

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

June 2024



John F. Grillo

United States Army Air Corps

Sponsored by:

Louisiana Purchase Chapter, NSDAR

John F. Grillo, after graduating from high school, and working at a tannery, enlisted in the Army Air Corps. On December 9, 1943, he was assigned to basic training at Gulfport Field, Mississippi for two months, then to Seymour Johnson in North Carolina for Air Crew Training. Next, he went to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. Because this was a major transportation hub for U.S. soldiers traveling to Europe during World War II, he knew that he was not going to the tropics. He pointed out that they had two different types of uniforms, one for cold weather and one for the tropics (suntan uniform). John said, "I knew I wouldn't be needing my suntan uniform."



He said that they boarded the New Zealand passenger ship in New York at night to set sail to England. The next morning when they departed was interesting. He said that he could never imagine the size of the convoy. They were among many ships departing in huge convoys. There were tankers, freight carriers, ships carrying airplanes, and supplies. Three escorts were on each side and there were ships as far as you could see.

After arriving in Liverpool, all the ships left. It was very dark when they boarded a train in Liverpool to take them to Southern England. There were six soldiers in a compartment. Their identification was their number on their helmet. He remarked, "that is who you were. I then saw planes flying over and realized it was a war zone."

John was assigned to sheet metal school as they used the metal to repair airplanes. They were preparing for D- Day as they anticipated losses for the airplanes of paratroopers. Fortunately, they didn't have to do much repairing. He commented with a grin, "Germans were poor shots."

He was then assigned to the 29th Air Depot Group to serve with the 16th Depot Repair Squad. They were the ground force and repair crew for aircraft. That is where he was when D-Day came on June 6, 1944. John related that General Montgomery was the commander of the land forces involved in the Battle of Normandy under the overall command of U.S. General Dwight Eisenhower. When D-Day was over, they had to haul supplies. John said that, not knowing at the time, but the military was

advancing in Europe. He was then transferred to a large military base close to London where he assembled gliders.

In the fall of 1944, American paratroopers were stopped. The invasion ended. After the Battle of the Bulge, he was sent to France. When the war ended, it was like the 4th of July. Shots were fired into the air, making loud explosions. They celebrated enjoying the American Style Beer made by the French.

John's highlight was going to Paris on several occasions. He pointed out that Paris was never declared an open city and there was no damage to Paris. I knew he loved Paris, as he broke out in song, "How ya gonna keep em down on the farm, after they've seen Paree?"

A month later, he was sent to Camp Miami preparing to go to the Pacific. However, there was a Railroad Strike in the United States and President Truman ordered the Railroad Battalion. On September 2, 1945, John sailed from Marseille, a port in southern France and arrived in New York on September 12, 1945. After a short time at home in Pennsylvania, he was assigned to Brookley Field in Alabama for 6 weeks. Because of the 85-point system, the adjusted service rating score, he was then assigned to Andrews Field, Washington D.C. where John was honorably discharged on December 17, 1945.

His medals include WWII European Theater Campaign medal, American Theater Campaign medal, WWII Victory medal, Good Conduct, Airborne troop carrier, and Corporal.

Returning to civilian life in Clairemont, Pennsylvania, he continued in the tannery business, and enrolled at Penn State University where he obtained a Liberal Arts Degree. He then worked for the Penn Department of Transportation in Washington D.C. In 1955, he moved to St Louis and worked for Mo Department of Transportation until he retired.

John has had an interesting hobby of Model Railroads through the years. He was active in the Jefferson County and Southern Model Railroad Club. He continues to be a member of Veterans of Foreign War, American Legion 40+8, and Knights of Columbus.

Presently living at Southview Assisted Living retirement community in Affton, he is the father of 3 children and 2 stepchildren.

Louisiana Purchase Chapter NSDAR is proud to nominate John F. Grillo as Patriot of the Month and extends gratitude and thanks for his service and commitment to our country.