

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



JOHN W. CLARK
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
COLONEL (O-5)
JUNE 5, 1962 – JANUARY 1, 1992



WOUNDED IN ACTION
as
PURPLE HEART PATRIOT
OCTOBER 2025

Honoring His Service and Sacrifice
Sponsored by: **Columbian Chapter, NSDAR**



Colonel John W. Clark was born in Columbia, Missouri, and graduated from high school in 1957. He married in 1962 and entered the Air Force shortly after his graduation from the University of Missouri in Mechanical Engineering.

Clark graduated from Undergraduate Pilot Training and was awarded his pilot wings at Reese AFB, Texas, in August 1963. He next flew C-131 Samaritan transports with the 12th AeroMedical Transport Squadron at McGuire Air Force Base (AFB), New Jersey, from October 1963 to June 1965. Clark then completed RF-4C

Phantom II Combat Crew Training and served at Royal Air Force (RAF) Alconbury, England, from June 1965 to October 1966. He began flying combat missions in Southeast Asia with the 11th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron at Udorn Royal Thai AFB, Thailand, in October 1966.

Clark flew more than 60 missions over North Vietnam when he was downed by anti-aircraft fire on March 12, 1967. He was forced to eject over North Vietnam and was immediately captured by swarms of militia and taken as a Prisoner of War (POW).

At home, Clark was listed as missing in action and presumed dead. It was not until his first letter arrived three and a half years later that his family learned he had survived and was a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam.

North Vietnam tried to convince the world that POWs were treated humanely, but they faced immense hardships. In the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" as a P.O.W. during the Vietnam War, he endured starvation, a deadly sickness, and mental and physical torture at the hands of the enemy. Clark used everything he had to survive—tapping into his courage, determination, faith, and honor.

After spending 2,170 days in captivity, he was released during Operation Homecoming on February 18, 1973. He recovered from his injuries at the USAF Medical Center at Scott AFB, Illinois, and then went back to college through an Air Force Institute of Technology assignment

at the University of Missouri-Columbia in October 1973. Clark then served as an instructor pilot at Vance AFB, Oklahoma, before leaving active duty on June 10, 1977. He spent time in the Missouri Air National Guard after joining the Air Force Reserve. He retired from the Air Force on January 12, 1992, as a Colonel in the Air Force. He earned the Silver Star, two Legions of Merit, two Purple Hearts, the Distinguished Flying Cross, six Air Medals, as well as other medals and honors. Today, Clark shares his story of perseverance at presentations for civilians and service members alike to support the community and the continuation of our freedoms. He has been active in the American Ex-Prisoners of War organization.

Clark has written a book about his experiences. John speaks to numerous organizations around the State and country about his experiences.

(Material from [Colonel John Clark - Boone County Historical Society](#). Accessed 3/4/2025). For further service background, see the *Columbia Daily Tribune*. Sept 14, 2012. [Ex-POW devotes his life to service](#), and [Clark recounts horrors of 'Hanoi Hilton' at 12th Military Recognition Day - CC Connected](#)

From Colonel Clark's book, *The Eagle Hunts*, pages 253 to 255.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Colonel John W. Clark, USAF (Ret.), spoke to the International Club of Atlanta, on Feb 6, 2021 and then, as shown above, spoke to the Atlant Council on International Relations on Feb 7, 2019 in Atlanta, Georgia.

John W. Clark is a retired Professional Engineer and Colonel in the United States Air Force, retiring from the Missouri Air National Guard as commander of a "highly trained and very selective, engineering, Command staff AugmentationFlight.

He graduated from the University of Missouri's College of Engineering and Air Force ROTC in 1962 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and as a **Distinguished Military**

Graduate and was awarded a **Regular Air Force commission**, which only highly esteemed and Air Force Academy graduates were privileged to receive.

As a **Distinguished Flying Graduate** from Air Force pilot training, he began flying the C-131 for Aeromedical Evacuation missions and then, after Combat Crew Training in the RF-4C Phantom II, flew tactical reconnaissance missions in Europe.

After flying approximately 80 combat reconnaissance missions over Vietnam, on one of which he was awarded the **Distinguished Flying Cross**, he was shot down, captured, and released six years later.

He then attended the University of Missouri in Columbia, where he obtained a **Master of Business Administration degree**. After returning to the cockpit and earning a **Certificate of Graduation as an Instructor Pilot**, he trained student pilots in the T-38 while holding the positions of Flight Commander and Chief of Academics.

In 1979 he joined the 131st Tactical Fighter Wing of the Missouri Air National Guard as a War Plans and Command and Control Specialist. He progressed through the ranks, holding the positions of Commander of the 131st Civil Engineering Squadron, Missouri State Director of Operations for Air, and State Plans and Programs Officer. After being **promoted to Colonel**, he assumed Command of the **231st Civil Engineering Flight** and was awarded his **2nd Legion of Merit**.

Colonel Clark retired as the Water Engineer from the City of Columbia, MO, where both his wife, Anne, and he now live.

Colonel Clark is a lifetime member of the University of Missouri's Alumni Association and continues his contribution to the University of Missouri and the community through his ability to speak of his experiences and how those lessons can impact the lives of our youth. He is a 2021 recipient of the prestigious University of Missouri Faculty Alumni Award, which was presented to him by University President Mun Choi.

Colonel Clark has served as treasurer of both the **Mayor's Task Force and the Committee of the Friends of the USS Columbia** fast attack nuclear submarine, of which he and his wife, Anne, were appointed Co-Chair of the original committee by the Columbia, MO, Mayor in 1994.

Having been active in the national organization of The American Ex-Prisoners of War, he has held the positions of **Missouri State Department Commander and the National Director of the North Central Region**.

He has served on the **Board of Advisors of the Jefferson Barracks Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Museum** from its inception until April of 2021.

He continues as a member of **Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler's Military Advisory Council** and has spoken to her youth Leadership Summit.

"For the sacrifice made for freedom," he has twice been awarded the **Silver Star Banner by the Silver Star Families of America**.

Colonel Clark also holds an **Outstanding Graduate Diploma** from the National Management Security Course of the **National Defense University in Washington, D.C.**

His military decorations and awards include, among others, the **Silver Star, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Purple Hearts, the Meritorious Service Medal, six Air Medals, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Prisoner of War Medal, and two Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Crosses**.