

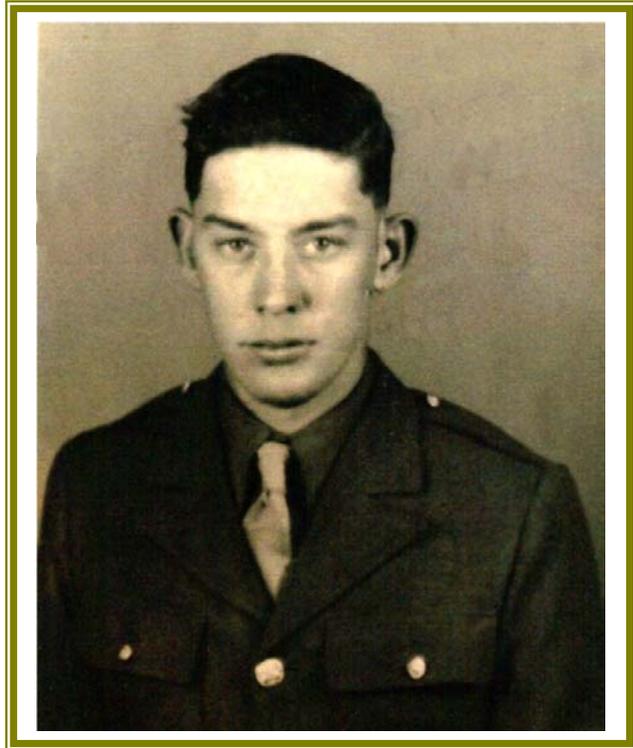
Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution  
Proudly "Spotlights" our June 2012  
Patriot of the Month



**Virl Gitthens**

Sponsored by:

**Missouris Shoal  
Chapter  
Lathrop, Missouri**



Virl Gitthens was born near Weatherby, Missouri, on February 6, 1922. He was sworn into the U.S. Army at Leavenworth, Kansas on October 13, 1942.

Virl was trained at Yuma, Arizona, after which he left San Francisco, California on August 13, 1943 aboard the *USS Sea Snipe*, a cargo ship converted into a troop transport. Their first stop was Townsville, Australia and then on to Oral Bay, New Guinea. At Oral Bay his unit operated the 54<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Field Hospital for eighteen months.

When the Japanese invaded the Philippines, Virl and his unit laid under fire from allied artillery and several men from the medical unit were killed. "When the Japanese had invaded Luzon they captured and used our own guns and ammo on us for two nights. The guns were on a track which they pushed out of a cave in the mountainside and used only during night." Allied aircraft destroyed the Japanese guns on the third day.

The Allies made their invasion at a bay near Luzon on

January 9, 1945. Viri was with an outfit that was a non-combat unit, but he said he dug his share of foxholes. He worked in a field hospital that took care of wounded from the front lines on the Island of Luzon. Viri's medic unit moved to Manila where they put up a hospital in an old tuberculosis hospital at Caisson Institute. "Here we treated 160 of the 300 men left who were on the 300 mile death march. Some men were so skinny, sick and weak they couldn't walk any further. They had to be carried in on stretchers."

All together Private First Class Gitthens was in three invasions while in New Guinea and one in the Philippines. After several months in Manila he went to the city of Batangas on Luzon and remained there until the Japanese surrendered a few weeks later. When he left Batangas the ship he was on went to a staging area at sea and waited to go to Japan. While at sea, they were hit by a fierce typhoon. After the typhoon passed they went to Yokahama Bay, Japan, where a hospital was set up for awhile.

The war was now over and after the hospital was closed the men were deployed. Viri sailed for Seattle, Washington and arrived on New Year's Eve 1945. He was then sent to Denver, Colorado where he was discharged on January 13, 1946.

Viri's awards include:

- 5 Overseas Bars
- Good Conduct Medal
- Medical Corps Medal

Viri and his wife Donna have three children, six grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. Viri's career was in the trucking field where he worked as a mechanic. He is a member of the Assembly of God Church, local American Legion Post, and Full Gospel Businessmen's Association.