camaguey, Cuba, on June 6, 1929. Her parents were born in Jamaica. Her father's name was Ivan Gray Gaynor and he was from St. James. Her mother's name was Beatrice Hemmings and she was from Westmoreland. Her parents arrived in Camaguey around 1919 when her father was nineteen and her mother was seventeen. According to Dellis Gray, it was her uncle, Herbert Hemmings, who brought her mother to Camaguey after his World War I service. Apparently, there are many people of Jamaican descent in Camaguey.

Dellis said that in Camaguey she first worked for Mr. and Mrs.

Meigs at Central Macareño. Mr. Meigs was with the Caribbean Sugar Company. It was at Central Macareño that Dellis met Chesman Ricketts, the brother of Daisy (Ricketts) Gonzalez as Chesman also worked for Mr. Meigs. Later, Dellis came to Havana where she worked for my parents while my father was with the United Fruit Company.

5. Dellis Gray believes that the address of our first house was Calle 197 entre 17 y 19, Biltmore. She cannot remember the house number, but said it was across the street from the house belonging to the Entrealgos who owned the El Encanto department store located at Galiano and San Rafael. That the owners of the El Encanto department store lived across the street from us was confirmed by my father, William Scott Chambers, who said that they had provided for their housekeeper in her old age by having her stay on with them. Apparently, in retirement, she was in the habit of sitting on their front porch every day for hours at a time.

6. Regarding our second house in Biltmore, Dellis Gray said that our neighbor to the right as you faced the house was Enrique Rodriguez-Faura (who was the social editor for a newspaper in Havana known as El Mundo). His wife was named Lulu and their housekeeper was named Dalia. Although my diary (January - December 1959) indicates that Rodriguez-Faura moved out on January 15, 1959, and the Prairie family moved in on January 16, 1959, Dellis said that Rodriguez-Faura may still live in that house.

On the other side was Raul Nuñez and his wife, Estrudes Mestre. Apparently, the Mestre family owned Radio-Television CMQ. Dellis says that Mrs. Nuñez was critical of my mother for allowing Dellis to enter and exit our house via the front door.

Apparently this just wasn't done. Dellis says that my mother said, "I trust her with my daughters, so she can come and go by the front door." Dellis also said that on Tuesdays my mother would get a list from her of what she wanted to eat and would go to the store and buy it including rice, beans, plantains, and bistec (beef). Dellis claimed that Mrs. Nuñez disapproved of this, too, and is reported to have said that the maids should eat picadillo and soup made from whatever the family was eating.

Other neighbors included Julio Iglesias de la Torre who owned the estate on the corner across the street from us. He was with the Shell Oil Company. The house was quite large and the grounds contained a playground and a zoo. At the end of the block was a house belonging to Rivero Aguero, Batista's puppet and the president-elect of Cuba. At the other end of the block was the house belonging to Dionisio San Roman, a Comodoro in the Cuban Navy. Dellis said that after the Revolution he was taken by force from the house and murdered. Then, his body was thrown into the sea on account of the crimes he committed against the people while he was stationed in Cienfuegos.

Around the block from us was the house belonging to the Godinez family. They were good friends of my parents. Dellis says that Batista's son, Papu Batista, lived next door to the Godinez family and that he had a large swimming pool. Apparently, this is the same man who attended Princeton University in New Jersey and had his suits made by my grandfather, Guerino Freda. My grandmother once told me that Batista's son offered to transport items to Cuba for delivery to my parents whenever he was taking a trip home. Dellis said that Papu

Batista was married to the daughter of a man named Perez Benitoa who lived three blocks away from us and was in the habit of arriving home in a helicopter.

7. News Story. El Mundo, (Havana, Cuba) Viernes [Friday], 28 de Marzo de 1958, p. B-8.

Comida

Los estimados esposos William Chambers y Gloria de Chambers, ofrecerán una comida mañana en su residencia del Biltmore, para agasajar a su hija, la encantadora niña July (sic) Chambers, que arriba a sus once años de edad.

Del simpático acto participará un selecto grupo de amiguitas de la festejada.

8. News Story and Photograph. El Mundo, (Havana, Cuba) Viernes [Friday], 4 de Abril de 1958, p. B-2.

UNA COMIDA DE niñas, que resultó alegre y animada en extremo, se celebró en días pasados en le residencia que en el reparto Biltmore poseen el señor William Chambers y señora Gloria de Chambers, estimado matrimonio de la colonia norteamericana.

Con el infantil ágape festejaron a la mayor de sus hijas, la linda y encantadora Judy Chambers, que cumplía los once años de edad, disfrutando de la grata reunión un corto grupo de amigas de la adorable festejada.

En la fotografía que publicamos, aparece Judy, en compañía de Caroline Berstene, Carol Dallas,

Jeanne McDonald, Melissa Wubbold y Jane

Potts. (Foto L. Marrero).

9. According to Peter E. Carr, Guide to Cuban Genealogical Research - Records and Sources, (Chicago, Illinois: Adams Press, 1991), p. 28, the Methodist Church in the Vedado Section of Havana was founded in 1883. Dellis Gray told me that the church is located at Calle 25 and K in Vedado. When I went to see the church, I noticed that the building has a plaque on it which says July 21, 1950. Dellis told me that she attended this same church while we lived in Cuba as she is a Methodist. I remember that we attended English-language services in the morning. She said that she attended services in the evening.

10. The original Certificate of Baptism for Cynthia Scott Chambers, date unknown, at the Methodist Church, Vedado Section, Havana, Cuba, is in the possession of Cynthia Scott Chambers, 1450 S.W. 70 Avenue, Plantation, Florida 33317.

11. The original Certificate of Baptism for Kathryn Judith Chambers dated June 29, 1947, at the First Presbyterian Church, Princeton, New Jersey, is in the possession of Kathryn C. Hogan-Torpey, 5035 Domain Place, Alexandria, Virginia 22311-5066.

12. News Story. The Havana Post, Friday, March 13, 1953, p. 8.

SOCIETY

Mr. and Mrs. William Chambers

Announce Birth of Baby Girl

Mr. and Mrs. William S. Chambers announce the birth of a baby girl born March at the Anglo-American Hospital.

Mr. Chambers is an official of the Cuban American Terminal Company (Ward Line).

13. In addition to a news story that is said to have appeared in The Havana Post on Friday, November 13, 1953, (this edition of the newspaper is missing from the microfilm reel at the Library of Congress), the following obituary appeared in an unidentified newspaper in the Philadelphia or South Jersey area concerning the death of Henry G. Chambers:

H.G. Chambers

Is Dead at 56

Harry G. Chambers, 56, of 21 Wayne Gardens Apartments, Collingswood, road foreman of engines for the Pennsylvania Reading Seashore Lines, died suddenly Tuesday (sic) night at his home.

A native of Philadelphia, Mr. Chambers resided in the Camden area for 13 years. He joined the railroad as a fireman in 1916, was named engineer in 1926, Assistant Foreman in 1942, and Foreman in 1945.

Mr. Chambers was active in Masonic groups. He was a member of Camden Lodge 15, FAM; Tall Cedars of Lebanon, Forest 5; Cyrene Commandery and Siloan Chapter 9, RAM. He was also a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

Surviving are his widow, Mary, two sons, Capt. Thomas W. Chambers, serving with the Army in Korea, and William Scott Chambers, of Havana, Cuba; two grandchildren, and his mother, Mrs.

Josephine Chambers, of Philadelphia. Services will be held at 11:00 AM Monday in the Murray Funeral Home, 408 Cooper Street, where friends may call Sunday night.

14. Thomas Wallace Chambers was killed in the crash of a jet trainer-bomber on October 6, 1955, at Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter, South Carolina.

15. News Story. The Havana Post, Sunday, October 9, 1955, p. 6.

William Scott Chambers, traffic manager with the Ward Line, went to Columbia, S.C. the night of Friday and by plane, once he was informed his brother, an officer in active service for the Air Force in the States, and (sic) [had] met with death by accident. Friends and officials and fellow workers with him in the Cuban American Terminal (Ward Line) are all deeply sorry for his loss. R.I.P.

16. News stories concerning the death of Thomas W. Chambers appeared in the following South Carolina newspapers:

News Story and Photograph. The State: South Carolina's Progressive Newspaper, (Columbia, South Carolina) Saturday, October 8, 1955, p. unk.

News Story. Sumter Daily, (Sumter, South Carolina), Friday, October 7, 1955, p. 1.

17. News stories concerning the death of Thomas W. Chambers appeared in the following Philadelphia newspapers:

News Story. Philadelphia Inquirer, Friday, October 7, 1955, page 1.

News Story and Photograph. The Evening Bulletin, Friday,

October 7, 1955, page 29.

The news story and photograph that appeared in a The Evening Bulletin read as follows:

2 Area Fliers Killed in South

West Phila. Captain, Birdsboro Youth

Die

Shaw Air Force Base, S.C. Oct 7 - Two fliers from the Philadelphia area were killed in the crash of a jet trainer-bomber here last night.

The dead were Captain Thomas W. Chambers,

32, son of Mrs. Mary Anne (sic) Chambers, of

rd St. and Airman Second Class John

1606 S. 53

Volpiccini, 20, of 103 River Road, Birdsboro.

The plane, an RB57B, was of the type used for photographic reconnaissance. It was on a routine training flight when fell in a wooded area and burned.

A veteran of 12 years' service, Captain Chambers served in Europe during World War II and later in

Korea. He was graduated from John Bartrum

High School and New Jersey State Teachers

College, Glassboro.

Captain Chambers formerly lived in

Collingswood, New Jersey. Surviving, besides

his mother, are his wife, the former Florence

Clark, of Merchantville, and their three month old daughter, Joan (sic).

Volpiccini was graduated from Birdsboro High School where he played soccer and baseball. He was nearly halfway through a four year enlistment.

He is survived by his mother, Mary; four sisters, Mary, Palma, Mrs. Angelina Testa and Mrs. Bernette Smail, and three brothers, Frank, Anthony, and Nicholas.

18. The following letter concerning the death of Thomas W. Chambers is in the possession of his brother, William Scott Chambers, 325 N.W. th Avenue, Plantation Florida 33324:

95

rd Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (NF)

43

Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina

14 October 1955

Mrs. Mary A. Chambers

rd St.

1606 S. 53

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dear Mrs. Chambers,

It is with deepest regret and sympathy that I write you on this occasion.

I have been your son's Commanding Officer for the past six months, and knowing Tom as I did, I believe I can understand how you must feel at his death.

Before Tom was assigned to this squadron, he was working in the Maintenance Squadron. He wanted to come down here and several of the airmen that had known him and worked for him ask me if we could get him.

This is unusual as you may guess, for it is not often that airmen think so much of an officer that they ask for him by name.

It was not long before I could understand it, for there was something special about Tom. He was not always easy with the airmen, but he knew what was to be done, and he did it with the full support of everyone that worked for him.

Tom had a young officer working for him that was trying hard to do a good job, but did not know how to handle the airmen.

I used to tell this young officer, "Watch how Tom handles the airmen in any given situation and you will learn a lot ". He had almost a hundred airmen working for him and every one of them loved him.

A couple of months ago, our Base Commander realized that he had to do something to increase the maintenance capability of the base. He established a school and nicknamed it "Tool Box". He needed a good officer to run this school. Your son was selected over all the other maintenance officers on the base and I know that it was a wise choice for I knew how Tom worked.

Mrs. Chambers, even though I had only known Tom for about six months, I could go on and on telling you about his outstanding achievements here. He has been an exemplary officer, he has been known and loved by so many many people and contributed a great service to the United States Air Force and to this

great country of ours.

As Chaplain Combs said at the memorial services held for Tom, "Captain Chambers is not dead and will never die in our hearts and minds - he has only left us for a while".

Mrs. Chambers, there is little I can tell you about the accident until the board has finished its investigation, but I can tell you that Tom was not at fault. When these things happen with no apparent reason, it makes us realize that there is still a God that controls our destinies.

We here in the 43

were busily getting ready for a maneuver or exercise called "Sagebrush" and Tom was helping to get the aircraft ready. Tom and some of his men were working late to test fly one of the B-57's. The flight was uneventful until a few minutes before landing they crashed not far from the base. The boy that was with him was Airman Volpiccini. " Volp", as we called him, was an excellent crew chief and very devoted to Tom. As I wrote to Mrs.

Volpiccini, "If Volp knew that his airplane was going to crash with Tom he would still have gone along, he was that conscientious about his work and devoted to the man he worked for".

Mrs. Chambers, I have been flying for thirteen years and have lost some of my best friends through accidents. It is dangerous work, but none of them have hit me as hard as this one. It is a great loss to you, to us who had also learned to love Tom and to the country he served, but I hope you will find strength in the fact that he lived a good life and that he contributed much to his country. Your son was a good pilot, a fine officer and a Christian man.

It is possible that with the information we have as a result of this accident and the salvaged airplane, we can learn enough to prevent recurrence. I am sure that if Tom knew that he had also contributed to this in making the airplane safer and saved other lives, he would indeed rest in peace.

We here in the 43

wanted you to know that we loved Tom and that you have our deepest sympathy. We pray that God will give you strength to bear this for you can certainly be proud of the way he lived and we will all have his memory.

Sincerely,

PAUL C. VANDERHOEK

Major, USAF

Commander

19. Obituaries concerning the death of Thomas W. Chambers appeared in the following Philadelphia newspapers:

Obituary. Philadelphia Inquirer, Wednesday, October 12, 1955, page 46.

Obituary. The Evening Bulletin, Wednesday, October 12, 1955, page 25.

The obituary that appeared in The Evening Bulletin read as follows:

CHAMBERS - On Oct 6, 1955, CAPT.

THOMAS W., husband of Florence Clark

Chambers, of 1606 S. 53

years. Funeral services Friday, 11 A.M., at the

Murray Funeral Home, 408 Cooper st., Camden,

N.J. Friends may call Thursday evening.

rd

20. According to an undated note (ca. November 17, 1996) from

Dennis Cangiarella, Vice-President, Locustwood Memorial Park, Route 70 W, Cherry Hill, New

Jersey 08002, Thomas Wallace Chambers was buried in that cemetery

in October, 1955 in Section 2, Lot 425. His headstone reads as

follows:

Thomas W. Chambers

South Carolina

Capt 43 TAC Recon SQ AF

World War II Korea AM & OLC

March 25, 1923 October 6 1955

21. News Story. The Havana Post, Sunday, July 24, 1955, p. 3.

Colony Column

SINCEREST SYMPATHY to Mrs. William S.

Chambers whose father passed away at his home

in Princeton. Mrs. Chambers is expected to

return on the weekend from Princeton as she was

present at the funeral...

22. News Story. The Havana Post, Sunday, October 11, 1953, p 3.

This news story, entitled "Creche Habana Nueva To Hold Benefit Party

Wednesday", said that Mrs. William Chambers was a member of an

Auxiliary Committee holding a benefit card party on Wednesday to

raise funds for the Creche Habana Nueva.

23. In 1950, Ruston Academy was located at Calle G esq. 5a in

Vedado. In the fall of 1956, Ruston Academy moved to a new location

at Calle 190, # 2102, entre 21 y 23, in Alturas del Country Club,

Marianao.

24. News Story. The Havana Post, Wednesday, August 1, 1956, p. 5.

William Chambers Joins

Staff of United Fruit

The local offices of the United Fruit Company announced today that William S. Chambers, formerly Assistant to Vice President of the local Ward Line organization, will join the staff of the United Fruit Company in the capacity of Assistant to the Manager of the Havana steamship agency. Chambers will assume his new position with the United Fruit Company on or about August 15, 1956.

Chambers was born in Philadelphia, Pa., on February 25, 1921. He married the former Gloria A. Freda and they have two daughters, Scynthia (sic) and Judith.

Chambers has been steamship Captain with the United States Lines, is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation. He is also a marine engineer and has served in the capacity of Assistant Port Captain for the Ward Line on their New York piers.

Chambers came to Cuba in the capacity of Treasurer of the local Ward Line organization and during the past two years has been associated

principally with their traffic department.

25. Dellis asked me if I remembered when the ship named La Coubre blew up in Havana Harbor on March 4, 1960. Although I have no recollection of this happening, Dellis said that she and my mother were very afraid for me because they didn't know where I was at the time.

The ship in question was a French freighter carrying Belgian armaments for Cuba. When the ship exploded, it killed more than 80 Cubans. Fidel Castro blamed the CIA. During the funeral ceremonies, Castro coined the new phrase, "Patria o Muerte", which is still in use today. The atmosphere was tense. Counter-revolutionary groups became active. In the midst of the gathering chaos, my father said he asked the United Fruit Company to relocate my mother, my sister, and me to Florida. They didn't think it was necessary. In their view, Castro was nothing more than another petty dictator who could be dealt with in time. My parents disagreed, so they obtained our exit permits, and my father had our belongings packed and moved to the United Fruit Company docks. Then, according to my father's memory, we left Cuba by plane on March 30, 1960 (his grandparents' wedding anniversary date). Dellis Gray said that on our last day in Cuba, we all got into the car, dropped her off at her cousin's house on Calle 29, entre 42 y 44 in the Almendares Section of Havana, and left for the airport. I have no idea what became of the car.

26. The VIGENCIA (exit permit) from the Republica de Cuba, Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Departamento Tecnico de Investigaciones de la Policia National Revolucionaria, dated March 7, 1960, for Kathryn Judith Chambers is in the possession of Kathryn C. Hogan-Torpey, 5035 Domain Place, Alexandria, Virginia 22311-5066.

27. The Arrival Notice of Possessions from Cuba (Household Goods and Personal Possessions, dated August 17, 1960), is in the possession of William Scott Chambers, 325 N.W. 95 33324.