

# **MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

*Proudly Honors*



**JAMES HARLAN WATTENBARGER**

**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
CORPORAL (E-4)**

**OCTOBER 27, 1943 – NOVEMBER 23, 1945**

**WOUNDED IN ACTION JULY 26, 1944**

*as*

**PURPLE HEART PATRIOT**

**JUNE 2025**



*Cheryl Farris, Honoring Her Uncle's Service and Sacrifice*

*Sponsored by: Little Blue River Chapter, NSDAR*



My uncle, James Harlan Wattenbarger, was born March 28, 1926, in Savannah, Missouri, to James C. and Martha E. (Wooderson) Wattenbarger. He attended school in King City, Trenton, and Kansas City, Missouri, where he left Westport High School in 1943 to enlist in the United States Marine Corps (USMC). He was known in the Family as Harlan, to distinguish him from his father. On his USMC Report of Separation papers, his place of entry was Marine Corps Base Quantico (MCBQ), Quantico, Virginia, on October 27, 1943. His military specialties were Machine Gun NCO 604, Rifleman 745 and the service schools were Infantry Battalion, Tent City, Camp Elliott, California. His principal military duty was Machine Gun NCO 604. Harlan's theatre of operations were Guam, Saipan, and Okinawa.

Harlan was wounded on Okinawa and was flown home to sell war bonds and inspire war workers. He was awarded a Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart Medal, and Navy Unit Citation. The citation for his Bronze Star

reads as follows: "For heroic achievement in action while serving as a machine gunner in an assault rifle company in operation against enemy Japanese forces on Guam, Marianas Island, from July 21 to August 10, 1944. On July 26, PFC Wattenbarger, unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for his own safety, placed his gun on high ground in an exposed position, under severe enemy fire, against enemy fire in order to give counterfire against enemy automatic weapons in strongly entrenched and camouflaged positions which had halted the advances of his company and were inflicting many casualties. This action assisted in providing the pinned-down

members of his unit the opportunity to move to more favorable positions and enabled others to evacuate the casualties. His heroic action was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

— L.H. SMITH, Lt. General USMC

As previously stated, Harlan was wounded on Okinawa and flown home on a bond-selling tour. Below is a copy of his speech, which should be read with a 1944/45 voice and not be judged by today's standards. I do not have the citation for his Purple Heart Medal, but his speech should be self-explanatory.

Harlan separated from the USMC-RAT, Quantico, Virginia., on November 23, 1945, and returned to Kansas City, Missouri. After his military service, Harlan joined the U.S. Border Patrol for three years in El Paso, Texas, and then the Federal Bureau of Narcotics. In 1955 Harlan went to work for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Police Science from California State University in Los Angeles, California.

Harlan retired in 1978 and returned to Trenton, Missouri. Harlan died at Liberty Hospital on November 1, 2011, and is buried in the Sharon Capel Cemetery, Harrison County, Missouri. He left one son and one granddaughter, two grandsons, a niece, three nephews, and many cousins. He was a member of the St. Joseph Catholic Church, the Joseph L. Norton Veterans of Foreign Wars (V.F.W) Post 919, Trenton Lions Club, and the 6th Marine Division Association.

Cpl J. Wattenberger

My outfit was ordered to take Sugar Loaf ~~Mountain~~ and Hill No. 3. The Japs know how to fight a delaying action and they had both hills covered with machine gun and mortar fire. We took them, all right, but we paid a price for them. I lost my entire machine gun squad in that action.,, Boys I trained with and fought with on Guam, and it's a pretty bitter thing to take.

One of my best friends, we had been buddies ever since I enlisted, was near me on Hill 3. All he had was a 38 pistol, and the Japs started up the hill after him. They were crawling, and in order to shoot he had to expose himself from the waist up. He stood there and fired all his 38 ammunition and then yelled for help. We sent him up an M-1 rifle and he used that on the Japs until he had shot up two bandoliers of cartridges. Then we sent a B.A.R., a Browning Automatic Rifle, <sup>and then with help</sup> and he worked on that some more. Nothing could stop that kid but he stopped <sup>HIM AND KILLED</sup>



plenty of Japs before they got him. He was hit through the stomach and died that night, but the next morning we counted 35 dead Japs in front of his foxhole.

*Rose leave*  
That's the way the Marines ~~are~~ fighting on Okinawa - day in and day out. That's what I'm back here to tell you about.

Don't get the idea we're posing as war heroes because we aren't. We're men who have a job to do and we know how to do it. You people at home have a job and *know you will* we expect you to stick with it and back us up to the finish. *Continued*

*The Jap. sent glider troops*  
~~When the Jap gliders came in to take the airfield on Northern Okinawa, I~~  
~~saw the fires from their explosions. They blew up some of our planes but we cut~~  
them down before they could do much damage. *THEY FACED CERTAIN DEATH.*  
~~It was a hopeless mission they were on,~~  
but they never hesitated. It's the same thing with their suicide pilots - they don't care how many they lose if they can damage one of our ships.

-2-

Cpl J. Wattenberger

Speaking for the men in the Marine Corps, I want to tell you that we are *job* fighting a tough enemy and we've got a long ~~row~~ ahead of us. We're backing you up on the front and we expect you to back us up here at home.