

John William Vessey

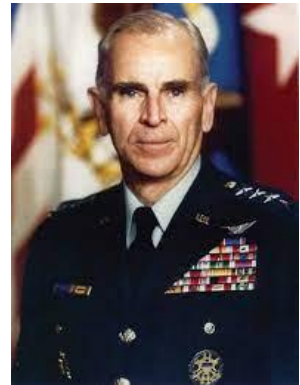
John Vessey was born on February 9, 1896 in Bloomington, Minnesota to William H Vessey (1862-1900) and Sarah Jane Kelly Vessey Goodrich (1866-1962). His father was a farmer and he died when John was just four years old. His mother then married John Goodrich. John enlisted in the National Army on April 9, 1917. He was assigned to Company C, 162nd Infantry, 41st Division. He trained at Camp Greene, North Carolina. He left for France on December 12, 1917 on the SS Susquehanna from Hoboken, New Jersey as a Private First Class, promotion received on November 10, 1917. He was promoted again to Corporal on February and to Sergeant in November of 1918. He returned home on June 10, 1919 on the USS Alaska from St Nazaire, France. He was released on June 30, 1919. He returned home and worked as a Depot Agent in Lakeville, Minnesota for the Minneapolis, Northfield and Southern Railway that became the Dan Patch Line for many years. Times were tough, per his son. My Dad did a variety of jobs to make ends meet from working on the Dan Patch Line, to cultivating strawberries grown on the family farm to selling gravestones. When the Great Depression hit he was transferred to Minneapolis and worked as a train dispatcher. He married Katherine E Roche (1902-1990) and they had seven children.

The oldest, John William Vessey Jr that they called “Jack” served in WW2 where he enlisted in the Minnesota National Guard while still in high school. He lied about his age saying he was 18 when he was only 16 years old. He had already been working for several years by that time.

He worked on the Dan Patch Line in Lakeville for 21 cents an hour. He also had a summer job where he worked with a crew of bridge builders to rebuild the footings of the railroad bridge in Savage over the Minnesota River.

Following the war he graduated from the University of Maryland and received his Master’s degree from George Washington University. During his 46 year military career, he became a 4 Star General with the United States Army. He also served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Reagan Administration. He is the only person to ever reach every rank in the Army during his career. After he retired, Jack led the mission to Vietnam that resulted in the return of many of the remains of military members that had been listed as missing in action. In

1992, he was honored with the nation’s highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom. He also served on the commission that selected the design of the World War II memorial in Washington D.C.



John Senior died on August 8, 1942 when his son’s division was on its way by ship to join the war effort in North Africa at the age of 46.

Both John and his son “Jack” are buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minnesota.