Alfred Alwin Casler

April 13, 1925 ~ November 3, 2019

No one has quite figured out the mystery behind Dad\s birth certificate. It is the only official document that lists him as George Alwin Casler, born 13 April 1925 in Gerlach, Nevada. From the first, Dad was called Alfred Alwin Casler, and it remained so throughout his life. Dad\s father was George Joseph Casler and his mother Lois Eileen Butterfield. Little Alfred was younger brother to Helen Lorraine Casler, born in 1919, and Evelyn Eileen Casler, born in 1922.

The Caslers soon moved to California as father George followed work. He was a locomotive engineer on logging railroads. The family ended up in Yosemite Valley when George went to work for the Yosemite Park and Curry Company. When the marriage broke up, Sisters Helen and Evelyn stayed with their father in Yosemite and Alfred went with his mother Lois. His mother took up with a bootlegger these were the times of Prohibition after all,Äîand some of Dad\s earliest memories are of being suddenly awakened in the middle of the night and being thrust into the family car as they stayed one step ahead of the Revenuers.

While in San Francisco, Lois learned that she had cancer, and when Dad was six years old he was handed over to Robert H. Presley, an old friend of Lois\s from their New York days. The story is told that Lois persuaded Presley that Dad was actually his son. Lois died three years later, of Septicemia, at the age of 34.

Dad never accepted Presley as his father, and modern DNA evidence shows he was correct. The two settled on "Uncle Bob\" as a title for Presley. Presley, a schoolteacher, moved frequently, and in Dad\s 12 years of primary and secondary school, he attended 13 different institutions.

Sometimes he was with Uncle Bob, and other times not. He was in foster care in Southern California for a while.

One institution that left quite a mark on Dad was the McKinley Home for Boys, located in Sherman Oaks in Southern California\s San Fernando Valley. By this time, toward the end of the depression, Dad figured he\d better pick up a trade. So, while other kids pursued their pastimes, Dad would be in the print shop, learning everything he could. The school was close to the Southern California film industry, and from time to time movie stars and starlets would visit the boys at the school. Dad particularly enjoyed these visits.

Dad was one of the thousands of participants in the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC, and helped build highways in the Sierra Nevada, further cementing his life-long love of the high Sierras.

Dad graduated from Bell High School. He was 17 in 1942 and received permission from his birth father to enter the Navy at such a tender age. He was assigned to the Navy V12 program, which trained young men to become officers who would then learn to fly. He had hoped to become a life-long naval aviator. But on the day before graduation, he had mis-memorized the correct answers to the color blindness test and failed. This was a life-long disappointment. He entered the Navy as an enlisted man and became a naval quartermaster, an expert in ship

navigation. He was on the bridge of the ship and was the one assigned to read the signal flags other ships in formation used. He thought this ironic, given the color codes used he was officially color blind but could read all these flags!

He was sent to the South Pacific theater and later piloted landing craft that would ferry marines and soldiers from the transport ships to the shore. Dad saw action in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. He was also stationed in Tacloban on the eastern side of the island of Leyte. When I was on my Mormon mission in the Philippines, I served a few months in Ormoc, a city on the western side of Leyte. That\s the closest we came to crossing paths.

After the war, his father\s third wife Winifred engineered a reconciliation between Dad and his father, who had sent him to live with his mother during the depression while keeping Dad\s two older sisters. Dad lived in and around Modesto, California, for several years. He took a job selling shoes for Sears and Roebuck, then switched to major appliances. While in this position, he met Minnie Mildred Schneider, and they announced their engagement in February of 1950. For reasons that neither Mom nor Dad ever made entirely clear, they eloped to Carson City, Nevada, and were married on 7 May 1925.

Using the GI Bill, Mom and Dad purchased a home on Stetson Drive in Modesto. They started their family. Son David (that\s me) came along on 28 July 1951, and Jeanni came along on 11 Sep 1952. Fran arrived on 21 Dec 1953.

As the story goes, one evening Mom and Dad were discussing what religion to raise the kids in. Mom was Catholic and Dad was Methodist. There was a knock at the door, and two elderly Sister missionaries were there to bring the message of the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them. Mom and Dad were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 3 July 1953.

Their conversion sunk in deep. Mom and Dad made the decision that Dad could do something that contributed more to mankind than selling freezers to the local farmers. They made the decision that Dad would go to school to get a teaching credential. They uprooted the family and moved to Bell Gardens in Southern California. Dad went to the University of Southern California where he had gone in the Navy V12 program. He soon obtained his teaching credential. The family moved to Glendale, California and Dad took up teaching for the Los Angeles Unified School District. His first assignment was to teach English and History at Eagle Rock Junior High School. He spent the summers working for DeWitt Van and Transfer company.

The Church\s emphasis on the family led to Joanne\s arrival on 22 Aug 1956 and Patricia\s arrival on 8 April 1958.

Dad continued his work for LA Schools. He took an assignment to help open a new school at what was at that time the edge of the city in the San Fernando Valley at Robert Millikan Junior High School in Sherman Oaks, California. While there he started his practice of working summers as a "consultant\" down at the LAUSD headquarters in downtown Los Angeles. He became involved in an effort to determine how best to work with the mentally handicapped (then called the \"educable mentally retarded\"). One thing led to another and Dad left his teaching job to work full time at LAUSD headquarters. He worked closely with Thelma (Polly) Coffin and together they pioneered what we now call Special Education. They rolled this out to the entire LAUSD and its 800,000 students. Then they helped roll this out statewide in California. Dad became part of the California State Board of Special Education. The success of the California program attracted national attention and Dad even testified before Congress about how the program worked. The rest is literally history. Special Education programs are at every K-12 school nationwide, and Dad was present at the creation. I can only scarcely imagine how much good has been done for so many hundreds of thousands of pupils nationwide since Polly Coffin and Al Casler and a few others pioneered this program.

Dad retired at age 60 from the LAUSD. His last position was Assistant to the Superintendent for Special Education. Dad retired two years later from his position as Chairman of the California State Board of Special Education. In retirement, he vigorously pursued his life-long passion for painting, both watercolor and oils. Favorite subjects included his many grandchildren.

Dad had memory issues later in life. He and Mom moved to the Salt Lake Valley to an assisted living facility in 2012. Mom died shortly afterward on July 26\", and is buried, at her request, under a tree. Dad\s seven years without Mom were marked by declining memory and stamina, and he finally faded away on 3 Nov 2019 at the age

of 94. He will be buried next to his wife at Larkin Sunset Gardens on November 7, 2019.

He is survived by his children, David and Loretta Casler, Jeanette and Scott Watkins, Frances Fletcher, Joanne and Allan Duff, and Patricia Biesinger, along with 16 grandchildren and 48 great grandchildren.