



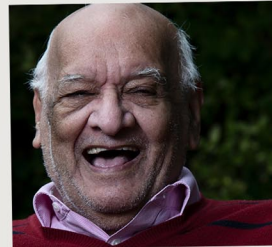
NATIONAL SERVICE REMEMBERED

Conscription through the eyes of the men who served.

NAME: Galvin Carville
BASE: Peterhead
DATE OF ENTRY: March 1954



"I'll give you my
number: 2722817. I'll
never forget it!"



Galvin Carville. 2020

I was 18 when I was called up and served from March 1954 to March 1956. I'm 85 now.

I went for training first and then they sent me to a radar station in Peterhead, in Scotland, and I stayed there until I came out. It was lovely, I saw a part of Scotland and used to do exercise with the Americans. I would laugh when they would say 'pigeons', as it meant they wanted to go home. It was good fun, I enjoyed it because I enjoyed the work. Time went very fast for me anyway, very fast.

When I went in, I wasn't worried about fighting. Once I was in the air force I was glad, I enjoyed it at Peterhead. I thought I'd never see Peterhead again so I enjoyed life there. I played football - for a small camp, we had a fabulous football team and went all over playing the air force cup.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the air force and the National Service. I'm sure if I had gone in the army, I would have had a good job and maybe done the same but I was lucky, I enjoyed my radar operating.

I only knew one guy who actually made the air force, so when I said I'm going to apply for the air force, everybody laughed at me. When I got my air force papers, I was happy.

I knew one guy very well who was in the army. He was a batman and looked after 2 officers, making sure they were alright and their rooms were clean. They were really nice and let him go home every weekend. When the time came for me to apply for a job, I applied to be a batman but they said my test scores were too high so I became a radar operator.

Operating the radar consisted of what you call a big exercise. 2 pilots would go up (PI - practice interception), one target and one fighter. They would send the target one way and put the fighter onto the target.

"I personally think they should have National Service, people have forgotten it's very, very, important. You know, a country with a regular army has never won a major world war."

When it was visible, they would say "tally ho", which meant he'd seen the target. At our station, the radar could pick up submarines.

We had some top people and equipment there. Downstairs would be the fighter pilots and we would do all the plotting. We would give the information and they would plot everything.

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When you plot the big exercise you look at the big screen and plot by the square, about 20, 30, 40 coming through, it was very interesting. When we were doing nothing, we would stand there and watch the plotters working on the table. Our Sergeants were all regulars, decent people. Do your work and you can have what you want. Our man in charge was brilliant, we got commended for everything. It was RAF Buchan but the real name was 409 Signals Unit.

I was in Germany on and off for 23 years, mostly with Americans. I got to know the American services well as I was working with them. positions were all held by draftees.

All the top people were all draftees, not regulars but draftees; secretaries to the First Sergeant, the Sergeant Major, the CO, all draftees. National Service people come in as they have to, like the draftees in America.

I felt sorry for them going to Vietnam and getting slaughtered there, a lot ran away to Sweden, but the majority went in and all got top jobs.

A lot went to Vietnam. In the division where I worked, quite a few military people with top positions were all held by draftees.

When you left after two years of service, you had to do Reserve. You just had to report for a day or two, so if there was a crisis going on somewhere, you had to be on reserve to be called up. It could've been the Korean war or the cold war at the time but nothing happened.

When I was de-mobbed I went straight to work. I was rubber-lining chemical tanks. That was a lovely job that took me all over Great Britain. The guys didn't like to go out, they wanted to stay in the factory, but I got on well with the Foreman (we played football for the company in St Helens so they had to look after me). Jock Kershaw his name was. If they had a job, I'd go and do it.

“Do your work and you can have what you want.”



I wanted to go out and work because you automatically get 25% bonus when you go so I used to go all over the chemical plants. I didn't mind, it was good money and good digs and I enjoyed being away. All my life I've enjoyed being out of the country. I left in 1963, went back in 1982 and came out 12 years ago.”

I like travelling, my son would say “Papa when are you going to stop going”, but I enjoyed my work so why should I stop. I did two lots in Saudi Arabia then I went to the Emirates just to look around. I got a good job and I thought I'm staying here, I had my own office in Dubai for many years. It's a lovely place, the sun shines every day. Lots of lovely hotels, I'm not a pub man, I'm a bar man - all these 5 star hotels, lovely discos, lovely bars, lovely women, it's the best life in the world in my opinion.

I did on and off for 14 years, I was sick when I left but I had to leave because of my pension. I'm very lucky to have found Shrewsbury.