

# Time spent in Korea creates life-long struggle for Yahtin

by Robert Medina

Chesley Yahtin was born December 8, 1930 in Simnasho to Cecil Yahtin and Hazel Queahpama Tewee. Chesley doesn't recall his father very well because he spent little time with him. But, his mother, Hazel seemed to keep herself busy working odd jobs here and there mostly picking berries and sometimes picking potatoes in the fields. Besides working, Hazel would also care for her other children, Chesley's sisters Viola Govenor, Amelia Tewee, Nellie Spino and step-sister Ruth Tewee. Two of Chesley's brothers drowned at HeHe during the Army Camp days, says Chesley. "I was younger than them so I don't recall them too well. I remember one was named Evert, they were between six and seven years old."

Some years later Chesley's mother was hired as a postal carrier at Simnasho and she kept that job for many years, recalls Chesley. As a young boy, Chesley recalls, he spent most of his time with his grandparents, Frank Queahpama, Jr. and Minnie Yahtin, also of Simnasho. Chesley's mother would worry and feared that some day, Government people would come and take Chesley away and she would never see her son again, that's why she would rather him be with his grandparents who lived away from the small community of Simnasho. Chesley didn't mind being with his grandparents; they were traditional people and he liked learning from his grandfather.

His grandfather taught Chesley how to ride a horse and how to fish without hooks or any other fishing equipment. He also learned how to hunt. Being with his grandparents meant learning the ways of life for Chesley.

Chesley enjoyed riding horses and going hunting up in the mountains with his grandfather.

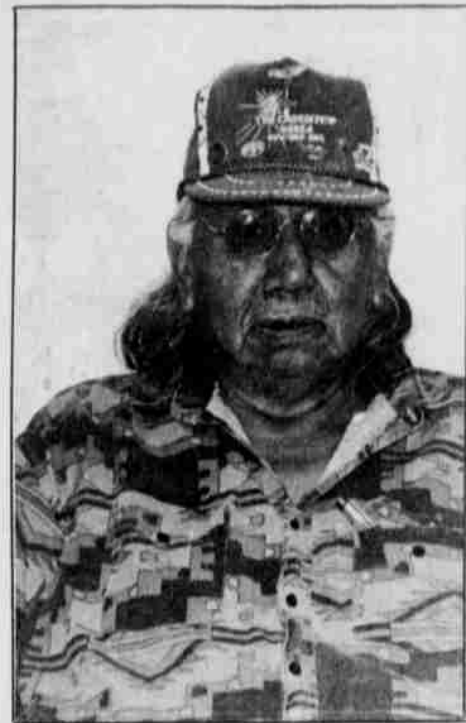
He liked going to Jefferson Creek and Mt. Jefferson area where his grandfather would submerge him in cold mountain water before a nice long sweat. Sometimes Chesley's grandfather would take him up to the mountains and drop him off with only a rifle. He recalls his grandfather

saying, "I'll be back in three days. On my return I expect a nice shady place to rest, a cold drink of water and some hot food to eat in this same spot." Because of Chesley's upbringing by his grandparents, he also learned to

Portland, were shipped to Japan. In March 1950, while playing Army games, Chesley received an urgent message from home that changed his life. His Grandfather had died and the family wanted Chesley to attend the

funeral back home. Chesley's commanding officer assured him that he would be flown home to attend his grandfather's funeral, but for unknown reasons, the Army changed their minds and Chesley was unable to attend the funeral. All Chesley could think of was his grandfather waving good-bye to him in front

of the old Administration building. Some how, Chesley, and the friend he met in Portland, ended up in Korea, together. On June 2, 1950 at about three in the morning, while in South Korea just below the 38th parallel near the Hiro Chon Reservoir, "we got an artillery and mortar attack from the Chinese communists in Korea." Chesley was resting in back of an Army jeep when bomb fragments began flying in all directions. The attack woke Chesley just in time. He raised up on his elbows, began looking around and wondered "what the hell was going on". Portions of the fragments flew by him causing no harm to him, but killed 13 men including his best friend who, was supposed to have gone back home on June 1, the day before the attack. Chesley was serving as a Medical Aid Man in the U.S. Army. He ran to the aid of the wounded and found his friend laying in a pool of blood with a large gash on his head. There was nothing



Chesley now lives in Warm Springs

they had long since ceased to worry that they might be next to fall from enemy bullets. Too much exhaustion and pain and death had been their companions. "We no longer thought or cared, because we were the walking dead. We passed the last Chinese ambush recalls Chesley where lay crumpled the men soon to be given places on other trucks and trailers farther back in the column—the men never to freeze, worry, or go hungry or march again,



In 1950, Chesley was a Medical Aide in Korea.

respect them and would always meet his grandfather's wishes. Chesley wanted his grandfather to be proud of him.

At the age of ten, some people came by horseback and took Chesley away from his grandfather and returned him to his mother. His mother was instructed to enroll Chesley in school at Simnasho where he only attended for a short while before being transferred to the Warm Springs Boarding School. Because Chesley did not know the English language, other kids would make fun of him. He could not understand, and it would make him mad, so he didn't want to be there even after they brought in an interpreter. At the age of 17, Chesley tried diligently to get enlisted in the Army, but they would not accept him without his parent's signature. His mother refused to sign in fear that she would never see him again. As soon as Chesley turned 18, he walked all the way to Bend, over 50 miles, where the Selective Service office was located. He signed up and told them he wanted to leave right away. Chesley was taken to Portland that same day and given seventy five dollars plus two weeks to say good-bye to all his family in Warm Springs.

From basic training in California, Chesley, and a young friend he met in

the old Administration building.

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1949 he enlisted in the United States Army at age 18.

"I was forced to kill or be killed."

During the rest intervals fires were built alongside the road. The fires gave no heat, for the hours near morning were so cold that nothing could break its grip. Nor did the fires cause concern among the men,

recalls Chesley.

"I am one of The Chosin Few, I'm very proud to say," says Chesley. "Whatever me and my buddies were in that frozen long-ago and whatever we are now, we are bound as one for life in an exclusive fraternity of honor," says Chesley quoting a war-related publication. "The only way into our ranks is to have paid the dues, sacrifice and valor of being there. The cost of joining, in short, is beyond all earthly wealth."

"Coming home was no picnic either after what I just went through in Korea, I wasn't the same person anymore and my family and friends could tell right away." Shortly after his return home, Chesley was married. However, the marriage lasted only a very short while. Two more marriages resulted in 13 children, six of whom have passed away. Chesley has many grandchildren and they are very important to him. He depends on them to keep him going.

Over the years Chesley has discovered he "was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. I would try to hide my feelings by drinking alcohol. I got into a lot of trouble. Day after day I would treat others in a bad way," relates Chesley. His efforts to hide his pain only caused more pain for him and subsequently, it has taken its toll. After years and years of suffering, Chesley, within the past four years, has come to realize that he need not be alone in his fight. He has sought and received help through counseling. He has support in the community. He is making progress in his struggle for "normalcy".

## Want to buy

Wanted—26 foot Teepee, in good condition. Would like to purchase. Call 383-3316.

## House for sale

Four-bedroom, two bath. All appliances included. Well maintained and landscaped in Greeley Heights area. 553-1055

## For sale

Quilts and quilrows. Or can be made to order at a reasonable price. Christmas is just around the corner...hurry, hurry, hurry. Call Eraina at 553-3331.



**Vacation Bible School**  
**at the Warm Springs Baptist Church**  
 Monday – Friday, August 14-18  
 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
 For information call 553-1267 or 553-5226

## Engine crew members introduce themselves to community

The Spilyay Tymoo will feature biographies of the engine crew at Fire Management so the community may be informed of who they are. These are the first three:

### Tana Frank

I'm a Nez Perce and Klamath. I grew up mostly in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

This is my third year as a firefighter. I worked one year with Winema Hotshots in 1994.

This is my first year as an engine operator.

To go to college is my future goal.

### John P. Miller

Hello, my name is John P. Miller. I have lived here at Warm Springs most of my life.

I worked for Fire & Safety for one year and transferred over to Fire Management. This is my second year with the engine crew.

I enjoy working outdoors and having different challenges on the job every day.

I'm not really thinking about the future yet.

### Tray Leonard

I was born in Madras, Oregon on October 28, 1969. I am Warm Springs, Wasco, Yakima, Nez Perce. I have four sisters and two brothers.

I attended Mt. Hood Community College for two years for fish and wildlife, also to Central Oregon Community College.

I have been employed with Fire Management for the past eight years. My first three years I worked on the Helitack crew as the Assistant Foreman. I then transferred to the Interagency

Hotshot crew as the foreman. Currently, I am the Assistant Engine Director for the engine crew.

I am in the process of getting my EMT-B and my private pilots

license. I have also been a volunteer for Fire and Safety for the past ten months.

I will be going back to school this fall for fire science in structure fires at COCC.



John Miller, Tana Frank, and Tray Leonard pictured in front of one of their engines. The first three from the engine crew to be featured in Spilyay Tymoo.

## Picnic was great—Thanks!

To the Editor,

The elder's picnic at Celilo, Oregon has become a popular event. July 20th marked the fifth annual event.

The weather was nice. Many traveled far and near. It was a wonderful sight to see our elders meet, share a meal and share stories with one another. Our elders traveled from Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla, Nez Perce and our local Columbia River elders came and joined us for this wonderful event.

Each year the Senior Programs meet and plan the picnic. The event seems to get bigger each year. This year, we had our elders from Nez Perce Country join us. That made it all the more special. A thank you to our Nez Perce and Umatilla elders for the gifts they brought to share with all of our July birthdays.

This year the YIN LISTEN Program Youth council joined us. The dancing and drum beat was a special treat. It was a pretty good day to see our younger generation and elders

come together.

At this time we would like to say thank you to the many different programs and volunteers for their help. With your extra help, the picnic was a total success. A special thank you for all program cooks; you did a wonderful job!

Thanks to these people: YIN Tribal Council; YIN CHR and SYE volunteers, YIN Facility Management staff, YIN AAOA Staff and SYE volunteers, YIN LISTEN staff, Warm Springs AAOA staff, volunteers, Warm Springs Tribal council for the salmon, YIN Youth Council and members, Umatilla AAOA staff, White Swan Job Corps, Nez Perce AAOA staff and volunteers, Patrick Weaslehead, director or research and development for Indian Education, Vicki Ghosthorse, Tina Antone, Wilson Wewa, Chuck Williams and Salmon Corps folks from Umatilla and the Salmon Corps folks from Goldendale.

Thanks again. We're looking forward to next year's event.

Picnic attendees from Yakama