

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

April 2023



Kenneth Steele

United States Army

Sponsored by:
Prairie Chapter, NSDAR

In 1994, Ken was looking for structure and discipline. He knew he needed to do something different with his life. As fate would have it, his brother had left an Army recruiter card on the table. He grabbed the card and called them and enlisted in the United States Army shortly thereafter.



His basic training was in Fort Jackson, South Carolina and then on to Fort Eustis and Fort Story in Virginia for training as a cargo specialist. He worked in transportation, driving twenty-ton dump trucks in the combat engineer department. He then went to Fort Stewart, Georgia and served with the 92nd Engineering Battalion. From there, he was stationed at the U.S. Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, home to refugees from Haiti and Cuba seeking to enter the United States.

When you meet Ken, you immediately think basketball. After all, he is 6'5". He and his fellow soldiers enjoyed playing basketball with the refugees, including the children. He states he had the opportunity to meet many good people and enjoyed interacting with them. He adds there was a time when it became very hectic as the refugees were refused entry into the United States. There were riots and destruction of property during that time.

From Guantanamo Bay, he was "deployed" to Atlanta, Georgia to work in the 1996 Olympics. He drove many athletes and officials to ensure they reached their various venues safely. He met members of the Dream Team--Gary Payton, Grant Hill, David Robinson, as well as Lisa Leslie. Then it was on to Tennessee to build bridges and tear others down to move them to other locations. He was General honorably discharged at the rank of E-3 in April 1997.

During his service he earned the Marksmanship Medal, Driver's Medal (he drove 50,000 miles without an accident), the National Defense Medal, the Service Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal.

He states he never got into trouble while in Basic Training. Well, there was that one time. He and his buddy broke the drill sergeant's two-mile running record. From that point forward, when the drill sergeant saw them, he ordered them to do 20 pushups. Before long, the drill sergeant didn't have to issue an order. They knew what to do. Twenty pushups.

It's hard for Ken to identify the most interesting thing he did. After all, in Guantanamo Bay he had the opportunity to help people, in Tennessee who met so many people, and to be able to help with the 1996 Olympics--who could choose! Ken also enjoyed basic training and remains friends with many of those he met. He adds that many of the life skills needed were taught to him during this time. He enjoyed the things he had to learn, knowing it was not quick learning. It took time to understand. He learned everything had a reason. It helped him be the person he is today.

In his civilian life, Ken has worked in accounting and sales as well as working as a Dean of Students at a local university. He holds an associate degree in accounting and Bachelor's Degree in Advanced Ministry Leadership. His full-time job is with the American Association of Veterinary State Boards.

He and his wife are lead pastors over the church and, for the past five years, have participated with the organization Clergy Observing Public Education. They work within the local school districts to help meet their needs. This includes a virtual meeting at the beginning of each school year meeting with the administrators, celebrating them, and praying for them. In 2022, this included meeting with those throughout the state of Missouri.

The best piece of advice he received came from his wife—"be your authentic self. Don't try to be more than you are. People will love you just for that."

His best advice—don't give up on what you want. Put your heart and mind into it even when it gets hectic, or it seems you can't attain it. Push forward and keep your mind set, and you will. Don't lose sight of what you are trying to do. No matter how big the issue may seem—continue to push forward.

Ken and his wife Rhonda have been married for 24 years. Their close-knit family includes three children Danielle 24, Kendra 23, and Isaac 20. Along with their niece Kayla 28, they all live under the same roof!