



**Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution
Patriot of the Month
May 2014**



Robert H. Richardson

Sponsored by

Margaret Miller Chapter

September 24, 1952. He was sent to Camp Crowder, and then to Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. He completed four months of infantry and engineering basic training. While ninety percent of his company was sent to Korea, Robert was assigned to Ft. Leonard Wood Co. 208th Military Police. He served as a Stockade Guard and took the personal history of prisoners entering the stockade. He became an NCO in charge of guards accompanying prisoners to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

During his duty, Robert and a number of others were notified they would be going to Las Vegas, Nevada, for atomic bomb testing. They were sent on a troop train to Camp Desert Rock, Nevada, which is located sixty miles outside of Las Vegas. This was a test camp built in January 1951. The United States conducted 900 nuclear weapons tests at Nevada Proving Grounds, about 75 miles southeast of Las Vegas, while another two hundred tests were done in the Pacific Ocean. Robert's Unit was

sent for a series of tests called “Operation Knothole,” conducted by the Atomic Energy Commission from March 17 to June 4, 1953. The soldiers were taken to Las Vegas to enjoy the night before the testing then taken to the test area.

He recalls when it was time they were told to get down in the trenches and wait for the countdown. A lone B-17 WWII bomber circled overhead by remote control. Everyone was told to cover their faces with their arms crossed. They heard the 5-4-3-2-1 count followed by a big boom. The earth rolled and shook, and what seemed like a thousand flash bulbs went off in their faces. Even with closed eyes many could see the bones in their hands. They felt a giant rush of force blow and then the force returning back. Everything was sucked up to the center of a seven-mile area, and then rose up into the famous plume and clouds we have all seen in pictures. When Robert and others received the all-clear, they saw they were under a beautiful light brown and white cloud. Climbing out of trenches they walked forward to the point of detonation. Being young and invincible, they had no idea what they had just been through or what they would encounter. Records show they just went through a 43 Kiloton bomb test, which was the most powerful test done at that time in the United States. There were 26,000 soldiers in the test that day. When returning to the buses they were brushed off with brooms and there were Geiger counters all around them to measure the amounts of radiation. There has been no recognition for the Atomic Veteran. This is a true experience our veterans have been through and a story needing to be told.

Robert earned the Good Conduct Medal, Rifle Sharp Shooter Medal, and the Missouri-Korean Conflict Medal. He and his wife Phyllis have two children and four grandchildren. Robert was a Chief Train Dispatcher for the Norfolk Southern Railroad as a civilian.

The Margaret Miller Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution are proud to nominate Robert H. Richardson as Patriot of the Month and extend our gratitude and thanks for his service to our country.