

Edward Loma

Drafted to the Army in 1969, Edward Loma remained in the service for three years. He attended basic training in Fort Polk, Louisiana, and began training for an upcoming assignment in Vietnam. He said part of the training showed him that children were sometimes among those killed in the war. "We were shown pictures in basic training, and told how sometimes kids were used against the soldiers and we might have to kill them. "I went AWOL because I wasn't going to Vietnam to kill kids," said Loma. He traveled home to McCurtain County. He was eventually arrested and put in the county jail for fifty days, then put in Broken Bow city jail for three months.

He was court martialed, and sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. "I was not mistreated. I was told there was a law that covered teenagers like me who could not take a human life. A lot of them were killed because they were sent over and couldn't kill the enemy. I was 19, just out of school, and didn't feel like I could take a human life."

Loma was originally discharged as dishonorable, and six months following, was upgraded to an honorable discharge.

"I liked the time in basic training and had really wanted to stay in the Army, but when I found out I may have to kill kids, I knew I would not be able to do that," said Loma.

He had trained as an infantryman. "We had to learn to use a lot of different weapons, and learned about booby traps."

Loma had relatives who served during Vietnam. "We were pretty much the same age. Uncle David Lewis served in the Army and Uncle Emerson Lewis served in the Air Force."

Loma married Glenda Wade from Battiast. "We were together 41 years. She passed in 2018." They had two girls and a boy. "I also have ten grandchildren," he said.

He still thinks about his time connected with the military. "I have learned that getting in church helps a lot. It straightened me out. I wasn't in church very long before I started preaching. I have been preaching almost 40 years. Currently, I attend Broken Bow El Bethel church. The pastor there was my brother when it was named. I have three brothers who also preach – there were seven of us and four are preachers. I am not a pastor, but I am there to help."

Loma said before going to the Broken Bow church, he had a church in Bethel. "Choctaw Baptist had about 25 people, then the congregation began to diminish. People slowly started moving out looking for jobs. The church finally lost the entire congregation."

He now lives near the Smithville Choctaw Center and enjoys traveling with the other senior citizens. Some of the trips he has enjoyed included Missouri and Kentucky.

Family traditions include, "Just being good to each other and going to church."

When asked what he wished more people knew about veterans, Loma said, "I guess everybody realized they do a good service and if it wasn't for them we wouldn't have the freedom we have today. I guess sometimes veterans are not treated like they should be. Some have been ignored. Some are homeless and do not have a place to stay. Veterans should not have to go through things like that."

Loma said, "I have been treated pretty well around here!"

His advice for future generations is, "The only way a family or person gets better is by turning their life over to the Lord going to church and learning what it takes to be a Christian."