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While working for Frito-Lay in downtown Dallas in early 1943, a buddy and I suddenly started talking about volunteering for the service. Though I was only 18, I had been exempted once and declared disabled because of a hernia. But we decided to try it. The big recruiting deal then was, "If you volunteer, we guarantee that you and your buddies will stay together." We passed our physicals and were processed in San Antonio before leaving for infantry training in Fort Hood.

Three months later, they called us in one day and said, "We need 100 medics." To our knowledge, none of us had any background in medicine. I was an old country boy, so I would have felt at home if they had said agriculture. But I was lost as a goose when they said medics. For whatever reason, however, they sent us to Fort Lewis, Washington, for training. When I called my wife and told her what had happened, she was shocked.

Soon after our training as field medics, we were on our way to Okinawa. All of a sudden, they changed our orders and sent us to Seoul, Korea. The 29th General Hospital, one of the best hospitals in the world, was located about 18 miles northwest of Seoul. I spent the remainder of my time in the service there. There were a tremendous number of American soldiers near the area, and we took care of a lot of seriously wounded men. We also sent a lot of guys home. Most of our seriously injured patients were flown to Tokyo and then on to the States.

Working for the colonel who ran the hospital, I was in charge of arranging the flights for patients going to Tokyo. By that time, the Japanese part of it was finished. I kept hearing stories about how great Tokyo was, so I decided to get on the list and take a trip there. We used a "two-fan job" airplane to transport the patients. Some of the men were in such bad shape that they had

to wear straightjackets. The day we left for Tokyo, I helped put straightjackets on three patients who were riding with us. The rest were disabled veterans who had put in their time and were headed home. About halfway across the pond, one of the plane's engines quit running. The captain came back and said, "You've got to turn those guys loose. We can't be responsible for flying through here with guys in straightjackets. If we go down, they'll need everything they've got."

I said, "You've got to be kidding. Man, it would take you, me and everybody else to put them back in these things if that engine fires up again."

"Well, I can't help it. We have to do it. Those are my rules," he said.

With some help from the other patients, we started removing the straightjackets and got two of them loose. About that time, the problem engine fired up. Boy, were we glad. Then getting those two men back in their straightjackets turned out to be a problem. Three or four of us finally got one of them secure. But we almost never got the other one under control. By the time we did get him back in his straightjacket, we were getting ready to land. That was quite an experience, and I decided not to take any more of those trips. And I certainly didn't want to fly in any more two-fan jobs. I did enjoy seeing Tokyo, however, and had a good time.

Korea was a very poor country with nothing but dirt or caliche roads. The nurses would be brushing dust and dirt from their uniforms when they came in to work. Many people were shocked to find such a well-equipped hospital in that area. Most of the medics in the field had good equipment, too. The men who had it tough were the medics who had been cut off from receiving supplies and had to work with whatever was available. Some of them even had to amputate legs with nothing but a pocketknife.

The colonel I worked for was from West Texas and was quite a character. He had three people on his staff and used to walk up and down the halls like he was mad at the world. The guys used to imitate him. I don't know what happened to him because I left before he did. Of course, he had a tremendous responsibility on his hands. But we did what we could to keep everyone's spirits up. Every week various activities were planned for them, including movie night. That was all right, though most of the shows were so old we had seen them a dozen times.

I was a Christian and believed that whatever was meant to be, God would take care of it. So I didn't worry too much about what could happen to me. Christian services were held at the hospital, and I saw a lot of men saved there. Some of our patients were bitter, especially the ones who had been drafted. They hadn't asked to be sent there to lose a leg or an arm or to be maimed for life. But all in all, most of the guys were happy about getting close to the point of going home. Even the single guys were anxious to get home. Those Korean girls didn't look as good as they thought. We always were glad to see those boys get to go home and knew that sooner or later, we'd get a chance to leave as well.

When my time was up in Korea, I returned to Camp Beale in California and was discharged there. My wife came out, and we visited kinfolks for a while. It had been tough being away from her so long. She had stayed in Dallas and made uniforms while I was in Korea. After we got home, I went back to work for Frito-Lay in sales. For the next 20 years, I worked in Dallas and then was transferred to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Jacksonville, Florida, for a period of time. I moved to Tyler 26 years ago to manage the regional office and retired after working with Frito-Lay for 45 years.

The Army was good to me. I had pretty good duty and came out as a tech sergeant. I matured a lot and learned so much during my training and from the people I worked with. I even learned a great deal from some of my patients. I thought about my experiences quite a bit after I

left the service. While in Korea, I had tried to keep my mind clear about the situation and do what I had to do. The nurses had told me that I couldn't sympathize with every patient and do my job well. I had spent a few months working directly with the patients before being transferred to the colonel's office. As grouchy as he was, I sometimes wished I could go back to the wards.

I don't think you can compare patriotism in this country today to what was happening in America during World War II. It seems to all come down to respect. People don't seem to respect much of anything, not even each other. Rather than trying to help a person in a wheelchair through a door, many folks will run in ahead of him. Though I never understood the Vietnam War, I couldn't respect the Americans who protested it so strongly or who treated our soldiers so badly. We may not always agree with the decisions our government makes, but we all need to do our part to keep things running smoothly.