

My Life as I Recall

I was born April 22, 1939 and raised in Tucumcari. My mother told me I was one of the first babies Dr. T.B. Hoover delivered in Tucumcari Memorial Hospital. In fact, in my Baby Book I have a photo of Dr. Hoover taken from the Tucumcari Newspaper telling of his WWII military service. I experienced what my own children have not. I graduated from High School with most of the people with whom I attended Kindergarten. In retrospect, I believe we had an idyllic childhood. The period of the "50's" has historically maintained that image with justification.

Tucumcari was the "village" that raised children. When I think of the freedom and ease I had as a girl growing up and compare it with today's typical community environment, I am in awe of my good fortune. Although my mother and father watched over my sisters and brother like a hawk, we were secure enough to walk down any street totally unafraid. I knew every single street name and could have drawn a map from memory. You could name the people who lived in most homes. Downtown was equally familiar. For years after I left Tucumcari, I could walk the streets and people recognized me by name. Just think about it – that is astonishing and wonderful!

My biography goes like this. After graduating from High School, I attended Eastern New Mexico University where I majored in Music Performance and Education. Thanks to the encouragement and inspiration from both my family and mentors like George Umberson and Barney Miller, I found my niche and had a rich and rewarding college experience. By 1962, I had performed in enumerable musicals, operas and dramatic productions. This included a professional stint with the St. Louis Municipal Opera Company. I am especially proud of having the leads in "The Most Happy Fellow," "The Sound of Music," and the opera "Carmen."

My first teaching position was Choral Director at North Junior High School in Roswell, NM. That same year I married William "Bill" S. Hays of Clovis, NM. Bill attended the University of New Mexico, but thanks to a 5th grade teacher many of you remember, Gertrude Hesson introduced Bill and I. After graduation from UNM, Bill entered the United States Air Force and we began an exciting and educational career traveling the world. We were an active part of "The Right Stuff," working and living with Apollo astronauts and the famous test pilot, Chuck Yeager. Our three sons, John, Scott and Greg, were sequentially born in NM, CA and Spain which illustrates some of the diversity of our experiences. Even though, like most families, we have had our share of ups and downs, if I had known what I know now, I would not change a thing.

Thanks to Air Force life, I taught and performed music in many different places, which proved to be a great benefit. Flexibility and diversity became a strong point. I directed an Air Force Children's choir to first place in USAF competition and third place in World Wide competition. While Bill served in Viet Nam in 1968-69, I returned to ENMU to earn my Masters Degree in Music and taught classes as a graduate assistant. During our next assignment in Houston, TX I sang with the Houston Grand Opera Chorus and taught choral music in the Pasadena School District. In Madrid, Spain, I performed with the Air

Force Chapel choir while thoroughly enjoying my expanding family and traveling in Europe. I taught in the Clovis and Albuquerque Public Schools and UNM after Bill entered the Air Force Reserves. Everywhere we have lived I have performed in and/or conducted Air Force or Episcopal Church choirs. We moved to Albuquerque in 1978 where we have lived ever since. One very special event in recent years has been reuniting with high school choral director, Dr. George Umberson. I was privileged to sing in the Arizona State University Choral Union under his direction on a tour of Australia and New Zealand in the summer of 2000. Having been his first private vocal student, it had exceptional meaning. The tour was marvelous!

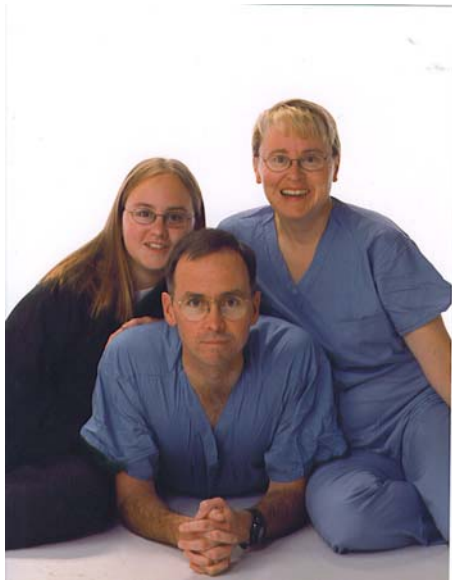
Something I have done in the last 50 years that would surprise you is my husband and I washed cars for over 30 years in Albuquerque. We owned and operated two full service car washes beginning in 1974, The Rain Tunnel Car Washes. I learned how to run a business from my husband who is a natural. We worked side by side until we sold the business November of 2005. Lt. Colonel Hays made good of two careers the first of which taught us to love travel. For several years we have had a motor home which we travel in extensively. So far we have been coast to coast/border to border (Alaska, Mexico and Canada) and we plan to do more. Last year's big event was three months in Alaska, an absolutely fantastic experience!!

Our greatest pride has been in our family. Our first baby, John, regrettably died in infancy at 15 months of age. Scott, the second, attended the New Mexico Military Institute and the United States Military Academy at West Point with honors. After serving 5 years in the Army as a "Super Dooper Paratrooper," a Ranger and a Pathfinder, he entered the University of New Mexico Medical School where he was one of their first students to graduate with a MD/PhD. We laughingly called him "Dr-Dr." In 2002 at the age of 38 he contracted cancer and subsequently died. Who said life was fair? Our youngest son, Greg, is receiving his PhD in Physics from the University of Texas this year and is a "Super Dooper Laser Builder."☺ Upon graduation, Greg will go to work for Stanford University at the longest building in the world, Stanford Laser Accelerator Center. September 1, 2006, he married Despina Milathianaki of Agios Nikolaos, Crete, Greece. Yes, we had a "Great Big Fat Greek Wedding" on the island of Crete which was an indescribably beautiful event. Despina also is a PhD candidate in Physics at UT. We have one granddaughter, Devon, Scott's and wife Toni's daughter. Devon graduates from Sandia Prep in Albuquerque with honors, exactly 50 years from the date of our own graduation. (Much to my joy, she not only is intelligent, but sings beautifully.)

Bill and I expect to travel as long as we can. A trip to Newfoundland is next on our agenda. We have been married 45 years and the Lord willing; we will reach the big 50 and more. We love life and each other very much. Very importantly, we have been blessed with faith, family and friends who have always been there when we needed them. What more can you ask for?



Bill and Rossanna at Denali National Park, AK



Scott, Devon and Toni Hays



Greg and Despina Hays