

# MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



*Proudly Honors*  
**PATRIOT OF THE MONTH  
OCTOBER 2025**

**VIRGINIA MAY COLE MAHAN**

**UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

**FEBRUARY 10, 1965 – FEBRUARY 19, 1969**

*Sponsored by: Louisiana Purchase Chapter, NSDAR*



Virginia May Cole Mahan graduated from California State University with a major in Speech. After teaching at a junior high school, Virgie aimed to join the military service. However, her interest in the Marines was delayed because they did not have the necessary facilities for females to complete the physical examination at that time. She then joined the Air Force, as she said, “to see the world, and they sent me to California.”

Virgie joined the Air Force out of patriotism, arriving at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, for basic training on February 10, 1965. As a second lieutenant, she completed the 90-day program.

Virgie then spent three years at McClellan Air Force Base in California as one of only two women. Despite being in the minority, she reported being

treated well and was able to ignore any animosity.

She smiled and said, 'I met a Lieutenant there and we quickly fell in love. Since married women could not serve as Air Force Officers at the time, he stayed in his career while I left after four years of service. Virgie, classified as a Vietnam Veteran, was not allowed in combat zones due to her gender. She served for a year as Public Affairs Officer with the 5th Air Force at Yokota Air Force Base, Japan, in support of the Vietnam War. While she admired Japanese culture, she observed that traditional gender roles were strong, and women faced workplace discrimination. Despite outranking the master sergeant, he respected her authority.

During her service in the Air Force, she conducted interviews with various individuals, including a Black pilot who had recently completed a flight. A newspaper reporter captured a photograph of them together; she keeps this photo in her room. The photographer apparently noted that both subjects represented groups less commonly seen in those roles at the time.

In May of 1968, Virgie received a promotion to Captain. She received an honorable discharge from Travis Air Force Base in California on February 19, 1969. Though she and her spouse hoped for many children, it did not happen. Using the G.I. Bill, Virgie then continued her education and earned a Doctorate in Special Education. She emphasized that every child deserves access to special education services.

When asked about her best advice from the Air Force, Virgie shared that a female lieutenant recruiter told her to volunteer for everything; eventually, people would stop asking her to volunteer. Virgie still follows this advice, noting that people often overlook her presence.

After her husband retired in 1983, they moved to Missouri near Fort Leonard Wood. She held various roles in education, including 10 years as an Adjunct Professor of Interpersonal Communication at Drury University. Virgie also worked for 13 years as a Civil Service Public Affairs Officer. Her guiding advice is, "Always hire competent individuals and allow them the autonomy to perform their duties." This principle guided her throughout her career.

When asked for advice on what to consider when joining the military, she said: "It's a great opportunity and can lead to many civilian careers."

Virgie currently resides at the Missouri Veterans Home in St. James, Missouri, and attends local meetings of the Rotary Service Club, the Chamber of Commerce, American Legion, and VFW.

The Daughters of the Louisiana Purchase Chapter, NSDAR, are proud to nominate Captain Virginia May Cole Mahan as Patriot of the Month and extend their gratitude for her patriotic service and commitment to our great nation..

