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I served in the Air Force for twenty years and in Civil Service for another twenty years before retiring. In September 1952 in Atlanta, Georgia, I volunteered for the Air Force because I didn't want to be drafted into the Army or Navy. My mother and father had passed away, so I was able to enlist at the age of 17 without parental permission.

The Korean Conflict had begun, so my basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, lasted only 12 weeks. Though it's been a long time, I still remember my instructor's name. After basic, I spent three months at McDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, with SAC airmen. From there they sent me to school in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Leaving Florida for Wyoming in the winter months was quite an experience. Wearing my one dress-blue uniform, I shipped the rest of my uniforms in an old duffel bag. When I arrived in Cheyenne, the uniform I was wearing was all I had. My duffel bag was lost and didn't catch up with me for about two weeks.

After Wyoming, I was assigned to the Air Force Security Service and was stationed at Brooks Field for three months while they investigated my background and cleared me for that assignment. Then I went to Kelly Field, where they had just built new offices for Security Services Headquarters.

During my three years at Kelly Field, I met my wife Janice. She was a Christian, but I was not. I noticed that Janice and all her friends had something I didn't have, and that got me to thinking. I accepted Christ shortly after we got married.

When I left Kelly Field soon afterward (during the Cold War), I made the first of two tours to Turkey. While there, we wore civilian clothes because we didn't want the Russians to know we were in the area. Of course, they knew anyway. I traveled all over Turkey to places like Trabzon, Samsun, and the Army base at Sinop and also helped build the main base at Karamasel. The mayor of Samsun gave up his nice home on the side of a mountain so we three senior NCOs could rent it. A maid and her husband took care of the cooking, firewood, housework, and heating of water for \$60.00 a month. Really, we lived pretty well under the circumstances. My oldest child was born while I was overseas, so I didn't see her for the first time until I rotated back to the States when she was 10 months old. Then I was stationed in San Angelo, Texas, for about a year before having to return to Turkey.

For the next 18 months, I was based in the desert near Iraq and Syria. Naturally, I couldn't take my family along on such a remote tour. Turkey was a very backward country when I was there. The larger cities like Istanbul were very modern, but the smaller towns were mostly dirt floors and mud huts. We lived with the Turks, which was not too good. Before moving into that house, we had worked at the top of the mountain and had to go down into the village everyday for lunch and the evening meal. We ate a lot of mutton. In the fanciest restaurant in Samsun, they cooked meat in big pots on sheet iron laid over a pile of rocks in the corner of the building. They began cooking each morning at about ten o'clock. When we would arrive at noon, a guy would hand us a plate and we would walk to the cooking area. By then, the meat would be cool enough to be dipped out by the server's hand and slapped on a plate. That was not that great. For dessert, rice puddings were lined up on a shelf around the small room. After they served it, we had to ease a fork underneath a crust covered with about 1/8 inch of dust to eat the rice.

Turkey was a very dusty, very dirty country. Some folks couldn't take the living conditions and had to be sent back to the States. I survived without too many things going wrong. I hear that the living conditions over there are pretty nice now, and military people take their families along.

When I left Dyabakir, Turkey, the Air Force was short on military training instructors. So I left the Security Service and worked as an instructor at Lackland Air Force Base for about four years. After that, I was assigned to a civil engineering squadron in Biloxi, Mississippi, for a year or so.

Then I received orders to go to France. President DeGaulle was kicking the Americans out of France by the time I arrived in Germany on my way there. I called my commander in France, and he said, "Don't come down here. Just call around in Europe and find you an assignment." So that's what I did. I wound up at the Upper Heyford Base in England for the next three years with my family. I was put in charge of civil engineering at a base for RAF airmen about 25 miles away. Except for the weather, we thoroughly enjoyed it.

Finally I rotated back to Bergstrom Air Force Base, where I stayed until my retirement in January 1973. Two years later, I went back into civil service. I worked at Bergstrom Air Force Base for the civil engineering squadron for another 20 years.

In the Air Force, I was in Thailand for a while during the Vietnam War. Many people protested that war, and I'll never forget my return to the States at that time. When I walked into

the San Francisco airport, a long-haired hippie threw catsup on me and called me a Baby Killer. That made a lasting impression on my mind, though I never talk about it much. GIs coming back from Vietnam did NOT receive good treatment. Something like that is hard to forget.

At that time, I thought American patriotism was going downhill. When I first entered the Air Force in the 1950s, people considered military service their duty. It was just a given. There were five brothers in my family, and four of us served. Now I think patriotism is coming back. Though it's not at the level it should be, it is at least improving over what it was in the 1960s and 1970s. I hope it lasts, but I do have some doubts. Americans usually have short memories.

I think George W. Bush is the best president we have ever had. Many people don't understand him because he means what he says and says what he means. People in Washington, D.C. are not used to that. Instead, they're used to a lot of spin tactics. Thank God, President Bush uses no spin at all and is a Christian with high morals. If we do go to Iraq to take care of Hussein, I would like to be a little younger so I could help.

Janice and I have been married for 46 years now and have two daughters in Austin and a son in Alaska. We have been blessed with nine grandchildren. Praise God, our family members are all Christians, and we attend church regularly.