



**Jack
Thomasson**
Navy

Jack Thomasson

Oct 27, 1921 - Oct 1, 1969

BIRTHPLACE: Sheridan, Wyoming

SOLDIER DETAILS

HIGHEST RANK: Lt. (j.g.)

DIVISION: Navy, NSTA, Coco Solo, Canal Zone

THEATER OF OPERATION: Other

SERVED: Jan 29, 1942 - Feb 18, 1948

HONORED BY: Barbara Joyce Splichal

BIOGRAPHY

Jack Russell Thomasson was born on October 27, 1921 in Sheridan, Wyoming to Russell and Thelma (Purdy) Thomasson. The family moved to Lake Wells, Florida, soon after and then when he was eight moved again to Belleville, Kansas. There he lived through high school years, graduating from Belleville High School in 1939. He attended Kansas State College in Manhattan, Kansas; graduating in May of 1943 with a degree in Journalism. After Pearl Harbor, a lot of young men were eager to 'do something for their country'. Jack Russell and his father, Russell, went to Kansas City where Jack Russell enlisted. His father also tried to enlist, but they told him 'you have had your war, Sir, go home'. Since Jack Russell had only three semesters at Kansas State College to complete his degree, the Navy deferred his going on active duty until after he graduated in May of 1943. Following graduation, he left on Memorial weekend for Notre Dame University for the Navy Officer Candidate School; earning his commission as an Ensign on September 22, 1943. He was one of the many known as a '90 day wonder' during the war, for earning their officer commissioning so quickly. After his commissioning, he was assigned to a new ship and sailed on her 'maiden' voyage down the Mississippi. This was a ship that was built near Chicago. They sailed to the Gulf of Mexico, around to the Atlantic and to Norfolk, Virginia. While in Virginia, he attended the USN Mine Warfare School in Yorktown, Virginia. He would later obtain the rank of LTJG. His war tours included working the Caribbean side of the Panama Canal Zone on a mine sweeper and working the ocean area between Japan and China on a mine sweeper. While in the Caribbean, his ship experienced a mine becoming entangled in their gear as they were ready to go into port. Jack Russell obtained a piece of that mine and carried it with him through the remainder of the war. Jack Russell was in Panama until the Japanese surrendered. Then he was sent to the Pacific and stationed in Japan. While there the ship he was assigned to did mine sweeping in the Sea of Japan. Because of his Journalism degree, he was the Communications Officer on each ship. It was while on the Sea of Japan that one day he contacted another minesweeper (because of their position on their RADAR). He told them to 'get out

of there, you are in 'live' waters.' In seconds that ship was blown up. After this incident, the Japanese were ordered to sweep for the mines. His last assignment was in New Orleans, Louisiana. The various vessels and stations were as follows - USS Earle DMS-42; USS Elusive AM-225; USS YMS66, Mine Squadron Staff; USS CATBIRD, Mine Squadron Staff; and NSTA, Coco Solo, Canal Zone. Jack Russell earned the following medals - World War II Victory Medal, American Area Campaign Medal and the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal with one Star. While on Terminal Leave, in April or May of 1948, Jack Russell sustained an injury to his neck during a swimming trip in Florida. He dislocated several neck vertebrae causing permanent paralysis. He was sent to the US Naval Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida and spent a year there. Later he was flown to St. Albans Naval Hospital on Long Island, New York. From there he was honorably discharged with full disability benefits and moved back to Belleville, Kansas to his parents' home. He remained there with nursing care for the remainder of his life; the next 20 years. He died in October of 1968.