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1953 - 1955

I was in college soon after the conflict in Korea began. My college almost had been cleared out because of people volunteering to serve. I tried to enlist but was turned down because of my trick knee, a result of my high school football days. Later, the situation in Korea grew worse, so I was drafted. A lot of my friends already were in Korea, and I always felt I wasn't doing my fair share. When the draft notice arrived, I expected to be turned down again but was not. But things began to wind down, so I did not have to go into combat. I was trained, ready and about to be sent overseas when the war ended. Looking back, I felt like I wasted one year and ten months of my life. Then I realized what it means to be ready to defend your country.

When the veterans of the Korean War began coming back, most of them didn't talk much about their experience. The first time I heard Taps played at boot camp, it made my hair stand on end to think I was part of something that big and how much I missed home and family – probably the first time in my adult life that I knew that I was truly and totally in God's hands. The rules were rigid, but men rarely questioned an order. If they told us to move a rock from one place to another, we did it without asking why. Now, I think people ask more questions. One recruit at boot camp refused to do something one day, saying it was ridiculous. He ended up in the brig.

Ultimately, my military service made me a better person. The older I get, and the more I see of the deterioration of morals in America, the more I wish I could have done more. I also have a sense of pride for having served my country.

I was assigned to the Engineering Corps with the 6th Armored Division of the infantry. We were trained to build bridges, roads, airstrips, etc. I was an enlisted man but served in the role of an acting platoon sergeant at times before some of the veterans started coming back to my

outfit from Korea. That bothered me because I didn't feel I had the experience or enough time in the military to be able to give them orders. We got along well, however, and it was only temporary.

With maturity and age, my sense of patriotism and faith is stronger now than it was when I went into the Army. I'm proud of our president, his dedication and Christian faith. In my opinion, the people in our country rely on their faith more today. We pray about things now that we took for granted before. Before September 11, 2001, Americans questioned every action or decision our leaders made. To an extent, however, they still try to play politics. If our country had to fight another war, I think veterans my age would be willing to go again without question.

One of our biggest problems today is the media. Before Vietnam, wars were not fought through the media. In my opinion, the Vietnam War may have been a political mistake. Things could have been done differently perhaps. The media planted the idea that Vietnam was none of our concern. I think our patriotism suffered as a result. Desert Storm didn't help either. There are fewer career military people now, too, and that could be a problem at some point.

It galls me to hear someone not sing the national anthem as it was written. Sometimes they think they can do it better their own way. I think that's almost like stomping on our flag. The national anthem is not a jingle or a rock song. If a performer doesn't like the original national anthem, he should write his own.

I like to think that I've always been a Christian, though I probably have not always been as good a Christian as I might have been. My military service really didn't make or break my faith. I'm stronger in my faith now, however. My priorities have changed as I've grown older.