

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

March 2022



Forrest "Gene" Steenbergen

United States Navy

Sponsored by:
Jane Randolph Jefferson
Chapter

Gene enlisted in August 1951, along with a few friends from his hometown in Russellville, MO. They were hoping to be in the same area together. Gene had a very bad cold, so his friends were placed together, and they waited to place Gene at a later date. While his friends went to San Diego, CA, he was sent to boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Station in Waukegan, Illinois. While there, he was trained, schooled, and graded to see where to assign him as a new cadet. Per his grades he was sent to Machinist school. At that time, Great Lakes Naval Station (NAVSTA Great Lakes) and San Diego Naval Station were the only US Navy boot camps.

He graduated in April 1952 and was assigned to the USS *Sperry*, AS12 that was anchored in San Diego, CA. The *Sperry* was a submarine tender ship.

During his tour of duty, they were mainly anchored in San Diego Bay, CA. The USS *Sperry* had a total crew of 20 machinists to keep it in tip top shape. The submarines would pull up close to the ships and would tie up to the side while they worked on them. Gene said you had to be a good swimmer, just in case. The machinists worked to operate, maintain, and repair all ship propulsion machinery, auxiliary equipment, outside machinery, steering engine and anything else mechanical going on in the submarine.

In 1953 they were sent to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii for 60 days. They were then sent to Chichi Jima, Ogasawara, Japan. The USS *Sperry* was stationed there for two weeks during this conflict. When they pulled into the Ogasawara Islands harbor, they could see that the Japanese had cannons built into the mountains to shoot at any adversaries and had control of the island. Gene said the Japanese were totally prepared for war before they arrived. The US Navy ships and submarines bombed the island repeatedly and was unable to take over the island. The ride back home to San Diego, CA took 23 days, and they ran into a Typhoon on the way.

Gene received extensive hearing damage while in service to the US Navy. As they repaired sonar in the torpedo room, they closed all the compartments and released high air pressure. In doing so, it released a very loud high-pitched noise that left Gene completely deaf for 3 days.

Gene received the Good Conduct, Korean Service, and the National Service Medals.

One noted memory happened on July 1953 when they crossed over the International Date Line on the way to Chichi Jima.

Gene was discharged in August 1955 from the USS *Sperry* in San Diego, California.

Upon arriving back home, Gene enrolled in college and graduated from University of Missouri with a degree in Engineering. Gene was offered employment at the Missouri State Highway Department after college where he worked until retirement in 1989. Gene was a professional Engineer designing highways around our state.



Gene is a member of the American Legion, Gideons International, and member of the Mount Olive Baptist Church where he has served in many officer and leader positions.

Gene is a talented musician and played with a band of relatives all around our community. Gene and his beloved wife, Lina, played at many of the nursing homes to bring joy to their residents.

Gene married the love of his life, Lina Scrivner, in December 1956. They were the most genuine, loving and devoted Christian family. They loved to travel the country doing family research. His late wife, Lina, was a past regent of the Jane Randolph Jefferson Chapter, NSDAR. They had three children, Michael, Missy, and Melanie, four loving grandchildren, and 1 great-granddaughter, and another on the way. Gene has a wonderful life and family that he is so proud of.

The Daughters of the Jane Randolph Jefferson Chapter, NSDAR are proud to honor Forrest "Gene" Steenbergen as Patriot of the Month and extend their gratitude for his patriotic service and commitment to our great nation.