

Ferris Family Stories

as told by niece Barbara Flak Seltzer



The Ferris siblings @ Marion's in Astoria - 1979
Anna Mae Parker, Fran Prigoda, Eileen Flak, Marion Evenson, Jimmy Ferris

There are many "Uncle Jimmy" stories and whenever they were being told, there was Uncle Jimmy in the background giggling just as hard as anyone else—that was part of his charm.

The Devil Dog story

Bear in mind Uncle Jimmy was very, very, very fussy with his treats and Aunt Margie continued on with the tradition his sisters started of spoiling him....

Uncle Jimmy was sitting up in bed, relaxing; Aunt Margie offered him a cup of tea and a cold Devil Dog. When she went to the kitchen, she found that the kids had eaten all of the Devil Dogs. She brought up the tea. When Uncle Jimmy found out that there were no Devil Dogs, he got up, carried the teas downstairs, held it up high and without saying a word very ceremoniously poured the tea down the drain.

In the Navy

Uncle Jimmy had just turned 14 years old when I was born, but I remember Uncle Jimmy when he was about 17-18 years old, I was going to grow up and marry him because he was the biggest strongest most handsome man ever (except for my father). A few years ago Uncle Jimmy told me that when he was in the Navy I was his pin-up girl—I was about 4-5 years old.

When Uncle Jimmy was in the Navy, Nana had a photo of him that she kept on the shelf. It was one of those that are mounted on thick cardboard or wood and cut out to the shape of the person in the photo. I remember that Nana would never let me touch it—no matter how much I asked. I am so glad she didn't. I would have played with it and probably would have ruined it. A few years ago, I was talking to Eileen and she was telling me that she and T.J. each wanted to keep the photo in their own room. I am so glad that the photo is still cherished and that Nana was wise enough not to let me play with it.

I'm Nick Ritzen

My grandfather, Ernie Ferris, was a colorful character (to put it nicely) and whenever he got picked up by the cops, he used the alias Nick Ritzen. Uncle Jimmy, who as far as I know never got picked up by the cops, adopted the alias for fun purposes as did my son Jason. There was always a question of whether Ritzen was spelled with a "z" or an "s", Uncle Jimmy proclaimed it was a "z". A few months ago Uncle Jimmy told me he was officially passing the "family alias" down to Jason. Uncle Jimmy decided he would start using Al Qaeda.

Crossword Clues

Uncle Jimmy was the one who told me who Mel Ott was, and now when I do crossword puzzles, I often think of Uncle Jimmy because Ott is a fairly common answer.

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Jimmy's niece Karen remembers her mother telling her that when she started dating someone with a car, she used to take Uncle Jimmy (about 4-5 years old) on dates with her as a "chaperone". Karen remembers sleep-overs at Uncle Jimmy's were the best. She was allowed to have lots of soda and potato chips and to stay up and watch T.V. with Uncle Jimmy and Aunt Margie for as long as she wanted.

Jimmy's sister Fran remembers that their mother would buy special candy (something in a silver wrapper and about as long as a straw) for Sunny Boy, and the girls were not allowed to have any. They (the girls) would steal one, share it, and pretend that Uncle Jimmy took it. Fran also recalls that at the end of World War II, Jimmy (about 12-13 years old) took one of the pillows to the window, ripped it open, and let the feathers fly out the 3rd floor window. True to form, his mother punished him for ruining the pillow. They were living on Bleecker Street in Brooklyn at the time.

Aunt Fran told me that in April at Aunt Marion's funeral, Uncle Jimmy put his arm around her and told her that she was his last "mother" now.
