

Choctaw Veteran Roger Clayton

Information from Russell Merryman: July 24, 2024

Roger Clayton told me, 'The first year I was in the Seabees. Then I was on the aircraft CVS 47 out of Long Beach, California.'

Presently, Roger lives in Arizona; where he has lived most of his life! Early on in life he lived up in Oregon/Washington area with first wife, mother to his two daughters. She passed away due to a hit and run driver. Some years later, he remarried a second time to country singer April.

Roger descends from Wm. P. Merryman & wife Anny Scott buried in the Skullyville Choctaw cemetery. Their son David Colbert Merryman (his wife Cordelia "Delia" E. Blair, and English woman). And, their youngest boy being Leo Earl Merryman (noted in the book "Choctaw Original Enrollees" by the Samuels. Roger's mother being Beatrice "Bea" (Merryman) whom married an Edward Clayton!

Wm. P. Merryman helped form the Choctaw government... per author. He was a Frenchman who came from Tennessee. While his son David C. Merryman was a U.S. Deputy Sheriff in Indian Territory! He parents had lived in Spiro and Skullyville areas. One of David's siblings John Scott —namesake of their maternal grandfather— biography in a history of Oklahoma tells how John owned the General Store in town! (Hence, it was something, to see also a store named "Merryman" in Marvel's recent "Echo" series)!

Roger is also a registered Choctaw artist having did paintings of the U.S. flag, and too works with gourds he grows. While he was in the Navy stationed in the Long Beach, California he would often visit by himself, and sometimes bring Navy friend Ronnie Parr with him. There in Long Beach he'd visit his mother's sister who lived there - namely Rudeen Rose (nee Merryman) - and her husband and his niece Shirley (my (Russ) & sister's future mom). Roger would also likewise visit his one brother who also who lived a stone's throw away down in the next block. Besides a brother, Roger had three sisters: the late Lola, "Jackie" and "Donna." And several nieces and nephews over the years, He would also continue even years later to visit his aunt Rose, her daughter and grandkids years (I being one of them).

The Navy base that used to be in Long Beach had to be about a couple of miles from where my late Grandma Rudeen Rose Merryman, my mom, my sister and Debra all lived near one another. Hence, Roger was (back then) frequently visiting us, those of his extended family! The Navy hospital within near a mile in Long Beach is still there in Long Beach, Calif., to this day.

Some of the family is also in contact with Merryman family who come from our common ancestor David C. Merryman and sister Mary (Merryman) Gregory. Some descendants, the Roses, mostly living up in Bakersfield area so we've seen them often at the Choctaw Bakersfield Gatherings! While my great-grandpa Leo's oldest, elder brother Walter Green Merryman's descendants live in Oklahoma as well as one niece of Roger's Ellen who moved there to get closer to Heritage and Choctaw roots.