

Curtiss Atomic Marines –

**Tom Snider**

Operation Surfboard, Wigwam, Redwing

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My dad was drafted in WWII with 5 kids and another on the way. Not making much money in the service, so us boys, me at 9 years old, my brother Bud at 10 years old and my brother Don at 11 years old, had to try and make a living, so we carried newspapers, 500 papers a day between us 3. Our house was located halfway on our route, so our sisters would fold the papers while we delivered them. We did that 5 days a week after school. Our mother would work at a restaurant during the day and do laundry for other folks at night

We would raise chickens and rabbits for meat to eat and had a garden that was about ½ an acre big, so we canned a lot of the vegetables. We were virtually a self-supporting family

I joined the cub scouts and the YMCA so that I could have something to do in my spare time, what little of it there was. Sundays were always taken up with church activities. After Sunday school and church services, we always had a covered dish dinner at the church, and after that, youth fellowship on Sunday nights

I remember that during WWII, when the sirens would go off and the air raids, we would pull all of the windows shades in the house, because if the air raid wardens could see light they would come to your door and tell you to put something over the windows that you could see the light showing though. So we used blankets to shut the light out. Here in Marshalltown the day that WWII ended every siren, every horn, every whistle, or anything else that would make a noise was set off. That went on for at least an hour. It was a great day because we knew that dad was coming home!

I know you guys on the west coast knew where dad was stationed. He was a shore patrol and guarded the Japanese at the San Diego compound.

GREAT DAY WHEN DAD CAMEHOME!!!!!! It seemed like everything changed overnight. Dad worked at a brass foundry before he was drafted and went back to that job when he was discharged from the Navy. It gave me more leisure time and all of us boys quit our paper routes. To keep busy, I then joined the Boy Scouts, which was a new Boy Scout Troop in our church. It seemed about the time that dad showed me how to be organized or to be in control of my life and how to set goals. So I told him that I would set my first goal, and that was to be an Eagle Scout

Two years later, I achieved that goal thanks to my dad and the lessons he taught me. He was a great friend and buddy. I wasn't a very good athlete, so I decided to be a manager of the baseball and basketball teams. I also was senior class president and two years as student council president at school.

And this is how I came to join the Marine Corps: school was out for a teachers meeting, and my car was not running as usual, so I decided to walk to town (7 miles). When I got to town, I was walking past the courthouse and saw a very common sign that said "Marines" on it. So I decided to talk to the recruiter at the courthouse. He seemed to be a great guy. This was at 7am and at 10am, I had signed and was on a bus on my way to Des Moines, which was 50 miles away. They fed us and gave us a physical. And at 4 in the afternoon, I was on my way to San Diego, on a train. The next stop was MCRD.

I remember this big old guy said "Attention", I listened, but my nose started itching, so I scratched it, "WRONG". He caught me and I had to scratch my nose until it bled. After that - I learned fast. I remember the first part of December 1953, when we were duck walking on the grinder and my right side hurt bad, so that big old guy again told me to keep duck walking. The next thing I know, I opened my eyes at the navel hospital in San Diego. My appendix has burst and three days later, I was headed back to MCRD, and guess what, right back to that big old guy again. Things seemed to be a little better after that.

After graduation, we went to combat training at Camp Pendleton. When we were about to be mustard out of there, our Sgt. wanted some volunteers, for what he didn't say. Naturally, no one volunteered. So he said Snider, "your one" and then he said "how tall are you", and I said "5'6, sir". Then he said stand on your toes, now your 5'8 - that will do. So the next thing I knew I got my orders, for Sea School . I guess one of the requirements were that you had to be 5'8

Next orders were for the USS Curtis AV4, from April of '54, to mid December of '56, I served on the Curtiss. Then back to Camp Pendleton for MP duty, then discharged.

When I was discharged, I had \$300 hundred dollars saved and used it for my first service station and had to borrow another \$1500 for the rest of the equipment. The station was in a small town of a 1000 people (LeGrand Iowa), and along with changing tires, pumping gas, changing oil, etc. I got a mechanics book and started overhauling cars, because one day I had a guy come in with a 1940 ford that used a lot of oil so he asked if I would overhaul it, and being as positive as I am, I said sure. After three weeks and a ton of hours, I had finished. I turned the key and stepped on the starter, lo and behold, after the second turn, it was running. No smoke, so now I was officially a mechanic. From that point on, I decided to expand, so I bought more service stations. I brought my son-in-law in to help. Everybody said that I was crazy, when I bought a three stall Skelly station. It was pumping only three thousand gallons of gas a month. So I set another goal. I was going to pump fifty thousand gallons in three months from the time that I took over. I knocked on the doors of all commercial businesses in town, asking for there business. I not only got there business, but I also got there employees business as well. I made my goal and Skelly rewarded me with a house full of furniture, and a trip to the Indy 500 race," a great time".

One day, I had the owner of the local ford garage come in, and he asked me to think about selling cars for him. I told him I would think about it and decided to sell the service stations and went to work for him. He turned out to be a great friend.

Two years later, I was written up in TIME Magazine as the top ford salesman in 1973. I had sold 783 cars that year. I'm still selling cars to this day and just love it!!!

By the way, my dad was very proud of his boys. We were all in the service, dad in the Navy, Don in the Army , Bud in the Air Force and me of course in the Marines.

While dad was in the Navy, my brother, Larry passed away, and dad had always said that he would have been in the Coast Guard. So we could have hit all the services. My brother Don received the Purple Heart while stationed in Korea and my brother Bud flew 35 missions in the Air Force in Korea during his 11 ½ years of service.

As for friends and family, I lost my best friend, my dad, 6 years ago, who passed away while living in Iowa state veterans home. I lost my daughter 40 years ago, and my brother Don passed away 10 years ago. I see my brother Bud a lot; we go fishing and messing around a lot together. I still have my daughter Penny, who by the way has a lot of health problems, who lives 100 miles south of Branson Missouri. That is where I was the last day of the Branson reunion. She has had a lot of operations for bone cancer and has had other medical problems, and I want her to come back to Iowa, but she says that as long as she has her walker and 4-wheelershe is staying put. I asked her where she got her stubbornness from and she told me to look in the mirror. I also have 1 adopted son and 2 step children. The rest of my family, my wife Nadine, nine grandkids, nine great-grandkids and believe me that's enough to keep anybody busy

I want to thank all of the Curtis marines for their companionship and all of the fun that I have had at the reunions. Hoping to see all of you soon!!!!

Semper Fi

Tom Snider  
"Little Beaver"