



WOMEN KICKING GLASS

Email Profile Archive #1

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

OCTOBER 14, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #1

Title IX Opens Doors for Women to Attend Norwich



It's hard to imagine that until fifty years ago, young women were restricted from attending many American colleges and universities, let alone military academies.

Athletic scholarships were rare and STEM career paths were primarily reserved for men. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was a landmark federal law that prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. This law compelled universities to open their doors to female students and had a profound impact on the integration of women into American military schools.



Norwich University's 26th President, BG Loring E. Hart, embraced Title IX and proactively encouraged the inclusion of women at Norwich University. Following the merger of Vermont College and Norwich in June 1972, a group of Vermont College women petitioned President Hart to live on the Northfield campus and join the Corps of Cadets.

In the fall of 1974, 71 women pursuing four-year degrees who were either upperclassmen previously residing at Vermont College or freshmen in a four-year degree program at Norwich, moved into Gerard Hall on the Northfield campus. Among them was the first cohort of women to join the NU Corps of Cadets.

Records documenting women's history and experience at Norwich are available through the University Archives. <https://archives.norwich.edu/>



Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

OCTOBER 21, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #2

The VC-NU Bus Society



When Vermont College and Norwich University merged in 1972, a “bus society” was created for the VC women who lived on the Montpelier campus and traveled back and forth to attend classes in Northfield.

Professor Nadine Nunez-de-Cela (*left, top*), who lived in Montpelier, rode the bus daily with these students. As an academic advisor and professor of Spanish, she advocated for integrating women into Norwich by placing them on campus instead of forcing them to commute. For economic, legal and practical reasons, President Hart endorsed this proposal and in 1974, 71 women found their home in Gerard Hall.



An ad-hoc committee of students, cadets, faculty and staff selected Nunez-de-Cela as Norwich’s first Dean of Women, Assistant Commandant of Cadets responsible for coordinating women’s campus life in partnership with the Commandant’s Office. Senior Amy White ’75 (*left, bottom*) was the “Dorm Fellow” who shared the women’s dorm responsibility with Dean Nunez-de-Cela. Amy saw all sides of coed life in her capacity as an advisor to her peers and as a liaison between the women and the top brass in the Corps of Cadets.

In a November 1974 article in *The Guidon*, Nunez-de-Cela said she saw the presence of women making Norwich better —better academically because of more diversity of opinion in the classrooms, better socially, and in Corps matters. Her goal was to ensure equal

opportunity and justice for every member of the campus community and “to deal with questions that arise over any aspect of the University, any time, anywhere.”



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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

OCTOBER 28, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #3

A Historic Experiment Gone Right



Norwich University officially became co-educational in 1972 after merging with Vermont College. The following year the Vermont College women petitioned President Loring Hart to live on the Northfield campus and to join the Corps of Cadets. In the fall of 1974, 71 women moved into Gerard Hall. Among them was the first cohort of women admitted to the Corps. In an October 1974 press release, Norwich described the inclusion of women as “a historic experiment”.

Among the women that moved from Vermont College to Northfield were five upper-class students who became the cadre/mentors to freshmen women that entered Norwich as cadets.

They were:

- o Diane Gionet '75
- o Nancy Young '76
- o Roberta Moskos '76
- o Mary Chambers '77
- o Mildred Brown '77

The Class of 1978 recruits were:

- o Caroline Flynn
- o Vicki Hippard
- o Irene Nadeau
- o Linnea Peterson



They were originally called L (Lima) Detachment because there were too few women to make a Company. They paved a path for future Norwich women and found their way through a tough program of academic excellence, physical challenges and social change. Their story is one of courage, endurance, and often humor.

The 1974 landmark ‘experiment’ began two years before the US Service Academies, including West Point. Norwich admitted women into the Corps the same year as Texas A&M and one year after the University of North Georgia and Virginia Tech. The Citadel and VMI would maintain an all-male Corps of Cadets until the mid-1990s.

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

NOVEMBER 4, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #4

First to Letter: Roberta Moskos '76



In 1973, freshman Roberta Moskos joined the Men's Rifle Team as the first and only woman. She participated on the team until 1976 while serving in the Corps of Cadets and earning a degree in biology and secondary education. Roberta became the first female Cadet to receive a Varsity Letter at Norwich.

As a Norwich trailblazer, Roberta also served as a delegate to the United States Military Academy where she, along with other Norwich female cadets, helped lay the groundwork for full integration of women into West Point's Corps of Cadets. That was in 1976, a full two years after Norwich University welcomed women into the Corps.

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

NOVEMBER 11, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #5

First to Commission: Diane Gionet '75



Diane Gionet graduated from Glenville High School in Scotia, NY in 1971 and enrolled in Elms College in Chicopee, MA. As one of ten children, she earned an Air Force ROTC Scholarship to pay for her education. She transferred to Norwich in 1972, shortly after the Norwich/Vermont College merger, where she resided on the Montpelier campus as a civilian student and drilled on the Northfield campus as part of A.F. ROTC.



In the fall of 1974, Diane, an education major, was among the first women to live at Norwich and join the Corps of Cadets. She was promoted to the rank of Cadet Captain and placed in command of the all-female Lima Detachment. That year she married fellow cadet, Richard Halliday in a ceremony in White Chapel.

In May 1975, Diane became the first woman to graduate as a member of Norwich's Corps of Cadets. She was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, becoming the first woman to earn a commission from Norwich. Her first military duty station was at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, where she attended Communications Officer School.

In the mid-80s Diane and her family moved to Portsmouth, NH. Shortly after, she and Richard divorced and Diane became a single parent, taking several part-time jobs to make ends meet. Known for her kindness and generosity, Diane still found time to donate many hours to charitable causes.



A seemingly incredible individual who attained so many firsts for Norwich women, Diane passed away suddenly from an undiagnosed heart condition at the age of 40. In a hometown newspaper article printed shortly after her death, Diane's 11-year-old daughter, Lizzie summed up her mother this way: "She had a big heart, big enough for everyone in the whole world."

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

NOVEMBER 18, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #6

Blazing Her Own Trail: Nancy Young '76



In high school Nancy Young excelled in sports and was interested in a career as a physical education teacher. When her father told her Norwich University had its very own ski slope and was about to open its doors to female students, she said, "sign me up."

As a freshman Nancy took a shuttle bus from the Vermont College campus in Montpelier to Norwich. The next year women were given the opportunity to join the Corps of Cadets. Nancy immediately opted in and in 1974 she, along with [Cadet Captain Diane Gionet '75](#), took command of Lima Detachment and the incoming class of female rooks. She was also on the ski and field hockey teams, and Air Force ROTC.



Nancy remembers her time in the Corps this way: "I did it because President Hart wanted women in the Corps. He asked us, and I figured it would be new and exciting. None of us knew what we were getting into."

Nancy went on to a successful career as a teacher, coach and author. "I had some amazing professors who inspired me to become certified," Nancy says. She taught science and math in Vermont, Massachusetts, and at a charter school. She coached field hockey and gymnastics for 35 years and taught piano lessons for 40 years. Nancy has written and published nine books and currently teaches for an online company and Fitchburg State University. "I feel I've lived up to Norwich's motto 'I will try' because I'm always willing to try something new and expand on what I enjoy."

Nancy married Alan Phillip, also Norwich Class of 1976. "My family has been a huge part of my life," she says. "I've been happily married for 46 years and have seven grandchildren. I don't have any regrets and I'm still very busy and active at 69 years old."

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

NOVEMBER 25, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #7

Accepting the Challenge: Vicki Hippard '78



As a high school student in Cincinnati, Ohio, Vicki Hippard determined “a military career is one profession where opportunities for women were promising and where the pay was equal to that of men.” With that, she accepted the challenge to attend Norwich University as one of the first women in the Corps of Cadets.

“It may have been a gamble on the part of the administration—and we were definitely an experiment—but it worked,” Vicki said. “We paved the way for others to follow in our footsteps.”

Sacrificing “present pleasures for future goals” Recruit Hippard did very well at Norwich. In a 1974 *News from Norwich* article, she said, “Each girl must prove herself in an environment that is downright hostile for a while. The pressure is on from all sides to prove that she can perform as well as the male cadets in every phase of education and military training.” Despite the no-fraternization rule, limited freedom, strenuous physical training program, and male prejudices that they faced, the female cadets had a relatively low drop-out rate. She was among the Norwich women who visited West Point in 1976 to advise them on integrating females into their Corps.



Majoring in Government and Criminal Justice, Cadet Hippard was a member of the Military Police Company, and attained the rank of Captain in HQ Company, all while maintaining an A average. In her senior year, she had the highest GPA in the Corps and was awarded the Distinguished GMC Cadet Ribbon for outstanding performance in Air Force ROTC.

Vicki graduated in 1978 and commissioned at Officer Training School, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. She was stationed at RAF Alconbury, England and Charleston AFB, SC, serving in the positions of Traffic Management Officer, Vehicle Maintenance Officer and Vehicle Operations Officer.

In 1985, Vicki married fellow Air Force officer Robert Mudrinich and separated from Active Duty to start a family. They have four children, three of whom are currently serving as active-duty military officers.

"My experiences at Norwich and the challenges I found there instilled in me a desire to pursue excellence in both values, personal development and accomplishments," Vicki says. "The number of women in the Corps has grown and they have so many more opportunities than we had back then. That is a good thing. We must keep moving forward to even greater success!"

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

DECEMBER 2, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #8

White Glove Inspections: Karen Brown '77



"I still laugh about the three-minute showers," says Karen (Brown) Clark '77. "They actually had a stopwatch so you had three minutes to soap up and get out, and then five minutes to get dressed."

Raised in a military family, Karen's oldest brother went to North Georgia Military College and her other brother, Walter '72, chose Norwich. She transferred from Western Maryland College as a junior to join the first class of women in the Corps. "I was pretty proud to be the third woman to graduate from the Corps. I liked the discipline. You knew exactly what was expected of you and everyone was in the same boat. You didn't have a lot of time to get into trouble."

Outside of the Corps and classroom, Karen was in the hunting and Spanish clubs, intramural flag football, softball and volleyball teams, and was on the Dean's List. From her room in Patterson Hall, Karen could see the Norwich ski hill. A student pass was about \$30 and when classes were over, she simply crossed the street to ride the chair lift to the top of Paine Mountain.

Like their male counterparts, women marched in the gutters, saluted upperclassmen, precision-ironed their uniforms, and dreaded room inspections.

"I had a few demerits for failing the white glove inspections," Karen says. "The clothing bars in the wardrobes were metal and we were given wood hangers with metal hooks that left a gray residue on the bar. Every time we had white glove inspections, I would get in trouble for not catching that."

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

DECEMBER 9, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #9

Tehran to Vermont: Sussan (Shahin) Coley '83



In 1979, Sussan (Shahin) Coley embarked on a transformative journey from Tehran, Iran, to Norwich University. Hailing from a group of 27 female Imperial Navy recruits whose tuition was paid-in-full by the Shah of Iran, Sussan was pursuing an engineering major while actively participating in the Norwich Corps of Cadets. The progressive Shah, recognizing the need for increased female representation in the Iranian armed forces, sent women like Sussan to American universities as part of a broader initiative. Sussan recalled, "The plan was to acclimate us, go through the process, complete our study, go back home, serve in the Navy and repeat the experience with more women."

However, the political landscape shifted dramatically with the onset of the Islamic Revolution in October 1979.

The U.S. embassy in Tehran witnessed the seizure of 66 Americans as hostages, prompting the Shah of Iran to flee the country. Despite attempts by the United States, led by President Jimmy Carter, to negotiate the hostages' release, the newly established Ayatollah Khomeini regime refused. In response, in April 1980 President Carter implemented sanctions, including a ban on Iranian oil, and severed diplomatic ties with Iran. Within 48 hours, all Iranian diplomats and students were ordered to leave the U.S.



Sussan found herself forced to return to Iran, only to realize that living under the oppressive Khomeini regime was unsustainable. The consequences of being blacklisted and having her passport confiscated due to her association with the prior government were compounded by the loss of women's rights. Despite the challenges, Sussan was determined to leave her homeland, forging connections with passport office employees and befriending an Armenian woman at the Austrian Embassy.

After months of uncertainty, a brief lifting of the passport ban provided Sussan with a narrow window to escape to Vienna. Pretending to be the embassy employee's maid, she navigated through the complexities of displacement in Austria, where she faced language barriers, financial struggles, and periods of homelessness.

Colonel Anne Turner, VSM, director of the NU library, and her husband, George, who had assumed the role of Sussan's "American parents," along with Norwich University's President Loring Hart, rallied support to petition Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy for Sussan's return to Vermont. Following a difficult 11-month ordeal, she finally returned to Norwich to complete her Bachelor of Science degrees in electrical engineering and mathematics as a proud member of the Class of 1983.



In photos above, Sussan Coley says goodbye to Norwich faculty members, and waves goodbye, as Iranian Imperial Navy students board the deportation buses.

Sussan's journey didn't end at Norwich; she went on to forge a successful consulting career and positions with Fortune 500 companies like Polaroid, IBM and Microsoft. In 1995, she earned her MBA from Boston University and garnered certifications from Harvard University, all while working full-time. Her contributions extended to the field of medical imaging, where she holds two patents for her work on a digital mammography platform.

Today, Sussan resides on an island in Maine, embracing a philanthropic role by supporting nonprofits for marginalized women and students, and rescuing abused animals. Despite facing PTSD-inducing challenges, she leverages her life experiences to give back to future generations, exemplified by her two terms of service on Norwich's Board of Fellows.

hand you were dealt and how you played it. I've lost a lot. I have been fired. I have been dumped. But I think I have had a great life... awesome, so hard and so good."

Reflecting on her remarkable journey, Sussan emphasizes, "The riches of a person are based on the experiences they accumulate... It's what

Sussan Coley's narrative stands as a testament to resilience, determination, and the transformative power of education and opportunity.

To read a transcript of Sussan's interview for the Sullivan Museum's Oral History project, see: [Oral History Transcripts - Norwich University Archives & Special Collections.](#)

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

DECEMBER 16, 2023

NU WKG, ISSUE #10

Entrepreneur and Problem Solver: Tina Christiano '83



"I was raised by a single mom who instilled in me the confidence to stretch limits and break barriers," says Tina (Judd) Christiano '83. "She was always encouraging me to venture to places where women weren't visible, so I was more than intrigued when Norwich opened their doors to women."

The first time Tina stepped onto campus was her first day as an excited, yet terrified student. Everything was new to her, especially as a member of the Corps of Cadets. Routines included being waken at the crack of dawn and impromptu inspections. She was part of the Fire Brigade, hosted a radio show on WNUB. Tina had the good fortune to find a mentor in Professor Hall Buzzell, who encouraged her when she felt overwhelmed.

Tina's experience at Norwich helped drive her, as she later built a successful company providing problem-solving solutions in manufacturing. She is the owner and CEO of Secondary Solutions Inc., a multi-million-dollar business with more than 100 full time employees, 75% of which are women. "I have been referred to as intimidating, direct and honest," says Tina. "Getting doors opened took plenty of prying and pushing, but determination was in my corner."

The resiliency that Tina learned at NU was vital during the economic downturn that followed the Covid-19 pandemic. "My team was dependent on me and giving up was never an option," Tina said. She navigated the pandemic challenges by securing new industry certifications which expanded the types of services her company offered. Tina then shared her model for success with other women-owned businesses so they could overcome similar obstacles. In recognition of her efforts, Tina was named the 2020 Woman Business of the Year by the South Carolina Small Business Administration.

With a successful business and a team of strong, pioneering women, Tina's mother would be proud, as is the Norwich University community. With her NU experiences, Tina Christiano has created a legacy for the women who will follow in her footsteps.

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