

His service upheld a long family tradition

EDITOR'S NOTE: In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, Lawrence Township Memorial Committee, in cooperation with the Ledger, will feature a column each week during the anniversary year profiling a Lawrence resident.

John Potter Stockton III, was barely 17 years old when he left his studies at the Pennington School early in 1947 to join the U.S. Army Air Corps as a private. His rise through the ranks from private to colonel when he retired from the Army Reserve in 1947 was not coincidental. It was achieved by hard work, dedication, and consistent with a strong family tradition of over 200 years of loyal

VETERAN PROFILE

Nicholas Loveless

and distinguished service, both civil and military, to the United States. The exploits and accomplishments of the Stockton dynasty would fill volumes.

Jack was born in Battle Creek, Mich., on Feb. 18, 1930, when his father and grandfather attempted to establish a new business there. When the business did not meet their expectations, they returned to Trenton, and

Jack spent his youth in a castle-like dwelling known as the Ivy Tower on the corner of Greenwood Avenue and Hudson Street. He is ninth in direct lineal descent from Richard Stockton II, who purchased 5,500 acres of land from William Penn, which is now a large part of the Borough of Princeton. In 1701 he laid the foundation of what was to become Morven, home of future generations of Stocktons and governors of New Jersey. Richard II's grandson, Richard Stockton III, was a member of the Continental Congress and a New Jersey signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Jack's great great great grandfather, Commodore Robert Field "Fighting Bob" Stockton, and grandson of "The Signer" had an outstanding military career that began when he entered the U.S. Navy as a midshipman in 1811. He served in the war of 1812 and distinguished himself in the war with the Barbary Pirates at Tripoli in 1815. In 1821 he commanded an expedition to Africa and established the first government in what was to become Liberia. In 1846-47 he fought with Fremont and Kearney in the war with Mexico as his "horse marines" conquered California. After his retirement he then served as a U.S. Senator. Jack's grandfather, a veteran of World War I, was wounded in France and was later recalled in World War II to command the military port of Glasgow, Scotland. His father also served with the 44th Infantry Division in World War II, and during the Korean War commanded the aerial port of Ashia in Japan.

"My grades were suffering at the Pennington School in 1946," Jack recalls, "and my father told me it was time to enter the service and straighten out. He took me to the recruiting office in Trenton and convinced the recruiter to take this under-aged student as a new recruit, and it was my father, then a captain, who swore me

in. After basic and electrical lineman technical school, I was assigned to the Army Aviation engineers, and sent to Iwo Jima for the next 18 months. The war had been over for two years and there were still large quantities of equipment there, as it had been a staging area for the invasion of Japan. One of our jobs was to construct a high voltage power line around the island. We were also assigned to remove the bodies of 5,000 marines that were killed and buried at Iwo, and send their remains back to the States. One of them was John Basilone, who had received the Medal of Honor at Guadalcanal and was later killed in action at Iwo.

"On one occasion one of our trucks picked up two apparent civilians we thought were Filipino laborers, but it turned out they were Japanese soldiers that had survived the 1945 battle and had hidden out in caves since then. They found an old Life magazine and saw General MacArthur's picture with Emperor Hirohito, and knew the war must have been over, but they didn't know who won. They decided to give themselves up and were returned to Japan shortly afterward. Ironically, one of them was from Nagasaki.

"Another of my jobs was to occasionally fly as a crewman on a B-17 air-sea rescue plane as a scanner, and to man one of the two .50 calibre machine guns in the waist positions. My final job was to erect an aircraft warning light tower on top of Mount Suribachi."

The Army Air Corps in the meantime became the U.S. Air Force, and Jack was returned to the U.S., trained as a remote control turret technician and assigned to the 370th Squadron of the 307th Bombardment Wing at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla. In addition to repairing electro-mechanical armament systems on the wing's B-29s, he was cross-trained as

