



## Quentin McKee

Aug 13, 1927 - Nov 15, 2017

BIRTHPLACE: Abilene, KS

### SOLDIER DETAILS

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HIGHEST RANK: Seaman 1st Class

DIVISION: Navy, Naval Ammunition Depot

THEATER OF OPERATION: American

SERVED: Jul 1, 1945 - Jul 21, 1946

HONORED BY: Kim E. (McKee) Barbieri

### BIOGRAPHY

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Quentin Ray McKee was born in Abilene, Kansas, in 1927, the fourth child of Virgil and Esther Ehram McKee. Virgil, a veteran of World War I, supported his growing brood as a rural mail carrier and truck farmer. During the years of the Great Depression, Esther worked in a local mattress factory to help make ends meet. Quentin attended McKinley, Sand Springs, and Lincoln elementary schools, later graduating from Abilene High School. In May 1945, Quentin was a seventeen-year-old high school senior who, like so many of his classmates, enlisted in military service out of a sense of patriotic duty. Three older brothers were already serving. Olney, was a Navy Air Force pilot in the Pacific; Lewis was a ship's gunner in the Pacific; and Kay was a cadet in the Army Air Force in Waco, Texas. The youngest brother, Virgil, Jr., would later serve in the Korean War. Two young daughters, Val Jean and Patricia, completed the McKee family. Quentin went through basic training at the Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois. He recalls training exercises to extinguish shipboard fires and target practice along the waterfront of Lake Michigan. An ever-present danger was that the 20- and 40-millimeter guns might blow-up on the 4-5 sailors who manned them. At the conclusion of boot camp, Quentin's unit boarded a train, certain that they were destined for San Diego. Instead, they were transported to the Naval Ammunition Depot at Hastings, Nebraska. Hastings was a college town, and sailors were a welcomed addition at campus social events. In addition, USO-sponsored dances were held every Saturday night. In his spare time, Quentin honed the popular art of sketching pin-up girls. His fellow sailors admired his work and soon were commissioning works to hang in their offices and on their bulletin boards. From Hastings, it was a relatively quick train trip back home to Abilene. While stationed at the NAD, Quentin worked in the personnel office, keeping track of liberty leave, sick leave, weekend passes, and sailors who were AWOL. His last six months of service were in the records office. For his military service, Quentin received the World War II Victory Medal. Following his discharge, with the rank of Seaman 1st Class, Quentin enrolled at Kansas State University. Within the year, he left to study at the Kansas City Art Institute for two years. In 1949, he returned to Abilene to

join the family business, McKee Gardens, for the next twenty years. In 1952, Quentin married Mary Ellen Farr. Seven children were born over the next 13 years: Kim, Robin, Christie, Jill, Weston, Miles, and Molly. Quentin continued to pursue his passion for art through night classes offered by Kansas State University. His paintings were selected for a number of art showings, including those on campus. Today, Quentin lives in Salina, Kansas, and, at nearly 78 years of age, continues to work fulltime at his own landscaping business. When he isn't working, he does his best to keep up with eighteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.