



## Charles Lee

Airman First Class, United States Air Force  
Korean War  
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I went to Lackland Air Force Base for basic training. So many troops were coming into Lackland during the Korean War that I was assigned permanent duty there until they could get some assignments made. On one of the tests I had scored very high on electronics so I was sent to Keesler Air Force base in Biloxi, Mississippi, to study electronics. I ended up being an electronics instructor in Biloxi for about nine months.

After that I was transferred to Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado. I attended camera repair school in Camera Technician School, and little did I know that my whole Air Force career hinged on this one assignment. While there, I went through all of the camera repair and camera technician courses and ended up being an instructor.

A company built a mount for aerial photography cameras that had gyroscopes in it, so that regardless of what action the pilot did with the plane, the camera and the mount stayed level. At the same time, another camera was developed to use what they call a focal plane shutter. There were parallel slots in the bottom of the camera and the film moved over the slot at the same speed as the aircraft. When we were looking at F 80 jets, the film was traveling very fast because we could photograph anywhere from 500 to 10,000 feet, depending on what lens we had on the bottom of the camera.

We photographed in eleven different countries, all the way from Scandinavia into Morocco. Just great experiences! I designed a testing panel that enabled us to test all the cameras before we went out on missions.

Our home base was at Spangdahlem, Germany, and then we worked out of Regensburg, Germany. If we didn't make a sharp turn left or right when we took off from the base, we would be in the Russian zone. Once when we were in a trainer, we did not make a sharp enough turn, and the next thing we knew, two MIGs, Russian aircraft, popped up on each side of the wing. They could have shot us down very easily, but the Lord was with us and these two MIG pilots just turned us and guided us right back into the American zone. The Lord just had His hand on my shoulder that day.

Another time when we took off in one of the two-seater jet trainers, we flamed out at the end of the runway. Of course, the plane just dropped like a rock. We landed in a German haystack, but nothing happened. The plane didn't catch on fire. We just walked away from it. I know that God was with me all the time. He certainly was on those two occasions.

Well, after I had served in the military, I decided that I would go back to college to get an education. I had attended Tyler Junior College for two years before joining the Air Force. After I got back, I started to work at Texas Power and Light Company in Tyler and then transferred to Booth Texas Power and Light Co. in Waco so I could attend Baylor University and finish my degree there. I have a double major in math and economics. Because I spent two and a half years in Germany, I had my minor in German and science courses. I did take some courses at Baylor, like Scientific German that counted toward my Master's degree and toward my minor in German. We studied physics, chemistry and all in German.

I was not married at the time I was in the Air Force. When I got back, I met and married Mary Ann Butler. We have been married forty-seven years and have two children and five grandchildren.

Rex White, Tom Kelly, Dennis Ortega and several others here in GABC were instrumental in my becoming a Gideon. No one knows what kind of a blessing you really receive until you distribute Bibles in the schools and hospitals. This is a ministry that I've really enjoyed.

I don't know that a lot of people in the United States even realized we were at war during the Korean War. I don't know that it has ever been declared a war. I think many people looked at those of us who were joining the conflict or were serving and asked, "Why, why would you do this? What's the necessity of it?" My feeling right now is patriotism is probably a lot higher now than it was at that time. I'm so thankful that we have a President like George Bush with the advisors and staff that he has and pray to God that He keeps giving them wisdom, and allows them to make the great decisions that they are faced with.