



## Lillie Knauls

I am very proud of my only brother, Paul Knauls. He is a lively 83-year-old and has been married to his wife Geneva for 48 years. He is an entrepreneur who goes to open the doors of his business each morning, leaves for home at noon, and then returns in the early evening to close the beauty and barber shop. He is well known in the city of Portland and in fact, he is affectionately called (even by the sitting mayor) “the mayor of northeast Portland!”

I would like to share what he still considers a great honor. Shortly after graduating from high school, Paul joined the Air Force in July, 1949. One day he was called into his superior’s office and told that since President Truman had desegregated the armed forces a year earlier, there was an Air Force base near Spokane, Wash., that needed to have the first “Negro” airman sent there. And because of Paul’s easygoing personality and pleasant demeanor, they were certain he should be the one to have that assignment.

Paul took the train from Lackland Air Force Base in Texas to Spokane, arriving at midnight. The next morning he walked into the mess hall to a surprised group of men! Now, being the first Negro at Fairchild Air Force Base, Paul said that he did not experience any prejudiced looks or remarks—and because he was such a good pool player, he always had partners to play in the game room!



Paul Knauls with sister Lillie

Although he was never sent to fight and never saw “war,” he was sent to Fort Lee, Va., to be trained to repair the military’s office machines and that was how he proudly served his country for three years and nine months during the Korean conflict. He received an honorable discharge in 1953 as a staff sergeant with “four stripes”—what a guy. That’s my brother!

Each Memorial Day I look forward to attending a function honoring veterans, just to say “thanks.” There is also another way that I express gratitude to servicemen and women in uniform in airports as I travel. When I see them in the food court buying food, I will go to the register and offer to pay for their purchase. It is my way of saying “thank you.” I am thankful for the freedom we enjoy because of those who have served and the many who have given their lives. May God bless America!

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