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My military career began in 1957 just after I graduated from college. I had grown up on a farm in Nebraska and was 22 and single at the time. When a man enters the military, he will go one of two ways. He either will go downhill or maintain his Christian principles and lead a good life. Fortunately, I was assigned to barracks with other college graduates who had their heads on straight and were of high moral character.

I went in as an enlisted man and was homesick a lot during basic training. I missed my family and our routine at home. Though getting up early every morning didn't bother me too much, the impersonal part of being in the service was new to me. But I adapted.

For most of my two-year tour of duty, I was assigned to 8th Army Headquarters in Seoul, Korea. The government recognizes me as a Korean War veteran, but I never had to fight. I arrived in Korea at the tail end of the war and was involved in the cleanup operations and helping the South Koreans get back on their feet.

My major in college had been Personnel Management, so I was assigned to the G-1 Section—the military equivalent of Human Resources. Our job was to provide assignments for officers. I also had attended an Administrative Specialists school in the service and was thankful to have a desk job as opposed to a foot soldier's job.

At the time, Korea was a war-torn country. Everything was in shambles. Not only had their buildings been destroyed, but their lives as well. Families had been split up because of the deaths of relatives or their capture by North Koreans. The U.S. forces were there as part of a recovery operation, helping the country to recover physically and its people emotionally.

As American officers arrived, we assigned them to particular jobs based on their MOS (Military Occupation Specialty). I also taught conversational English at Seoul University in the evenings. That provided me with the opportunity to learn about the Korean culture and to express some of our American values to the young students.

Though the students were open to learning more about our culture, the young girls were

very hesitant to meet in a private setting with a military person because of conditions following the war, including military occupancy and rampant prostitution. Being seen alone with an American GI could be a blight on a girl's reputation. In a group setting, however, things worked well.

I was not a committed Christian when I was in the service, though I had come from a Midwestern Methodist background and tried to be a good person. The mentality in my family then was that if you were a good person and never did anything wrong, you were a Christian. After I was discharged from the Army and married, I moved to the Bible belt and came to realize what being a Christian really meant. At that point, I gave my life to Jesus Christ and accepted him as my personal savior.

Looking back on my experiences in the military, I see now that God was watching after me and had big things in store for me as a Christian later. Eventually, I used some of those experiences in my testimonies and in dealing with my children and grandchildren. Every Sunday, I attended non-denominational services in the chapel. The messages and music meant a great deal to me. Overall, it was a pleasant experience, and I feel like I accomplished some things by helping the South Koreans bounce back from a horrible war.

I made many friends in the Army and have stayed in touch with them over the years. Though I missed my family and my girlfriend, I seized the opportunity in Korea to make new friends. Living conditions were very poor, so I learned to appreciate the American way of life.

When I came home from the service, it was a very exciting time. My girlfriend from college and I had written to each other while I was overseas and planned to become engaged upon my return. After we married, we moved to Dallas and were introduced to the fellowship of the Baptist church. There I witnessed for the first time an invitation extended during a church service. Now our four daughters are grown and gone, so our lives revolve around our church (Green Acres Baptist Church) and Sunday school.

Patriotism just keeps building when you're in the military, especially overseas. You take pride in America and in being an American serviceman. The Gulf War and the events of September 11, 2001, have entrenched in me the meaning of patriotism. It continues to grow.