



**Joseph T. Hickson**  
Personnel Man Second Class, U.S. Naval Reserve  
Peacetime  
1952-1960

At the age of 18, I went into the Naval Reserve in 1952 during the Eisenhower administration, and I was never called to active duty. I enlisted for an eight-year program -- four years active reserve, two years inactive reserve and two years active duty.

A person in the Naval Reserve then, met with their unit one night a week and two weeks each summer. During the two-week summer tour, they either had to attend a school related to their work or go on a cruise. Depending on the reserve unit, some reservists meet once a month for two days on Saturday and Sunday.

I was an enlisted classification interviewer. All the new recruits took a battery of tests to determine the phase of the Navy in which they would participate. If they made high scores, they could become an electronics technician, a radioman, a yeoman or a personnel man. If their scores were not quite as good, they could strike for boatswain mates, or other positions. The important thing was to stress the importance of the test to the people taking it. They should understand that the testing is a significant thing and should strive to do their very best. Most people score in the average range, some above average, and some below average. On a very rare occasion, someone will score in the high range on all of the tests. A young black man was the only person to do that while I was involved in the program. That type of score enables the person to choose any phase they would like as far as their Naval career is concerned.

While serving in the reserve, I lived in Fort Worth and attended classes at Texas Wesleyan College as a business major. I met my wife in 1953. Both college freshmen at the time, we did not date until our senior year. We married in 1956 and are still happily married.

While in college, I had a full-time job at a photo finishing company to earn money to go to school. After graduating, I went to work for Sinclair Refining Company in their purchasing department and stayed there for approximately five years. Next I worked for Montgomery Ward as a mail order buyer. Then I left Montgomery Ward and Fort Worth to move to Farmington, New Mexico, where I worked for Amoco.

For the next few years at Amoco, I prepared reports for federal and state regulatory bodies. At one point, they transferred me to Denver to do the same type work and then transferred me back to Farmington one year later. When I left Amoco, I went to work for Shell Oil Company in Denver and stayed there for approximately three years before being transferred to Midland, Texas, and then to Houston. At each place, I worked in the purchasing department. Other than my work with Amoco, I always was involved in purchasing and retired as a major equipment buyer for Shell in Bakersfield, California.

I grew up going to church every Sunday, and my wife and I always went to church. In Houston, we attended University Hills Baptist Church and decided that the people there definitely had something we did not have. Every Sunday, it seemed like our Sunday school teacher was teaching directly to us and the preacher was preaching to us. While we had always thought we were Christians, we decided we really were not. So we called the pastor one day, and he came over to our home. We explained to him the situation and we turned our lives over to Christ. That was when we actually became Christians. We also were baptized again. Soon after that, we were transferred to Traverse City, Michigan, where we became members of a mission church that met in a converted automobile-repair garage. The members did everything, including the janitorial work and yard work.

We moved to Tyler when I retired in 1989. In various places, we had met people who had lived in Tyler and they indicated Tyler was the only place they had ever lived where they would like to live again. The first church we visited after settling in Tyler was Green Acres Baptist Church. Normally we would visit half a dozen or so churches before joining one, but we knew Green Acres was the church for us after only one visit.