

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month



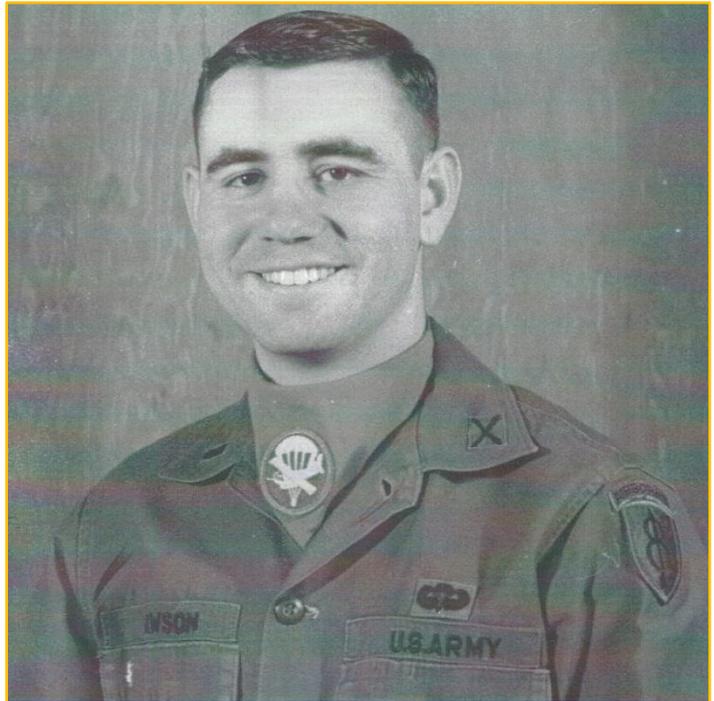
December 2017



Harlan A. Lawson

United States Army

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Platte Purchase
Chapter



Harlan is a native Missourian born in October, 1943. He moved to a 113 acre farm in 1944. He attended a one room school for grades one through eight and high school for three years. In 1960, his family moved to a larger farm and then he attended a different high school where he graduated as valedictorian of his class. He attended Central Missouri State College where he graduated with a teaching degree in mathematics and physics receiving the Charno Award as the most outstanding male graduate. He taught one year at a large city high school followed by a year in the Republic of the Philippines on a Rotary International fellowship where he completed a graduate mathematics course of study at the University of the Philippines and taught mathematics at Ateneo University and Maryknoll College. After traveling around the world he returned home to teach advanced math in Missouri.

Harlan entered active duty with the United States Army at the St. Louis Induction Center in June, 1968. He completed basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, followed by advanced individual training in Field Artillery at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. After graduating from Field Artillery Officer Candidate School, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Field Artillery. He served in various staff and command positions in the 8th Infantry Division (Airborne) in Germany; Strategic Technical Directorate Assistance Team 158; Vietnam, XVIII Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq; with his final seven year tour at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, as Director of Tests for the Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA). Harlan was selected to command the Second Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division on the longest combat air assault in United States

Army history. He graduated from the Naval War College in Rhode Island and the Army War College in Pennsylvania.

The Army paid for two years of graduate study at the University of California-Davis where he earned a Master of Engineering-Applied Science (Nuclear Physics) degree. Harlan served two tours with the DNA. As a Captain, he managed the development of the first automated war simulation combining Army and Marine ground forces with Air Force, Navy, and Marine air support. When he returned to DNA in 1992, as a Colonel, he directed the last two underground nuclear tests conducted by the United States. Following the nuclear test moratorium by President Clinton, Harlan redirected the Test Directorate towards conventional attacks of various hard targets simulating chemical, biological and nuclear storage facilities around the world. Most of the weapons used in Afghanistan and Iraq were field tested on Test Directorate test beds at the Nevada Test Site or White Sands Missile Range under Harlan's watchful eye. Harlan retired from active duty at Fort Bliss, Texas in June, 1999, with the rank of Colonel.

Harlan was awarded the Bronze Star three times in combat. Other awards include the Army Service Medal, Joint Distinguished Service Medal, and Legion of Merit. He earned the Parachutist and Jumpmaster badges as well as the Air Assault and Pathfinder badges. He was awarded the Air Ground Operations Specialist designation by the United States Air Force at Hurlburt Field, Florida.

Regarding his time in service, Harlan shared the following memories: "When the North Vietnamese attacked Hue in 1972 with 130 mm cannon fire, we had no artillery that could match their range. Then in 1991 when facing that same type of 130 mm cannon in Iraq, we succeeded in linking our counterfire radar with the Apache gunships and destroyed the enemy artillery before they could fire a second volley. That sort of made up for our inability to respond adequately nearly 20 years earlier in Vietnam.

During Desert Storm, one of my soldiers insisted that he must be baptized before we entered combat the next day. The only water anywhere near was a dirty old camel watering trough. Just as we started towards the watering trough, the Methodist Chaplain drove up and conducted a full immersion baptism in that dirty water. Specialist Owens was delighted to be properly baptized even under those conditions. I am aware of 24 soldiers in my battalion who were baptized before and during Desert storm, sometimes with and sometimes without a chaplain."

Besides teaching prior to the Army, Harlan and Janet, his wife, have owned a couple of business and remained active in farming or ranching operations throughout most of their lives. They are both active in their local United Methodist Church where they both serve on the church board. Harlan and Janet provide tutoring to community students on a weekly basis. For the last five years, Harlan has served as the Vice President of the Governing Council for the local classical charter school where the students are taught to be knowledgeable of our nation's founding principles and to prepare them to serve as effective citizens.

Harlan and Janet have been married 46 years. They have two daughters and two sons.

Platte Purchase Daughters are very honored and proud to recognize Harlan A. Lawson as Patriot of the Month for his dedication, patriotism, and service to his community and our great nation.