



I agree with Thomas Wolfe: You can't go back again. I can understand the impulse that took you back to Alamogordo and doubtless, if I came that close to Tonopah, I would likewise succumb to curiosity. In fact, one of the compadres of that bygone day, with whom I still correspond a bit, did stop at Tonopah a couple years ago. He sent me a snapshot of the old tarpaper range-office, which is apparently still standing. It looked appreciably smaller than I remembered, as buildings long unseen but well-remembered have a way of doing. I sometimes wonder if anyone has ever prospected the rich trove of lead which lies, in the form of 230-grain nuggets encased in rusty steel, for a few acres to the west of the old pistol range. Literally hundreds of truckloads of ammo were unloaded onto that range and hurled forth at 780 ft/sec by shivering aircrews, under the supervision of shivering 938s. Even on hot days, we shivered because you never knew when the barstids would turn on you. Now that you mention it, I wonder what ever did happen to all the old Forts and Libs. The AT-6s and the other trainers--even a few B-25 Mitchells--were mostly gobbled up at surplus prices but who in tarnation would want a B-24? I wonder if even the Smithsonian has one. You may recall that I quoted a line of Michener's once, via the WO3W about how one day Guadalcanal would ring upon the ears as soft and distant as Valley Forge and Gettysburg. As I recall, you grotched at his use of the term "an American quality about them," which, you said, was incapable of definition. Myself, I'll have to agree with you, though: It is hard to realize that a fifth of a century has spun past since last I brushed pulverized particles of Texas from a pair of GI shoes. The Air Force wore brown ones in those days...

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"The roads are covered with freezing drivel."

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I'm not all certain our poetic tastes are at all congruent and I must say I envy you this unshakable air of certainty that ones own opinion is the opinion and the only one that can possibly ever be. From the samples you quote, it sounds very much as if the Kennedy book is the sort of poetry that I would enjoy very much. And that will doubtless solidify your own conclusions like nothing else possibly could.

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Once, a couple of annual deadlines ago, I went through the waiting list and made note of those names belonging to people of whose existence I was reasonably certain. I by no means meant to imply that all the rest were phantoms or figments of some hoaxter's febrile brain. I have since that time transferred at least one of the unknowns across the line into the category of those personally met: Charles Hanson was at Chicago/Sep'62. Of the rest, I've visually verified the existence of these: Deckinger, (Hanson), Main, DeVore, Schultz, Wells, Breen, Berman, Lupoff, Sanders, Scithers, Davidson, Girard, Lindsay, Willis(!), Budrys, Hickey and Irwin. I'm faintly haunted by the possibility that there may be one or two that I have seen but do not recall with enough positivity to list. Yeah: Ed Meskys should be added to the list. It is largely a matter of examining people in the mind's eye and squinting hard at the name-tags they wore. I will not precipitate another crisis by listing the names of people I never encountered. After all, I do believe in Daphne Buckmaster if for no other reason than her celebrated letter to "-" and the notorious first word on page 13, or wherever. Hoping you are the same, Brownn Grennell