



Charles Pickens
Captain, U.S. Army
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I was in the army during the Korean War. I was living in Austin and finishing degree work at the University of Texas when I was drafted through the Lubbock county board. I was sent to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, for initial orientation and then shipped to Ft. Bliss, Texas. Some of us thought that we were going overseas when we went to Ft. Bliss. I did my basic training there and then applied for OCS (Officer Candidate School) and was in the Artillery Guided Missile OCS at Ft. Bliss. After completing that schooling, I was assigned to Ft. Bliss as the personnel officer for the artillery guided missile school. I was in charge of the faculty and processed the records of all of the school faculty. That was a pretty interesting job, but not really exciting. We did a lot of processing for overseas shipments for all of the base. It became my responsibility to meet the levy each month.

I was married when I was in service. In fact, Mary and I married when we were 18. We met in high school when we were 15, married three years later, went to college at Texas Tech, and then went to Austin to the University of Texas. My wife stayed in El Paso all the time that I was stationed at Ft. Bliss. It wasn't an easy existence at all, but it was good that we had time together there in that situation.

A lot of my friends were involved in the Korean War, and I heard from some of them. After two years, the war was winding down and The Department of Defense sent out an early-release letter stating that anyone who had served two years could apply and get out. Of course, I did. I didn't do a lot as far as participating actively in the war effort, but I played a role in all the school activities and a lot of the training activities at Ft. Bliss.

After my time in service, my wife and I expected to go back to Austin. I had worked part-time for an insurance company in Austin while attending the university, but the company had sold its business and moved to Ft. Worth. When I applied with them, they did not have an opening so I went to work with the Miller's Mutual Insurance Company in Ft. Worth as a casualty underwriter. Through that connection, I became aware of a job opening in Tyler and interviewed for the position. My wife came down to meet with the folks and to look over Tyler, and we fell in love with the city immediately. We moved to Tyler in 1955.

I wanted to finish my education, and I did some here at the University of Texas at Tyler. I didn't use the G.I. Bill for schooling, but I did use the land purchase program of the Texas Veterans Land Board. A friend and I found a track of land north of town and used the program benefits to help buy it.

Patriotism was very high at the time that I served in the military. Recently it has increased because of the 9-11 events. There is an increased show of patriotism at this time.

I was raised in the Methodist church and was a Christian when I went into service. My family lived in the little town of O'Donnell, south of Lubbock. My Sunday School teacher, Mr. Shipman, led me to Christ. He was one of my real mentors, and I thought the world of him. I became a Christian when I was 12 years old.

Mary and I had daughters. Our daughter, Pam Barr, and her husband are active at Green Acres. Our daughter, Patti Pickens, is a resident of Richardson, Texas. My wife and I have been members of Green Acres since 1976.