

VETERAN OF THE MONTH

Tellico Village VFW Post 12135



Wayne Schroeder was born in Alton, IL, where he lived with his mom, dad, and three brothers. Wayne's father served in WW II in the Army. During his service, he was wounded by an enemy sniper in April 1945 and received a Purple Heart. Wayne comes from a big family where 10 of his uncles also served in either the Navy or Army.

After graduating high school, Wayne went to college on a football scholarship to Montana State University. He played as an offensive guard for two years until he eventually received his draft notice in July 1969. Wayne was drafted into the Army as a Communications Radio Telephone Operator (RTO). After basic training and advance individual training, he was deployed to and serve in Vietnam with 1/11th Infantry, 5th Mechanized Division. As the RTO, he was responsible for communicating airstrikes, MEDEVACs, fire support, and extractions. Wayne recalls a time where he was on patrol and stepped into a "Spider Hole" left by the enemy. His foot and leg were injured by sharp bamboo sticks. He also survived multiple fire fights throughout his tour.

However, Wayne also remembers the incredible people with whom he served with. He remembers the care and compassion his Company Commander and Platoon Leader had for the men in their ranks. They would do their best to bring their men back home, if possible. A quote that stuck with Wayne over the years was from his Company Commander. His Commander would state a lot of the times, "We are going to fall back and regroup." At the time, when his Commander would say this,

Wayne knew they had to reset and return back again when the opportunity was right. Once reset, then his platoon would storm ahead to their objective. Wayne also had the opportunity to serve with the South Vietnamese Rangers out of Quang Tri. For two months, his Platoon Leader, himself, and the interpreter were imbedded with the Rangers. Wayne served for 15 months in Vietnam, and when his tour ended, he was Honorably Discharged and returned home from the service in 1971. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal and the Vietnam Service Medal.

After his service, Wayne returned home and worked on the family farm for one year. He then decided to use the GI-Bill and returned back to school in 1972. While in the school's physical education class, Wayne met his future wife Peggy on the tennis courts. They dated and eventually married in 1974. Wayne reflected back, with a laugh, that Peggy and him ended up never playing tennis again after they met. In 1976, Wayne graduated from Western Illinois University with his bachelor's degree in Education. Even though he had intentions of being a teacher, he received an opportunity to work at a bank and never left the industry. He worked his way through different levels of management up to branch and district management. Throughout his career, he worked with multiple banks and moved around a lot due to mergers. Wayne eventually ended his career with a position in the US Bank as a District Manager. Wayne retired from the bank industry in 2019. Wayne and Peggy then decided to retire in east Tennessee and moved to Tellico Village. They also have three children, two boys and one girl, who are spread out and live with their families in the Netherlands, Colorado, and Iowa. Wayne joined the Veteran of Foreign Wars (VFW) in 2020 and has been the lead for the Buddy Poppy Campaign for the last three years. Wayne also volunteers in his local community and assist widows/widowers with home repairs. Wayne and Peggy are happy and are enjoying their retirement.

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.tvvfw.org/>.