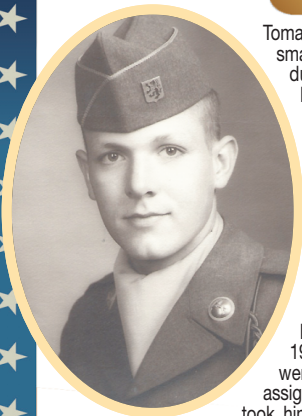


# VETERAN OF THE MONTH

## Tellico Village VFW Post 12135



Tomas Shacklee was born in southeastern Kansas in 1936. He grew up in the small town of Fredonia, KS on a farm with his grandparents. As a small child during WWII, his uncle Kenneth R. Miller, who served as U.S. Army / Air Force Bombardier, was captured in the fall of Batan. He survived the "Batan Death March" only to become a Prisoner of War (POW) in Osaka, Japan until the end of the war in 1945. Due to his uncle's bravery and endurance during his service, it influenced Tomas to join the military as a means of protecting his nation against those who were determined to dominate America.

Tomas began his military service by enlisting in the Kansas Army National Guard in 1953. It did not take very long and he decided to enter active duty on December 27, 1954 as part of the Army Signal Corps. He attended Basic Training at Fort Carson, CO then to his follow on assignments for Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at Fort Gordon, GA and Fort Monmouth, NJ. After the completion of his training as a Microwave Repairman, he was sent to his first duty station in Wiesbaden, Germany, and served there from 1955 – 1957. During his time in Wiesbaden, he met his wife Helga in 1956 and they were married in 1957 before he moved to his next duty station. In 1957, he was assigned to White Sands Missile Range until 1959. Then Tomas's next assignment took him to Communications-Engineering and Installation Agency Europe (CEEIA) from 1959 – 1963. Then, in 1963, Tomas was sent to serve in Europe and was assigned as a Communication's Chief for Allied Forces Central Europe (LANDCENT). He served in several positions throughout his European assignments until he was assigned to Vietnam in 1969. While in Vietnam, he served as a Communication's Supervisor for the US Army Special Assistance program until 1970. Tomas then returned back to Europe and served there for another five years before returning back to the US and was reassigned to Fort Carson, CO. He served in two duty stations, within the US, before he was then sent back to Europe in 1980, where he served in multiple duty stations. His eventual last tour of duty on active duty ended in 1985, where he served as an Operations Manager for Central Army Group (NATO) Signal Support Element. Tomas retired honorably in 1985 after serving 30 years with the US Army as a Sergeant Major (SGM/E9). Tomas' military awards include a Bronze Star (2 OLC) Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal and several other awards and citations.

Even though Tomas retired from active duty, he immediately decided to continue his service as a Department of the Army Civilian at the request from the US Army Europe (USAREUR) Commanding General to serve as a Host Nations Officer for Europe, Africa, and Middle-East. Tomas stayed in Europe from 1985 through 2004 serving in a multitude of assignments and positions culminating into his second retirement from the Army as a GS-12. He was also instrumental in forming International Enlisted associations within USAREUR and the Allied Headquarters located in Germany. Other highlights during his tenure include working with the US State Department and Pentagon as a communications escort for all political dignitaries and high ranking Officers during Strategic Army Limitations Talks (SALT) and other high level meetings in Europe and Middle-East. Overall, Tomas served a total of 50 years and 1 month with the US Army. Over the 50 years, and 1 month, his background covers experience in the Telecommunications, Electronics and Engineering Field to include, Strategic Information Systems, Automation, Research and Development, Quality Assurance and Testing for the Department of the Army in world-wide assignments, and Disaster Services Coordination Support. Tomas' most recent duties, prior to his retirement were: Telecommunications and Automation Consultant to the Commander, 2nd Signal Brigade and it's seven subordinate Battalions located in Germany, Belgium, Italy, and the Netherlands on all issues pertaining to Communications, Automation Systems, Network operations or related interfacing. Additionally, his years of service has taken him to unique locations such as Iran, Ethiopia, Belgium, Congo, Arctic Circle, and numerous other locations throughout the world.

Tomas and Helga have two children together. Their son, Tomas M. Shacklee also served in the Army for 36 years and retired as a CW5 Chinook Pilot. Tomas also has a grandson who has 20 years in the Army and is serving as a CW4 Instructor Pilot in Fort Rucker, AL. Tomas and Helga eventually moved to Lenoir City in 2018 to enjoy their retirement. Tomas dedicates his time fishing, hunting, and fly tying.

Tomas has been a long time member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). He joined the VFW while serving in Nahrang South Vietnam and eventually became a Lifetime Member while on assignment to Fort Carson, CO. Ever since joining the VFW, he stayed an active member in the local VFW Post he was assigned. Tomas stated that being a member of the VFW has enabled him to give back to those who supported him during the bad times; however, he is also able to enjoy the comradeship of his fellow veterans and their individual achievements in support of the Nation.

The Tellico Village VFW Post #12135 General meeting is held at 7:00 p.m. in the Tellico Village Yacht Club every third Wednesday of the month. Further information can be found on the Post website at: <https://www.tvfw.org/>.