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Korean War

In 1952, I was drafted into the U.S. Army. They immediately sent me to Fort Sam Houston and on to Camp Roberts in California for basic training. Most troops went directly from there to Korea. After basic training, I was working with Troop Information and Education when I received orders to report to the front lines of Korea.

While walking around the parade grounds that day, I told myself to pray about it. In my prayer, I promised to become a witness for the Lord if I didn't have to go to Korea. About that time, an officer driving by stopped and said, “You look like you're worried or something.”

I told him what had happened, and that I had prayed that the Lord would use me as a witness. The officer scratched his head and said, “I have an idea. You get in the car, and let's go to headquarters to see if we can get your orders reversed.”

At the command quarters, he told the master sergeant, “This man doesn't need to go to Korea. I just came from there, and he doesn't need to go through that. He has high scores and a high IQ, so he needs to go to Atomic Research. If he can't go there right now, let's send him over to the East Coast.” The officer had been seriously wounded while in Korea, and he knew that I would qualify for officer's training with my master's degree in mathematics and administration from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and my high IQ scores. My orders were changed almost immediately, and I was transferred to Fort Eustace, Virginia.

I called my wife in Jacksonville, Texas, and told her my prayers had been answered. But I knew I had to follow through and not just leave it at that. So for the rest of my time in the service, I witnessed for the Lord constantly. I carried a pocket Bible and witnessed to everyone I met. As a squad leader, I witnessed to my squad and even some of the officers. Some people became saved, and some just thought about it and asked questions.

At Fort Eustace, I discovered I would have to spend two more years in the service to work

as an officer in Atomic Research. Since I was not willing to do that, they made me a liaison officer for the 373<sup>rd</sup> Military Transport Division. Then they gave me orders to do more liaison work at the Pentagon. Next I was sent to a big command base for the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines in Argentina, Newfoundland, to work as an education specialist. I visited other bases to set up schools, including Fort Slocum, New York.

It was always a pleasure to talk to the soldiers in my classes. If you get to know a man, especially in the service, they like to talk about their hometown. I could always strike up a conversation and get to know them personally by discussing that. Then they would become more interested in participating. Many of those soldiers had not completed elementary school, so we even set up classes to teach them to write home to their families. I taught the soldiers because I had faith I could do it and was determined to do it. And the Lord blessed me. I also knew that if a person sees someone who has accomplished something, he makes the connection and wants to try to do it for himself.

The Lord took care my wife, too. While I was stationed at Camp Roberts, she was able to come to the base. Afterward, I had time to fly home for a while and also managed to be home for two Christmas holidays. It all worked out well.

When I came back to the United States, I received an honorable discharge at a base in Arkansas. Before that, my wife and I had met with Dr. Hollis Moore, superintendent of the Tyler Independent School District, while I was home on leave. He told us he would be thrilled to have me working there and said he would call. After I returned to Newfoundland, he called my wife in July and told her that he wanted both of us to teach at Hogg Junior High. At that time, teachers had to have at least three years' experience and a master's degree. She told him that the only problem was that I was in the service and she didn't know whether or not I would get out before school started in September.

He said, "That's no problem. I'll take care of that." Then he asked for my commanding officer's name and rank. We didn't realize it, but Dr. Moore was a good friend of Lyndon Baines Johnson, who was head of the Defense Department at that time. He called Washington and talked to Johnson, giving him the information and telling him he wanted me in Tyler in a few days. Johnson told him, "I'll take care of it."

The future president immediately called the commanding general in Newfoundland and said he wanted me released. He also had orders sent to the commanding general telling him what was to be done. Within a few hours of my wife's conversation with Dr. Moore, the general called me into his office and said, "I've never had this happen before. I've never as a general had anyone call me to say I was to release someone. I don't know how you know him, or how you did it, but this is a first. His initials are LBJ." Of course, I knew who that was. Two or three hours later, I was packed and on a Navy plane headed home. I still say the Lord took care of me and believe I was rewarded for witnessing for Him.

People have to look into their future and into their faith to get through the Armed Forces, or it can be difficult. They can make it a good experience or a bad experience. I went where my faith led me, so my military experience was a good one. I had faith that I could hang in there and learn something while helping other people. Rather than worrying about just getting through, I figured why not make use of my time.