

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution
Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

December 2016



Eugene Gilbreath
United States Army

Sponsored by:
Rachel Donelson
Chapter



January 14, 1945, Noville, Belgium. The 101st Airborne began their counter offense against the Germans.

Gene Gilbreath suddenly heard an extremely loud noise and then found himself flat on the ground, "sucking blood." This was what his parents had hoped to avoid by refusing to sign the permission papers for their 16-year-old graduate to join the war. His father had been seriously injured in WWI. But Gene had signed for himself the day he turned 18. After calling for help several times, getting back to his squad became his motive. He somehow stumbled back to where his squad was located. He was put in a jeep and taken to the battalion station. He lost consciousness before arriving at a field hospital in Luxembourg. It was found that he had a broken collarbone, broken left arm, slight injury to his left lung and serious injury to his ulnar and radial nerves in the left arm. This would be followed by a string of hospitals starting with a hospital in Paris and ending with one in Daytona Beach, Florida.

The 101st was well known for their participation in Operation Market Garden in the Netherlands. As a member of Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division in Aldbourne, England, Gene clearly remembers taking part in Operation Market Garden. He said the weather was great, sunny and probably 50 degrees and the jump went very well for most of the parachutists. Holland had become a training ground for them and for him with the bazooka. When Eindhoven was heavily bombed by the Germans, he was part of an anti-tank platoon.

The Belgian Ardennes was the scene of a new offensive by the Germans so the 101st had been sent to participate. It was there that Gene had suffered his injuries. Finally in September 1945, his time with the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment for the 101st Airborne Division was ended but also the devastating war was over. Gene received several decorations: AEME Theater Ribbon w/2 Bronze Stars and 1 Bronze Arrowhead, Presidential Unit Citation, & the Purple Heart.

With the ending of the war and his convalescence, Gene began a new phase in his life. He had begun his education in a one-room school and graduated from high school at an early age. College at Southwest Missouri State College would be his next goal. He graduated in three years with a Bachelor of Science in Marketing and Advertising. Also during this interval, he married Doris.

His first job, prior to the war, had been as a timekeeper with Swift & Co. During his college days and until his retirement in May 1979, Gene worked for General Motors Acceptance Corporation serving as a financier and insurer. During this time, he also belonged to Toastmasters. He and Doris were also caring for the family farm.

In 1992, he and Doris began traveling and enjoying golf. Sometimes their travels took them to Netherlands and Belgium. Gene had fond memories of the Dutchmen, so he returned to the Netherlands several times. Always the Dutch were grateful in their remembrances of the American GIs when they were there during World War II. After Doris passed away, Gene continued traveling. He returned to Bastogne and to Eerde, Holland. He now spends his time reading, working out, and making a boat. He was a Mason, a Shriner, and with the Elks for many years. The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars are his focus now.

He walks spritely and takes a place in the front of the Veterans' Day Parade in November. Each Monday, Wednesday and Friday, he takes his place on the front row of the Silver Sneakers class and mirrors the movements of the instructor. He never misses a beat and offers a challenge to those younger in the class.

Rachel Donelson Daughters are very proud to nominate Eugene E Gilbreath, an outstanding citizen, and an honorable veteran, as Patriot of the Month and extend their gratitude and appreciation for his patriotic service to our great nation.