

VETERAN OF THE MONTH

Tellico Village VFW Post 12135



Kathy "Red" Dukauskas was born in Oliver Springs, TN and was one of five children. Her father, who worked at Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, was also a veteran. He served three years in the Army and was deployed as an Infantryman during WWII in the Philippines. Her mother stayed at home and cared for the children until they eventually all grew up and left the home. Once the home was an empty nest, Kathy's mom decided to work in the community. Kathy graduated High School in 1972 and moved to Nashville, TN to work. After two years there, she decided to move back home to Knoxville, TN.

It was in 1974 that Kathy decided to join the Air Force. When she met with the recruiter, Kathy told him that she was not interested in being a secretary or nurse, so she enlisted as a diesel mechanic in October 1974. She attended basic training in Lackland Air Force Base (AFB), TX then was moved to Shepard AFB, TX in January 1975 for her Advanced Individual Training (AIT). While there, she trained as a Power Production/Diesel Engine Mechanic. She graduated her training in April 1975 and was assigned to Vandenberg AFB, CA. At the time, Kathy was one of four women who were diesel mechanics in her squadron. One day the Commander brought all

four women in and asked if they wanted to "go home" and separate from the service. Kathy and her peers told him "No" and they continued to serve as mechanics. It was during her first assignment that she met her current husband, Jerry, in December 1975. He was a SSgt (E5) in the Air Force at the time. One day, when she saw Jerry pull up on a motorcycle, she instantly knew he was the one. They began dating and within a year they were married. They continued their active-duty career in the married couple's program and moved to many different duty stations. Kathy served across the states in a multitude of assignment locations and eventually cross-trained in the Training Career Field during her assignment at Castle AFB, CA from 1977 - 1980. From there, she continued her career and was eventually assigned as a diesel mechanic in Osan AB, Korea working on U2 Spy Airplanes. Due to her training background, she was also assigned to the orderly room in the training section. Kathy was utilized as both a diesel

mechanic and Training NCO. She performed both roles admirably. Her leadership noticed her commitment and knowledge and she was submitted for a Meritorious Service Medal. The award was recommended for downgrade to a Commendation Medal, since she was not awarded a Commendation Medal before. In 1983, Kathy moved to her final duty station before she left active-duty service in Guam as a SSgt (E5). She served in Guam until 1985, totaling 11 years of service. During her time on active-duty, Jerry was commissioned as an Officer. When it came time for Kathy to reenlist, her husband performed all three reenlistment ceremonies as the officer who presided over the Oath of Reenlistment. Their service together as an Officer/Enlisted couple had its challenges, but to them, it was just how they served their country, while supporting each other's career.

After she was honorably discharged from the Air Force in 1985, Kathy instantly became an Air Force spouse. She decided to stay at home with her son Eric, and enjoyed Hawaii while supporting Jerry's career. When their time in Hawaii was over, Kathy moved to Kelly AFB and went back to work as a Government Service (GS) employee as a Procurement Clerk. It was in 1989 that Kathy decided to join the Air Force Reserves, and Jerry then retired from the Air Force as a Captain after 22 years of service. As Jerry started his second career with the Small Business Administration (SBA), Kathy dual served as a GS employee and Power Production in the Air Force Reserves. They moved many times from 1989 to 1998 until Kathy finally retired from the Air Force Reserves in 1998 as a MSgt (E7). During her remaining nine years, Kathy worked in several GS assignments with offices in the U.S. Attorney's Office in Houston, TX, Department of Transportation in Albuquerque, NM, and the Department of Energy in Phoenix, AZ. In 2009, Kathy retired from her GS career as a GS-9. Jerry also retired from the SBA as a GS-13. After 23 years in Arizona, Kathy and Jerry decided to retire and move to Tellico Village, TN. Their son Eric served in the Navy for five years and is now an Air Traffic Controller in Denver, CO. In her retirement, Kathy enjoys working with the Moose Club. She is also a quilter and works with others quilters to distribute quilts to homeless veterans and babies in orphanages. Kathy is also a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #12135 in Tellico Village, TN.

The Tellico Village VFW Post #12135 General meeting is held at 7:00 p.m. in the Tellico Village Yacht Club every third Wednesday of the month. Further information can be found on the Post website at <https://www.tellicovillagevfwpost.org/>.