

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

July 2024



Wayne Bill

United States Army

Sponsored by:

Jane Randolph Jefferson Chapter, NSDAR

Wayne was raised in Webster Groves, MO. Upon graduation from high school in 1962, he attended Central Missouri State College in Warrensburg, Missouri, where he met his future wife, Betty. While in college, he was deferred by the draft twice. During his last year in college, he was drafted to go into the service.



In May 1967, Wayne graduated from college and enlisted for Officer Candidate School. After spending six weeks of Basic Training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, he was sent to Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma for Advanced Artillery School. Fort Sill is the national headquarters for artillery training. Following six weeks of Advanced Individual Training, Wayne progressed to Officer Candidate School for six months. He graduated as a Second Lieutenant in August 1968 and was given a month leave to spend with family. Wayne and his wife, Betty, were married during this time.

Wayne received orders for Fort Bliss, an Air Defense Artillery Base in El Paso, Texas. He served in the Group Supply Headquarters for one year before he would see his name on the list to be assigned to Vietnam. From Seattle, Washington, Wayne boarded his flight to the Vietnam conflict. In August 1969, he arrived in Cam Ranh Bay, and was moved to Da Nang, Vietnam. In Da Nang, headquarters assigned him to the 1144th Artillery Battalion.

Wayne served as a First Lieutenant platoon leader in a M42 Duster Quad 50 Battery stationed near the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) between North and South Vietnam. He led Duster tanks which manned six soldiers on each tank, one as a driver and the other five on top of the vehicle. Wayne also rode on top of one of the tracks. They were one of the four batteries of the 1144th Artillery. Wayne was sent to the C Battery of the 1144th Artillery. Each Duster held two guns which shot 40-millimeter ammo. Wayne's platoon also supported the Seabees. The Seabees assignment was to check for buried bombs/mines and to spray Agent Orange to kill the vegetation, allowing the soldiers a better view in the dense foliage along the highway.

Unfortunately, the Seabees would precede Wayne's platoon on searches, so he and his soldiers came back to base with the brunt of the Agent Orange herbicide all over their clothing. (*Production*

of Agent Orange ended in the 1970 s. The dioxin contaminant is highly toxic and continues to have harmful impacts today).

Wayne remembered a conflict that stood out to him while in Vietnam. Mai Loc, a Special Services Camp, had been overrun by the NVA (North Vietnamese Army), and Wayne's platoon had two tracks stationed at this location. To their astonishment, this camp had hidden underground bunkers under the center of the camp which saved many lives. Then here comes "Puff, the Magic Dragon", an AC-47 gunship that fires 6000 rounds per minute. The AC-47s call sign was "Spooky" but ground troops affectionately called it "Puff the Magic Dragon" because the Viet Cong thought it was a fire-breathing dragon. The airplane fired its guns around the outside perimeter of the camp. This was followed by a Battery of the 5th Mechanized Division who killed all the remaining invaders in the camp.

On the following morning, Wayne arrived at the Camp and had a memorable discussion with Captain Shinseki of the 5th Division. To Wayne's surprise, years later the captain achieved the status of General Eric Shinseki, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under President Obama.

The best advice Wayne received from his Captain Truesdale was "Don't tell your men to do something you wouldn't do." Wayne spent 12 months in Vietnam. In 1970, he was flown back to Fort Lewis in Seattle, Washington, where he was honorably discharged.

Wayne received the following medals: The Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal, Republic of Vietnam Bronze Gallantry Cross, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and The American Warrior Achievement Medal.

After his honorable discharge in 1970, Wayne returned to college at Central Missouri State University and received his MBA. He began working for Swift Meat Company. After five years, he moved to Ames, Iowa as a partner in a fresh meat business. Wayne would in time move to take a position with Ralston Purina as District Sales Manager in Fulton, Missouri. After 20 years with Purina, Wayne began working as an International Marketing Specialist with the Department of Agriculture for the State of Missouri. Wayne spent 10 years with the Department before retiring in 2010. During his tenure, he was elected to the MOSERS (Missouri State Employees' Retirement System) Board of Trustees for six years and was Board Chair for two years.

Wayne is a lifetime member of the local VFW Post 2657. He held the following positions: Commander-2 years, Quartermaster-7 years, Trustee-3 years. He loves to renew friendships and volunteer at the VFW. Wayne was on the Fulton City Council for eight years and has served on the Fulton Parks and Recreation Board since 1990. As an avid baseball fan, Wayne coached Fulton youth baseball teams for over 10 years and was the Director of the Bambino Midwest Plains Regional Tournament in 1990. Fulton's Bambino team proudly placed 2nd to Colorado!

Wayne and his wife, Betty, have been married for 55 years. Wayne enjoys watching his son play tennis in California. His granddaughter, Reese, entertains him by playing both beach and indoor volleyball; his grandson, Eli, challenges him with video games and new technology. Playing golf is Wayne's true passion, but he wears out quickly. He walks and exercises at Legends, the city recreational center. With the gift of a new kidney, he would love to do more work around the house, volunteer, and play longer rounds of golf!