

# Quittin' Time Farm

A sidelight turned into a highlight on our way to Boston. Yoshi and I flew American to Dallas and Atlanta, then caught a dinky Delta to the Florida Panhandle. We wanted to visit two of my old shipmates and their wives — Terry and Deanie Sutherland and Jack and Edna Thomas. Both couples live in rural comfort near the small town of Chipley. Terry's 30-acre place is called "Quittin' Time Farm." Below is a report that Terry sent out to other *USS Colahan* shipmates, with a few bracketed comments added by me.

## Jackson Sellers

*Jackson pulled a dirty trick on us. He tipped the pilot of his white-knuckle Delta Connection flight. The airplane arrived about fifteen minutes early from Atlanta into Florida's famed Panama City International Airport. Never before in the history of the Emerald Coast has a plane from Atlanta arrived ahead of schedule.*

*Jack and Edna were there to greet the Lake Forest couple while Deanie and I lollygagged in the back of the limo sent to pick Jackson and Yoshi up. [A limo would have been nice, but it was actually their SUV.] The couple were physically whipped when they arrived, having had to change planes in Dallas and Atlanta. Nevertheless, they agreed to go to supper, so the six of us found a nice restaurant on St. Andrews Bay where we could catch up on just about everything, including living in Kentucky and Indiana and what LCDR Claude DeBuhr had to say about Jackson's liberty. [It's a long story, but DeBuhr, the Colahan's most hated officer, once restricted Ensign Jack Sellers to the ship for missing muster one morning in Yokosuka.*

*The randy young officer had overslept at a girlfriend's house. This was years before he met Yoshi.]*

*After a delicious supper, D and I drove J and Y to their hotel in Chipley, then glided through the night to our little tree farm, and collapsed with a small libation before turning in. Taps. Taps. Lights out in all berthing spaces.*

*The next day Jack and Edna picked up the surviving Sellers couple and delivered them to T & D's little shack in the woods, where the old CIC guy cooked up a mess of Mexican omelettes, thanks to Deanie's prepping of all ingredients. [In the 1950s, Terry managed the Colahan's Combat Information Center.] Just to satisfy Jackson's notion that Southern food had to be sampled this close to Alabama, D cooked*

*up some biscuits and white sausage gravy as a belly filler. Then we made Jackson and Yoshi walk it all off though a nature path in some easy pine woods. It was Yoshi who stopped at every bit of flora and asked questions or made comments about this plant and that. This woman knows her horticulture. Since Jack and Edna had to prepare for a trip starting at oh-dark-thir-*



ty the next day, we sent them off to their home about a half-hour east of us. As the sun sank slowly in the west, we took the Sellerses down a terrifying series of dirt roads to Jack and Edna's house for a short visit and another property walk. Edna has a bit of arthritis, but she played the piano and entertained the troops. One could see that Jack and Edna have done a lot of hard work in the past year, planting and clearing their three acres.

Jackson and Yoshi are people of amazing stamina, but the day was fading, so we took

them back to their Chipley hotel and left them in peace the rest of the evening. We are not as young as they, so we went home and collapsed. [Actually there's not much difference. Terry is only months older. I was too polite to ask Deanie's age.] The next morning was when the silver airplane would take the Sellerses to Boston. They were chipper and ready to charge when we picked them up and drove them to that big airport in Panama City to wing off to bean land.

**Terry Sutherland**



While making a round-the-nation RV trip last summer, Terry had occasion to see my Lake Forest workshop. He showed me his larger one during my Chipley visit. He built the detached structure himself, with the help of his sons. Impressive. The insets in the above photo show how the two of us looked when he was the *Colahan's* CIC officer and I was her communications officer. Terry, a Naval Academy graduate, stayed in the Navy and retired as a commander, while I, a mere Naval Reserve officer, got out as soon as possible to pursue a journalism career. His "tree farm" has 20 acres of hardwoods and 10 acres of pines. At one point, he handed me a copy of *The Original Tomcat* and asked me to inscribe it. I was pleased to do so, and was especially pleased to see he had purchased the more expensive hardback version. A few more dollars in royalties for me.





Yoshi was less interested in Terry's workshop than in the artistic woodwork he fashions in it.



In addition to the workshop, Terry has a detached artist's studio, where he produces oil paintings on any subject that interests him. His painting at left, *USS Colahan Off Diamond Head*, was patterned after a 1963 photo that I thought was the finest image of the ship we had served on. The original hangs in Terry's home. A full-size digital reproduction on canvas hangs in mine. Both the studio and the workshop are used when Terry designs and makes something such as the *tsuba* tabletop below. A *tsuba* is a Japanese sword mount.







**Jack Thomas**, at left, also stayed in the Navy and rose to chief petty officer. He was a radioman aboard the *Colahan*. Below, second from right, he skylarks as his division officer, a guy named Jack Sellers, inspects uniforms in the mid-1950s. The two Jacks share the same hometown — Evansville, Indiana.



Some organisms that are called “moss” are not mosses at all. Deer moss is a lichen — an algae and a fungus in a symbiotic relationship. But whatever they are called, the sponge-like things sprout in profusion from the floor of Terry’s pine forest. Above, Yoshi takes a close look. The inset provides a blowup of a cluster. Neither Yoshi nor I had ever seen deer moss before.

**Jackson Sellers, Lake Forest, California, November 2005**