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World War II

Like most everyone else during World War II, I wanted to serve my country. I also wanted to learn to fly. After joining the Air Corps, I went through cadet training and was sent to March Field, California, in December 1945. I thought I was going overseas. Instead the war ended, and we were given the option of leaving the military. Wanting to complete my education, I chose to leave.

Before that, I had managed to get into some pretty serious trouble during my cadet training. A buddy and I broke some rules and were confined to quarters for about two weeks. A fairly nominal Christian at the time, I knew I had messed up and needed to get right. So I turned to the Bible my mother had given me, though God and the Church didn't mean much to me at the time. God was present in my life, however. I wasn't so aware of him, but He was aware of me. Looking back, I see times when I received His guidance and protection. Now I know that I may have forgotten about God at times, but He never forgot about me.

Other than size, there wasn't too much difference from one aircraft to the other in my training experience. Everything worked pretty much the same way. When the B-29 came along, it was far superior in speed and the ability to reach high altitudes. The Air Corps was turning out pilots as fast as possible because they were needed overseas. So we had little time off.

Newspapers constantly reported our successes in Europe and the South Pacific, so we knew the war was coming to a head in our favor. I was based in Peyote, Texas, between Pecos and Monahans, when we heard the news that the Japanese had surrendered. Of course, we all were elated. Everyone realize what an awesome task President Truman had to call on our military to drop the atomic bomb. He did the right thing. Many of us had lost high school buddies in the war. Some had been killed during the Bataan Death March, some had died at Iwo Jima, and others were lost throughout the South Pacific and Europe.

After the war, there were many shortages of what we considered necessities. I was attending college with other ex-GI's, and we all were anxious to get out and start making a living. But I had learned a lot about discipline in the service. They also taught me about respect for authority.

When Pearl Harbor was attacked in December 1941, it became obvious we were at war. I remember exactly where I was when I heard the news, just like I remember the details of my surroundings upon hearing of the bombing of the World Trade Towers on September 11, 2001. During World War II, we knew without doubt who our enemies were. Today I'm concerned about the outcome of the war on terrorism. Our leaders are being harassed and deterred from making good decisions. We'll get through it though.

I'm grateful to think that our young people today have the same intense desire as we did to preserve our freedom. Of course, young people have to fight the wars. During World War II, it wasn't as hard as it is now to differentiate evil from good. Hitler had overrun Europe and was intent on taking over the world. We needed to do what was right then, just like the young people in America now.