

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Proudly "Spotlights" our June 2012

Patriot of the Month



Arvel "Buck" Chapman

Sponsored by:

**Thomas Hart Benton Chapter
Warsaw, Missouri**



Arvel "Buck" Chapman was born at Horseshoe Bend, which is located east of Lowry City, Missouri, in the year 1922. His father was a farmer and later a restaurant owner. His mother was a homemaker who passed away when Arvel was six years old.

Buck graduated high school with the Lowry City Bulldog's class of 1939. At high school, he played basketball and was on the track team. He also did a lot of hunting and fishing. Right after school, Buck worked a number of odd jobs, and he later worked at his father's restaurant.

Buck enlisted in the United States Navy in 1942. He applied for and was accepted into the aviation career field and he began his pilot training shortly thereafter. As part of Air Group-7, (his training team) and flying the F-6 Hellcat, he started into his training with a great deal of enthusiasm. As Buck put it, there were lots and lots of bombs and rockets to be dropped and fired during the training. There were four other pilots along with Buck who were assigned to this training group. Together the group trained and learned to work

as a team. While some would practice performing attacks and bombing runs, the others would fly cover to help protect them. They would swap roles and continue using teamwork to accomplish their missions. The team of five traveled together to Florida, Oklahoma, Texas, California, Washington, and Oregon for different training scenarios. The plan was to get them ready to deploy across the Pacific Ocean, as a team, as the Pacific theatre of operations had already begun. At just about the time they were preparing to go, the atomic bomb was dropped, immediately ending that part of the war.

Buck and the four other pilots had spent a great deal of time together and had become very close friends, as had their families. They vacationed together for twenty-eight consecutive years.

In 1945, the Navy informed Buck because of all of the time and training he had received the Navy could not just let him go, even though his enlistment was up. He chose to transfer into the Naval Reserve, making his new duty station in Olathe, Kansas. He stayed with his unit in Olathe for eighteen years until he retired in 1963 as a Lieutenant Commander. Buck has many medals and awards, but he did not want to list them.

In September 1956, Buck's Squadron was on a training exercise in Florida. He served as the Squadron Operation's Officer. When it was time to head back to their home station, one of the pilots was very sick. It was decided Buck would fly the jet back home. While cruising along at 28,000 feet over Georgia, his aircraft suddenly started surging uncontrollably. Buck could not get it under control. The jet then totally shut down and quit. The F-9 did not glide very well and it just started going down. He attempted to restart the engines but had no luck. As the aircraft dropped below the 8,000 feet level he grabbed his ejection handles, tensed up very tightly and ejected from the jet. His shoot popped open and he came down in a cornfield. Buck was none the worse for wear, so he rolled up his shoot and started walking out of the cornfield. Later he was called in for a Pilot Investigation Board to give his account of what happened. He found out that nearly every other pilot who had jettisoned from a cockpit before him had suffered severe injuries. Buck told them after his ejection, the seat hit him very hard. He provided a great deal of input into the ejection seat safety program that contributed to the design and modification of new and improved egress seat systems.

Prior to joining the Navy, Buck worked for Sears and Roebuck in

Kansas City, Missouri for a year, where he maintained soda machines in the cafeteria. He left Sears in 1942 when he joined the Navy. In 1945, after he had been reassigned to the Navy Reserve Squadron in Olathe, he again went back to work at Sears. He retired in 1980, after thirty-eight years of employment with the company.

Buck met Mary, his future wife while he was working in his father's sandwich shop. Mary said her parents viewed the establishment as a beer joint so she was not allowed to go inside. She often met Buck out front on the sidewalk. They were married in 1944. They have two daughters, three grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Buck's hobbies include hunting, fishing, and working jigsaw puzzles. He enjoys sports, especially basketball and he and Mary were square dancers for many years. He takes great pride in his garden plot. He attends the United Church of Christ.