



**The Tipton County Veterans Council and the Tipton County
Museum, Veterans Memorial and Nature Center
Veteran of the Month for August 2017**

Homer Thurl Ray

Retired Aviation Structural Mechanic – Hydraulics Chief Petty Officer Homer Thurl Ray was born on Dec. 5, 1939 at Portales, Roosevelt County, New Mexico, the first child of Harris T. and Annie Louise Ray. He joined the U. S. Navy on Jan. 29, 1959 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and went to Boot Camp in San Diego, Calif. His first duty station was Patrol Squadron 22 (VP-22), homeported at Barbers Point, Hawaii, but soon deployed to Kodiak, Alaska with the squadron. He was sent to Aviation Structural Mechanics, Hydraulics “A” School at NATTC Memphis where he graduated as honor-man with a GPA of 92.6. On his way to Utility Squadron 8 (VU-8), he spent 60 days at the receiving station in Charleston, S.C., because the Caribbean was spawning one hurricane after another. He was assigned to the Drone Department at VU-8, where, in addition to the normal duties of a Structural Mechanic, he learned to pack parachutes for the KDA and Q2C drones. His next stop was back to NATTC Memphis for Class “B” school where he graduated as honor-man with a GPA of 89.6 before being transferred to the Pacific Missile Range Calif. In the spring of 1965, he was honored as the Sailor of the Quarter for the Pacific Missile Range. In 1967, he was attached to Attack Squadron 196 (VA-196) homeported in Whidbey Island, Wa. During a three year cycle of operations, VA -196 spent 27 months aboard the USS Constellation (CVA-64) and USS Ranger (CV-61), most of which was deployed as a part of Task Force 77 in the Tonkin Gulf, and affectionately known as the Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club. In September of 1970, he graduated as honor man from the Instructor Training Course NATTC Memphis where he taught at the Airman Preparation Course, AMH “A” School and AMH “B” schools. In March 1975, he reported aboard the USS John F Kennedy (CV-67) where he served in the Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department, Mechanical Division, as AIMD IM2 Division Chief. On March 28, 1978, HT retired from the U. S. Navy, and returned to Memphis with sixty days leave in his “pocket,” thinking that he would just kick back and enjoy a vacation. In less than a week, he was called by the State Technical Institute at Memphis, where the chairman of The Industrial Maintenance Department was looking for an instructor in hydraulics and pneumatics. After 26 years of teaching, he retired as the Engineering Division Chairman and he is still trying to work in the 60-day vacation which was his original plan in 1978.

HT Ray is a Life member of the Tipton County Veterans Council, VFW Post 4840, Volunteer Chapter 414 National Sojourners, Dunham Lodge 150, Tipton Lodge 226 and The Scottish Rite of Free Masonry. He has been a volunteer for several years at the Tipton County Museum. He was nominated for Veteran of the Month by Henry Leslie Billings. HT lives with his dog Petey in Brighton.