

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution  
Proudly Honors



Patriot of the Month

May 2017



## Louis Eugene Greco

United States Navy

Sponsored by:  
John Sappington  
Chapter

Born to immigrant parents from Italy, Louis Eugene Greco is first generation American. In June 1943, he enlisted with the United States Navy in St. Louis, Missouri, right after graduating from high school. After boot camp, he was assigned to the *USS Tatum (DE-789)*, a Destroyer escort, with a crew of 300. Little did he know that he would serve his entire three-year enlistment and travel over 100,000 miles to both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters on the same ship. Louis was a water tender, a seaman who attends to the condition of the water in steam boilers—he kept the ship going. After the new ship's shakedown training, the *USS Tatum* performed escort duty along the east coast until

25 March when she departed New York for England as the screen of a convoy. After 27 days at sea, she quickly returned via Wales and Belfast to New York City.

His second and third transatlantic voyages took Louis to North Africa. The *Tatum* was a protective escort for several carriers headed for French Morocco. After delivering planes to Casablanca, the convoy returned to the United States, then turned around and again departed for Algeria. The ship was continually escorting ships in the Mediterranean—to and from Tunisia, Naples, Malta, Corsica, and Sardinia. From Naples, she escorted a landing craft convoy for the impending invasion of southern France—she protected the small boats as their Marines advanced to the shore. The *Tatum* returned to the States, arriving back in New York in mid-December 1944.

Later that December, she began a conversion to a high-speed transport. Once cleared, the *USS Tatum* (now *APD-81*) steamed to the Chesapeake Bay for training. Following port calls at Panama and San Diego, *Tatum* entered Pearl Harbor in April 1945. After more training in the Hawaiian Islands, the ship proceeded, via the Marshalls and Carolines, for the Ryukyu Islands.

*Tatum* arrived off Okinawa's beaches on 19 May 1945 and reported for duty with the anti-aircraft and anti-submarine pickets stationed around the island. At dusk on 29 May, the warship was attacked by four kamikazes. As the first plane swooped in across her bow, *Tatum's* guns opened up and scored hits on his wing and fuselage. About 40 feet from her, the plane's left wing and tail struck the water, jarring loose its bomb. It skipped off the surface and careened off one of *Tatum's* guns; it pierced *Tatum's* hull and two of her longitudinal bulkheads. The dud came to rest with its nose protruding eight inches into the passageway of an officer's stateroom. The plane itself skimmed over the water into the *Tatum*, dented her hull, and knocked out her fire controls and communications with the engine room.

Meanwhile, the second and third planes were setting up for their attack. *Tatum* drove one of them off with gunfire, but the other continued on toward the ship. Under a hail of gunfire, the kamikaze banked sharply, and splashed down about 100 yards from the stern of the ship. Within seconds, his cautious comrade renewed his attack; *Tatum's* anti-aircraft fire followed him as he prepared to come in again. His third and final attack carried him across the ship and into the water.

The fourth plane apparently had been waiting for a favorable route of attack. He circled, banked, and dove at *Tatum*, but *Tatum's* barrage ripped off his left wing, and he plummeted to the water about 30 feet from her port bow. The underwater explosion rocked *Tatum* severely. Despite considerable damage, her crew had her up and running within 15 minutes. According to Louis, she headed to Okinawa for repairs but was kicked out of port; she was too dangerous to be near other ships. Back at sea, the dud was disarmed and dropped overboard. *Tatum* now needed to get to Leyte for permanent repairs.

On her way to Leyte, the *Tatum* signalman alerted Louis that his brother's ship was sighted in the area. Louis and Dominic met at sea and were able to spend the day together. The *Tatum* hosted the 30-crew members of Dominic's *USS Landing Craft Infantry(R)-224* for a movie on deck, and invited Dominic, an officer, to spend the night in their Officer's Quarters. "No way," Louis said. "He's my brother and he sleeps where I sleep!" A memorable reunion for both brothers!

After V-J Day, the *Tatum* spent eight more months in the Far East, assisting post war occupation and reconstruction. She assisted in the evacuation of Allied Prisoners of War and then shifted to Nagasaki where she supplied boats for the evacuation pool. Louis recalls riding down the streets of Nagasaki and the Japanese people turning their backs to them—the area was completely devastated. *Tatum* continued to shuttle passengers between Chinese ports until April 1946, until she returned stateside, arriving on the east coast in the summer of 1946.

Louis had survived freezing hurricanes in the Atlantic and horrific typhoons and kamikazes in the Pacific. He was honorably discharged and returned safely to his home in August 1946. He received medals for the American Campaign, the Europe-Africa-Middle East Campaign, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign, and the Philippines Liberation. The *Tatum* earned two battle stars during World War II.

After the war, Louis continued his education. He graduated from the Missouri School of Mines at Rolla with a degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1950. Soon after, he began his professional career at the Aeronautical Chart and Information Center (ACIC), the predecessor of today's National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). He was selected to attend The Ohio State University for advanced training in the field of Geodesy, Geophysics, and Gravity, after which he returned home to develop the DoD Gravity Library, the worldwide holdings of gravity data. He retired from Federal Service in 1986.

Louis married Jacqueline, and they had seven children. After losing his wife, he married Carol. Together, they have 13 children, 27 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren. He is a member of Our Lady of Providence Roman Catholic Church, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the White House League, and the Gateway Corkball League. He is very proud to be an American Veteran.

His message to future generations is, "Join the Navy; see the World."

John Sappington Daughters are very proud and honored to recognize Louis Eugene Greco as Patriot of the Month for his dedicated patriotism and service to our great nation.