

# Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution



## Patriot of the Month

April 2015



### Theodore Schalk

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Poplar Bluff Chapter



Ted Schalk entered the U.S. Navy on his eighteenth birthday, November 17, 1942, and left Poplar Bluff, Missouri, for swearing in at St. Louis, Missouri, after which he went to North Chicago for training at Great Lakes Training Center. He spent six months afterward at a submarine base in Kodiak, Alaska. His following assignment was the USS Little (DD-803), a destroyer that was commissioned in August 1944.

Practicing off the coast of California, he became proficient in firing torpedoes. In firing twenty-two torpedoes, he hit the target twenty-one times. He was classified as a Torpedoman Second Class (TM2). Following the stint along the coast of California, the USS Little left port in Seattle and headed for the Pacific. The first stop was Hawaii where Ted saw the destruction caused by the bombing of Pearl Harbor. They left Pearl Harbor and headed towards the islands of Okinawa and Iwo Jima where they lent support to ground forces on the islands. Leaving to resupply their munitions, they went to Tinian Island picking up shells that could travel twenty-six miles after firing. Ted watched the raising of the American Flag on Iwo Jima. He recalls that we lost 26,000 Marines in three weeks, and 36,000 were wounded in what was one of the bloodiest battles of war. Following Iwo Jima, the USS Little became part of an armada of ships preparing for the Invasions of Okinawa, involved in screening troop transport ships, escort landing ships, and providing picket duty until the USS Little was sunk.

Ted states he was on a torpedo mount when the first of a group of Kamikaze planes began firing on the ship. He came to the bow of the ship and saw one shipmate was shot and a plane was right on top of them and slammed into the ship. He received serious injuries to his head, neck, and shoulder. When the first was over, the ship was sinking, a crewman administered first aid to Ted and another gave him his life jacket and said, "Jump." That sailor was James Brown who died at age 93 in Moses Lake, California. Ted says, "He gave me back my life." Months of hospitalization followed for Ted as he had his wounds treated at Tinian and after being stabilized placed on the hospital ship, Solace, and taken to Mare Island Naval Station, California, and then transferred to Billington Naval Hospital, Memphis, Tennessee. Before leaving Tinian, he received the Purple Heart from General Curtis LeMay. In addition, Ted was awarded the American Theater Ribbon, Asiatic-Pacific Theatre Ribbon, Good Conduct Medal, and Victory Ribbon.

While on convalescent leave with a buddy Ted was walking down the street when a girl whistled at him. He went right up and took her arm. Dating for about a year, broke, he borrowed twenty-five dollars and married Vida Stoud, and they have been going “arm-in-arm” for 68 years, raising five children, enjoying their ten grandchildren, and several great grandchildren.

The old family farm is where Ted likes to spend time gardening and enjoying the land. For thirty years he worked as a rural mail carrier, worked in a sporting goods store, and has built many homes in Poplar Bluff with his carpentry skills. When he thinks about the suffering and deaths of his shipmates, he is saddened. “I should have been dead,” he says. “It was nothing outstanding. It was surviving. Having witnessed the destruction and death of many, Ted states, “Bodies were flying in all directions. You start thinking a guy can get killed out here. You realize what war is all about. Somebody is trying to destroy us. I will never understand why people destroy one another.”

The Daughters of the Poplar Bluff Chapter DAR are proud to nominate Theodore Schalk as Patriot of the Month and extend their gratitude for his patriotic service and commitment to our great nation.