



ROBERT “BOB” BECKLEY

Specialist 5, Army Artillery

U.S. Army

March 20, 1957 – March 15, 1959

At the time I went into service, I was living in a little town called Tilden, Illinois, and working as chief electrician at a fertilizer plant. I was in service from March of 1957 until March of 1959. I was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Then I was stationed in Hanau, Germany for a year. I was in radio repair in artillery. I was with the 4th howitzer battalion, 18th Artillery.

Nothing eventful happened in the late fifties, and I was pretty lucky to serve during peace time. The only crisis that the U.S. had at the time was the sinking of the ships in the Suez Canal, and we didn't go to war over that. I really enjoyed the time I spent in Germany. I got to go the World's Fair in Brussels, Belgium, and I toured Berlin just a before the Berlin Wall went up. There were five of us soldiers travelling together so we hired a cab and toured East Berlin. The American, British and French sectors had been rebuilt almost completely at that time. In East Berlin, there was one street named Kurfdammerstrasse or something like that. The Russians had rebuilt one building deep on each side of the street, just as a showplace, a façade.

Everything behind the buildings was in ruins. I did get to see the exit dome from Hitler's bunker. It was still leaning on its side; it hadn't been completely destroyed yet.

While I was stationed overseas, I sometimes travelled in uniform and sometimes in civilian clothes. We soldiers were well accepted everywhere we went. I remember the first time I got a haircut. It was just 13 years after WWII ended, and I felt very uncomfortable when the German barber took a razor to shave my sideburns. He did all right, and I calmed down. The war was over, and everyone was friendly. I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent over there.

I had a lot of good times in Germany despite the fact that I was away from the family and had a son that was less than a year old. I enjoyed seeing the countryside. In fact, I have been lucky enough that the companys I worked for have sent me back over there twice. I spent two weeks touring Germany in '85 and in '95. I haven't been back to Berlin yet, but I intend to go back in the next few years.

While I was in service, I learned a little more about electronics because I was in radio repair. After I got back home, electronics soon went solid state and so I lost all of that, and I never did pick up the solid state electronics.

I was raised in a Christian family and was a Christian when I went into service. My grandfather on my mother's side was a United Presbyterian minister. There were ample opportunities for worship while I was in the military, but, at that time, I was rather rebellious and had gotten away from God. In later years I came back where I belonged. God has been good to me all my life, very good.

My wife and I retired at Y2K. January 3, 2000, was our last day of work, and two days later we had a Lindale address, actually in Mt. Sylvan. My wife's daughter had moved to Texas, gone to college at Baylor, married a classmate who was from Lindale, and settled there. As soon as we retired, we moved to be near the grandchildren

We visited Green Acres while here on vacation, and when we moved to Texas, we visited again. After two weeks we decided that this was the church for us. We have been very pleased with our decision.

Being in the military was quite a positive experience. In fact if it hadn't been for that opportunity, I probably would have not become interested in what goes on in the rest of the world. It's a big, beautiful world out there, and I want to see as much of it as I can. When I was young, my family didn't travel. Before going into service, I had been in about three states. I now have been in 46 states. I haven't made it to Alaska or Hawaii yet. My experience in Europe taught me that I need to see some more of world. My wife and I have been to Germany, Switzerland, France, Austria, Liechtenstein, Belgium, Holland, Ireland, England and Scotland. This country is, indeed, "America the Beautiful," but I still would like to see all of God's creation.