

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

Interview conducted by: Judy Allen at (location): his home Date and time: 1 pm Oct. 31

NAME -- Eldon Ward

---

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

---

**In which branch did you enter?** Enlisted in Army had it on mind to make a career of it. 2yrs, 8 mos, 18/2 days. Was blown up then spent several months in hospital. 4 or 5 months early out. in Vietnam in Laos .

---

Big push to stop the **Ho Chi Minh Trail** where supplies were brought down from North Vietnam – we got there and there were all kinds of underground tunnels full of ammo marked from every country in the world and even from McAlester Army ammo depot. We set charges in there and were going to blow it all up and were told to pull out and leave it alone. We pulled up to an old river bottom to pick up wounded. The enemy hit us again and My tank took the first round. It was a tank retriever. I was maintenance in recovery. My primary job, like all the guys, was infantry. I was always back up on tanks and personnel carriers when they went on a mission. That was my third time to get blown up. That time they got me for good. I have three big scars on right side of head, I had one here in throat, and the right hand - the whole palm was hanging by about a half inch of skin and third degree burns on right side of body. These injuries were from shrapnel. I lost most of hearing and sight on right side. I was evacuated out by helicopter – the first one. We were hit by an armor piercing round. Hit right in ammo storage rack full of explosives and grenades and rifle bullets. We were all sitting on top of retriever waiting on helicopters because it was so hot and humid. It was at least 120 degrees with high humidity. That was the Vietnamese best weapon – our predictability. I knew that but I had a weak moment and it cost me. I was sent to Quant Tri – to a MASH unit. That was not far from the demilitarized zone – it was the Mash hospital that was farthest north.

*\*\* The Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone was a demilitarized zone at the 17th parallel in Quang Tri province that was established as the dividing line between the two countries i.e. North Vietnam and South Vietnam from 22 July 1954 to 2 July 1976 when Vietnam was officially divided into the two military gathering areas\*\**

---

They operated on me and took all the metal fragments out of me, and doctor said I didn't have any blood left in me so they had needles in me giving blood. It was two weeks before I regained consciousness. The orderly would come in several times a day to move my head because I didn't have the strength to move my own head. The doctor said I shouldn't still be alive.

---

First time I was blown up we ran over a mine with the retriever and blew the whole bottom out, another time there was a USO show 30 or 40 miles away and we stole the Col.'s Jeep (3 or 4 of us) and we drove to watch the USO singing, we ran over a mine coming back, blew up jeep, turned it over. I got my back hurt then, but didn't realize it. All four of us were able to roll the jeep back over on it's wheels and started it and got home. The col was very upset the next day

when he saw what happened, but nobody knew anything about it. The Col was about like our chief. A very smart, compassionate man. He and the major (assist battallion Commander) were great guys. After that, it was just a bunch of Lieutenants with God syndrome and a bunch of alcoholics.

---

I came out as an E2. Three other guys who were like me, I made E5 in 14 and a half months in service and even in wartime, that is fast. A Lt. gave orders that did nothing for the war or our outfit. Just for his John Wayne image. Three other E5s did not buck up against it, and were killed.

---

I had already decided military wasn't for me and I was getting out when my time was up. I wanted to get my time in and get of that place. I saw the writing on the wall when I was in service even before I went to VN. That was when there were race riots and protests on college campuses. I wound up in a Co in KS that is 240 men, 18 white guys, one Indian and four Mexicans and the rest were black. I was based there almost a year. Basic was Fort Polk, LA and Belvoir, VA to train for heavy equipment operation and maintenance, then they sent me to KS to a supply co – trucks and one crane.

---

**Division --**

---

**Unit --**

---

**Were you Drafted or Enlisted or Commissioned?** – Enlisted Army because it does the true business.

---

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

---

The Army is the one who actually gets it done. I got friends in Navy – retired from Navy, Marines, Army.

---

**RANK at discharge:** E-2

---

**Years served – from-** 1966 **to --** 1969

---

**Peace or wartime?** VN War

---

**Where did you attend basic training?** --Fort Polk, LA

---

**WHERE DID YOU SERVE ?** – Vietnam; Belvoir, Riley KS, Carson Co, Yokahoma Japan and Fort Hood, TX.

---

I went to VA in Muskogee for years because of ear issues. There was a DAV staff who said I should file for disability. Tried for years but couldn't get it through. Now I am 80 percent and unemployable, so actually 100 percent disabled.

---

I was working at bullet factory in Savannah. I tried to stay to myself. As long as no one bothers me we get along good. There were some guys who were supposedly in VN, and different ones told me they didn't worry about the ones that ran their mouths, but were worried about me because I was quiet. They eventually tried to get rid of me. I was a ten-point veteran and they were having layoffs. They told me when I first went out there. The first time I went out there after service, they were going to put me as a forklift operator. A guy was there and supposed to

check us out. Two of them were talking and one said he wished VN would have lasted three more years so he could get his place paid for.

---

A ten point veteran – if you are a veteran and you hire on at a government job and you have any kind of disability, that gives you tenpoint preference. When they do Reduction in Force (RIFS) and Layoffs, you have to have so many points and that goes by the number of years you have worked for the government. A veteran who has been wounded and has Purple Heart automatically have ten points.

---

I am associated with Choctaws now. Councilman Karr – the first time he ran for election – I had not met him but researched all the candidates. Everything I could find out, Robert was the best, so I voted for him. After he won the election, I wanted to know something about the CN so I made an appointment and came talked to him. He told me about the Wednesday senior meals and he tried to share all he could about the CN. I started going there and realized I knew people there. Some were even relations. I really enjoy most of the people out there. They are a very good people. Native Americans, the closer they are to full blood it takes longer to warm up to you. They form opinions of you and if they form a bad opinion, it is hard to overcome. If they like you, they will go a long way for you. Robert always had the latest, up to date information. He has different councilmen and speakers from departments in the nation. When I saw the chief's slogan "Together We Are More." I can tell he really cares for the young and the old. I can see the together we are more on the exterior. He goes to OKC and DC – the more we are a united nation, that gives him more of a backup. More clout. He wants people to come together more as a family. The older I am the more I study scripture and the more I see that is where people need to be. Things are going to change drastically in the future.

---

**What was your job while in service?** - Infantry; tank recovery

---

Did you make any special friends in service? Who were they and do you have any stories? - Yes, a big Latino sergeant knelt beside me to say "Indian, the gook that shot you is now in hell, chewing on a 60 round."

---

**And commanding officers that you especially remember?** The Battalion commander was a brilliant tactician and handler of men.

---

**Were there any animals (work or pet) around the areas you served?** If so, what was their role? Food for natives.

---

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

---

At Nam, only had alcoholic sergeants and god-syndrom Lts.

---

**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?**

---

Go along with training but depend on one's own mind for survival. The US government is too predictable.

---

I wrote up a study the timeline of God, at the beginning he said let there be light and Jesus began to shine.

---

## **MEDALS AND CITATIONS RECEIVED**

Purple Heart

---

## Stories of Military Service:

---

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

none

---

**How did you get to your initial point of entry?**

Wright brothers' first invention.

---

**What type of training or schooling did you have?**

Infantry, Heavy Equipment, Maintenance and Operation. Track vehicle recovery.

---

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

**Worst:** Trying to turn men into robots. USO parts, gang fights, racial rites.

**Best** of training was having fun. I was a grown man at 9 years old and had siblings older and younger than me.

I worked for a couple of farms and they paid me with milk and meat and stuff. My dad was more than ½ Choctaw. Both grandpas were on the roll. My dad was alcoholic and mom was in love with herself. I was pretty much on my own from the time I was 9 years old. From that experience growing up when I went in the service, their job was to take kids and turn them into men and one way they do that is try to humiliate and scare them, break them down. Some of that stuff was so funny to me and the Sgts would get on to me for laughing at the other guys they were getting on to.

In training, we had to get military clothes and fill a duffle that weighs about 70 pounds. The Sgts wanted us to run up the hill carrying the bag. I got halfway up the hill and this kid fell down and was crying like a baby. The Sgt was in his face chewing him out.

I didn't conform. I wasn't scared so they had me on extra details trying to break me down. I would take a pic and shovel to parade ground and dig a big hole, then carry the dirt with a wheelbarrow to dump it. Then I would go to another area, dig a hole and bring the dirt back to fill in the hole in the parade ground, then would have to go fill in the second hole.

---

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

There were other NA there and would look at me and laugh when they saw me doing the extra detail. The Native Hawaiians were buds of a feather, had to stick together. I served with Navajos too.

I had a brother and sister older and a brother and sister younger. The younger sister was killed in a car wreck when she was 13. I was in Belvoir. My oldest sister died of cancer this year.

---

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

As good as I ever had at the time.

Most of the time I was in the field and ate C-rations and things like that. I never did base camp. I learned early on. They had a big tent and chow hall and you could get pretty good food. When I first got to VN, it was at Da Nang - at a big airport. Right in the middle of no place. No

protection. No way to hide. They gave us an orientation to VN, we sat down on the runway. A guy said you don't have to worry, we haven't been hit here in 3 months. We were there about ten min and the Vietnamese gave us an orientation too, they starting lobbing us. The guy next to me had shrapnel go in one armpit and out the other one. He was dead before he hit the ground. We hadn't even been issued rifles. We were sitting ducks. I knew right then, if I was going to survive, I would have to depend on myself.

---

I got busted five times in 8 months. Disobeying, insubordination, I was at the farthest Landing Zone (LZ) North. The French had been in there, building churches, bridges, etc. Some of our guys one evening in a personnel carrier and the gooks blew the bridge when they were on top of it. They sunk in the river. The Major was there first and they called us in with the retriever. The river was at monsoon season. It was swift and out of bank. The Major tied a rope to his waist standing on the retriever. He went down to open the door to get the guys out. The pressure was too great. He couldn't pull handle. They finally pulled him back up on personnel carrier. I was a lot smaller and lighter than him and I tied the rope around me and finally got the door open. We got two guys out alive. Later we went to a ceremony in base camp.

---

This Marine Major was getting a silver star because he was flying around in a helicopter that night coordinating that operation. My major said he had never talked to that guy, did you? I said no, I have never heard of them. Another little ceremony later on, gave me and the major a silver star. I told them to take it and stick it where the sun don't shine. They said it was insubordination. I didn't get the Silver Star and there is no record of any of this.

---

**What was your first assignment after basic training?**

---

AIT

---

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

---

**(If Yes) What was training with that equipment like**

---

Vehicles, radios, weapons – it was interesting.

---

**What was the hardest part of training?** Ignorant instructors

---

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

---

Became an E-5 specialist in 14 and a half months, supposedly fast, even in wartime.

---

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

---

Alcoholic Sergeants and god-dyndrome lieutenants. USA politicians in a wrongful war and taking any one they could get.

---

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

---

Work, because it was all I could remember doing.

---

**Wartime Service vs. peacetime service.**

**Where did you serve?**

---

Vietnam, USA, Japan

---

**Were you in a combat, combat support, or combat service support role? Or did the war zone make that designation irrelevant?** Combat and combat support; in and around demilitarized zone, based in south Vietnam with missions in Vietnam and Laos.

---

**(If combat/ wartime) How did your combat (wartime) experience change you?** Have had the least amount possible to do with society since my return.

---

**What kinds of friendships and camaraderie did you form while serving, and with whom?** In ways, it is closer than marriage, even though time and distance.

---

**How did you stay in touch with family and friends?** Occasional letter

---

**What did you do for recreation or when you were off duty?** Stateside, was sports events. No such thing in the Vietnam.

---

**Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual events?** Many.

---

**Was there something you did for "good luck?"** Talked to God, stayed to myself

---

**What was the best part of your service experience?** Got to know people in truth.

---

**Do you recall the day service ended? Where were you when your service ended? ■ Did you return home? Where were you?** Medical – Fort Hood TX, went to see old man that gave me a place to stay before entering service.

---

**How did you readjust to civilian life? Did you work or go back to school?** Have not adjusted. Worked and went to school at the same time.

---

## **Reflections**

**How did your military service experiences affect your life?**

---

I have friends who retired out of the Army, Navy Marines, and I have a lot of respect for them and their opinions. It is hard because when I was in basic they taught us what communism is and how it takes over a country.

I saw the same thing in KS and when I got to Nam I saw the communism. There are things that my own gov, my own command, put me through trying to degrade me. It really resurfaces with the stuff in Israel going in.

---

I feel for the guys and am proud of the military. The way it is used, is sickening. Been that way since I got out.

---

"Do not trust people, hate thought of government."

---

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

---

Most people live by what someone else tells them (religion, politics) Most follow the majority. Mindless people are the most dangerous thing on earth.

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

Native are as I perceive family would be.

---

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

---

Every war stems from someone wanting something the owner will not give up, so it is stolen or you will accept "my god" or I will kill you. Military is the means by which man-gods get what they want.

---

## **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?**

Many men have a built-in desire to rule over people, some even desire to kill other people without being held accountable.

---

He received a Purple Heart; etc

---

**Is there anything else we should talk about that we haven't covered?** Combat vets seldom talk about their experience for several reasons. Today, people are beginning to follow what we said 50 years ago.

---

**What do you wish more people knew about veterans?** Combat vets have a wisdom in the value of history that foretells the future. Total stupid is by choice.

---

When I first came back, Those of us who were combat veterans –  
(My wife and others comment about it a lot. )

We would go to public places, couldn't sit with our back to the door and would have to sit next to a window. Many of our family and friends thought we were nut cases. Then all the active shooter incidents started taking place a few years ago, and now you can't find a seat with your back to the wall.

People remember what we said a few years ago about them coming to the US. Now it is here and there are other things starting to hit the surface.

The Lord said to honor the father and the mother that your life may be longer. You think about that and we had two babies - died at 1 day old and 2 days old.

After a while I think on this and what it is the parents have lived thorough experiences like I have and was near death. I tell my kids and other people about these things to avoid. That is what God was talking about.

**Questions not related to your military life:**

**Wife** – Esther – married 53 years Oct 2023 . Married after he got out of military.

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

---

Born in Smithville on Mountain Fork River in SE Oklahoma. Father was York Ward, Grandfather was Coleman Ward. My grandfather had a tourist camp on the highway at Mountain Fork.

---

He is a believer of Jesus and committed to God. No specific church – man's doctrine.

---

**What did your parents/grandparents do for a living?**

---

Parents: York Ward and Muriel,

Gparents: Coleman Ward and ??Willie::?? Not sure of her name.

Other grandparents were John Lewis and Minnie  
Grandfather was a business man and father was a con-man

---

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

---

Smithville one year – attending 19 schools in SE Okla, including a short time in McAlester,

What did you do for fun growing up: I made a living for four siblings off the land, Animals and God were my teachers.

---

**Did you have brothers and sisters?** Two older and two younger

---

**What are some family traditions that have been passed down?** none

---

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

Both. Choctaw kids would fight, sometimes daily but, there was little to no bullying. There is a big difference. Most USA Whites, still today think Indians are beneath them.

---

**Do you speak any Choctaw?** Very little

---

---

**Did you marry and have children? Tell me about them, including their names.** Yes, three, two are dead.

---

**Did you have a non-military career after service?** Heavy equipment maintenance.

---

---

**Do you have advice for future generations?**

---

My best advice to anyone is to study the book of John in the New Testament and study it over and over and then go back and study the book of Daniel and book of Revelation. You cannot know Daniel and Rev until you have studied the entire scripture. When you do, the book of John tells you to commit to God and believe in the Lord Jesus or you will not know anything.

I say look at it word for word and what it says because if you listen to the words that God said, he said this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Him shall you hear, then you go to Jesus. He said Man shall live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. That personal relationship with Jesus means exactly what it says. You can't have a denomination telling you what to do what to think and have your personal relationship with them, the relationship has to be with Jesus. A lot of people who confess Jesus, just don't seem to believe there is the evil one and if they do believe, they have no idea how deceptive he is. The Lord Jesus said he would do war against those who believe and follow the evil one.

He will win the war.

---

Apostle Paul said there will be some of us still standing at the end. The two witnesses are not people – they are Faith and Conscience. It is in all people who truly believe and truly follow. All the people who have faith and conscience to direct them. They will be dead 3 1/1 days, then all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. When Jesus says rise up, there will be an earthquake, 7000 people will cry out to the Lord. All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. We shall not all sleep, but we shall be standing when the Lord comes.

---

**How would you describe yourself?**



---

A disgruntled old dark cloud

---

**What is most important invention you have seen in your lifetime**

---

Electro magnetic generator has yet to be understood in it's value

---

**What has amazed you most during your lifetime:** The fulfilment of God's prophecies

---

---

**How has COVID 19 affected your life?** \_\_It is the crashing blow to excellence in Liberty\_\_\_\_\_

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:  
Has his dd214

---

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

---

Anything else you would like to share or donate that helps tell your story?  
US Gov will spare nothing in trying to break spirit of fullgown, God fearing man.

---