

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

Proudly Honors

PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

JULY 2025



JOHN SAM SMITH

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

SERGEANT (E-5)

DECEMBER 1966 – DECEMBER 1970

Sponsored by:

Dorcas Richardson Chapter, NSDAR

I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps on a delayed program in 1966 during my senior year of High School. I elected to enlist rather than be drafted since I had already been notified my number had been drawn. Enlistment gave me an opportunity to bargain for the training program I wanted. I entered boot camp at Camp Pendleton, San Diego, California, in December of 1966. Boot camp was followed by twelve weeks of Infantry Training Regiment (ITR), also at Camp Pendleton.

As with all Marines, my basic Military Occupation Status (MOS) was Infantry; my secondary MOS was Aviation Supply Maintenance. This meant I supported troops on the front line. My next duty station was in Memphis, Tennessee, for three months, where I was trained for my MOS. After my MOS training, I was transferred to New River Air Station in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

While in New River, I was responsible for procuring parts, repairing, and maintaining military equipment. I was responsible for keeping records on the parts needed, their use, and maintenance records. In the States, procurement was an orderly process. Locate the company that made the parts, confirm they had a contract with the Marine Corps to provide parts, then order the needed item. I controlled and managed items from \$100,000.00 and up. Record keeping was also a part of my job. I was able to make some changes and improvements to the recording accounting process at New River Air Station, for which I was awarded a Meritorious Mast accommodation. During the 2 1/2 years I was stationed at New River Air Station, I received the rank of corporal and sergeant meritoriously.

In the Marine Corps, at that time, orders came down according to the needed MOSs until soldiers reached the rank of Sergeant. At the rank of Sergeant, orders came down by name; therefore, when I became a Sergeant, I obtained orders for overseas, Vietnam in Southeast Asia.

Following a month of leave and moving my wife back to her home, I returned to San Diego for two months of additional infantry training before going overseas. I was then flown to the Aviation Air Base of Fatima, Okinawa.

Again, my assignment was to procure and repair maintenance parts, plus keep equipment in running order. This job became much more difficult overseas. It seemed

everything was hard to get, and I had to become creative to keep "planes in the air." I became a "McGiver." One such creative incident was how to replace helicopter blades. It seemed helicopter blades were the first thing the Viet Cong shot up, and so they were always in short supply. The Air Force, however, always had a large supply of blades, so I decided to "borrow" a few of them. I found a truck with a flat bed and a driver, and we headed for the Air Force base. We loaded the truck with the "borrowed" blades, I signed the paperwork "Smith," and headed back to Fatima. We immediately replaced our helicopter blades, and they flew back to the front line. Eventually, it was discovered what Smith had "borrowed" the blades, and I was advised not to do that again.

The critical nature of the blades for the Marine helicopters kept the incident a tongue-in-cheek warning. While on Fatima Air Base, I also traveled from base to base as part of a records inspection team.

Although my permanent duty station was Fatima Air Station, I received orders for three months of temporary duty in Vietnam. While there, I served in my basic MOS. I flew as a gunner in the door of helicopters, as well as, repair and maintenance. I returned to Okinawa after the 3-month temporary duty.

My duty in Okinawa ended in December 1970, and I returned to San Diego, California, to be discharged from the Marine Corps. As with all enlistees, there is always a two-year inactive reserve service period during which the soldier could be called back to duty. I was not called back during these two years, and so my four-year military commitment ended.

I would like to end this narrative by relating to one project several other Marines and I were involved in. A representative from the Bell Helicopter, who was a native Japanese company, was in Okinawa. He knew of a local need for an orphanage in the town next to the air base. Our group found washers, dryers, beds, and other needed furniture on base and in the trash. We repaired it all, and after the Bell representative found a suitable building, the orphanage was set up and began caring for kids. The first group was approximately 125 children.