



Seeley Genealogical Society

2015 Outstanding Volunteer Award

Presented to

James R. Seeley

**In recognition of your many years of voluntary
service given to Seeley Genealogical Society**

Cream Rises By Marshall Seelye

The potato farmer loaded his just dug crop loose in the wagon box. On the way to the market the wagon bumped and shook. As the wagon arrived at market, the largest and best were on top hiding the small ones on the bottom, hence, a good price for the load. “Cream always rises to the top” is another example of the best getting to the top.

Our honoree is an outstanding example of this truism (and I don’t mean that he was out standing behind the barn when brains and talent were passed out). Reared on a dairy farm, Jim was recognized for various abilities while he was in Canton High School in Canton, Pennsylvania, graduating in 1954. In 1955, during his first year at Mansfield State Teacher’s College, he received a nomination to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. He accepted the nomination, graduating in 1959 with the rank of Ensign, USN. His first assignment was on the destroyer, USS Haynsworth (DD 700), where he rose to the position of Chief Engineer. During his entire career his sea duty assignments were always on destroyers. Next came a succession of assignments, ships, and graduate schooling, including the ports of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Saigon, Vietnam; Norfolk, Virginia; and Pensacola, Florida. During his active duty years he was Executive Officer on two ships and Commanding Officer of the USS Robert A. Owens (DD 827). His tours ashore were all in research and development, where he was selected for major command as R&D Program Manager. Jim retired from the Navy with the rank of Captain in 1982.

He then formed a business in technical risk management, supporting several major Navy Program Managers. He finally retired at age sixty-five to spend time with his family and volunteer in various ways.

Married for twenty-three years, Jim (of course we are referring to Jim Seeley) has three children, five grandchildren, and one great-grandchild, the loves of his life. After all his years in the Navy, one would expect that he would have learned a basic rule that any raw recruit learns fast: “Never volunteer for anything.” But Jim has been a volunteer since his civilian retirement in 2002. He has volunteered in support of local organizations, played some golf, and, most important to SGS, became active in genealogy.

Jim was elected SGS Chief Genealogist in 1999 and President in 2001 in which position he served for six years. His major contributions to SGS include founding a tracking and numbering system for queries, managing a DNA project that firmly established that immigrants Robert and Obadiah Seeley were not closely related, structuring a filing system for the Seelye Research Center so that members can identify what is shelved there and how to find it, continuing research of old English records to help determine immigrant Obadiah Seeley’s ancestors, and implementing an initiative to document SGS. He planned reunions in Williamsburg, Virginia; Wethersfield, Connecticut; and Abilene, Kansas. Jim served on and chaired various SGS committees for many years. (On a personal note, I enjoyed serving on any committee chaired by Jim because of his mantra: start on time; stick to the subject; be recognized by the Chair; and one person speak at a time.)

Please recognize that SGS is a one hundred percent volunteer organization. Obviously, this includes everyone from someone serving on the smallest committee to the president. I can think of no one more deserving as most valued volunteer than Captain James R. Seeley, USN, Retired.