

**Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution  
Proudly "Spotlights" our April 2012  
Patriot of the Month**



**Clarence Floyd  
Cherry**

Sponsored by:

**O'Fallon Chapter  
St. Louis, Missouri**



**In the words of Clarence Floyd Cherry, "Risking my life for me nation's freedom created powerful feelings for the Stars and Stripes."**

**Clarence Floyd Cherry entered the Army Air Force on April 21, 1943. At the age of 18, he served as a left waist-gunner for the 350<sup>th</sup> Squadron. His duty was very dangerous, manning one of the plane's dozen 50-caliber machine guns in the open air from a standing position near the rear of the fuselage. He had to wear an oxygen mask and brave the 60 degree below zero temperatures.**

**On May 19, 1944, Clarence and nine other crew members of the B-17 "Roger's Raiders" were returning to England from a successful daylight bombing mission over Germany when Nazi Messerschmitt and Focke Wulf fighter planes opened fire. Six Flying Fortresses from the Army's 100<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group, known as the "Bloody 100<sup>th</sup>" because of its high casualty rate, were knocked down.**

**"I was on my 16<sup>th</sup> mission, coming back when we were shot out of the air," recalled Clarence. "The pilot ditched us off the coast of Denmark." He was wounded by shrapnel during the firefight and awoke in one of two inflatable rafts with his crewmates, one of them badly injured but all alive.**

**A few years ago at a reunion, he learned the pilot had rescued him and the tail gunner who were both unconscious in the radio room midway inside the plane, before the B-17 sank.**

**The crew floated in four to six foot waves for forty eight hours, worrying about being captured by the nearby enemy. "We were so close we could hear the tugboats in the Danish harbor. You hear a lot about the gung-ho attitude and there was some of that. Mostly, you prayed. You didn't want to be a prisoner of war."**

**A British Air Service rescue plane dropped a wooden boat for the crew and they managed to travel about 100 miles out to sea before two Danish fishing boats took them aboard. The fishermen were going to take them back to Denmark and turn them over to the Nazis as prisoners. A British Navy high-speed rescue boat came to their aid.**

**After spending five days in the hospital at Great Yarmouth, England, Clarence returned to duty and flew thirteen more missions before being relieved of combat duty. In 1945, he returned to the United States to train Russian and Chinese aircrews in Colorado.**

**Clarence's medals include:**

- Purple Heart**
- European Theatre of Operations Ribbon w/4 bronze stars**
- Air Medal w/3 clusters**
- Two Presidential Unit Citations**

**Clarence and his wife Lorraine are the parents of two daughters. They have five grandchildren. He is now retired after a long career in industrial engineering and radiography.**

**He is a member of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars. He volunteers his time, giving talks at schools to promote patriotism and respect for our flag. Clarence also works with the Westminster Museum in Fulton. His nephew will be accompanying him on an Honor Flight in the spring. He is a member of the Episcopal church where he serves as lay Reader and teaches 8<sup>th</sup> grade religion class.**