

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution



Patriot of the Month

December 2015



Ray V. Smith

Sponsored by:

Rachel Donelson Chapter



Ray Smith served as Signaller 1st Class in the United States Navy during World War II. He entered the service in Kansas City, Missouri on September 13, 1940. He attended signal training at the Naval Base in Chicago then was sent to the Brooklyn Naval Yard where he was assigned to the cruiser USS Augusta. Later he was assigned as an armed guard for merchant ships hauling equipment and supplies to England. He made eight trips across the Atlantic. While in Liverpool, England, between transports Ray was assigned to a ship heading to Cape Town, South Africa, then on to the Red Sea and Egypt before returning to the states.

After the war started he made three trips to Africa. While assigned to the merchant ship Benjamin Harrison, heading to Africa, the ship was hit by a German torpedo. From his assigned position Ray could see the torpedo headed toward the ship. When hit everyone went into action. Ray's lifeboat was tangled in the lowering mechanism and the men were dumped into the ocean. All he had was his lifejacket, whistle, and flashlight. He was in the water several hours and just as it was getting dark a ship came to the rescue.

Men rescued from situations like this were called "Survivors." After medical treatment from oil burns Ray was sent to the Brooklyn Naval Yard then home on leave for 30 days. When reassigned he enjoyed "Survivor" treatment such as first in line for meals and first in line at pay day! He taught several signaller courses then got to pick a ship and went to sea again making trips to England, Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Australia, New Caledonia, Guam, and Saipan, and a number of South Pacific Islands. Ray was in Saipan in 1945 when the war was over and it took almost a month to get back to San Diego.

Ray joined the Naval Reserve in 1947 and went to Drury College, Springfield, Missouri for a short time. He sold real estate and worked as a dispatcher and in the traffic department for a truck line in Kansas City, Missouri. Ray married Freda Watson and they have a son George.

He was called to duty when the Korean War began in 1949 and was a Quartermaster. He was assigned duty at the Great Lakes Naval Station and then sent to Japan. He received the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Bar, Victory Medal, European Theatre Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Area Medal, Pre-Pearl Harbor Medal, Korean War Medal, World War II Victory Medal, and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

After Korea Ray was an Arthur Murray Dance Instructor in Missouri, California, and Ohio. He has been married for thirty years to Betty Cunningham. They settled in Springfield, Missouri where Ray worked for the Missouri State Employment Office until retirement and is a member of the Elks Lodge.

The Daughters of the Rachel Donelson Chapter DAR are proud to nominate Ray V. Smith as Patriot of the Month and extend their gratitude for his patriotic service and commitment to our great nation