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Vietnam War

I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force during my college days at Baylor University. Shortly after leaving Baylor, I went on active duty in June 1963 at the age of 24. My beginning salary was \$220 per month plus a little extra flight pay. When I married about a year later, my wife made more money as a teacher than I did as an officer.

Most of my military career was spent at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio — the primary basic training base for Air Force recruits. The Vietnam War was just beginning, so the training effort was growing. I was assigned to the Air Force Marksmanship School, a division of the Air Training Command. Our mission was to qualify soldiers in marksmanship in preparation for active duty. I also served with the Competitive Teams Division and traveled with rifle teams to represent the Air Force at matches across the country. For three years, our primary targets were the national and international matches at Camp Perry, Ohio. We trained all year in preparation for those competitions. As a member of the Air Force's International Team, I shot in the Olympic tryouts in 1964. Afterward, I went with the Air Force High Power Team.

My wife and I were living on Lackland Air Force Base at the time. My daughter was born there. It was a great time, and I made some good friends that I still see at least once or twice a year. Many of them have retired but still live in San Antonio. Many of my teammates had been in the service 20 years or more when I joined them. All in all, however, I probably should have gone into another field that would have prepared me for a career. Marksmanship was a hobby, not a career.

For a while, I planned to be a career officer. But experience levels began to change as the war situation changed, so more and more people were going to Vietnam. I felt sure that my next assignment would be in Vietnam if I stayed in the Air Force. So at the end of my first tour, I

decided to get out.

I left the Air Force in September 1967. For the next year, I worked in Waco for a mobile home manufacturer. Then I moved to Tyler and worked for 20 years as a sales representative for the Burroughs Corporation, a computer company. Now I'm retired.

I've been a Christian since the age of nine. My wife and I grew up in Center, Texas, and both attended Baylor University in Waco. When we moved to Tyler, we became active in the Green Acres Baptist Church primarily because of all their children's programs. During our 30 years as members, we have become close to the people there and it has been a great time of growth. In 1979, I was ordained as a deacon and still serve as an active deacon.

My friend Cliff Jones, a Green Acres Sunday school teacher, showed me I could teach others. He asked me to fill in for him when he was sick. Teaching was hard for me, so I said I couldn't do it full time but would sub occasionally. As he grew sicker, he asked, "Well, would you take the class until I can get back?" I agreed to do that, but Cliff died and never returned. I've been teaching his class for six or seven years since then. It is a class for men aged 55-65, and its members have had a great influence on me. I've really enjoyed it.