

Ronnie Parent, Spiro, was a member of the Seabees

Ronnie Douglas Parent, Spiro, Oklahoma, served in the U.S. Seabees from 1969 to 1970. He rose to the rank of Utility 2 (UT2) while in the service. Parent served as a Naval Advisor to the Vietnamese Military stationed on the Goda Hau River at an advanced tactical support base by Cambodia.

Parent signed up for thirty months, spending six months at boot camp at Gulf Port, Mississippi. During boot camp, we were in Hurricane Camilla. The hurricane blew away the barracks and everything. It nearly blew me away! It blew away the building I was in," he said. Because of the hurricane, Parent and the other troops were put on search and recovery detail, looking for bodies.

After six months in Gulf Port, Parent was sent to Coronado Island, California for training, then to Vietnam for thirteen months. "I worked with the Marines for part of the time I was in Vietnam. I was with a Naval Advisory Group to the Vietnamese. We patrolled rivers at night and I was an advisor to the Vietnamese," he said. While working as a Seabee with the Marines, Parent received his 5<sup>th</sup> promotion.

"We were on a little base on the Cambodian Border – sometimes we would eat steak or lobster – the best to be had – but nothing to go with them. I missed hamburgers and fresh milk," said Parent.

He honors the U.S. Flag. "People don't know what the flag means," said Parent. "As long as we had the United States Flag flying (on our location), we had support and supplies. When we left, and took our flag, the Vietnamese flag was the only one flying. The support and supplies from the U.S. stopped. I realized then how strong the U.S. is and how they ensure a peace."

Upon returning from overseas, he went home, and received an early out with honorable discharge. Prior to enlistment, Parent had taught school for two years. "I was single, I was 25 years old, I was going to get drafted, so I just joined the Seabees," he said. The highest rank he received while in the military was an E-5.

"I knew going in that the military was not going to be my lifetime career," he said. After discharge, Parent taught at Spiro for over 20 years. He also served as the school's Principal part of his career at Spiro Public Schools. "I was also Mayor of Spiro for fifteen years – from 2004 to 2021," Parent said.

He married Jane Ann Parent in 1976.

Parent was commended for his service and named Choctaw Nation Veteran of the Month for January 2022. He is from District 4 of the Choctaw Nation.

Advice from Parent to future generations is, "Work hard and care about your country."