

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution  
Proudly "Spotlights" our November 2010  
Patriot of the Month



**John Newton  
Pemberton**

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John graduated from Pacific, Missouri High School in 1942. He was drafted into the Army on Feb. 24, 1944 and received basic training at Camp Roberts, California. He was sent to Ft. Mead, Maryland for one week, before leaving for England. John went to the European Theatre Operations by crossing the English Channel to LaHarve, France, as a combat soldier in the 9th Infantry Division, 60th Regiment and 1st Battalion. He saw action in Northern France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany, and was in the Battle of the Bulge. John relates they were told not to go inside buildings at nighttime to rest while in combat, but he went inside one anyway and curled up in the corner against the wall and went to sleep. He awoke the next morning and discovered there was a German soldier sitting against the wall within 3 feet of him. When the soldier didn't move, John realized the soldier was dead and he had spent the night beside the dead German soldier.

After crossing the Remagen Bridge, he was taken as a Prisoner of War (POW) by Hitler's Schutzstaffel Protection Squadron on March 9, 1945. The POW's were to be transported by train to a new location. They were loaded on the train but sat for a half-day without moving but before it could leave, the American planes, not knowing it was carrying Americans, started attacking the German train. An American soldier got

out of one of the cars and was opening the doors to the train cars, so the American POW's could get out and seek cover. Another American soldier managed to get the soldiers together in an open field and positioned them to spell the words USA - POWs. The American planes then waggled their wings indicating they understood and stopped the attack. John wrote a journal telling about his war experiences and mentioned this incident in the journal. The journal was written so his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and those thereafter would know about his experiences during WW II.

John's brother was reading Tom Brokaw's book *The Greatest Generation* one evening and called John and told him about Brokaw mentioning the same story in his book. Brokaw had interviewed an American soldier who was a doctor and on the same POW train. Brokaw's book tells that the Germans knew there was a doctor in the group of POW's and came to get him to operate on a soldier needing an appendectomy. The doctor told the Germans he was going to let the others out and began opening the boxcar doors.

While the POW's were being marched to a new location, he and three others managed to escape and linked up with the American Army on April 6, 1945.

After returning to the states, John married Louise Schmelz at Washington, Missouri on May 29, 1945. They traveled to Camp Carson, Colorado where John was stationed. John was discharged at Jefferson Barracks, MO on Feb. 15, 1946 as a Sergeant. He received the following:

- 4 Bronze Battle Stars
- American Theatre Campaign Ribbon
- European African Middle Eastern Campaign Ribbon
- Overseas Bar
- Victory Ribbon

John and Louise had two sons and a daughter, as well as five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Louise passed on October 30, 2006. John is a member of the First Baptist Church and a fifty-year member of the American Legion.