



Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution  
Patriot of the Month  
August, 2012



**Donald Clay Kroner**

Sponsored by:

**Armstrong Chapter DAR**

Donald Clay Kroner attended school in Moberly, Missouri then worked at the Brown Shoe Company prior to enlisting in the Army in 1943 at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. After basic and Advanced Infantry Training (AIT) at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts, he was sent to Long Island, New York, for extensive artillery training, then on to field maneuvers in Tennessee. All this was preparation for going overseas.

PFC Kroner was assigned to the 549<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery Command (CAC), Golden Acorn Division, an anti-aircraft artillery group, and left for Liverpool, England, in early 1944. He crossed the English Channel arriving at Normandy Beach on D-Day plus 2 which was June 8, 1944. As Donald and the other young troops exited the ship, they were confronted with a bewildering sight, bodies floating in the channel waters.

The 549<sup>th</sup> fought its way across France suffering heavy losses during their many battles. In December, 1944, Donald was in the "Battle of the Bulge" in the Ardennes Forest in and around Bastogne, Belgium. This action lasted for six weeks during the coldest winter in memory at that time. Food and warm clothing were at a serious shortage.

The 549<sup>th</sup>, part of the Third Army, was commanded by General George Patton and the men had set up a tent city, laying tarps from jeep to jeep, trying to stay dry and out of the continuous rain. General Patton drove by in his jeep, took one look, and ordered all the tarps rolled back and the guns be manned at all times, even during the rain.

Another story Donald shares happened years later back home. Donald had become friends with another resident of Moberly, Albert Durham. They were reminiscing about their war years and discovered Donald's outfit, the 549<sup>th</sup>, had freed Albert and other American POW's at Buchenwald Concentration Camp in Germany.

Donald married Mary Rothman in 1949 and they have three children: Donald, Wayne, and Susan Kroner Riley. In 1974, Donald married Gertrude Benny and moved to Springfield, but when Gertrude passed in 2004, he moved back to Moberly.

Donald is a member of the Moberly Episcopal Church and the Moberly Moose Lodge. The members of the Armstrong Chapter of the DAR are pleased to honor this 88 year old Patriot who has served his country well.

Like many young soldiers, Donald had some free time, and while in Belgium, he dated an attractive English nurse. He remembers as the 549<sup>th</sup> moved across France and Belgium the people were very receptive to the American soldiers. He also has several pieces of memorabilia from the war and wears a ring made from the metal of a downed German fighter plane.

Donald's Medals and Awards include:

- World War II Victory Medal
- Good Conduct Medal
- 3 Bronze Stars (Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe campaigns)

Donald was discharged January 29, 1956, at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis and returned to Moberly. He worked at a Sinclair service station during the day and attended Moberly Junior College. He earned his certification in General Mechanics and Welding. Over the years, Donald has worked at Noll Motors, Fennel Auto Body, has been a Moberly Fireman; and in Springfield, he worked at Reliable and Thompson Sales and Service.