

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

March 2023



Jack Fortner

United States Air Force

Sponsored by:
Gayoso Chapter, NSDAR

Jack Fortner is being nominated for Patriot of the month. Jack enlisted at 18 years old after being influenced by servicemen who came to his Dads store in Steele, MO. They would ask him what he was going to do after high school and he said he wasn't sure. They told him he should enlist in the Air Force and that's what he did. He was also told to enlist as a boomer and that's what he did also. He entered the Air Force in 1978 and retired in 2004 as an E-7. He was given two air medals with Oakley clusters.



He trained at Castle Air Force Base and went to Flight School there in California. After graduating he went to McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, Kansas and was then assigned to Grand Forks in North Dakota for 3 years 2 months and 9 days. He had 1,000 flight hours he decided to put in for a new Air Force Tanker Ten. He did get that assignment and was transferred to March Air Force Base outside of Los Angeles where he spent 9 years until they closed the base and was moved to Sacramento to Travis Air Force Base. He retired from there and had 14,000 flight hours. During his military career he was the boom operator and refueled the planes. He was also the Cargo Loading Supervisor on the flight.

Mr. Fortner loved his time in the military and he said that for the longest time he never felt like it was a job. He said that "I would wake up and think where am I going today." In 1991 it all came to a halt after Saddam invaded Kuwait. He spent all his time going from California to the Middle East where he would spend two to four weeks at a time. He said that while in the Middle East he found it to be very stressful as they did not want them there. He actually participated in four different wars. The first war was in Kuwait. The second one was in 1995 when the Serbs were trying to annihilate the Croats in Bosnia. The third one was when 9/11 happened where he was put on various missions and put on Bush Alert. He went to Guam and was briefed by a commanding officer who was a brother of one of the American pilots that was overtaken and his plane crashed into our buildings. He said that it was a very scary time and stressful because you never knew where you would go or do. The fourth war was in Afghanistan.

His most interesting time was in January 1980 in Alaska where he would refuel a spy plane. He would fly to the north for 4.5 hours from Fairbanks. They had 1000 pounds of arctic gear on board in case you crashed. He was at that time at the top of the world! He said he's never been so cold!

The best advice he ever received was in high school from the servicemen he met at his Dad's store. Those were the Air Force men that told him to enlist and what to be.

In his civilian life he now works as a computer engineer.

His family life includes his wife, Leah, who he married in 2017. He also cares for his Aunt who lives close to him. He has children who live in other states that he cares about and tries to see them as often as he can.

He feels that being in the military is something that everyone should do after high school. One learns discipline and builds character. He said he saw a lot of lives transformed for the good in his time of serving. Jack follows the events of the world today and is a very patriotic citizen.