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483rd Headquarters Squadron
Peacetime
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In 1957, I went into the Air Force right out of high school. Of course, my parents and grandparents wanted me to go to college, but quite frankly I'd had about as much school as I thought I could take at that particular time. I wanted to do something else. I was sent to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, for basic training before being assigned to the weather maintenance squadron at Tinker Air Force Base, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

My squadron visited different stations and bases throughout the United States to repair and inspect weather equipment. Next I was transferred to Japan, where I served my remaining tour of duty with the 483rd Headquarters Squadron at Ashiya Air Force Base. I ended up as an airman in charge of the base supplies for the Headquarters Group. We took care of all the supplies, including food, fuel, weapons and everything else that came through the base. Our security clearances were pretty good, and the work was kind of interesting. It was a high transportation base with a lot of paratroopers and Marines on their way into or out of Korea. They were housed in transient barracks before being transported.

One of my duties was to supply soldiers with applications to marry, and also to stall those applications. We were located near a small fishing and farming village where a lot of clubs opened because of the base, and a lot of girls came to meet the men there. When a lonely young guy would arrive and meet a beautiful, young Japanese woman, he quickly would fall in love and want to marry her. I would provide the soldiers with an application that looked like a phone book, which they had to fill out and bring back. Then it would have to go through a bunch of panels for a background check and approval.

The general in charge of the base and one particular major (my commanding officer) always instructed me to place those applications in a drawer instead of sending them on for approval. They would stay in that drawer until the soldier had asked about it three or four times.

Of course, that was an effort to slow things down. Those young soldiers were just infatuated with their new lives and the attention those girls gave them. An awful lot of people got upset because their applications weren't being processed quickly enough, and the girls were pressuring them to get married. Some of those cases were pretty interesting. Not many soldiers followed through. By the time we had stalled long enough, they had begun to realize the true motivation behind the girls' wishes to marry. Their goal actually was to get into the United States. It wasn't a love deal, but more of a "what-you-can-do-for-me" situation.

Luckily, the people in charge were smart enough to recognize the truth of the matter and had seen it happen before. If a soldier became insistent, his application would be processed. But the stringent background check on the girl killed a lot of those applications, too. At that point, the military officials just refused to grant permission for them to marry. Of course, a soldier still could get married, but he would not be able to bring the girl to the States. If he married a Japanese woman without prior military approval, he had to decide whether or not he was willing to remain in Japan. That could be an interesting ordeal. Not many decided to stay.

I certainly enjoyed learning about the Japanese culture while living in and traveling through their country. Fortunately, my uncle was with the OSI (Office of Special Investigations) in Japan, kind of like a plainclothes policeman. He had me assigned to a detail where I transported prisoners from Ashiya to another base for disposition. They would be sent to the States or tried there if the Japanese laws demanded it. But we tried to get them out of the country as quickly as possible because the trials normally weren't fair. While performing that job, I had a car or a jeep all the time. So I was able to see a little bit more of the country on weekends. My job was eight to five on weekdays, basically. We only worked weekends if there was an alert or a May Day. May Days are big over there, and we were not allowed to leave the base during one. The Japanese would celebrate those occasions, and it would be dangerous to be away from the base.

At one point, I bought a motorcycle and traveled around the area with a group. We saw lots and lots of rice paddies and that kind of thing. Japan is an interesting place. I only attempted to learn enough Japanese to get me through. A few restaurants were "Americanized" and pretty good, but we sure missed the good old American hamburger. Though the base food was at least above par, they didn't serve the regular things like we have in the States. Every once in a while, however, we would have hamburgers or charcoal a steak.

Back then, I was single and didn't have the responsibilities I have now. So I learned a lot, traveled a lot, and did a lot of things in Japan. During the Cold War, I traveled to Korea a few times to deliver supplies and troops. We were on a supply base in Japan that was the closest base to Korea. The Koreans came over and checked on us a lot. Flying back and forth from Japan on a C-131A — a huge troop and supply transport aircraft that actually held tanks, we would land in the fields of Korea to deliver or pick up troops. We had a rather large number of aircraft and, of course, we had escorts for some of the fighter planes. The U2 airplanes (popular back in those days) would land at our base once in a while to pick up stuff or to refuel. I once met Powers, the pilot who was shot down over Korea soon after I left.

Toward the last days of my service, I participated in the deactivation of the Ashiya Air

Force Base. They were starting to deactivate and remove the United States military forces out before returning the base to the Japanese. Though it was close to Korea, the base was no longer really needed since the Cold War was spinning down. They especially didn't need the expense of running it. A lot of guys received early outs then because several bases were being deactivated.

After leaving Japan in 1963, I served two years as a reservist. Though I passed the test to go to Officers' Candidate School, I didn't want to re-up. I had all the military service I wanted at that time. Instead, I decided to enroll as a business major at the University of Tulsa. I never took advantage of the GI Bill; looking back, I kind of wish I had. Also, I never applied for a VA loan for housing. As I've grown older, I've started using some of my government benefits. But I can't say that the military really contributed to my education or even my career. I was assigned to administration because my FAC was administration. Though my duties were administrative rather than business management, a lot of my responsibilities with headquarters squadrons involved management.

Following college, I worked for a couple of years at Midwestern Instruments, one of the originators of intercom ordering systems at fast food restaurants. They invented and marketed that system.

Then I went to work as a purchasing agent for the Rockwell Corporation, known then as North American Aviation. The Tulsa company was heavily involved in the aerospace industry. In the early days, a lot of aerospace programs came out of Tulsa, such as the modular program. As the aerospace program started to phase down, they converted the factory to manufacture airplanes. When the Boeing 727 was first built, we started making the wings and the center sections in Tulsa and sent them to Seattle for assembly. That was interesting.

In the middle of my life, I changed careers. I went from purchasing into sales in 1974, so we have moved around quite a bit with different companies. We moved to Tyler about a year ago. While traveling through East Texas with my wife, we absolutely loved it. When my son began working in Dallas, it was quite natural for my wife and I to relocate here. Having bought nine acres of land at Lake Palestine nine years ago, we decided to build a house there. Now we are really enjoying East Texas.

I grew up in a Christian home. Though my family didn't attend church that much, I very often went with a neighbor. Occasionally, my parents would come just for church services. As a teenager, I met my Savior at Immanuel Baptist Church in Tulsa through an evangelist called Angel Martinez.

God guided me quite a little bit and took care of me in a lot of cases during my military service, I guarantee you. Before joining the Air Force, I never had traveled much. Of modest means, my parents didn't take a lot of expensive vacations. When we traveled, we went back to the farms my parents called home in Northeast Oklahoma and Southwest Missouri. A young man fresh out of high school, away from home and in a new country for the first time, can get into a lot of trouble. He can do many things that are not necessarily to the Lord's liking. I can't say that I didn't do some of those things, but I would say that the Lord directed me through

them. Looking back, I can see that he carried me through in some cases, sparing me from harm and bringing me back into His way. When I first went overseas, I didn't walk with Him for a few months. It was kind of like turning a kid loose in a candy store.

Shortly after we moved here last year, we began attending Green Acres Baptist Church. In Tulsa, we attended Southeast Baptist Church, a large church with a great bunch of people. Before that, we had gone to a very small church with only about 350 members. When we came to Tyler, we wanted to find another nice church. One Sunday while my wife was in Dallas, I came to Green Acres. I called her later that day and said, "You're just not going to believe this church and their music program." Though that really made me want to come back, we still wanted to visit other churches. For about six months, we attended services and Sunday school at different churches in the area. After returning to Green Acres several times, we found a Sunday school class we liked and decided that this was the place the Lord wanted us to be. So we joined and really have enjoyed the church.