

# Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

## Proudly Honors

### Patriot of the Month

June 2024



## David "Ike" Isaacson

### United States Air Force

Sponsored by:  
Columbian Chapter, NSDAR

David Isaacson was born in Michigan to an Air Force mechanic father and a mother who was a schoolteacher. He was one of four boys who had each chosen to serve in a different branch of the military, but now it was the Vietnam era and his decision came down to having options of where he would be stationed. At first, he waited to be drafted, but then, on the advice of trusted family and friends, David enlisted in the Air Force, like his father. For some unknown reason, all the Isaacson fellows quickly became referred to as "Ike" when they did military service.



Like his father, David also became an airplane mechanic, working on fighter aircraft. Much like a surgeon who has an intricate operation where one slip of the scalpel could kill a patient, David's work inside the engine of a jet had to be precise; the lives of the pilots were in his hands and often his fingers. David remembers one particular 36-hour shift with one of his buddies. They were in South Korea in the winter, just the two of them and a plane, in the dark, relying on his ability to recognize what part of the plane's engine he was feeling.

The space inside the engine was tiny, allowing only a finger or two to locate what needed to be repaired or replaced. Missing by just a centimeter could cause a chain reaction of failures, and David was responsible for ensuring that did not occur.

Many years after his active-duty service, David returned to the military in the Air Force Reserves, where he was invaluable to the US yet again. He rose in the ranks in those years; he became the Command Chief of the Fighter Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, MO, and there he was more able to facilitate change. Respected by subordinates and superiors alike, he became a trusted advisor. He listened to young airmen, helped them through challenges, offered support and encouragement, gave them tools to cope with and navigate the twists and turns of military service. "They felt like they could talk to me," David said. The young guys knew he had been where they were and he hadn't forgotten that. The older guys knew that he had proven himself, both on and off the field. This put David in the unique position of knowing

what was going on in the heads of both groups and being able to bridge the gap between them. Much like his delicate maneuvers when working on an airplane engine, the gut knowledge of what, when, and how much to say was instinct, helping him to patiently find his way. He could speak to the young with understanding, and he could speak to the old with authority. This made it easier to propose change and to find better ways to be effective.

David became well-liked and essential, so much so that, when he retired from Whiteman AFB, the celebration was packed with hundreds of airmen who wanted to speak about him and celebrate with him. The event went on until well after midnight.

After his first stint in the military, David relocated to Macon, Missouri, where he had originally come just to visit a military buddy, but he liked the peaceful feeling of being in a small town in nature. Fortunately, he also met his wife, Lisa, a lifetime resident of Columbia, Missouri. He said in his retirement speech that "she is the most wonderful human being that I have ever encountered." That tribute was true then and it is now. Lisa stayed home alone each time he was deployed. After his military service ended, she remained home while David traveled the country to assist AF bases with upgrading systems and processes. In 2010, David retired from the traveling job, to be at home with Lisa, and to work for the USDA at the University of Missouri.

Over the years, they have traveled all over the world. They returned with artifacts, art, cultural relics, unique rarities, and rocks. Yes, rocks. Rock collecting started at a very young age, and later in life he was always bringing and sending rocks home. As they traveled together, they continued the tradition. Many of those rocks are now perfectly scattered in their front flower bed. Some of them look no different than what you might find on the Katy Trail; however, each rock has a story, a memory that David and Lisa alone share. Ask them about the red rock from Hell.

David's impact on the US Air Force and the men and women who serve will endure for decades. One of the sad ironies in David's amazing career is that his time in Iraq is the cause of his shortened life now, due to pancreatic cancer. Working for months in close proximity to the "burn pits" of Iraq caused a sickness that has ravaged his body. The chemicals from those pits spread poison in the air which then entered David's lungs every time he breathed. Its effects lay dormant for nearly two decades, but now he is one of thousands of casualties of that war. While the government finally acknowledges the danger and is taking steps to rectify some of the damage via The PACT Act, it is not going to help David. He is dying.

The legacy that David leaves behind is that he loves his country, and he is proud to have served her. He wants nothing more than to know that he was able to make some small contributions, to make things better. In his final moments, David wants to serve his country one more time by getting the message out that steps should be taken to prepare for the conditions, foreign and domestic, before sending military members to serve there. While it is too late for David and the thousands like him, we can work together to keep it from happening to others.

To see David's Farewell speech at his 2007 retirement, copy the link below and paste it in the address bar of a new browser window:

[youtu.be/s8FvEx3yLMQsi=GhPS\\_x8a7TwhZ6pz](https://youtu.be/s8FvEx3yLMQsi=GhPS_x8a7TwhZ6pz)

Chief Master Sergeant David Isaacson

**EDUCATION:**

1968 Basic Military Training (BMT), Lackland Air Force Base, Texas 1968 Advanced Individual Training (AIT), Chanute Air Force Base, Ill.

1991 USAF Non-Commissioned Officer Academy (Correspondence Program)

1994 Associate of Arts, Construction Technology, Community College of the Air Force 1996 USAF Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Academy (In-Residence)

2001 Bachelor of Arts History, Columbia College, Columbia, MO

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. August 1968-May 1970, Naha Air Base, Okinawa, Japan
2. May 1970 - December 1971, Hamilton AFB, CA.
3. October 1989 - February 2002, Whiteman AFB, MO.
4. February 2002 - December 2005, Whiteman AFB, MO.
5. January 2005-2007, Whiteman AFB, MO.

**MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:**

2004 Spirit of Tiger Award/Exercise Tiger Association 2004

1999 Chief Master Sergeant Award for Outstanding Performance 1999

1997 442nd Fighter Wing Quality Team of the Year Award 1997

1995 Non-Commissioned Officers Association Commendation Award 1995

1992 One of 12 Air Force Reserve Outstanding Airmen of the Year 1992

1991 First runner-up, Outstanding CDC Graduate in Air Force-wide competition 1991

1991 442nd Fighter Wing Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year 1991

Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters Air Force Commendation Medal

Air Force Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters National Defense Service Medal with two bronze stars Iraqi Campaign Medal

Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with bronze star Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal Korean Defense Service Medal

Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

**EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION:**

Master Sergeant September 1995 Senior Master Sergeant March 1998 Chief Master Sergeant October 2000