

David Elliott



A Memoir

© 2020 by DAVID ELLIOTT. All rights reserved
No part of this publication may be transmitted or reproduced in any way
without the permission of DAVID ELLIOTT or his Representatives.

Produced by



NOTE: COLIN'S BOOK

As a second-grade project, my grandson, Colin Brooks, wrote a history of me, his Grandpa.

Selections from his work preface the first three chapters of my memoir (pages 4-5, 13, and 32-33), and why not? He is obviously one of my biggest fans!

CONTENTS

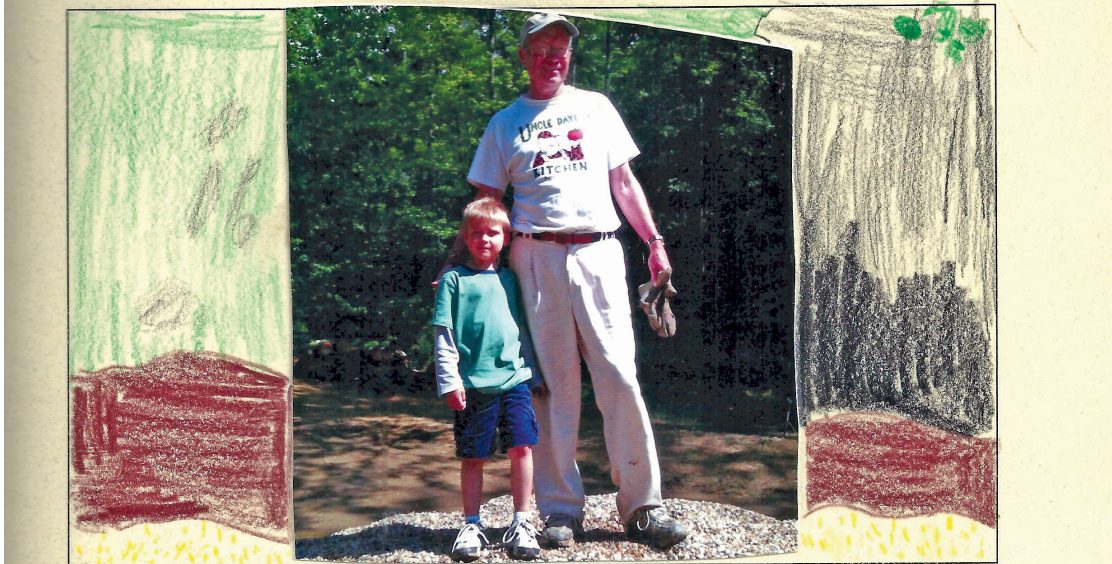
INTRODUCTION	7
ROOTS AND RELATIVES	15
LIFE IN CANAAN	35
LEAVING HOME	47
LAW SCHOOL, MEETING JEANNE AND CHALLENGES AT HOME	55
THE ARMY	73
AETNA: THE BEGINNING YEARS	103
ADVANCEMENT AT AETNA	111
MBIA	125
FROM CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER TO CEO OF MBIA	135
CULTURAL ENRICHMENT	147
MOVING ON	173
WHAT REALLY MATTERS	201
THE ELLIOTT FAMILY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM	213
FAMILY LIFE IN PICTURES	247
THE SEARCH FOR MEANING	293
FINAL THOUGHTS	303
APPENDIX	307



Grandpa and My Childhood

Written and Illustrated by
Colin Brooks

COLIN'S BOOK - INTRODUCTION



My grandpa is a very special person to me. I am happy that he only lives 20 minutes away. On special holidays, I always look forward to Grandpa's beautiful voice saying either "Happy Thanksgiving" or "Merry Christmas." Grandpa, your voice is as beautiful as a field of sweet smelling flowers. When I grow up, even in a dark room, this book will light up the whole room like gold I will share this book with everyone I know. Listen to me Grandpa. I love you!



“I doubt that the meaning of life, or even the meaning of my life, will emerge from this retrospective, but if any glimmers of truth do shine through, the attempt will have been worthwhile.” Here with (right to left) daughter Sarah, Jeanne, son Matthew, daughter Jennifer and her husband John.

INTRODUCTION

To say that life passes quickly is a truism, which is why it's so important to enjoy each and every moment and not live in the past or for the future.

In the hope that some family members — my grandchildren in particular — might have an interest in family history and genealogy, I've written this memoir in order to provide an account of at least one generational root. I doubt that the meaning of life, or even the meaning of my life, will be found in this retrospective, but if any helpful lessons do emerge, the project will have been well worth the effort. Moreover, I may gain a little perspective myself as I try to provide wisdom to others while examining several of the intractable issues and controversies of my time, like the Vietnam War and the issues of spirituality and immortality, to take two extreme examples on the spectrum.

This project has been 10 years in the making, mostly organizing my thoughts and then debating whether to actually proceed, (even while being quite aware that family histories have become a hot American on-line hobby, with 100 million or so active on-line genealogists). The reasons for my resistance eventually proved to be unconvincing. Given my age, it is no longer premature, nor, hopefully, as I first feared, will people think me egotistical for documenting who I am, how I got here and where I'm headed.

I've had a reasonably interesting life and career and lived in a very interesting, fast-paced and challenging time straddling the 20th and 21st centuries, so I believe that my descendants and perhaps others could be curious to know of the history and experiences of one of their forebears during this period. I know I would like to have had a similar history of my ancestors, near and remote, to help place myself in a time-line context and to compare experiences.

Next, I wanted to impart certain lessons that might be gleaned from the vicissitudes of my life or the lessons I have learned. That is true of one conclusion in particular, the overriding and exhilarating importance of providing and receiving love,



Exploring the spiritual realm is, I believe, the most important inquiry one can make; indeed, the searching itself can be its own reward.

support and compassion. I hope that comes shining through. Whatever the challenges, obstacles and pitfalls that lie in one's path, life can be joyous, productive, satisfying and unquestionably well worth living.

I have also been blessed with a wonderful family and inspiring relatives, friends and colleagues, and I have interacted with some remarkable people, all of whom I would like the world to know about.

Another factor motivating me to write my story is, I confess, a fear of being forgotten once I am gone, and the commensurate desire to leave something a little more lasting than dust behind. Finally, I enjoy writing and the thoughtful organizational process that this discipline entails. So, while this narrative is first and foremost for the edification and benefit of my grandchildren, as you can see I had several equally compelling reasons for embarking upon these memoirs.

To say that life passes quickly is a truism, which is why it's so important to enjoy each and every moment and not live in the past or for the future. I may not always have managed to live in the "now" very well, but by most measures I have had a story-book life of health, happiness, love, friendship and prosperity. I feel I have been guided by the spirits above in all I have done. And although I may not have witnessed or experienced the darker side of life directly, I have been keenly aware that it exists. Like everyone else, I have faced obstacles to fulfillment along the way. I appreciate and accept life as a multi-dimensional phenomenon — challenge and mystery, yin and yang, good and evil — and have struggled to understand what it all means.

Not knowing whether life exists beyond us is a vexing issue that I ponder continually, but I'm resigned to the fact that despite very persuasive evidence I will never know for certain, at least while inhabiting this terrestrial plane. Nevertheless, I encourage my grandchildren and everyone else dear to me to examine this question and probe for deeper meaning. We mustn't take our existence for granted. Exploring the spiritual realm is, I believe, the most important inquiry one can make; indeed, the searching itself can be its own reward.



Granddaughters Neva and Madelyn

I will return to reflections on the metaphysical realm later, but I hope my grandchildren pause occasionally to consider the amazing enormity of the universe and the staggering number of events and processes that had to occur in just the right proportion for the cosmos to evolve and for mankind to develop. To my mind, there can be no better argument for the existence of a creative designer or underlying consciousness that governs the universe nor a better indication that there is an afterlife. Yet, who knows? Perhaps such a conviction is nothing more than the absurd product of wishful thinking. Alas, you will not find the definitive answer here, despite my relentless brooding about the matter. While this memoir focuses on one life, it is important throughout the narrative to retain the more cosmic perspective with which I now briefly start.

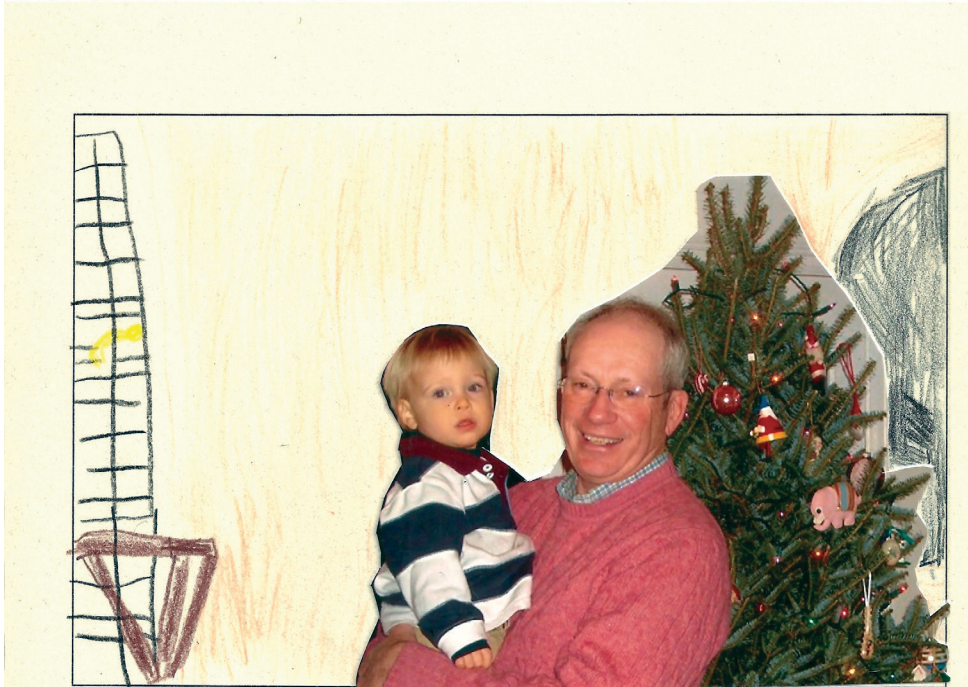
One of the beauties of the memoir is that you can start it wherever you choose. I will begin at the very beginning, namely some 14.8 billion years ago when my life (and yours) had its origins. The Big Bang is the accepted theory of the way in which the universe originated from an infinitely small speck of dust that led to the explosion from which we all derive. I accept this evolutionary theory of the universe, the infinite expansion that led, five billion years ago, to the creation of our solar system and Planet Earth, and later, a mere 100,000 years ago, to the gradual ascent of man, all guided by a superior intelligence (or perhaps not). From this cosmic beginning my life eventually emerged, and the next chapter will telescope across the eternity of evolution to a cold, snowy day in December 1941, when my life began.





Colin interviewing me for his book

COLIN'S BOOK (1)



My name is Colin Brooks and I interviewed David Elliott. I call him Grandpa. His hair is wavy and gray. The waves are clean and smooth as the ocean. His eyes are bright hazel. They are as shiny as silver and gold. He is six feet tall. Grandpa has tons of very special personality traits. Here are a few. He is kind, sweet, cheerful, helpful, makes delicious ice cream cones, a s'more maker, maker of the best campfires, and, best of all . . . the best Grandpa ever!! My Grandpa makes ice cream cones that have the best taste I ever had in my mouth. Every time I eat one, I feel like I am in a world of sweetness. Learn more about Grandpa and the past. Read more and you will get all the answers that you have about his past as a kid.