



**Charles McCollum**  
Captain, U.S. Army Reserves  
1958-1968  
Vietnam War

After graduating from Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, I joined the service in August 1958. We were pretty much through with Korea, and Vietnam was stirring. France and the US had some special forces in Vietnam, but it wasn't something we were actively pursuing yet.

I reported to Fort Benning, Georgia, for officer's training and graduated. Next I went to the basic training unit at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri for six months. Because I was on a six-month R.O.T.C. program through Westminster College, I was discharged after that. I served in the Reserves for the next 10 years, on active duty two weeks each year in Missouri, Louisiana, Ohio, Florida, Colorado, and Texas with different units (intelligence, tank corps, artillery, infantry).

The discipline and regimentation in the military were good, even though I always was moving around and had to join different units to fulfill my Reserves commitment of nine and one-half years. I made many friends in that environment. I could have been called for active duty at any time. At the beginning of the Vietnam War, a lot of Reserve units were called. I was in Florida with a tank unit at that time.

After I returned from my original training period with the Reserves, I worked for Bell South in New Orleans, then Ohio Bell in Cleveland; then a few years at architectural school at the University of Florida; then back to work in the architectural department of Colorado Power and Light in Denver for a couple of years. In the mid 1960s, I went to work for Southwestern Bell in San Antonio, and various locations in Texas; three years in New York with Bell Labs and ATT and retired in St. Louis in 1991.

Born in Dallas, I also lived in St. Louis, Little Rock, Oklahoma City and Westfield, New

Jersey, before resettling in St. Louis. I went to high school in Little Rock, attended University of Arkansas and graduated from Westminster College in Fulton Missouri. So I didn't really grow up anywhere in particular.

My wife Julia and I moved to Tyler about two years ago, though neither of us had been here before. We had retired from St. Louis to Kiawah Island, South Carolina. My wife's uncle and aunt lived in Winnsboro, and they had played a big part in raising her. They had no children and were in poor health, so we decided to move here to take care of them. Her aunt passed away before we arrived, and we later moved her uncle into an assisted living facility in Tyler. He passed away in Summer of 2003.

We looked for a church in Tyler for almost nine months, attending services at just about every church in town. Originally Presbyterians, we were changing denominations because we were not too happy with the direction our church was taking. Like most people, we didn't want to go to a big church. But we found there wasn't anything that compared with Green Acres Baptist Church. It's been a wonderful experience. Typically we go to Sunday school, where all our friendships have emanated. The growth of the church and the things I've seen there are really amazing. We came from a small church with about 120 active members in downtown Charleston, South Carolina. The Sunday school classes at GABC are a lot more active than the classes at our previous church. My Sunday School class has been the most uplifting experience in my walk with Christ. My wife is very active in church, P.A.T.H., Christian Women's Job Corps, and Salvation Army. My volunteer work has been primarily with P.A.T.H. since moving here.

I have seen God's providence and guidance in my life in many different ways. Julia and I were blessed with two sons. One is serving his residency in radiology with the Air Force in San Antonio, and the other one works for a metallurgical company in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. They both have two children. Two grandchildren were born into our family this past year, and we've enjoyed making trips to baby-sit.