

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution Proudly Honors



Patriot of the Month

May 2021



John Losito

United States Marine Corps

Sponsored by:
Rock Island
Chapter

John Losito, as would be expected, will proudly tell you he is a Marine. Albeit he was discharged from the United States Marine Corps nearly 70 years ago, he adheres to the adage "Once a Marine, Always a Marine." John is currently a member of the Marine Corps League, Lake of the Ozarks Detachment 1137, where he is an active charter member. John is a Korean War combat veteran, and his tour of duty, particularly behind enemy lines in North Korea, was a dangerous one.

John Losito enlisted in the active-duty Marines in August of 1950, where he reported for boot camp at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina. John had been a Marine Reservist before enlisting for active duty, and at twenty-one years of age, was older than any other of the recruits in his boot camp platoon; thus, the moniker "Pops" was bestowed upon him by his fellow platoon members. After thirteen weeks of combined basic and combat training, John was assigned to a newly formed group, a "Close Air Support" squadron where he trained extensively at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Vieques, Puerto Rico, Kaneohe Bay, Oahu, and Sasapo, Japan before his combat deployment to Pusan, South Korea in July of 1953. Perhaps because "Pops" was considered more mature and experienced in life than his Marine counterparts, John was promoted to Staff Sergeant a few months before arriving in South Korea.

Staff Sergeant Losito and his Marine Air Support Squadron, First Marine Air Wing, made their way to Inchon, South Korea, aboard a "Mash" type helicopter, and several days later were driven into enemy territory in the area of Kusong, North Korea. At this locale, the squadron set up "panels" to provide close air support for American pilots to identify locales of enemy troops and distinguish enemy strongholds from American and United Nations troops. A Marine Reconnaissance platoon was detached to John's squadron to provide intelligence information about enemy movements and encampments. John's outfit stayed in the Kusong area for nearly a month when a cease-fire (Korean Armistice Agreement) was ratified by both sides, and all American and United Nations troops were ordered out of North Korea, south of the 38th parallel, the line which demarcated north from south. Most United Nations forces were kept in South Korea as a peace-keeping force, and John's squadron ended up in an encampment north of Inchon where they stayed "in-country" for about one year. Staff Sergeant Losito earned the label "Company Scrounger" due to his skills at procuring comfort items for his men. John recalls one period wherein he formed a close friendship with a Seabee Commander who informed John that their orders were to dump "Quonset huts" (metal, oval-shaped pre-fab housing units) into the Yellow Sea as a means of disposal and reef creation. John finagled a Quonset hut for his outfit, which he converted into an Enlisted Club. A Marine Colonel from another outfit heard about John's Club and negotiated one of the huts for his men. John boldly agreed to procure the hut for the cost of one case of scotch whisky and a case of Jack Daniels, which he used to stock his Club. John still gets a laugh out of that bit of bartering.

Marine Staff Sergeant John Losito was sent home and discharged from the Marine Corps in August of 1954. John went on to work for a pipe company in Illinois and eventually moved to Lake of the Ozarks in 1976 and opened two bars in the Osage Beach area. John is retired now and spends his days with his wife Rosie of 55 years.

Rock Island Daughters are proud to honor and recognize John Losito as Patriot of the Month for his patriotism and invaluable service to the United States of America.