

# Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution



## Patriot of the Month

September 2015



**John B. Williams**

*Sponsored by:*

**Margaret Miller Chapter**



John B. Williams (also known as Jack) was born in Moberly, Missouri, and graduated high school in Renick, Missouri. He enlisted in the Navy in Moberly, then went to boot camp at the Great Lakes in Michigan.

After boot camp, he was sent the U.S. Navy to the Henry Ford Trade School (HFTS) in Detroit, Michigan. He studied machine shop, welding, foundry, and molding. He also sat with Henry Ford at the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary HFTS celebratory dinner, as well as danced in the same square with Mr. Ford at the evening's square dance.

Following graduation at HFTS, he was assigned to the USS Vestal in the Pacific Theater of World War II. Mr. Williams witnessed firsthand the trials and tribulations of the war. While he was on shore leave in Hawaii, his ship, the USS Vestal, was moored next to the Arizona when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Some of his shipmates died during the attack. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, he was transferred to the USS Dixie. Mr. Williams was also in England during his service. He remembers this time fondly, except for the sneak attacks by Germany at night. After a long 48 months at sea, Mr. Williams enjoyed his first R&R in Australia. He also participated in the A-bomb tests at Bikini Atoll.

One special memory Mr. Williams tells is the story of when his ship crossed the Equator. A longstanding Naval tradition is to initiate "Pollywogs" into the Kingdom of Neptune (the legendary god of the seas) upon their first crossing of the Equator. At the end of the ceremony, the seaman were proclaimed to be "Shellbacks." He returned to the U.S. via Seattle, Washington, where he received an honorable discharge from the U.S. Navy in 1947. He had also attended Officer Candidate School in Kansas.

Mr. Williams' medals include the American Defense Medal, American Area Campaign Medal, Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, European African Campaign Medal, WWII Victory Medal, and Good Conduct Medal.

Mr. Williams returned to Moberly to reunite with family and friends for awhile. Deciding to move to Illinois, he pursued employment in Quincy when he worked as a molder for seven years. It was in Quincy where he met the love of his life, Elvira (Vera) Strothoff. Vera was a widow with five children. He and Vera married in 1953, returning to Missouri where they purchased a farm new Madissn. Their son, Preston, was born in 1956. John's wife was his soulmate and helpmate for the farm. She passed in 1998. Mr. Williams continued to pursue his lifelong dream of farming from 1953 to 2014 when he retired to the Missouri Veterans Home in Mexico. His son, Preston, and Preston's wife, his grandson and his wife Jullia, remain on the family farm. Mr. William's stepdaughters, also reside in Missouri.

Besides farming, Mr. Williams taught machine shop and welding at the Moberly Vocational School during the late 1960s and 1970s. Some of his greatest joys have been coon hunting, raising champion Plott hounds, pursuing the craft of buggy and carriage building, and owning serval nice pairs of draft horses. He still enjoys his grandson John's fiddling, as well as following his son Preston's blacksmithing pursuits.

The Daughter of the Margaret Miller Chapter DAR are proud to nominate John B. Williams as Patriot of the Month and extend their gratitude for his patriotic service and commitment to our great nation.