

I was 13 years old when my father was assigned to Cigli AFB. We had already lived in Italy, Germany, then Italy again prior to Turkey. My father worked for Chrysler Missile from 1960-1961.

I was happy to run across your website and refresh my memory of Turkey. I remember well living on the base and going to school at the USAF-run school in Izmir. I, of course, remember the culture park and visiting Ephesus, among the many weekend trips we took. I must admit that at the age of 13 I had little interest in the historical sites, however.

I read your anecdotal stories with interest. Of course, like all stories that are passed along, the details sometimes differ from reality. I can clarify/add details to two of your stories.

The first story involves the Turkish soldier that shot our missile. When he was apprehended/arrested, he was flown by helicopter to, I believe, Istanbul. I know this for a fact because our family friend at the time, Colonel Devine, was on that helicopter. Midway through the flight the Turkish soldiers opened the helicopter door in order to throw out the perpetrator of the crime. Col. Devine, shocked at this prospect, intervened on the man's behalf. The Turkish soldiers listened to Col. Devine and closed the door. Apparently the American could not stomach this form of punishment. So, upon arrival in Istanbul and departing the helicopter, they shot him. Obviously, they felt that this was more acceptable to a Westerner. That story was told to us by Col. Devine, whose sons were my close friends back then.

The other story concerns the American driver who hit the pedestrian, and whose wife was arrested. I know that the details of that story are incorrect. I know this because my father was the driver of that car and I was the front seat passenger. In fact, my father had picked me up at school that day and we were traveling back to the base. A man literally jumped in front of our car during this trip and we hit him. We were driving a VW Beetle and he hit the front bumper and flew into the passenger side windshield. The windshield smashed into pieces but stayed within the frame. The man landed beside the road. We immediately stopped the car. My father told me not to get out, although he did. The man was bleeding, but not badly. A bus stopped and a crowd began to gather.

Of course, nobody spoke English. We hoped that the bus driver would know what to do. My father decided that the best thing he could do would be to get help ASAP, so we raced to the base and reported the accident.

No one was arrested. My father and I had to answer many questions at a police office located within a very grim looking prison. The Turkish Police were intimidating, but let us go. Within a couple of days it became clear that I, not my father, was being followed by Turkish men in a car. This happened over a few days. My father asked me if I was noticing anything suspicious and I told him about these men. Within a couple of days my father and I were taken to the airport and put on a plane to the US. I stayed with family friends and my father returned to Cigli. The rest of my family, my father, mother, younger brother and infant sister stayed on at Cigli for another six months.

Then, very quietly, they were taken to the airport, just like I was six months before, and put on a plane to the US. No fanfare. It happened out of the blue.

This all was a very scary ordeal. I wasn't sure what the crowd was going to do to my father. I know that nobody could have avoided this man's leap into our car. I was very afraid for my father. I also worried about my family in the following six months. My father inquired routinely as to the health of the pedestrian. We were only told, prior to even me leaving Turkey, that the man had a punctured lung. No other information was ever made available. We always worried about his ultimate fate, recognizing that it was probably grim.

I don't know, to this day, if the USAF knew what the Turkish Police had in mind for either me or my father. Our departures happened quickly, although six months apart. As I recall, after I left the Turkish Police were told that the plan, all along, was for me to leave early in order to start a new semester in school. This, of course, was not really true and I don't know if it appeased them.

I would like to have shared your website with my father, however, he died last year. He would have thoroughly enjoyed the pictures and stories, and I am sure would have contributed others. We never talked about the accident, at least not in the last thirty plus years. It seems strange that it occurred nearly 50 years ago, yet I remember it vividly.

Thanks again for sharing your pictures and stories. I hope that I clarified some of the anecdotal stories.

Ron Robertson