

# Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

May 2024

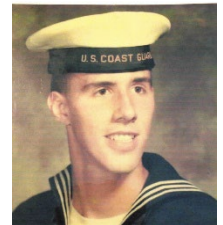


## William C. Claiborne

### United States Coast Guard

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As the end of his sophomore year in college approached, Mr. Claiborne was faced with a difficult situation. Trying to juggle two jobs and going to school full-time, he found himself three credit hours short of maintaining his student deferment. He believes that that was one of the many mistakes he made in his lifetime. The draft lottery had just been held and his birth date was the thirteenth drawn. That meant that he could be drafted at any time. Given his lack of interest in being drafted into the Army and being sent to Vietnam, he decided to pursue his options. He spoke to recruiters from both the Air Force and Navy but both had lengthy waiting lists with men in the same situation he was in. As he was walking out the exit door, he noticed a small office in the corner labeled U.S. Coast Guard, so he decided to investigate. Being from the Midwest, he knew nothing about the Coast Guard. Talking to the recruiter, he found that they offered a lot of opportunity. More important, there was no waiting list and he felt he had found the best kept secret.



Within a month, he was on the way to Alameda, CA for eight weeks of basic training. From there, he was sent to a base on the Mississippi River where he waited for a school opening. He then received orders for Governor's Island, NY where he studied Electronics and later attended LORAN school.

LORAN (Long Range Aids to Navigation) stations generated a high-power, low frequency radio signal. When paired with other Loran signals, it allowed the military and commercial navigation receivers to pinpoint their location. It was their responsibility to always keep the transmission operational. The introduction of satellite navigation in the 1990's led to its obsolescence by the end of the century. Since most of the LORAN stations were in North America, Europe, Japan, the Aleutian Islands, and the entire Atlantic and Pacific areas, he assumed he would be going overseas. That was not the case.

He received orders to Coast Guard LORAN Station San Mateo Pt. in San Clemente, CA. The base was located just north of Camp Pendleton and immediately next to the ocean front property of Richard Nixon. After he became President in 1969, the Coast Guard station became known as The Western White House. In addition to their regular duties, the Coast Guard supported presidential and state dignitary visits, including summit meetings with President Brezhnev of Russia, Prime

Minister Sato of Japan, and President Thieu of South Vietnam. Being a fan of old western movies, his favorite visitors to the compound were John Wayne and Chuck Connors. Not everyone was impressed by presidential visits. The Coast Guard had a German Shepherd by the name of Blitz, which could roam the compound. One day, Blitz got into it with President Nixon's Irish Setter. Mr. Claiborne does not know what happened to Blitz but the dog was never seen again.

While in San Clemente, Mr. Claiborne was promoted to ET2 (E5) and was able to complete his four-year enlistment there in July 1974. A month after his separation from the service, President Nixon resigned as President.

The electronics training he received and leadership opportunities he received, were the basis of his civilian career, for which he was very grateful. His regrets are that he did not have the opportunity to go overseas, but he has great memories of his time in the Coast Guard. After his discharge, he repaired electronics for a few years until he moved into electronics management and then operations management for several companies before retiring in 2013. He has volunteered for Gideon International. Mr. Claiborne is a widower with three children.