Brushes with the Famous

Dad Loved Airplanes

LIKE MANY in his generation, my father, Albert Mueller, has been an airplane buff for all his 90-plus years. He enrolled in an aviation program and spent hours building model airplanes in a small workshop.

Most of Dad's models were fashioned from wood culled from Kraft cheese boxes, but not one special model.

On July 22, 1933, pilot Wiley Post completed his solo trip around the world in 7 days, 19 hours. His airplane, the Winnie Mae, landed in New York, where it was greeted by a crowd of 50,000.

He began a tour of the U.S., and Dad learned that he would arrive in a month, so he got busy. He chose white pine with a good, straight grain. On its base, he painted a map of Post's route.

On the August day when Post was arriving, Dad persuaded his father to drive him and his younger brother Bill to the Buffalo, New York airport. Dressed in his Sunday best, Dad, then a recent high school graduate, walked out onto the tarmac to meet Post. Dad said Post seemed surprised and said a few words of thanks. He kept Dad's model.

Post flew off for more accolades, and Dad signed on at Curtiss-Wright Corporation, where he could work on real airplanes.

It was only 2 years after that that Post and his passenger, humorist

Will Rogers, crashed in the Alaskan wilderness and died.

—Jane G., Rochester, New York

Met One of the Dorsey Brothers

MY WIFE, ROSALIE, and I were joined for a great weekend in New York City in 1948 by our friends Janet and Ted Messick.

After settling in our hotel, Ted and I went down to the bar to see where we could go for dinner and entertainment. The bartender said that the Hotel Statler was the best because Big Band leader Jimmy Dorsey was being featured there.

We all went to the hotel. While we were at a table, a lady photographer asked if we'd like to have our picture taken.

We said sure, if Jimmy Dorsey would join us.

Can you imagine my surprise when she said she'd ask him?

He was sitting in the back of the dining room and walked up to our table and pulled up a chair.

Mr. Dorsey sat with us long enough to have a soda and some friendly conversation.

The photo cost a whole $1.25!

—Jack T., Seaford, Delaware

Met Desi at Country Club

MY FATHER was a cement contractor while I was growing up, during the 1950s, in southern California.

In 1956, my dad was working at the Indian Wells Country Club, owned by Desi Arnaz. It was too far for Dad to commute, so he stayed in a motel while the work was being done.

One day, my mother and I drove out to see him—and Desi Arnaz was there, and my dad introduced us to him.

I was 15 and very excited to meet someone famous.

—Linda S., Layton, Utah