

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



Proudly Honors
PATRIOT OF THE MONTH
JANUARY 2026
JAMES B. DONAHOE
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
COLONEL (O-5)
1960 – 1991

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O'Fallon Chapter, NSDAR



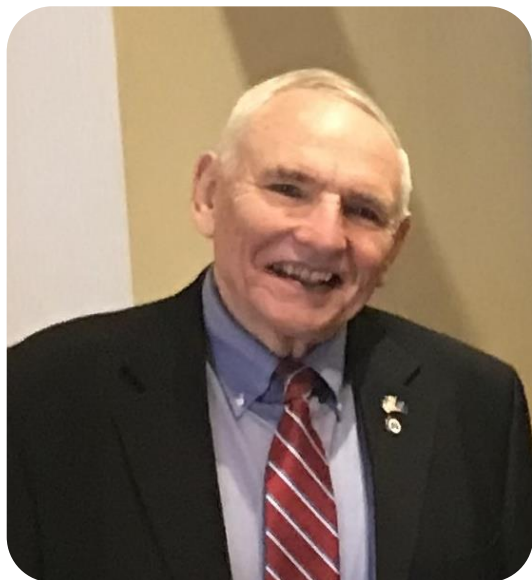
James B. Donahoe was born in Winchester, Kentucky, in 1940. He had three younger brothers; one joined the U.S. Navy, and another joined the Marine Corps; both also served in Vietnam. He attended night school while working to obtain his college degree and joined the Air Force in 1960 as an Aviation Cadet. He attended flight school to become a navigator and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1961.

In 1960, after the Christmas holidays, while returning to flight school on a Greyhound bus, he met a student nurse, Josephine Trumbach, from Belize, Central America. He helped load her heavy, oversized suitcase into the overhead luggage rack. They sat in the last two remaining seats for a short 20-minute bus ride, getting to know each other. On their third date, he proposed, and she accepted... and they married in 1962.

Their first assignment was to Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, where Jim was a crew member on the huge C-133 aircraft transporting cargo to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Greenland. In 1966, a subsequent assignment took the family to Yokota Air Force Base, Japan, for 3 years. Jim was a crew member on the RC-130 aircraft that flew strategic reconnaissance missions along the borders of Russia, North Korea, China, and North Vietnam. That was followed by an assignment to McGuire AFB, New Jersey, flying worldwide aboard the large C-141 transport aircraft. In these assignments, Jim accumulated over 6,000 hours of flying time, much of it in combat zones.

His follow-on assignments were as a Staff Officer at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, the Air Force Military Personnel Center at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, and then to the Pentagon in Washington, DC. The next assignment took the family to Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, where he was the Vice Wing Commander. It was here that he developed a special passion for caring for military families and their needs. With thousands of people assigned to or working on the base, he launched programs that greatly improved the working conditions and housing upgrades for the families and junior enlisted members.

Colonel Donahoe's final two assignments were commanding Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) operations across the Pacific Basin (i.e., Hawaii, Japan, Korea, Okinawa, Philippines, Guam, and a host of smaller locations). With over 10,000 employees, he launched major programs to offer military members/families a "Taste of home," major cost savings, and access to unique products from across the Orient. This was a major morale boost for military and civilian families stationed in the Pacific.



After 31 years of active duty, Colonel Donahoe retired in 1991 and was immediately recruited by the Department of Veterans Affairs to serve as Director of the Veterans Canteen Services (VCS). During his 15-plus years here, he made major improvements in customer service, upgraded facilities in ALL 172 VA Medical Centers, and introduced new retail and food concepts. He created a new level of excitement to improve treatment for patients and working conditions for employees.

He set a personal goal of visiting at least 10 medical centers each month to train employees, improve services, and upgrade facilities. This gave him a first-hand view of the needs and hardships of the patients and their families who had to travel many miles to visit VA Medical Centers for treatment. Government funds were available to care for patients, but NO funds were available to care for families...who could not afford commercial lodging and food at ANY cost. As a result, many Veterans were going

through major medical treatments with no family members at the bedside to assist in recovery and rehabilitation. The families tried to be there by sleeping in their cars in the VA parking lots, or camping out in the hospital lobbies and waiting rooms at night. But at best, this was poor service for everyone.

When Colonel Donahoe retired from the VA in 1991, he was asked to form a Board and raise money to help build a Fisher House on the Jefferson Barracks VA Medical Campus in south St Louis. Serving as President, he formed an all-volunteer board that raised over \$2 ½ million to help build the St Louis VA Fisher House. In 2010, the house was opened and “gifted” to the VA to operate and maintain. This house would provide FREE lodging and meals to the families of “hospitalized” patients who would come here from across the Central Midwest (8 states). It would also provide a dedicated staff of VA employees and volunteers who would be devoted to caring for their guests.

Since its opening, this one house has hosted over 14,000 guests and saved them over \$12 million in food and lodging costs...which they could never have afforded.

The John Cochran VA Medical Center in downtown St. Louis now has plans to renovate and modernize by building a massive new Inpatient Bed Tower, which will offer the very latest in medical practices and equipment. It will treat many more Veterans who will come here for major medical procedures (e.g., heart surgeries, transplants, spinal cord treatments, etc.). The St Louis VA Executive Teams has asked for a second Fisher House to be built on or near this campus when the new bed tower is opened (est 2034). To date, with Colonel Donahoe at the helm, the Friends of Fisher House Board has raised over half of the \$6.4 million local share needed for this new house.

Colonel Donahoe stepped down as President of the Friends of Fisher House St Louis Board in October of this year, but will remain on the Board of Directors to continue working for Veterans and their families who travel here for VA hospitalization.

He is a member of the VFW, American Legion, and the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). He has devoted his life to helping those who served and continues to give of himself.

The O'Fallon Chapter, NSDAR, Daughters are extremely proud to recognize and honor James Donahoe as Patriot of the Month for his dedication, patriotism, and service to our country.