

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



Merle K. Green

Sponsored by:

Missouris Shoal Chapter
Lathrop, Missouri

Merle Green was born July 4, 1921, at Winston, Missouri and graduated from Winston High School in May 1940. After graduating he lived and worked on the farm until he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corp in June 1942 at Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, Missouri.

After basic training and two aircraft mechanic schools, Merle was assigned as an aircraft mechanic to the 64th Troop Carrier Squadron, Alliance Army Air Base, in Alliance, Nebraska. The mission was to maintain C-47 airplanes which would jump the paratroopers, tow gliders, and transport cargo.

While at basic training, Merle paraded to honor the Governor of Missouri and while in aircraft technical school at Lincoln Air Base, Lincoln, Nebraska, he paraded for the Governor of Nebraska.

Being a soldier with no rank, he was always on various duty rosters like

kitchen police, guard duty, and barracks fire guard (which meant he had to keep coal in the heating stoves as the weather was often ten degrees below zero and windy). When a break occurred between details, he would go to the aircraft hangar or aircraft parking area to help with any maintenance required on the airplanes or engines.

After about a month Merle knew his way around the airplanes somewhat. The line chief asked if he ever wanted to fly and be a flight engineer and he said, "Yes." Over the next three months he was promoted to Private First Class and continued learning how to maintain the airplanes and fly as a flight engineer. They practiced formation flying, low altitude flying just above tree top level, jumping paratroopers, airborne infantry, towing gliders and lots of landing and take-offs, both day time and at night. Towing gliders loaded with soldiers and artillery guns and ammunition was dangerous.

Merle almost fell out of the airplane one time over northern Nebraska while on a paratrooper jump. He didn't put on his parachute before he tried to pull in the parachute static lines after the jump. The airplane hit an air pocket caused by the airplane in front of them. He was thrown off the floor and his head and shoulders were outside the airplane door. The next second, the airplane lurched to the left and threw Merle back into the plane. From then on he always wore his parachute when pulling the static lines.

From Nebraska, Merle was sent to Douglas C-47 factory school at Santa Ana Airbase, California. While staying there a few days at Christmas time in 1942, he got to go to the Hollywood Canteen twice. He danced with Bette Davis, Rita Hayworth, and Shirley Temple. Merle also met Jerry Colonna, Audie Murphy and other celebrities.

Merle was discharged in September 1945. As a civilian he worked as an auto mechanic and truck driver until he reenlisted in the U.S. Air Force, Denver, Colorado in 1948. In 1950, he was sent as an aircraft technician to Japan for the occupation of Japan. The Korean War broke out and Merle worked in support of the war as a hangar chief. In 1951 he was transferred to Clark Air Force Base, near Manila, Philippines and assigned to a Headquarters Squadron as the maintenance coordinator for the Far East. This included support of the Central Intelligence Agency operating in Vietnam and China. He returned to the states in 1953 and was assigned to March Air Force Base, 22nd Bomb Wing, Strategic Air Command, Riverside, California, as a non commissioned officer in charge of aircraft maintenance for B47 aircraft. In 1957 he was transferred to Dyess Air Force Base, Abilene, Texas. In 1959 he transferred to Forbes Air Force Base and in

1963 he transferred overseas to Kadena Air Force Base on the island of Okinawa. The Vietnam War broke out and he gave maintenance support to that effort maintaining F105 fighter bomber aircraft.

While in the South Pacific during World War II as a crew chief and flight engineer he flew 1500 hours. Merle also chalked up 300 hours of combat missions all over the South Pacific dropping combat troops, supplies, food and ammunition. He also evacuated the wounded from front lines to hospitals. He was on twenty seven different islands in the South Pacific.

Twice, he and the crew of five were reported missing in action because of being lost in bad storms. Each time they were able to find an island to land on after praying that the fuel would hold out until someplace was found. One time they were up eleven hours or so before finding a small island (Sunday Island). It wasn't even on their map. On one island Merle and the radioman went looking for bananas and they met up with some natives. They were taken to their village and after offering them tobacco and a pocket knife made friends. When away from home base Merle always slept under the wing or inside the airplane acting as a guard. He kept the airplane ready for take off and flying at any given time. At night the voices of the jungle was his music and during the day the angry roar of the aircraft engines.

On October 7, 1966, Merle suffered a heart attack and was sent back to the states. He medically retired with twenty one years of military service at the rank of Senior Master Sergeant.

Merle's awards and medals include:

- 2 Air Medals**
- 5 Battle Stars**
- Good Conduct Medal**

Merle and his wife, Mildred, have seven children, twenty two grandchildren and twenty three great grandchildren. He worked for Trans World Airlines (TWA) in aircraft maintenance.

Merle is a member of the Christian Church and the American Legion. He also belongs to the local Antique Club, two TWA Retirement Clubs, 3 Wars Club, Wings Club; a U.S. Retired Air Force Club, and the 64th Troop Carrier Squadron Club.