

# MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



*Proudly Honors*  
**PATRIOT OF THE MONTH**  
**OCTOBER 2025**  
**JOE RANDALL PAUL**  
**UNITED STATES ARMY**  
**JULY 31, 1967 – JULY 30, 1970**  
*Sponsored by: Clark County Chapter, NSDAR*



Joe Randall Paul was born November 22, 1949, in Marietta, Illinois. His mother was a homemaker and occasionally worked at the post office. His dad worked on coal barges on the Illinois River.

Joe grew up with his brother, Michael, who was only one year older than he. Living on the Spoon River amongst many of their father's 13 siblings and paternal grandmother, Gramma Rosie. Joe was called Randy at the time, so he wouldn't be confused with his uncle Joe. The boys enjoyed frogging and hand fishing on their own and with cousins. President Kennedy was assassinated on his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. Joe was in the filling station next to the school buying his lunch of a candy bar and soda when he heard the news. In school, Joe participated in football, baseball, and track. While in his teens, Joe would make the trek to his Uncle Lee's farm outside of Wyaconda to help for the summers. He graduated from high school with his brother in Cuba, Illinois, in 1967.

Immediately after graduation, Joe entered the Army - his dad had to sign for him to join since he was under 18. After Basic Training at Fort Leonard Wood, then Advanced Infantry Training (AIT) at Fort Gordon, Georgia, Joe ended up in Jump School at Fort Benning with his brother, Michael.

Then Joe received orders to go to Vietnam.

He spent one year in Vietnam, where he was an Infantry Paratrooper. Joe said there were many things you had to deal with: leaches, mosquitoes, the daily malaria pills, and jungle rot. When you first got there, you would go through four canteens of water, but eventually programmed your body to be able to get through a hot day with just one – and the rain collected off your poncho was better than any other water available there. He hated snipers and land mines the most.

Joe spent most of his time in Vietnam in the central highland mountains, where it got cold at night, thus his love of the camouflage blanket that had been issued. The platoon would be on the front for 25-30 days to do search and destroy recon, then cycle to the back to the rear for three to four days.

Joe had a Kodak Instamatic 104 and would send home film to be developed when he got to the rear, but a lot of it got wet and wouldn't develop. He still has several photo albums from his tour.

Joe said the highlight of his time in Southeast Asia was taking leave in Bangkok, Thailand. "There was so much going on... motorcycles everywhere on the wrong side of the road, and the beer was 12% alcohol." While there, he purchased a ceremonial sword for his dad – but had to have

the hotel send it directly home because he couldn't take it back to Vietnam. I was delightfully surprised when it actually made it back to the States with no issue.

Joe considered extending his time in Vietnam for a one-year "rear job" to help keep Michael from Vietnam. But Michael had already reenlisted for six years.

Joe came home to the States in March of 1969, while Michael was transferred from Germany to Vietnam. Michael was eventually discharged after receiving grenade shrapnel in Vietnam and died at 53 due to a brain tumor.

Joe then served at Fort Leonard Wood as a Drill Instructor for the remainder of his term of service. He said focusing on teaching the new boys how "not to get killed" helped him cope.

Joe earned several awards before being discharged from the Army in July 1970, including: National Defense Service Medal, Drill Instructor Badge, Parachute Badge, Vietnam Service Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star for Meritorious Service, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Bronze Star for Valor, Expert Badge with Rifle, and Overseas bars.

He moved to the Wyconda area in 1973.

When asked about his civilian life, Joe replied, "If you name it, I've done it!" Some of his jobs included working at a fertilizer plant for 18 years, digging graves for 16 years, plumbing, trenching and backhoe, mowing cemeteries, and enjoying slow-pitch softball in his downtime.

Along the way, he has accumulated three children, six grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren.

A typical day now includes coffee uptown before going home to "putter around", split wood, mow the yard, and occasionally help his grandson with plumbing jobs. Joe enjoys watching the Cardinals and spending time at his cabin on the river.

He said the best advice ever given to him was to believe in our Constitution. That our forefathers knew that they were doing, and if we get away from that, it will be a bad deal. He believes we, as a nation, are starting to lose ethics and respect in our country. "When you lose respect, you lose control. With no respect, you are due for a dictatorship...When you are 17, you don't think of that. I was Young and gung-ho, didn't know better." But he said perspective changes over the years and is proud of his service and probably still would have joined because "I'm a Patriot".