

Alton Fuller

SURVIVOR

This has nothing to do with a popular television series and nothing to do with Darwin's survival of the fittest. Rather it is the story of a man who has survived more than 80 years due to the grace of God and the guidance and protection of the Holy Spirit of Christ. A Christian man by the name of Alton F. Fuller born April 12, 1925 to Rufus and Christine Fuller in the community of Chopin in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana.

LOUISIANA – THE EARLY YEARS

Rufus a descendant of Warren Fuller married Christine, aka Chestine, in 1920 or 1921. Their first child passed at birth but later three boys were added to their family. The first was Andra Lee (Chubby) born in 1923 followed by Alton and then Marvin (Puncy) in 1927.

The family lived on what was referred to as the homestead. The homestead consisted of 160 acres half of which belonged to Rufus and the other half to his brother, Uncle Buford. Rufus also personally owned and operated the school bus for additional income. He owned a grocery store from 1926 to 1935. At that time people would charge groceries and pay when they could. Eventually the store had to be closed because much of that debt could not be collected.

The depression in the thirties was a hardship on our entire country so the boys took jobs outside the home at an early age. At that time it was not criminal or unusual for children to work and help provide the necessities of life. Alton began working on farms at the age of ten for ten cents an hour. Later at ages ten through twelve he also worked on an ice truck making deliveries. Most homes had only an ice box which would keep a block of ice cold for hours. There were only a few kerosene refrigerators at the time and certainly no icemakers. The ice truck would deliver 12-1/2 to 25 pound blocks of ice. That job paid 15 cents an hour.

Rufus was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 1939 and passed in 1942. Christine soon became physically and mentally exhausted. The boys had to take charge of their own laundry, food, school, chores at home and employment outside the home.

From 1941-43 Alton worked at a grocery store/post office. This job served him well in several ways. One way being the generosity of the storeowners who invited him to eat with them sometimes three meals a day. The post office experience also was instrumental in his assignment to a job working with mail in Italy following his battle injury during the war.

There were always chores to do at home. Alton was responsible to cutting wood and bringing it in for heating. Chubby and Marvin had more responsibility for the farm animals. Cows were to be fed and milked. There were pigs and chickens to be fed. And there was always a garden to tend. When the family had chicken for dinner, Alton would go out, catch a chicken, ring its neck, skin it and then cut it into pieces. Occasionally lines were crossed in the division of labor and confrontation would ensue, but we won't go there.

Growing up was not all work and no play. Alton loved to play basketball and softball, fish and swim, and go to Natchitoches to the movie. However, he excelled in basketball. As a seventh grader he played on the Jr. Hi. team. A fond memory is of a basketball tournament his sophomore year. His small country school named Cypress had a total enrolment of about 300 students. They went up against Natchitoches high which had over 500 students in high school. Cypress defeated Natchitoches by 12 points and went on to win the tournament. Then there was a time as a freshman when he hit a home run each of the first three times at bat. Alton was then and is now a competitor.

Electricity came to the area in 1937. Before electricity the Fuller family had one of the few battery operated radios, therefore, friends and family would come to the house on

There were six boys in his graduating class and five were drafted into the military. One was his very close friend, Leroy Bonds. Leroy happened to have a lovely sister, Edna. Edna and Alton had dated for some time, had fallen in love, and chose to be married before his departure. They were married on July 12, 1943, and he reported for duty in August. Edna remained at home to hope and to pray for the safe return of the love of her life.

For Alton it was departure into the unknown. He was sent to Camp Adair in Oregon via a troop train along with, among others, about eighty young men like himself from Texas and Louisiana. They went through Big Spring, El Paso and Los Angeles with few stops. At times they were taken off the train for exercise. The trip to Oregon was for the purpose of basic training in Japanese warfare, however they never went to Japan. After eight months they got back on another less than comfortable train and traveled across the U.S. again, through Idaho, Nebraska, and Virginia.

On his 19th birthday, he boarded a Liberty troop ship in Newport News, Virginia, to cross the Atlantic for Oran, Africa. He learned quickly that he was not a seaman. It was a very difficult 18 days of seasickness. A destroyer escorted them as the Germans were sinking troop ships. On arrival in Africa they had 18 days of amphibious training.

He boarded yet another ship, this time to Naples, Italy. The next period is just to say there were three battles South of Anzio. The fourth battle north of Florence is when Alton was injured. He was taken first to an evac hospital and then flown to Rome. A university in Rome had been converted to a hospital where he was a patient from September thru December.

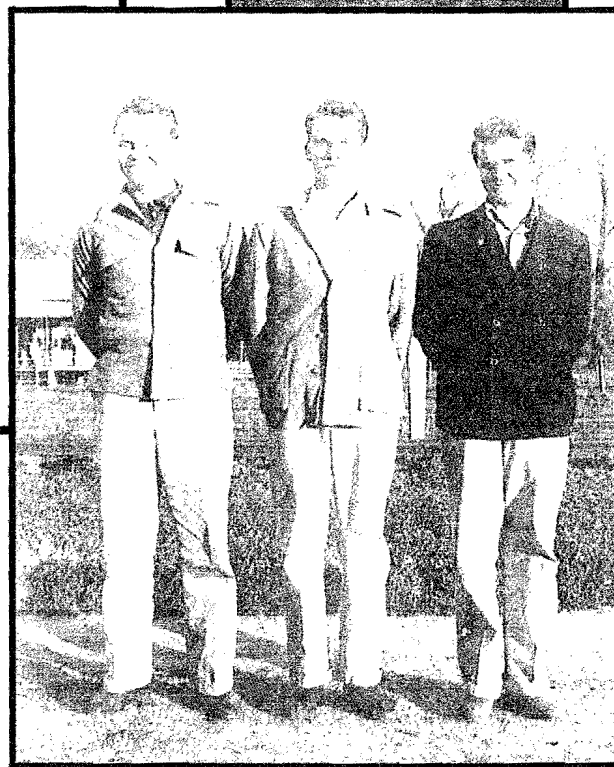
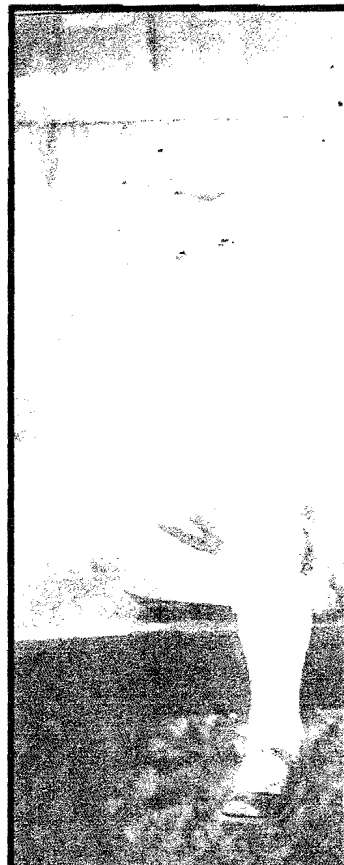
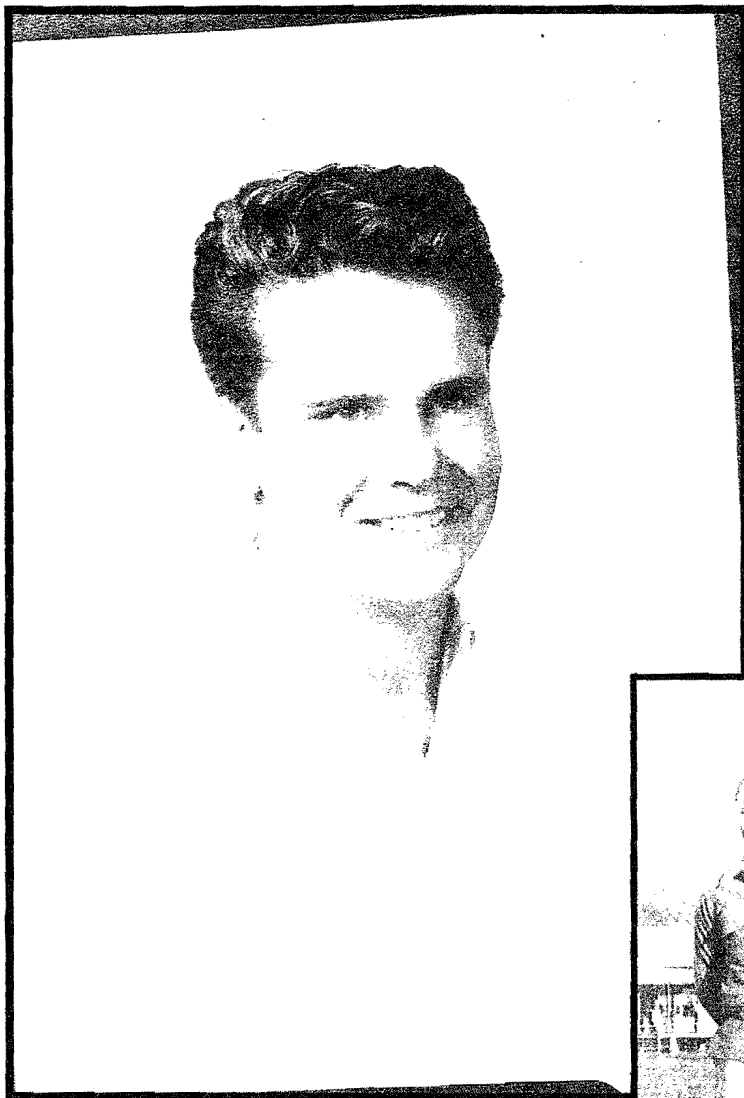
Following dismissal from the hospital they sent him to Naples for reassignment. From Naples he went back to Rome assigned to the Allied Military Government, Headquarters Company, Piedmont Region. Because of his experience in Louisiana working at a post office, they gave him a job handling personal and official mail. This was at last a choice assignment. It happened to be at a hot springs resort, Chianciano, "The Italian Spa for Liver Disease and Heart Trouble".

On his 20th birthday, April 12, 1945, he asked permission to go to Rome for R & R. With special orders signed by the captain, he had a jeep and a driver take him there. They had a three-day pass enjoying entertainment, sight seeing, and good food. Incidentally, that birthday was also the day President Roosevelt passed away.

There were other fun times while in Italy. He was able to play on a basketball team. Some of the other troops taught him to play a good game of table tennis and they also played cards a lot. They attended opera and USO entertainment, with Frank Sinatra being the most notable American performer. They had radio as well. While in Torino in 1945 they enjoyed hearing the World Series on radio. Also, they often heard Axis Sally with her propaganda.

The Early Years ~ Louisiana

*Earliest picture of Alton
Chopin, Natchitoches Parish*



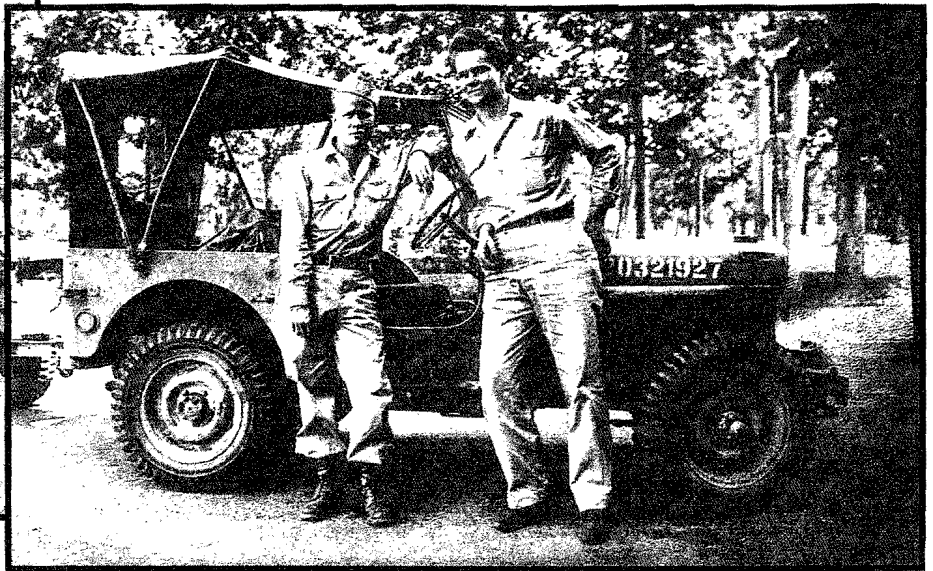
*Cypress High
School*

Chubby, Alton, Marvin

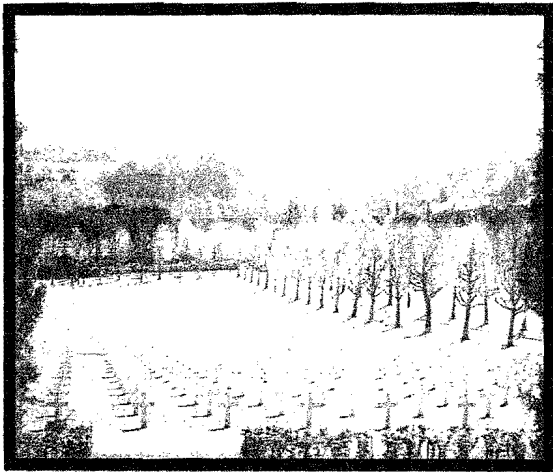
Italy



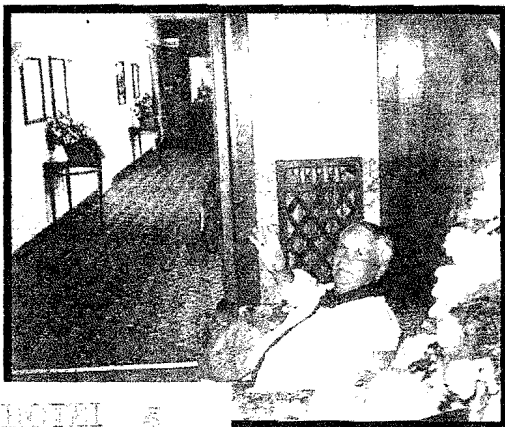
1945
East of Torino



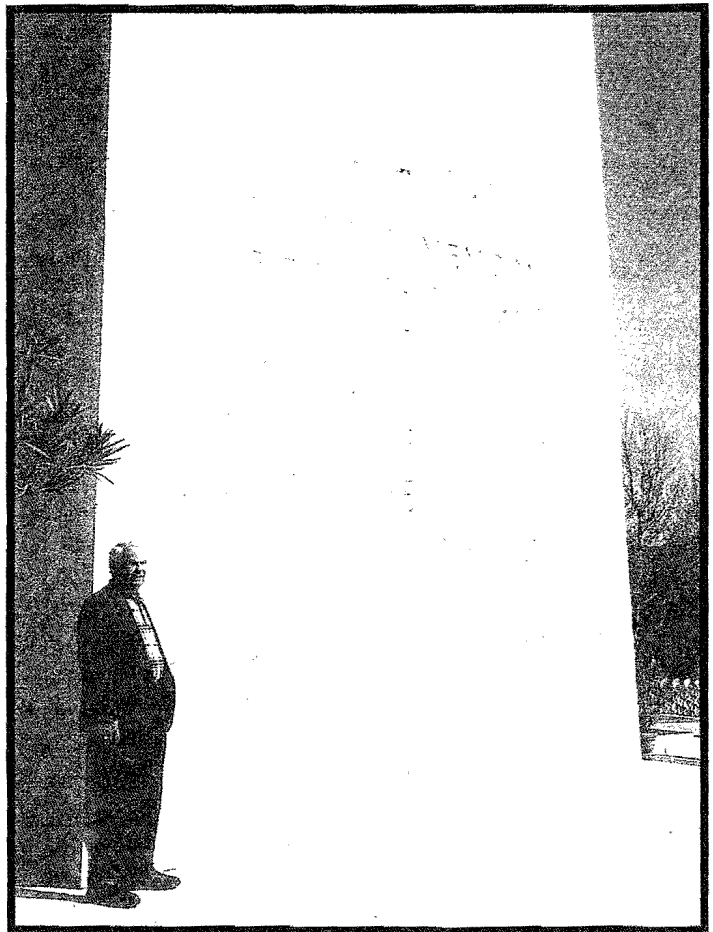
June 28, 1945 ~ Milan, Italy



2000 ~ Torino



THE HOTEL
MILANO



2000 ~ South of Florence

The war ended May 10, 1945. Alton left Italy that December for Norfolk, Virginia, on a small aircraft carrier. He did return safely in January 1946 having survived the war.

FAMILY MAN

As the war ended more than three million men returned to find jobs. Alton was faced with another challenge. His first job was with a survey gravity meter crew. That lasted about four months. His Aunt Adell Durr, his mother's sister, was visiting from New Mexico where her husband was employed by a gas company. She advised Alton to come there as she felt jobs were plentiful in the oil and gas business.

She was correct. At that time they were just beginning to lay a pipeline for delivery of natural gas to California. He was hired by El Paso Natural Gas Company in Jal, New Mexico on June 3, 1946. He spent four days in the field when someone came out and asked him if he would like to work in natural gas dispatching. He did not even know what that was but was ready to learn and happy to lay the shovel down. In 1960 he was made Chief Dispatcher, Permian Division.

Alton and Edna's three children were born and reared in Jal. Actually, Alton Dean was born in Hobbs, New Mexico, in 1947. Followed by another son, Gary Don, born in Eunice, New Mexico, July 1950. Then in March 1956 they had their baby girl, Julie Kay, born in Kermit, Texas.

Again Church was a vital part of community and family life. They initially joined the First Baptist Church in Jal and later became charter members of the Calvary Baptist Church as they played an integral part in establishing that new outreach. Alton had started teaching Sunday school in 1953 at First Baptist and continues to teach at every opportunity today. He was ordained a deacon in 1957 at Calvary. All three children accepted Christ at an early age.

Alton was also active in civic matters. He served several years on the school board, part of that time as chairman. Dean and Don were able to go to school in Jal all twelve years.

Family does not stop with the birth of their three children. His two brothers also became employed by El Paso and their children spent most of their school years in Jal. Even Christine left Louisiana to live near her children and grandchildren in Jal. She remained there until her death. But wait there is more. Edna was from a family of eleven children. Her brother, Leroy Bonds, came to the Permian Basin where he lived and worked all his life. There were four of her sisters (Ann, Faye, Melba, and Nina) who raised their family there as well. We will not attempt to name or number all the nieces, nephews, in-laws, etc.

Not long after moving to Jal Alton was able to return to the game of basketball. El Paso Natural sponsored an AAU team called the Gassers. Alton played on the team for seven

years. Some time after that he spent a lot of time playing basketball with the camp kids one week-end on a tennis court. That resulted in a trip to the doctor with knee pain. The doctor's advice, "Alton, act your age". Realizing the doctor was right he quickly returned to the game of golf which he had discovered years before. Golf offered a lot of opportunity to mix business with pleasure. He was able to play golf for more than fifty years.

While still in Jal the family began to grow again as the children married. Dean married Nawanda Byars and they have two daughters, Dena and Deedra. Don and Danette Dunn had a daughter, Amy, and a son, Andy, who is the only grandson.

In 1969 Alton transferred to Midland as part of the Division staff. Kay was in high school and of course had to transfer. They joined Fannin Terrace Baptist Church where Alton again served as a deacon. Following graduation Kay married and later added two more granddaughters, Danielle and Ashley.

It was not unusual for Alton to be on the road. Driving to and from Jal, Midland, and El Paso and as well flying on company and commercial planes. If traveling with his friend and boss, Travis Crutchfield, Vice President of the Permian Division, they played golf when possible. Crutch loved to play gin rummy and golf. If traveling with most of his peers Alton was designated driver as he never drank.

The 1980 promotion to Director of Systems Gas Control over three divisions made it necessary to move to El Paso. They enjoyed making new friends there. There was an unusually close bond with the people in the Vista Hills Church.

Unfortunately, Edna was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 1984. The church became an invaluable source of strength and support. Alton took early retirement in February 1985 to care for her. She lost that battle in April. After more than 40 years of marriage, Alton was left alone to question where his life would go from there.

THE REST OF THE STORY

Months later while in the Hill Country for a family reunion, Alton was at the airport in Austin. He recognized Marie Lenamon who had been a member of Calvary in Jal. They had a conversation while waiting for her flight. He asked whether she was single and the rest as they say is history. It was the summer of 1985 and they are still together today after twenty years of marriage. They married May 10, 1986 with son, Don, officiating. They chose the Marble Falls area as home and live in Meadowlakes. The marriage added a stepdaughter, Cyndee, her husband, Joe, and two stepgrandsons, Jack and Austin.

At sixty Alton was retired, strong and healthy and still eager to make a contribution. He had for years been a student of the Bible and was active in church leadership so it was no surprise that he elected to focus that time and energy on Christian service. He felt he could minister to small Churches which could not afford a full time pastor. He was

ordained to preach the gospel in May 1993. He pastored Mt. Blanc Baptist Church for almost two years, taught Bible at the Mexican mission, started a prison ministry at the womens prison in Burnet, led Bible study at both the county jail and the intermediate prison in Burnet. He traveled to several prisons to assist in the Bill Glass prison ministry rallys. The area missionary, Bob Schmeltekopf sent him to Monta Vista, Colorado to teach WIN (Witness Involvement Now) school. Alton conducted the funeral of a dear friend, Sonny Alewine, in El Paso. On happier occasions he performed the wedding ceremonies of two granddaughters, both Amy and Danielle.

Having time to play golf almost every day for the first years was another way to enjoy his retirement at home in Meadowlakes. He enjoyed a foursome during the week and tried to teach Marie on weekends.

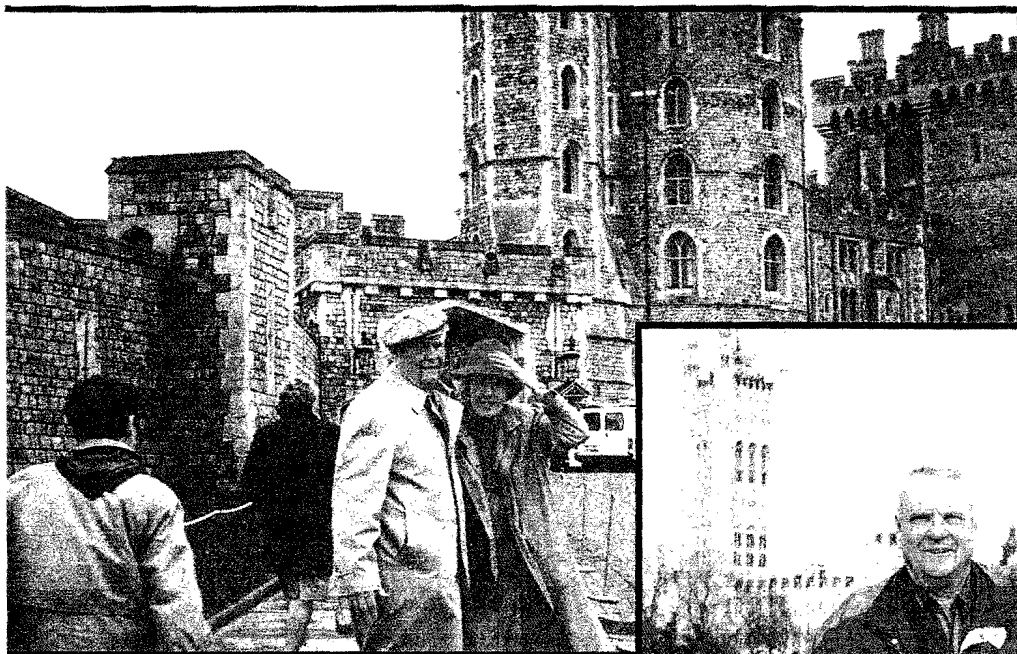
They also found time to travel. Beginning on their honeymoon in Victoria, Canada. There were two trips to Orlando, Florida, trips to Hawaii and to Maine and lots of places between. They joined a group from Texas State University on a tour of London. Dean and Alton went to Italy in 2000. Dean covered a lot of territory in a little car he rented, revisiting sites Alton recalled from the war. They even stayed two nights at the Jolly Hotel, formerly called the Piemonte Hotel in Toreno, where Alton had lived for four months over 50 years ago.

As can be expected at a certain time in life known as the golden years, health problems develop. The knee problems which took him out of the game of basketball became a problem even with golf. This led to a minor surgery and later a knee replacement. He has virtually given up on golf. A doctor error left him very ill following gall bladder surgery. That time he was hospitalized almost a month. He has had some small strokes, one took the vision in the right eye. Then there was the time we were visiting Don and Marie Dilmore in Conroe and Alton had to be rushed by ambulance to the hospital where he was given a pacemaker. He now has his second pacemaker and is going strong. He stays active working in the yard and going to the health club.

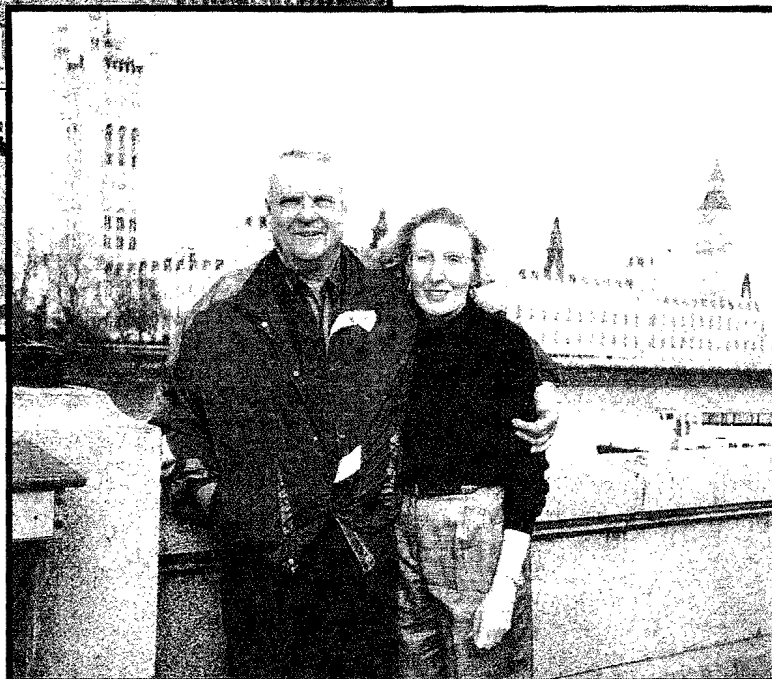
Yes, Alton is a survivor, threescore and ten years +11 (the eleven he calls his bonus years). He is still enjoying life and continues to be a true blessing to those who know him. He, too, has been blessed into the third and fourth generation with fourteen great grandchildren.

To quote a friend, Alton remains a man of honor, of courage, of dignity, and grace...

Thanks be to God!



**March, 1994
Itton and Marie at Windsor Castle.
And Parliament**



**April, 1995
70th Birthday
Dean, Don, Alton, and Kay**



**April, 2005
80th Birthday ~ Horseshoe Bay, Texas
Joe and Cyndee Turney
Marie, Dean, Nawanda, and Alton Fuller
Kay and Darryl Payne**

The Signs of the Times

The Apostles asked Jesus,
Tell us what will be the signs of your coming
And the end of the World?
When will this occur?

Jesus said, before I come again,
Many will come in my name
Saying I am the Christ, the Messiah,
To try to mislead you into error.

And then if anyone says to you
See, here is the Christ,
Or look there He is, do not believe it
Be on guard and watch out for the tricks of Satan.

False Christs and false prophets will arise,
And show signs and miracles to deceive
And lead astray, if possible, even the elect,
Those that God has chosen out for Himself.

Be prayerful, watch and wait,
For you will hear of wars and rumors of wars
Do not be afraid, keep your peace
This must take place for the end is not yet.

Nation will rise against nation
And kingdom against kingdom
There will be famines and violent earthquakes
Sights of terror and infectious diseases.

The gospel will be preached throughout the world
As a testimony to all the nations
Then the end will come
However those who God saves will endure forever.

Because of the increase in lawlessness and wickedness
The love of many will grow cold
Many church goers will fall away
And betray one another and will pursue one another with hatred.

Then you will be handed over to the authorities
To suffer affliction and be sentenced to death.
You will be hated because you are My people
But not a hair of your head shall perish.

So be ready to give a testimony to them about Me
The Holy Spirit will speak for you
Your foes will be unable to stand against you
Or refute what you say.

Watch therefore and stand firm
For you do not know what hour your Lord is coming
Hell is prepared for Satan and his angels
Choose you this day who you will serve.

This is the signs of the times
I have told you everything in advance
In those days after the tribulation
The sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

And the stars will fall from the sky
The powers in the heavens will be shaken
And then you will see the Son of Man
Coming in the clouds with great glory and power.

And God will shorten the days
For the sake of his chosen ones
He will send out His angels to gather His elect
From the farthest bounds of heaven and earth
And so you will be with the Lord forever
This is the signs of the times.

Alton F. Fuller
Marble Falls, TX 78654

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN

Jesus is coming again
Only God the Father knows when
It may be morning, night or noon
Some believe He is coming real soon
So be faithful, watch and pray
For Jesus may come today
Jesus is coming again.

I would not have you be ignorant dear brother
About Jesus coming again
We believe that Jesus died on the cross
And He came back to life again.

When Jesus comes back again
Our Father will bring with Him
All God's children who have died
and we that are alive will meet Him in the sky.

The trump of God will announce His time
Everyone will know that Jesus is crowned
He will judge the shamed and the redeemed
Jesus is God's final word, King of Kings.

The invitation is to come to Jesus now
For the Spirit and the bride will tell you how
And let him that heareth and thirst
Come to the Lord of the Universe.

He is the Counsellor, Faithful and True
And when we see Him coming in the sky
We know that our redemption draweth nigh
And God will wipe all tears from our eyes.

Jesus is coming again
Only God the Father knows when
It may be morning, night or noon
Some believe He is coming real soon
So be faithful, watch and pray
For Jesus may come today
Jesus is coming again.

Alton F. Fuller
Marble Falls, Texas
October 30, 1989

Alton F. Fuller
Born: April 12, 1925
Deceased: January 26, 2010

Alton F. Fuller, born April 12, 1925 in the hills of central Louisiana, went to be with his Lord at 6:00 PM on Tuesday January 26, 2010 . He was preceded in death by his wife, Edna M. Fuller, and his son Gary Don Fuller. He is survived by his wife of 23 years Marie Fuller, of Marble Falls, Texas, his son, Alton Dean Fuller, of Boerne, Texas, his daughter, Julie Kay Payne, of Fort Worth, Texas, and his step-daughter, Cyndee Turney of Dripping Springs, Texas.

Mr. Fuller was born to Rufus and Christine Fuller in Chopin, Louisiana. He had two brothers, Andre Lee and Marvin, both deceased.

Alton served his country in Italy during and after WWII. He was in the ^{91st} 292nd Infantry, and was wounded just north of Florence. Following the war he was assigned to the Allied Military Government and served in Turin, Italy.

He had a very long and successful career with the El Paso Corporation, retiring after almost forty years of service. He was active in many natural gas industry boards and committees, served in various school board capacities, as well as many positions with church and social organizations. He had been active in First Baptist Church of Marble Falls, served in a pastoral role in various rural churches in that area, and was very active in the Bill Glass and other prison ministries.

He leaves behind a host of friends and family, including eight grandchildren, and seventeen great grandchildren.