

# Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

## Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

December 2023



## Maria E. Rutherford Polacek

United States Air Force, Navy and MO National Guard

Sponsored by:

Charity Stille Langstaff Chapter, NSDAR

Maria was well acquainted with Military life after growing up in a family with a long line of service. During her youthful years, the family lived in Okinawa and Ethiopia as they followed her military career father during his assignments.

Maria joined the United States Navy in October, 1968 after graduating from High School in McRae, Georgia. Her father was serving in Vietnam at the time she became part of the Navy forces. Her boot camp training was at Bainbridge Naval Station, Maryland. After 10 weeks of training, she was named Honor Woman of the Company. She spent an additional 6 weeks at Bainbridge becoming a Naval Personnelman.



She was then assigned to Training Squadron (VT-27) Twenty Seven in NAS Corpus Christie, Texas. Her duties were in support of Navy Pilot Training. The squadron included only nine women. While in Corpus Christie, Hurricane Cella did massive damage to the Naval Air Station in 1970. Maria lost everything due to the hurricane. Five days later, Maria was transferred to Alameda Naval Air Station in California located in the Bay Area of San Francisco. Alameda Naval Station was home port for the USS Enterprise (air craft carrier) and many more carriers that supported US Military Forces in the Vietnam War. She was honorably discharged in 1971 as a PN3 Petty Officer 3rd Class with the following Awards: National Defense Service Medal and Meritorious Unit Commendation for VT-27. Maria then enlisted In the US Air Force in November, 1971 for four years. First assignment was 62 Air Base Group, McCord AFB, Washington (Mobility Airlift Command) MAC. One of her duties at this assignment included notifying next of kin regarding MIA status, death, or serious injury to active duty service members. Maria was then assigned to Pope AFB, North Carolina, Shaw AFB, South Carolina, and RAF (Royal Air Force) Chicksands, United Kingdom. She worked with the American Embassy in London, England while at the Royal Air Force. Maria was honorably discharged in 1975.

After these years of service, Maria attended college on the GI Bill receiving a BS in Criminal Justice, married, and had one son. She then joined the Missouri Army National Guard in 1980. While in the National Guard, Maria participated in the following Special Assignments: Cuban Refugees; Governor Inauguration; Trainer for MOPRNG Military Academy; Participation in Drug eradication program at the Southern US border (Texas and California); Support of Road Building in Honduras and Panama. She then retired from the National Guard in June, 1994. Upon retirement, she received the following awards: Army Commendation Medal; Army Achievement Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster; Humanitarian Service Medal; National Defense Service Medal-Second Award; and MOANG Commendation Ribbon.

Maria then completed her Master in Education Guidance and Counseling becoming a Licensed Profession Counselor serving primarily children in need. Maria's husband is deceased. He was a veteran of the Navy (Vietnam War) and Missouri National Guard.

Charity Stille Langstaff is proud to nominate Maria as Patriot of the Month.