



Walter George Burgess

Lieutenant Junior Grade, U.S. Navy (Active and Reserve)
May 1944-July 1946, 1967

My parents would not let me join the Navy until I turned 17 and completed a year at Texas A & M with military training in the Corps.

Three friends and I joined and went through boot camp in Jacksonville, Florida. After A & M, the Navy boot camp was like being on vacation without harassment from upperclassmen. Three of us were in the same air crewman training and two of us were assigned to the same plane after we graduated. Then we went to aviation ordnance school at the Naval Air Technical Training Center, NATTC, in Millington, Tennessee. After that we were sent to Yellow Water, Florida, to air gunnery school and then to Corpus Christi Naval Air Station as air crewmen in PBM (Patrol Bomber by Martin) Squadron. After eight months of operational training, we were awaiting orders for overseas when the war was over. Everyone was so disappointed. We spent two years training to fight the Japs, and all of a sudden we were doing nothing but shore patrol duty.

Discharge was based on points and we didn't have enough to get out in August, 1945. I did not fly any more, but was on shore patrol in New Orleans where troops returned after two years overseas. Keeping the peace was a real pain in the neck. We were sent to the Blims at Alvin, Texas, to start putting planes into mothballs. We stayed there until we were released from active duty.

I went back to A & M on the G. I. Bill. I took business administration, graduated and got my commission in July 1949. I was 3rd class Petty Officer when WWII was over, and I stayed in the reserve "because no one gets called unless everyone gets called." That was a big lie.

In 1951 I had just gone to work for Humble Oil and Refining Company when the Navy ordered me to San Diego Navy Station for eight weeks training in cryptography school. .

After that I was sent overseas to Fasron 120, headquartered in Opama, Japan. Our squadron, based at Ewikina, Japan flew submarine patrol off the coast of Korea. We had the PBM, Patrol Bomber by Martin, which carried a 13-man crew and could fly 16 hours without refueling. Nice, twin-engined plane with gull wing (a refrigerator and galley). Slow. You could walk faster than a PBM. It was not amphibious so they would float the gear out to it and we would beach it. We carried depth chargers, 2,500 lb. bombs and six depth chargers. While on patrol, we never verified that the Red Chinese had submarines off the coast of Korea, but our squadron was still flying those missions when I left there.

I was assistant communications officer and then Cryptographic Officer and Communications Officer of our squadron. We had no cryptographic machines but had authority to use the Naval Air Station at Ukuska. We made two trips a day over there to pick up messages and then distribute them and use whatever we needed to make the reply at their base. When we saw battle report messages that were secret and then read the newspaper account, we didn't even know it was the same battle. So much was exaggerated. After 14 months there, I was released from active duty as Lt. JG and returned to the states. I stayed in the Naval Reserve until I retired. I had 23 years and 4 months total reserve and active duty time.

The North Koreans came over and shot at us below the 38th, but we could not cross the parallel without getting reprimanded. That was really a sore point with the pilots. If McArthur had been left alone, he would have put an end to North Korea, and we would not be bothered with it today. People in service could not believe that Truman recalled McArthur who knew the Asian mind and the front situation better than anyone. They thought it was a disaster. The enemy was on the run and things were going our way. The decision was bad for morale because the troops believed in McArthur and were convinced that he really knew what he was doing. The Korean War was more or less a thankless operation, whereas WWII pulled the whole nation together and unified it.

My family moved to New London in 1938, a year after the school explosion. When I got out of high school in 1943, gas was rationed and, if I went anywhere, I had to thumb a ride. Before entering service, I had been to California twice.

In 1951 I was amazed that the occupation forces were still in Japan. If you walked into a store, Japanese people would leave if they thought you were going to be mean. They had been told that the Americans were going to kill everyone. They were so thankful the war was over, especially young men who were training to be kamikaze pilots.

As a Christian in the military, I could see God in all we did. Making night landings in Corpus Christi Bay was not easy, even with a good pilot. Once we lost an engine on takeoff, about 15 feet in the air, but we got the plane down and landed after bouncing about 14 times. When I look back, I see God was in control. The Lord touched my heart and came into my life when I was a teenager and I joined the Baptist church.

Finding GABC is one of the greatest things that have happened to me. I watched GABC

on Channel 7 two Sundays and then started coming here. Six weeks later, I joined. I'm so glad it was on TV.

My time in service helped me realize how lucky we are to be Americans and to have the companionship of others in the service, all working together for the same thing. Being in the military helped me appreciate America in all its diversity. We all worked together. There was no division. Service taught discipline that affected the rest of my life. The freshman year at A&M really laid the groundwork.