

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Proudly Honors



EUGENE CORNELIUS
UNITED STATES NAVY
FIRST CLASS AVIATION MACHINIST MATE
JULY 15, 1942 – SEPTEMBER 25, 1947



as

PURPLE HEART PATRIOT
MARCH 2025

Gail Cornelius, Honoring His Father's Service and Sacrifice
Sponsored by: Webster Groves Chapter, NSDAR



Eugene Cornelius was born on April 8, 1927, to Frances Marion Cornelius and Zona Iona Wright. He grew up in Texarkana, Arkansas along with his siblings Gail, J.W., Kathryn, Retha, and Ruby, and remained there until he entered the military. In 1942 his brothers, Gail and J.W. decided to enter the military. Not wanting to be left behind, Gene also decided to join. There was just one problem; Gene was only 14 years old. He had an easy solution, falsifying his birth certificate. So, his brother Gail joined the Army Air Corps, J.W. the Marines, and on July 15, 1942, Gene joined the Navy.

While serving, Gene, an Aviation Construction Mechanic, was assigned to serve in the South Pacific and was shot. He was sent to Australia for treatment. After being sent back to the Air Station in the South Pacific he was involved in an explosion and again sent back to Australia for treatment. Gene received two Purple Hearts for these injuries. Unfortunately, no one in the family knows where these precious awards have gone.

After serving in the South Pacific, Gene was stationed at Cabiniss Airfield in Corpus Christi, Texas. While at Cabiniss Airfield, Gene met June Prose, a Navy Seaman, and on November 26, 1945, they were married. At that time June had no idea just how old Gene was. What a surprise for her.

After the marriage Gene was sent to Pensacola Florida and then Jacksonville Florida where his first son, Gail, was born in 1946. On September 25, 1947, Gene was discharged from the Navy. While searching for work, the couple went to Richmond, Washington, where they had their second child, Carolyn. Then they went along the West Coast and through Texas looking for employment. They finally ended up in Texarkana, Texas, where Gene had started his life,

and then north to the St. Louis area, June's hometown. They ended up having five more children, one who died in infancy. Gene spent most of his life after the military as a truck driver.

As a military family, Gene lost his one brother Gail at sea in 1944 off the shore of Hawaii. His brother Gail also received a Purple Heart. J.W. was able to return to the States. Gene's son Gail joined the Navy and served in Vietnam. Because of Gail's service, he now must deal with Parkinson because of Agent Orange. Gene's youngest son, James, joined the Army and two of his grandsons joined the Navy. What a legacy Gene started at such an early age.