

(Continued from page 11)

ing at a small emergency airstrip. Schechter was immediately evacuated by helicopter to a hospital ship.

Ironically, the Broomhead story and the Schechter story were related. Two months before Broomhead was shot down on 4 December 1951, he had received a Red Cross telegram that his wife was injured in a car accident. He was allowed to return to San Diego on emergency leave where he found his wife in critical condition, disabled and a permanent paraplegic at the Balboa Naval Hospital. Six weeks later he returned to the carrier but was shot down and presumed dead on his third flight. Michener was aware of these facts because on several occasions he had corresponded with George Schechter, father of "blind pilot" Ens. Kenneth Schechter, about Broomhead's wife who was in the hospital bed directly across the hall from his son. Michener contacted Broomhead's wife, but for whatever reasons, he chose not to expand his storyline beyond the death climax of the three airmen on a hilltop. Instead, he wrote about a fictitious happy "Brubaker" in a good-bye scene with his wife in the luxurious surroundings of the Fujiya (Fuji-san in the story) Hotel. In reality, the greater paradox, perhaps, was the repatriation of a crippled Broomhead (his two fractured ankles and compressed vertebra were left untreated by his captors) coming home to a paraplegic wife in a wheelchair.

True wartime events such as these colored Michener's perception of the war, and provided him with a depth of experience that translated into the characters in his renowned book. Michener wrote *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* as a tragedy based on true wartime events of Naval Aviation personnel he knew. It would become the seminal novel on Naval Aviation in the Korean War.

~~~~~  
Article by Dr. Richard E. Kaufman, Professor Emeritus at California State University, Sacramento. He was a Naval Aviator in the Korean War and later a professional acquaintance of professor and writer James A. Michener at the University of Texas. This article is based on the author's interpretations of Michener's notes and journals.

COPYRIGHT 2002

Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center

COPYRIGHT 2004

Gale Group

## 50 Rules To Live By

~~~~~

1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.
3. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.
4. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.
5. Pay off your credit cards every month.
6. You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree.
7. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.
8. It's OK to get angry with God. He can take it.
9. Save for retirement starting with your first paycheck.
10. When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.
11. Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.
12. It's OK to let your children see you cry.
13. Don't compare your life to others'. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
14. If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.
15. Everything can change in the blink of an eye. But don't worry; God never blinks.
16. Life is too short for long pity parties. Get busy living, or get busy dying.

(Continued on page 13)