

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Proudly Honors



LARRY PAYNE
UNITED STATES ARMY
SPECIAL FORCES – GREEN BERET
SERGEANT (E-5)
MARCH 1966 – MARCH 1969
U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 (CW-4)
MARCH 1969 – MARCH 1972

as

**PURPLE HEART PATRIOT
APRIL 2025**

Honoring his Service and Sacrifice
Sponsored by: St. Joseph Chapter, NSDAR



Larry Payne was born August 7, 1943, in Polk Township, DeKalb County, Missouri. He and his family later moved to King City, Missouri, where he graduated from high school. After graduating, Larry moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, where he worked for South Park Lumber Company. He met his wife, Audrey, in St. Joseph and they married in 1964.

In 1966, Larry and a friend found out they were next on the list to be drafted. Not wanting to be drafted, he and his friend enlisted. His friend went into the Air Force. Larry enlisted in the Army so he could apply for Special Forces Airborne Green Berets. While in basic training, Larry put in his application for this elite group. To qualify for the training to become a Green Beret, Larry had to pass numerous, rigorous physical fitness and mental tests. Only three candidates out of 100 made the cut. After several months of training including jump school, tactics, demolition, firearms, and other specialty areas, he became a Green Beret with the rank of Sergeant. He reported to Echo Company of the Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he had more training in the Operations and Intelligence School. Audrey moved to Fort Bragg to be near Larry during training. She told of an evening when he was going bowling with his friends. He did not return that night. She was checking hospitals and his work but could not get an answer. Larry said he and the others were taken and put on an airplane, for a two-week exercise. They were dropped

with their parachutes over the Everglades. They were instructed to find their way home to North Carolina. Once the men got out of the swamp and assembled, they were able to flag down a trucker who drove them all the way home. Larry was able to relax at home for a few days since they were well ahead of their expected report date. Audrey would experience other trials like this after Larry was sent to Vietnam. Due to the nature of his mission, he was able to receive letters but could not send any when he was on alert for a mission.

After a total of two years of intense training, Larry left for Vietnam on March 8, 1968. He was assigned to the Military Assistance Command Vietnam-Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG). He was based out of a camp named Khe Sanh near the



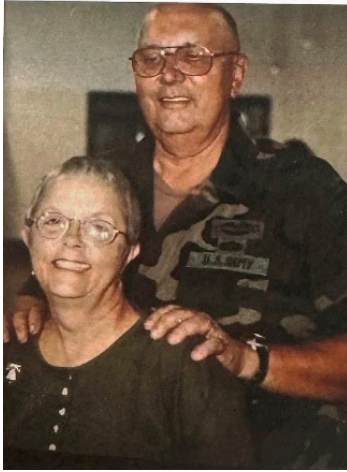
Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) as the team leader. The main mission was reconnaissance. They worked closely with the indigenous people of the area, the Montagnard. Larry, one other Green Beret, and nine Bru Montagnard made up their team, which was called Michigan. The Montagnards were vital to the mission as they knew the terrain. Larry became friends with one young man, Contua, who was his Montagnard team leader. Casualty rates for these teams exceeded 100%, meaning every man was wounded at least once, and approximately half were killed.



Not long after arriving, Larry received his first injury on March 17, 1968. Shrapnel barely missed the back of his head and grazed his back. This injury was treated in the field. On March 30, he received his second wound, shrapnel hit his right leg. A minor injury, again, and was treated in the field. Larry received a Purple Heart for each of these. He was unaware he would be getting these medals. Thirteen years later, they came in the mail to him in St Joseph while he was recovering from more serious injuries from a car accident. Larry was also awarded the Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and Good Conduct Medal.

Larry returned home to St. Joseph, Missouri, in March 1969 and remained in the inactive reserves. In 1972 he joined the Missouri Army National Guard, obtaining the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 4. He served in the Guard on active duty and retired in 2003. During this time Larry worked for the Missouri Army National Guard as a Civil Service Employee. He retired in 2003.





Larry and his wife, Audrey, volunteered with the Red Cross for 25 and 30 years respectively, retiring two years ago. They have both deployed to many different disasters around the country, including New York City, after 9/11. Larry was able to return to Vietnam in 1997 and was reunited with his old friend Contua. They were able to reminisce about their time together and learn what they have been doing since they parted.

Larry is recognized for his valiant service during the Vietnam War. After the war, Larry continued to serve his country and fellow citizens alongside Audrey during his long, distinguished military career and their dedicated, selfless volunteerism. Both are true American patriots!