

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



Proudly Honors
**PATRIOT OF THE MONTH
MAY 2026**

JOSEPH ERNST, JR.
UNITED STATES ARMY
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3 (CW3)
APRIL 14, 1967 – SEPTEMBER 30, 1987

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White Alloe Chapter, NSDAR



Joseph Ernst, Jr. was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, to Joseph C. Ernst, Sr., a Marine who served in the South Pacific during WWII and had a career as a U.S. Customs Agent, and Darice L. Ernst, a waitress.

Joe's sister did not serve in the military, but his brothers did; Steve served in the U.S. Army in South Korea, and Pat served as a Major in the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations (O.S.I.).

Joe worked a variety of jobs as a young man, including dishwasher at the coffee shop where his mom worked, grocery store bag boy, hardware store attendant, and small truck driver.

Joe was not married and was looking to leave home. He investigated the Peace Corps and French Foreign Legion before enlisting in the United States Army.

He went back and forth between the Army and the Marines, finally deciding on the Army because they offered a more rapid opportunity for advancement, and at this point, he was looking to have a career in the Army.

His initial point of entry was Oakland, California, and then to basic training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, for eight weeks. From Fort Polk, he went to Fort Gordon, Georgia, for eight weeks for Military Police (MP) school, having wanted to be a Military Police. His class consisted of approximately 120 men who were all going to be sent to Germany. Joe wanted to go to Vietnam. He was sent to Okinawa for six weeks to attend the MP Sentry Dog School. The dogs (German Shepards) were trained to kill everyone except their handler.

From Okinawa, he went to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, then on to Saigon with the dogs in crates on the back of a truck and their handlers sitting on top of the crates. They were unarmed and vulnerable. They rode to Long Binh military post, where he joined the 212th MP Dog Company, 18th Military Police Brigade.

Joe's job was to walk the perimeter with his dog, King. He worked the perimeter of the largest ammo dump, which was Long Binh. The Army did not give them guns while they were not walking the perimeter. Firearms were locked up and monitored closely. Joe decided he wanted a different assignment. He was assigned to Nha Trang, specifically a mountain above Nha Trang where they had short-range Hawk missiles.

Only one strand of razor wire separated him from the enemy. He lived on the mountain (all dog handlers did), there were no lights on the perimeter, and he lived on potatoes and eggs.

Tet is the U.S. version of our New Year for Vietnam. In late January 1968, the troops started to get hit with a variety of things, including mortar shells. At first, they thought this was part of the Tet celebration. They found in short order that this was a planned and widespread attack by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. As a result, the Army changed its stance on giving guns to the troops. Each member was given a weapon to carry 24/7.

Joe needed a break from the Army, leaving with the rank of Sergeant, he went to try law enforcement in Los Angeles, California. He realized quickly the Police Department wasn't for him, and he went back to the Army, serving in Alaska as a town patrol with the air police. He then became an MP investigator in Anchorage and served as a Criminal Investigation Division (CID) officer in Alaska. Next, he was assigned to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, as a Warrant Officer One, then Chief of the Drug Suppression Team. He was picked to go to the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) training for 10 weeks in Washington, D.C. He went to Germany as a Special Agent in Charge in Schweinfurt, where he handled felony investigations. He then went to the CID headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia, reviewing criminal investigations. He then became Chief of the Accreditation Division. He was selected for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) National Academy and trained for 10 weeks. He spent six months at Fort Rucker, Alabama, taking the Warrant Officer Senior Course. From Alabama to Fort Bliss, Texas, where he served as the Operations Officer. His last assignment was at Fort Hunter located in Liggett, California.

His military training credentials helped him in civilian life. He wrote security policy and procedure for the B2 bomber program, was a probation patrol officer, taught inmates at the Leavenworth and Lansing penitentiaries, was an Adjunct Professor at Park University, where he obtained degrees in Criminal Justice Administration and Management, his master's was obtained from Webster University, and finally retired from the Social Security Office.

The CID motto is "Do What Has to be Done." With time and experience, he appreciated this motto more and would like to pass on that, regardless of rank or wealth; no one is above the law.