

James M Edwards, WWI Code Talker

James Morrison Edwards was born to Morrison and Lena Carney Edwards on October 6, 1898 at Glover, OK. Edwards attended Armstrong Academy in Caddo, Oklahoma and the Folsom Methodist Training School in Smithville. We was known for his laughter and was often joking around with his buddy Ben Carterby.

Corporal Edwards was one of the first to transmit messages in Choctaw in October of 1918. He was in Co E, 142nd Infantry, 36th Division.

He told a reporter in a December 21, 1941 Daily Oklahoman article that every order over the phone became known to the enemy and surprised were impossible – until the messages began being transmitted in the Choctaw language. According to the article, Edwards and Mitchell Bobb, Calvin “Cabin” Wilson, Solomon Louis, Joe Davenport, Noel Johnson (all fellow students from Armstrong Academy near Bokchito) worked together as Code Talkers. First, they developed code words for Army terms that had no counterparts in the Choctaw language. Field artillery became “big gun” and “fast shooting gun” became machine gun. “Big group” was a company, “twice big group” was a battalion and “eight group” meant squad.

According to the Daily Oklahoman article, Edwards said he was in charge of the message relay team, and he and Noel Johnson were stationed at division headquarters with the commanding officers. Louis and Wilson wee sent to the front-line trenches while Davenport and Bobb manned phones at battalion headquarters.

The newspaper says, “Success was immediate. Secret orders remained a secret with those concerned. Word leaked back from the German lines that he Kaiser’s most expert linguists were stumped.”

Later, during WWII, Edwards tried to enlist again, stating, “Maybe they (German forces) still can’t talk Choctaw.” Edwards worked for the BIA and served the Choctaw people as a pastor of the Indian Methodist Church. James Edwards died on October 13, 1962.,