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 Second Lieutenant, U.S. Army Air Corps  
 World War II  
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April 9, 1942, the day I went into the service, was a dark day. Bataan had surrendered in the Philippines, and the Japanese had forced the soldiers to march until half of them died. From Fort Sam Houston, Texas, I was sent to the Signal Corps at Camp Crowder, Missouri, where I completed basic training and classes on close order drill, military discipline and “How to Wear Your Clothes”.

I put in for Officers’ Candidate School (OCS) and after passing two boards, I was told I would be notified if selected. I also applied for a position in the Air Corps. While in training on the other side of Camp Crowder, I received word of my acceptance into OCS as well as the Aviation Training Cadet School. Having always wanted to fly, I chose the latter. Then I went to Nashville, Tennessee, for more close order drilling and to await aviation training. However, I failed my physical and was shipped to Newport, Arkansas, as a candidate for the second phase of flight school. In Newport, I worked in Tech Supply until the call came through with orders to send me overseas.

Before shipping out, I was given a furlough and went home to Bridgeport, Texas, to see my family. Then I flew from Fort Worth to Salt Lake City for a brief stay until my departure for Camp Storeman in San Francisco and finally overseas duty. My ship was the USS Republic. While sailing on the 637-foot ship for 33 days, I noticed the ship would zigzag when the water was smooth. I learned that this maneuver kept submarine commanders from being able to line up on us for a torpedo hit.

When we arrived at Finch Haven, New Guinea, the port had no room for us. So we sailed north to Hollandia, New Guinea, escorted by destroyers on either side of our ship. In Hoangdon we were sent to a camp that was in the process of being established. As we were setting up the camp, someone discovered a small stream nearby. That precipitated a mad rush by soldiers with soap and towels to take baths.

Before long, we were shipped out again on a C-47 to Brisbane, Australia, where our barracks were right in town. I was assigned to the administrative office at 4-East Air Command Service Headquarters until we returned to Hoangdon for more "pencil work." While there, a notice came that the OCS was accepting candidates again. My tech sergeant and I put in for the position. This time, however, I figured out how to get around the "hand in your right ear/hand in your left ear" test that I failed during my last attempt. I felt that if I was good enough to go overseas, I was good enough to go to OCS for 16 weeks of hard work.

I was accepted and soon arrived at OCS to begin more close order drilling and attend morning classes. After graduation, I was chosen along with several others to work for an officer I once worked for in Hollandia. Later I was assigned to the message center at a brand new camp in Manila.

It wasn't very long before the war ended in the Pacific on September 2, 1945. A group of P-38 pilots then were brought to our camp to be trained as administrative officers. I decided to get acquainted, and that resulted in invitations to fly with them. Usually on Sundays, we'd fly over Manila Bay, Corregidor and the Bataan Peninsula. A fellow with Air Rescue offered to take me along on trips over the bay going to Corregidor to see what was left of the barracks and the tunnel after the heavy gunfire damage.

One day, the colonel (by then a civilian) called me to his office and said he was sending me to Baggio for ten days to observe the activities and report to him upon my return. I assumed he chose me for this assignment because he liked me. Early the next morning, I took a Greyhound bus to Baggio. Though I wasn't quite sure what to expect, I will never forget a Filipino waiter asking how I wanted my eggs fixed. Having eaten only powdered eggs for months in the hills, I wasn't sure what he meant. Of course, I was pleased to learn he was talking about fresh eggs, which I then had for breakfast every morning.

In Baggio, I played golf each morning and tennis every evening. But after doing this repeatedly, my roommate and I became bored and decided to drive a Jeep through the mountains. Our trip through the marketplace was an eye opening experience. After that, we decided to return to the "Country Club Camp".

Upon my return to Manila, I went to the colonel's office with my information and report. He asked, "How'd you like it?"

“Go!” I said. Then he told me to call the ground forces and tell them not to let anyone else go to the “Country Club”. So that more or less ended that. Soon the colonel called me to his office again and offered to promote me to 1st Lieutenant if I would sign up for three more months. Though I told him I wanted to go home, I ended up staying three months anyway. At that time, there was a point system. The first time it came up, I was a long way from being eligible for a release to go home. So I figured I would be in for a while.

While waiting to be sent home, I found out that Jerry (one of my former classroom instructors) was waiting in a nearby replacement camp to go home. Those camps were not the best places to be. So I found Jerry and brought him back to my barracks, where the living conditions were considerably better, to wait with me. When his orders finally came through in October 1945, I took him to the train. That was the last time I saw him, but we call each other every Christmas to this day.

While riding around on an Air Rescue boat one day, I was listening to the radio and realized I had accumulated enough points to be released. The next day, I received my release orders. I returned home on a victory ship — “The John Land,” which was half the length of my first ship. It took about 17 days to get home. As we were heading to San Francisco, a heavy storm came up and made it necessary for the ship to turn due east to avoid it. I can still see the bow of the ship dipping down, and the waves rising over the top of it.

When I arrived in San Francisco, my throat was very sore but I refused to go to sick call. I just wanted to get on the train home to Fort Sam Houston. There I was given a release rather than a discharge because I was still in the Reserves and had a commission. Once I knew the day of my arrival home, I notified my parents. They met me at the bus depot in Fort Worth. That was basically the end of my military career. Altogether, I had spent four years in the service and can honestly say that I don’t regret any of that time.

I stayed home with my parents a few days before returning to Beaumont to continue my pre-war job at the telephone company. My uncle was my boss. I told him I would like to relocate, preferably halfway between Tyler and Longview, and my wife Maurene’s house, because I didn’t want to go through anymore hurricanes. When he asked me where that would be, I told him Tyler or Longview. He said there was about to be a vacancy in the switching room at the Tyler office that I could fill when it became available. So I moved to Tyler, Texas, in March 1949 with my wife and three-month-old daughter. Until I retired in February 1982, I held that position in the switching room.

Later I worked as a television cameraman at Green Acres Baptist Church for 11 years and thought that would be my calling. But I had to retire due to physical limitations. I was unable to stand for long periods of time. My last day there was the last Sunday in September 1999. I never missed a Sunday unless I was sick or out of town.

Maurene and I were married on February 8, 1941, and celebrated our 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 2001. We have two daughters and five grandchildren.

The events of September 11, 2001 united the American people, just as the bombing of Pearl Harbor did. During World War II, everyone I knew was patriotic and stood behind me when I went into the service.