

# Bob Willis

## The Journey of My Life

I was born and raised in Berkeley, Mo, a suburb of north county of St. Louis. I was fourth of five children. We were brought up in a single parent, mother, household. She, being a devout catholic, sent us to catholic school until we finished eighth grade and then went to Berkely High School. I never graduated.

I enlisted in the marines at the age of seventeen at the behest of my uncle, who was a chief of police in a neighboring suburb of St. Louis. I told the recruiter I wanted to wait until after Christmas to go to bootcamp, so on December 26<sup>th</sup> 1967 (that should have been a clue to me), I was on the yellow foot prints at San Deigo. Upon boot camp graduation, I was informed that I was to be a cook! In my shock, I asked my drill instructor “Doesn’t the navy cook for the marines?” That was the first time any of the recruits saw him laugh. Then off to Camp Pendelton for ITR and there I met Mount Mutha!

Upon the completion of ITR, I embarked on a career in food service. Food service training was done at Montford Point, Camp LeJeune. After my basic food service school, I was selected for Special Mess Training. Special Mess Training meant that I was going to cook/serve/clean at a general’s quarters. After six months in general’s quarters, I requested to be reassigned to a mess hall, now dining facilities. The remainder of my twenty years was spent mostly in the dining facilities with another tour in a general’s quarters on one of my many Okinawa tours. I had a tour at 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, Los Pulgas, Camp Pendleton where I was serving as chief cook, and our dining facility won the WPT Hill award. This award was for the best facility in the Corps. I also served as a company gunny for a 6 months stint and finished out my career back at Camp Johnson as an instructor. While touring the world, that is to say LeJeune, Pendelton and all over the tiny island of Okinawa, I managed to finish high school and complete two years of college before retiring. Upon retiring from the marines, I finished my college degree at UNC, go heels, with a BS in sociology.



I spent most of my civilian career in food service, but one day I decided to try my hand at driving and got a cdl. I drove for Schneider for a couple of years. I was offered a job for an orthopedic company, Biomet, driving a 43 foot RV around the country. The rv was used for sales. I would drive it to various hospitals and doctors’ offices and set up the presentations for the local sales staff, who would bring medical staff on to see Biomet’s equipment. It also had a mock operating room in the back half, so the doctors could practice installing the hip, knee or shoulder replacement. We, the staff of Biomet, referred to it as the most expensive lemon, it broke down a lot!!! It was an interesting job and I was fortunate to have visited 44 of the 50 states, and played golf in most of them.

I married a girl I had met during my brief time in high school after I finished my military training. We had four kids and ten grandkids. We divorced after 25 years, and I stayed single until moving here and meeting Dian. We’ve been married for 5 fantastic years. (She told me to say that)