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I grew up in Sarasota, Florida, and studied mechanical engineering at Georgia Tech. After graduating from college, I received an ROTC commission. Three months later, in January 1955, I went on active duty with the Strategic Air Command (SAC) as a lieutenant. I served three years and earned the rank of captain.

Though I had planned to fly as a navigator bombardier, I washed out after my flight physical because of my eyesight. That was great since I really had not been excited about the extra time required for flight school. As a result, they placed me in aircraft maintenance and sent me for a year of training in Illinois. The job also fit well with my mechanical engineering background, and I was able to learn a lot about practical applications.

General Curtis LeMay, a tough guy and was basically the General Patton of the Air Force, ran SAC and made it a vital part of the armed forces during the Cold War. Political circumstances were fairly low key at the time of my enlistment. The challenge was to keep people aware of the existence of the Cold War. The Cuban Crisis had passed. The Berlin Airlift had passed. And the Korean War had just ended. Though nothing was going on, members of the Strategic Air Command had to remain in a war-ready status. LeMay knew that if we didn't play for keeps, we wouldn't play at all. So we were always involved in war games involving such things as flying missions close to Russia, reacting to a possible nuclear attack, and preparing to attack with our own nuclear weapons stored at the SAC bases. A friend of mine, a master sergeant, once worked directly for General LeMay with the Nuclear Weapons Standardization Board. He was exposed to radiation during a strategic alert and suffers the effects of that exposure to this day. He almost died as a result of that war alert training mission.

I was stationed just 200 miles from home in Homestead, Florida, south of Miami. Our job was to be on stand by for any threat of an enemy attack so we could launch airplanes on very short notice. Though we were not on alert very often, we had to remain on duty 24 hours at a time when we did. We also had to be able to move our entire bomb wing to a remote forward site. Our activities never got much publicity, however.

One of my roommates was a weather officer and a brilliant mathematician. He disappeared one day and returned two years later. When I asked him where he had been, he said, "I can't tell you. You wouldn't believe me if I told you anyhow." Later I figured out that he had been forecasting the weather over Russia for the U2's and had been stationed at a U2 base in South Texas. He is now a Catholic priest.

Every three or six months, we would go on an alert that said "Go to war." Then we had to report to SAC Headquarters about the number of planes ready to take off. Some planes actually took off, made a simulated mission and came back. Those were typical practice sessions, but we never knew for sure whether it was real or not until after it was over. I had to make sure the planes were properly maintained and ready to fly. I was not one to worry about our situation. I had confidence that the Lord would provide no matter what the circumstances. So I gave no thought to the risks involved. We didn't plan for defeat. We planned for victory.

During one exercise, we spent two months in Morocco with two Bomb Wings. Each Bomb Wing was comprised of 30 or 40 aircraft (B47's and refueling tankers). We replaced other wings that were going home. There always had to be a certain number of Bomb Wings at the forward bases. Two bases were located in Florida (one in Orlando and one in Homestead), and our headquarters were in Shreveport with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Force. While I was in Morocco, I became engaged. My fiancé was still at home, so I asked her father to give her an engagement ring for me on the day of her graduation from high school.

All these things happened before the American pilot Gary Powers was shot down and exposed what was going on. Though SAC did not have a high profile, there were a lot of things going on that few people knew about at the time. Today, they're trying to reverse that strategy. Our job was to respond to aggressive acts. Now they're trying to create a preemptive strategy. In other words, get the enemy before they can perform an aggressive act like the events of September 11.

SAC was a business. The only uncertainties were the timing of alerts. Everyone had a job they were very well trained to do, and we also were well focused. Our schedule was somewhat routine, unlike serving in a combat zone where things change rapidly. Working in maintenance, I was not privy to the secret things. Our main issue at the time was defending our country from a nuclear attack. We were very comfortable in our ability to neutralize an attack, no matter where we were.

Along with a commission comes a certain amount of responsibility. You must serve as an example to your subordinates, both professionally and as a Christian. I worked with many kinds of people and was challenged to treat everyone with respect. I served with some veterans of World War II. One crew chief had been a Master Sergeant longer than I had been living at the time. Another, my line chief was a Master Sergeant who had been a Major during the second World War. So the ex-Major was reporting to a Lieutenant — me. Generally speaking, I served with an honorable group of people. I respected them and was treated with respect. I have learned over the years that every day I walk, I am serving as a Christian witness because I never know who might be watching.

Though I didn't go to church a lot as a kid, I grew up in a Christian home. My mother was a Presbyterian, and Daddy was a Methodist. My parents were strong Christians and gave us a good religious foundation. They raised me to understand my responsibilities as a Christian. In college, I had a long-time friend who was a very conservative Baptist. Other college friends included the son of a Presbyterian minister, a Jewish guy and a bum. They all were neat guys, and we often talked about our faith. Those campus discussions made me stronger in my faith. In

turns of my church involvement, I became more active in the church after moving to Tyler. My wife and I first attended Marvin Methodist Church and then became charter members of a new missionary Methodist church. After that church closed, I worked with the Witness Mission Ministry helping them with the business end of things. After leaving the service, I went to work for General Electric in 1957 and remained in Tyler until retirement.