

Ford Family History

I begin with John Thurmond. He was rector in The Parish Church, Wittenham, England circa 1453. My two sources are The Thurmonds of Virginia by W.R. Thurmond Witschey and a monograph published by Shirley Donnelly of Oak Hill Baptist Church, Oak Hill, West Virginia in 1939. One noteworthy American Thurmond is Strom Thurmond. He is son of one of Mary's brothers. More of her nexus with a Ford to follow.

We start with the Thurmonds because there is no existing record of the Fords prior to John R Ford of Ford, Virginia circa 1840 owning a farm now existing as a city Ford, Virginia.

Fords came as Faure (sp?) or some derivation thereof and were French Huguenots. Ancestor arrived before or after the edict of Nancy circa 1700. The Anglicans did not want Huguenots around and pushed them into the dismal swamp land south of the James River.

Over time they moved further south in Virginia and that may be where the story picks up with my great grandfather. Sounds pretty likely to me.

Interesting that he would marry the epitome of Anglican Church in the sister to Strom Thurmond of the Thurmonds of Virginia. Damn Yankees drove them together and forged a bond for sure.

John Ford fought in the War of Northern Genocide. He served in the Army of Northern Virginia and is reputed to have been a cavalryman. He may have at some point been attached to Jeb Stuart but I find no record of this. I do have his Bible he carried as a religious amulet. It is quite compact and was never read but is the original King James as commissioned by Queen Victoria. Bibles like these served as talismans for soldiers on both sides of the war.

When John returned from the war he had sold his horse for a mule. He knew a mule could plow and if you could plow you could plant and if you could plant you could harvest, eat and trade. A horse served no purpose.

It is my understanding he returned in Spring, 1865 to utter devastation. His wife had been probably raped and left to freeze and starve in Virginia Winter in 1864

along with his three young daughters. The farm was burned, the fields destroyed and everything else taken. Pneumonia and exposure to Winter did the rest. New Yankee confiscatory taxes assured that anything he grew would be taken plus his land ownership revoked.

John took his mule and sold it for \$50 gold. Gold was the bit coin of the time. This was an incredible amount which tells you the value of a mule. Confederate currency was worthless and Lincoln's greenbacks relatively unavailable.

John took the gold and moved out of the occupation zone to Oak Hill, West Virginia. He went to work for the WVa school board and built a new farm.

He met and married Mary Thurmond. Mary's father and six brothers served in the CSA as rangers and cavalymen. They may have known John. This is not disclosed. Anyway, all seven Thurmonds survived the war. In one engagement located where my son's ex-wife's parents now live, all seven brothers fought the Union army and lost. Three were captured and the rest wounded but escaped. Incredibly all survived the war when two of three males in the South (including male slaves) died or lost one or more limbs.

Mary was the sister to these six brothers. John and Mary married and had four sons and a daughter. Your great grandfather Charles Philip Spurgeon Ford was one of the sons. Interestingly, John had to have been almost twenty years older than Mary when they married. Mary and John never forgot nor forgave the Union atrocities. John refused to recognize that West Virginia did not remain a part of his beloved Virginia and that was known through all the community. Mary received the right to vote when women received suffrage but as a native of the South had to also take an oath of allegiance to the USA before exercising her new right. She refused and never voted.

Your great Grandfather Charles Philip Spurgeon Ford had four names. The Spurgeon was added by Mary weeks after he was born when she and John had attended a gospel meeting featuring Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Billy Graham of that age. Hence they added that name to your poor great grandfather. Granddad rarely attended church. It was said he went to weddings and funerals and not much else.

Granddad graduated from high school and presented himself in Richmond at the Medical College of Virginia (now a part of Virginia Commonwealth University VCU) to take the entrance exam. The College was one of the three best in the

South in 1913. The test was rigorous but if passed, you could enter without a college degree. Granddad passed.

I have pictures of him in anatomy dissection class. The professor is also featured. They used cadavers provided by the N&W railroad of drunk males killed by trains in the Richmond rail yard. The professor had a stove pipe hat like Lincoln and held it behind his back as he oversaw the student efforts. As he did so other students took pieces and threw them surreptitiously into the hat.

Granddad graduated in June, 1917. I have the commencement invite and his diploma. Wilson asked for and received a Declaration of War from Congress against Germany in March of that year so Granddad went into the military. The military was not prepared for war. They could not catch Poncho Villa in Mexico. They were prepared to fight Indians in the Southwest. It took almost a year to get to France. When Blackjack Pershing arrived in France he announced in French Lafayette we are here. Six months later the French were asking where.

Your other great Granddad Lee Matthew Kerley was a doughboy and served in France as a basic infantryman. I have his discharge and service medal. He fought in Argonne and Chateau Thierry names that should be much better remembered than they are. His claim to fame is he survived and returned home.

My Granddad Ford arrived in France roughly ten days before 11 11 1918 Armistice Day. He arrived as the fighting and casualties ended. He did have to face the epic Spanish flu epidemic that then swept post war Europe and killed more people than the war did in four years. He did not arrive stateside until late in 1919 and took up practice in Huntington, as a GP and anesthesiologist until retiring sixty years later. Yup he practiced for sixty years.

He married a nurse Ethyl Mc Cormack. They had two children a boy and a girl. Granddad was his son and in 1941 found himself at Marshall as a junior and member of ROTC. Most of the young men knew war was coming and Dad wanted to be as prepared as possible while going to college.

December 7 was a Sunday. Roosevelt went to Congress for a declaration of war against Japan the next day (Germany and Italy then declared war on America and that is how we ended fighting them and Italy when the formal declaration only applied to Japan).

Marshall and the City of Huntington responded with patriotic fervor not seen since the Firing on Ft Sumter. The Marshall band marched from the campus to the recruiting station. Behind them marched the ROTC and behind them any student willing to immediately volunteer. They sent the cadets through first. All passed the routine medical exam except one, your granddad. Dad had flat feet, was terminally myopic and had a hole in his heart from rheumatic fever as a child. Even the elixir of patriotism could not prompt any of the physicians to approve him so he was rejected for medical reasons.

Many people believed Dr Ford had made a call to spare his son. Dad heard the rumors of cowardice and it seared him. He spent the next three years battling to get into the fight and prove his worth as a man and as a patriot. He became the man of La Mancha and jousted with the windmill and in this case the windmill yielded to Don Quixote.

The story is a bit murky here. Dad finished school as quickly as he could and worked himself into great physical shape. For a man that hated exercise this should tell you the level of motivation. Dad found himself at boot camp at the same place in Texas where Virginia did her tour with the air force. He went all through boot camp and was transferred to the west coast for deployment in the Pacific when again a medical check found he had flat feet and he was cast aside.

Your grandmother Ford had two brothers. One was of age and joined the Navy where he spent the entire war in Honolulu as a SP. The other brother was fourteen when Japan attacked, too young for volunteering. He could wait to age 18 or on his 15th birthday he could enter the merchant marine with parental permission. His father had seen combat and knew that was no place for a 15 year old. Regrettably the small town and his public job at the newspaper plus the charges and rumors of cowardice finally enabled their son Wally to get his way and get the paper signed. He trained where Charlie is now stationed.

Their first voyage was to have been to Murmansk, Russia. The supply ship barely cleared harbor before a U boat found them and sunk them in sight of the coast. Most of the crew perished. Wally was never right nor normal after that although he continued to serve.

One trip found him going to Vladivostok, Russia. Russia and Japan were not at war so any supply ships sent there were given a code to give the Japanese who permitted the American ships to go there unmolested. It is on the east coast of Russia just above Japan. While there, the Russians interned the crew in a prison

camp while the ship was unloaded. The camp was next to an airfield. A Russian plane overran the runway and was damaged. A Russian officer found the pilot drunk and executed him on the spot with a pistol fired at the base of his neck. When asked why, he responded that pilots were cheap in Russia but planes very dear. Your great uncle endured a bad life after the war ruined by alcohol fueled by what he had seen at too early of an age. He was a good man gone bad.

Dad did not ship out with the group he trained. Ten years or so after the war ended he found out what happened to them. I was 4 years old and mom taught high school. Mom took dad to work. dropped me at daycare and taught high school math at Huntington East High School. She took the lunch hour to pick me up, take me home, feed me and then return me and herself to school. She took me to pick up dad each evening.

This particular day a ramshackled old pickup truck was parked in front of our house. The house had an open deck and on it she could see a figure. She thought about it and decided to take me to the porch and find out who this might be and what they wanted. A few steps were required to reach the porch and front door. She inquired of the man standing now on the porch what he wanted. He looked like a bum on skid row fresh off a bender. He asked if Charles Ford lived there. Mom said yes and the man asked if she would ask him that a _____ (name lost) wished to see him.

Mom thought and decided to take me inside, lock the door and call dad at work. Wives did not call their husbands at work in the fifties. That was total humiliation for the husband. Dad worked at Island Creek Coal in accounting. He totaled numbers all day long. It was an open bullpen and in those days there might be one phone for ten desks. Mom called and of course another man answered the phone. Dad was called to the phone and everyone knew it was his wife calling.

Irritated, Dad asked what mom wanted. He called her Gerry. Mom said a man was at the house...in 1956!!! Dad then asked what was going on with increasing anger and impatience. Mom then said a man named so and so wished to see him. Dad got halfway through a very strong rebuttal and went strangely silent. He placed the phone away from his face and stood there. Then he pushed it back up to his ear and mouth and told mom he was on his way home and to ask the man to wait. With that he walked into his bosses' office This was the fifties. You did not simply walk into the boss's office. The boss (a man named Floyd Honchel) looked up at the intrusion. Dad simply said something had come up from the war and he had to deal with it. Floyd knew mom had the car so he reached in his desk, took out his car

keys and flipped them to dad. Then he said take off this afternoon and let him know whatever Dad might additionally need.

Dad drove his boss's car home. He and the man stayed on the porch until evening. Only the two know what was said but over time the following came out. The group dad left was sent to Tarawa and was part of the first wave of the invasion.

Tarawa is remembered as terrible Tarawa. It is where the Japanese schooled us on how to island hop, and how we needed to perfect our equipment and tactics. The schooling came at an awful price. Tarawa had coral reefs 1,500 to 2,500 feet off the beach. At high tides the newly developed LSTs could stream over and get to the beach. At low tide they snagged the craft and left them a sitting duck. We misread the tidal chart and sent them in at low tide. Men disembarking for the craft had to deal with treacherous under tow and were trying to carry 100 pounds of equipment. Few made it to shore.

The military decided light bombardment would leave the beach intact and make supply delivery easier once secured. All Japanese batteries remained unscathed as well as machine gun emplacements, It was a turkey shoot. By day's end you could walk from a demolished LST to the beach and have no danger of getting your feet wet from anything other than the blood of the mangled corpses. The Life magazine pictures were so terrible the censors seized the magazines before they could be sold. This man was one of roughly 15 survivors from the group that deadly first day out of roughly 500 in the group that trained with dad.

Dad then went to bombardier school and aced it but at the end was rejected for poor eyesight. It seemed he was never going to win the joust with the windmill. By August, 1944 America had armies under Mac Arthur pushing up from Australia, other armies pushing west across the Pacific, armies in the Italian peninsula and two deployments in France. We were running out of manpower.

Dad was put on a halftrack and sent to Europe. He did not have to march and he had a big 60 caliber gun so he could hit something even if blind as a bat.

The windmill was bested. Don Quixote triumphed. Then the horror.

A half track is an armored and turreted vehicle that has tank tracks in the rear and two rubber tires in front. The turret housed a sixty caliber machine gun. This configuration allowed the halftrack to travel on roads at 50 mph and yet retain the ability to go off road. It was worthless against a tank but highly effective against

most anything else. The turret was open on top but had a swivel. Being open saved weight.

Dad arrived through Antwerp at the front in the Third Army just as the Battle of the Bulge ended. He went through a town where his brother in law had marched as a general infantryman a month before. Uncle George Heiner was wounded just before dad arrived. He almost died from his wounds. They discovered this after the war.

One of the great falsehoods of WW 2 is the forgotten campaign in Germany proper during the late winter and spring of 1945. A comparison to Sherman's March across Georgia to the sea is appropriate combined with what he told his army as they turned north into South Carolina. His order was that up until then they had made Georgia howl as an army but now in South Carolina they were a rabble and were to institute unlimited vigilante justice as an armed mob. They did then and the American Army did likewise in Germany in 1945.

The orders were simple. Use the autobahn to find Germans and kill Germans. If SS no surrender allowed. No exceptions. To stay awake they took early version and strong amphetamines. A sleeping soldier risked greater chance of death. The side effects were not known, much less believed. One night they returned to camp and the MP asked if they had heard the news. No they said what news. Roosevelt is dead. Gee that is too bad they said. What outfit was he in? A reference is to read Hemingway's short story online "A Way you will Never Be" set in Europe in WW 1 as troops defend a bridge against an advance against the Austrians by the Italian army. Our troops were in that same mental and physical state.

The SS sealed their fate when they butchered American POWs during the Battle of the Bulge. Years later when dad was retired and living in Hilton Head public TV did an interview with the SS commander that ordered the murder. His group was later surrounded by vengeful Americans who refused to permit surrender. He and one small detachment escaped and he was retired in Switzerland.

Dad had by then two artificial hips. He mumbled and swore and left the room. His wife Ginny came to me fifteen minutes later and said I was going to have to talk to him. I asked why. She said all dad would say is that he was going to Switzerland to kill that kraut SOB. I went to their bedroom and dad was making progress packing. I asked where he was going and he said to Switzerland to kill that murdering kraut. I told him he couldn't. He challenged me. I then told him that the interview was

recorded and that kraut SOB had died earlier that summer. He checked and confirmed. Yes, a terrible resolve never ends.

They went out with three half tracks each day. If they found too many Germans to kill they requested help. Each day the Americans moved their service camps forward as the reconnaissance in force removed German combatants.

One Sunday morning in March dad's halftrack with their crew of three, had the radiator leak and overheated. His crew consisted of him, a West Virginia Baptist, a Chicago Catholic and a street smart Jew from NYC. I can only imagine the conversations they must have had.

They pulled over and the other two continued on instead of waiting for them. That was the American army then in the 3rd Patton's Army. Press forward and attack always.

Dad's halftrack had been the lead vehicle that day. They fixed the radiator and rejoined the other two. As they caught up the three vehicles saw a German kid on the side of the road wearing a Hitler Scout Youth uniform. They hesitated. The kid was maybe twelve. They did not shoot. As the lead halftrack went by the kid threw a masher into the open turret. It exploded killing the crew. The second half track open up with the sixty caliber at 100 foot range. It dismembered the body. The head rolled across the road and the trunk in pieces fell into the culvert. They pulled up to the burning track and seeing no signs of life sped away to find more Germans to kill. Moments like this did make a soldier indifferent to the idea of German civilians. There were none. Nor were they upset at the deaths of the comrades. Only filled with more resolve to kill more Germans and endure.

The worst casualties were sustained in a battle fought between two American armies. Remember these soldiers did not retreat. Resistance was met with additional force. The Third and the First Army inadvertently mistook one another for Germans and sent in reserves to kill each other. It took a week before command was able to separate the two. Amphetamine driven soldiers and acting as vigilantes and mobs do sometimes run into same.

One morning they received new orders. They were to join a force and proceed to a specific point on the map. That point was one of the Mauthausen Concentration Camps. I do not know which one. They were to use small arms fire only, surround the objective then take and hold it. Rumors spread they were liberating a POW camp. That brought joy and anticipation to everyone. There was the brief titter of

humanity. They arrived at the objective. They surrounded it, checked for booby traps and found the guard towers deserted. They opened the main gate as grey dawn slowly transitioned to day. It was foggy and cold. They noticed an oven. What was that for? Bake bread at a camp? Huh? Then they noticed the fuel, neatly stacked cords of wood one endless row after another as only Germans can do with precision. Perfectly matched not one inch out of line and longer than a cord.

The prison hut doors slowly slung open as the men realized these cords were not of wood. What walked outdoors were ghastly creatures. They could not be human but they were or had they only been once but not now? There was nothing left but skin and skeleton. The smell you never forgot. It gagged and sucked the life out of you. You could not escape it. Worse than the smell of death, something much worse. A look into the eyes saw the opening unimpeded to their luminous souls.

<https://www.israelvideonet.com/rare-color-footage-of-the-nazis-and-their-crimes-against-the-jews-disturbing-content/?omhide=true>

Men who had seen combat and every unspeakable horror became sick to their stomachs. No one knew what to do and then they realized the cords were neatly stacked body parts prepared for cremation. The Germans had learned the parts burned more efficiently than a whole body and had the inmates chop up the dead collected from the gas chambers. No one knew what to do. There was nothing to do. Draining the blood saved fuel to burn the bodies. The Germans missed no tricks.

This horror haunted dad for the rest of his life. After the war he had nightmares of reliving those moments but as a participant and not as a liberator. He became one of the victims. Dad turned to drink and years later while inside the bottle when far inside, he began to re-experience those same nightmares in his wakened state. He would stumble down the darkened hall weeping like a child. The hall was the camp and he was witnessing the horror over and over....

A rage began to fill the soldiers. Was it the stench, the eyes, the living skeletons or simply a primeval scream for vengeance? An unspeakable rage and a need to vent. The mob driven by this left the camp and arrived at a neighboring village. They went house to house. Just picture an enraged KKK looking for an accused black rapist. If it fogged a mirror it was pushed to the town square. Then at gunpoint the Germans were pushed to the camp and marched through the camp. One soldier shouted at a young Austrian Fraulein. "You fascist bitch come and see what you have done. Come and see." Soldiers that saw these camps never had any relations

with Austrian or German females. They could smell the stench of guilt on them. They never forgot.

The burgermeister later denied they knew about the camp after saying they all believed that the soldiers were going to push them into the ovens. Saw the smoke and smelled the stench but had no clue.

Villages made lots of money and wealth off the dead in concentration camps. Hitler had his largest complex Mauthausen built to benefit the Austrian village of Braunau and Linz where he was born and later raised. This village shared in that and you could see it when you visited. The SS took the gold, silver and jewels but everything else went through the village for resale. You see it in the films where the victims are separated from their bags before they are separated from their children and wives before they are then separated from life and any gold or silver removed from their corpses by Nazi goons armed with a pair of pliers for deliver to Munich re and the Swiss re after being melted down. Nice profit. No innocents in Nazi Germany in Spring, 1945. These villagers were well fed and clothed and neatly clean German standard. Any German not in a Nazi gulag in 1945 had surrendered his humanity and resides in Hell today forever. Make no mistake.

Americans found each German town had huge church crosses lifted high in the air. A contest would be held with the winner taking the pot for being the first to shoot off the cross. After the camp the Americans made sure every cross was blown to pieces. Since the church was so quiet about Hitler and the genocide it seemed highly ironic that the first thing the Americans did was remove the crosses.

Another activity was to shell a town and then stop. The burgermeister organized clean up battalions to clean off the streets and remove the debris. As soon as they were finished the Americans resumed. Source of great enjoyment to the troops to have those German Huns labor like that. Cleanliness was Godliness to the Germans and the Americans wanted to make sure they were far removed from God in all ways. The Germans are exempt from God. This will never change.

Dad's combat excursion goes from the border with Netherlands, across Germany, into Austria and ends in what is today the Czech republic. The day before the European war ended his group found some well dug in Germans that had superior fire power. These Americans did what they always did. They attacked and took no prisoners.

The movie Patton made after the book by Ladislas Farago relates a historically accurate scene where an American tank column is running out of gas and sees a larger German tank column retreating. It does what those Americans did. It attacked with no gas and few shells left. Same principle applied here. The engagement raged for the balance of the war through the long dark night. The next morning during a pause, word arrived that an armistice was established, to cease fire and stop killing. The Americans did so quite slowly and with reluctance. You can't turn off see German kill German with a simple command and these Germans had killed Americans. It was blood libel, personal and driven by amphetamines.

The Germans dreaded the Russians but they feared the Americans because the Americans always attacked. Always.

Dad returned home with a Czech flag that had a swastika sewn into the heart of it (representing Nazi acquisition of the Sudetenland or South Germany the heart of Czechoslovakia) and a military id of a dead German soldier. The latter is, I think, the last man Dad killed in combat. I am sorry it has been lost because dad used to look at it every so often and I believe he remembered. This soldier crossed the Polish border 09 01 1939 and died 05 07 45. One lousy day. For once it was not just another damn kraut. It was almost a human being to him....

Dad returned to the US at the same port facility where my son has served. He went by rail to Huntington, West Virginia and received a furlough to see his parents and say goodbye to them. He had been told his unit was to then go to the west coast for training and embarkation for the invasion of mainland Japan. Everyone receiving those orders received furlough and knew it was strictly a one way ticket. No one is coming back from that. Hence the furlough.

A little truth in history is needed here. During 1944 almost a year earlier, the B29 was introduced in the Pacific and for the first time we could hit Japan proper by air. Guam was the island that housed the airbase. We built and equipped several bases in South China but these were overrun by the Japanese army. Guam was the replacement but the equipment and bombs lost impacted history.

A good friend of dad's after the war named Sam Crum was a Seabee. A Seabee built stuff after killing all the Japanese. One island they invaded had a garrison of 500 Japanese Royal Marines. None surrendered. They never did and after a while were rarely asked to. He was on Guam hence what follows.

The B29 was rushed into production and deployment before it was ready for either. Guam maxed its range and weight loads. A problem this version had was gaining take off speed. Sometimes it did not. Sam's job was to limit the fire after a failed takeoff crashed the plane and the crew burned alive. They would take bets on which plane would and would not survive takeoff. Still those crews got on the plane and went on the mission. A resolve few have ever matched.

When the Americans took Saipan you may remember the pictures of the Japanese women and children jumping off the cliff sometimes prodded by imperial soldiers who then jumped. What you may not know is across the way from this cliff the Americans stood and passed the hat betting on who would jump or be prodded next. It was personal and it was racial. Dead Americans at Pearl assured that. When American loudspeakers implored the Japanese to surrender these men hooted and hollered and waved their weapons at the Japanese to make sure they might jump. They wanted to watch them die. Again a way we will never be as Hemingway wrote and opined frequently.

More lies abound in America. The Germany and Italian minorities in America were a fervent breeding ground for espionage . Your great uncle (the one shot above) had a brother in the FBI. It took everything they had to limit German espionage. Mix in Japanese espionage and we would have been overrun. The internment camps stopped that. How many espionage acts happened by Japanese after the Japanese Americans were put in camps? None. You could not achieve the same effect with German Americans because a German American looked like an English American. When the nation is in peril you play for keeps and let the survivors assign blame. No regrets from me or anyone else in that generation that knew what we were fighting.

During 1944 we had to learn how to bomb effectively with the B 29. At high altitude the bombs simply scattered and dispersed and did not cause sufficient impact. A young officer named Curtis Le May had an awful idea. He was shown the new napalm bomb we had developed but had not been used successfully from high altitudes. He knew the Japanese had bamboo cities around each plant for workers. Japan had insufficient fuel to transport workers so bamboo housing had been erected. If you could catch those on fire the resulting inferno would take out the plant. At high altitude you could not get enough concentration of napalm to ignite the tender box. That civilians lived in those housing units was not our problem. We dropped leaflets warning of impending air attack and to leave. We did not care if they did or not.

Le May's awful idea was to remove all the machine guns to allow for more napalm to be carried and to bomb at 1,500 feet not 30,000, That would concentrate the hits and set off the tender.

The result was terrifying to the crews. They were sitting ducks at 1,500 feet and casualties were beyond measure. No bombardment group ever sustained worst casualties and yet they just kept getting in the planes and flying to their almost certain deaths. My definition of a hero each and every one of those souls. If a plane was downed the Japanese bayoneted the lucky ones. The unlucky ones were kept and tortured until war's end and then murdered after the end of the war in large measure to make sure the atrocities remained a secret.

The first attack created an inferno so horrible that it knocked our own planes out of the sky. If you were in the third group, surviving this Hellish tower of fire and wind was the greatest challenge. Many did not.

Japanese accounts largely ignored are even more horrific. Rivers dried in their bed. People were blasted by the flames of fire moving at F5 storm speeds. The vacuum created by the process sucked people's insides out. Others were incinerated or their skin entirely removed by the blast. The dead were the lucky ones. The dinosaurs and monsters that frequented Japanese cinema in the fifties were patterned after the movement of these firestorms that took on the appearance of monsters. These attacks burned the very psyche of the people. No atomic blast could ever do worse. None did.

When reconnaissance took photos the next day Le May and the officers could not believe what they saw. The cameras were checked for malfunction. This was not possible. What they saw was nothing. Only dirt. No evidence of life or structure or any remains whatsoever. It was literally a clean slate of dirt only. Not even stubble. No evidence of human occupation anywhere.

This pattern continued. Le May was within ninety days of ending Japan when he ran out of napalm. The bombs lost in South China were the difference. Had he had that inventory he would have succeeded. Iwo Jima, Okinawa, the later bombardments, the Manila atrocity, the invasion of the Philippines and the two A bombs would not have been necessary. Because he did not have those bombs my dad was on his way to face certain death and knew it.

When Truman took office he knew nothing about the A bomb. Germany had surrendered and the armed forces were preparing for the final onslaught against Japan.

Truman was presented with three options. It was from these three options he made his famous buck stops here comment.

Option number one was the Navy by Admiral Halsey and Spruance. They had witnessed the kamikaze on Okinawa and Iwo Jima and knew from recon reports the Japanese had assembled 20,000 to 25,000 more aircraft for use against the invasion armada. Their option to Truman was to finish off the fishing fleet, use the restored napalm stocks to burn the crop, and let starvation run its course. A year later the starving survivors would elect surrender with no additional loss of American life. Truman responded by saying he could not sanction the genocide of Japanese women and children on a scale unparalleled in human history. Truman valued human life even if Japanese and more so if it involved women and children. Few of his countrymen shared his sentiments or values at that time.

MacArthur's representative (this is where the enmity between the two become animosity. Mac had stood up the President literally) presented Mac's option. He was the greatest strategist in American history despite his personal foibles and failings. He had prepared an invasion plan that the Navy agreed would work. American troop deaths the first six hours would exceed 250,000 including Granddad. Japanese casualties would be a multiple of 4 minimum to maybe 5 of that amount the first day alone. Nimitz then indicated we would lose 1/3 of our fleet during the invasion but prevail in addition to the troops killed. Truman responded by saying this was the worst catastrophe America had ever faced in war. In one day more men would be killed than in every war ever fought by America and that the invasion would take 13 months or more to finish. No one could guess or estimate the casualties for the other side in military or civilians. Worst we knew the Japanese women and children would be deployed as suicide martyrs and would have to be killed. It was assumed that this killing would have to be indiscriminate meaning Japanese casualties might almost rise to extinction level numbers.

The third option was a more secret meeting where Truman was made aware of the bomb. He was told it might compel surrender and that it might not even work at all. He was also told there was a chance that once the process was started it might cause a chain reaction that would incinerate the planet. The last was stated as unlikely but possible if fully deployed and used as a weapon.

You are the President. You make the call.

I have a picture of dad standing along the beach in California weeks before scheduled embarkation for deployment. He is looking west. You can tell he knows he is a dead man walking. My idea of an American Samurai just like every other soldier that would have been a part of that invasion. We remember the dead but we forget about the people saved and living. Santana is right and here is an example.

So who were the Japanese? In January, 1945 they had butchered roughly 1,000,000 Filipino civilians in Manila before disbelieving American eyes. They had instituted the Bataan Death March after Corregidor. They had treated the Koreans like Muslims do dhimmis. They had their own Mengele experiments with Chinese prisoners in Manchuria, they had butchered unknown millions of Chinese including the rape of Nanking.

We had already liberated enough prison camps to know what they did there. They had committed Pearl Harbor and the attack on Clark Airbase in Manila. They attacked and sank the Panay and tried to kill every crew member to keep the attack secret. One crew member was the father of a moon astronaut Armstrong. They sneak attacked the Czar's Navy and butchered over 200,000 Russian POWs at the end of the Russo Japanese War.

Why did we dropped two bombs is because we did not have three. No apologies. The Japanese got what they deserved because they earned it the old fashion way. There were no innocents in Japan either in Summer of 1945.

The bombs spared dad's life and made life possible for me and for you. It also saved millions of Japanese lives. Far more Japanese were killed in the napalm than died in the A bomb drops and far more would have died in an invasion. Somehow these ugly truths are ignored in this sick, demented and revisionist world of today.

My story in the military is a footnote. I was thirteen when Gulf of Tonkin supposedly happened. It is worth noting that I know an ex military helicopter pilot that flew Navy Seals to just off the coast of Hanoi for them to then go on shore and blow up power and water plants in 1961. The CIA was using the Seals to wage war against North Vietnam four plus years before troops arrived in South Vietnam or the false flag of Gulf of Tonkin happened. I also have a detailed book describing this written by one of the Navy Seals involved.

I wanted to serve but was too young. I wanted to carry the flag to South Vietnam as a moral crusade against those bloody commies and pay them back for Korea. We would show them. My friends had some older brothers and they went over full of the same zeal. When they returned they mumbled SNAFU and that we were not trying to win that war and to stay out. At age 17 I had the choice everyone born my year male had to make. Would I serve or not? I got my draft card at age 18 and decided that if required I would go but in no way volunteer.

When I reached college as a freshman I joined ROTC. Nixon had eliminated student deferment and instituted a national draft lottery. I hate the word lottery to this day. No deferment meant if you received a draft notice you were allowed to finish the semester then report for basic training. Clinton went AWOL and stayed in Europe. Bush had daddy make a phone call from CIA HQ to the right national guard unit that would not be deployed. The rest of us could file CO. I am no CO so that was not an option for me.

The lottery was held in the year of your 19th birthday. If you received a bad number you were cooked unless you were in ROTC beforehand. If in ROTC you were deferred until you graduated in four years and received your commission. Failure to do both in the prescribed time meant immediate induction and base camp followed by an all expense tour of Vietnam.

ROTC served as insurance against a bad number. If I received a bad number I stayed in ROTC and worst case pushed back deployment another 2 and a half years and then would be deployed as a 2nd Looney. Best of a bad deal. I think you both agree that there are worse things in the military than being a second lieutenant.

We had a Roman toga party that night waiting on the radio call. Grain alcohol and Welch aide mixed in a large vat with one large ice block. I missed the show.

The next morning I was shaken awake with the dreaded your mom is on the phone. Rediscovering my humanity I crawled to the phone. Mom was crying. I only remember her crying three times in my life. A very tough person. She cried the day her father died and the day her mother died. She was now crying for me. She told me I had a bad number. I was number 8 in the draft. That meant sure induction. It took a while but I gathered some sort of thought and conveyed to her that I was Ok because I was in ROTC and they had to give me deferment for that reason. She did not believe it.

Dad called about the time I stumbled back into bed promising to never even smell grain alcohol again. He asked why I was not in class. That was dad. If I had been in class then why call I thought. He then said you got a bad number and he was going to arrange a position for me in Canada with the steel company. I finally was able to tell him I could not be drafted because I was in ROTC. I had a two and half year waiting period and that if the worst came to worst I would at least be some sort of officer. I then told him I could not run and have someone else fill the spot that had my name on it. Wouldn't be right. He was silent and then said I was right and then to make sure I stayed in ROTC and to not doing anything stupid less that SE Asian swamp catch me up after all. Thanks dad.

When I was fully functioning I checked the local newspaper. It did not have my birthday in the top 100. Anything above 200 and you were home free. Curious, I bought a Charlotte newspaper because they had the complete list. I found my birthday next to the number 358. I had two other people confirm it then called mom first. I explained my number was 358. She said no. 8 because I was born on 02 22 1952. I said no I was born on Sunday the 24th. We argued and I told her to pull out my birth certificate and we would go by that. She did and came back to the phone in disbelief that yes I was born on 02 24. She did not cry.

I then called Dad and he argued. I told him mom had checked the birth certificate and he could check the calendar. I was born on Sunday, right? Was 02 24 1952 a Sunday? He called mom and called me back saying he agreed. I surrendered my M1 the following Monday. Oh and yes I could assemble and disassemble a M1 blindfolded at that time Virginia. Right of passage for a plebe.

This gives you something to keep as it relates to the Ford family and some of the blood that flows in your veins.