

# Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution Proudly Honors



Patriot of the Month

May 2018



## William “Bill” Pollard

United States Army Air Corps

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Missouris Shoal  
Chapter

Bill graduated from high school in May, 1941, and joined the United States Army Air Corp in March, 1943. He was inducted at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and transferred to Kearns, Utah, for basic training. For further training he was transferred to Fort Collins, Colorado. Then for medical training for Air Evacuation he was transferred to Bowman Field, Kentucky. His next transfer was being shipped by the English to Liverpool, England, for further training at Reading, England, with preparation training for the Normandy Invasion, June 6, 1944.



Bill recalls, “In the Battle of St. Lo, France, which followed the Normandy Invasion, his unit had trouble getting in there for air evacuation. Their job was to evacuate wounded soldiers. At this battle there were hedge rows that were used as fences that had to be destroyed with tanks in order to evacuate the wounded. In this battle United States General McNair was killed.” After moving into a Missouri Veterans Home, he met Pat Patterson and they had many visits about the Battle of Lo.

His unit also evacuated soldiers from concentrations camps in Germany who had been faced by hard work, starvation, and death. This was a very gruesome evacuation and some of the evacuees were not able to travel.

His unit, the Medical Air Evacuation Squadron 819's job was to evacuate the wounded. At a station near Paris, France, they were returning late in the day from a flight when he saw two small children, probably 5 and 6 years old, trying to salvage food out of their garbage can. When they saw Bill, they ran. It was cold and they did not have adequate clothing. The children were scared so he followed them. The children entered the ruins

of a bombed out building. Bill knocked on the door and a lady came to the door carrying a baby. She realized that he was an American soldier and then he asked her if those children needed some food and warmer clothing. She smiled as he stepped into the door. The lady was wearing a Tam that covered her head because French civilians had been shaving the heads of ladies who had collaborated with enemy soldiers. Bill left and told her he would be back with some clothing and food for the children. He went immediately to his comrades and they gathered some clothing and food for the family. The family seemed happy to receive the items and the children were smiling and the mother thanked them profusely. This happened many times because the American soldiers always had something for the children in need.

Another time a grandmother with small children passed their camp and the Americans gave candy to the children. So one day, the mother came to them and told them if they had some soap she would do their laundry.

One day when they were delivering medical supplies close to the enemy lines at the field hospital quite a distance from Paris, they picked up General George Patton and took him to a meeting he was having with General Dwight Eisenhower. This was the only time he came in contact with General Patton or General Eisenhower.

Bill's memories of Christmas in War – "This year as Christmas was approaching, my mind drifted back to Christmas 1944. I was in France doing what I did throughout World War II – remove wounded from the field, treat them for their wounds, and get them to either a field hospital for more treatment or accompany them to another location by plane to a better area for further treatment.

This was also the Christmas I was chosen to accompany George Lott back to the United States by accident. George was a medic that was severely wounded and needed to be airlifted back to the States. I was with him and due to bad weather ended up flying all the way back to the United States. Life magazine covered the story of his path from France back home.

Being in the 819<sup>th</sup> Army Air Evacuation unit, I flew over 50 missions to help save the wounded. Air evacuation was faster than land transport, safer and more comfortable. It was remarkable that during the war all of the medical air evacuation units combined transported a total of 1,176,048 wounded soldiers. Of all those transported only 46 died on route.

If a medic could get to the wounded soldier in time to stop the bleeding and prevent shock, his chances for recovery were excellent. Most patients came back to consciousness in the field or evacuation hospital. They were groggy from morphine and the first person they saw was usually a nurse from the Army Nurse Corps. These nurses never got enough credit for what they did. They were susceptible to become a casualty just like any soldier. The Army nurse was usually wearing fatigues, always busy, exhausted, and harassed by the young soldiers. However, these American girls had a marvelous smile, gentle hands, and a reassuring attitude. To a wounded soldier they were like angels sent from heaven.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the soldiers on both sides of the line had an image of a manger in Bethlehem. They sang the same carols with the favorite being Silent Night. The two sides were there to kill each other however. There was no stand down for Christmas. I wished for the end of war then and I still wish for the end of all wars now. There aren't many winners, and some might say there are no winners."

Bill was awarded four Bronze Stars for the following battles: Rhineland, all of Central Europe, Rome-Arno, and Normandy. He was also awarded the Good Conduct Medal, and the Air Medal. One of his most meaningful experiences was a flight he made from France to United States Mitchell Field, New York, and the meeting he had with Pope Pius XII, at the Vatican. Bill was discharged October, 1945, in Missouri.

During Bill's civilian career, he was employed in the sales department at Kayser-Roth Corporation. His wife is deceased; he has two sons, six grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Bill was a farmer. He is a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, United Methodist Church, and he says he lives in the finest Veterans Home in Missouri.

Missouris Shoal Daughters very proudly honor and recognize William "Bill" Pollard as Patriot of the Month and extend to him their deepest appreciation and gratitude for his very dedicated, patriotic service to our great nation.