

Veterans interviews – RETURN TO: Judy Allen, Choctaw Historic Projects, PO Box 1210, Durant OK 74702 – judy.allen@choctawnation.com. 580.513.7984.

Interview conducted by: Judy Allen at (location): Veteran home in McAlester Date and time: 9-8-23 @ 10am

NAME -- Alex Staples

Birthday --11-16-46

PHONE –

Next of Kin and their contact info:

Billy Staples:

Are you Choctaw? Can you share a copy of your CDIB and/or Membership card? y

In which branch did you enter? Army

Division -- 95th Army Reserve

Unit --

Were you Drafted or Enlisted or Commissioned? – Enlist

(If given a choice) Why did you choose that branch?

Senior year, the boys decided what we wanted to do a couple of us went together, some were already enlist, We all went to basic together at Fort Polk – 8 weeks. Also went to Fort Bliss TX. We came home a couple of weeks then drove down to Fort Bliss. They got released before me and I flew back home.

RANK at discharge: E-6 Staff Sgt.

Years served – from- nov of 63 to -- 69

Peace or wartime? Vietnam war. We stayed nervous the whole time. I never had to go overseas.

Where did you attend basic training? --

WHERE DID YOU SERVE ? –

The two forts and McAlester. Met once a night through the week and once a month spent a weekend. We would go to LA in the summer for two weeks.

What was your job while in service? – I went in Supply at Fort Bliss and ended up being changed back to infantry before I got out. They changed the whole 95th. We were supposed to help train others.

Did you make any special friends in service? Who were they and do you have any stories? -

Simp McClendon was one of them, Jerry Null.

And commanding officers that you especially remember?

Capt. Farrady was Co Commander.

Were there any animals (work or pet) around the areas you served? If so, what was their role? –

Was there a point during your service, that you decided the military was, or was not, the right career choice? (Please explain) –

At the time I had other things on my mind. I was not married in the '70's. We divorced and I married three more times. I have two sons by Deb, the second wife.

I drove a truck and was gone a lot. It takes a special woman for that.

Is there a battle or point during your service that you would like to describe so that future generations can better understand what military life can be – for better or worse?

Everybody needs to get some of that. These young kids, I think it is good for them. It teaches you a lot about respect and this and that. I think it would help a lot of them.

MEDALS AND CITATIONS RECEIVED

Sharpshooter rifle

Stories of Military Service:

What or who did you leave behind when you joined the service? (family, child, pet)

Parents Alec and Jackie Staples. They had to sign for me because I was seventeen. My dad was in the Philippines in WWII. They were supportive of my decision. I had two sisters, Jerie and Lynn. Jerie passed when I was living in Atoka.

How did you get to your initial point of entry?

Enlisted McAlester

What type of training or schooling did you have?

What is your most vivid memory of your time training or in school? What was the BEST part? What was the WORST part

It was hot and humid (we went in summertime). The barrack had no air conditioning, which we were not used to AC anyway. The food was all right. We had marches to see how fast you could get from point A to point B at a quick step. I do good to go to the mailbox and back anymore.

Did you serve alongside other Native/American Indians? How did that inform your experience?

I really don't know -

What did you think about the chow? (at base and in the field!)

Every now and then they would serve steak. I kind of liked the steaks.

What was your first assignment after basic training?

In supply – whatever needed done. We had a Sgt who was over supply and we made sure people got what they needed.

Did you receive any specialized training? If so, what?

Did you qualify with equipment (vehicles, aircraft, radios, weapons, etc.)?

(If Yes) What was training with that equipment like

What was the hardest part of training?

Basic was tough, but not too bad for me and my buddies. Some of those boys you could tell had not done a day's work. During summer my buddies and I would haul hay and stuff. WE had to walk the money bars before every meal to get into the mess hall. Some of those poor boys would have blisters on their hand.

Did you receive any promotions? Could you tell me about them?

They would give you orders to let you know you had been promoted. Would reflect on next paycheck. At first paid monthly. We would have to report for pay in active day. They would pay in cash. Reserves would pay every three months.

What was the hardest part of the military life-style for you to adapt to? Why do you think it was?

Being away from home – just 17 yrs old. There was no privacy whatsoever, for anything.

What was the easiest part of the military life-style for you to adapt to? Why do you think it was?

Wartime Service vs. peacetime service.

Where did you serve?

Were you in a combat, combat support, or combat service support role? Or did the war zone make that designation irrelevant?

(If combat/ wartime) How did your combat (wartime) experience change you?

What kinds of friendships and camaraderie did you form while serving, and with whom?

How did you stay in touch with family and friends? Letters. Got to make a call every now and then if we had PX privileges

What did you do for recreation or when you were off duty?

Me and Jerry Null went to Juarez a lot. There wasn't much for us for recreation.

Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual events?

Was there something you did for "good luck?"

What was the best part of your service experience? Things you learned, you noticed later things you picked up in service – discipline – it teaches you a lot.

Do you recall the day service ended? Where were you when your service ended? ▪ Did you return home? Where were you?

Got out of reserves after spent my time. You were tied down. I was not driving truck then, but I wanted to. You had to be at reserves at certain times and had to go to LA for 2 weeks in summer. You had to make sure you were here for that

How did you readjust to civilian life? Did you work or go back to school?

Went to truck driving. Had been driving in hay field since 14, Friends showed me.

Reflections

How did your military service experiences affect your life?

What are some life lessons you learned from your military service?

Discipline; you learn to be a better person. You know you have got friends and you depend on each other.

Are there lessons to be learned from the way Native communities treat their veterans?

Seems like Natives pay a little more attention. They have reg VA and Choctaw VA. Both help if you need it.

How has your military service impacted your feelings about war and the military in general?

I knid of know what the guys go through even though I didn't go over. You know more about what goes on than the average person. My dad never talked about it a lto but I know stationed in phillipies, they went through hell there.sometimes diplomacy works, sometimes it doesn't and the country will still continue to make them. It depends. We can't be pushed around, bullied.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to share your recollections of your military service.

Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?

Is there anything else we should talk about that we haven't covered?

What do you wish more people knew about veterans?

Kind of what they go through and tell them thank you.

Native American veterans?

Questions not related to your military life:

Where were you born and who were your parents and siblings? Any of them veterans?

mcalester

What did your parents/grandparents do for a living?

Mother had a job at sewing factory; she went to work at a Rockwell to make sauter boards for airplane. They made some for astronauts. Father did this and that and was a deputy sherrif for 8 years for Pitts Co and worked at prison for several years as a guard. He farmed for a while after Army. We had a dairy for a while.

Where did you go to school? (youth and adult)

What did you do for fun growing up

Did you have brothers and sisters?

What are some family traditions that have been passed down?

Gatherings at holidays. Always had family on weekends and holidays. Always a lot of people at our house. We wrre around Arpeler and that was the gathering place.

What was it like growing up Choctaw? Did you ever face adversity as a youth, or as an adult?

Do you speak any Choctaw? no

Did you marry and have children? Tell me about them, including their names.

Did you have a non-military career after service?

Do you have advice for future generations?

They need to straighten up. I am kind of worried about ones coming up now. I was trying to ell a younger guy the other day. Had doors and windows changed and save the old door for a person. He started to yig it down and said that game I play comes up with all kinds of things to figure.

How would you describe yourself?

Try to be a good father and grandfather, strive to be better today than I was yesterday.

What is most important invention you have seen in your lifetime

What has amazed you most during your lifetime:

I have seen quite a bit in my lifetime. Man to the moon, change of the cnetruey,

How has COVID 19 affected your life? _____didn't like mask wearing but I did. _____

Do you have any photos from your life (including time in the military, when you were a youth, during your career, adult life with family, or other photos that are important to you and your memories)? Can you share up to 15 of those photos with us? Please list a description of any photos you are sharing?

Can you share copies/images of any discharge papers or other military documents? Please list what they are:

Do you have any news clippings, significant event programs, or other material you would like to share? Please list the items.

Can you please share an image or copy of your DD214?

Anything else you would like to share or donate that helps tell your story?

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