



**Tipton County Museum  
Veterans Memorial & Nature Center  
Veteran of the Month November 2018**

**James Russell Clark**

Born on July 22, 1949 in Tipton County, James Russell Clark received his draft notice on February 9, 1968, as he was preparing for high school graduation. Not only did he receive his draft notice that day, but his family also received notice that his older brother, Thedward, had been wounded and was listed as missing in action in Vietnam. Thankfully his brother was found and able to recover from his wounds. Thedward encouraged him not to join the Army; therefore James enlisted in the Marine Corps on February 12, 1968. After graduating from Munford High School on May 26, 1968, he arrived at Paris Island for basic training on June 9<sup>th</sup>. After basic training he volunteered for Vietnam; however, his request was denied as his brother was again serving in Vietnam, and the Department of Defense would not allow them both in a combat at the same time. Thedward served three tours in Vietnam and was wounded twice before being honorably discharged in 1976 after nine years of service. A few years later, he died the day before Thanksgiving due to complications from his injuries and exposure to the chemical Agent Orange. Had it not been for Thedward's service and desire to protect his little brother, James' life may have turned out very differently.

James was assigned to the Aviation Ordinance section of the Marine Corps and spent thirty years working on and teaching others about the operational procedures of various aircraft platforms: Cobra/Huey/Sea Knight (floating banana) helicopters, F-4/RF4B Phantoms, A-4 Skyhawk, EA6B Intruders, AV-8B Harrier, and C-130 Hercules. He attended several military schools and was a qualified Instructor. During his first 21 years in the Marine Corps, he rose from the lowest enlisted level of Private/E1 to the highest enlisted level of Master Gunnery Sergeant/E9. He was a well-known and respected Aviation Ordinance Chief. After serving 30 years of active duty, he retired on June 30, 1998. For his service to our country he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, 2 Navy Commendation Medals, Navy Achievement Medal, 8 Good Conduct Medals, National Defense Service Medal w/one star, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon w/one star, a Letter of Appreciation, and 2 Meritorious Masts. Retiring allowed him the opportunity to pursue his initial calling - the ministry. He entered the seminary in 2001; and in January 2007, he was ordained as an Original Free Will Baptist Minister. He served as a minister in various churches in North Carolina before he and his wife Mary Sue returned to Tipton County in 2015 to live on her family's farm, a 184-year family owned estate. James continues to serve as a lay minister locally under the direction of the West Tennessee Presbytery.

In 1971 James married the love of his life, Mary Sue Clifton; and she still puts up with him 47 years later. God blessed them with two beautiful daughters, Tracy Dianne Clark Sanderson (Kevin) and Jennifer Renae Clark Rahilly (Christopher). Tracy owns a small digital marketing business, and Jennifer is a traveling trauma nurse. James and Mary Sue also have two beautiful grandchildren, Samuel (14) and Ellie Gray (6). James was nominated by August 2018 Veteran of the Month, Charles McCorkle.