

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): Phone call Date and time: 9-8-23 @ 2pm

NAME -- Dale Cantrell

Birthday -- 12/23/48

Next of Kin and their contact info:

Linda Cantrell

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

In which branch did you enter? Army

Division -- Joined reg army after grad HS 67 joined in 68; went to Ft Polk in April for basic and AIT, Infantry was cross trained in 63 Bravo was wheeled vehicle mechanic.

Unit --in Ft Polk they had a guy getting up on stage in khakis and said everyone going to jump school. I went to jump school at Ft Benning GA 2 weeks Airtrooper training. Then assigned to 82nd Airborne in NC.Ft Bragg. I was in the 3rd Brigade 505th Batallion stillpart of 82nd division in late 68 I got orders to go to VN. In army you usually go as a battalion or bridage. I had individual orders to go with a different unit. I t was Nov and I went to Vietnam in early 69 and stayed for a year. I was in infantry 9th Inf Div. I was in south VN in the Delta. I was assigned to infantry in late 69 the division was sent home and went to Frt riley KS. 1st 2 and 3rd brigade was staying there . I was in 3rd and stayed another one or two months. I wanted to be in an airborne unit. I volunteered for another year with airborne unit. Went home for 30 days then come back. My orders said report to 101st division and I went to the northern part of VN. Sayed about a year. Assisgned to a unit but orders are individuallyl. Camp Eagle and were with combat engineers.

Were you Drafted or Enlisted or Commissioned? – enlisted

(If given a choice) Why did you choose that branch? In Army they had US and AR - one was drafted and other you joined. I do not know why I chose Army. Just all I heard about. I saw pics of Uncle Earnie who was killed in the Battle of Bulge. I saw pic of him with a flat hat and bill.

RANK at discharge: E8, First Sgt

Years served – from- 1968 to -- 2008

Peace or wartime?

Where did you attend basic training? --

WHERE DID YOU SERVE ? – when to Vietnam and came back 1971, joined NG in 74-75 timeframe. Military Police with 45th NG I went in as E5 and got out 1995 as an E8; in this time frame we went to Germany several times, and Panama Canal as a MP and also worked at the Murrah Bldg bombing. I was First Sgt of the MP unit at that time. Provided security at the bombing. Our shift was 6 pm to 6 am. We worked with highway patrol, FBI, fire depts. - we all worked side by side.

In 1995 I was ready to retire. I had a Brig General from the National Guard and was offered an E5 spot in Infantry. A buddy in OK had an E8 spot in 75th in USAR Army Reserves with TSM Training and Support Battalion. I got up there and after 6 months the guy I replaced cam back and then moved to a truck driver. We had 20 people all driving 18 wheelers up and down highway, hauled everything from tanks to generators to food, anything that was required. I did this a year, then the guy left again and I got the MP job back, on the TSB we were train support bat.

We went across the USA evaluating other soldiers. We would go to a unit and check the number of people, and see who showed up for drills, and checking their qualifications and if they do the job right.

We went coast- to-coast to all the forts.

They activated me - and when you get activated, you go from state money to federal money. I would spend a week, two weeks or a month at one post and then go to the next. Evaluated training procedures to Army Standards.

My favorite role in service was as a MP. I was in 75th and stationed at Fort Sill. We went to Fort Bliss and watched MP escorting tanks as a training procedures. There was almost an accident and I stopped it. The commander said he wanted me and so I went back to active service in Regular Army.

MRD stands for Mandatory Retirement Date. The colonel said if I wanted to stay he would write a letter. One after 20 years, then after 30 and 2008 I was 60 years old.

2002 -08 was training people to go to Cuba. Trained others on how to put on handcuffs and escort and treat other religions with respect. I went to Cuba.

MEDALS AND CITATIONS RECEIVED

Stories of Military Service:

What or who did you leave behind when you joined the service? (family, child, pet)
Married in 73.

How did you get to your initial point of entry?

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

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

I met Calvin Carney. We were in Dong Tam (Army Base in Vietnam) and met him in PX. I was waiting in line and heard a voice from home.

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

It was between bad and terrible. But you survive. I spent a year in NG in 1990 and was in Desert Storm. Spent a year in the desert. Went from C-rations to MREs. We used to use C4 and light it up and cook off that.

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

(If Yes) What was training with that equipment like

Trucks and weapons, was a CLS Combat Life Saver, kind of like a medic. Treated shock and stopped bleeding

What was the hardest part of training?

I thought Fort Polk LA was the worst . People kicked you, pushed you around and there were mosquitos and snakes all over the place.

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

Father died when I ws about 4 and I had 8 brothers and sisters. The army wanted us to just do what we were told, and I had a little problem sometimes with discipline. I boxed at Ft Polk, Benning, Bragg and Vietnam and got knocked out everywhere I was.

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

Know what you are doing, and were told when to get up, etc. didn't have to make the decisions.

Wartime Service vs. peacetime service.

Where did you serve?

VN and Desert Storm

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?

Military helped me out quite a bit. Learned more self discipline and am more self driving . also learned to associate with right friends.

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

In VN were at NCO club and when I got married, we did a lot of sightseeing.

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

I worked for a get and go convenience store, Otasco, and worked for the state of OK in 1982 as a correctional officer.

Reflections

How did your military service experiences affect your life?

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

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

Ukraine, when Russia lined up troops on the border, we should have lined up troops on other side. It would be a show of force instead of a fight. I believe in an aggressive nature there. I have a hard time as a combat vet, talking to other vets who are not combat vets. Over the years I have learned better and that we need everybody.

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?

I was thinking every man and woman needs to go into the service for two yeas. Every Monday, I volunteer at the DAV here in Krebs as a service officer. I have helped people get disability approval.

What do you wish more people knew about veterans?

You see them on the streets with VN hats and some are white haired and potbellied.

Do you speak any Choctaw? no
