

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution Proudly Honors



Patriot of the Month

February 2021

William Shirah

United States Marine Corps

**Sponsored by:
Saint Charles
Chapter**



William Shirah entered the United States Marine Corps on December 5, 1977 at the age of 17. He served for ten years. He joined the Marines because his Dad was a Marine in WWII and had 7 assaults in the South Pacific. He had entered the delayed entry program in his Junior year of High School and was scheduled to go to boot camp in June 1978, however, with an attitude and a chip on his shoulder, he was expelled from school in October of 1977. After about a month his father told him that to either get a job or go into the service. He chose the Marines and his father signed the Waiver.

His boot camp was at Parris Island, SC in Platoon 1137 which was followed by 30 days at home where he worked as an assistant in Marine recruiting out of Panama City, FL. His first school was in Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD for small arms repair. His first duty stations were the Marine Airwing out of Futenma in Okinawa, Japan, Camp Pendleton, CA and Lejeune, NC. He was promoted to Sergeant in December of 1979.

In January of 1983 he deployed to the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit scheduled for amphibious operations in Beirut, Lebanon as part of a multi-national peace keeping force. His unit arrived right after the Embassy was blown up. Attacks from the residents grew from rock-throwing to sniping to shooting mortar rounds and rockets at them. The Battalion Landing Team Headquarters was blown up on Sunday October 23, 1983 with his unit providing support in a tent city about 100 meters from away.

During his career, Sergeant Shirah was offered support and encouragement by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, then-Vice President Bush and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. Shirah received advice from his father: "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, being courageous is what counts." Also, from his first NCOIC, GYSGT Elexo, "Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it."

Sergeant Shirah received two Good Conduct Medals, eight Meritorious Masts, one Naval Unit Commendation (NUC) while in Beirut, a Combat Action Ribbon, and an Expeditionary Medal. He is a lifetime member of Beirut Veterans Association.

After his Marine Corps service, William held positions in security and policing and it was his move to NE and employment in nuclear security, that he found his calling. He received certification while policing part-time and, later, worked for as a community college officer for ten years. In 1999 he began work for the Federal Reserve. He then went to the Veterans Affairs in February 2007 and continues to serve there today. He achieved the position of Chief in April 2011 in Topeka, KS. In October 2013 he became Chief of St. Louis as well as the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Chief of Midwest States. Today he is the VISN Chief of the Midwest.

Saint Charles Daughters are proud to honor and recognize William Shirah as Patriot of the Month for his patriotism and invaluable service to our great nation.