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A World War II Eagle Tail Dance:
Oral Histories of Eastern Band Cherokee Veterans

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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By Angela Duncan Ragan

This study explores oral histories of Eastern Band veterans of World War II. This study is both a compilation of World War II veteran's oral histories as well as a literary analysis of the oral histories in order to uncover the stories within the stories. This dissertation seeks to restore the orality of the Eagle Tail Dance by presenting the oral histories of Eastern Band Cherokee veterans of World War II. It also seeks to understand the complexity of reasons for enlistment into the military by these veterans as well as how their service affected both their lives and their community.

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Angela Ragan
March 25, 2014

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As noted by early explorer and military diplomat Lieutenant Henry Timberlake during the mid-1700s, the Eagle Tail Dance of the Cherokee was a warrior dance that served several purposes. When the dance was a sendoff into war it was utilized to build up warriors' spirit and energy. When used upon the return from war it was to relieve the burden of the warriors by spreading the burden of warfare among the people for all to carry. This recounting of their acts in battle set a history of the war. Lastly, the Eagle Tail Dance was used to care for the poor within the tribe:

When any of their people are hungry, as they term it, or in distress, orders are issued out by the headmen for a war-dance, at which all the fighting men and warriors assemble; but here, contrary to all their other dances, one only dances at a time, who, after hopping and capering for near a minute, with a tomahawke in his hand gives a small hoop, at which signal the music stops till he relates the manner of taking his first scalp, and concludes his narration, by throwing on a large skin spread for that purpose, a string of wampum, piece of plate, wire, paint, lead, or any thing he can most conveniently spare; after which the music strikes up and he proceeds in the same manner through all his warlike actions: then another takes his place, and the ceremony lasts till all the warriors and fighting men have related their exploits. The stock thus raised, after paying the musicians, is divided among the poor. The same ceremony is made use of to recompence any extraordinary merit. This is touching vanity in a tender part, and is an admirable method of making even imperfections conduce to the good of society.¹

The beauty and the pageantry of the Eagle Tail Dance is evident to any who have witnessed it performed; however, the meaning behind the dance has been obscured through the years as it has been performed as an art form and a preservation method,

¹ Henry Timberlake, *Lieut. Henry Timberlake's Memoirs, 1756 -1765 with Annotation, Introduction and Index by Samuel Cole Williams, LL.D.*, (Mountain Press, 2001), 92-93.

rather than a performance of orality used to help the tribe at large (through gifting) and the individual through a cleansing recounting of battle. This dissertation seeks to replace the forgotten orality by presenting the oral histories of Eastern Band Cherokee veterans and perhaps through its restoration a renewal of effects of the orality – a gift to the people hearing and restoration of *tohi* (balance) to the tellers.

Indigenous peoples of the world have relied on oral tradition to perpetuate their sacred histories, teachings, and lifeways; Native North America was no different. Oral traditions are an important part of life for every Native American, whether living on the reservation or in urban settings; the stories tell us who we are and from where we originated; they have power. These oral traditions however, are different from, and yet related to, the oral histories of today's historian, anthropologist, sociologist, or other academics' understanding of what constitutes an oral history. There are three primary genres of Native American oral histories: sacred histories/myths, as told to life histories, and today's oral histories in which tribal members participate in the collection of life stories that revolve around a specific time or event in the life of the people.

The first and primary oral tradition among Native peoples is the sacred histories and creation stories, often termed "myths" in academic writing. For native peoples these are the most important, and the oldest of our oral traditions. These "stories" tell us of our ancestors, how our tribal homelands were created, and the relationships between humans, animals, plants, and Mother Earth at large. It is these stories that have been told and retold since time immemorial, and they are the sacred texts upon which we base our lives and our oral stories today. Within this category there are tribal histories, clan histories,

and family histories, each different and yet interrelated. The tribal histories are the most prevalent in written works as clan and family histories are private and are not to be “sold” or “given” to outsiders. These tribal histories, and especially the creation stories, are the oldest told to Europeans and Euro-Americans.

In the late 1800s with the development of anthropology and linguistic studies the collection of Native American oral histories skyrocketed. John Wesley Powell, the founding director of the Bureau of American Ethnology, and Franz Boas, the father of American anthropology, are both credited with creating and establishing the ethnolinguistic approach to collecting oral histories and life stories that would dominate the scholarly collection of Native American histories and cultures for the next fifty years and would continue to influence the collection of oral histories until today. Powell was interested in native languages and therefore focused on the linguistic aspect of the oral stories collected while Boas was more interested in the stories and the cultural significance of them to the people studied. It is toward Boas that the majority of anthropologists during this era would lean when collecting oral histories.

One such anthropologist is James Mooney. Mooney was employed by Powell and collected linguistic information as well as cultural and social information about the Eastern Cherokee during his 1896 and 1898 fieldwork. His work *Cherokee Sacred Myths and Formulas* first published in the Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1900, while containing some linguistic work, was devoted almost entirely to the sacred histories of the Cherokee and the sacred formulas of their medicine men. This work is an excellent example of work done by anthropologists and ethnographers during this period.

Mooney interviewed extensively during his fieldwork among the Eastern Band of the Cherokee and the Western Cherokee in Oklahoma. However, the myths published were not the exact stories told to Mooney, but rather an amalgamation of several storytellers' versions of the myth compiled and rewritten by Mooney to reflect the spirit of the myth rather than the actual wording and social connotations. Mooney calls this a verification process in which one version, most often one told by Swimmer, is compared, contrasted and then combined with several other storytellers' versions in order to create a comprehensive version that Mooney then published.² In a fashion, Mooney was recreating a form of the Eagle Tail Dance. Warriors who performed the dance, directly after a battle, recounted events in the battle in front of other warriors so that perceptions could be questioned and countered insuring that the veracity of the battle could be created and then perpetuated with a comprehensive version of the battle or at least a true one-sided account as members of the opposing tribe were, of course, not heard.

For anthropology and ethnography the focus of research among Native Americans during this era was the social and cultural functioning of the stories. Linguistic researchers focused on language meaning and intonation. None of the groups focused on the stories themselves. The academic focus differs greatly from the reasons Native Americans tell and preserve their sacred stories. As Simon Ortiz states in an interview in *Winged Words*, it is not just speaking or listening that is important to Native people but rather "that whole process . . . of that society in terms of its history, its

² James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, Dover 1995 edition of the original 1900 publication in the *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1897-1898*, New York: Dover Publishing Company, 1995, 236-238.

culture, its language, its values and subsequently, its literature. So it's not merely a simple matter of speaking and listening, but living that process."³ Oral histories of veterans allow for this whole process to occur, just as in ancient times when veterans returned and performed the Eagle Tail Dance, veterans today can and do retell their stories and in doing so help one another and their community to understand where they have been and how the community at large can help them heal, oftentimes just by listening to their stories and sharing the burden of knowing war. This dissertation involves the entire process of listening, telling, and living the stories that create and sustain the EBCI not just the stories or the essence of the stories. This study seeks to reveal how the histories of the veterans are not just stories of how history shaped their lives but also about how they have shaped at least one listener's life through the process of the telling.

In the 1950s and 1960s more anthropologists, ethnographers, and sociologists became aware of Native peoples' desire to tell their own stories and Native writers' began incorporating traditional tribal histories into their writing. During this era, Native American myths and stories moved from being something collected by scholars to stories "told" or written by Native Americans either as compilations of their tribal stories or within their own fictional and non-fictional works. One such work is N. Scott Momaday's 1968 work, *House Made of Dawn*, in which Momaday skillfully weaves Pueblo oral traditions into and throughout his work, creating in essence an oral

³ Simon Ortiz, "Interview" Coltelli, *Winged Words* 104, qtd in A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, *American Indian Literatures: An Introduction, Bibliographic Review, and Selected Bibliography*, New York: MLA, 1990, 5.

performance in a written work. Collections such as *The Way it Was, Inaku Iwacha: Yakima Legends* compiled by Virginia Beavert (Yakima) published in 1974 relates traditional stories in a tribally specific and approved way, reclaiming Native stories for whom they were kept. In many ways the oral histories within this dissertation also reclaim the story for the teller. Oftentimes veterans only tell their story to fellow veterans; by their willingness to share their stories outside of this circle the veterans in this study have reclaimed their right to their stories as well as the purpose for sharing them, healing – healing that only comes from sharing.

Sharing life stories to ethnographers became a genre at the turn of the twentieth century. With the publication of Niehart's *Black Elk Speaks* in 1932 as-told to life histories became popular among academics studying Native America and its peoples. The “authors” of these works were often the editor's main informant or a long time informant on tribal history and culture who were approached to tell their life story. The interactions between interviewer and interviewee, the cultural dynamics surrounding the interview, and the questions of language, orality, and literacy had yet to be raised as important aspects of the interview.⁴

In *Native American Life-History Narratives: Colonial and Postcolonial Navajo Ethnography* Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez contends that during this time period researchers' zeal for “objectivity” as well as their training and adherence to Freudian

⁴ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (Boston: Methuen and Co., 1982); Linda Martin Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others.” in *Who Can Speak? Authority and Critical Identity*. Judith Roof and Robyn Wiegman, editors. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995; Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez, *Native American Life-History Narratives: Colonial and Postcolonial Navajo Ethnography*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).

psychoanalytical training and Jungian dream analysis created a schism between the discursive sciences of the interviewer and the conversively told stories of their informants.⁵ Through her analysis Ramirez illustrates how the clash between Native storytelling practices that are grounded in community and conversivity (the interdependency between all the people present who are co-equal partners in the construction of the story) and the objectivity and distance required by the scientific discursive approach created ethnographies that led to interpretive confusions and at best a questionable and spurious accounts of Native American cultures.⁶ Ramirez' insistence upon attention to the interdependency of Native American storytelling on the audience, the teller, and the story as well as the place, history, and reasons for telling the story is an outgrowth of the move in the 1960s away from anthropologically-based life-history narratives to oral history and this new discipline's attention to the interrelatedness of the interviewer and interviewee as partners in the process of telling the interviewee's life story. This partnership is clearly evident in the oral histories collected within this study, the collection is a give and take and my questions to the interviewees may provide the map of the interview, but the interviewees are the guides on our journey.

The field of oral history came about during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s as academics in history, English and minority studies moved to examine America in more ways than the great man or top down historical models that had become dominant in academia. During these early years of the oral history discipline Linda Shopes notes how

⁵ Brill de Ramirez, *Native American*, vii – xxx.

⁶ *ibid*, Chapters three, four, and five, 65-168.

projects were unique in that they focused on previously well researched areas in order to fill gaps within the sources and knowledge of the traditional history or research.⁷

Native American literatures were enriched through this process as tribes came together to create new oral history collections and Native authors reclaimed and reworked older as-told-to life histories. The scholarly acceptance of oral histories as method, source, and discipline and the opening up of the genre has allowed Native American writers to incorporate traditional stories into both their fiction and non-fictional works. One such non-fictional work is Tom Holm's 1996 work *Strong Hearts, Wound Souls: Native American Veterans of the Vietnam War*, in which Holm incorporates veterans' oral histories throughout his work to examine how Native Americans adjusted after returning home from Vietnam and the need for specific treatment for Native American veterans. This work is an excellent example of Linda Shopes' argument that oral histories are both source and method.

Another example of how Native Americans have reworked the oral history genre is Velma Wallis' 1993 work, *Two Old Women: An Alaska Legend of Betrayal, Courage and Survival*. This work is a fictionalized account of an Athabaskan legend, an oral legend written down, but continuing the tradition of teaching through creating an English version of a story that has far reaching moral consequences, a way in which to keep traditions alive through change. Another excellent example of utilizing myths within fictional works is Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, published in 1977.

⁷ Linda Shopes, "Background Paper: Oral History," an attachment to the Oral History Association's Mellon Project application, www.oralhistory.org accessed and printed 20 September 2008.

Each genre of oral traditions/history has created challenges for Native Americans and offered a different cultural outlook than the Euro-American one imbedded in older practices of anthropology, ethnology, and history. As genres have changed over the past century the stories of Native America have continued to change the way in which they were received and opened up new ways of understanding. This study continues this tradition as it analyses oral histories of Cherokee veterans of World War II and how their experiences and narratives stories have shaped their lives, community, and tribe, as well as the listener/interlocutor of the stories.

The reliance on oral histories as the basis of this dissertation requires recognition of the positionality of interviewers, interlocutors, and those people past and present involved in cultural and cross-cultural encounters. In his 1993 work *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, Greg Sarris argues that verbal and nonverbal interaction “serves as the basis for dialogue within and between people that can expose boundaries that shape and constitute different cultural and personal worlds.” Dialogue for Sarris constitutes conversation between two or more people which is different from my use of dialogue, which I see as the speech portion only of the conversation. Sarris utilizes Bakhtin’s term *heteroglossia* to describe the “multitude of voices that comprise . . . all forms and elements of communication.”⁸ I prefer Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez’ concept/term *conversivity* which denotes not only the voices but the cultural positioning, history, and understanding of the people(s) involved in verbal communication as well as the

⁸ Greg Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4.

nonverbal cues and objects involved.⁹ It is this cultural positioning within conversation, storytelling, and interviewing that Sarris is most concerned with and how to transmit this positionality so readers, scholars, and listeners can understand the lesson he learned peeling potatoes while visiting with his female Pomo relatives: things are not always as they seem.

A brief synopsis of the potato peeling story will help to clarify. As a graduate student working on his dissertation on the life story of Cache Creek Pomo renowned basket maker and medicine woman Mabel McKay, Sarris was visiting with Mabel, Frances McDaniel, and his Auntie Violet Chappell. As Mabel was telling a story about a medicine man, Violet set some potatoes down in front of Sarris and asked him to peel them. Sarris said that this was an unusual request as he did not usually help in meal preparations when visiting his Pomo relatives, but, suspecting some antic from Violet, he watched her and began to peel the potatoes. Seeing Violet's shiny round potatoes, Sarris believed the object was to create nicely rounded and smooth peeled potatoes. Only after having peeled them and being proud of his work was his attention brought, rather forcefully, to the potato peels in front of Violet. Her peels were paper-thin, not rough and thick like Sarris' – the object had been to peel the potato so that the majority of it went into the pot to feed the people. From this Sarris learned he “did not see a potato the way Frances McDaniel, Mabel McKay, and Auntie violet Chappell did.”¹⁰ Sarris realized that as a well-paid man he never had to worry about stretching food to feed a family or make

⁹ Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez, *Native American Life-History Narratives: Colonial and Postcolonial Navajo Ethnography*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), xiii.

¹⁰ Sarris, *Keeping*, 3.

ends meet. Further Sarris states, “writing about this interaction in a way that reveals my limits and expectations becomes a means for me to extend to readers what made for the exchange at hand. It is the way I learned to write Mabel’s life stories, so that the written text becomes the story of my hearing her stories.”¹¹

Different histories, cultural and social backgrounds, economic status and education levels result in different positions in encounters with one another. Sarris challenges us to recognize these positions within ourselves and within our conversations, readings, and encounters with others, and to make these positions known in order that cross-cultural *communication* can be accomplished. In applying Sarris’ notions of positionality to my own work perhaps the greatest awareness of how it affects the interview is his use of Dell Hymes’ term *metaphrasis* to illustrate the structure or frame in the speech event of fieldworkers. Sarris notes, “The fieldworker cannot know about frames independent of his or her presence. What the fieldworker sees is not so much how the entire community keys speech events for its members but, rather, how it keys them for the fieldworker specifically”¹²

Within my own work while I may not know exactly how the framing differs from the perspective of the interviewee there are several areas that I know affect how Native American veterans frame their oral histories during interviews with me. First, there is the fact that I am a woman. While there are many more female veterans now than there were after World War II, the number of women veterans available to interview about World

¹¹ *Ibid*, 4.

¹² Sarris, *Keeping*, 19.

War II is small and diminishing. That being said, one key position within the conversations with veterans is that I am a woman interviewing mainly male veterans. Add to this the age difference between myself and the veterans – I am almost always in the age bracket of the children or grandchildren of these veterans. A third difference that plays into how these veterans tell their stories is cultural. While I am Cherokee and Choctaw I am not a member of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee, I am not from the area and while I may be learning certain key aspects of the land and communities within the EBCI, my interviewee's references to people or places still must be elaborate. Added to all of these factors is the major factor common to the type of interviews I am conducting – war veteran interviews. Many veterans of any war are reticent to speak of their experiences within the war or battlefield frame to anyone outside fellow war veterans. In addition, World War II veterans are from the “silent generation,” a moniker given to this generation by society as a result of their reticent to talk about their trials, tribulations or success.¹³ Until the last ten to fifteen years this generation has been largely silent about the Great Depression and how, as children growing up during this time, it shaped their lives. The veterans of this era have remained largely silent as to their involvement in the war and especially any actions that may be interpreted as heroic or having valor. Interviewing these veterans requires knowledge of their very different positioning.

An example drawn from one of the interviews can best illustrate how my position within the conversation affects the interview. The importance of the interviewers and interlocutors on the interviewee's framing of the interview cannot be underscored

¹³ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Generations: The History of Americas Future, 1584 to 2069*. (New York, NY: Harper Perennial: 1991) p. 279.

enough. Who is interviewing, the number of people involved in an interview, the interviewer's age, education, relationship with the interviewee and if the interview is to be tape recorded or videotaped – all of these factors are considered, either consciously or unconsciously, when determining how an interviewee will frame his story, as my interview with Rueben Taylor underscores. I asked Rueben for an interview at one of the American Legion Post meetings. He stated that while he didn't have a lot to say he was willing to be interviewed.

Shortly thereafter I received a request from the Cherokee High School. Ms. Laura Pinnix was looking for a veteran to honor as elder of the year and wanted to know who I thought would be a good choice. My immediate response was Rueben Taylor, as he is very involved with the American Legion Post and its programs with children. During the conversation I revealed that I was planning an interview with Rueben in the not too distant future. Ms. Pinnix asked if they could videotape and be involved in the interview. I did not have a problem with the request and advised that as long as they received permission from Rueben it would be okay. The presence of myself, approximately twelve children ranging in age from ten to sixteen, and their teacher, Laura Pinnix, created an audience for Rueben that framed his interview to such an extent that Rueben prepared a "speech" about his participation in World War II. While he was still willing to answer questions he would not elaborate a great deal on his prepared speech. When asked questions he believed children should not hear, or would be negatively influenced by, he would state very evasive answers, such as "I don't remember much about that."

While this interview was framed very differently than all my previous interviews the way in which the prepared statement and evasive answers were given told me a lot more about Rueben than I would have understood had the original one-on-one interview taken place. His commitment to the upbringing of the children, the care in which he responded to their questions about his life in Cherokee, and the places he had seen while in the military revealed his choice to guard his responses. All his responses reflected his caring for the children and desire to give back to the community. Added to this was Rueben's commitment to community, especially the brotherhood that is created during wartime, in his prepared speech he was adamant that the information was not about him, but about the soldiers with whom he served. I did not know until later that Rueben had never discussed his participation in the war with anyone or that he had agonized over that speech for weeks prior to the interview; rehearsing it with the Legion Post Commander in order to not break down at any point in the retelling of the experiences.¹⁴

Fieldworkers cannot know about frames independent of their presence; however, they can be aware of the fact that their presence, and certain aspects concerning who they are, frame the conversations they have with their "subjects." Fieldworkers also acknowledge how awareness of different aspects of their research can frame the interactions. The fact remains that framing occurs because I am conducting an interview, not having a conversation with combat buddies about our war experiences. In order to reveal this framing both to myself and my readers after each oral history I will evaluate

¹⁴ Rueben Taylor Interview with author, September 21, 2006, digital recording in possession of author. The conversation with Laura Pinnix is from memory as is the conversation with Lewis Harding about Rueben's agonizing over the interview.

and analyze my place, thoughts, and interaction with the oral history, the veteran, and my understanding of the history. This analysis will be entered directly after each interview and will be italicized in order to differentiate between the analysis and the interview.

I believe the best way in which to achieve intercultural communication is writing in an open and questioning way so that others can better understand the culture that we are writing from, to, and through. I write from a critical perspective that questions primary sources and draws out the connections from the past to the present. As an interviewer I constantly try to be aware of the different positions both I, my interviewees, and interlocutors hold in the conversation as well as the various ways in which everyone is framing their speech.

During World War II over 44,000 American Indians served in the military out of a national population of 350,000 – almost one-seventh of a population which includes women, children and those ineligible for service. While historical and anthropological studies focus on the mainstream veteran population, few studies center their scholarship on Native American participation in this war. Those few are pan-Indian in approach and typically address federal policy or on the “connection” between military service and assimilation. This study differs from previous studies in both its foundation and focus. My emphasis is tribally-specific rather than pan-Indian. This study is centered in the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian whose population in 1940, according to the tribal roll, was 3,472.¹⁵ Over three hundred of these members would serve during World War

¹⁵ William R. Woods, “The Eastern Cherokee Veterans of World War II,” Master Thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1950, 9.

II.¹⁶ This study presents the experiences of Eastern Band Cherokee veterans in World War II and upon their return home, using the words of the veterans themselves: a personal view of Cherokee warrior experience in World War II and its aftermath in their lives.

Like other Native Americans, Cherokee have fought in every military conflict in the history of the United States – from the War of 1812 to the current “War on Terror.” Statistics show that Cherokee have fought in disproportionate numbers to their population, yet scholarship on their participation in any of these wars is scarce. This dissertation helps to rectify this situation by its focus on World War II veterans and their oral histories.

The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian (EBCI) is located in western North Carolina on the Qualla Boundary (the land base/homeland of the EBCI) which consists of over one hundred square miles spread out over five different North Carolina counties.¹⁷ The Eastern Band is an excellent case study candidate for several reasons: statistical evidence demonstrates EBCI participation in World War II is closely matched with nationwide statistics of Native Americans who served during this war. The EBCI is a small group of approximately 13,000 whose history is accessible through both oral and written accounts and the number of veterans in relation to tribal members closely

¹⁶ See Appendix for list of known EBCI military members during WWII.

¹⁷ Throughout this dissertation I will use the term Qualla Boundary and Boundary to refer to the area in which the Eastern Band is situated in North Carolina.

resembles that of other Native American tribes throughout the United States.¹⁸

Historically, studies of Native Americans generally fall within three categories: federal policy, associations between Native Americans and Euro-Americans, and non-Native Americans' perspectives on Indians. Military history also has general classifications: federal policy, military strategy and tactics, diplomatic histories, and personal accounts of military personnel. While military history and Native American history can coincide in scholarly works, these studies generally focus on Native American warfare in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. A few scholars have focused on Native American participation in twentieth century warfare.¹⁹ Their works examine the relationship between the federal government and Native American tribes and the effect of military service on federal Indian policies, effects of military service on Native Americans, and a comparative analysis of Native American veterans with Indigenous veterans of Canada and Mexico.²⁰ These works explore the reciprocal relationship

¹⁸ For a more in-depth look at Eastern Band history and their involvement in twentieth century warfare see John Finger *Cherokee Americans: The Eastern Band of Cherokees in the Twentieth Century*, William R. Woods, "The Eastern Cherokee Veterans of World War II," Master Thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1950 and Angela Ragan, "From the Red and White to the Red, White, and Blue" Master Thesis, Western Carolina University, 2007.

¹⁹ The seven authors and their works are: Michael L. Tate, "From Scout to Doughboy: The National Debate over Integrating American Indians into the Military, 1891-1918." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 17 (October 1986): 17-437; Alison R. Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1991); Tom Holm, *Strong Hearts, Wounded Souls: Native American Veterans of the Vietnam War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At Home and at War*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); Jere' Bishop Franco *Crossing the Pond: The Native American Effort in World War II*. Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1999 ; Russell Barsh, "American Indians in the Great War" in *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Summer, 1991), 276-303; Al Carroll *Medicine Bags and Dog Tags: American Indian Veterans from Colonial Times to the Second Iraq War*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008; and Susan Applegate Krouse, *North American Indians in the Great War*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2007.

²⁰ Bernstein, Britten, Franco, and Townsend examine the relationship between the federal government and Native American tribes while Holm studies the effects of war on Native Americans and

between Native Americans and non-Natives and answer a call from military historians to move from an emphasis on military strategy to the effects war has on military members and their communities.²¹ None of these works are tribally specific or based on oral histories of tribal members.

Research indicates a high rate of military service within the Eastern Band during the nineteenth century (every able bodied man served during the Civil War, with all but a handful enlisting in the Confederate Army) and into the twentieth century with approximately eighty percent of the male population during the World War II. How have warrior traditions influenced EBCI enlistment? How has U. S. militarism affected warrior culture? How have the combination of warrior culture, U. S. militarism, and veterans' experiences in the military influenced the EBCI governance structure and tribal identity? All of these questions are pertinent, and while they may not be "answered" or "asked" during the collection of the oral histories, the answers may be found through analysis of the stories, either my own analysis or through further examination of the questions and more interviews with veterans of later wars.

In order to "read" Native American oral histories it is essential to understand how the interviewee is situated within tribal culture and history. It is within Cherokee sacred history that veterans have a place – as warriors, diplomats in the Red society, and within governance structures. Creation of oral histories through interviews with EBCI veterans

Carroll compares U.S., Mexico, and Canada's Native population's involvement in their respective government's military.

²¹ I am using the word community to refer to the people of the Eastern Band at a given time (before during and after each war) and in a specific place (the boundary).

is the main foundation for this study.²² Oral histories can restore voice, agency, and interpretive authority to those whom the existing written record often objectifies or leaves out.²³ This oral history archive will allow veterans' responses to be compared and contrasted with other EBCI member's interviews and questionnaires, historical tribal and federal documents, as well as other veterans' oral histories.

In addition, this archive creates a foundation for interrogation of written sources to occur through conversive methods. Conversive methodology utilizes the knowledge that each telling/retelling of a story is different because of the interactions surrounding the telling, whether it is written or oral. Tellers omit or add to stories in order to engage in a conversation with their listeners. Use of conversive methods recognizes and utilizes the conversationality of oral histories. It also allows for acknowledgement that the use of discursive methods (a distancing of self to create "objectivity" in research) to analyze encounters within the Cherokee culture may have produced faulty histories by not taking into account the reasons why stories were being told, who was telling them, or to whom they were told. Use of conversive methods decolonizes discursive texts produced by European and Euro American chroniclers and restores Native American voice and agency to these works.²⁴ The oral histories will allow an interaction in which implicit

²² Copies of the veterans' oral histories will be given to the narrators and the original archival quality narratives will be housed in the Charles George Memorial Library located in the Robert S. Youngdeer Veterans Memorial Center, Cherokee, North Carolina.

²³ Linda Shopes, "Background Paper: Oral History," (Oral History Association, 2006); Thomas Charlton, *Oral History for Texans*, (Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 1985); Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, (London: Prentice Hall International, 1995).

²⁴ Brill de Ramirez.

knowledge²⁵ can be utilized to understand not only the stories being told but also the perspective of the teller and the listeners. As a Cherokee veteran, implicit cultural knowledge allows me to interpret some of the communicative nuances that occur during interviews, interactions between veterans, and interactions between tribal members and veterans. For example, silences, specific requests for the way interviews are held or where they are held, as well as the amount of respect given to veterans are all areas in which implicit cultural knowledge allows me to understand what is occurring, why it is happening, and to determine the cause of the subtle changes in conversation. In addition, implicit knowledge allows for a deeper understanding of the unspoken interactions between veterans, between veterans and community members, and between veterans and tribal leaders and outsiders. Conversational changes, facial changes, silence, or gifting can occur for various cultural reasons. My knowledge of the culture and veteran traditions will allow for maneuvering within the interviews and lead to less cultural misunderstanding and a greater understanding of cultural continuity and change. For example, a sudden silence within a room can be interpreted several ways, one of which is out of respect for a veteran, another is disrespect of an elder. Knowing what constitutes a snub versus how respect is given and received is one way implicit cultural knowledge allows me to understand exchanges within varying groups. Implicit knowledge is subjective, but it acknowledges this subjectivity and the tension created through this acknowledgement allows me to constantly question myself, my reasoning, and my analysis.

²⁵ Implicit knowledge is termed situated cognition among anthropologists.

Within ethnographic studies, interview protocols (until the late 1960s) required researchers to remain objective and distanced from their subjects. The belief that interviewers could be objective and distanced came into question as researchers began to understand what both subjects bring to the interview session shapes how they understand the question, interact with one another, and how the questions will be answered. As a result, interview protocols started to be challenged beginning in the 1960s when researchers in women and cultural studies took steps to include the voices of their subjects, not just their words. Writing about these changes Maxine Zinn in her 1979 article, “Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological and Political Observations by an Insider” examined the insider-outsider controversy surrounding social science research that had arisen from the civil rights, equal rights, and minority movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Zinn relates how dominant societal assumptions about minorities and the frameworks constructed upon these assumptions continually “produced distorted accounts of minority group life.”²⁶ In addition to distortion of minority life, the unequal status between researchers and the people they study has created disparate and exploitative relationships, with minority groups being exploited. In the 1990s, sociological and ethnographical researchers added to the work of women and cultural studies researchers as they began questioning even further how oral histories, interviews, and ethnographic field work was being carried out and the implications on

²⁶ Maxine Zinn, “Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological and Political Observations by an Insider,” *Social Problems*, 27(2), 209.

research from both the interviewer and interviewee positions.²⁷ These scholars have opened the academy to new possibilities for researchers to explore within works that rely on interview materials. These changes sparked debates and changes in anthropological approaches, however past approaches among anthropologists and sociologists on Native American societies have angered many tribes to the point that they have created IRBs to keep these social scientists away from their people. Other tribes have been angered to the point that they have made it nearly impossible for any researchers to enter, even when they are not anthropologists or sociologists. In other areas scholars have pushed the insider paradigm and insisted on creating studies with peoples instead of studies about a people (Basso, Sarris, Holm, Hill, Justice are just a few exemplary examples of researchers working with tribes instead of studying them). These new forms of anthropological and sociological works have been eagerly accepted by tribes and many others would be more accepting of these new methods and the scholars who use them.

Because of the negative implications studies may have on communities, Native peoples continually call for researchers to be responsible with information as well as responsive to the needs of the people being studied (Holm, Deloria, Justice, Warrior, Weaver, Mihesuah, Basso, Womack, Sarris). I heed this call throughout the study. First, the oral history transcripts go through several revisions during which the interviewees are involved and their decisions about whether any portion of the interview will not be made public is honored. While this may limit scholarship, honoring the wishes of the tribe and

²⁷ See writings by Sherna Berger Gluck, Daphne Patai, Renato Rosaldo, Linda Shopes, James Clifford, Linda Alcoff and Maxine Zinn for a fuller accounting of the change in interview protocols and the underlying causes for this change in the 1960s.

the veterans creates trust within the interview relationship as well as generates opportunities to discuss subjects that would normally be closed. In 2006 Robert Warrior openly questions this tribal/interviewer control over interviews in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Warrior states:

I am a strong believer in the principle of institutional review of research protocols and the development of tribal IRB and research policy offices. . . . Yet, when researchers cede control or are expected to cede control of the conclusions they draw in their work, I can't imagine what good end is being served. Clearly, indigenous people have suffered at the hands of unscrupulous, biased research for generations, but I would suggest that those same people stand to suffer nearly as much or more from scholarly work that, by fiat, reflects the prescribed points of view of appointed research police.²⁸

The EBCI does in fact have two tribal IRBs, one that covers medical research and another for cultural research. I am a firm believer in tribal IRB offices and their desire to control access and dissemination of tribal knowledge to outsiders. I willingly and eagerly applied for and was granted approval through the cultural review board of the Eastern Band in 2006. Part of the agreement I have with the tribe is the assurance that veterans can remove portions of their oral histories that they do not want distributed. Another portion of the agreement contains an assurance that tribal elders/spiritual leaders be allowed to review interviews that specifically deal with traditional ceremonies, beliefs, or oral traditions and remove anything from the oral history that is circumspect or could be misconstrued by outsiders. While the Eastern Band's cultural review board does not have interpretive control over my dissertation, they do have some say, and I would say

²⁸ Warrior, Robert, "Native Critics in the World: Edward Said and Nationalism" in Weaver, Jace, Craig Womack and Robert Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, (Santa Fe: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 214.

rightfully, over what portions of the Cherokee beliefs and ceremonies are disseminated to outsiders. In the end, I believe that final control by the veterans of their completed interview is a small price to pay for both access to interview these veterans and an unrestricted avenue of questions. This free movement beyond the written questions leads to many fruitful discussions that would have been closed off if the veterans did not feel that in the end they were in control of what would be shared with others. For example, many veterans are hesitant to discuss the horrors of battle and the deaths of comrades without prior assurance that if after the interview they believe their words would do more harm to either their own or their friends' families they could then strike that portion of the interview, or at the very least ask for fake names for their friends. Final transcripts have been thoroughly vetted by the veterans and the tribal elders at large.

I conducted all oral history interviews within this study. Each Eastern Band veteran was contacted through word of mouth at the Steve Youngdeer American Legion Post 143, advertisement in the *Cherokee One Feather* (the EBCI newspaper), and veteran-to-veteran contact. In the conclusion completed interviews were compared and contrasted for patterns of economic status, reasons for enlistment (familial, tribal traditions, economic, etc.), boarding school experiences, and community background. These patterns will allow for future assessment of how the patterns changed over time when analyzed in comparison with veteran histories of other wars, primary sources (written data) from this era and pre-World War II when oral histories are not available.

This dissertation utilizes Native American critical analysis in listening to and reading both the oral history transcripts and written documents in order to uncover where

stories can reveal the why and how of life happenings by relating cultural knowledge that can be utilized in present situations.²⁹ Native American critical analysis seeks to uncover how the underlying religious, cultural, historical, and ecological meanings hidden within written documents are tied to one another.

I completed two years of Cherokee language classes at Western Carolina University during my Master's program, and I continue to hone my skills as a Cherokee speaker. The importance of the Cherokee language cannot be underscored enough. Speaking the language leads to thinking in Cherokee cultural patterns and as Hawaiian nationalist Haunani-Kay Trask states, "Thinking in one's own cultural referents leads to conceptualizing in one's own world view."³⁰ The mastery of language in conjunction with Cherokee cultural knowledge creates "ways of knowing that cannot be documented in parenthetical citations or in bibliographic reference." I rely upon the use of situated knowledge³¹ while reading Cherokee and federal historical documents as well as understanding the unspoken with oral histories in order to reinstate a Cherokee perspective throughout this dissertation.

²⁹ Essential works on Native American critical analysis include Daniel Heath Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Miheesuah, Devon A. *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), Greg Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Jace Weaver, *That The People Might Live*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), and *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Eds Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice and Christopher B. Teuton, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008).

³⁰ Quoted in Scott Richard Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?" *College Composition and Communication* (Feb. 2000) 462.

³¹ Virginia Carney, *Eastern Band Cherokee Women: Cultural Persistence in Their Letters and Speeches*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005), xii.

The focus of my dissertation is to examine how veterans use experience and knowledge gained outside of the tribe to foster adaptation of Cherokee traditions, governance structures and life ways. Each chapter of the dissertation is the oral history of one veteran. World War II veterans were chosen because I believe this was the turning point in how Eastern Band veterans viewed military service. The four veterans chosen represent each branch of the military that saw the greatest numbers of Eastern Band members. The selection also includes a nurse –an important inclusion, as all women from the EBCI served in the nurse corps during World War II. Also the selection of veterans includes very traditional Cherokee members as well as those who have assimilated into the dominant society.

The conclusion of the dissertation contains a comparative analysis of the oral histories. Here I answer such questions as: Did the warrior tradition of giving back to the community survive military service or has it morphed into something different? To what extent, if any, did Cherokee traditions play a part in the decision to serve in the military? Was the reason to join a result of mainstream popular culture, familial tradition, southern culture, or tribal traditions? And how were they perceived and treated as Natives in the military? In answering these questions I illustrate how veterans perceived the war and how their responses to serving and their experiences changed how they conceptualized their identity as Eastern Band Cherokees.

The conclusion also renders the history of the veterans of WWI and their establishment in 1938 of the American Legion Post 143 in Cherokee, North Carolina, the first all Native American Legion post in the country. The creation of this Legion post had

direct consequences on how veterans understood their service in the military, how they could best serve Cherokee peoples, and it also served as a path to continue Cherokee warrior traditions through service to community.

This dissertation, through collection of Eastern Band histories and the analysis of these histories answers a call for oral histories to be both source and method, while giving back to the veterans and the tribe the orality of the Eagle Tail Dance, and perhaps through this the spreading of the burden of the war.

CHAPTER II
A LITTLE DIFFERENT³²



Jerry Wolfe is the image many people remember about Cherokee, North Carolina. His picture graces the Museum of the Cherokee Indian's brochure and it is Jerry who welcomes visitors in the movie that is the first stop in the museum tour. Two days a week Jerry greets tourists in person at the museum. A wonderful story teller, wood carver, and Cherokee speaker it is a joy to talk with Jerry about any subject and, as his story relates, he continues to remember and dwell on the amusing things that military life had to offer and not the horrors of Omaha beach that he witnessed on board a troop transport.

I grew up in the Big Cove area, on a branch off of Big Cove called Sherrill Cove. I was born in a log cabin. My dad had built two cabins, one for the living room and one for the kitchen and dining room. I was born in that larger one, it had a big fireplace and

³² Jerry Wolf, interview by author, 13 October 2006, Cherokee, North Carolina, digital recording, recording in possession of author. In each of the chapters comments made by the author will be in italics and the words of the veteran are in plain text.

bedrooms, and built of logs, and then the kitchen was small, of course, and it had the dining room table, stove. Back then we used wood in our cook stove and wood was our heat. That was our only heat. That was not only in our community, but that was everywhere. I was born in 1924 in that house.

My mother always talked to me in English. She finished fifth grade in 1898, I guess, some where along there, and she spoke English. She said, "I want you to learn English because if you don't, they'll punish you in school for not speaking English. Or if you're speaking Cherokee, they'll punish for that, so you learn to speak English" and I said, "Okay." So that's what I spoke. I advanced well in school in the beginners class. I went right off to the second grade, and third, and so on. Whereas a lot of the kids that knew no English at all had a hard time. It took them two or three years in one class, beginners class, and then low first grade, and then high first grade, and then finally to the second grade. It took a lot of them about four years to get to the second grade in those days. You had beginners class, had a low first grade, and when you advanced from that, you went to the high first grade, and then the second grade, finally, and a lot of them didn't make it.

My mother used to speak in Cherokee with my dad. My dad didn't speak English at all. When I went to boarding school that is when I learned to speak Cherokee. We didn't go home at night because we didn't have transportation and we didn't have roads, we didn't have either one of them. So the Quakers came down in 1893 and set up the buildings for a campus. They put in five dormitories, two for the girls and three for the boys. That's where we stayed, in those dormitories, and that's where my mother stayed,

too, when she went to school, in the dormitories. Anyways, my peer group, the kids that I played with, were speaking Cherokee, especially when we'd go out in the woods and ride our sleds, and climb trees, and play tag, they were all speaking Cherokee and I begin to pick it up. I learned to speak Cherokee with my peer group. It was very easy to pick up, too, because I'd heard a lot of it in my home with Mother and Dad. So I picked it up real quick. And I speak. Today we're having a very hard time with our language. But one good thing we have is a lot of recordings of our language. We have our own written language, and that really has helped a lot today to keep our language alive. I learned to read the Sequoyah syllabary; I learned to read the Bible; I learned to sing songs in our language, in our Cherokee language. So I'm very glad I picked it up, and keep Cherokee whole for our young kids.

In 1941, we were in like the eighth grade when Pearl Harbor was bombed and all our big guys in Cherokee school joined the armed forces, some the Navy, some the Marine Corps, some the Army, and all the branches that we have. Most of our guys I think joined the Marine Corps and the Army. And I said, "When I get ready to go I'm going to be a little different, I think I'll go to the Navy," so I did. I joined the military in 1943 when I was eighteen years old – in July 1943 and I stayed from 1943 to 1949, six years. I was in the Normandy Landing, on the hour at four in the morning when we went in, and it was the beginning of the firing of guns, that's when we went in and delivered the Rangers, Army Rangers. They're a branch of service from the Army that are Marine tough, that's the people we took in. I went to the Great Lakes and I did my basic training.

It was a whole trainload of us left Spartanburg, South Carolina, and went up to Chicago and we arrived just in time to eat breakfast and they lined us up and we went and got our meal. After we finished our meal they grouped us together and said, "All you men, now, in this group, are in the same company. You will go over and they will issue your uniforms, your clothes, and after that there'll be a man to show you what barracks to go in." So we did all that. We were up in the barracks, topside. There were two decks in the barracks – one was the bottom and one was the top. They put us on top. We went in and there was no one there. It was just a big room where all the bunks were lined up, so we just sit down against the wall. A big group of us, I think there were over a hundred of us. Well, we sit there probably about twenty minutes and we got to talking, talking about where each of us were from and all that. And in a few minutes the door slammed opened, real quick, and here come that big ensign, big ole fellow with a big ole face, looked like a big boxer bull dog. He said, "What the hell are you guys doing here? Who are you anyway?" And somebody said something and he said, "Keep your damn mouth shut!" and then he would ask a question and when someone would start to answer he would say, "Who the hell asked you?" Boy he started in on us, "I don't know where you damn people are from. If you think you are going to be sailors you are sadly mistaken a bunch of people looking like you are looking. No way will you be a sailor. No wonder our United States Navy is going to hell! It's on account of people like you coming in here thinking you're going to be Navy men." Boy, he got on us for about thirty minutes. He was standing up on a table talking to us when another man come in. The ensign jumped

down and left. He had told us what he thought of us and this other man took over and assigned us to our bunks.

We didn't get up at a certain time; we got up anytime that bell went off. It might be three o'clock in the morning or one o'clock or whatever, when we were in bed, in our bunks and that bell went off you better be getting up. That chief had said, "Now, when you guys hit your racks I want to be able to hear a pin drop if it drops on the floor." He said, "I want it that quiet." One night this guy yelled out in the night. The Chief come to the door, peeped in and he said, "What's going on in here?" No one answered, it was just as quiet. "Well that's all right if you don't answer. That's all right, just go on back to sleep, we'll take care of that later." So we went on back to sleep. Then about two o'clock when we were sleeping real good that bell went off. You didn't hesitate; you didn't turn over and say ooohhhh. You got up; I mean you hit that floor just as soon as that bell went off. Boy that bell went off and we were all up. We started to get our pants and put them on, we had shorts on, and Chief said, "No, sir! Get out the way you are! Go down, and as you go out the door grab you a rifle!"

We had a big rack and there were probably two hundred rifles in there. Each one of us grabbed one. Chief took us out and he worked our butts off until about five thirty in the morning. We drilled; we went through the manual of arms probably a hundred times with those rifles. Boy I am telling you we'd had it.

"Okay, go in and hit your racks"

One of the guys said, "Why don't we just stay up it is only thirty minutes until we get up?"

“I said hit your racks!”

So, we went in and we crawled in our bunks, and boy I was dead. That bell went off, and we didn't jump like we did before, we just barely got up, but we got up, we didn't hesitate. We got up and went on and had our meal. The guy that yelled, he sat way back in the corner. The guys that bunked close by knew who he was when he yelled. Boy that evening after work they grabbed him up and they gave him one of the awfulest scrubbing you had ever seen. I felt bad for the guy. They really worked him over.

They said, “Everybody gets a shot at him now!”

So, they gave me the brush, you know those scrub brushes you scrub with, and I just took a swipe at him, I don't even think I hit him and said, “Here, next man!”

They were lined up, giving it to him; boy, some of them guys really worked him over good.

You didn't have anything under your mattress. Like say if you received a letter from home and you didn't have time to put it in your locker. When they called on you to go out and do something, you better be going right then, you didn't look around and say wait till I put this letter up. You went right then, cause if you didn't they would sure get on to you. They got you one way or the other. Sometimes guys would be reading their mail when they would say, “Let's go!” They didn't have time to open up their lockers and put their letter in there. So they would throw up that mattress real quick and throw that letter under their mattress. Hot dog, they would check! They would find those letters and they would give you a good working that evening. They would usually wait until you finished all your details for that day, then you had extra time. You could write letters

home, but instead of writing a letter home you were punished for having that letter under your mattress. They made it rough on you, just as rough as they could make it. That was basic training.

Boarding school helped me a lot in the military because we lived under military rules, or command. We didn't run down to the dining room like a bunch of horses to get any kind of food or our meal. We always lined up, stood at attention, looked just one way until a big bell rung, and our little captain would say, "Right face," or "Left face, forward march," and we'd march and keep in step down to the dining room. We went in, said our grace, and then we ate. Then after a few moments we'd come out, line up again and we'd march back up to our dormitory where we lived. We would go in and clean up before school, then we'd line up again and march to the school house - big school house. It would be like first, second, third, fourth, fifth grade, we'd go in, in order. We'd salute the ensign every morning before we'd go to school. Then during the evening, about four when the flag was executed we would salute that flag - everybody stopped. You'd hear that little bugle indicating it was time to execute the flag. When that was being done, everyone stopped and we'd stand at attention. If you didn't do that they booted you in the butt real hard, they didn't mess around with you. So we learned all of those things. We learned to march, learned to drill, learned a lot of things military. We had reveille in the morning to get up, then about nine or ten at night we had taps blown, we'd go to sleep with taps. We had a lot of drills, too. When I went to basic training, I knew all those commands and the man who was in charge of us called me out the second day we were there and he said, "Have you been in the military before?" and I said, "No, sir." So I told

him the story of being in boarding school. I got to be his helper; I got to drill these guys. I was real proud of that. That helped in the military, it really helped.

At the end of basic training the man that gave us such a hard time in the beginning, he came through and watched us give our last review. We were all in the company and we were keeping in step, I mean we were right on top of each other, we were right on. He was sitting there reviewing us as we passed. Then when we graduated he came and congratulated every one of us. "I didn't think you men could make it the way you looked, and I was mistaken." He apologized to us. "You men go now and make some good men out of yourselves, make some good sailors." Yeah, he congratulated us.

After I got out of basic training I was sent to Willow Creek, Virginia, which is an amphibious base, and that's where we learned to land with a landing craft. During that time I got to go to signal school, communications – where you signal by flags, by semaphore, and by the code – the lights. You've probably seen lights flashing on the ships, and they are sending out messages and I learned to read those. I could read those messages, just like a book.

When we were being transferred to go overseas, that was in 1943, in December. I went in, in July and in September we graduated; we had nine weeks of basic training. In between September and December is when we were learning how to land and how to take in troops for invasion. Well, the ship was small, the landing craft was small, so what they did was they carried them over on the Merchant Marine ships, transported those ships over, then we boarded them after we got overseas, because they were too small to sail the big waters. To get over there we were on the *Queen Mary*. We boarded in Brooklyn, New

York, in 1943, December, right at Christmas time. We were going to Scotland and stop in for a day or two and then they would take us on down to Falmouth, England. Well on our way over, about half way over, the Germans announced that a U-boat, a German submarine, had sunk the *Queen Mary*. We were aboard the *Queen Mary* when they made the announcement. That was strange, and we thought, "Oh, my God, we're sunk!" I think that frightened us, just about everybody.

We finally made it to Scotland. I got off in Scotland and stayed in a real king's castle. I stayed there for about two weeks. Then was transferred to Falmouth, England, where I stayed until about April. The first night that I was there the planes were coming over bombing where we were living. Every night they would come over, but they always missed our base. They bombed all around it, in the corn fields you would see big dips in the earth where the bombs had exploded. They were trying to hit Falmouth, and hit us too. We were very, very fortunate that they didn't hit us. Everybody would start running. You would hear the planes coming over, just about dark; you couldn't see the planes, on account it was dark, it was always just about dark, the beginning of darkness. The sailors started running through the dormitories, the barracks. Well, the first time the planes came over, here they went, just a big bunch of them and they went all the way down to I don't know where, but then they would come back. One of the old sailors was lying in his bunk. I started to go with them, go running. This big ole Navy guy said, "Where are you going?"

"Well, I don't know just with the crowd."

“Sit down right there. Sit down on my bunk right there and be at ease. If those bombs are going to hit you, they will hit us here or if we are running they will hit us. So sit down and be calm”

So I did.

“In a few minutes they will be back.”

They were a whole bunch of them. They came back and they would run through and into the next dormitory and run through and on down. I don't know how far they went.

“Anytime that anything like that is going on, just be calm and sit down and don't worry about anything.”

So I did. They killed themselves; they probably would have stomped you if they had knocked you down. They were really really scared. They were bombing not far away; you could feel the ground shake.

Along about the second night I was there I ran into all of my buddies that I trained with back in the states. They said, “Hey go to town with us, go downtown with us.” They had got there ahead of me; they were there two weeks before I got there, because I stopped in Scotland. One guy said, “Hey we got girlfriends down in town, come down and meet you one.” So I went with them. We went down, there were about four of us, got around the table, ordered our beer, Black and Tan, I remember. They got to talking to the girls. When they came in they introduced me to one. We sat there and talked. The guys got up, and one of them said, “I am going to take my girlfriend home. We will see you back at the base.” So we all just scattered. Well, finally, I told this girl I would walk

her down. Well we walked out and it was black-out. It was dark, but she knew where to go. I said, "Now wait a minute, I am stuck. How do I get back to my base? I can't see." She gave me directions and off I went. I didn't know where I was going, I didn't know if I would ever find the base or not. I would keep walking, and I would meet someone and say, "Hey, where is the Navy base" and I wouldn't get no answer, just tell me to go on, go on. Finally, I was way out of town and that is where the base was, out of town and up on a hill. I was out of town and I ran into a fence, and I thought I would just follow the fence up to the gate and there would be a guard there. Sure enough I found a gate, and I said, "Guard, guard!" I didn't get no answer. I thought, "Maybe he is not on duty." I couldn't see, so I turned and went in to the gate. I didn't walk very far, and I bumped my leg on something hard, so I felt down there. You know what I felt? It was a tombstone. I was in a cemetery. It was about four o'clock in the morning before I found my base. I walked, and walked, and walked and I would meet people. Finally I met somebody who told me exactly how to get to the base. That was my first experience being over in a foreign country. They all left me.

The next day, I said "You guys, boy you pulled a good one on me! You guys left me!"

"What you say? Boy we didn't think you didn't know how to get back!" They were all use to that; they knew how to get back.

I made second class petty officer after we made the invasion and we were heading home. First class is a higher grade; second class is the next down, and then third class, and then the seaman. So from the seaman to third class petty officer I went to second

class, and that's what I was when I got out. I felt real good, and I advanced quite fast too. I didn't have no trouble passing the test. You had to pass a test to get your grade, to get your promotion. I did a lot on board ship. I went on a bigger ship after we landed and got our job done over on Normandy Beach.

I tell you, by the time I was nineteen years old I had seen a lot of action – real action too. We weren't playing around. We were fired on. I was right next to a buddy during the Normandy invasion, and they were firing, and my buddy he just fell over. I thought “Oh, gosh he's shot!” and the first thing I thought of was getting down and seeing what I could do. When he fell over he grabbed his chest, and I thought, “He is shot in the chest, oh.” I unbuttoned his life jacket, you know we had on life jackets, and I unbuttoned that real quick and looked and there wasn't no blood.

I said, “Hey, where are you hurting? Are you hit, or what?”

“Oh, no it's my leg.”

I looked down and from his knee down was all blood red. He was hit in the knee. So, we got him kind of wrapped up till we backed off. We put a tourniquet on it and wrapped it up to stop the blood. Then after we let our men off and backed off we had to get medical treatment for him. We were on a landing craft at that time. A small landing craft but we carried quite a number of troops, Ranger troops and a tank and a couple of big trucks loaded down with supplies. When all of our ships were going in to the beach and landing and letting the men off, this major that was in charge of the Rangers wouldn't give the command to disembark. He was just silent. Our Captain said, “Hey, you better give command. We got to get out of here! We're not going make a target for

those people to hit us.” So our captain backed off. We moved back, turned and started moving away from the shore. Then that major spoke up, “Go back in and I will give command this time.” We went back in and the major gave command. There was a tank aboard, a small tank and the major crawled in and went down the hatch to the controls. They hit the beach and he made a right, and he was going down, not too far, when that big German 88 hit that tank. The last I saw of that tank was a flame about six feet high coming out of the hatch. I thought, “No wonder he didn’t want to give command; he knew what was going to happen; he had a feeling he wasn’t going to come out of it alive.” That was the reason he was scared, well we were all scared. We weren’t that scared though, right at that moment. We were looking around, seeing what was going on, seeing all of that gunfire, the guns firing at us. I didn’t feel uneasy or anything. It was after, just a few days after, and even up until today. I look back on that, and I think, “Gosh how about that we went through that rain of fire and we would have been gone since that time. But we came out of it.”

Look, so many more of the soldiers died when the ships landed than being shot. Because when we hit the beach, all those ships had a lot of obstacles to get through. They had thornies made out of steel, big sea sharks. When you hit one of those it would puncture the bottom of your ship, or the bottom of your landing craft. When it would do that you were stuck and you couldn’t go forward or backward, so the guys had to jump off. When they jumped off ... the water was deep there and they would go on out of sight, they wouldn’t come up. They were weighted down with their pack, their rifle and

their clothes and when you get soaked like that there was no way you could come out alive. They would just sink. I saw a lot of them do that, a lot of them.

There across from Weymouth England, in a little bay, there were five thousand ships going into that little bay for our country. Five thousand of them. There were fifteen of us that took those guys in. We all came out alive and the only injury was my buddy. We all came out alive. We were there for six months after the invasion. We kept carrying in supplies; we kept going in, going in, going in.

Where we went in, way down on our right had been a pretty good size town - Cherbourg, France [*This would have been the Omaha beach landings*]. There was nothing left of that town after the invasion, they had shot it up so bad, that not even the people there were left. We went down, a whole bunch of us, hundreds of us, just to see the city, or rather the ruins of that city. But, we didn't sail down, we marched. There was a regular road that went down to Cherbourg from the beach and so we marched. After we came back that evening they had the awfulest gun battle. It was snipers against snipers and they had been there when we went through. I said, "How about that we could have been shot!" If they had opened fired on us we didn't have anything to fight with, we were just marching. We thought everything was clear, that they had been pushed out. But it was about halfway down the road that the Americans and the Germans really had a big gun battle.

Another time the same thing happened, but it was aboard our ship. We sailed down to a place called Moreleigh, France. There was a river coming down into the ocean and we had to sail up this river to deliver supplies. After we went up this river and had

reached Moreleigh behind us they had a bad gun battle again. We had just come up through there. It happened twice to us. We must have been meant to come home, I always thought.

They had a lot of what we called buzz bombs. They were bombs that were made with wings and had dials on them and they set the dials to travel so many miles. They were launching them from France. They were coming across the channel and coming down into London and exploding and it was really tearing up a lot of buildings. They were controlled underground. For a long, long time they could never find where they were being launched. They were coming over at night. You could see them and you could hear them, boy they made a rugged noise. Finally, one day a haystack out in a field caught on fire and burned down. Underneath there was a big dug out room and that is where they were launching those buzz bombs from . . . from under that haystack. That haystack had been camouflaging all that; it looked just like a haystack out in a field. When we discovered that we destroyed it.

One Sunday we heard something coming. We were looking.

One guy said, "That's a dive bomber coming."

And we all manned our guns, got ready to fire. I guess there were four of us standing there up on the top deck. We were looking and looking and in a minute it became visible. It was a bomb about fifteen feet above the water and it exploded about six or eight feet above the water. It had been set to hit a ship, not the water. I watched it explode then I looked around to talk to my buddies, and say, "Hey, how about that." But,

when I looked there wasn't a soul standing there. They came out from their hiding places and said,

“Didn't you know you could have been killed?! Standing there that way.”

I hadn't thought about that. I was just watching to see how far it would come down, to see it hit the water.

They said, “You better take shelter next time you see one coming.” Boy did we laugh about that.

It wasn't long after that when we had another incident. The planes that were bombing Germany would go out over our head, but when they would return we wouldn't see because they would return on a different path. Again, one Sunday we were sitting around, out there talking and out in the direction of Germany there was some planes coming. There were a lot of ships there along the coast, and way down we saw the first ship open fire. They were shooting at those planes. We had never seen planes coming from that direction, they were all coming around and parallel to these ships and they were coming from the wrong direction. You would see a plane go down; you would see a pilot parachuting. They would come on around pretty close. I think one of our gunners fired at one and hit one, shot him down. We heard a command come over the loud speaker “Cease Fire!” We got to looking real good, it had a star on the wing. They were American planes; we had shot our own planes down. I think there were seven of them that were shot down. Of course they rescued them. I don't think there were any pilots killed but the planes were lost, sure enough. There were mistakes made like that. It is kind of sad.

When I returned from Europe they sent me to Newport, Rhode Island. From Newport after I went to school there for a while, I was going to fire department school, and from that point they sent us to New Orleans, and I picked up a ship in New Orleans.

Down in New Orleans I had to wait to pick up a ship there. There at the base we had a personnel inspection – that is when you have to be sharp. You got to have on your uniform and you have to be as clean – as clean can be. You have a haircut and all of that. There were a lot of us, a whole big field full of us lined up. It was a Saturday morning. One of the guys said, “They tell me that the toughest captain there is in the Navy is going to inspect us. He is tough on you. If he sees just a speck on you he is going to write you up.”

Well, my white hat had a little speck on it, and I couldn’t clean it off before we went in. I couldn’t get that little spot off but I went on. I chanced it. Here he come. A big old chap, an old man and he had his staff with him and they were writing down what was happening. He would step up to you and he would look at you from the top all the way down and then he would go back up. Then if you passed he would step down to the next one, and then the next one all the way down. He come to me and he looked me up and down, then he spoke to me,

“Sailor”

“Yes, sir!”

“What nationality are you?”

“American Indian.”

“You know if it hadn’t been for an American Indian I would not be inspecting you today. Our ship was sunk, it was sinking and I didn’t have no chance of being saved until a big arm grabbed me and pulled me to safety. I was saved. It was an Indian that saved my life. That is the reason I am here today inspecting you. You go on and make a good man out of yourself like that man did.”

“Yes, sir!”

After the inspection was over I was swamped with all those people.

“What did he say, what did he say?”

“He said the next time we have an inspection I am going to be inspecting you.”

“No, no, what did he say, sure enough?”

“Just what I said. I am going to be inspecting you, so you better straighten up.”

Oh, we had a lot of fun like that.

I saw a lot of funny things too. Like when I was in Norfolk, Virginia, and we were having the same thing, an inspection. One of the guys was just coming through the gate, coming up for quarters that morning. We always had a rough inspection to see if everybody has on the right uniforms, the right work clothes. We called it muster and during muster we had roll call. This guy came through the gate, came on up, and lined up just in time so he wouldn’t be written up. But, he was a little shaky about lining up I noticed. I always checked people out, looked at them. He was kind of squirmy. We went through roll call and muster and when the lieutenant dismissed us, this guy he just stood there. One of the guys said, “Hey we’re dismissed, you can move.”

They guy said, “Shhh, shh.”

Two or three of us looked at him and wondered what was wrong. He wouldn't move. He called us over.

"Come here, come here." "I got a fifth of whiskey under my bell bottoms, here. It is sitting on the ground. I can't move if I move it will be just sitting on the ground."

So we just got around him and talked. Finally all of the officers left and he reached down and put it in his bosom and came on, on board. Boy it was funny. I saw a lot of things that were real comical.

When we would pull into a new town, just about everybody wanted to go to town. So about four or five of us would get together, get ready and go to town and have a big time, try to paint the town. One night I had duty and had to stay aboard. The guys I was due to go out with came by and they said, "Hey, Jerry come go with us – this is a new town."

"I know but I got duty."

"Come go with us anyway. Get somebody to standby for you"

"No, I better stay."

Well, they went to town, and I stayed aboard. Well about midnight I heard them, coming in, just a talking, just a carrying on. I heard one of them say, "Hey, let's go down and wake up ole Chief Wolfe. Let's go wake him up. Let's go wake him up"

There were extra bunks in the bay and I crawled out of my bunk real quick and got in one of those extra ones. They came down. I knew they would give me a hard time because they were all pretty high. I covered my head up. Then I heard them say, "Well that damn fool he's gone; he's gone to town after we went." They just carried on "He's

gone. He's gone." I never told them I changed bunks because if it happened again they would find me then and give me a rough time.

In 1945 I was due for a discharge from the Navy to come home. I come home and I couldn't find anything in Cherokee. There was not a thing in the world here in Cherokee. Two little stores, and no jobs, there wasn't nothin' here. And I said, "Shoot, I'm going back to the Navy for a while." So I went back in, in 1947.

I went to Key West, Florida. I worked in the torpedo laboratory, with Westinghouse, and GE, General Electric, making torpedoes. I worked in that field for a couple of years. Then I was transferred out and I picked up a pretty good size ship until I was discharged off of that ship. That is when I come home. I got to go to Pearl Harbor. I saw the beginning of where the bombing began by the Japanese forces. I saw all the sunken ships, the damaged ships, the Arizona laying deep down in the water, all you could see was just a shadow, looked like a shadow down underneath the water there. There were like 4,500 sailors still in that ship and they are still in there yet today, they never got them out. That is a lot of men, 4,500.

I got out in 1949, late '49 I remember. I was married by that time, had a little one, a little baby. And after I got out, then I went to a trade school and I learned the building trade. So a lot of the buildings you see along the road now, today, I had a part, some part in helping build these buildings, the Lift, the Medicine Man, the Drama Motel, and back up the road a lot of the buildings, the bank and the post office combination, I did all the rock work, and all the masonry work, putting up the walls, and a lot of work throughout the area here.

I kind of wanted to forget about it once I got out and wanted to do something else. I had been under the strain all during that time. Well, getting out and having my time affected me quite a bit, because I was kind of rowdy when I got out. It took me a little while to get back down to real business. In the beginning it was kind of a game. I was kind of free to do whatever I wanted, in a way, and yet, on the other hand I had responsibilities, too. I didn't take my responsibilities very serious then, like I would now. Your responsibilities are really serious when you come right down to it; they have to be done; they have to be carried out. I didn't do a great deal of that. I was still with my Navy ways, I guess. All during that six years we were a wild bunch of people, always going out and doing things like drinking, getting high, and doing a lot of things. That hung onto me for a while after I got out. But when I got down to seriousness then I began to pick and go and that is the reason that I did a lot of work after I come out of it.

I still drink my beer though, right on up to date. At night while I am watching a ballgame I will have a beer, but I don't go out and disturb anyone. I've got that, I know I am corrupt, so I never go beyond that. I always rest good, too, at night when I have a beer. I don't drink any strong stuff like whiskey; I wouldn't touch that at all or wine.

I don't have any regrets about serving, because it's helped me. It has really helped me. I worked twenty years with the federal government program. The six years I was in the Navy, see that's federal too, it put me in the twenty-six year bracket of federal service when I retired. Those Navy years helped me to retire. I retired at sixty from federal service. I worked for the Job Corps program in the national Forest. I was a masonry instructor. We did a lot of work in the national park.

Another positive thing that came out of that was the beginning of education. It brought in education for our young people. I didn't graduate from high school; I was away, in the service, in the Navy. I was supposed to be graduated in 1944. Things opened up a lot, I think, for the whole country, not just Cherokee here, but for the whole country. Better ways of living, better homes, all of that come out of it. A lot of jobs. Back before the war, in the 1940s the wages were waaay, waaaay down. I think carpenters made thirty-five cents an hour, brick masons made thirty-five cents an hour and laborers, common laborers were about a quarter an hour, so we made about two dollars a day, before the war. When the war broke out the jobs began to open up. Like our TVA dam, Fontana Dam. It began in 1942 and was completed in 1945 and it is the fourth highest damn in the world. They worked day and night on it. The reason for building it was for power – to help in the war effort, for factories and stuff like that. I think a lot of good things came out of World War II.

Jerry's story offers many glimpses of historical events – Cherokee life in the mountains of North Carolina in the early twentieth century, American Indian boarding school experiences, military life, and World War II. He is a wealth of knowledge about Cherokee life, history and culture and a generous host to all the visitors and tourists he has welcomed to Cherokee, North Carolina both personally and through his role as spokesperson in the museum's short movie. Recently, in 2012, Jerry was named Beloved Man of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian, a position he carries out with aplomb.

My meeting with Jerry was prompted through a discussion I had at the American Legion post with other veterans trying to ascertain who the World War II veterans were and how I could contact them. Jerry's name was given to me as a "starter" resource: someone who not only was a World War II veteran but one who could possibly give me information about other Eastern Band World War II veterans. He was also an "easy" contact as I did not have to have his home phone number to contact him. I was told, "Just go on over to the museum and meet him and work out an interview time and place." Much easier said than done – Jerry only worked two to three days a week at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian so catching him at the museum took a couple of weeks and then when we finally did meet and I explained my project to him it was several more weeks and meetings before we could arrange a good time for the interview, but perseverance paid richly.

I was finally able to come to the museum and Jerry and I went to a large room that was part of the museum's exhibition area, but was in the process of being redesigned for the "Emissaries of Peace" exhibit. This room was a large, dark, cavernous area that seemed to echo each of Jerry's words, as soft spoken as they were at times. We sat together on metal fold-up chairs with a couple of boxes for our end tables to hold Jerry's water and my tape recorder. For the next three hours I was held captive as Jerry told of his participation in World War II and his Navy days beyond the war. Jerry is a traditional storyteller, by that I mean that he is called upon over and over again by the tribe to tell the traditional Cherokee stories to visitors, both at the museum and at other gatherings such as the Cherokee Indian Fair and Mountain Heritage Day, a two day

event sponsored by Western Carolina University. As a storyteller Jerry has honed the word to be a powerful message carrier. The way in which he slows down or speeds up his delivery, the way in which he adds emphasis to small words or pauses draw his listeners into the story he is telling, be it his war history or the traditional story of why buzzards don't have any feathers on their heads, or how the possum lost its tail. Being involved in the story and being transported back in time through nuances allows me an in-depth learning moment. I am a part of the story, as Jerry meant for me to be, I can ask questions and be more open because he expects this involvement and yet I also hold back questions because I do not want to interrupt the flow of his story.

Oral history collection, for me, is about a conversation, a more one-sided conversation albeit, but then again is any conversation an equal portion of speech and listening? I think not. I believe that every conversation we have, if we stop to reflect on it afterward, is more one person talking and the other listening and the next time maybe the talker becomes the listener. I tend to let the interviewee lead the conversation down roads he or she wants to travel in order for the story to emerge rather than dragging the person down a question laden freeway where a collision between questions and answers may stop the flow of information. With Jerry I was definitely in for a long trip in which we slowed down to enjoy some of the funny moments and quickly passed through some of the harder moments. Often times Jerry would catch me off guard with the comedy of life which is why I stated in the preface of the interview that he dwells more on the comedic side of life rather than the tragedies of life. When telling about his buddy being shot on D-day the delivery of "Oh! He has been shot!" followed by Jerry telling how he looked to

help by removing the fellows life jacket and searching him for a bullet is followed by “Oh, no, it is my leg” The humor of stopping shooting, getting down from the side of a troop transport and removing someone’s life jacket and physically running your hands over their body looking for a possible life threatening wound is immediately followed by “Are you hit? Where are you hit?” and the man’s response – one must think for a moment about the oddity and hilarity of life – what must this man have been thinking when Jerry is taking off his life jacket, loosening his shirt, and running his hands over his body? And what must Jerry have been thinking about while the man waited to tell him it was his knee. The oddity and levity this adds to the story is not at first apparent and tends to only come out after a rereading of the story.

In much the same way it was after I had read the completed story that I began to question how I had framed Jerry’s retelling of his history. Why did I believe that Jerry had shared more “funny” stories than “the horrors” of war, when in fact it was almost equal? This comes, I believe, from my reordering the stories to make them flow better for readers rather than listeners. In conversations we often become sidetracked in our retelling of an event and go off in another direction. To lessen the confusion of having to backtrack to the main narrative I moved all the “rabbit holes” to a section of the oral history. By this movement I created a false sense of Jerry’s stories being broken into segments about childhood, boarding schools, traumatic war stories and funny war stories which in fact is not the way he told them. He told them intermixed with one another so that the comedic could highlight the powerful and make it even more so, a “sticking” memory rather than a transitory memory or telling. In his use of comedic tales his story

has a staying power for the listener that a story that shocks and illustrates harsh memories does not – simply because being mated with the funny creates a safety zone in our head, allowing us to remember more of the story than if only the harshness or sadness of a story was told. The brain has a way of blocking memories out that we deem “unsafe” to remember, but pairing them with a funny or joyous memory allows us to recall all of the occurrences. Adding comedic relief also allows for a fuller understanding of war and everything that it entails. It brings home the fact that these “men” were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five for the most part, many away from home and parents for the first time, away from their way of life and the people, places, and friends they hold dear. All of this can be seen and felt in Jerry’s actions in trying to help his friend and his friend’s stunned silence as the horror and yet thankfulness take hold in his mind – the horror and pain of being shot, and the thankfulness that he was still alive to feel the pain and horror of life during war.

In war histories we often have to use our imagination to fill in the blanks of what is not being said, but merely being alluded to. For example Jerry recalls buzz bombs that destroyed England during Hitler’s “War for England” in which these bombs were sent incessantly to destroy not only the land but the will of a people to continue the fight. In telling about these bombs he relates that one such launch site for the bombs was under a haystack and how the Allies could not find it until the haystack burnt. Jerry does not say anything about the people who would have had to live in this underground bunker, whether they survived and were taken prisoner or whether they were killed in the fire. He also talks about friendly fire and the loss of American airplanes, although he is quick to

point out that he believes all the pilots were rescued, but the planes were lost and how he saw this as sad. Why does he see the loss of American planes as sad, and yet says nothing of what was surely the loss of life of our enemies when the haystack burnt down and the hidden bomb site was found? As a veteran I read these silences as “just desserts.” The loss of airplanes during war is a sad occasion – we have less men and armament with which to fight and win. It is also sad that we did not have the knowledge that the planes were coming in after being over hostile land – they had survived the enemy only to be downed by their allies! Whereas the loss of life of the enemy is not worth mentioning because they were using their hiding places to kill American and British peoples, so their death in war is not meant to be mourned or acknowledged; the importance lay in the finding and destroying of the bomb silos and the oddity of hiding them under haystacks! After all, in the United States our bomb silos are deep inside mountains, protected by steel and secrecy, not out in the open protected only by a flimsy haystack that caught fire and burned, relaying the whereabouts of the silo for the entire world to see.

Jerry is a consummate storyteller, a person who can bring you into the story through the richness of detail he brings out. I enjoyed our time together and the process of collecting his memories about World War II and his life prior to joining. I think the biggest regret I have concerning Jerry is that, unlike the other veterans that I meet with, he was not involved with the Legion post although he was a member. Therefore I didn't get to see and speak with him on a continual basis and follow-up with him about how the retelling of his memories may have triggered more memories or feelings about the war that he wanted to share.

CHAPTER III
THE SEVENTH CHILD³³



As the twenties “roared” along in the United States, in Cherokee country a blessed child was growing up and going to boarding school. Virginia Sneed, grew up on the mountainside until age six when she was sent off to boarding school, so while other children in America were playing and listening to new jazz this child was marching and listening to Taps. Virginia knew at an early age that she wanted to help others and upon graduation she went on to nursing school. Shortly after her graduation from nursing school Pearl Harbor occurred and she decided to join the Army. Serving in both World War II and the Korean War her experiences reveal not only medical advancements but also the cultural changes that have occurred in America, both within Cherokee and in the larger U.S. society.

³³ Virginia Sneed Dixon, Interview by author, 30 October 2006, Cherokee, North Carolina, Digital recording, recording in possession of author.

I was born December 29, 1919 in an old house that set off here on the mountainside. My mother who is half Cherokee and my father was an eighth they had always lived here. I had a full-blooded Cherokee grandmother on my mother's side who I never knew because she died before my mother was married. She was full Cherokee and she was a Nick. She's buried way up on Wright's Creek, a little cemetery way up on the mountain. I was the seventh child of a family of ten and when I was six I entered the Cherokee Boarding School at Cherokee and at that time it was based on the military. We had *Reveille*. They played *Reveille* in the morning and *Taps* at night and to this day I love *Taps*. About nine o'clock one of the men up on the hill would play *Taps* and it went all over the campus. It just was wonderful to hear it in the night. They taught us to march. We had to march. Even the little ones we marched.

Then I went through the boarding school, that was nine months and then in the summertime you went home. And when I had finished the sixth grade the day school started. So we began coming in and lots of mornings we walked because it's only about a mile from where we lived to the school. That was the Cherokee day school and I stayed at Cherokee and graduated in 1938. There wasn't any money around, nobody much to help you, you know, we were small. A lady at Cherokee helped me get into nurses training in Knoxville, Tennessee. That's when most of the nurses graduated from diploma schools where you went to the hospital and worked like a little flea for three years. I borrowed \$150 from the BIA, that's the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to pay for my books, that was our only expenses. They furnished our uniforms and looked after us health wise and everything. You got excellent training because you're practicing and went right over to

the hospital and took care of patients. It's not universities. I mean, you spent your time at the hospital taking care of patients and you also attended classes.

My senior year, I remember, even though I was working nights some nights, I would have maybe two or three classes the next day and they weren't all together. They were staggered. I'd get up in the morning, go to my class, and come back to bed and same way in the afternoon. But, I graduated and, well we graduated in May, but you had to stay three years to the day. If you missed a day like being sick because we missed two days taking our state board examination, you had to stay three years to the day. So, I graduated, I believe it was, or got finished, on September the 19th, 1941, and I worked. You don't usually take a permanent job until you hear from your state board examination. I had worked a little hospital in Virginia and then I moved down to Bristol, Virginia and was working there at a hospital when I heard from my state board examination. Then you can get registered because you can't get registered till you've passed your state board. About that time, the Army started writing.

In September, the Red Cross came to our hospital and asked us all to join up to be a Red Cross volunteer nurse. Which I did. That meant if they ever needed you, they'd call you. Well they must have given our names to the, they called it the war department back then, and they started writing letters to me asking if I wouldn't come in the military, they needed nurses so badly. This went on and then after Pearl Harbor I began to think about it seriously. I was working in Bristol, Virginia, in this little hospital working nights. I was up in my room and one of the girls, one of the other nurses came pounding, she said, "Come down, come down! The Japanese have bombed Pearl harbor!"

Of course, we didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was. And that's how I knew. I decided soon after that to come into the Army because they'd been writing to me frequently asking me if I wouldn't. They needed nurses so badly in the military, if I wouldn't come in. I know they got my name through the American Red Cross. About the end of December I decided I would go into the Army. So I accepted and then they started sending all these papers. I left from Bristol, Virginia, going to Camp Lee, Virginia. It's been so many years ago, a lifetime. I was twenty-one, no, twenty-two. My birthday is the twenty-ninth so I had just passed my twenty-second birthday. February 6, 1942, I reported to Camp Lee, Virginia. I got there about six o'clock in the morning. At two o'clock in the afternoon, I was on a ward working. They didn't give you any basic training. Nothing! And I didn't know what the AOD, the MOD, or the adjutant was or nothing! Nothing. Somehow you muddled through and I stayed there from February to May.

I was sent to Walter Reed because I had developed this rash and they wanted to send me up there to see why I was getting this rash. After I was there as a patient for about two months, they assigned me duty there at Walter Reed. I began to work on the different wards at Walter Reed and we were just beginning to get patients from the North African Campaign at that time, in the fall of 1942. I was working on the officer's ward. I remember two second lieutenants; they were always teasing me and doing things. And then toward the end, I think it was in December, the chief nurse asked me if I wouldn't go out and work at the convalescent section.

They had bought a girl's school out on the edge of Washington, DC. It was actually in Maryland. But they had taken over this girl's school for the convalescent patients because we had so many of them. A lot of them, most of them were amputees and they had taken over this girl's school and remodeled it, except there was no elevator in the place and you have amputees and no elevator, it was difficult. But the men were so good about it. I stayed there until February of 1945. I asked for a transfer. I wanted to go overseas, instead they sent me to take a psychiatric nursing course on Long Island at Pilgrim State which was a state hospital but the military had taken over sections of it because they were getting so many mental patients coming into the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the hospital was near so they could just transfer them right out to the psychiatric hospital to look after them.

Then the war in Germany was over and I had finished my course there and I got orders for where, for the mountains of China. It's a little tiny, 22nd field hospital, way up on the Burma Road. Oh, it's about ten thousand feet elevation in the mountains and a small hospital. This unit, the 22nd field had gone over there but they went into the jungles of Burma and they wouldn't let the nurses they had with them go, and they'd been two years or more without nurses. But it was an ideal, wonderful little spot. We weren't very busy. The war was almost over. I was there when the Japanese finally surrendered and we got orders. You got orders to come home according to your time in service; they went on a point system. But anyhow, I think I left the little hospital in September and I spent a month in Calcutta waiting on a ship because the ships had to come up the Hugli River and they can only come up when the tide comes up because it's not deep enough.

So we waited there, you're always waiting, not my whole unit, it was different nurses but I stayed at the hospital, the general hospital. They had quarters for transit nurses so I stayed there. I came home in November. We were on the ship most of November because we sailed down through the Hugli River into the Gulf of Salaam but now they nicknamed it Sri Lanka, but we went by there and then out into the Indian Ocean. And of all the oceans I've been on, the Indian Ocean is the most beautiful color. So clear we can see down. So it took us a month. We had to come up through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean and then out on the Atlantic and it was rough storms. It was December, right.

Virginia made it home to New York just before Christmas and remained in New York through New Year's. This is a picture of her and some friends celebrating their return to the states and New Year's Eve 1945. Virginia is on the far right.



We got back to New York and I came down to Fort Bragg and I got out at that time. That was 1945 just before Christmas and they said I was out. I had been in for almost four years. I was still a reserve nurse, an Army nurse and then I went back in

1949 full time. I was stationed down at Fort Bragg with an EVAC hospital. We went on maneuvers I think three times. We were assigned to the general hospital for duty but I had to report back to our unit every time they needed us. So, we went on maneuvers twice and then we went to the Caribbean. They were having maneuvers down in the Caribbean. We never got off the ship but one time we were supposed to set up a hospital on the Island of Vieques. But we just went over to visit; we didn't get to set up the hospital at all. We floated around out there on the Caribbean on this hospital ship and just ate, we didn't work or anything. I thought, "What a vacation!" We didn't get off but one time. Then when the North Koreans invaded the South in 1950, my unit, the 171st EVAC hospital, was picked to go to Korea.

We left Fort Bragg, my whole hospital unit except the doctors. We had the nurses, the administrative officers and all the enlisted personnel and they put us on the train at Fort Bragg. It was really quite a trip. They put us on a train with all of our equipment at Fort Bragg and we traveled all the way across the United States. Our cooks, with the hospital unit, fixed our meals and everything. It was a weeklong trip and we just sat and read and sang songs until we got to San Francisco. Then we went by ship from San Francisco to Japan and we went down into the southern part of Japan and went from Japan over to Taegu. We were waiting to go north but we stayed in Taegu for a while and then we were sent to Taejŏn. We set up a hospital unit in Taejŏn, and we were supposed to get these patients. We never got that many patients. We went to Pyongyang in November of 1950. My hospital unit, the 171st, went to Pyongyang and set up a hospital and we were taking patients and everything is very primitive. We were in this

old North Korean hospital, but they had blown out the windows, no water, no electricity, no nothing.

We set up our hospital unit and we were taking in casualties. You had the triage – it's where a doctor; a nurse and a chaplain would go. They'd line the patients up in the entrance hall and it was cold because we didn't have any heat except little, tiny potbelly stoves and they were constantly blowing out black ash. You went with black ash around your nose and your mouth because you were breathing it. I worked during the day and then I was assigned at night on the surgical ward and it was hard work because we had all these casualties that were coming in. They would be in shock and we could never get them out of shock because we just didn't have heat. We had these little stoves and they just didn't heat those big old buildings that had never been fixed. It was very backwards and everything. We stayed there into December, from sometime in November till December and then when the Chinese invaded, they were told one afternoon,

“Get the nurses out! The Chinese are invading and we don't want them to capture any of the females.”

They told us, “Go and get packed! You'll be leaving as soon as the planes come in.”

We had to leave our patients and everything. There were about forty-one of us, I believe, with the Red Cross girl and they took twenty or more on the first plane. I was with our chief nurse, Colonel Bradley; we were on the second group. We had just gotten on the plane and it had those bucket seats. I don't know whether they still have them but where you sit didn't have seats, it's just buckets against the wall and then they put all the

luggage in the middle of the plane. They were tying it [*the luggage*] down and we heard this racket and it was a bomb. We were the only plane on the field. It was just a tiny airstrip. And the second one, it came a little closer, and the third one landed just outside the plane. The dirt and rocks flew all over the plane. By that time, everybody was carrying their helmets and I was trying to get my helmet on and I did get it on. Here was poor Colonel Bradley who'd been captured in the Philippines, she had put a ball of twine in her helmet and she couldn't get it out and I felt so sorry for her but finally she made it.

The pilot said, "Watch out girls!"

They didn't wait to tie down that luggage. He just said, "I'm going." He went down that field without any lights on. He didn't warm it up. He just went up. He said all he could think about was getting off the ground before one hit the plane directly.

We made it back down to Seoul all right and we were there for two or three weeks. When we first got there, we slept on the floor in a chapel. There wasn't any place to put all these people that were pushing back. Everybody was pushed back to Ascom City. So we spent one night and then they put us in this old warehouse and we didn't have sleeping bags or anything. We just had blankets and it was so cold. You had to take spit baths because there weren't any showers or anything like that. We would try to bathe under a blanket or something. You didn't do much hygiene. If you could get your teeth brushed you were doing well. Then they said we're gonna send your hospital back to Japan. We've got too many hospital units here so you all are going back to Japan for TDY [*temporary duty*] but they kept the doctors because they were needed.

We had to go to the Port of Incheon and Incheon Port apparently is shallow so you can't bring a ship in near. You have to ride one of the barges out; the landing barges out to the ship and oh was it cold, and stormy weather. But we finally got out by riding on the barges and got on the Navy ship. You don't know what luxury that is. You're dirty. You're hungry. They had milk. They had fresh foods. But that first night, we were in a storm on the Yellow Sea and I always get sick the first night if it's real rough. After I get my equilibrium I'm all right. By the next morning I got my equilibrium and I was all right. We landed over in Japan. I think it was Sasebo. From there, they told us we could go out; they told us they were sending us out on vacations everywhere. You could pick different places in Japan to go. So we picked a hotel, in Osapansa, way down on the Southern tip of Japan.

We picked this hotel and its run by the military – nothing's real fancy. The food is just plain rations but they had all these Japanese people to wait on you. They just waited on you and you could have breakfast in bed and everything was just wonderful. About, I would say twelve of us including our assistant commander, Colonel Patterson went and there were even some Navy guys there, too. They had once planned to have the Olympics there. This place was supposed to be for the winter Olympics and it had a volcano there. They built this beautiful hotel way up there in the middle of nowhere – near the volcano. They even had a big swimming pool in the basement of the hotel that was heated by volcanic hot water coming in. I only made it down there one time because that was too much for me to go down there and get in that hot, hot water. It just made

you so weak after you had been there. We stayed there over Christmas 1950 then we were all assigned to hospitals in Japan.

I went to the 361st station hospital which is a psychiatric and dermatology hospital in Tokyo. It was way out on the outskirts of Tokyo. It had been built after the 1922 earthquake in Japan, several of us went to that hospital. Everything was an experience because it was something new. You saw things. The Japanese are an unusually polite society. A lot of them worked at the hospital – interesting that. I stayed in the nurse's quarters and the Army furnished a maid to clean and all that. My roommate, we were sharing a room, she said, "Would you like to have a personal maid?"

"What would I do with a personal maid?"

"Well this little Japanese girl would like to work and if you give her ten dollars a month and I give her ten dollars a month, she can live on that in the Japanese economy."

"Well, what will she do?"

"Anything you want her to do."

"Sure, that's okay with me."

We had this little Japanese personal maid. You don't know what luxury. If I was off duty in the morning and didn't have to go to work until three, when I woke up, boy, she'd run and get me a cup of coffee and bring it to me. And she went down, as soon as I got home in the evening, we had to wear white shoes and socks. She was on those white shoes and hose and washed them out and hanged them up. If you went out the night before - we could wear civilian clothes out on dates and things - she would go through your closet and pick out anything that needed ironing. She just waited on you.

I said, Lord, for ten dollars a month I can say I had a personal maid. It was really wonderful.

They [*the Japanese*] were nice and we were right out on the Tama River or the hospital was, it'd been given by the Americans I believe after the earthquake and we were near one of the big gyms of the Sumo wrestlers. We'd go out for a walk and here we'd meet them with their kimonos on and they'd be going to their gyms. We'd walk along and they had all these little shops in one area where they'd fix all these little frilly flowers and things. It was just . . . to watch them work, you know and they're so industrious and they do so much with so little.

It was 1950 when I was there. They had recovered a lot, a great deal, from World War II by that time. Their houses were so flimsy and I think they're actually very cold. Mickey, we gave them American names, he used to work in the kitchen on one of the wards I worked on and he'd be there at eight o'clock in the evening.

I said, "Mickey, you can go home any time you want to. You don't have to stay this late."

He said, "Oh but it's so warm here that's why I like to stay."

After that, I never said anything. He could stay all night if he wanted to. But he'd stay in the kitchen and just do things for you if you wanted anything for the patients and he really didn't have to but he said it's so warm here.

I think I stayed from January to June before our orders came back to go back to Korea. We had to all go back to our unit, the 171st EVAC. Then we were sent back to Korea and we went to Taejŏn to set up a hospital. We were not doing much so I

requested to join this new surgical team connected to the 8063rd MASH [*Mobile Army Surgical Hospital*] located up near the DMZ [*demilitarized zone*]. They approved it. I went in December to join this new surgical team. I think it was the only one we had in Korea. We only had four or five nurses, four doctors, and about twelve enlisted personnel, the men. We only took spinal cord and head injuries. That was one of the greatest experiences. I had never worked exclusively with just head and spinal cord injuries and it's very, very interesting and trying because you're in a tent. Your cots are down low, no running water. No running water and no heat. We just had these tiny little stoves that we could use for heat. The Colonel said he didn't want the nurses in the operating room – they were to take care of the patients. We just went on giving blood and IVs because we had to keep these young men alive. Most of them were unconscious, with terrific head injuries. We had a few back injuries and some would never come out of their comas because too much of their brain tissue had been lost.

We'd get them soon after they were hit because this was the first time they starting using helicopters. They used to bring them in on the little helicopters and they had the little coffin like things on the outside. They could put two patients in there and they could go down in the ravines and pick up the patients and we'd get them sometimes within an hour after they had been hit. I'm sure that we saved a lot of lives. Now it's nothing the way they have all these modern conveniences, but this was the first time they'd used the little helicopters. We'd go out to meet them and I said I hope some of these men don't wake up while they're flying around in that little coffin up in the sky. They'd think they'd gone to heaven because most of them were in a coma. Only one guy

do I remember. He'd stepped on a trip flair and the whole right side of his face was gone. His eye was way down here on his cheek and this was all just gone, this side (*the right side*). The men were shaving his head and sometimes they'd joke and tease and go on. I thought, he acts like he's conscious and I said, "John?" and he said, "Yes ma'am." Just like that. He'd never lost consciousness. I shook my head at the men so that they wouldn't say anything that they shouldn't say in front of him to hurt him in any way. But after he got there, they operated on him.

About his third or fourth day he said, "Nurse, do you have a mirror?"

"Yes."

"Can I see it?"

The colonel said just let him look at himself. He looked at himself and this eye was gone and he had big stitches everywhere but he never lost his mental ability.

He said, "God, who'd want to marry me now?" He was about twenty-four.

I said, "Now stop that! They'll give you an artificial eye, they'll do plastic surgery and you'll be all right."

Working with patients like that where their injuries are usually fatal and if they're not fatal, they're for life. We had one Irish boy whose spinal cord was cut. He said, "The doctor told me I'd never walk again...He was just teasing, wasn't he?"

"No, you'll never walk again. It's sad but there's just nothing we can do. Your spinal cord is severed." You know, you have to tell them the truth. If you try to lie, you've lost them.

I don't know who thought of it but somebody thought of it before I came to the unit, but they had the most novel way of turning your patients, like your back injuries. You have to turn them every two to four hours. All our patients had a catheter because they were all unconscious. You don't use sheets in the field, you only have blankets and very few so you had to keep them dry. When I first got to the unit, we have these field kits that you use in the medics and I jerked out this drawer and all these condoms flew all over the place and, of course, all the men are watching.

I said, "Hey, what are you doing with these?"

And one of the corpsmen came and he showed me what they were doing. They would take a condom, the men, the corpsmen, and they would punch a hole in the end and put the tube, not a catheter, we didn't have catheters, they put the tube in there so they could just pull the condom up over the penis and you didn't have an indwelling catheter that might get infected and then they'd just run it to a bottle on the floor. So when the men that were unconscious voided, it just ran. I thought that was the most novel idea. I couldn't figure out why the condoms; but there are several things that you find you can do in the field. Another was when you have a back patient with a spinal cord injury, you have to turn him every two to four hours so he won't get bedsores and they just had these two saw horses, the things that carpenters use, and they'd lay them on the litter, they were on a litter, and, of course the litter was canvas, they'd just cut a hole in the canvas about that big (*Virginia holds up her hand and makes a circle with her fingers to show about a quarter-sized hole*) to run the catheter down through that hole to the bottle and then we had two big straps so when you wanted to turn that patient, you just put another litter on

top of the hole and two men would just flip him over. So it was a nice way to keep him from lying in one position. I'm sure some of the men in the outfit or somebody before us thought of it, because they were using them when I got there, you just improvise in the field.

We would keep the patients calm, we rarely had any outbursts, but we had one, one day. I was working and this one British boy, I was trying to get a needle in. You had to give them blood and IVs because they can't take food and eventually you put a tube down and feed them through their nose to their stomach. But one day I was trying to hit this boy's vein and I couldn't and I guess I was hurting him and he was a British boy and of course he was out of his head and he came out with a precise British accent and he was calling me every kind of name . . . whore and everything you could think of and it was just . . . and we had one American boy and he knew what was going on and here he was with his head all dressed and he jumped up and he said, "How you all gonna let him talk to her like that? I'll kill him." And he's ready to jump on the poor old guy. The corpsmen all had to come running to get him back in bed. I said, "He doesn't know what he's saying. He's out of his head." All he could feel was the pain. It was pandemonium there for a while, but most of our patients would never regain consciousness. That was what was sad.

Another sad thing that I encountered with neurosurgical patients, we had one or two that tried to commit suicide. We had one that we called Cyclops. He was Hispanic. He had big brown eyes. He had put a pistol in his mouth. You know, when combat gets too terrible for some people they can't take it anymore. He had put a pistol in his mouth

and shot himself. The bullet went up and took out one eye and part of his brain. He could not move. He could not talk. But he realized, I think he knew things. He really knew things that were going on and he used to watch us with that one big, brown eye. He would follow us around the ward with that one eye. We sent him to Japan because that's where they put the permanent plates in their head. When they came to us, the main thing was to save their lives. So they would clean up all the dead tissue in their brain and just pull the skin together and they were left with a big hole up there but it was just covered with skin. Then they would go to Japan where they would put in a permanent plate. Usually we kept them about two weeks before we felt they were well enough to stand the trip to Japan. But this young man we sent to Japan and I took some patients over one time and I thought, "Well, I'll go up and see which of our former patients were up there." He was facing the door and I could tell, although he couldn't move, he couldn't speak; I could tell by that one eye he recognized me when I walked into the ward. You know it was amazing. But he couldn't show any emotion, couldn't talk, couldn't move, but his eye was the only thing.

I stayed there [*in the MASH unit*] until 1952 and I had enough points to come home. I got orders to leave in April 1952. I came home and I was first assigned to Fort McPherson in Atlanta. I had requested to be assigned to a hospital near my home here [*in Cherokee, North Carolina*]. I didn't like it. It was just a small hospital and I like an Army post. I was there about eight months when another nurse asked to be sent to Atlanta because her mother was ill and lived in Atlanta.

They said, "Will you go to Fort Benning and let her come up to Fort McPherson?"

I said, "Oh, yeah, I'll be glad to."

So, I went to Fort Benning and I stayed there. I was assigned to the station hospital there and I met my husband in 1953. I got married in 1954 and then I was pregnant the next month it seemed like. And at that time, you had to get out if you were pregnant. They wouldn't let you stay in the military. I had thirteen and a half years, but, anyhow, I was discharged in August 1954 from the Army. As I say, I loved the service and all that and I would have joined the reserves but see I had two, (*children*) my husband went back to Iraq without the family. When you have two children that you have to look after, you don't want to have to take off and go for your reserve duty. But I would have loved to have finished it out. But my husband retired in 1971 and we lived in Black Mountain until he died in 1996 and then I came back and built my house here because I already owned this land and everything.

I'm old, but I've really, I think I've really enjoyed my life. It's been very interesting for some poor little old Indian girl from the mountains. I got out and saw the world and met a lot of interesting people and everything. I think it does people good to get out and see the world. That's my story. As I say, I've enjoyed, I loved my military life. You have to like the life of a military person, I think. I thoroughly enjoyed the military. I really did. It's a great experience. I wouldn't take anything for it, you know. I met many interesting people and did a lot of things I wouldn't have had the opportunity to do if I'd just stayed home. People said, "How did you ever get out of Cherokee?" I said well it just happened that way. Life, sometimes you just follow what comes along, you

know. You don't really choose. So, I can say I've had a very interesting life, fulfilling life, I believe.

At the time of this interview Virginia was 89 years of age, today she is 94 and still going strong. She lives by herself, continues to drive, take care of herself and her business. She not only survived WWII and Korea but she also survived pancreatic cancer, one in a million to do so. Virginia still believes strongly in remembering and honoring those soldiers killed in action or as a result of their wounds, and fights to have a monument built to honor them in Cherokee. Possibly because she saw so many that couldn't be saved, but it is certainly a cause that is near and dear to her heart. The horrors of war are never more real than to those that fought to save the lives that were being extinguished or changed forever on the battlefield. The doctors and nurses of the armed forces are truly heroes to those they have served and heroic in their service to humanity.

I meet Mrs. Dixon at the American Legion Post during one of our monthly meetings and asked if I could interview her about her experiences during the Second World War and she laughingly agreed and gave me her phone number to call before I came, saying, "I am almost always at home so just give me a call before you come." So the following Tuesday I gave her a call mid-morning and she said to come on out and gave me directions to her home. This was the first time I was introduced to the way in which directions are given in Cherokee, North Carolina. I told her I was coming from the Legion Post so she told me "come out of Cherokee and as you are coming into Soco Gap

turn up the mountain and my house is up on the side, you will see my mailbox and just turn in and come on up. Well, I thought for a moment and then asked if she was referring to the road that went off to the left at the Wendy's Restaurant between the town and the Casino, to which she replied, "yes, there at the top of Soco Gap." Soco and "proper" Cherokee are separated by the main highway, most visitors to Cherokee do not know that they are in different communities within the Boundary. They just assume that the entire area is Cherokee, the city, when in fact tribal members give directions to different locations, where they live and where brought up by using the community names – Yellow Hill, Cherokee, Soco, Big Cove, Snowbird, etc. Without this knowledge you can get lost very easily. Thankfully, I had spent some time familiarizing myself with the area and knew that the small area of road between the two "sections" of town that climbs up the mountain is called Soco Gap.

I told her I would arrive around one and she said, "No, no. Now you come on up here and have lunch with me and we will talk then." So I got everything ready and went on up the hill to her home. A beautiful, well-kept home on the hillside overlooking the Casino grounds. Virginia is a tall statuesque woman, with an open manner and a welcoming smile. She invited me into her home, set me down at the table and then continued preparing our lunch as we began to get to know one another. After about ten to fifteen minutes I had to stop her and ask if I could go ahead and start my tape recorder because much of our conversation was covering items in the interview and I wanted to make sure I didn't forget any of the details she was sharing about growing up in Cherokee.

Virginia is a very down to earth person, her stories are frank and don't pull punches, but they are not so harsh that you can be removed from them either. In many ways Mrs. Dixon reminds me of my paternal grandmother - if you asked a question you should be ready to hear the answer – that is not to say either of these women would answer the question in such a manner that it would hurt the person asking, but they are very truthful and forthright with their answers and with their stories. Frank but not harsh or cold. Thorough and yet not so in-depth that the reason you asked the question was lost or that your interest was quenched either. It seems you are always waiting for “the rest of the story.”

Virginia is the only officer I interviewed and I found it very interesting that she did not go through officer training prior to being sent to serve at a hospital. No rules or regulations were given, no knowledge of the chain of command. And perhaps it is this that makes her so accessible to her patients. She talks of how she in some ways “mothered” these boys who were in fact not as old as her or in some cases her age or older. The care she took with their feelings, the knowledge that most of these men would never be whole, physically or mentally, must have tugged on the heart strings of this young woman. Today she still fights for those who didn't come home and it makes me wonder if she is continually representing those that she could not save during her tours in war zones. I would argue that it is because she has been a witness to both physical and spiritual death that she is so pragmatic in her speech and in her day-to-day life.

Virginia shares that she did not marry until after her service in Korea and that she wishes she could have continued as a reservist, but that having children and a

husband in the military made this impossible at the time. Her marrying at such an “advanced” age for some would seem unusual for Cherokee women. However, I think several factors contributed to her delaying marriage. Virginia left the reservation to go to school this in itself is an anomaly, most Cherokee women stayed on the reservation working in the area after they had completed high school, they did not go off to college or nursing school. Added to this fact is that Virginia did not return to the reservation after completing her schooling but instead went straight to work and it was from Georgia that she left for the military. The next fact is many young men were joining the service even before we entered the war, making eligible men a rarity on the home front.

Virginia’s choice of a husband may also speak about why she waited to marry. Marrying an officer is in fact almost a common place occurrence among fellow officers in the service. Military life is unlike civilian life in many ways, but a major difference is that most of our down time is spent with fellow military members of our rank and station. Another facet of military life is officers fraternized with officers and enlisted members with enlisted personnel. Our jobs, rank, area of the country in which we are stationed give rise to many of our life choices: if and when to marry, to whom we will wed, if we will have children immediately or wait. All of these decisions are made with the fact of our military service at the forefront of our minds. Another deciding factor is if our chosen mate is in the same division, platoon, or command with us then the military dictates whether we can both stay in the service together, or if one must get out and join the reserves. I wouldn’t hesitate to say that all of these factors were weighed by Virginia and her husband prior to deciding to get married and have children.

My greatest regret is not asking Virginia, "Why?" The interview was one of my favorite and we spent a lot of time together after and have visited informally together several times and yet I have never asked her my two burning questions about her interview – Why did you want to be a nurse? and, Who was the benefactor that helped you attain this goal? I would like to know the first because it seems that she knew at an early age that she wanted to be a nurse and help people, even if she didn't know what that would entail – that she would end up serving her country and fellow soldiers. The second question is because I would like to know if her benefactor was Lula Owl. I have a suspicion that it may have been and that underlying her reticence to join the military before Pearl Harbor, was the knowledge that Ms. Owl had served during World War I and may have shared her experiences in France with the young girls at the school where she served as a nurse after returning to Cherokee, NC. Ms. Owl was the first member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian to become an officer in the military, and the only officer from the ECBI during World War I. It would be an interesting project to interview those that knew Ms. Owl and could share some of her stories about military life and being a nurse in World War I. Even better would be the opportunity to compare and contrast her life during World War I with Virginia's experiences in the military in World War II and Korea.

I don't believe not knowing the answers detracts from Virginia's story and perhaps that these question continue to intrigue me eight years after the interview may suggest that it is time to talk with Virginia again, ask more questions and renew our friendship over a nice lunch.

CHAPTER IV

SIMPER FIDELIS, EDSON RAIDER

His name is Robert S. Youngdeer. Some people call him Robert; his friends call him Bob, and others, out of respect, call him Chief Youngdeer. Born in Cherokee, North Carolina, on April 13, 1922 he, like many Native Americans, was not a citizen of the United States at birth; he would become nationalized in 1924 with the passing of the Indian Citizenship Act. Bob Youngdeer became a Marine at age eighteen.

When I was eighteen years old, I joined the Marine Corps in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, went to Parris Island. About June of 1940 . . . I had just finished the tenth grade. Richard Taylor who lived up the road here, he was a buddy of mine and Sam Owle, who was related to me . . . his dad and my mother was first cousins . . . We decided to join the Marines. We had seen Sherman George, he went in about '38 or '39 and come back with the blues on and Joe Pritchard he went to school up here in Cherokee and he come back; he'd been to Parris Island. Then a recruiter came one time, he showed us a film of training at Parris Island. I had always wanted to be a sailor, go into the Navy, but they were enlisting the Navy at six years, so I decided I wanted to be a Marine. All three of us, Richard Taylor, Sam Owle, and myself, we went to Asheville to the recruiting

station. I don't even remember how we got up to Asheville. And that recruiter, they found the same thing wrong with all three of us!

“You got an over bite. Your upper teeth overlap your lower teeth too far. You might be on a ship or on a tank and get a sudden lurch and it will shatter your teeth.”

And they refused us enlistment up there in Asheville. I didn't know it was because we were Indians until I came back. So, I got on the underground greyhound [*hitch-hiked*] and I rode it to Pennsylvania. I could have left the same day up there, but I went to Doylestown, where my mother and brother were staying. My brother who was five years older than I, I talked him into joining and he went with me. So we went down to the Old Customs Building on Chestnut Street, raised the right hand and headed for Parris Island.

I couldn't get in, you know back then at Asheville. I don't know why they were holding on to that tradition in the South but I know they didn't have any people of color in there when I went in. There were no women; there were no blacks in the Marine Corps when I went in. It didn't happen till about '52. No wait . . . correction . . . we took some to Oklahoma with us in '43. Anyway they weren't enlisting them when I went in . . . they wouldn't enlist us up here in Asheville. But I do know there were some young men [*Cherokees*] who went over to Knoxville and joined the Marine Corps. But I joined in Philadelphia.

Chief Youngdeer is referring to the fact that there were no integrated units until 1952, but there were some all black units at this time who often were assigned to the same areas. However, throughout the history of the United States Armed Forces, Native Americans have always been placed in integrated units (this does not include the

Confederate States of America, as Native Americans fought in all-Indian units within this entity).

We went through boot camp, July till about September of 1940. After boot training, we went by train to Norfolk, Virginia, and went aboard the USS *Henderson*. That was an exciting day. Oh, I had dreamed I would be on a big ship and be on the ocean, oh, it was so exciting. The ship pulled in the New York harbor. The World's Fair was still going on at that time. We had liberty there. I suppose we were there about five days and then the ship shoved off, and we ended up in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where I was assigned to Dog Company, First Battalion Fifth Marines. I came back to Parris Island with the first regiment, then I transferred to Quantico, Virginia back to D-Company, Fifth Marine, First Battalion, this was in 1941. We were up and down the coast quite a bit aboard these four stackers. They were destroyers, World War I destroyers the Navy had made into troop carriers and assigned to the Marine Corps, at least they carried us. We went up and down the coast; we went to Miami, Florida. We had a great time in Charleston, South Carolina.

While at Quantico, I entered the first division boxing tournament and, well, I didn't have any competition in the First Battalion Fifth Marines at Quantico, so we went down to New River, what is now Camp Lejeune, they called it New River then and we Marines called it tent city because everybody was in tents. They didn't have buildings then like they do in this modern Marine Corps. That was the old Corps. I am an old Corps, an old salty. I won the junior middleweight championship for the Fifth Marine Regiment. It didn't make any difference whether you were a professional or amateur in the tournament there and I lost to a young professional. I lost my bout. Jack Dempsey

refereed that bout; now that's history; Jack Dempsey was the world champion. We were there at the tournament on Seventh December 1941. On Sunday morning we got word that Pearl Harbor had been bombed by the Japanese.

So we made our way back to Quantico by train and while we were at Quantico the First Marine Raider Battalion was formed, this special battalion was formed out of the First Battalion Fifth Marines and then it became First Marine Raider Battalion. It was an all-volunteer battalion. There were about eight hundred men I guess in the battalion. We stayed there as the First Raider Battalion until about March or April of '42, then took a troop train to San Diego, California. I was in E-Company. We went aboard a ship there and shipped out for the South Pacific. The war had been declared then.

Like most of the "Silent Generation," Chief Youngdeer glosses over the formation of the Raiders, and leaves his contributions completely out. I feel compelled to add to his story here.

The formation of the Raider Battalions had been in the works for some time; in the end there were be two such units, the First Marine Raider Battalion, Edson's Raiders on the east coast at Quantico, and the Second Marine Raider Battalion commanded by Evans Carlson on the west coast. Both units would distinguish themselves in World War II and both leaders and members would become the stuff of Marine Corps legend. During the formation of the First Marine Raider Battalion, Colonel "Red Mike" Edson, knowing that close combat with the Japanese would be inevitable, began training his Raider Battalion. In January 1942 Edson brought in retired Marine Colonel Anthony Biddle, a legendary master of close combat. Biddle, at the spry age of sixty-five engaged a circle of Marines brandishing bare bayonets and disarmed all of them in short order. At this time,

Private First Class (PFC) Robert Youngdeer, as he has already stated, was on temporary duty assignment to New River (Camp Lejeune) in a boxing tournament. While PFC Youngdeer might have been the reigning regimental middleweight champion, he was also the most accomplished hand-to-hand combat instructor in the battalion and so without any hesitation Colonel Edson immediately revoked PFC Youngdeer's orders and brought him back to the battalion to train his fellow Raiders. Training for the Raider Battalion was neither quick nor easy, but it was thorough. Within ten weeks of his recall to train the battalion in close quarter combat the First Marine Raider Battalion was onboard the USS Zeilin (AP9) on its way to Pago, Pago, Samoa.³⁴

We crossed the equator and back then they had their ceremonies. You were a lowly pollywog if you had never been across the equator. Most of the sailors had never been across the equator; even my battalion commander, Colonel Edson, was a pollywog. There was an initiation, up on the cargo deck with canvas stretched over it and they had a big tub, a big canvas tub filled with water and stuff out of the galley. You know greasy oil and cut up potatoes, carrots and stuff in there. They had a chair up there. You would sit down with your back to the water. In that tank there were three or four big sailors with "shilales," clubs made out of sawdust, and they would flip you over backwards into that tub filled with bilge water and the sailors would beat on you and then when you come out of there they had King Neptune and the royal baby. Well the pollywogs had to crawl up to the royal baby. He was a big sailor with a big beer belly, they had drawn a big circle around his navel and he was sucking a big bottle, looked like a quart bottle, had a bonnet on and these pollywogs had to kiss his belly button. Then go up before Neptunus Rex.

³⁴ Col. Joseph H. Alexander, *Edson's Raiders: The First Marine Raider Battalion in World War II*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press), 43-56.

Neptunus Rex he is reigning that day. He is ruler of the raging main. King Neptune had a pitchfork charged with electricity and they hosed down the canvas and they would touch guys and you would get quite a shock out of that. After that initiation you became a shellback. I still have my shellback card.

They don't do that anymore I understand. I understand it's degrading now. You're mistreating the young sailors and Marines; they don't do that anymore. I am sorry that they stopped that initiation. The same way when you crossed the 180th Meridian, when you gain a day or lost a day, depending on which way we were going. You were a dragon, see until you crossed that 180th once you crossed it you become a golden dragon. I am a golden dragon also. I am proud of it.

When we crossed the 180th meridian there was a Marine lieutenant, he was the transport quarter master, and I guess the sailors didn't like this lieutenant. So they had him up in the gun tub, in the back, aft, of the ship there and he had two coke bottles taped together. Had him scanning the horizon, it was hot, a hot day, and they had him scanning the horizon for icebergs. He would scan the horizon with those coke bottles and turn around and say "No icebergs in sight" and they would say "Can't hear you, can't hear you." They had a time with that lieutenant, but they made the swabbies knock that off.

Anyway, the ship crossed the equator and we went to American Samoa . . . Pago Pago . . . they call it Pongu Pongu, the natives do. When we pulled into Pago harbor, what a beautiful island, we looked out on the beach and we saw what looked like dozens of lady folks on the beach. All those young Marines got excited. When we went to shore it turned out that the men wore the lava-lavas, there were no ladies. The Samoan Marines, they had khaki colored lava-lavas, white t-shirts and steel helmets, and they carried an

M3 rifle. We were there three months training on that island – getting ready to go somewhere. Colonel Edson was our commander. Colonel Merritt A. Edson.

*Training on Pago Pago would consist of more of Red Mike's infamous Raider training – cross-country hikes, night exercise, close quarter combat training and Red Mike's specialty, weapons training. Marines are all well trained, but Edson's Raiders were the elite of the elite, and they were well trained by their beloved commander for their mission – even if they didn't appreciate it at the time.*³⁵

Fourth of July 1942 we went aboard USS *Haywood* and our rear echelon that we had left at Quantico was on board that ship. We left American Samoa; Tutuila is the name of the island, and from there we went to New Caledonia, Noumea, a free French island. I was up on the railing there; it might have been our first day, the day we tied up. Before we got off the ship anyway, I looked down on the dock and who did I see – two soldiers from Cherokee, North Carolina, gosh, Enoch Samson and Leroy Ross. They were on a work detail. I hollered at them; I never got to go out and shake hands with them or anything. I did get to see Enoch; he lived to come back home and die. But Leroy, I never did see him anymore.

Leroy was one of six Cherokee to lose their lives on the Pacific front during World War II; six more would be lost on the Western front.

One evening the general came down to the company area, he wanted to talk to Robert Youngdeer and there was a couple of other guys; I think it was a guy name Giffels, and Smokey Finesco. I was a corporal and these guys were sergeants. Smoky Finesco and Giffels and I think Carrigan. We call him “wrong way Carrigan” because of

³⁵ For the training of the Raiders see: Col. Joseph Alexander, *Edson's Raiders*.

the guy that flew the wrong way trying to get to Ireland, Corrigan his name was, so we called this guy “wrong way Carrigan.”

Anyway, the lieutenant said, “Tonight there’ll be a truck come by and pick you up, you men, and some more men from the battalion. Have your sea bags packed.”

He didn’t tell us why. I think the same day he asked us if we were afraid of sharks – well, yes we were, I am.

“Can you swim a mile?”

I can swim, yes.

So they took us to FAT headquarters put us in a tent. Then we went to Noumea, on a little short liberty there. We came back to the new tents we had been assigned. The next day the Lieutenant, our squad leader, came in and said, “Some dark night a submarine is going to surface out here off the beach. We’re going to go aboard that sub. Then we’ll be going somewhere, we’ll be there for three days and three nights reconnoitering the island, the place they dropped us.’

It was five teams I think of twenty-six men. It was to get information on enemy forces that were there: where landings could be made and the guns they would probably have on the beach and all that stuff. We practiced there for a week swimming out in the river and in the ocean; there was a lot of difference between the river and the ocean. We went out there swimming and had a man sit in a rubber boat with a loaded rifle in case sharks did come after us. We didn’t have any problems. We practiced there for over a week. Making night reconnaissance and swimming out there in the ocean. Then they assembled us one day in the tent and the Lieutenant said, “It has been called off.”

Relief.

He said, "We have all the information that we need for where we are going." So we didn't have to go through that ordeal. This was sometime in July. Our Battalion went aboard the New Zealand transport ship, *Monowai*. We were aboard that ship to the Fiji Islands. In the Fiji Islands we transferred from the New Zealand ship and went aboard the USS *Haywood* again. Marines hated that ship. Aboard the old *Haywood* again . . .

From there we went to Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands and that was Japanese territory. The Japanese had moved in there about April. Early on the morning of August 7, 1942, I was top side. Our heavy, heavy ships were out there, big cruisers and I think we had one battle ship. These ships were spread out over that big ocean and they were shelling the landmass. You could see the explosions and hear the sounds of the gun fire. We climbed down the cargo net into the Higgins boats. You had to remember to keep your hands on the vertical rope instead of the horizontal, so somebody above wouldn't step on your hands.

We landed on Tulagi without any opposition. We went up on top of the ridge. It was a smaller island; Tulagi is about three miles by five-hundred yards at the widest point. It was the headquarters for the British Government; the Britons had the Solomon Islands under their control. They had modern homes on one end of the Island. That's where we went. That first day I saw my first dead person . . . Looked like a little boy lying there, it was a Jap soldier . . . a small person . . . had a little steel helmet on.

We set up on the ridge there, where the residente, the governor of the island, had his headquarters; there were two or three houses there. There was a deep cut through a ravine across that end of the island and there was a cricket field down there. I was in a machine gun company and one of our machine gun squads had set up on the ridge. My

buddy Arthur Hampton, Sergeant Luke and one other man was on the machine gun . . . well the gunner . . . he got killed right away; a sniper killed him. Then my friend Hampton . . . we went through gun drill a lot in practice, when one falls out, when somebody is dead, then number two would jump in behind the gun. So Hampton jumped behind the trigger there, behind the gun, and he got killed immediately. So then Sergeant Luke, he jumped behind the gun and they killed him too. Three right in a row. It took about three days to secure the Island. We had some Banzai attacks. A whole bunch of dead Japs that the Marines had killed and I think we lost about thirty-seven killed there on Tulagi from our battalion.

One day I was put on detail along with another corporal from the battalion and two men from the Parachute Battalion . . . that was the outfit Alfred, my brother, was in, First Marine Parachute Battalion. They didn't jump in. They went in by Higgins boats, just like the rest of us. They landed on another one of the little islands. The four of us were put on the prison detail to take prisoners across to the big island, Guadalcanal, from Tulagi by a tank glider. We had Higgins boats following us and the Gunny [Gunnery Sergeant] told us, "Submarines come up out there every day." We didn't have any of our ships; they had all left.

They had this big sea battle about the second night and they sunk five of our heavy cruisers, the Japs did, so we didn't have any ships there to support us. The Australians lost a heavy cruiser, the *Canberra* there. The United States lost the *Quincy*, the *Benson*, and one other. We didn't have anything, and they told us a sub had been coming up in the daytime, just in plain sight out there. We already had twenty-six Jap bombers coming over and bombing us. We had witnessed a big aerial battle. From on

Tulagi we could see the big battle – twenty-six bombers coming over and the dive-bombers and the torpedo planes. From the ridge we were on we could see all that going on out in there in the ocean, it was wild out there with all that ack-ack going up from the ships. We could see airplanes falling – quite a show, spectacular . . .

It was dark when we left Tulagi with the prisoners. We had about nine prisoners, I guess. The tank glider I was on had a coxswain, he is the man that drives the boat, and it had a man on the 50-caliber machine gun. They told us if that sub surfaces, and the sailor can't drive him off with the 50-caliber, then we'll shoot the prisoners and make a run for it. It was dark and there were buildings burning on Tulagi and they cast a light out onto the water so far. But as soon as we left the light being cast from the burning building on Tulagi then it was pitch dark. Then a big flare went up! Oh Boy! We thought, "The sub is going to get us now!" We cut the engine on the boat and drifted, after fifteen or twenty minutes or so, nothing happened, so we went on over to Guadalcanal. We took the prisoners to a compound, a barbed wire enclosure where they had prisoners. Most of those prisoners were Korean laborers that the Japanese had forced into labor, brought down there to build airfields and stuff like that. Very few Japanese would surrender, but they did have a handful.

We went down to the compound, took the prisoners down there and checked in with the Captain in charge of the stockade. We got stuck there for two weeks because we didn't have any air cover. Our engineers were building on the airfield and when the Seabees come in later, they went to work on it. But at this time we didn't have any aircraft, so we got stuck there for two weeks. Every day at noon, twenty-six Jap bombers would come over and drop their bombs. The first day it happened, I and a couple other

guys who went to Guadalcanal with me, we were swimming, washing our clothes, we only had what we had on. We were down in the river there, which is near the compound and these twenty-six bombers came over. Every day at noon they would come over the Jap bombers would. They would drop their bombs trying to hit the airfield. The Japs had the airfield well under way when we landed and they had left a lot of equipment there – steamrollers and tractors and all kind of equipment – which the Marines captured.

One night after about two weeks, we heard a lot of firing going on up the coastline. The First Battalion First Regiment was up there on the Tenaru River. I thought that they misnamed it – it was really alligator creek. We heard the firing and the firing and some of the ricochets were coming over where we were at the prison compound. The Japanese had hit the First Marines on the Tenaru River. That battle raged, all night, all night. Sergeant Galachan, he was a paratrooper with the prison guard unit, he and I decided to walk down there the next day. We walked down there and two bullets whizzed over our heads. The battle was over. Marines had stopped the Japanese there, at the river. The next day we went on a work detail we took some prisoners, Korean laborers I am quite sure, took them on a truck down there. We loaded seven hundred bodies... Japanese bodies. They were lying all over that beach. In the tropics, it won't take long for the flies to start working. They were littering the beach, the Japs were. Some of them, you could see them swimming out there and the Marines were taking pot shots at them from the beach. One Jap guy was sitting; he was sitting in a foxhole. He was dead of course and there was a big ole red worm hanging out of his nose, just like a clock . . . tick tock . . . tick tock . . . The others, flies had gone to work on them and you could literally take a shovel and get the maggots out of their stomachs. People don't realize what war is all

about. We loaded 'em up, like cord wood, on to these trucks, dumped them in the holes that the Marines had bulldozed out and blasted out with TNT. Buried about seven hundred bodies there. So that was the Tenaru river battle that was . . . quite a day.

At this point Chief Youngdeer is quite emotional, after collecting himself he remarks, "Here I sit all safe and sound, with Old Glory still flying. All these years later and it is still hard to recall." Throughout the four or five hours that we interviewed together there were several instances when he would stop for a moment and collect his thoughts or mentally and emotionally regroup, but this was his only loss of composure. With everything he witnessed and lived through this is quite impressive control.

Not long after that battle was over, one evening what happened here comes Marines – fighter planes, Grumman Wildcats and dive-bombers. They come in for a landing on Henderson Field, they called it Henderson Field because Henderson was killed in the Battle of the Coral Sea and they named this airfield after him. Here come these planes in! Ooh! You heard people shouting and screaming "yay . . . yay . . . yay . . . here comes help!" We didn't have any support until then – no airplanes, no ships. The ship had left us. This admiral decided it was too risky, didn't even unload all of our equipment. They didn't unload all the ammunition or rations or the heavy equipment, or the artillery – they didn't get all that unloaded. He took off and left us there. We were on our own with what little we had, the division was. These planes come in and what a relief that was. So the next day when those twenty-six bombers come over, our fighter planes were up there waiting. When those Jap bombers came over, we could hear the battle going on up there. We could hear the planes falling. After that we had our fighter planes and the bombers there supporting and it was a different story.

But those ships would still come in at night; the heavy cruisers and destroyers would come in and they'd shell the beaches, shell the airfield. After those fighter planes come in, the next day, we went back to our units on Tulagi because we had air cover. The four of us, the two paratroopers, the other Marine corporal and I, we went back to Tulagi. I got word that the parachute battalion had moved from the two little islands between Florida Island and Tulagi to Tulagi. My brother was in C-company First Parachute Battalion and when we got back to Tulagi, the parachute battalion was on Tulagi. Of course, I found the chaplain that was with them, we didn't have a chaplain, the First Marine Battalion didn't, I guess we were too tough to have a chaplain. He was with the weaker unit, the parachute battalion. Anyway, I found the chaplain who was with them over there and I asked him if he had anyone named Youngdeer that was killed. He said, "No. I don't have that name." I walked around little bit and I seen my brother over there shaking a coconut under a coconut tree, trying to find him something to eat. I happened to have a carton of cigarettes, I didn't smoke so I gave them to him and he passed them out among his buddies, made them all happy.

Cigarettes were included in all C-rations and passed out among the troops during World War II. During World War I loose tobacco and papers were handed out, but more men had moved to rolled cigarettes at this time and the military started including them instead of Bull Durham in the ration packages.³⁶

The prison detail had just got back after two weeks on Guadalcanal when they transferred us (*the Raider Battalion*) over to Guadalcanal from Tulagi. They needed more help over there than they did on Tulagi, it was a small island and secured. So there was

³⁶ Smith, Elizabeth A. and Ruth E. Malone. "‘Everywhere the Soldier Will Be’: Wartime Tobacco Promotion in the US Military." *American Journal of Public Health* 99 (2009): 1595-1602

two tin cans, a tin can is what sailors and Marines called the destroyers. We went aboard the tin can, one of our converted troop transports and they took us over. There was two transports, we boarded the *Calhoun*. As soon as we started to get off that Higgins boat to get on the beach, we could hear dive-bombers coming down . . . Japs. I jumped in a big hole already dug there. I can still feel my heel kicking the Lieutenant in the mouth when I dove in that thing. And I couldn't do anything. I serrated his lip. We were so shook up I guess it didn't bother him too much. He was probably shook up too . . . somebody said, "*Calhoun's* been hit, *Calhoun's* been hit!" By the time I looked up that other tin can was already gone. Deep sixed. All I could see was sailors and Marines swimming around out there. Higgins boats was out there picking them up. That was our indoctrination to getting back on Guadalcanal.

We went into bivouac in a coconut grove. The Lever brothers had a big coconut plantation there and we bivouacked in that. They got word that the Japanese had been landing supplies, reinforcements, about twenty miles from the airfield. Being in a Raider battalion, we went aboard ship. In addition to the destroyers they had these tuna boats there, imagine that, we called them yippees. They go tuk, tuk, tuk. They were tuna boats from the west coast and I was on a tuna boat! We went up past some locals, and went ashore there and all the Japanese, the main body, had already left. They were going to retake the airfield and this colonel he thought "Oh, these Americans they were a bunch of sissies they can't beat Japanese, we are much better fighters, jungle fighters than they are." He took off with a bunch of his troops to retake the airfield. There were still a few there, but they fled. They had medical supplies, ammunition, and rations. It was a good place to pick up souvenirs too and I got a few souvenirs, but I didn't get back with them –

swords, sake and beer, I think maybe some of that sake and beer went back with us. I remember seeing them, hooking the Higgins boat on to the artillery piece and they just dragged it out into the ocean. We were there all that day; we destroyed all the medical supplies, rations and all the canned goods and stuff, so they couldn't come back and get them. Then we went back up to the bivouac area. While we were there they shelled the airfield, the shells were going over our heads. Can you imagine – it's like a freight train going. They shelled that field every night.

They finally moved us. Our battalion commander, he was a smart, smart man, a great leader and he had all of our respect. I really admired and respected Colonel Edson. Colonel Griffin, he was our executive officer. We went up on this ridge behind the airfield. The colonel had figured out, and the divisional commander agreed with him, where the Japs would probably hit. They were landing troops every night somewhere. They had what we called the Tokyo Express, it brought down troops by barge, by ship and they were landing troops there – thousands of them. We went up on "Bloody Ridge" – what it became known as after the big battle. I was attached to Major Bailey's company; C-company was on our right flank. Sergeant Boone was squad leader. We went down on the river there. Major Bailey got killed later on – he got the Medal of Honor for what he did on the Ridge. He got killed in another phase of Guadalcanal. We walked across a lagoon; there was a felled tree there. I got halfway across that thing. I don't know why but I had my trenching tool in my hand. I fell off that tree into that lagoon and oh I had heard about crocodiles! I bet I grew wings and I came out of the lagoon! I lost my trenching tool. We went down the river and cut fire pits for the machine gun. We cut

fire lanes; you cut fire lanes so when you fire you won't have any interception or deflection of your bullet.

I got on the banks of the river, on guard . . . The commander Captain Harrod had told me couple of nights before that we were expecting an attack, that ten thousand Japs was going to hit us with heavy artillery. I was on the river there and I saw this guy floating down the river hanging on a log. I looked down and challenged him and he waved a rag at me. I motioned to him. He got out of there. He bowed, he was real polite. He was probably a Korean. I turned him over to the squad leader there and they sent him to HQ. We were there that night. That first night nothing happened. It was real quiet; all you could hear was the monopoles – those are malaria bearing mosquitoes; they stand on their heads and bite you. I had a head net on and gloves to keep the mosquitoes off my face and my hands. Nothing happened that night; it was quiet.

The next night along about nine o'clock Japanese ships started shelling. They were shelling the airfield behind us. None of the rounds were coming over the ridge where we were; I don't know how long that shelling went on, not too long, but as soon as it stopped I heard people wading in the river, heard them splashing. It was quite . . . It was quite, eerie quite . . . that Jungle thick vegetation and you couldn't see the hand in front of your face . . . it was dark . . . Heard this splashing across that river and we knew they were coming. All of a sudden they were coming right down our fire lane and then they were on our flanks, and they were behind us. We were thin, we didn't have a lot of people on that line and then a lot of firing started. They went through us and they hit the ridge behind us and they were beaten back. They came back through us again. We never did come in contact with them but I did throw some hand grenades and we heard them.

We had dug a machine gun emplacement up in front of us, and then moved it back away, there was a hole left in front of us in the fire lane. Heard them up there that night when they first came across. They were in that hole, some of them were and I could hear them talking, heard them bayoneting one of our men. I heard this scream, this begging and crying and Japanese voices; I could tell they were reprimanding somebody, getting after them. Found out later what it was, they were working a Marine over, bayoneting him and all that stuff. I found out later it was one of my friends named Ritter. I had seen him earlier. He had dysentery, oh! That malaria and dysentery was terrible there. I'd seen Ritter when we went into position there on the river, that first day. He was lying alongside the trail; he was so weak and he smiled a little bit. I smiled and went on where I was going.

That night these guys got in that gun emplacement we had abandoned. I threw a couple of hand grenades, over into them. We were there all night. The next day, everybody had left down there, they had pulled out. There were a handful of us still down there. We had packs and stuff like that, and I had a pack on. In that pack, we had mail call while we were in the coconut grove before we went up on the ridge and so I had a couple letters home. I had a flag that I had taken out of a Jap helmet that had blood on it and I had the most beautiful little purse that they'd got somewhere in the island they had picked it up somewhere; a Jap had had it in his pack. Beautiful little pink shells on it and family pictures and girlfriend pictures Japanese, you know; I had that in my pack. We had got all this stuff going down there after the first night when they came through on us. Well I left my pack and all that stuff I had.

We heard someone calling for help; I heard this voice saying “Is any of C-Company out there? Is any of C-company out there?” So I went over to the bushes there, this Marine was lying in there. He had been shot up in his legs, I guess he had a couple rounds up in the lower part of his body and he couldn’t walk, you know, had his legs shot up. I found him there and went back and I told, I told Frink, Private Frink to go get a blanket so we can carry this Marine out of there.

So Frink took off looking for a blanket. Somebody said, “Oh, they killed Frink.” Frink had been shot by a sniper – killed him. Then they got a hold of the rest us. I was with another Marine there, and I stood up to get my bearings and I blacked out. A sniper got me. When I woke up, I was looking at my gloved hand. It didn’t hurt, it just knocked me out. Bullet hit me under the nose here and come out under my ear there (pointing to the left side under the nose to under the right ear). I just blacked out. Like in the ring when someone knocks you out. I don’t know how long I lay there, but I wasn’t there too long. I had a corpsman with me, Malloy. Doc Malloy was with me. When I woke up I couldn’t breathe, I was breathing through the hole in my neck, I wasn’t breathing right, and I couldn’t talk because my tongue had been shot. I took my first aid packet off my belt, back then they were metal and I couldn’t even pull that opener. They open with a ring, like you would open a can of sardines. I put my finger in the ring and I didn’t have the strength to open it, to get my first aid out of there. So Doc Malloy, he opened my first aid packet, spread it out, put in on my neck and he called me John . . . I don t know why he called me John. I had known Doc Malloy for some time – he and I were on the boxing team at Quantico. We both went to New River to fight in the division tournament. He

was in the Navy but you know, they think they're Marines too. We couldn't do without them, couldn't do without the corpsmen.

The guy that was with me he had been shot in the foot, I got up. I was still able to walk. I couldn't talk very plain. We started scattering around there. I ran into Sergeant Holden but he wasn't much help to me. Then I met a Jap face to face on a trail there; he didn't know I was injured. If he did he would have probably got me but he jumped on one side of the trail in the bushes, and I went on the other side. Then I saw three Marines coming by, and I tagged on to the tail end of them. I followed these three Marines. We were in this lagoon. That ridge was a dominating terrain feature that overlooked Henderson Field. He who controlled the ridge controlled the Field. That's why we were up there to defend it. I followed these three men, one of them was Hubert Lambert, from West Virginia, I followed them. We went right into my company up on this ridge. Oh, my buddies come running out there to help me and get me in.

About that time we had another air raid. The twenty-six bombers were coming over again and they all hit the fox holes. They had little holes scraped out, couldn't dig too deep on account of that coral. I just laid on the stretcher out there; I didn't feel like trying to hide. I just laid there. Nothing come near us anyway. After the air raid was over, they carried me off the ridge down to the field hospital, a big tent. I still had a hand grenade in my pocket. We had them taped so the spoon wouldn't fly off and blow us up. We'd peel the tape off, and then it would explode if you pulled the pin. I went into the aid station there and they started pulling teeth and they took this grenade out of my pocket and gave it to one of the Corpsmen there, he gave me kind of a weak smile. That night I was in the bunker with a lot of wounded Marines, and that's when the major battle took

place up on the ridge. I could hear all that firing. It was double the sound of the Tenaru river battle.

You could hear Marines hollering, you could hear Japanese screaming and talking in their own language. I could hear someone giving fire commands, because we had artillery, and that's what helped saved the day. I could hear them giving fire commands to the artillery, 105s I guess they were. Laid there all night and listened to that battle rage up there on that mountain on that ridge. The next morning they were flying wounded out to New Hebrides. I was able to walk around. There was a jeep load of us and we took off to the airfield, about the time we got out on the airfield, there were flares going up in the air, Japanese signals. The jeep took off. I guess the driver knew where there was a bunker. I didn't go into the bunker, I just laid outside. There was a doctor with our group, he gave me a shot of morphine. It was getting daylight then, we went into this airplane. We went aboard that plane and when that plane took off it sounded like somebody was hitting it with gravel.

It flew us down to New Hebrides, Espirido Santos, and I laid in the naval hospital there for a couple of weeks, I guess, maybe not that long, I couldn't keep track of time. I was lying on my side with one of those kidney shaped little trays under my neck where that stuff would drain out in it. I had that for a while. There were a couple of guys, other patients in there that had been wounded; they weren't in my outfit. The older sergeant he kept telling funny jokes to this young private, and that private had been shot in the stomach or somewhere and he couldn't laugh.

He would get so aggravated, "Don't tell me them funny jokes!" because he didn't want to laugh.

That guy would say “hey . . . hey . . . baby, put on the green light . . . the man wants a green suit.”

This kid would laugh and say, “no . . . no . . . don’t tell me those funny things!”

One day the hospital ship *Solos* pulled in. So they were going to take us to New Zealand. I was walking, walking wounded, I was recovered pretty good. I went aboard that hospital ship, walked into the ward. I guess they call it a ward. First guy I saw was my brother. He was sitting there on a chair folding bandages; the nurse had him folding bandages. I told that nurse, “That’s my brother.” So she gave me a bunk right beside him [laughs]. He had one of those salve cans; you don’t see them anymore, he had a \$5 bill in there. He had it with him all the time. On ships they have where you can buy your ice cream and stuff; they call it D-Dump. He went and bought us some ice creams.

We pulled out of Espirito Santos and went to Auckland, New Zealand. I don’t know whether they unloaded anyone there or not. I did see one of our gunnery sergeants on the dock. I didn’t get to talk to him but I saw him down there. The ship shoved off and pulled into Wellington, New Zealand. Then they took us by train up to the Silver Stream Naval Hospital and that’s where I was admitted before returning to the States. On that ward, there was a fellow from Franklin, North Carolina, and his mother was working at the Red Cross in Franklin. When I come home on sick leave, Christmas of ’42, from Mayer Island Naval Hospital, California, his mother come over to see me. That was her son on the ward, a Corpsman, a Navy Corpsman, what a coincidence.

I came back to the States, Mayer Island. I was in hospital for six months. One day I told the doctor, “Sir I would like to get out, I want to go back to duty.” And that pleased him, because a man wants to go back to the war, you know. So he sent me back to duty at

Mayer Island, to the Marine barracks there, doing guard duty down on the docks, where they were repairing ships. You couldn't sleep, because Rosie the Riveter went trr-rr-rr-rr. We worked the midnight shift. The Marine Corps works four hours, the Army has two hour guard duty, but the Marine Corps has four hour shifts and you would try to get some sleep. But when Rosie turned loose on that riveter, there was no sleeping. I was there for a while, and then word came out that you could transfer, so I asked to be transferred back to Quantico. Cause we use to have a song we would sing, "I want to go, right back to Quantico, Gee, I want to go home!" That's how we'd sing when we're in the South Pacific. I got transferred back to Quantico in a casual company, which is what it means casual; they hold us there until they find someplace else for us. I was in a detail with a bunch of corporals; they sent us to New River [Camp Lejeune]. One day they picked thirty-five NCOs to ship to Oklahoma to do guard duty at the naval ammunition depot and that's where I got acquainted with this lady sitting on my left [his wife of sixty-three years, Aileene].

I was in McAlister, Oklahoma, from 1943 to February 1945 when I got shipped out to Camp Pendleton, California, ended up on Okinawa. I joined F Company, Second Battalion, First Marine Regiment. Joined that regiment on the Shuri Line; Okinawa was a bad operation. But I got there a little later; they were down on the Shuri Line headed for the lower end of the island there and then we secured the Island – Okinawa. Then we went north and set up another tent city, on the north end of the island. There was talk about invading Japan. Then, one rainy night, rain was coming down quietly, when all of sudden things exploded down there and voices, hollering, hey, hey, hey. Japan had surrendered! The next day in the chow line some crazy Marine pilot dive bombed our

chow line. He didn't drop anything he just went zzzip right over our heads! Oh, boy! We were diving for cover as that Corsair came out the sky.

I had enough points to come home. I came back to the States. I wanted out, discharged you know. I come back and six months later I was on another ship headed for China. We had a young child about eight months old and we had another one on the way and I was headed for China for two years. I was on a boxing team there. Did pretty good. I boxed in Zhengzhou and boxed in Shanghai. Middle weight champion of western pacific. In May of '43 I was in the all-Navy tournament; I was a runner up there. Then in 1948, my enlistment was coming to an end, so I go home, back to McAlister, Oklahoma, and went out and seen the sergeant major at the old Marine barracks, naval ammunition depot. I met Sergeant-Major Reagan. He said, "Well I got a place for you, can't guarantee you how long you will be here." I was still dreaming about going back and forth. Well, I stayed out over three months, and I couldn't get back in with my same rank, I was a staff sergeant, I had to drop the rank to re-enlist. So the Army recruiter, down in the post office, he said, "Army will take you at the same rank you left the Marine Corps with." Here I was without a job, without an occupation – all I had ever done was carry a rifle and give orders to lower ranking members. So, by golly, I was sworn into the Army in Muskogee Oklahoma.

I moved my little family to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas. Moved them there and we got a place to live out in Lopaka, Arkansas. Ohhhh, I missed the Marine Corps so bad – gosh –different type of people here you know, Army. When I got to Jaffee, I was in the processing company. I was taking these guys around to be processed. One day there was a first sergeant coming through; he had this screaming eagle on his left shoulder, 101st

Airborne. He said, "You ought to go Airborne. That's the next best thing to the Marines Corps." Of course he was just kidding me; he thought that the Airborne was the best. The First Sergeant told me that applications could be taken for jump school in Fort Benning, Georgia. This put me back to basic training at Chaffee. One day as we were sitting in the old barracks there and they were giving us lessons on how to tear down an M1 rifle. I carried one of those things in combat. I wasn't paying too much attention I guess; the lieutenant was kind of unhappy with me. About that time the company runner come over and said the First Sergeant wants to see you. I went over to First Sergeants office and they wrote for me, the jumping school at Fort Benning; I was on the list.

So about July we headed for Columbus, Georgia. All we owned, we had in one little car, everything and two babies. We did find a place to stay down there, it wasn't too bad. I reported in at Fort Benning, Georgia. I was met by a Sergeant First Class named Craig. There were several of us volunteers for the Airborne and first thing, he said, "Give me fifty push-ups!" I couldn't even do twenty when I got in good shape. I couldn't raise my arms for about two weeks. Then we went into companies and it was a five weeks course. Followed by a week of glider training, we packed our own parachutes. We had to have five qualifying jumps. We packed our chutes in the packing shed, but we had an instructor there making sure we packed them right – we'd know how to pack them after that. We had thirty-four-foot towers there where they would hook you up to a harness on the pulleys. You would make exits out of that jump tower; you would get in the right body position. There was a big guy sitting down there watching you. You had all those instructions; you've been in the sawdust pit in July and they didn't have any such thing as hot weather training back then; you trained regardless of how hot it was. Because when

you go to combat you don't quit when it gets cold or too hot. Some of the men couldn't even jump out of the towers, the heights you know; they didn't know they were afraid of heights. Then they had the 250-foot towers. Two or three of them were free towers – they would send you up 250 feet, then they cut you loose and you would float down. They grade you on your land and fall. Then they had one, it was guided. You go up and then you come down on that – you come straight down. That was the first one you went on. That was easy. So we had that training and then after the fifth week we made our qualifying jumps. After all that running and hollering at, cursing at, it was a relief to get out of that airplane. I made five qualifying jumps. I got my wings – my parachute wings and my glider wings.

I got transferred to the Fort Campbell, Kentucky. We had to scurry around get a place to live there. At Fort Campbell I made Sergeant First Class. I made Master Sergeant at Fort Campbell. We were there from fall of '49 till '52. And I left there a Master Sergeant, very fortunate; the Marine Corps did that for me. I was in good company. I never had any combat jump, but we jumped up through New York, in winter maneuvers, had a man killed on jumps there. We jumped in Labrador, had a man killed there, out of my plane. I was jump master. We got fifty dollars more a month than the enlisted men. You had to jump once every three months to be on jump status. And then you had jump: thirty-five jumps to grade senior parachutists and sixty-five for master parachutist and you had to have night jumps. I was a master parachutist. I got what you call premium pay on top of my jump pay, and we were doing pretty good for enlisted people.

While at Fort Campbell, I volunteered for Korea. Imagine that, somebody volunteering to go to Korea, to go back into combat. I had a letter of acceptance to C

Company 187. The 187th made the combat jumps in Korea and I volunteered for it, had the letter of acceptance. I re-enlisted for Airborne, and I come out of the reenlistment with orders to go to Germany. I guess it's a good thing because my family joined me over there after a year and a half or so. I was in a non-jumping outfit, what the Airborne soldiers call straight legs; that was our pet name for them.

We were over there and had mighty good training in Germany. They had some of the best training I had in combat tactics. Then we came back to Fort Campbell. We gyroscoped, the 11th Airborne division replaced the outfit I was at in Germany, and they called that gyroscope. At Fort Campbell, the 11th Airborne left, and I was on an advance party from Germany, my family and I; we reported into Fort Campbell. The MP on the front gate he said, "Orders have been changed. You are going to Fort Ord, California." So we ended up in California, Fort Ord. Out there it is non-jumpers and we were in a training outfit there. I was there long enough to put a couple of cycles through basic training. I got an award there for having the best platoon in this cycle. The guys vote for you. At that time Captain Finn, company commander, I knew him in Germany, called him shaky Finn because he would see somebody outranking come around, he would get all shook up, you know. We called him shaky Finn. He was a good man I would say but he would get shook up, excited.

Captain Finn said you couldn't put your hand on anybody. Back then you could lower the boom on them if they misbehaved. But Captain Finn he said, "If that man's rifle is crooked, at right shoulder arms, don't touch him, don't touch him, tell him to straighten it up, if he doesn't, then I don't know what to tell you to do." [*This is when a change in procedure was being enacted in the military from "correction as you see fit,"*

to a “hands-off” protocol] So I asked my platoon. They were young men, draftees, and they were good men. We had good draftees. I said, “Do you want to be treated like men or like babies?” They said, “We want to be treated like men.” So they voted me the best platoon man in that cycle. Then when I became eligible to reenlist, I reenlisted Airborne unassigned. Airborne was in my blood, just like the Marines was, not quite as much, but it was in there.

I saw my old company commander, Captain Le Roy Smith. He was one of my past commanders out on the drill field. I had to have PT test and a physical to get back in Airborne and I was about thirty-five or thirty-six, something like that.

I said, “Captain, sir, I have just reenlisted for Airborne, unassigned, I got to have a PT test.”

He said, “Give me that paper. Give me one push up!” I did one push up. Fifty push-ups he wrote on there. Thirty-five pull ups, seventy-five sky jumps and one hundred sit-ups. Then he signed it and said, “Here” There are some good guys in service you know.

Then we got sent to Fort Bragg, we were there about four years and I made First Sergeant there, E8. I run those guys in the ground there and I didn’t like administrative work but I sure like that physical part. I ran thirty-six miles on my thirty-sixth birthday in combat boots there. Me and another young black trouper from the company, he and I ran together. He was muscular you know he lifted weights and all, he was a good soldier. We had a good time there at Fort Bragg, all the jumping we did and helicopters and night jumps. They had one drop zone there – Holland drop zone – it was the biggest one. There was one type of aircraft that could take sixty paratroopers. I was a jump master on that

trip and we had sixty men in the aircraft. You don't just go up and jump. There are a lot of things you got to do. There was another master sergeant, MSgt Gabe, who was jump master qualified. I gave him half the sticks. They call them sticks. I took the first stick and he took the second. We had to make two passes on that trip, because there were so many men – couldn't get them all down at one time – had to make two patches on Holland drop zone. I was four years there with the 503rd Airborne Battle Group living in “the rock” they called us the rock because that outfit jumped on Corregidor during World War II. Two hundred and fifty feet in the air and all those rocks down there – Corregidor – so that was our patch – the rock.

It wasn't long and here come some more orders – going to Okinawa. The 503rd Airborne Battle Group was the nucleus to the outfit that went into Vietnam. You could take your families with you; they could be there is so many weeks, so here we went. It was the first time I ever rode in the chief's quarters on a ship, I had always been in big compartments where we were six or seven high – stepping on each other to get in the top bunk . . . This time I was a master sergeant. The sergeant major and I, we had chief's quarters. From San Francisco to Okinawa, we traveled in style. While we are still at sea, before we even get on land the sergeant major gets a radiogram from the Marines on Camp Zukeran. Here we are Army.

They are inviting you to the habu pit tonight, to welcome you. The habu is a poisonous snake on Okinawa. Well, Sergeant Major told the First Sergeant that we were invited to the habu pit, that the Marines had invited us. We got in our Khakis and got squared away and we went down to the habu pit that night. Those sergeants were waiting for us at the door, “Welcome, welcome aboard.”

I go in there and this one guy sitting up at the bar turns around and says, “Are you Henry or Robert?”

“I am Robert . . . who are you?”

“I am Henry Dean.”

“Henry Dean! What are you doing?”

He was a gunny – a gunnery sergeant, five stripes, everybody introduced themselves. That night we were welcomed there in the club. About two months later, the staff of NCO club United States Army invites us. We go up there and nobody pays any attention to us. I said it was professional jealousy because we were Airborne and they were straight legs. Nobody invited us; nobody welcomed us, nobody. I didn’t know where to sit – if you didn’t find a chair you stood up – difference of Marine Corps and Army. Oh Lord . . . I am a retired Army First Sergeant – Airborne.

When I couldn’t get my family over there and the brand new first lieutenants could get theirs over there, I had twenty years coming up. I told the master sergeant, the administrative NCO that I wanted to put in my retirement papers. My retirement went into the works and Sergeant Louis, he was the S3 sergeant, said,

“How about a retirement parade?”

“No, I just want to go home.”

“I tell you what, I’ll get the Marine Corps Band. If you will have a parade it’ll be an NCO parade. I’ll get the Marine Band.”

By golly they did. There was only one officer from the battalion there. My company officer didn’t even go. No other Army officer went. But there was a Marine Colonel there and those seats were full of staff NCO Marines at the parade. I trooped the

line in a jeep. They had the battalion battle group lined up there. And the Marine Band was standing in parade formation. I rode that jeep, I took the salute. Trooped the line in the jeep standing up, I and the lieutenant colonel and the jeep driver. Went around the formation, come back and stopped in front of the reviewing stand, got out and got up on the reviewing stand and the troop passed in review. The Marine band paraded. When the last unit passed the reviewing stand, there was a helicopter up there about so many thousand feet and about five guys jumped out onto the parade ground. One of them missed and landed out on the waterfront . . . he got hurt. So they sent me off with a bang. So that was my military career. I don't regret a minute of it.

I think my military service helped me when I ran for principal chief and for other times in my life. You go through a lot of hard times in the military and deal with a lot of different people; you meet a lot of different people, different nationalities. You meet a lot of good people. I was a new kid on the block when I ran the first time – I had never had been in council; never had been in anything up there. I come back and didn't like what I had seen and so I ran for vice chief . . . I didn't get it . . . I ran for council and I didn't get it. But, I didn't give up. Then I ran for principle chief and I made all the community meetings and there were people that were unhappy and so I got elected. Dealing with people and being able to take the harassment, you know there is a lot of harassment in the military. That job, principle chief, it brings a lot of harassment – people talking about you . . . against you . . . trying to undermine you and all that. I think my military career helped me to know how to deal with the harassment.³⁷

³⁷ Robert S. Youngdeer, interview by author, 9 September 2006, Cherokee, North Carolina, digital recording.

Robert Youngdeer spent the first half of his life serving the people of the United States; he retired from the Army in 1960 at age thirty-eight. Upon his retirement from the Army in 1960 he began serving the peoples of Native America when he began his career in law enforcement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). He began this career as a corporal and retired as a criminal investigator. During his time with the BIA, Youngdeer served as a special investigator assigned to reservation police forces on various reservations in North and South Dakota, Arizona, Alaska, and Mississippi. In 1973 he retired again. This time he returned to Cherokee, North Carolina. Almost as soon as he arrived back in Cherokee he found his people unhappy and wanting change in the governance of the band. So once again Youngdeer decided to serve. From the mid-1970s to 1983 Youngdeer ran for public office and in 1983 became Principle Chief of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian. Chief Youngdeer served from 1983 to 1987.

During his term as Principle Chief, Youngdeer was mostly at odds with the Cherokee citizenry he was serving. His no nonsense, Marine Corps training put him at odds with many of the Cherokee who continued to practice the harmony ethic. His service to his country first and then to his people put him at odds with many Cherokees during this time. Youngdeer's beliefs in assimilation and the development of Americanism and individualism are common among Native American peoples who spend a great deal of their life outside the reservation and away from their tribal members. Chief Youngdeer did not spend his adult life on the Boundary, that fact and his no nonsense approach to governing did not make him any friends in the political arena, but then Chief Youngdeer was not looking for friends, but rather a change from a nepotistic and corrupt

government to one that was accountable to the people at large. It was this stance that cost him re-election.

*Today Chief Youngdeer is retired and enjoying time spent with his wife Aileen. If asked to serve, to speak, or to mentor he unhesitatingly gives of his time, his knowledge, and his energy. While the majority of his military service was in the United States Army, he remains a Marine; as his testimony here states he remains *semper fidelis*.³⁸*

I have a granite memorial in the garden where I live. It says "Red Mike and his gallant men, Edson's Raiders, South Pacific, WWII, Semper Fidelis." I have an American and Marine Corps flag behind it. It's my way of remembering those who didn't return.³⁹

Chief Youngdeer is the quintessential soldier or Marine; he doesn't pull punches in the telling of his story or in life. Chief Youngdeer is a consummate storyteller, one who brings you into the story with him and shows the absurdity of war as well as its brutality. You are with him on that hill as he is searching for his fellow Marines; you are with him as he shakes the cobwebs off and focuses on the mission after having been hit by a sniper. You feel time slow down as you watch a worm click off the seconds, tick, tock, tick, tock, as the horrors of war recede from the mind as you focus on that worm. It is absurd, but it is also a saving grace, you can focus on something besides the hundreds of dead littering the ground around you.

³⁸ Robert Youngdeer and Reid Chapman. "Robert Youngdeer Oral History" *World War II Mountain Memories: Homefront to the Frontline, Testimonies of WWII Veterans and Civilians from Western North Carolina*. Interview June 30, 2003. http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/oralhistory/WWII_/youngdeer_robert.htm; John Finger. *Cherokee Americans: The Eastern Band of Cherokees in the Twentieth Century*. University of Nebraska Press, (Lincoln, 1991).

³⁹ Robert Youngdeer, "The Marines on Guadalcanal: Robert Youngdeer First Raider Battalion" <http://www.worldwar2history.info/Guadalcanal/E-Company.html>

As Chief Youngdeer cuts a fire path and then waits, you can feel the tenseness in the air. As Japanese soldiers rush over the stream and up the hill moving too fast to engage and then the waiting, the excruciating wait for them to return in hopes of engaging them and coming out alive. Chief Youngdeer brings all of these actions alive with the small details. The most interesting of his stories to me, were not the “war stories” (probably because I censor war stories in my head as I hear them; having interviewed over fifty war veterans I have found ways to protect my own well-being). Instead I appreciate the stories of how we as soldiers, sailors and Marines find ways to pass the time, the ceremonies we create to break the monotony of the tediousness of military life. For instance, the shellback story that he relates, to me is hilarious, but at the same time painful. Only sailors and Marines would come up with a way to initiate themselves into a special club for crossing the equator. But I know from other interviews that this initiation ceremony was one that was revered by all seamen, and the few soldiers who participated in it as well remembered the time with fondness and not a little bit of pride; being humiliated and shocked with a cow prod while wet is I am sure a memorable event. The pride from carrying oneself through the initiation and remaining “composed” is indeed something of which to be proud. Every person who has went through this initiation still retains their shell back card, and, like Chief Youngdeer, I believe it a pity that young men and women today do not have the opportunity to prove themselves to their peers and themselves through such a ceremony.

CHAPTER V

Kind of Young for That⁴⁰

Rueben Taylor was born November 7, 1925 in Cherokee, North Carolina, the second son of Ibson and Cindy Taylor, he was one of five boys, all of whom served in the United States military. Rueben was attending boarding school in Cherokee when Pearl Harbor was attacked; he had just celebrated his sixteenth birthday. Less than a year later he had joined the Army and became one of the “Devils in Baggy Pants.” Rueben epitomizes the harmony ethic of the Cherokee people, as his story illustrates. He tells this story as a member of a team and not an individual, but it is the individual who has helped to shape Cherokee men and women who came after – those who followed, and listened to this wise veteran and Legion member.

My name is Rueben E. Taylor, veteran of WW II serving in the Army Paratroopers. What I have to say is not about me, it's about the accomplishments of the 82nd Airborne Division, of which I was a member.

⁴⁰ Rueben Taylor, Interview by author, 21 September 2006, Cherokee, North Carolina, Digital recording, recording in possession of author.

The invasion of Holland, September 17, 1944 was when the US 82nd and 101st Airborne Division with the British First Airborne Division went in to clear the way for the British 2nd Army's drive into Germany. Troop carrier planes took off from English bases for Holland shortly before noon on September seventeenth; special pathfinder planes drop their loads of paratroopers over drop zones at 1300 hours. The 82nd Airborne landed in the Nijmegen area, captured the town and the tactically important surrounding territory.

It took seventy-three days to clear the enemy out of Holland. After that, we were sent to Rheims, France for a little rest.

On December 16, 1944, orders were received to move out. The 82nd Airborne Division was sent to the area in the vicinity of Webermont in the Bulge. The Battle of the Bulge was in its last stages, and the Allied High Command could now use its superiority in men and supplies to oust the beaten remnants of Von Rundstedt's Army in the Siegfried Line. By constantly applying pressure to prevent the organization and consolidation necessary within the shelter of the forest we formed a barrier. Days later my regiment, the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment was ordered to crack the Siegfried Line, and from there drive on into Germany. The Division was assigned to occupation duty in July 1945. The division left the city in October 1945 and returned to Fort Bragg, N.C. via New York.

The bulge, Christmas Eve, 1944, we were stuck in freezing weather a thousand miles away from home. We were eating ice-cold C-rations; our feet were numb from the freezing weather we were living in. We were being shelled nightly from German 88s which made it impossible to get any rest. Our machine guns were dead silent. After

witnessing the horrors of war as friends were blown away, we were near exhaustion, mentally and emotionally. Sixteen days in the bulge was worse than seventy-three days in Holland.

In the bulge we found the going rough. The weather was freezing temperatures. Near zero weather limited the advances to about two miles a day at best. Day after day we were wallowing hopelessly through the snowdrifts. We learned to save our hands and feet from frostbite by cutting blankets and sewing them together for makeshift mittens and footwear. We wrapped paper around our feet to help keep them warm. If a man was wounded he had to keep moving fast or he would freeze to death.

This is Rueben's statement about the war that he shared at the time of the interview. Rueben had been asked to be interviewed by both myself and Laura Pinnex's middle school class. In preparation Rueben prepared the above statement, had the American Legion commander read it and then he practiced his delivery all prior to our meeting, and without my knowledge of this preparation (I was later told by Lewis Harding, the Legion Post commander of Rueben's nervousness and preparation for the interview). After reading his statement he did take a few questions but throughout the process he was very uncomfortable and would answer quickly and quietly. He shared more personal non-military information during this time. If pressed about a particular aspect of the war he would give a short answer and ask for another question. His reticence to answer is partly due to the children present and partly due to the fact that Rueben does not want fame, glory or even recognition. In the traditional ways of the Cherokee he feels he did his job, nothing more and nothing less and should not therefore be recognized for his gallantry, or valor. This fact can be ascertained when one learns

that Rueben never mentions that he was awarded with the Bronze Star, a Purple Heart, the Croix de Guerre, the Fleur de Guerre, and two Presidential Unit Citations one for securing Holland and one for breaking through the Siegfried Line. When asked what he had done to receive these honors his response was, "They just gave them out to everybody in the unit." The following is information gleaned from questions asked during the interview and from conversations I have had over the past five years with Rueben.

I volunteered for the Army. All my friends were going, they were older than I. I was sixteen and they were going in from seventeen, eighteen, and on up, so I said, "I'm going, too." At sixteen.

Did you have to tell a little fib to get in?

Well, I can't remember that. They might have just took me in anyway.

Did you have to have your parents sign for you?

No. I left from boarding school. My friends were going and I had seen one of the boys come back from basic training that took airborne training. I seen his wings on his chest, and I said, "That's where I'm going." That's why I volunteered for the Airborne. I did my basic training at Fort McClellan, Alabama. After that I went to Fort Benning, Georgia for Airborne training. The Army recruiters came to the boarding school, I signed up and left with them that day. They took us to Fort Bragg. There were others that went too - Charles Crow, Jess Crow and George Crow, they all went into the Navy. I was afraid of sharks.

Training was rough. I was young, no training for anything like that. But they trained us. Our vocation, our training was how to kill, any way you could kill. Then

airborne training. First jump was the best 'cause you didn't know nothing.' The second one after that was sort of scary to me. We jumped from twelve hundred feet.

I can't remember the date, but 1943 we got to Leicester, England, and started training for it and then went into D-Day. I was held back, I didn't have to go. They might have thought that I was kind of young for that. And then we were shipped up to Rheims, France, again, and the division was sent back to England to prepare for the drop in Holland in September. I had remained at Leicester, England while the others went forward for D-day and those that remained we trained for the drop into Holland. I was eighteen when we dropped into Holland, we were in Belgium when I turned nineteen, I was on guard duty for my birthday. I could hear the blades on a windmill screeching when I was on duty.

I was on patrol in Holland when I was shot in the leg, in the knee. We had orders that if anyone was injured to the point that they could not return to the camp then the others were to shoot the soldier so that the enemy could not get the information. Our passwords for getting back into camp were Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse for that operation.

What was it like coming home?

Happy days. Happy days. When we went in the service overseas we had to stay 'til the thing was over. The only way you got to come home was if you lost a leg, arm, or dead – then you get to come home. I was with one fella, he'd been over there forty months, I think, and he was wanting to get home. I was over there a little over two years. I came back to Cherokee, I was discharged, took leave, and then I went back and re-

enlisted again for three years. I was discharged in January 30th, 1947, I was 20 years old. It was good to get back home alive.

Worked anywhere I could find an odd job. There were no jobs. If you found a job, it was sawing jobs. You might make \$30 a week. Paying house rent, water and sewer, power, we were barely getting by. I took GI training in 1948 as a plumber electrician. Couldn't get a job 'til – a steady job 'til 1959, when the Harn Company moved in. Worked there for three years, then I got a job with the Public Health Service, and worked there six years, and then I got in with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and worked there 'til I retired in 1968.

I joined the American Legion in 1960. I'm a forty-six-year continuous member. Been the Commander twice, and first and vice commander a number of times. Sergeant-at-Arms for I don't know how many years – just 'til last year – last election. I'd been asked to join the American Legion when I first come out of the service, but I wasn't ready. When I did join, I got busy, and been active since. They needed a good Color Guard, for one thing, but Chief Robert Youngdeer had already started one, so I was the fifth member of the group till he left and then I become one of the regular members of the Color Guard. I been working the Color Guard since 1962, I guess over forty years.

When asked about whether his service affected him after he returned –

We Indians don't have to have this, what do you call it, psychiatric treatment after being in the wars. We are a strong race of people. Clarence Rogers had been in prison for one thousand two hundred and forty-three days, he come back and blended right back into civilian life. He was a survivor of the Bataan Death March. You have to have a lot of willpower, too while you're in service to live, try to live in – especially in wartime. That's

the reason living from day to day. I was slightly wounded in November 1944 when we were in the Hurtgen Forest, Germany. I was shot in the leg. I was treated for it and sent right back to the line. It was freezing weather. If a soldier was wounded, and he couldn't get out or get up, he would freeze to death right where he was. Weibermont, the Bulge - The Valley of the Shadow Death – if you were wounded and couldn't move you froze to death. We were all going forward, and they had to fall back and regroup. The Battle was hard, lot of death.

After five years of conversations and “interviews” I still do not know the details of Rueben being awarded the Bronze star. After our interview and the article I wrote about some of the Legion members was published, Rueben began getting more and more attention about his service and his awards of valor. He has been honored by the tribe and by other communities in the area as one of the Eastern Bands heroes. As I was sitting in the Legion office one day Rueben came in to talk and in his quite way he sat for a little bit then he said, “You know, ever since we did that interview they have been talking. They treat me like I am some kind of hero. I ain't no hero, I just did my job.” It was as if by talking the first time and continuing to talk about his time in service, because he has now given that same “statement” three or four times at various events that he has been asked to speak at, that he wanted us to have another talk that would allow him to return to the shadows. My reply to Rueben was simply, “Rube, you'll always be my hero.” The reason he will always be my hero though is not because he participated in World War II, or because he was in the Battle of the Bulge, or even because he was awarded the Bronze star. No, Rueben will be my hero because when I asked Rueben why he wanted to become

an American Legion member and start an Honor Guard he answered, “Because I wanted to do something to honor those men, those heroes, that didn’t get to come home with us.”

There were five Taylor brothers and all served in the military. Richard, the oldest tried to join the Marine Corps with Robert Youngdeer in Asheville. While Robert hitchhiked to Pennsylvania to join, Richard went to Knoxville, Tennessee. Both Robert and Richard were Raiders but Richard served in a different company. As Rueben has shared, he was an “All-American” a member of the 82nd Airborne, Frank was in the Army for both WWII and Korea while the baby of the bunch, Lee Taylor, enlisted for the Marine Corps during Vietnam. This is not an unusual situation among the Eastern Band; there were many families who enlisted in the military – all brothers, fathers and sons, and some families had three or four generations of the family who had served in the military. This is just one more way that Rueben is an excellent example of Eastern Band military members and their commitment to service – be it in through military, community, or tribal service.

Rueben’s story has a special place in my heart. The angst it caused Rueben to recall and write down his story was something that occurred unintentionally. I always try to get my interviewees to think about their time in service and I give them the questions ahead of time so that they may reflect on things they want to share, but I don’t want them to “write” their story because it losses some of the interaction, the living part of the orality seems to whither when one tries to create the “official” story of what happened. Even in autobiographies if you try to make the story configure to expectations the story telling process is lost and the end result is dry, it is missing the punch of freshness. However, the circumstances surrounding Rueben’s interview changed the way

in which he approached telling his story. Many veterans, Rueben included prior to the interview, have never told their story publicly and even privately it often remains untold or only shared with close military friends, those we know will understand what it is like to have a drill sergeant yelling in your face, or have been in the thick of things during war; these people know that of which you speak and will understand the tense silence, the moments taken to recompose oneself before continuing, and the inner struggle to relive the memories and yet distance oneself from the pain and horror these memories often bring. I believe that had Rueben's story remained an interview/talk between the two of us the interview would have delved deeper into his personal experiences and a better understanding of why he joined specifically to serve in an Airborne unit, possibly we might have uncovered the elusive reason for his bronze star. I believe it was connected to his being shot during the Battle of the Bulge, but I could be wrong; it may have something to do with the occupation of Germany or the drop into Holland; in all of these instances the members of the 82nd Airborne distinguished themselves and their unit.

The involvement of children in the interview process, something I felt I could not decline, nor do I suppose that Rueben felt he could either, changed the dynamic of the interview. It put impressionable children in the audience, thus changing the positionality of the teller and the listeners; no longer was the interview between fellow veterans, but an audience had been created that would remember the man, the story, and the circumstances of the interview. Added to this, Mrs. Pinnix also wanted the interview video recorded, again changing the dynamic of the interview. This created an unchanging fact that Rueben would be required to tell his story and provide information that previously had been locked away in his memory. The agony of indecision about what

to talk about, how much of his story he was willing and comfortable sharing to children, their innocence about war in general and World War II in particular would also hinder how much Rueben may have been willing to share in this setting. All of these things combined, I believe, to create a pressure on Rueben that led him to create and practice an “official” story of his time in the military. He also wanted to be sure to create this story so that the children would get the “correct” messages and life lessons from their elder, while sharing a little bit about the realities of war and what occurred in Holland and Germany.

The official version is that the story is about the 82nd Airborne and their actions during World War II when they parachuted into Holland and then assisted in driving back the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. The lessons are simple – put others above yourself, honor those friends and comrades who died, and put forth an honorable story that you, your family and your tribe can be proud of in the end. The reality of war is that Germany was our enemy and that, further, even when across an ocean you can remember what you were taught at home and it can keep you alive. Using bits of cloth and newspapers stuck into shoes and gloves to keep hands and feet warm was not a new skill created out of necessity on the battlefield, it was a skill taught to the young Cherokee in the mountains of North Carolina during the twenties and thirties, the “depression” years. In an economically depressed area many Cherokee braved the cold of the Appalachian Mountains by wrapping their hands, feet and indeed their houses in newsprint to keep the cold out. You are taught at a young age to keep moving to keep the blood circulating; you are taught at ceremonies when you are wading into the frigid water of the Oconaluftee River how to keep warm and the importance of moving

(dancing) to stay alive both physically and spiritually. These are the lessons that are revealed when reading the official story and considering the positionality of the teller and listeners. These stories are interrupted, challenged and revised when it is just two people, the story changes to a conversation that flows naturally and the “official” becomes personal. However, once the story is in place it creates a field in which one must maneuver with new questions at the next meeting; it is no longer a conversation to be continued, but a story about which one must ask questions, a story that then becomes “challenged” making the new questions almost impossible to ask and remain respectful of the teller and respected interviewer. An official story, a written transcript, becomes harder to question than a conversation in which one can ask for more in depth information. In a conversation, one can say “I am not sure about your questions, can you explain?” But in asking for clarification or a deepening of the story, one is immediately met with, “I told you what happened,” or “it is not about me, and what happened with me, but about the unit, and what we went through as a unit.” This is not to say that conversation between Rueben and myself shut down, but I was of the understanding that the official story was as far as he was willing to go, once he had created it, and therefore continuing to question him about his time in service received only surface answers and nothing deeper was discussed.

In looking back there are many questions about Rueben’s story that are still unanswered, and I do not know if I will ever get the chance to talk to Rueben in an open interview again to answer them. Questions such as “Did your unit find out that you were not yet seventeen when you joined? Is that why they thought you were too young for D-day? What was it like as a young man to leave Cherokee and all you knew to go into the

Army? Did boarding school help or hinder you in the military? In your personal life? Were you raised speaking Cherokee? What is your happiest memory during the years you were in service? Your saddest? And what military battle were you in that lead to your receiving your Bronze Medal? These are some of the questions that still burn in my mind to ask Rube, but more important than the questions, I just want more of an opportunity to know this wonderful man and for him to know how very important his service to his country, family, and community is to all of us in the Cherokee area. I know he doesn't believe himself to be a hero, but the way he leads his life now is an inspiration to many.

CHAPTER VI

“Reading” Oral Histories

World War II brought many changes to the Qualla Boundary and its members. The oral histories contained within this dissertation can only tell us of individual experiences when considered separately; however, when taken together, these histories reveal a more thorough historical perspective on the Boundary, the Eastern Band and the social and cultural identity of the “silent generation” of Cherokee. Society dubbed this generation “silent” due to their reticence in speaking out about their history, their society and tribulations during the Great Depression and most especially about their war experiences. Tom Brokaw recently dubbed this generation, “the greatest generation” after he spoke with many about their experiences in World War II, and while I agree with this estimation this generation remains silent to those around them and they only talk when asked specifically about their life or their involvement in a specific activity such as war.⁴¹ The last thirty years has seen a proliferation of oral histories from this generation. There has been a large push to get these stories collected before this generation disappears; this proves more than disproves the moniker, “silent generation.” For if they had shared their history, the need to ask would not remain. To ferret out the history of the “Greatest Generation” one must break through their silence, illustrate to the teller the importance of his story, and then honor that story for the truth that it tells. This dissertation does exactly that, it uncovers the history of Eastern Band Cherokee veterans and their role and actions during World War II. Each oral history is unique in its shape and size, how it was told,

⁴¹ Tom Brokaw, *the Greatest Generation*, Random House, NY, 2001. Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Generations: The History of Americas Future, 1584 to 2069*. (New York, NY: Harper Perennial: 1991) p. 279.

the experiences of the veteran and the interaction between interviewer and interviewee makes each story unique, however, just a like crazy quilt when the pieces are put together, the total is even more beautiful, unique, and strong than the pieces that create it. An examination of the oral histories contained within this dissertation reveals that the stitching in the quilt of stories is the questions asked of the interviewees and these stitches reveal community, educational, familial, and enlistment ideology that are the shared colors of the many different fabrics of the quilt of life. In addition the American Legion plays a significant role in both the collection of these stories and the lives of its members, the blue of Legion membership can be found in the fabric of all their lives, as well as my own.

The Steve Youngdeer American Legion Post 143, is involved in the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian community. Its founding members chartered the post after World War I and named the Post for one of their own who had sacrificed his life on a battlefield in France. American Legion and Veterans of Foreign War (VFW) membership has dwindled in the past forty to fifty years as members have passed on and younger veterans have been slow to join. There are many reasons veterans choose or decline membership in these veteran groups. Most often these reasons are generational in nature and oftentimes war specific as well. The founding members were seeking a way to support Americanism and keep alive the camaraderie they had found during wartime. World War II and Korean War veterans want to serve their community, have a continuation of camaraderie, and instill in future generations a love of service to man, community and nation through mirroring these things in their own life as well as in the work they do within the community. Very few Vietnam veterans have joined these veteran groups, and

this joining has only been in the last twenty years. The reasons for not joining or joining later in life have been linked with their treatment as Vietnam veterans. If the veteran was drafted into military service very often the bitterness of what they had to do in service and the way they were treated after returning home from war keeps these veterans at an arms distance not just from the veteran groups but society at large. If the veteran joined the military during Vietnam he is more likely to seek membership at a later age as he wants to once again serve his country and community with hopes that this time his service will be recognized and supported rather than spit upon by his fellow countrymen. Vietnam veterans also desire camaraderie with fellow Vietnam veterans, ones who know what it was like in the jungles and are fighting some of the same demons. Younger veterans, veterans of the First Iraq War, as well as the more current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are at a generational disadvantage. Most posts, both VFW and Legion, are made up almost entirely of World War II and Korean War veterans and the younger generations do not see the common ground they share with these older veterans, and often times the older veterans also do not see the common ground.

Yes, they all served in the military, but that military and military life has changed greatly in the last sixty years. Added to this is the generational differences between the two groups. Men of the “silent generation” went to war as a matter of course, something uncovered in the oral histories – it was never “if I decided to join” but always, “when I was old enough to join.” The younger generation joined the military and found themselves involved in a war after the fact, or they joined during wartime for personal or patriotic reasons, not just because it was what you did when you reached the age of “enlistment.” Wars were also fought differently fifty or even sixty years ago. Then war

was personal, it was hand to hand, you saw the people you were shooting or who were shooting at you, it was not the electronic warfare of today. Today's veteran actually has some shared experiences with Vietnam veterans as oftentimes both never knew "who" the enemy was – soldier or civilian, man, woman or child; in Vietnam they could all be carrying hand grenades, in Iraq and Afghanistan they could be car bombers or suicide bombers. In both of these eras the identity of the enemy was not cut and dried, but still the differences of service remain, so often they don't speak about their war on common terms.

These are some of the reasons that men and women decide upon membership in veteran organizations. I believe, however, that in regards to membership in the American Legion, the decisions are tied directly to the fact that this is a service organization and that as such it requires time and commitment. Like any volunteer service organization the members are called on to do a large amount of work for little recognition or appreciation. Volunteers work together in these organizations because of a shared passion – education, beautification, service, or political affiliation, for example. Members have a shared background as veterans and often the work they do is related to Americanism – that is how to become good citizens of the nation. They do this through various programs, such as the honor guard that posts colors at many different events across the country; another example is the importance of voting; here they teach children the importance of voting and help in school elections to illustrate the importance of voting in all elections – local, state and community, not just presidential elections. They also take care of or oversee veteran graveyards. The sacrifice of time and talents is great, therefore most members do not seek or become involved in Post membership and service until they are retired from

the workforce and can give great amounts of time to the organization. Veterans do not become members of these organizations to “validate” their service or their status as veterans, they do so because they want to continue serving their community and their country. I was ignorant of all that the American Legion does to help veterans and their communities until I became involved with the veterans at the Steve Youngdeer post of the American Legion during research for my Master’s program at Western Carolina University. I enjoyed working with these veterans and quickly became a member and officer at the post, working alongside these veterans to help them create a museum dedicated to Eastern Band veterans and service leaders. The oral histories contained in this dissertation are an outgrowth of my desire to serve the Legion post and the EBCI, and each of the veterans whose stories are contained within this work are proud members of the Steve Youngdeer American Legion Post 143.

The oral histories of each of these Legion members begin with their youth. As each story attests the Cherokee boarding school played a big part in their childhood. Unlike previous EBCI members who attended boarding schools off the Boundary, World War II veterans were attending high school on the Boundary at the Cherokee boarding school. As related in their oral histories each of these members attended boarding school on the Boundary and finished their education there, with the exception of both Rueben Taylor and Jerry Wolfe who left boarding school and went into the military before graduation. Rueben literally left boarding school with the recruiters to join the Army while Jerry enlisted in the Navy and shipped out prior to finishing high school. Jerry received his high school diploma in 1999 when Cherokee High School, like many others

that year, recognized the sacrifice these veterans had made and awarded diplomas to those students who were in their senior year when they enlisted or were drafted.

Each member remarked, either during the interview or during subsequent conversations, that boarding school helped prepare them for military life. Each recalled learning to march, the posting and retiring of the colors, “Taps,” and the regimented way of life during their time in boarding school. In the case of Jerry Wolfe the military training he received at boarding school helped to get him noticed and put in charge of other recruits. Also the regimentation of life at the boarding school differed little from life during military basic training. Henry Pratt based boarding school life on the military, in both situations the goal is the same – for Indian boarding schools it was to “Kill the Indian and keep the man” in the military it is kill the individual and keep the soldier. Yet, the boarding school stories these veterans share differ greatly from those collected and shared recently in Native American literature.⁴² These oral histories relate how boarding schools could also be places for learning and preparing for life. Jerry Wolfe speaks about learning the Cherokee language while at boarding school something that flies in the face of most accounts of Native American Boarding School experiences that have been recounted in recent monographs on the subject. Each of these members also had nothing bad to say about their experiences at boarding school and seem to remember it fondly and speak of it in terms of a safe place, a place where they felt safe and cared for, not the horrific places of beatings recounted in academic accounts of boarding schools. For these men and women boarding school was a way of life. Because of the terrain, each member of the tribe spent time at and grew up within the school walls. It was not a punishment to

⁴² D’Arcy McNickle, “Train Time” and with Richard Fey *Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet*; Brenda Child *Boarding School Seasons*; and K. Tsianina Lomawaima *They called it Prairie Light*.

be Cherokee at this school, as everyone else was also Cherokee. The Cherokee boarding school was an on Boundary boarding school, not an off reservation school such as Carlisle, Hampton, Haskell, or Chilocco. In these boarding schools the underlying program was assimilation into white culture. At the Cherokee boarding school this program was not carried out with the same vigor. Instead it was a place of education and a safe haven during harsh winters where students were provided with food and shelter, not “loaned out” to white families to be taught how to act and work in the white world. In fact, many students of off-reservation boarding schools returned to work with the students at the Boundary school. Here they were taught traditional arts and crafts along with their main academic studies. Many boarding school children learned weaving, basket making and woodwork at the school, rather than through work with an elder.⁴³

Beginning the oral histories in childhood also gives the reader an understanding of the degree to which the speaker adheres to traditional Cherokee beliefs and whether the speaker speaks Cherokee or is from an English only background. Traditional Cherokee thought and speech patterns are prevalent in two of the oral histories and are less noticeable in the remaining. This can be ascertained in the flow of the story, and the brevity in recalling painful memories. Some of these thought and speech patterns are not as easily recognizable due to the editing process where I changed the story to read along a timeline, but even in these instances the pauses and quickness of recounting painful incidents remain. Another thread that is present throughout all is the underlying reason for joining the military. With the exception of Virginia Sneed Dixon, the Cherokee men reveal that they made the decision to join at an early age – they were all in school when the decision to enlist was reached.

⁴³ Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian *Cherokee Elders: Our Greatest Generation*.

Again, with the exception of Virginia Dixon, the stories relate the decision to enlist was neither a concrete decision nor were the underlying reasons to enlist. Among Eastern Band members the desire to enlist in the military is elusive. I asked the question, “Why did you enlist?” several different ways with several different directions. For example if an older brother or a relative enlisted first did that have an impact on why you enlisted? Did you enlist to see the world? Did you enlist because of the scarcity of jobs or to acquire a profession? As the oral histories attest the answer to this question was no, instead they talk about enlistment as if it were a foregone conclusion: “when it came my turn to enlist,” or “when I was old enough to enlist I knew that I wanted to join the _____,” or in the case of Virginia Dixon, it was war time and the Army needed nurses, so she went. For the men interviewed for the oral history collection as well as those questioned outside of the collection the question baffled them; it was more of a “when you get to a certain age, you go” type of mentality without a questioning of why. This may have been because those I questioned for the oral history collection did leave directly from boarding school or in Mrs. Dixon’s case directly after nursing school. This was true up through Vietnam veterans I spoke with, the reason or desire behind their enlistment was just as baffling to them as to those of us who asked. As stated previously, the World War II generation and the Korean War generation grew up with a belief in service to community and country, and at least for the men it was almost a moot point about going into the service; the decision was which branch you would join when the time came.

The oral histories indicate a desire for adventure and excitement was a motivating factor in which branch of service to join depending on what one wanted to accomplish.

For example Jerry Wolfe states that he wanted to do “something different” than the other boys enlisting and decided to go into the Navy rather than the Army or the Marine Corps. For Rueben Taylor he had seen an older boy who had come home in his Army Airborne uniform and wanted to wear a uniform like that - “with the patch on the arm.” Even Robert Youngdeer made a decision based on a comparison of the military groups. Youngdeer had originally wanted to enlist in the Navy but one had to sign up for six years and he was unsure if he wanted to serve in the military for that length of time and so he opted for the Marine Corps so he could enlist for a shorter period of time but still serve on board a ship, something he had dreamed doing for years.

While excitement and adventure played a role in what branch one would join familial connections to the military did not play at all in the decision. A comparison of World War I EBCI veterans and World War II EBCI veterans reveal that each member whose oral histories appear here has a relative who fought during World War I. However when asked if their relatives being in service played a role in their joining the answer was, again, no. Even when the member had a brother serving when he enlisted, like Rueben, when asked if that played a role in his decision to enlist the response remained negative, this was the same when Rueben’s younger brother Frank who joined the Navy at the end of World War II. When asked if Rueben or Richard’s service played a role in his joining he replied that no, he just wanted to see the world. This however would change by the time EBCI members would begin joining the military for the Vietnam wars, these members state that their brothers, uncles, cousins or fathers had fought during

World War II or Korea and it was their turn to join the military and fight for their country.⁴⁴

Once in the military these veterans reveal that group cohesiveness was great. In each of the oral histories the word “I” is seldom used; it is most often “we” unless the use of I has to do with individual activities or actions. This is most evident in Rueben Taylor’s “official story” of the actions of the “All Americans.” He places himself within the group and tells of where the group went and what they did. He also recalls what he himself did at specific times, but most often it is in response to a question or query from his audience. This removal of self from the telling of the stories reveals how Cherokee tradition and thought and speech patterns still remain. Traditionally a person does not talk about what they did or did not do in a situation but how the group acted and reacted. This remains true in the oral histories collected from Cherokee veterans as well as in interviews with later war veterans until the Vietnam Era is reached. This is not to say that these veterans do not recount personal antidotes or use the “I” pronoun at all, just that it occurs less in their stories than in oral histories collected from veterans of later wars. You hear most World War II and Korean veterans say “we were stationed” rather than “I was stationed” you hear more “we whooped up on” instead of “I opened fire.” A careful reading of the oral histories contained herein reveals this interesting turn of phrase and allows one to understand the importance of team work and camaraderie to these veterans. Cherokee Veterans of the Vietnam War however, use the “I” pronoun unless relating specific group or unit activities. This trait reveals two distinct occurrences in the oral histories.

⁴⁴ Ragan, Angela, “From the Red and White to the Red, White and Blue” Master’s Thesis, Western Carolina University; 2007, 98-100.

First, this trait reveals that when asked about how they were treated in the military, or if they found prejudice or racism in the military, the answer to the question was always no. However, during interviews the fact that these men were often called “chief” was revealed. This revelation was always casual on the part of the interviewee, with no thought that the reference could be seen as anything other than “normal.” In Jerry Wolfe’s history we find the most revealing story of how being an American Indian had a positive impact with his commanding officer. While in Robert Youngdeer’s case we see the prejudice clearly in the rejection of him and three other Cherokee men when they went to enlist in the Marine Corps in Asheville, North Carolina. Other interviewees often remark on being called “chief” but rarely do we see overt racism such as that revealed by Robert Youngdeer or Jerry Wolfe. What has become clear in both my research and others works among Native American veterans is the overwhelming evidence that these men most often serve in elite positions – such as point men or gunners, or in combat specialty groups such as the Army Airborne, Navy Seals, or the Marine Corps.⁴⁵

Second, this trait speaks to the amount of group cohesiveness during World War II, it also points to how the veterans focus their memories on the group and not themselves. Each time there was a pause for a painful memory it dealt with the loss of friends; each time there were tears shed during an interview it was over the loss of life of friends and comrades, sometimes unknown to the teller but through the memory of the faces seen only in death. Not once in all the oral histories I have collected did a speaker break down while relating injuries to self. Many times however, breaks were taken and tears were shed over the loss of so many good men and women. Heroic deeds were never

⁴⁵ See Alison Bernstein, Thomas Britton, Diane Camurat, Jere B. Franco, Laurence M. Hauptman, Tom Holms, Susan Applegate Krouse, John P. Langellier, Angela Ragan, Michael Tate, and Kenneth Townsend

shared. I have lived, worked and shared many a meal with the men and women veterans of the Eastern Band over the last eight years and although I know many have silver stars, bronze stars, Navy crosses, Croix de Guerre and purple hearts, I have only heard from one about how he was injured and received his purple heart. I doubt even this recounting, however, would have made it into the oral history if we had not talked about it on numerous occasions as we tried to get the VA hospital to pay for care.

These men and women do not consider themselves heroes. In fact they point to those who died and were buried far from home as the heroes of our country. They discount their service and their heroism with an oft heard phrase, "I was just doing my job" As a matter of fact, after it became common knowledge that Rueben had received the Bronze star, the Croix de Guerre, a purple heart and several presidential unit citations, those around him began asking him to be the guest of honor on floats for the Fourth of July, Veterans Day, and the Indian Fair Grand Marshall, to name just a few. I guess Rueben must have thought that I was to blame for the information getting out, and in some ways I am, for if he had not been interviewed the information would not have been known. Rueben approached me shortly before I was due to leave Cherokee for Texas and in his quite unassuming manner said, "You know all these people think I am some kind of hero. I'm not. I'm not a hero; I was just doing my job. The heroes didn't come home." I still don't know what Rueben did to receive his accommodations, and I probably never will as he has never told anyone, but he will always be my hero, and the hero of many more, not because of his actions on the battle field, but rather because of his actions at home, working endlessly to honor those left behind on the battlefields of Europe.

Rueben is not alone in his efforts. Each man and woman whose oral history is written in this study works tirelessly to honor those fallen in the line of duty. Mrs. Dixon fights for those killed in action and to have a monument built to honor them. Jerry Wolfe keeps their memory alive as he tells his stories and works to educate visitors who come into the Cherokee Indian Museum. Robert Youdeer has planted a flag and dedicated a memorial in his backyard to the Edson Raiders, while a retired Army First Sergeant he will always be a Marine, one of the few brave Raiders who stormed the beaches of Guadalcanal.

The common thread of boarding schools, reasons for enlistment, treatment of Native Americans in the military and the changes brought to the boundary and the Cherokee people through the continual involvement of their men and women in the military during most of the twentieth century can only be fully studied and understood through listening to participant stories. More research and collections of oral histories is imperative if we are to fully understand how the veterans of Native America have influenced their tribe's social thoughts and patterns. Each collection and analysis should be undertaken as a tribal analysis in order to understand the movement over time within the tribe before comparing and contrasting the different tribal experiences to analyze whether a pattern can be seen throughout Native America. Examination of the oral histories contained within this dissertation reveal common threads of ideology in community, education, family and enlistment. Whether these same ideologies continue among those veterans of the Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghan wars is a subject for further research. The "greatest generation" as this dissertation reveals was in many ways

the turning point for how Eastern Band Cherokee veterans viewed their military service and their roles in the tribal community.

Each person whose story is told here is unique, as is their story. These oral histories, in being told, release the teller and help to spread into the community the pain, joy, and sacrifice that serving our country produces in the lives of veterans. There is no way to summarize these stories into one, for it is not a story, but many stories with one shared purpose – service. Wa-do.

APPENDIX A

Veteran Interview Questions:

General Information

1. What branch of the Military did you serve in?
2. How long did you serve?
3. What was your MOS (Military Operations Specialty)?
4. What year did you first remember hearing about the war you served in?
5. When do you first remember being aware of U.S. involvement in the war in which you served? What were your thoughts about us being involved?
6. How do you think the press covered the war?
7. What positive thing or things do you think came from your war? Negative things?

Specific Information

1. In which Cherokee community were you raised? Do you live in that community today?
2. How did you come to be in the military? (were you drafted or did you join)
3. Do you think your culture/traditions helped you while in the military?
4. Do you think your experiences while in service changed the way you look at society, if so how?
5. Do you think the Eastern Band people view veterans differently than non-veterans?
6. How did your military training and experiences affect your life after you were discharged?
7. Do you have any regrets about being in the military and serving during wartime?
8. Did you have any political or personal conflicts about fighting for the government given their historic treatment of Native peoples?
9. Did your views concerning the government (federal and/or tribal) change after you served?

Areas of Discussion:

1. How did you come to be in the military?
2. What was basic training like for you?
3. What were your experiences when you arrived “in country”?
4. What were your personal experiences during your time “in country”?
5. What were your experiences coming home?
6. What were your experiences once home?
7. What occupations have you pursued since your time in the military? Have you been involved in the Eastern Band government and if so in what capacity?

****Please note:** I do not want you to relive any painful experiences that you do not feel comfortable in sharing. My intent is not to bring pain but to share your war experiences with others so they might have some understanding of the part Native Americans played in American wars and how these roles affected the lives of our people. It is also my intent that through the sharing of your stories you might be acknowledged for your contribution to America both militarily and in your community.

APPENDIX B

**NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ANGELA RAGAN**

Interview Agreement

The purpose of the Oral History Project of Angela Ragan is to gather and preserve historical documents by means of the tape-recorded interview. Tape recordings and transcripts resulting from such interviews become part of the personal library of Angela Ragan and copies of these interviews will also be held by the Steve Youngdeer American Legion Post. This material will be made available for historical and other academic research by scholars and members of the family of the interviewee.

We, the undersigned, have read the above and voluntarily offer Angela Ragan full use of the information contained on tape recordings and transcripts of these oral history research interviews. In view of the scholarly value of this research material, we hereby assign rights, title, and interest pertaining to it to Angela Ragan.

Interviewer (Signature)

Interviewee (Signature)

Date _____

Date _____

Name of Interviewer

Name of Interviewee

APPENDIX C

**NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ANGELA RAGAN**

Interview Agreement/Transcription/Tape Usage

The purpose of the Oral History Project of Angela Ragan is to gather and preserve historical documents by means of the tape-recorded interview. Tape recordings and transcripts resulting from such interviews become part of the personal library of Angela Ragan and the Steve Youngdeer American Legion Post. This material will be made available for historical and other academic research by scholars and members of the family of the interviewee, regulated according to the restrictions placed on its use by the interviewee. Angela Ragan is assigned rights, title, and interest to the interviews unless otherwise specified below.

I have read the above and reviewed the transcripts of my interview and I voluntarily offer the information contained in this oral history research interview. In view of the scholarly value of this research material, I hereby permit Angela Ragan to retain it, with any restrictions named below placed on its use.

Nature of restrictions on use of transcripts:

Nature of restrictions on use of tape recordings (**Unless** noted below tapes will **not** be released to the public and will be kept in a locked safe. They are only being kept as a legal safeguard).

Interviewee (signature)

Date _____

Name of Interviewee

APPENDIX D
Members of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians
Who Served during World War II

Adams, George T. (Navy)		Bradley, James L.	E	
Allison, Benjamin H. (Army)		*Bradley, Thomas A.		
Allison, Boyce J		*Brady, Charles R.		
Allison, Felix W.		*Brady, Floyd		
Allison, Mount B. (Army)		Brady, James L.		
Anthony, Charlie (Army)		*Brady, William	D	
Arch, James (Jimmie)		Brown, Hubert		
Arch, David		Brown, Sam		
Arch, Johnson Jr.	E	Brown, Thurman A.		
Arch, Ronnie		Brown, Wroe H.		
Armachain, Calvin	E	Bryson, C. A.		
Armachain, William	E	Bryson, Jessie R.		
Arneach, Frances Newman	E	Bryson, Thurman W.		
Arneach, Samuel Clinton		*Bushyhead, Joel D.	D	
Arneach, Richard Earl		Calhoun, Smathers	D	
Ashe, Wilburn H.		Calhoun, Herring Walker		
Beck, Jarvis E.		Catolster, Alexander	D	
Beck, John Quentin		Catolster, Boyd		
Ben, Stan		Catolster, Benjamin	D	
Bigmeat, John	D	Catolster, Guyon	E	
Bigmeat, Mark Welch	E	Catt, Boyd	E	KIA
Birchfield, Riley		Catt, Paul J.	D	
Bishop, Quenton D.		Childers, Alvin W.		
Blythe, Andy J.	E	Childers, James E.		
Bowman, Arnold J.		Climbingbear, Henderson	E	
Bowman, Harold James	D	*Cole, Hollis B.		
Bradley, Albert F.	E	Cooper, Earl T.		
Bradley, Charles		Cooper, Harry M.		
Bradley, Edward		Cooper, Paul		
Bradley, Freeman	E	*Conseen, Adam	D	
Bradley, Harold Calvin		Cornsilk, Clarence	E	
Bradley, Harry L.		Cornsilk, Jacob		KIA
Bradley, Henry A.		*Craig, William		
Bradley, John Cecil		Crowe, Charles E.	E	
Bradley, Johnnie H.		Crowe, Gilbert		
Bradley, Kenneth		Crowe, Jesse	E	
Bradley, Lee William	E	Crowe, John Adams	E	
Bradley, Morgan		Crowe, Joseph S.		
Bradley, Oscar		Crowe, Richard N.		
Bradley, Raymond	D	Crowe, Robert	E	
Bradley, Richard L	E	Crowe, Sevier	E	
Bradley, Henry A.		Crowe, Warren Harding	E	

Crowe, William H.	E	*Goines, George Carpenterry	
Cucumber, Delliske	D	Green, Lewis R.	
Cucumber, David	D	Green, Matthew M.	
Cucumber, Everett		Green, Monroe	
Cucumber, Joe J.	E	Green, Morrison	
*Cucumber, John		Griffin, James R.	
Davis, Clarence G.		Hardin, Ernest	
Davis, David		Harris, William	
Davis, Dean D.		Hayes, Frank	
Davis, Glen L.		Hensley, Harry	
Davis, Lloyd C.		Hensley, Ralph W.	
Davis, Haven J.		Hensley, Theodore R.	
*Davis, Jack Cornelius	E	Herron, Clyde	
Davis, John R. Jr.		Herron, Finley	
Davis, Otis E.		Herron, H. T.	
*Dean, Henry	E	Herron, Thomas H.	
Denton, Carl H.		Herron, Wilburn D.	
*Dillard, Benjamin		Hill, Blaine, Jr.	E
Dills, Homer E.		Hill, Ned Jr.	D
Driver, Clarence		Hill, Jacob J.	
*Driver, John B.	D	Hill, Jesse J.	
Driver, McAdoo	E	Hornbuckle, Benjamin F.	D
Driver, Nick	D	Hornbuckle, Thurman	E
Driver, Richard	E	Huskey, John	
Driver, Wesley	KIA	Huskey, Robert	
Dugan, James B.		Jackson, Boyd S.	
Dunlap, Harry R.		Jackson, Elijah	E
Dunlap, Odell	D	Jackson, Frances E.	
Enloe, Lenoir		Jackson, John J.	
Enloe, William L.		Jackson, John S.	
Enloe, Verlin W.		Jackson, Walter S.	E
Feather, David		Jenkins, Carrell R.	
Fisher, Harvey G.		Jenkins, Hugh B.	
French, Roy D.	E	Johnson, Charles D.	
George, Ammons		Johnson, Lloyd H.	
*George, Davis		Johnson, Joe	
George, Guy		Jumper, Stanford	
George, Joseph	E	Junaluskie, Archie Davis	
George, Newman		Kalonahaskie, Howard E.	
George, Sherman	E	Kanott, William Henry	E
*George, Tom		Keener, James P.	
*Gloyne, Daniel D.	E	Keener, John W.	
*Gloyne, John	E	Keener, Thomas Wayne	
*Goforth, Arthur J.		Keener, Wayne	
Goforth, Leonard A.		Keener, William J.	
Goforth, William H.		King, Frederick L., Sr.	

Lambert, Cabe M.			
Lambert, Clyde M.			
Lambert, Daniel			
Lambert, David E.			
Lambert, Felix Thomas	D		
Lambert, Freeman C.	E		
Lambert, George H.			
Lambert, James	KIA		
Lambert, Jesse R.	E		
*Lambert, Joseph Russell			
Lambert, Leslie			
Lambert, Nessler			
Lambert, Philip			
Lambert, Russell D.			
Lambert, Samuel D.			
*Lambert, William R.			
*Lambert, Winford	E		
*Ledford, Allen	E		
Ledford, James	E		
Ledford, Mason			
Ledford, Noah			
Lillard, Charles C.			
Lillard, Sherman	E		
Littlejohn, Garret	D		
Littlejohn, Ned	D		
Locust, William Russell	E		
Long, Johnnie			
Long, Lloyd	E		
Long, Steven G.	D		
Lossiah, Charles			
Lossie, Jesse James			
Lossie, John Jr.			
*Lossie, Sampson			
Lossih, Abel			
Lossih, Calvin S.			
Luff, Mary Lambert Nurse)	E		
Maney, Cecil			
Maney, Charlie D.			
*Maney, John H.			
Maney, Marvin			
Maney, Shufford K.	E		
Maney, Simon Peter	D		
Marmon, Ben			
Martin, Jesse			
Martin, Roy A.			
Mashburn, Floyd H.			
Matthews, Marshall			
Matthews, Seaborne	D		
Miller, Arch			
Miller, Frank L.			
McCoy, Frank			
*McCoy, James H.			
McCoy, Russell D.			
McCoy, Walter R.			
McCoy, William	D		
Moore, James W.			
Moore, Theodore			
Murphy, Clarence	E		
Murphy, Robert G.			
Oocumma, Andy			
Oocumma, Joseph Welch	D		
Otter, Henry	E		
Otter, John			
Otter, Samuel William	E	KIA	
Owl, Ellis			
Owl, Eugene			
Owl, George A.			
Owl, Jarrett			
Owl, Joseph C.			
Owl, Samuel F.	E		
Owle, Raymond			
Owle, Clifford			
Owle, Clifton	D		
Owle, Johnson Lee			
Owle, Philip			
Panther, Samuel			
Parker, Carrol			
Parker, Claude			
Parker, Gerad			
Parris, Joel C.			
Patterson, Roy D.			
Pheasant, Driver C.	D		
Queen, Blayne		KIA	
Queen, Calvin C.	D		
Queen, David R.			
Queen, Jimmie			
Queen, Joe			
Queen, Robert			
Queen, Solomon			
Queen, Tommie			
Ramsey, Clyde E.			
Rattler, Diamond			

Rattler, Joseph W.	E	Smith, Golman	D
Rattler, Mark	E	Smith, Howard	
KIA		Smith, Jarrett	
Rattler, Robert		Smith, John David	
Rattler, Wilson W.		Smith, John Wilbur Jr.	E
Reagan, Candler	D	Smith, Joseph Allen	
Reagan, Emmett		Smith, Leonard	
Reagan, John P.	D	Smith, Leslie V.	
Reed, David		Smith, Milton	D
Reed, Harlen J.		Smith, Phillip Henry	
Reed, Jackson	D	Smith, Sheridan	E KIA
Reed, Kenneth		Smoker, Jack C.	
Reed, Mark	E	Smoker, Jack D.	
*Reed, Noah	E	Smoker, Owen	
Reed, Robert	D	Sneed, Kenneth Osco	
Reed, Samuel	D	Sneed, Lawrence	D
Reed, Wilson	E	Sneed, Patrick V.	
Roberson, A. J.	KIA	Sneed, Vernon George	KIA
Roberts, George W.		*Sneed, Virginia (Nurse)	
Rogers, Clarence W.	E	Swayney, David W.	
Rogers, Frank A.		Swayney, James H.	E
Rogers, George D.		Swayney, Jesse L.	D
Rogers, Jasper Carl		Swayney, John H.	
Rogers, John E.		Swayney, Hubert	E
Rogers, Robert B.		Swayney, Walter D.	D
Rose, Lyle		*Tahquette, Howard	
Ross, Isaac	E KIA	Talalah, Sam David	
Ross, Leroy	E	Taylor, Cecil	
Sampson, Enoch	E	Taylor, Frank Joseph	
Sanders, Carl W.		Taylor, George	E
Saunooke, Edison	E	Taylor, Herbert D.	
Saunooke, Joseph B.		Taylor, James	E
Saunooke, Richard A.	D	Taylor, Jonathan Larch	
Saunooke, Welch L.	E	Taylor, Lawrence	
Saunooke, William		Taylor, Phillip	
Sequoyah, Emerson		Taylor, Rueben E.	
Sequoyah, Charles Wilber		*Taylor, Remos	
Shell, Boyd B.		Taylor, Richard	E
Shell, Joshua	KIA	Taylor, Simeon	
Sherrill, Andy		*Taylor, William Henry	
Sherrill, James H.		Teesateskie, Lee	
Sherrill, Frank W.		Teesateskie, Welch	E
*Smith, Alvin E.	E	Teesateskie, Will	
Smith, Charles Henry		Thompson, Adam Carl	
Smith, Franklin	E	Thompson, Ennis	KIA
Smith, Hosea Gilbert	D	Thompson, Jefferson D.	E

*Thompson, Joseph W.		Welch, Oscar	E
Thompson, Leroy		Welch Robin	D
Thompson, Reginald R.	E	Welch, Thomas K.	
Toineeta, George Howard	D	Welch, Vester	
Toineeta, Jeremiah	KIA	Welch, Wilson W.	D
Tollie, William L.	D	*Welch, Woodrow Wilson	
Tooni, Michael		(a.k.a. Wilson Oocumma)	
Tooni, Russell		West, Alfred T.	D
Tramper, Welch	E	West, Cecil P.	
Wachacha, Mose		West, Sherman A.	
Walker, George William		Wilnoty, Kaiser	
Walker, Jack Donald		Winkler, Dennis	D
Walkingstick, Abraham	E	Winkler, Harold	E
Walkingstick, Calvin		Wolfe, Charles	
*Walkingstick, Edwin		Wolfe, Donald	E
Walkingstick, Henry	D	*Wolfe, Eli	D
Walkingstick, James R.		Wolfe, Jacob	
Walkingstick, Ramsey		Wolfe, Jeremiah	
Walkingstick, William	D	Wolfe, Ned	E
Wayahneetah, John	D	Wolfe, Richard B.	
Wayahneetah, Robert Austin	KIA	Wolfe, Robert W.	D
Welch, Adam J.		Youngbird, David R.	
Welch, Elliot William	E	Youngbird, Edmund	E
Welch, Irvin		Youngbird, James	
Welch, Isaac		Youngbird, Ned	
Welch, June M.		Youngdeer, Jesse H.	E
Welch, Jonah H.		Youngdeer, Robert S.	E
Welch, Larch			

D – Drafted

E – Enlisted

KIA – Killed in Action

Names listed in bold are included on the Cherokee Veteran Memorial, Cherokee, NC. Names listed with an asterisk have been verified as Eastern Band but are not on the Memorial.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ NARA RG75 Series 34 Cherokee Indian Agency Education Records Education Branch Records Correspondence and Reports 1902-1952; NARA RG75 Series 36 Cherokee Indian Agency Educational Records Educational Branch Records Veteran Training Files 1944-1952; “Many Cherokee Indians Serving In Armed Forces” *Bryson City Times* 19 November 1942; Willett to Jennings 18 June 1946 RG75 Series 36; Progress Report of the School for Indian Veterans at Cherokee RG75 Series 36; “Cherokees in War Zone” *Asheville Citizen* 16 December 1942; Steve Youngdeer Post 143 American Legion Membership Records 1946, 1947, 1963, 1965, 1967, 2005. This list was compiled from Annual Reports of the Cherokee School (1946-1947 and 1948-1949), a newspaper account of those Cherokees from Swain country who enlisted or were drafted, a newspaper account of enlisted Cherokee men serving in the Pacific, and records

from those members who partook of Public Law 16 (Vocational Rehabilitation Bill) and Public Law 346 (G.I. Bill of Rights) both of which required that the trainee had to have entered the service after 9-16-1940 and served during World War II in order to receive training. The list was then cross referenced with the Cherokee Veteran Memorial and the 1933 Census Rolls.

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Recording in possession of author.

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Digital recording. Recording in possession of author.

Ladd, Glenn. Interview by author, 2 September 2006, Cherokee, North Carolina. Digital
recording. Recording in possession of author.

Law, B. J. Interview by author, 30 October 2010, Cherokee, North Carolina. Digital
recording in possession of author.

Long, David. Interview by author, 1 November 2006. Cherokee, North Carolina. Digital
recording. Recording in possession of author.

Owle, Freeman. Interview by author, 16 November 2006, Cullowhee, North Carolina.
Digital recording. Recording in possession of author.

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Recording in possession of author.

Panther, Sam. Interview by author, Cherokee, North Carolina. Digital recording.
Recording in possession of author.

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Recording in possession of author.

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