



## The Tipton County Veterans Council and the Tipton County Museum, Veterans Memorial and Nature Center

### Veteran of the Month for November, 2017

#### Jerry Eugene Beckley

Born on Christmas Eve 1933 in Bakersfield, California, Jerry was a child of the depression, spending his youth in Texas as well as California. On July 21, 1948, a tender but mature 14 year old Jerry enlisted in the U.S. Army in Fresno, California. His parents helped fudge his records so they would have one less mouth to feed.

Discharged from the Army on May 12, 1951, he enlisted in the Navy on October 4 as a Gunner's Mate. In 1954 he qualified in fleet snorkel submarines as one of the last Gunner's Mates to be accepted into the Submarine Service. He served onboard USS PERCH (ASSP-313) and at Guided Missile Unit #90. After his conversion to Nuclear Weaponsman in 1959, he served onboard USS GRAYBACK (SSG-574), USS BARBERO (SSG-317), and USS HALIBUT (SSG(N)-587). While onboard GRAYBACK, he became part of the "Two-Man-Rule", the two people who would arm nuclear weapons should the unthinkable happen. Jerry was deployed on GRAYBACK in October 1962 when he was called to the Wardroom and informed that DEFCON had changed from the normal DEFCON 5 to DEFCON 3 and that he was to open the sealed Emergency War Orders. In the last few years, documents that detail how close we came to the unthinkable in October 1962 have begun to be declassified. It was men like Jerry who saw us precariously perched on the brink of a devastating war that was, thankfully, avoided; and who carried on, never able to share the knowledge of how close we really were to wiping out life as we know it.

Upon appointment to Warrant Officer, he served as Special Weapons Officer aboard USS HUNLEY (AS-31) and as Weapons and Diving Officer at Norfolk Naval Shipyard. With an eye to the future, he pursued his education, earning an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice from Palmer College in 1973, a Bachelor of Science Degree from Baptist College in Charleston in 1974, and a Master of Arts Degree from Central Michigan University in 1976.

Jerry earned numerous medals during his career including the Silver Star, Purple Heart, Navy "E" Ribbon, Navy Good Conduct Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and Korea Service Medal.

After retiring from a fruitful Naval career in 1978, he served twenty years in Federal Civil Service at the Polaris Missile Facility, retiring as a GS-14 from the Submarine Launched TOMAHAWK Cruise Missile Project Office. He taught at various colleges from Washington, D.C., to Virginia, to Tennessee. He has a long history of volunteering and giving back through the Shriners, Masons, Wounded Warrior Project in San Antonio, and his church. He is the patriarch to 9 children, 9 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren. Jerry's family understands service over self. Not only Jerry, but also his father, 3 sons, and one grandson have signed the check promising to give all - up to and including their lives - to protect and serve our country. Jerry and his wife Connie live in Munford. He was nominated for Veteran of the Month by Sean Hamilton.