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When I was 20 years old, I was drafted into the Army. I grew up a lot during the two years I served and don't begrudge a minute of it. Though it's not necessarily anything I'd want to do again, the war made a man of me.

I spent nine months in Korea. First we went to the Punch Bowl and from there to Cho Won Valley and Christmas Hill. Then I was sent back to Cho Won Valley for a while, but I had returned to Christmas Hill by the time the war ended.

In late January or early February, I was sent up to the rim of the Punch Bowl one night with an Emory Scope rifle. The Koreans raised a flag on Joe Stalin Hill every morning and every night. When they showed up to raise the flag that night, I shot one of them. Then they opened up on me with 50-caliber machine guns. They shot so close that they creased my helmet. That was close enough. That area was something else. There was snow on the ground, and it was really cold.

We could tell the difference between fighting the South Koreans, North Koreans and Chinese. Most Koreans would just sit there and shoot at us. The Chinese constantly were trying to come at us by sneaking through the lines. We really had to be on our toes with them. After the shooting stopped on July 27, 1953, the North Koreans came over and visited with us. We traded candy, cigarettes and other things. I don't think the North Koreans really wanted that war, but the Chinese pushed them into it.

I was glad when the war ended. After the fighting was over, we were pulled back to what they called a rest area. We set up our headquarters there, and I got into communications. I had to string telephone wires all over everywhere. Before that, I had been attached to a rifle company.

While working in communications, I knew what was going on all the time. I was a corporal then, but they put me in for a promotion to sergeant after I was placed in charge of the communications section. As it happened, my company clerk received my sergeant's stripe because his name (Colver) was similar to mine. When the company commander came by and asked me where my sergeant's stripe was, I told him, "Well, I haven't made it."

"What do you mean, 'You haven't made it'? You were on the last list," he said.

"No, sir," I said.

When the commander investigated and found out what had happened, the company clerk was busted back to a private and almost went to the brig. Once again, the commander put me in for sergeant, but he said that one of my stripes had to be placed on special order. The same day he told me that, I had found out that I was on the list to go home. So I told him, "Save it to give somebody else."

I was discharged in Chicago. Though I can't remember the name of the camp, I do remember how pretty it looked when I went there after the war. From Korea, we came through Hawaii, the Panama Canal, Colombia and other South American ports, Puerto Rico, and New York. The Statue of Liberty was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen when we pulled into New York. Next they sent us to Chicago for processing.

After I left the service, I was living in Kentucky. It was beautiful country, but the people were clannish and very different from Texans. After my first wife and I were divorced, I moved to Dallas and later married a girl from Kentucky. I had met Mary Ann when I was living there. In Dallas I worked for the same family that I work for now. They eventually built a car wash at Fifth Street and Broadway in Tyler and moved me there to manage it. I've been there ever since.

I took advantage of the GI Bill by going to an Automotive and Diesel Mechanics School and made a career of working on cars. Until very recently, that's been my livelihood. In a way, it still is because I still work on cars by taking care of the maintenance on two car washes.

War made a believer out of me. I grew a little closer to God in Korea but kind of drifted away after I returned to the States, until I moved to Tyler and joined Green Acres Baptist Church. I got involved with the people in my Sunday school class, good people like Bill and Mary Goolsbee, the Glovers, John Childs, and others. Those people made a big impression on me and made a big difference in my life. John still is making an impression on me. He's an excellent teacher and a fine man. There are a lot of fine people in this church.

Patriotism in America is different now than it was during World War II. I think people felt more like it was their duty to serve their country. I know I felt like it was *my* duty. Some people nowadays don't seem to take it seriously. They have a tendency to expect other people to take care of those things for them rather than getting involved.

I think everybody needs to get behind our president. Whether or not they voted for him is irrelevant. President George W. Bush was elected by the majority, so he deserves everyone's support. That's the democratic way. Though people may not agree with everything the president says or does, they also don't agree with everything others do or say. That's the beauty of this country — we do have the freedom to disagree.