

# Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

April 2023



## Karen T. Shotwell

### United States Air Force

Sponsored by:  
Gilead Rupe Chapter, NSDAR

Karen T. Shotwell enlisted in the United States Air Force on March 25th, 1993, in Montgomery, Alabama. She worked as a communication/navigation mission systems specialist on several aircraft including KC10A, T-38, A-10, AC-130U and AC-130H. She also served in the senior leadership role of production supervisor for flightline operations.



Karen was stationed at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base (AFB) in North Carolina, Travis AFB in California, Osan AFB in South Korea and concluded her military career at Hurlburt Field near Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

During her twelve years of honorable service to our country, Karen received many awards and medals for her dedication and work ethic. Some of these include the Air Force Achievement Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters (OLC), NCO Professional Military Education Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal with 1 Star, Air Force Overseas Short Tour Ribbon, Air Force Training Ribbon, Air Force Longevity Service Award with 1 OLC, Air Force Expeditionary Service Ribbon and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. Two of these medals were earned while working in a combat zone.

After 9/11 Karen was deployed with the second wave of special operations personnel and was the production expediter for C-130s at various forward operating bases (FOBs). Her squadron, with her at the helm of aircraft readiness, set records for expended ammo and sorties flown over the Falluja conflict. She deployed to FOBs in Daharan, Masirah, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Of the many interesting things she experienced in the Air Force, one of Karen's fondest memories was participating in the September 1998 Operation Keiko Lift. Operation Keiko Lift moved a 10,000-pound killer whale from Oregon to Iceland.

Karen worked and thrived in a military career field that was dominated by men. In a given unit of approximately 300 Airman, there would only be 10 to 15 women. With a take-charge attitude and an indomitable will, she led flightline maintenance operations that produced combat sorties

and made sure US Marines on the ground in Falluja had the gunship support they needed to stay alive and capture the city. Karen's leadership saved lives.

How does an All-American girl from Alabama get to oversee millions of dollars' worth of aircraft and military personnel that save US lives while destroying our enemies? Well, if you ask Karen she'll tell you "Whatever the problem is just take it one step at a time. You just have to keep putting one foot in front of the other."

Today Karen is still putting one foot in front of the other as she works to sort out the invisible scars of war with therapeutic painting and art projects. She has two Pomeranians named King Julian and Rose Bud. She is a Wounded Warrior Project Alumni and is living her best life, one step at a time, here in Odessa, Missouri.