

Lowry AFB, CO

August - September 1980

Recollection & Memory of Airman Roy Rector (now legally Roy Rivers)

After basic training, I took a couple of weeks leave to return to Arkansas to get my pregnant wife Nancy and our son Charles, and then reported to my training base for technical training in Materials Management and Supply (AFSC 645).

We arrived in Aurora Colorado and found a basement apartment 11 blocks from the base. I began my tech school as scheduled and drove my private vehicle to and from the base as I received my training. I was excited to begin my new career and learn my job. My training squadron was commanded by 1st Lieutenant Geoffrey Jasmer.

Within the first couple of weeks, I received a call from Nancy while at school, telling me that our son Charles was sick and she felt we needed to get him to a hospital for care. I got permission to leave training and picked Nancy and Charles up. As there was no hospital on Lowry, we set out for Fitzsimmons Army Base (also in Aurora) for an ER visit. I needed to get gas en-route and stopped at a station.

First Incident:

As I was pumping my gas, a green two-door Ford Pinto pulled in to the pump immediately on the other side of the pump I was using. I noticed that the man behind the wheel had long brown hair, and a brown handlebar mustache. We made eye contact and I nodded a "hello" to him. He didn't acknowledge me, but rather stared glaringly at me while I pumped my gas, and I noticed he didn't get out of his car for gas himself. As I finished and got back in my car, I told Nancy about him, because it was clearly not a normal encounter.

As we pulled onto the street, the man in the Ford Pinto, pulled behind us and followed us closely. I wondered out loud to Nancy what his problem was. I accelerated to pull away from him and he accelerated to match me. I told Nancy that something was up with him and I was going to turn onto the next street so the man could pass us by. As I turned onto the street into a residential neighborhood, the man also turned and followed closely behind. I pulled into someone's driveway thinking the man would pass us by and leave. He didn't. He drove a few houses down the street and made a u-turn, then parked in front of the house we had pulled into. He just stared at us from his car.

At this point I realized that something was wrong and he was being harassing and malicious towards us. I told Nancy to hold on as I was not going to allow this encounter to continue. I backed out of the house and headed back to the main road. The man followed. I was in an Oldsmobile Cutlass 442 and knew I could easily outrun a Ford Pinto, so I made a beeline for Fitzsimmons. The man pursued us but was

lagging behind as I attempted to leave him behind. Fitzsimmons Army Base was an open base so there was no guard at the gate.

We caught the light just right and entered the base at a fast speed, well ahead of the man in the Ford Pinto, but I could tell he was still pursuing. On the base we came around a big curve and squealed into the security police shack as a base policeman was just pulling in also. I got out of my car and ran to his vehicle telling him we were being pursued by a Ford Pinto for some unknown reason. At that very moment, the Ford Pinto came squealing around the corner and seeing the security policeman, gunned his car to try and get away, passing us by. The security policeman told us to stay put as he quickly got on his radio and back into his car making chase.

The man in the Ford Pinto managed to escape off of the base. The security policeman returned in a few moments telling us what had happened and that he had radioed the Aurora Police to watch for the man and his car. A report was made and Nancy and I went on to the hospital with our son, albeit a bit rattled from the experience.

#### Second Incident:

The next morning we were awakened by breaking glass as two bricks were thrown through the windows of our basement apartment and into our living room. We were scared to death! We didn't know anyone in Colorado. We had had no arguments with anyone and had no enemies. The only correlation we could draw was the previous days experience with the unknown man in the Ford Pinto. As neighbors in our apartment complex gathered, we called the Aurora Police immediately and they appeared on the scene within 30 minutes. They questioned us, searched the area, and made a report. We had our landlord come over to assess the damage and to arrange the windows to be replaced. At this point, we were having lots of questions as to why this was happening to us, and we were fearful for our safety.

#### Third Incident:

I think it was two days later, that I left home for tech training and stopped at the Clothing Sales store to pick up a new ribbon I had earned for my dress blues uniforms. I was there right as the store opened. I couldn't have been inside the store any longer than 10-12 minutes. With my purchase in hand, I went back to my car and got in.

The next few minutes is a blur of panicky details to me and is mostly remembered in slow motion. I had gotten in my car, put my seatbelt on, and then the very instant that I turned my key to start the car, everything exploded! I remember the feeling of the car "popping up" or "jumping" vertically and kind of backwards. All this in slow motion. The hood blew off. The windshield shattered and it felt like there was fire and smoke everywhere. I remember feeling the blast hitting my face, neck and shoulders. The next thing I remember is seeing fire and my sheer terror of knowing that I had to get out of the car. I wasn't knocked unconscious, but I couldn't make my arms and hands find the seatbelt release. I remember thinking that I didn't want to die like this in a fire.

The next thing I remember is the sound of someone yelling something and my drivers door opening up. The people from the Clothing Sales store had heard the blast, looked out and saw my car in flames, and grabbed a couple of fire extinguishers and ran to my aid. It felt like extremely hot water had been sprayed in my face, and I couldn't make out what was being said to me for a moment. I was pulled from the car onto the blacktop. I was dragged a little ways away from the car but I couldn't make out the words they were yelling at me. It felt like my head was in a vise and my eardrums were blown out. I can't say all that happened afterward. I remember a bunch of vehicles with flashing lights and a fire truck.

#### Fourth Incident:

I think it was about 2-3 days later. I was now having to walk to school as my car was totaled from the explosion. It was an 11 block walk to the side gate of the base. My first walk there after the explosion I was about 4 blocks from the base when I heard a gunning engine from behind me. It was very immediate and I don't know how I reacted so quickly, but a car came speeding suddenly up from behind me. I heard the car, but when it gunned the engine, I looked back and in a split second saw the car run up onto the sloped curb of the sidewalk to hit me. I very narrowly avoided being hit as I dove as best I could over a section of chain link fence of the yard in the neighborhood I was walking in. My right foot got hit in mid dive and kind of spun me into the fence as I didn't completely clear it. I fell hard onto the fence and the ground, but I was on the other side of it!

The car sped up to the next crossing street and then did a chirpy u-turn and came back towards me, running up on the sidewalk again, as if to punctuate his efforts as he sped away. I was pretty good at cars, and I recognized this car to be a white Plymouth Fury. I don't remember the year. I was full of adrenaline and afraid to move. I sat there for just half a minute or so and then ran with everything I had to the gate, and told the security police what had happened. Again, the Aurora Police were called, and another report made. One of the officers that ended up coming to talk with me was an officer who had knowledge of the report from our basement apartment incident.

At this point, my commander (1Lt. Geoffrey Jasmer) called me in for a few questions and asked me to bring Nancy with me. He had of course been made aware of the car explosion and the other incidents and was very concerned for my safety. Nancy and I were beside ourselves. It's my understanding that the car explosion incident had caused that not just the base security police had got involved, but also the Aurora Police, OSI, and the FBI.

My chain of command determined that some unknown person or group was trying to kill me. By this time, my ability to hide my fears was totally beyond me. Lt. Jasmer wanted to get me into a program called the Endangered Airman's Program, which I was told was similar in scope to a witness relocation type of scenario. It would require that I leave my family and get on an airplane that I didn't know the destination of, and I would secretly be taken to a location for 6 months and not even my wife and family

would know where I was. My wife and son would then be transported in the same manner to join me in 6 months. All the while, our extended families wouldn't know where we were. Nancy was 8 months pregnant at this time. I couldn't bear the thought of missing the birth of our next child and the hardship that would cause her. So, Lt. Jasmer came up with another plan.

He arranged for Nancy and my son to travel to Hill AFB, Utah to stay with the family of a Master Sergeant we had never met, for their safety, until I could finish my technical training and then I would be assigned there. He then arranged for me to move into the barracks on base for my safety. The orders I had received at tech school were for me to be assigned to Lakenheath, England. Through my chain of command, these orders were cancelled and the new orders for Hill AFB, Utah was somehow arranged. Nancy and my son literally left in two days. A detail from the base helped me to pack up my household belongings and put them in a storage locker on the base, and I moved into the barracks.

#### Fifth Incident:

I had been on base living in the barracks for a week or so, I think. My technical training was going forward okay. One evening at about dusk, I decided I would see a movie on base at the theater located just across the parking lot and across the street from the barracks. As I cleared the overhang of the barracks into the parking lot, I was accosted from behind by two men who appeared to be civilians. A white man, and a black man. They pulled my arms behind my back, grabbed me by the collar and my arms, and I was very stiffly and forcefully walked about 100 feet or so to a hedge by a ditch next to the road which ran beside the barracks. They told me to shut up something about a lesson for me.

The second we stopped at the hedge, they turned me around and I could see 12-15 airmen in line at the theater. A couple of them were actually looking towards me. Before I could say anything one of them winded me with a punch to my solar plexus while the other one held me. I don't know how many punches I took, but I remember them throwing me through the thorny hedge, into the ditch, and they were gone.

I was laying in the ditch, probably in shock, and just hurting all over. It seemed like I laid there for a minute or two. Long enough for me to wonder why nobody had come to my aid. Finally, a female airman appeared and asked me if I was okay. I don't remember the rest of what she said, but I think she's the one who called for the ambulance. I was treated for a few abrasions and released, but I was a mess.

I couldn't concentrate on my studies after that. Almost every thought was about that I was probably going to be killed for something that I didn't know why was happening. The next morning Lt. Jasmer ordered that another airman was assigned to be with me at all times. I was not allowed to go off base, and nowhere on the base without the company of this other airman. (I don't remember what rank he actually was.)

I think I had this “protection” for 2 or 3 days, when I was called into the office and told that I was being graduated early the next day, for my protection. The next morning I was ushered into a room with a Staff Sergeant, who I understood to be one of the trainers. He told me to have a seat and that I would have to take all the tests for the future materials I would not be able to be there for. I asked how I could take the tests and have any possibility of passing them. I was then instructed to read the questions and the possible answers. The Staff Sergeant would say... “that sounds like D to me” and I would mark the answer and read the next question.

With the help of my chain of command and other airmen, a U-Haul truck was rented for me, my families belongings were loaded inside, and I was escorted on the drive to Hill AFB, Utah for a reunion with my family and to report to my new unit. I was assigned to Systems Command at the 6514th Test Squadron, located at Hangar 1.

My shop chief was a Master Sergeant Joe Fitzsimmons, whom everyone called Fitz. The day after I arrived on base, I was brought before a group of men. My unit commander, the base commander, the head of security police, a man from OSI, and a man from the FBI. I thought there were a couple other people, but they were not specifically identified to me. I was briefed that I would be given base housing the next day for my security. I would also be assigned a detail that would be keeping an eye on me, if not around the clock, at least nearby on a daily basis for my protection. It felt much safer.

People in my unit were standoffish to me initially. I would later learn that some of them thought I was an OSI “plant” who was actually sent to spy on them. Else why would I get base housing immediately as a one-stripe airman who was not supposed to be eligible for 18 months? None of my contemporaries knew about my round the clock security protection, and they weren’t believing the truth of what had actually happened to me.

About 2 months into my assignment at Hill AFB, I began passing out. This started happening with some regularity, sometimes several times a month. Many tests were conducted in an effort to learn why. Initially, it was thought that I might have developed some kind of a brain tumor because of all the recent head trauma. I had EKG’s, EEG’s, Sleep Deprived EEG’s, Cat Scans, and more.

After approximately 14 months I think, I was called in for a debriefing one day with a whole host of people very similar to those I had met with when I arrived at Hill AFB. I was told that my protection was stopping as of that day. Something had happened that put a light on why I was targeted. They told me it appeared that the Denver Mob had put a “hit” on me, but as far as me having any involvement, it was a case of mistaken identity. Evidently I looked very much like a man who had been killed in the Denver area by the mob, and the case led to links that somehow had to do with the timeframes and attempts on my life.

Commander From Lowry, AFB  
1Lt. Geoffrey Jasmer

Coworkers & Commanders From Hill AFB

Lt. Col. Herbert Klein  
MSgt. Joe Fitzsimmons  
SMSgt. Larry Gordon  
SSgt. Ricardo Martinez  
SSgt. Stan Evett  
Sgt. Sharon Hickman

Family that Nancy and Charles stayed with

MSgt. Gallagher (Roy, Utah)