

Souvenir Of Military Service In Kayseri



I was born on May, 8th, 1924 in Istanbul as the child of a middle class family and grew up facing a lot of challenges.

I lost my mother when I was 3 years old. Even though my father remarried, he raised me and my older sister himself.

I had first served in Malatya in the military. Two years later, our regiment went to Kayseri.

On a day we were off, we had a souvenir photograph taken by a photographer who took the pictures of soldiers.

All of the airmen would have pictures taken like this during that period. We had pilot caps on our heads.

We used to wear navy blue shirts.

I became a soldier in April of 1943. I had just turned 19 years of age. I was in a division for working in the airports of Malatya.

There, there were a lot of nonMuslims and we were treated quite well. The military meant discipline.

I had put myself under discipline too. And this military service had a lot of benefits of course.

I served in the military close to four years. Not only in Malatya, I did my service in different cities like Adana and Kayseri too.

The captains treated us very well.

There was no discrimination among the soldiers. My duty there was pouring concrete on the airport field. I worked in the supplies department too. I did different jobs too.

My rank did not go up in the military. I was a private till the end. There were no high-ranked soldiers among the non Muslims any ways. Except for doctors.

When they became private soldiers, they continued as lieutenants. But our relationships with our superiors was very good.

Furthermore, before a Yom Kippur day, an orthodox Jew among us had gone to our colonel and procured permission for the Jewish soldiers to perform their religious worshipping, meaning being able to fast.

And a week later, on Yom Kippur day, we congregated in a place with the order of the colonel, recited our prayers, a fasting meal was prepared for us and we fasted the following day. Very smoothly, we experienced the warmth that the soldiers could not receive in Europe, in our own military organization.

I was discharged in January of 1947. I had taken a leave of absence once; for the wedding of my older sister.

I was on leave for exactly fifteen days. I think it was at the end of 1945 or beginning of 1946.

I had one older sister in my life and it was very important to me to be present at that wedding.

During these military years, malaria happened frequently, and I had contracted it during my period of inexperience.

Fever goes up to 40 - 41degrees C, but the next day there would be no fever whatsoever.

We would lie in the infirmary for a few days, and there were medicines like quinine, and antiprin, I would take them and get along.

Of course I had lost quite a bit of weight during that time. The military served me as a major lesson in my life.

I forgot about being a child of the streets, and learned obeying given orders, that is to say, I learned discipline.

Everyone would be wearing the same uniform, and treated the same way, and I benefited a lot from the military.

I was 23 years old when the military service ended.