



**Missouri State Society
Daughters of the American
Revolution**

**PATRIOT OF THE MONTH:
Bernard Joseph "Joe" Kniest**



Bernard Joseph "Joe" Kniest graduated from Maplewood High School in 1941. Hoping to attend medical school, he accepted employment with Western Electric. The attack on Pearl Harbor called for increases in the draft. Following the lead of many other young men, Joe opted to enlist in the Coast Guard in 1942. He served temporary duty at the St. Louis Coast Guard Headquarters. He was transferred to Chattanooga, TN, and served as Morale and Welfare Officer. He was transferred to California, then Honolulu, where he boarded the invasion tanker, the US AMMONUSUC (Auxiliary Oil and Gas Tanker 23) in the Western Pacific, specifically Iwo Jima.

One of his most vivid memories of that assignment was delivering the first aviation fuel to Iwo Jima that allowed US fighter planes to reach Japan. The AOG he was on had no keel, which allowed it to go directly to the coastline and pump fuel right to the island. Joe explains:

"We had to cross through a coastline that was filled with body parts of Americans and Japanese that extended for at least one-quarter of a mile to get to the shore. We began unloading in the afternoon, and probably had pumped all night to empty the tanks. I was on duty watching the pumping process when a Jap crawled down from Mt. Suribachi. He fired a shot at me, but lucky for me it hit the ship below me. The Jap then ran through a trip flare, which landed in the ammunition dump. A huge explosion occurred with ammunition exploding both up and sideways creating a fireworks shower. We immediately cut our line

and pulled out to sea. One vast explosion ripped the ammo dump sending debris everywhere.”

“The next morning I returned to the deck and discovered a piece of volcanic rock the size of a baseball. I still have this memento of that day. We were told that the only armaments left on the island were what the individual GI had. If the Japanese had any troops or reserves they could have invaded Iwo again. Watching the shot up fighter planes coming back from Japan was enough to consider the price the US would have had to pay in any invasion of Japan. The atomic bomb saved untold numbers of American soldiers.”

Joe returned to civilian life at the end of 1945. As a result of his work with St. Louis University’s football and basketball teams during his high school years, he was offered a full scholarship when he returned home, if he would continue the responsibilities as team manager. He assisted the University team trainer, announced games, and was official scorer for 33 years, including several NCAA tournaments. As a member of the New York Stock Exchange, he continued to volunteer at the University as a statistician. He missed only 14 games in 42 years. He was inducted into the St. Louis University Hall of Fame for his service and dedication, earning the Bob Bauman Sportsmanship Award in 1995 for "outstanding contributions to Billiken athletics through demonstration of the highest principles of integrity, honesty, and fair play without consideration for self gain." His love for the games continued until March 2005, when it became necessary for him to resign due to ill health.

Joe married Joan Vogler in September 1962. They have four children and five grandchildren. For many years, he took his family camping all over the country, including two months in Alaska. They have toured in many countries—Europe, North Africa, South and Central America, the Caribbean and Canada. Joe belongs to the Hampton-Midtown Kiwanis club and the 1,2,3 Sports Fraternity. Whitey Herzog is also a member. Joe celebrated his 85th birthday in 2005.

Joe’s wife, Joan nominated him for Patriot of the Month. She is a member of the Fort San Carlos Chapter.



MSSDAR Patriot of the Month