



## Charles Akin

E-5 Machinist Mate 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, United States Navy  
1965 – 1969  
Viet Nam

When I finished my third year of college, I enlisted in the Navy. I'd been raised in a military family, and my dad was still in the Navy when I joined during the Viet Nam War. Because of petit mal epilepsy, I had a 4F draft card but I didn't show it when I enlisted in Dallas. After basic training in Great Lakes, Illinois, I went through Machinist Grade A School. From that point, I went by train all the way to Jacksonville, Florida, to my first duty station, which was on the U.S.S. Forrest(sp?) Royal. Because we were on the east coast of the U. S., I figured we wouldn't be doing any serious fighting. Within six months, in '66, my brother and I were both on the Forrest Royal... in Viet Nam.

Our basic duty was plane guarding. We made it easier for the marines and the soldiers on land by shelling the gun emplacements along the shore. One time we had gone toward shore, shot at the enemy, and turned back when the North Vietnamese gun emplacements picked up our ship and started shooting at it. Praise the Lord for our good captain who started weaving our ship back and forth. We never got a scratch on us.

Once I was on a small destroyer that ran alongside the aircraft carrier in case a launched plane went down. Usually helicopters took care of downed pilots, but this time, we were the closest one to a plane that was shot down. We rescued the pilot, brought him aboard, and life-flighted him back over to his aircraft carrier a couple of days later.

Home from Viet Nam, I married Linda. I was sent to Jacksonville, Florida, and expected to take short cruises during the rest of my time in service. A week before we were to leave on a cruise, I was transferred to another ship, the Robert K. Huntington. When the boilers blew up on a ship which was to go to Viet Nam, they picked my ship, out of all the Navy, to take its place. I went to Viet Nam the second time for about seven months.

I left service a month early in order to go to college. My wonderful wife and the G.I. Bill enabled me to attend North Texas State University, East Texas State University, and U T at Tyler and to get a degree in music education.

Whenever my dad was in the service, we moved around. We lived in Fort Worth and Little Rock and then he was put in charge of the Naval Reserve Training Center here in Tyler. When we moved here, we lived about a half mile from where our church is now and we were members of GABC back in 1960. Experiences when I was young led me to believe that God wanted me to worship Him through music. That's what I'm doing here now. I thank the Lord that we are able in this country to worship as we please in the church that we choose.

When I went into the navy, I thought it was the safest service to be in. My military experience was good, in the sense it enabled me to do a lot of things later that I would never have gotten to do, had I not been in. I knew the Lord and was grateful that He did not let me have an epilepsy seizure during four years of service. He protected me again and blessed me by bringing me home to my wife. We have an adopted son, Jay Dale Akin, daughter-in-law, Pam, and three grandchildren.