

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution
Proudly "Spotlights" our June 2012
Patriot of the Month



**Robert M.
Hankins**

Sponsored by:

Missouris Shoal
Chapter
Lathrop, Missouri



Robert M. Hankins was born on a farm north of Osborn, Missouri on March 30, 1924. His family consisted of one sister and four brothers, making a family of eight children. The four brothers served in World War II and one in the Korean conflict. His sister's husband was in the Air Force.

Robert joined the United States Navy at Leavenworth, Kansas on March 19, 1944. He attended boot camp at Farragut, Idaho where he received a rating of Seaman Second Class. On August 1944, he was sent to Bremerton, Washington, where he boarded the *USS Yorktown*, an aircraft carrier with 3,500 men on board that was part of the Third Fleet. Aircraft carriers were one of the number one targets during the war. Robert's ship left California on October 13th for Hawaii loaded with trucks, air planes and other supplies. After spending a few days in Pearl Harbor the *Yorktown* went on to the Philippines where they were engaged in their first battles at Leyte Gulf, Luzon, and Manila. During the war, the Third Fleet shot down over 300 Japanese airplanes, severely crippling the Japanese war efforts.

Between battles the *Yorktown* was stationed in a "safe place"

called Mogmog, which was a chain of the Ulithi Islands and an area half way between Hawaii and the Philippines. This area was where aircraft carriers could refuel, men could get “rest and relaxation” and ships were protected by a circle of United States submarines.

During January 1945, the *Yorktown* entered the China Sea, refueled at Hong Kong and was under attack when they left the area. Robert’s ship was engaged in battle north of Formosa and in February invaded Tokyo, Japan, shooting down several planes and also doing damage on the ground; fortunately the United States received no loss. At this time they struck and helped in the invasion of Iwo Jima. At one time the *Yorktown* was hit and a plane burned on deck. Most of the time, they traveled along with the *USS Missouri* and were protected to a certain extent by destroyers who traveled along side of them.

The *Yorktown* supported the invasion of Okinawa and while there the United States had some ships which were hit by Japanese suicide planes. The *USS Missouri* was hit by a bomb but survived. Robert’s ship supported the battle of Okinawa for several months. Later they moved to Tokyo and North Japan where the *Yorktown* shelled the Japanese airfields, transports, and military installations. The middle of August his ship was ready to strike Tokyo again when they were called back and told the war had ended.

While waiting for further orders his ship was refueled and the Third Fleet mail was delivered and sorted. United States planes were sent up over Tokyo and dropped supplies into our Prisoner of War camps. Word came to them about the Peace Treaty being signed by General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz on the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. While the *Yorktown* was stationed at Yokosuka Naval Base, Robert drove one of five *Yorktown* jeeps to take officers sightseeing at Yokosuka, Yokohama and Tokyo.

On October 1, 1945, the *Yorktown* left Tokyo Bay to begin the journey home. Robert arrived at San Francisco pier, Alameda, California and had a thirty day leave. The middle of December, he boarded the *USS Santee* and on the 25th, left for Guam and Saipan to bring troops back to the United States. Robert arrived back in the United States on February 8, 1946. He was given an Honorable Discharge with a rank of Seaman First Class on February 13, 1946 in St. Louis, Missouri. He returned to his home on February 14, 1946.

Robert’s medals, awards, citations include:

- **Philippine Liberation Medal w/1 star**
- **Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal w/2 stars**
- **American Campaign Medal**
- **Victory Medal**

Robert married Dorothy Edwards in Troy, Kansas on July 17, 1944. They have four children and nine grandchildren. He has been a life long farmer. He is a member of the Baptist church and the American Legion.