

SMALL TOWN NEWS

Obituary

Floyd Robert "Red" Porterfield

By Arthur Graphic-Clarion staff

Arthur Graphic-Clarion of Arthur, Illinois

On the evening of September 30, 2013, Red Porterfield passed away at Baptist Health Medical Center in Heber Springs, Arkansas. Red was 95 years old.

Red was born in Quay, Oklahoma, on November 13, 1917. He was the third child and first son of Nellie M. and Paul R. Porterfield. Red attended Oilton High School in Oilton, Oklahoma, and graduated from Arthur Township High School in Arthur in 1934.

At age 18 Red joined the U.S. Navy and served aboard the battleship USS Mississippi for three years. Red then attended Submarine School at New London, Connecticut, and served on the submarine USS Narwhal for nearly two years.

In September of 1941, Red joined the submarine USS Nautilus where he served until December of 1944. During that time Red completed 13 successful submarine war patrols.

During the Battle of Midway on June 4, 1942, the Nautilus relentlessly pursued a group of enemy ships. The ships, aware of the presence of the Nautilus, subjected it to bombing and brutal depth charge attacks on multiple occasions throughout the day. The Nautilus did not relent, creating a significant disturbance to the ships' mission and ending in the sinking of an escaping enemy aircraft carrier.

Red was awarded the Silver Star Medal in recognition of his outstanding heroism during a successful night surface attack in enemy coastal waters in September 1942.

On December 31, 1942, the Nautilus was sent on a rescue mission to Bougainville Island in the North Solomons. The islands were under enemy occupation and non-native residents including clergy were in great danger and forced into hiding. The Nautilus surfaced several miles off shore in the dark of night. A small launch towing a rubber boat was sent to the beach. Red was one of three crew members that manned the rescue launch. The effort was not without incident but was ultimately successful rescuing 29 residents including 14 nuns. Red was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for outstanding heroism for his role in the successful rescue.

The crew of the Nautilus received the Presidential Unit Citation for outstanding service during its war patrols.

After leaving the Nautilus, Red served on the USS S-32 and USS Blower.

Red attended the University of Idaho from August 1947 to June 1949 earning a degree in Naval Science and then attended General Line School from July 1949 to May 1950 as a student officer.

Red then served on the USS Sea Fox and was the Executive Officer on the USS Bluegill and USS Diodon. In November of 1953, Red became the commanding officer of the USS Redfish. Red served as executive officer of the USS Muliphen and participated in the Lebanese landing during July 1958. He was promoted to Commander in May 1958 and became the commanding officer of the USS Allen M. Sumner in October 1959.

Red entered the Navy in January of 1936 as a Seaman 2nd Class and retired from the Navy in December 1965 as a Commander.

Red's decorations include Silver Star with 1 star, Bronze Star, Navy and Marine Corps Medal, Commendation Ribbon with 2 stars, and the Presidential Unit Citation with 1 star. His campaign and service medals include Good Conduct Medal, American Defense, American Campaign, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign with 7 stars, World War II Victory, Submarine Combat Insignia with 12 stars.

After leaving the Navy, Red attended San Diego State University and earned a degree in accounting. Red then went on to teach accounting at the San Diego College of Business, work as the auditor/controller of the Pomerado County Water District, and accounting manager for the City of Vista. During this time Red lived in Poway and then in Valley Center.

Red moved from Valley Center to Flagstaff, Arizona, where he lived for several years. He then moved to the Atlanta, Georgia, area to assist in setting up the accounting system for a new company. Once that was complete, he moved to Heber Springs, Arkansas, in 2007 where, soon after arriving, Red purchased and renovated the Anderson House Inn along with his friend and companion LaVonne Sten-berg. I Red was honest, direct and loved to have a good laugh. Those that spent time with him know the grin he would get when the humor of life presented itself.

He led by example and allowed those that he led to take responsibility for their tasks and develop into leaders as well. Above all, Red loved to learn. He never stopped educating himself, and he used his knowledge to serve his country and those around him.

Red was preceded in death by his father, Paul Porterfield; mother, Nellie Rapsilber; sister, Juani-ta Lenover; and wife, Noma Porterfield.

Red is survived by his sister Lillian Fox.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on November 13 at the American Legion Saxton-Willis Post 64. 49 Park Road, Heber Springs, Arkansas. Memorials may be made to the charity of your choice.

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