



# HERO FLIGHT: ARMY ASSIGNMENT LEADS TO MARRIAGE AND PATH FOR HIS FUTURE LIFE

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN  
THE GOTHENBURG LEADER

Dan Tinlin had his sights set on the future when he joined the U.S. Army.

“The reason I joined was because I got the GI Bill. It expired at midnight, and I was sworn in at 11:30,” said Tinlin.

It was 1955, and Tinlin had been living in San Antonio, Texas. His enlistment only took him about eight hours from home when he headed to Fort Bliss, Texas, for basic training. While there, he signed up to be a part of the medical corps.

“I spent another three months in medical basic training at Fort Sam Houston’s Brooke Army Medical Center. I had been doing some swimming and diving in a water show in San Antonio, so going to Fort Sam allowed me to continue to do that when I was off,” he said.

In September 1955, Tinlin went to Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver to join the 171st Medical Field Service unit.

“While I was there I worked in different wards, including the leukemia ward for about six months and the tuberculosis ward for three or four months,” Tinlin said.

He even spent time in the pediatric ward.

“I changed a lot of diapers,” he laughed. That was a far cry from some of the other wards, he said.

His tour began about two years after a truce was signed officially ending hostilities in Korea. But the armistice didn’t stop the injuries.

“I did work in some of the wards where the soldiers were coming in who had been shot up. Everybody is told that didn’t happen then, but it did. A truce was signed in 1953, but the war never ended. It’s a very strange situation. And the stories those wounded soldiers told were horrible.”

Tinlin spent the remainder of his time at Fitzsimmons in the dental service making dentures when he found out he was being deployed to Germany.

“I was standing in line waiting to go when they said I was the last one on,” he recalled. “The guy behind me said, ‘Oh, darn it! My wife and I really wanted to go.’ So I let him have my spot.”

Tinlin admits he later had some mixed feelings about that decision.

“I would have liked to have gone to Germany, but after some

of the things I heard and saw, I’m glad I didn’t have to leave the states. But I sure would have if I would have been called.”

He was discharged Jan. 31, 1958, not knowing for sure what his next step in life was going to be.

“One of my roommates was working in the accounting department at Frontier Airlines and said they needed help, so I went to work there. After about three or four months, I became a sales rep for Frontier,” he said.

It was while working for the airline that he met his wife, Sharon Aden.

“We met in the cafeteria at a hangar,” Tinlin said. “She was a United Airlines flight attendant and was from Gothenburg. After we got married we decided we wanted to raise our kids in a small town, so we moved here in 1962.”

The couple purchased the local bowling alley and ran that for several years. In 1990, Tinlin partnered with Jim Baldonado and started The Home Agency, a local insurance business where he continues to work.

Tinlin is one of the veterans who will take part in the Dawson County Area Hero Flight, leaving Lexington Sept. 25.

“I’m really excited about the Hero Flight. I’ve been to Washington, D.C., a number of times and have seen the changing of the guard two or three times. And I get cold chills every time,” he said.

Making this visit even more memorable for Tinlin will be participating in the laying of a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown.

“It is such an honor to get to lay the wreath. I was chosen not because I deserve it, but because I’m the oldest Army veteran on the trip,” he said.

He admits he hesitated to sign up for the trip since he did not go overseas, but friends encouraged him to do it. And his son, Jeffrey, volunteered to be his dad’s escort. Tinlin said he is looking forward to the visit to Arlington National Cemetery but is perhaps most looking forward to seeing a memorial.

“I have only seen the Korean Memorial during the daytime, so I’m really looking forward to seeing it at night. Just thinking about it gives me chills.”