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Corporal, U.S. Army  
Medical Corps  
1944

In 1944, I was called up for military service shortly after my eighteenth birthday. Due to my 20-400 vision, I flunked the physical. I was absolutely crushed and thought I was a disgrace to the family. My brother was serving in the Air Force, and I wanted to do my part also. Two years later, they drafted me again. I was accepted at that point and assigned to the U.S. Army Medical Corps.

By then my brother had been killed during the war, so I had mixed emotions. But I still wanted to be drafted and felt that all young men should serve their country. There are some things a man tries not to think about. I knew I had to serve, so I made the best of it.

My initial basic training was a big shock to me. My brother had told me, "It's not like anything you've ever gotten involved in." But I thought, *I can take it*. I quickly learned that our field sergeant would not treat us as a mother would. Once he stepped right up next to my ear and screamed, "**WADE! DO WHAT YOU'RE TOLD TO DO!**" He scared me slap to death, and I must have jumped a foot off the ground. The first time I was placed on KP duty, I was ordered to clean a pot that was taller than me. They had cooked macaroni and cheese in that pot, and it was a mess. I had to climb inside the pot to scrape it with a can lid. I was not at all happy.

After basic training, my job was to train the medics to care for wounded personnel until they could be transferred to field hospitals. Though I would call it first aid, sometimes it was a little more than that. My eyesight problem had remained the same, however, I could train medics with no problem. With glasses, I could see fairly well. For several months, my duties mainly involved preparing duty rosters for medical trainees. The doctors would tell me what subjects they planned to teach each week, and I would type a schedule. The courses included lessons about treatments for broken bones and other injuries. Medics were taught to work with whatever was available. For example, they could use a bayonet as a splint for a broken arm. I had to take the same training.

Most of the boys we taught went to Japan. Also among our students were the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and some Air Force men. I didn't feel like I was contributing much to the war effort, but I suppose my efforts eventually fit into the overall picture. We had to have medics. There weren't enough doctors to go around.

Since I had taken typing in high school, I asked a field sergeant one day, "Do they ever need anyone who can type?" He assured me they did and sent me to Personnel. A sergeant there asked how fast I could type, and I told him 60 words a minute accurately. Ten minutes later, I was sitting across the desk from the commander of the Medical Corps in Battalion Headquarters. He stood up, looked at me and said, "Do you mean to tell me that you can type 60 words a minute accurately?" I said, "Yes, I can." I had found a home. He told me I wasn't going anywhere else, and I didn't. I stayed there for several months as a company clerk preparing military reports. Mistakes were not allowed. If I made a typing error, I had to throw the page away and start over again. But it really wasn't a big problem. I still was assigned to the Medical Corps.

When my brother and I were small children during the Depression, we didn't go to church. We lived far out in the country and couldn't depend on our Model-T to get us there, though it was the best car we could afford. After we moved to Kilgore, my dad said, "Nobody in the oilfield goes to church." But our first day in town, we passed the Eastview Baptist Church and saw a good number of cars. My mother turned to my father and said, "I thought you said nobody goes to church in East Texas." The next Sunday, we were in church. We attended Eastview until my father passed away and my brother and I left for the service.

During my time in the Army, I attended church whenever I could. I particularly enjoyed the beautiful hymns. They had such deep meaning to me as a Christian. I feel sorry for people who didn't know the Lord. When I couldn't go into town, I attended services at the base chapel. One church sent young people to the jails, where a young preacher would speak to the inmates and some of us would sing. It took a little nerve to sing in front of some of the tough people I saw there, but it was an interesting experience. We also visited nursing homes and a veterans' retirement home nearby. Performing a cappella, a WAC sang the lead and I sang tenor.

As a Christian, however, I was on my own in the service. The only help I received was from the Lord. So many of the other young men were free of parental restraints for the first time and felt like they could do anything they wanted to do. I didn't feel that way. I knew the Lord would know what I was doing no matter where I am. That was enough for me. I believe I carried the Lord in my heart and always felt like he was with me. Though things sometimes were unpleasant in the military, I knew the Lord was with me and would protect me. And He did.

After leaving the Army, I went to college. While on terminal leave, I actually began attending classes about six weeks prior to receiving my discharge papers in the mail. I earned my degree in 1950.

Looking back, I realize I had a pretty good deal in the service. I had everything that my brother did not have. My mother had spoiled me, but the Army took care of that condition rather quickly and very efficiently. That was good for me.

Today's resurgence of patriotism is encouraging to me. But the strongest display of patriotism I ever saw occurred during a mammoth parade for Skinny Wainwright, who was retiring from military service. General Wainwright was the hero of the battle at Corregidor in the Philippines. He had commanded the troops there and was a prisoner of war from the winter of 1942 until sometime around the summer of 1945. I had great admiration for him. He told of such experiences as surviving by eating rats. During the parade, thousands of soldiers (including me)

marched by for his review. When they played the Star Spangled Banner, I got a lump in my throat and I'm sure tears were running down my cheeks. I thought, *What a wonderful thing this man has done. He has absolutely given his all. This is the very least we can do to honor him.*

I still have the American flag that flew over my brother's grave. It has only 48 stars as opposed to the 50 stars on flags now.