

Gary Harold Findlay

as interviewed by Judy Hansen

July 2014

I was born in Smoot, Wyoming on the 25th of July 1930 to Hugh and Gertrude Findlay. Dad had a dairy farm and I spent all my growing up years there. Because I was so small I was held back a year in school.

After the 2nd world war my dad ran a milk route. My brother was gone and it was pretty hard for my dad to do all the heavy work because of his age. So in 1947 I stayed out of Star Valley High for one year to help my dad. I drove the milk route so he wouldn't have to.

I went back and finished school. While I attended school, I joined the 141st Tank Battalion Wyoming National Guard in the fall of 1949. It was stationed in Laramie, Wyoming. I spent nine or ten months in the guard. I graduated high school in May of 1950. In June 1950 the Korean conflict broke out. In September 1950, our unit was due to move out and go to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. That is where I spent most of my time.

When I joined the Guard I was in the kitchen and was classified as a cook. I cooked for a while but that was when I was in Wyoming. As soon as we left Wyoming our status was changed from National Guard to Regular Army. Every person that went into the regular army had to be trained so they put us through regular basic training. We were supposed to go to Korea in December 1950 but they cut our orders. They decided they wouldn't send us over because the Koreans were pushing really hard. The enemy pushed everyone back and off of Korea so the US took everyone and sent them to Japan or the other islands they had control of out there. That was when they made us a cadre unit. A cadre unit is a unit that trains other people. Once they decided they were going to make us a cadre we had to train all the new recruits coming into the Army – their basic training, infantry and such. I spent quite a while at Fort Campbell training people. I provided training in quite a few different things. I trained people in the tanks and arms. I spent about nine months doing this.

I had one Officer that went through the course. He followed his men through their training to see how the instruction was going. He told me, "Man, this is outstanding; you do an outstanding job teaching these people. I'd recommend you to teach my guys anything." This was quite a feather in my cap. I enjoyed the Army. I liked working with the guys. There were a lot of good people. I enjoyed driving the tanks and shooting the 90 mm's.

We were driving around in tanks all the time and a lot of people were upset because they had to walk everywhere. While I was in Fort Campbell a lot of the folks from Kentucky had never seen a rodeo. They talked us guys from Wyoming into going to their hometown and putting on a



rodeo for them. We had one guy dress as a rodeo clown and everyone thought it was pretty neat. They didn't have a corral or arena to put the rodeo on in so we told them to take a lot of fence panels, put them together, and create their own arena. There were a lot of animals but they were all racing horses. They finally built an arena and found enough horses and we put on a rodeo. It all worked out great. I had been helping at the chutes and we got down to the last rider and they asked me if I was going to ride. I told them I hadn't thought of it but they told me to come along and they would put me on the last horse. I had ridden horses all my life but this was bareback. There was only a cinch around the horse's waist that you could hold onto with one hand. I got on the horse and she tore out of there. I lasted three jumps. I went straight up in the air and away she went. I came down and landed flat on my back. They come out and tried to pick me up but I told them I was alright. I started walking back to the chutes and my legs buckled and I couldn't stand up. They took me to the town hospital in an ambulance. After they x-rayed me and couldn't find anything wrong they hauled me back to camp. I was on light duty for a while. It was an experience.

I also spent a bit of time in Fort Lee, Virginia. They sent me there for quartermaster's school. That is where you learn all about taking care of equipment and supplies. I worked in the supply room. When they sent me there it was with the idea that I would be with them for a while. After I got there and was done with the training they found out they were shipping all the National Guard home so I would be discharged. While I was in Fort Lee, I had a buddy, Stanley Bass that lived close to Washington DC. I was able to stay there for Christmas in 1951. Stan and his girlfriend took me to Washington DC and I was able to go through the Smithsonian, the Washington Monument, and all the sites to be seen there. Many of the places we visited Stan told me he had never seen before even though he lived right there.

I served almost two years. I went back home to Wyoming in May 1952. I stayed in the guard until October 1952 and then they discharged me.

I had a lot of training benefit coming to me from the military so in January 1953 I went to what they used to call Central Utah Vocational School in Provo; now they call it UVU (Utah Valley University). I wanted to go out in welding but they told me I couldn't do it because they didn't have enough room for me. They told me they would put me in welding for ½ day and forging¹ the other half. I eventually ended up in the forging school full time. I went to school for three years.

I went to the Samoa Islands on an LDS mission in 1956 for two ½ years. I got home to Wyoming from my mission Dec 7, 1958. After that I registered in school again for the same program. I started school in January 1959 and went down to live with my brother and his family in Orem.

I met this kid in my class and asked him if he knew any rich women that could take care of me for the rest of my life. He said, "Yea – I know just the one for you." He introduced me to Wanda Littleford from Lehi. It was a blind date; and boy she was blind. She's been sorry ever since (he laughs). We were married August 1959.

¹ Metal working process

Wanda and I worked for Doc Jone's on his farm in Lehi when we first got married. Then we moved up to Riverdale for a year and ran a church farm. I interviewed with the government and went to work for Hercules and we moved back to Lehi and built our home here². That was 1963. Hercules guaranteed worked for five years but started laying people off after three years. When they laid me off I went to work for IMCO in Quality Control. I heard Tooele Army Depot was hiring so I applied and started working for there as a sheet metal specialist until I racked my back up and had to quit.

Wanda had been divorced when we married so she bought a son, Jay into our family and I adopted him. We then had four more children Jeana, Alan, Bryan, and Janet. We also had several people from Samoa and some Indian students come live with us while they went to school.

² 630 S 600 E