

Milton Joe Boydston

Family followed callings to serve nation and God

Milton Joe Boydston is from a family of strong siblings who followed callings to serve their nation and God. He is quick to talk about his family and their history, lauding the accomplishments of his beloved brothers and sister.

Before Milton Joe will discuss his own lifetime of service and success, he insists on listing his brothers and sisters. They are all the children of Alfred Emmett Boydston and Viola Marie Ware Boydston. His mother was a Choctaw Indian from what was then known as Blue County. The name Boydston comes from their Scottish ancestry.

Milton Joe's eldest brother, Alfred Emmett, Jr., was born July 17, 1918 and died in the year 2000. "Emmett joined the 45th National Guard and in 1939 was in Louisiana in the Signal Corps. He decided he would stay in the military when WWII broke out. In 1942 he was headed on a ship to New Delhi, India to establish communications. After 1 ½ years, he was then sent to Kunming, China for one year, then back to the U.S. In late 1944, he was sent to Fort Monmouth, New York. The Korean War broke out in 1950. Emmett served in Japan under General MacArthur as a coder and decoder and was awarded the Bronze Star for his service.

"Emmett was back at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey in 1953. Then he was the head guy of the 4th Army Signal Corps," said Milton Joe. As Commander of the 4th Army Area Signal Corps, Emmett was headquartered in San Antonio, a four-state area. "He told me later he had many sleepless nights because he knew where I was, because of the Signal Corps. After sixteen years in the military, Emmett resigned his commission as a Major, because he had a higher calling – to preach the Gospel of Christ."

Brother number two was Robert L. Boydston. "He was born March 13, 1921, and was a 5th Air Force pilot who died in combat 1944. He was called 'Pappy' in his squadron because he was a little older than most. Robert had told his wife he was going to fly a few more missions, then come home. He called his wife to pack her bags so when he got to the west coast he could call and she and a cousin could join him," said Milton Joe. "He was shot down and killed on one of the last New Guinea missions. Her packed bags sat by the front door a long time as a sad reminder of the trip to the west coast to meet a husband who would not return alive."

Milton Joe remembered Robert used to fly over the Caddo, Oklahoma school and the kids would run out and know it was him. He would tip the wings of the plane and the kids would wave. Robert would then fly back to the old Will Rogers training airfield in Oklahoma City. Robert left for New Guinea in January of 1943 with the 5th Airforce. He was a pilot of an old A-20 attack bomber.

Milton Joe said, "All old aircrafts of wars have some kind of name painted on the plane. Robert L. left for New Guinea, leaving a six-month-old daughter. She was Pappy's joy – and that's what he named his plane – 'Pappy's Joy'." Painted on the plane was a picture of a stork carrying a baby in a diaper – a baby dropping a bomb.

Brother number three was Harry G. Boydston. He was born December 16, 1923 and lived until 2015. Harry was a Gunner on a B-25 during WWII.

Harry was seriously wounded in Italy on his mother's birthday. He lost an arm, a finger and part of thumb. "Brother Harry was wounded in Italy. He came back in January. Later, he got out of the service. The GI Bill gave him a house in Oklahoma City. I moved up there from Caddo to live with him in the Fall of 1944 and went through high school there. I didn't have a home after

Harry got married and sold his house. Harry went to Shawnee and I moved in with a friend to finish high school.”

The sister of all these boys, Mary Elizabeth Davidson, was born January 18, 1926. She and her husband served in Malaysia 14 years as missionaries. She is still living.

Brother number four, John Franklin (Frank), was born April 20, 1928 and served in the Air Force during the Korean War. He served from 1950-1951. Frank was an All-American football player at Baylor, Texas. He died in 2000.

An infant brother, Ernest Harold Boydston, died within six months of being born in 1931, leaving Milton Joe as being the baby of the family.

Three of the brothers listened to a call of faith tugging at their hearts. “Emmett, Harry and Frank came back from the war and were called to preach.

“Harry was a Baptist preacher. He served mostly in Oklahoma City. Frank was a lawyer. He worked for a firm in Texas, The Lord told him to preach. He got out of the law firm and surrendered to preaching.”

After Milton Joe moved to Oklahoma City and attended high school there, he remembers the first time he drove a car. A Mr. Harris drove him and an all-state basketball player to Baylor University for scholarship possibilities. They didn’t realize Mr. Harris was staying in Waco. “The basketball player and I were sent back to Oklahoma City with the car. It was my first time to drive a car. I was all over the road, and off the road! But I made it.”

Military and a strong faith were not the only things the family members had in common. They were all adept athletes, too. “I was a football player at Central High. Frank, my brother, was an All-American football player at Baylor, as well as graduating #1 at the law school there in his class. Frank was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles, but left all that for the ministry.

“Thelma Lee was my wife of 63 years. She was a friend of the friend I lived with the last year of high school. I called Thelma’s house (to ask her out) and her mother answered. She was spending the night with a friend and I told her mom I would call again later, but her mother insisted I call the friend’s house.

“For our first date, we went to Lincoln Park. It was January or February of 1950 and four or five of us got together and went to a wiener roast. The first time I kissed her was in the back of my friend’s car.”

Milton Joe said, “Things went on and in July of 1950, we were on her porch when I gave her engagement rings. She said what are these for? I said, ‘You know what they are! I can’t marry you now because I am going to Korea, but when I get back, I want to get married.’”

He said, “I was in the Army. In the midst of war, things were bad and I wrote a ‘Dear John’ letter to her and said she should find someone else. I wasn’t sure what was going to happen to me during the war. She wrote back and said she loved me. My friends found out what I had done and slapped me on the back and said ‘Why would you do that?’ I wrote back and asked her to take me back – she said she never left. I took care of her 16 years at the end. She was in a wheelchair. She couldn’t talk but she could understand when I would read scriptures and I would sing to her.

“My wife passed away in 2015 after 63 years of marriage. We had five children - four boys and one girl.”

Milton Joe’s army career was 44 months, from 48-52. Serving during the Korean War, he was sent first to Pusan and then to the Manchurian border, to the 38th parallel. “I served from one

end to another. I spent most of my time on the mountaintops, and once in a while, in the lowlands. I was a Platoon Sergeant.

“Ten miles outside of Pusan was my first combat. That morning in early September, things were going good. The C.O. called for an airstrike – pilots misread the directions and took us to pieces. 60 of us were left alive out of 100.

“A Lt. Shayes asked four of us to go behind enemy lines and get a wounded Sgt. on a litter. Told us later, he was getting us a medal. We never received one.

“My outfit was so destroyed – they had to send those of us left to another outfit. So - three days with the first outfit and the remainder of my time in Korea was with another.

“While up on the mountain on New Years’ Eve in 1950, my legs were frozen. We had to withdraw suddenly. We were running for our lives,” Milton Joe said. “We didn’t have enough men to hold them. We got to the 4th Division rear and they said ‘What’s going on?’ We told them to get to the trenches on higher ground. I hit a trip wire and it didn’t go off. That was a blessing. All this time my legs were in deep snow and were freezing. The next day, we were getting ready to leave and I couldn’t walk. I got evacuated by train. A Navy guy said I needed to eat ‘this’ (it was eggs and milk – the first I had seen in a while) I got sent back to Pusan, then back to Korea.

“There were three of us from the same outfit going back to combat. We were told our outfit had been annihilated. We were told to go back to the tent, and if we had any money to send it home. They said, ‘We don’t know where you are being sent’. Then stragglers came in and we fed them.” The stragglers were survivors of other attacks by the enemy.

Milton Joe was discharged as a Sgt. 1st Class, although he was supposed to be a Master Sgt. Paperwork that was messed up somewhere along the line resulted in the error. He has five medals, including two Purple Hearts. He was 21 when he came home from Korea.

He spent time at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and Fort Hood, Texas, where he got involved in coaching. He was also involved in Special Services Infantry at Fort Hood.

“I am proud of the years my family spent fighting in the name of freedom.” He is very aware of the cost his and other families have paid. He said the pain is still sharp, even after all these years.

“During my lifetime I have had three concussions. One in high school football - I couldn’t remember but two plays (and I’m the quarterback). Coach had me to play the whole game feeding me the plays to run.

“The second concussion was June of ’56 from a mortar round. I don’t recall to this day just how I got to the side station. The officer let me rejoin my platoon five days later.

“The third was going to work and a lady hit me head on. An officer took me home and told me to stay awake.”

“I spent a month in the hospital in Japan with frozen legs and wounds. Today, I’m eternally grateful for God’s watchful eye over me. I deeply praise and thank Him daily, since He has come into my life (January 1965). Jesus Christ is my Savior – my Lord – my all.”

Wisdom passed on from Milton Joe is: “My advice for young people today is that people used to have real role models. That’s not available today. People follow people – want to be like others, when they need to be their own selves. The Lord will give you wisdom to do so.”

Interviewed on several occasions by Judy Allen, 2022. Notes given by Boydston.

Cut line:

Milton Joe Boydston spreads out family photos as he tells about his siblings and parents.
Photo by Judy Allen.

Cut line for smaller, insert photo:

Korean War veteran Milton Joe Boydston in military uniform.
Photo contributed by family.