



WOMEN KICKING GLASS

Email Profile Archive #5

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

JULY 20, 2024

NU WKG, ISSUE #41

Women on the UP: Gerard Hall



Following the merger of Vermont College and Norwich University in June 1972, Norwich became a two-campus institution offering associate and bachelor's degrees as well as post-graduate programs to both men and women. Vermont College, in Montpelier, VT, retained its name and operated as a civilian campus for women. Norwich remained a residential campus for men, offering ROTC training and a Corps of Cadets.

Each day students were shuttled by bus between the Montpelier and Northfield campuses for classes, social events, and athletics. In 1973 a group of women petitioned President Loring Hart to live on the Northfield campus and join the Corps of Cadets.

In August 1974, with approval from the Board of Trustees, 71 women moved into Gerard Hall. Twenty of them were freshmen entering a four-year degree program at Norwich. Fifty-one women moved from the Vermont College campus to Norwich to complete their degrees.

Among the 71 were eight women who formed the first female cohort in the NU Corps of Cadets. Four upper-class women became the cadre and mentors to four incoming freshmen. Norwich's acceptance of women in the Corps came two years before the federal service academies admitted females to their programs in 1976 and 25 years before Virginia Military Academy (VMI) admitted women in 1997 by Supreme Court order.

These women—both Civilian and Corps—paved a path for future generations, finding their way through social change, physical challenge, and academic rigor. They are celebrated for overcoming barriers and blazing new trails through their courage and determination.

During Homecoming Weekend (September 18-22), a plaque will be dedicated at Gerard Hall, honoring the first women to live on the Norwich campus. Please join us on Friday, September 20, at 2:30 p.m. for the unveiling.

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!

JULY 27, 2024

NU WKG, ISSUE #42

Forward-Thinking and Doing: Norwich's College of Graduate & Continuing Studies

Representing another innovative chapter in Norwich's history, the College of Graduate & Continuing Studies (CGCS) launched in 1997 with a Master of Arts degree in Diplomacy & Military Science. In the nearly three decades since its inception, online programs have emerged as a powerful tool for advancing equality in higher education. They offer flexibility and accessibility and remove the geographic constraints which had previously been a barrier for military personnel, working professionals, parents and others to advance their education.

One of the first female CGCS graduates was Deborah Trimpe Burger-Hogg M'02 of the Netherlands, a former member of their Royal Navy. More than 10,000 men and women from across the nation and around the world have graduated from CGCS programs to date.



Melanie Soto '19

Melanie Soto '19, Bachelor of Science in Strategic Studies and Defense Analysis

Melanie joined the Air Force directly out of high school in 2004. Her boss at the time had earned his master's degree from Norwich and expressed how military-friendly the school was. "I knew that an online program was the best bet for finishing my degree."



Deborah Yemisi Ayodele M'21

Deborah Yemisi Ayodele '21, Master of Science in Cybersecurity

Deborah was a business intelligence/risk management analyst in Nigeria before relocating to the U.S. "The changes in the technology world and the desire to become a role model motivated me to pursue my degree in cybersecurity," she says. "Norwich has made me a better person. I have gained up-to-date knowledge that I wouldn't trade for gold."



Catherine Carroca M'17

Catherine Carroca '17, Master of Science in Nursing

"I had a friend who went through the MSN program at Norwich, and she encouraged me to apply," says Catherine. "I wanted to set an example for my children that anything you can dream of is possible if you apply yourself." Catherine says she thought online courses would be easy. "I was wrong. I was challenged in every class. I never finished (traditional) high school and now I am graduating from Norwich with honors and applying to Doctor of Nursing Practice programs."



Kelley Lawrence '16

Kelley Lawrence '16, Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice

Setting an example for her children was Kelley's motivation for earning a degree as well. "When my son was younger, he said he didn't want to go to college because neither of his parents did. That's when I knew it was important for me to get my bachelor's." Originally accepted to Norwich as a traditional undergraduate when she was 20, Kelley chose not to go. But a Norwich degree continued to be her dream. "In 2014 I learned about the online program and it was perfect for me."



Marcia Bryan M'16

Marcia Bryan '16, Master of Business Administration

Marcia wanted to further her education and evolve her career. "I learned many things about myself including my drive to succeed. Through the group projects—which I always hated in the past—I learned to be accommodating, tolerant, and not to sweat the small stuff." With her degree in hand, Marcia is thinking about starting her own consulting business. She says she continues to carry the Norwich spirit. "I don't know if I can define it, but I feel it. The quest for excellence, integrity, loyalty and duty."

Norwich Online is leading the way with more than a dozen bachelor's and master's degree programs and graduate certificates. To learn more about the College of Graduate & Continuing Studies, visit <https://online.norwich.edu/>



Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

AUGUST 3, 2024

NU WKG, ISSUE #43

In the Air and On the Ground: Norwich Women in Engineering

Captain Alden Partridge recognized that America needed engineers to design and build the nation's infrastructure as the Industrial Revolution brought rapid change and increased urban populations. Civil engineering has been part of Norwich's curriculum since 1819 and our alumni have helped build the nation for the past two centuries. Many served as trustees of the university as well.



Bobbi (Fine) Haney '79

Roberta "Bobbi" Haney '79 is among them. She was the first female to graduate from Norwich's four-year civil engineering program and first Civilian alumna to serve on the NU Board of Trustees. "I have always credited my success in a male-dominated field to my time at Norwich,"

Bobbi says. "I was the only woman in my engineering classes, so I had 20 brothers who really watched out for me. The experience gave me the confidence to work with men as peers."

Arriving in the Fall of 1975, Bobbi was among the first women to live on the Norwich campus. "For the most part, I felt totally accepted. The engineering professors were especially welcoming. All the students were treated the

same, regardless of whether they were Corps or Civilian. While there were occasional comments about civilian women detracting from the military atmosphere, we always felt a part of the university."

Following Norwich, Bobbi received a master's degree in civil and environmental engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She graduated as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched the Superfund program to address hazardous waste sites. Bobbi was among a handful of women in the program at its inception. Over a 25-year career in the environmental field, she rose through numerous leadership positions within a national firm becoming a regional manager and Senior Vice President. Bobbi then joined Payette Associates, a leading architectural design firm in Boston, spending 11 years as the Chief Operating Officer, where she led all finance, legal, human resource, information technology, and other operational aspects of the firm. "My experience at Norwich prepared me and provided the skills and tools to succeed in these leadership positions," Bobbi says.

Bobbi is a lifetime member of the Partridge Society at the Two Star General level. She was a member of the NU Board of Trustees from 2009 to 2024, serving as Vice-Chair for the last three years. Following her service on the Board, she received an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Leadership from Norwich. She continues to work to ensure that civilian and Corps students feel part of the same university though their lifestyles are different. "It's the values-based education and community that transcends the two populations and sets Norwich apart from any other small, liberal arts college," Bobbi says. "It offers so much more than a basic education."



Mary Yeager Rudd '84 & M'06

An aerospace engineering pioneer, **Mary Yeager Rudd** originally enrolled at Norwich as a chemistry major. During her freshman year she noticed the classes engineering students were taking "looked way more interesting." She changed majors and graduated with a bachelor's in mechanical engineering in 1984.

Mary started her professional career at what is now Collins Aerospace as a project engineer for the turbine engine sensor product line. During her 40 years at Collins, Mary led teams in the design and system analysis for aircraft fuel quantity indicating systems, including the F-22, Boeing 767 and 747, the development of cryogenic liquid oxygen and hydrogen gauging, and the flight-critical main engine feed line depletion system for the Lockheed Martin X-33 single stage to orbit

launch vehicle. In 2006 Mary earned her MBA from Norwich and was class valedictorian. "I chose the online program at Norwich because of the defined timeline and course structure," she says. "It also fit nicely with my travel schedule at the time."

Mary became engineering manager at Collins for the design and development of five avionics systems for the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Her diverse team included mechanical, electrical, software and systems engineers located in Vermont, Seattle, WA and India. This program was one of the largest and most complex executed by Collins Aerospace.

"My time at Norwich in the Corps and being the only female engineer in my class really prepared me for a career in the male-dominated field of aerospace engineering," Mary says. "My general manager observed that I never even noticed when I was the only female presenting in large meetings, which gave me the opportunity to be a mentor to our first female engineering scholarship program participant." Mary also proudly gives back to Norwich, having served on the NU Alumni Association board of directors and as a member of the Partridge Society.

Norwich University's legacy in shaping the future of civil and mechanical engineering is exemplified through the achievements of its graduates like Bobbi Fine Haney and Mary Yeager Rudd. Their pioneering roles underscore the institution's commitment to producing leaders who break barriers, drive innovation and inspire future generations of women to meet the evolving challenges of a dynamic world.

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!

AUGUST 10, 2024

NU WKG, ISSUE #44

Latina Entrepreneurs: Andrea Moreno '16 and Katarina Wabrek '17 & M'18

Rook Week 2012: the blazing August sun beat down on **Andrea Moreno** and **Katarina Wabrek** as they heard the 5:30 a.m. cannon fire for the first time, setting their hearts racing and altering the trajectory of their lives forever. Endless hours spent squaring off the Upper Parade Ground, reciting knowledge from the infamous Rook Book, and enduring piercing morning bugle calls gave both women a sense of purpose during their time at the Military College of Vermont.

Their Norwich experience was not just a chapter in their lives but a time that forged personal growth and a lifelong friendship. It also fostered a vision to “pay it forward” through the nonprofit organization they launched in 2020, Dos Rosas.



Andrea Moreno (l.) and Katarina Wabrek (r.)

From Michoacán, Mexico, to Alumni Hall's third-floor deck, Andrea flourished on the Hill where she received her bachelor's in international studies and French in 2016. The drive and determination instilled by her cadre motivated Andrea to attend Vermont Law School following graduation from Norwich. She earned her Juris Doctorate in 2019 and was admitted to practice law in Pennsylvania. Norwich's introduction to the U.S. military lifestyle established a strong foundation in her life as she now serves as a Captain in the U.S. Army JAG Corps. She is currently the Brigade Judge Advocate for the 65th Medical Brigade in South Korea.

Massachusetts-raised with Dominican roots, Katarina grew up with close ties to Norwich. She is the proud daughter of two alumni, Michael Wabrek '88 and Mary Adams Wabrek '91. The bricked barracks, upper parade ground with the iron Plumley gates were a second home growing up. Katarina pursued her passion for architecture in Chaplin Hall. She earned her bachelor's in architectural studies with a minor in engineering management, and a master's in architecture the following year. She currently works at a prestigious contemporary architectural firm in Boston, where she plans to obtain her architectural license, delve into interior design, and enhance her design skills.

Andrea and Katarina founded Dos Rosas to advance Latinas through professional development and mentorship while helping bridge opportunity gaps and economic disparities within the Latin community. The organization encompasses all aspects of a Latina's development that will influence and assist her educational and career aspirations. Within four short years, Dos Rosas has expanded to more than seven states, hosted over fifty professional development events, and provided thousands of dollars in grants to Latinas committed to positively impacting the Latin community.



Katarina Wabrek (l.) and Andrea Moreno (r.)

As President Schneider said at the 2012 Rook arrival ceremony, "This is not for the faint of heart, and many of you will not make it." The leadership qualities, persistence, and effective teamwork Norwich instilled in Andrea and Katarina continue to allow their female-founded coalition to advocate for the integration of Latinas within all aspects of the classroom, community, and corporate structure.

Their home will always be the Hill, with its freezing-cold Paine Mountain morning fog. That is where Andrea and Katarina learned discipline, determination, and most importantly the value of giving back. Thanks to Norwich University and its Corps of Cadets, the founders of Dos Rosas have achieved distinction and are eager to inspire others to do the same.

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

AUGUST 17, 2024

NU WKG, ISSUE #45

This We'll Defend: NU Women in the U.S. Army



Donna Rix '79

When Norwich University opened its doors to women in the Corps of Cadets in 1974, it also created a path for them to commission into the United States Armed Forces. In 1979, **Donna Rix** was the first woman to commission into the United States Army. Upon receiving her gold 2LT bars, she was stationed in Germany as a member of the Adjutant General Branch.

And so began a legacy of Norwich alumnae achieving distinction in the US Army.

In the small town of Amesbury, MA, **Katherine "Katie" Hathaway '12** dreamed of serving her country. She chose Norwich as the gateway to gain the necessary experience, preparation, and guidance for a successful military career.



CPT Katherine "Katie" Hathaway, USA '12

Katie joined the NU Women's Rugby Team. The team's dedication and unity were a source of inspiration for her, and their success, winning two national championships, further fueled her determination. These formative years instilled in Katie a sense of discipline and a passion for service that would shape her future.

Upon graduating, Katie was commissioned a 2LT Quartermaster Officer in the US Army Quartermaster Corps. In 2016, when the Department of Defense lifted the ban on women serving in combat arms military occupational specialties, Katie volunteered to transfer to the Armor Branch. After several months of training, she was assigned to 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. In 2018, she was among the first woman in US history to command a Tank Company, blazing the trail for women in combat arms.

“Norwich in general, the Corps of Cadets and women’s rugby have been the most defining things in my life,” Katie says. “They helped me embrace challenges, instilled discipline and bolstered my passion to serve others.”



CPT Pamela (Dubey) Donais,
USA '14 & M'17

Pamela (Dubey) Donais' decision to attend Norwich was driven by her interest in the military and testing to see if it would be the right fit. Being around like-minded and motivated classmates challenged Pam to better herself in every aspect, from the Corps to academics and sports. Pam played varsity softball and served as a team captain. She made lifelong friends and built the foundation of her values and beliefs. “I loved being challenged and I graduated as a strong, confident leader.”

Pam commissioned as a Military Police Officer but sought a more fulfilling and challenging career path. Like Katie, with the opening of combat arms branches to women, she applied and was among

the first accepted into the Armor Branch. She was deployed to Iraq and was among the first female combat arms officer to lead troops in a combat zone. And at Fort Benning, Pam was the first female armor officer to serve as a Troop Commander in Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFAB).

In 2017 Pam completed her master’s degree in leadership from Norwich. She currently serves as Troop Commander in 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, KY.

Now a Captain in the US Army, Pam says the best thing about Norwich was meeting her husband, SSG Daniel Donais '12, USA. She hopes their 2-year-old daughter, Jordan, will attend Norwich University one day. In the meantime, Pam is balancing life as a mother, a dual military spouse, and a career as a Troop Commander responsible for more than 100 soldiers. She says, “Norwich teaches you how you fit into a bigger picture and how teamwork is an integral part. I attribute a lot of my success to my time spent on The Hill...and coffee!”

Donna Rix, Katie Hathaway and Pam Donais are among hundreds of Norwich alumnae who have served in today’s Army. Their stories are a testament to the strength and determination fostered at Norwich and the continuing legacy of women breaking barriers in military service.

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!

AUGUST 24, 2024

NU WKG, ISSUE #46

Combat and Come Back: Bergan Flannigan '08, Purple Heart Recipient



In January 2013 Pentagon Chief Leon Panetta lifted the ban that prohibited women from serving in combat, opening up thousands of front-line positions to female service members. But even before the ban was lifted, women were serving as military police, medics, and intelligence officers who were often part of units on the front lines.

Bergan (Arsenault) Flannigan was the top military graduate in the Class of 2008 and was commissioned into the U.S. Army Military Police. “At that point it was as close as I could get to being in the Infantry,” she says. While at Norwich, Bergan met and married Thomas Flannigan '07, also Army MP.

After completing her Military Police training, Bergan reported to Ft. Stewart, Georgia, and was almost immediately deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan. As a first lieutenant, Bergan found herself leading troops on the front lines, serving in the same military police company as her husband.

Tom, also a 1LT, was the executive officer of the 293rd MP company in Kandahar. Bergan commanded the company's Spartan Patrol, responsible for commercial neighborhoods in the city. She and her soldiers were in the thick of it daily. “Our job was to help them create police stations, learn the different tactics of patrolling their communities, and implement different regulations and rules,” Bergan says. Eight months into her deployment, and on her last mission before a two-week leave, Bergan was on a foot patrol through a market when she was struck by an anti-personnel IED. She lost her right leg above the knee. “The world just exploded,” she recalled. “Your ears just ring you and don't feel anything.”

Bergan credits the medics on patrol with her for saving her life. After initial treatment in Afghanistan, she was flown to Germany and then to Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C. Bergan was awarded the Purple Heart by her commander in Afghanistan before arriving at Walter Reed. “I had already lost my right leg, and they were trying to save my left one,” she says. “But once I got to Walter Reed, I decided I was going to stay in the Army.”

She was in and out of the hospital for two years and had more than 20 surgeries. Despite the amputation and adapting to a prosthetic, Bergan resumed active duty. After completing the 3.

Military Police Captain's Career Course in 2011, she and Tom were stationed in Hawaii. She was assigned to a unit that spent the majority of time traveling around the Pacific. Between the long flights and time away from home, Bergan decided it was time to leave the military in 2013.



Bergan's long-held dream of a career in the Army was coming to an end just as she learned she was pregnant. "Life can have different plans for you, and it can be really hard. No matter how tough or how smart you are, the challenges of being in the military, of being deployed, of being wounded, of combat stress, and coming home from that are huge challenges to figure out on your own or in a relationship." She returned to her home in upstate New York while Tom remained on active duty in Hawaii. They divorced shortly after their daughter was born. "You know when you get deployed there is risk but when it happens to you, you don't know how to deal with it."

Now a full-time mom, Bergan spends time with her family including her twin sister, Bethany, also a 2008 Norwich alumna. She stays active taking care of her daughter, and herself. "I spend a lot of time at the gym. I can't do some things in the way I used to. I was an avid snowboarder, and I ran a lot. I can still do those things, but at a different level."

Reflecting on her journey and lessons learned along the way, Bergan says, "The first step is to get out there...you will surprise yourself by how you are able to adapt to different things. There are so many ways you can get help when you're struggling. Find something different to do in your life. Find something you never thought you would be able to do and do it."

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

AUGUST 31, 2024

NU WKG, ISSUE #47

Uncharted Waters: Norwich Women in the Navy and Coast Guard

A mathematics major from Queens, NY, **Joan (Boyce) Jamrog '88** attended Norwich on a Naval ROTC Scholarship. While a member of the Corps of Cadets she participated in several extracurricular activities, including as a four-year member of the Regimental Drill Team and on the women's soccer team.



Joan (Boyce) Jamrog '88

In the spring of 1988, Cadet Boyce became Ensign Boyce, Norwich's first female Naval ROTC graduate and the first to complete the four-year program at the university. This also made her the first Black woman to accept a commission from any branch at Norwich. The June 1988 issue of the Norwich Record said, "Norwich, the Navy and Joan Boyce--it's a winning combination!"

Following graduation, Joan completed tours of duty aboard the USS Sylvania during Operation Desert Storm and the USS Ainsworth, stationed at Norfolk, VA. After the Navy, Joan began a career in Information Technology, first with HAECO Americas (formerly TIMCO Aviation Services) and then with IBM, serving as the Information Technology Team Lead. She is now the Technical Services Team Lead at Kyndryl in Pelham, NC.



Shanti Sethi '93

Shanti Sethi '93 was another trailblazer on the high seas. When she joined the Navy in 1993, the combat exclusion law was still in effect, limiting her options. However, the Exclusion Act was lifted by the time she became an officer. In 2010, she took command of the guided-missile destroyer, USS Decatur, becoming the only Indian-American woman and 15th female officer to command a major U.S. combat warship. She was also the first female commander of a U.S. naval vessel to visit India.

Being in the Navy taught Shanti not to sell herself short or disguise her ambition. "You can't be what

somebody else thinks you should be,” Shanti says. “You really have to become comfortable in yourself and say, “This is who I am, and I can succeed as who I am. I don’t have to pretend or try to be someone else.”

Shanti served as Vice President Kamala Harris’ Executive Secretary in 2022 and Director for Talent Management and Recruiting for the National Security Council in 2023. She now does executive coaching, helping leaders navigate work and life transitions.



Jennifer (Cummings) Ledbetter '88

When **Jennifer (Cummings) Ledbetter '88** graduated from Norwich in 1988, the university did not offer a program for Coast Guard commissions. As a result, she had to attend Direct Commission Officer Training School. In August 1990, Jennifer became the first Norwich woman to be commissioned in the USCG.

In 2021, Norwich adopted the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary University Program (AUP) to prepare Corps and Civilian students for careers in the Coast Guard. Upwards of 70% of graduates of the program are nationally commissioned into the U.S. Coast Guard. **Hannah Shaner '24** became the first Norwich woman to graduate from the program and commission.



Hannah Shaner '24

As a Criminal Justice major, Hannah not only achieved her MCV designation but was also honored with The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War award. This accolade was bestowed for her exceptional display of patriotism and remarkable service to the community. Hannah was also a stand-out in the athletic realm. She capped her Norwich swimming career as the conference champion in the 200 IM and was a driving force behind the team’s back-to-back conference championships.

For more than 200 years, Norwich University graduates have safeguarded our citizens and allies on the land and sea, at home, and abroad. Since 1985, Norwich women have made their mark in history, shattering barriers in the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

To read previous posts on women in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, see **[Semper Fi on the Hill](#)**, profiling Margaret “Meg” Reardon '85 and Adrienne Evertson '90, the first Norwich women to commission in the U.S. Marine Corps, and **[First in Combat](#)**, spotlighting Jana (Hurst) Raymond '90, Norwich’s first female Naval Aviator.

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

SEPTEMBER 7, 2024

NU WKG, ISSUE #48

Lifting off from Norwich: Shaeleigh Strange '22

Established 200 years after Norwich University was founded—and 45 years after [Diane Gionet '75](#) became the first NU woman commissioned in the U.S. Air Force—the U.S. Space Force became the sixth branch of the U.S. military in 2019. Space Force is the coequal sister service within the Department of the Air Force.



The Space Force is responsible for securing “our Nation’s interests in, from, and to space.” The motto “Semper Supra” means “always above,” representing the service’s role in establishing, maintaining and preserving U.S. freedom of operations in the ultimate high ground. The Space Force logo is a delta shape with the North Star at the center to serve as a guiding light while the service works to secure the space domain. Space Force personnel are titled “Guardians” and are counterparts to Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen.



Norwich University’s Air Force ROTC Detachment 867 commissioned its first female Space Force Guardian, **Shaeleigh Strange** in 2022. As a mechanical engineering major, Shaeleigh wanted to pursue her passion for engineering in the military. While at Norwich, she participated in women’s club ice hockey and volunteered as a math tutor. During the summer months, she helped recruit students to attend Norwich.

Lieutenant Strange’s first assignment was to the Space Systems Command - Innovation & Prototyping Acquisition Delta at Kirkland Air Force Base in New Mexico. There she was tasked to fill spacecraft procurement gaps within the Space Test Program (STP). STP is the primary provider of spaceflight for the U.S. Department of Defense space and technology community.

Since its first launch in 1965, the STP program has deployed more than 300 missions.



Starting early in the new STP's approach to buying satellite buses capable of carrying multiple experiments to orbit, Shaeleigh was the Mission Manager for STP Sat-8, a 12U CubeSat slated to launch in 2026. The cube-shaped nanosatellites are spacecraft sized in standardized units or Us. Her efforts in enabling the CubeSat launch will help ensure space experiments can be hosted on free-flyer satellite buses.

Shaeleigh is now a member of the Navigation Technology Satellite-3 (NTS-3) team, the Department of Defense's first experimental, integrated navigation satellite system in nearly 50 years.

Following in the footsteps of Diane Gionet and all Norwich women commissioned before her, Shaeleigh and other Space Force Guardians are leading the way on the vast frontier of space.

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Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

SEPTEMBER 14, 2024

NU WKG, ISSUE #49

Mothers and Daughters: Legacy Families on the Hill

Legacy families—those with multiple generations of Norwich graduates—are a special and proud alumni group. We can trace legacy relationships back more than a century, however Norwich daughters attending their mother's alma mater began much more recently.

The legacy of **JoAnn (Murphy) Kelley '74** and her daughters—Meegan '05, Jennifer '06, and Margaret '10—paints a rich, multigenerational connection to Norwich University, intertwined with family, education, and service.



JoAnn (Murphy) Kelley '74

Their individual journeys, though unique, are deeply rooted in Norwich's history and values.

JoAnn's story began in 1970 when she chose Vermont College because the curriculum was well organized, and student tour guides were friendly and helpful. "I just felt comfortable," JoAnn says. "It was a good fit for me. I felt safe and welcomed." Enrolled in a 2-year elementary education program, she saw her future in teaching.

Norwich University and Vermont College (VC) had a close relationship, as did their students. VC women regularly attended dances and other social events at Norwich, resulting in many marriages between VC and NU students. In the 1970s, both schools faced declining student enrollment. The emergence of community colleges eroded interest in VC and Norwich was impacted by a trend toward co-education and anti-military sentiment during the Vietnam War.

The two institutions merged in 1972, the same year JoAnn completed her associate degree at Vermont College. With Norwich's doors open to women, she decided to continue her education in a 4-year degree program. At the Junior Ring Dance, she met her future husband, Mike Kelley, also NU '74. She graduated with a bachelor's in



Jennifer Kelley '06



Meegan (Kelley) Henson '05

education in 1974 and in the 50 years since then, she and Mike raised five children, four of whom attended Norwich.

Jennifer Kelley, the oldest of JoAnn and Mike's children, grew up at West Point where her father taught. It was a dream come true for Jennifer to attend Norwich. As a civilian student, her experience was not a traditional one, but it shaped her deeply. Jennifer's involvement in the nursing program and student support gave her a profound sense of belonging which she continues to cherish in her professional life as a mental health nurse in Vermont. "It's a community that lasts a lifetime," she reflects, grateful for the professional connections and friendships she formed at Norwich.

Meegan (Kelley) Henson decided early on that she wanted to be part of the structured environment of a military academy. Norwich's size, traditions and small school feeling drew her in. Initially an engineering major, Meegan found her true calling in environmental science with a minor in engineering. Active in various campus activities, including the Corps of Cadets, Maroon and Gold, and band, she thrived at Norwich.



Margaret (Kelley) Thomas '10 & M'17

During her junior year, her father was offered the position of Commandant of Cadets at Norwich and her family relocated to Northfield. She spent the summer between her junior and senior years engaging in unique experiences, from archeological digs in Greece to ROTC training in Hawaii. Following graduation in 2005, Meegan entered the Medical Service Corps, where she met her husband, a West Point graduate who had also majored in environmental engineering. She served for 11 years in medical logistics and operations.

Following her discharge, Meegan and her husband moved to Florida and started a family. Now a Supply Chain and Human Resources Manager for the family business, she credits her success to the adaptability and communication skills she developed at Norwich. "NU taught me how to work with anyone, from any background, military or civilian," she says.

Margaret (Kelley) Thomas '10 & M'17 felt a strong pull toward history and higher education. She attended Norwich as a civilian majoring in history. While there, she played a significant role in shaping civilian student life including serving on the South Hall Planning Committee, engaging civilian students in campus traditions like WinterCarnival and the Junior Ring Dance. She too, married an alumnus, Jonathan Thomas '11. Her time at Norwich fueled her passion for higher education, leading her to return for her master's degree in business administration.

As with all her siblings, she continues to be a lifelong learner and is actively pursuing her doctorate in educational leadership. Margaret and her family moved to central Florida ten years ago. She currently works as the Director of Assessment & Testing at Seminole State College and sees her future in leadership within higher education. “Norwich taught me resilience, leadership skills, and the importance of giving back,” Margaret says. “I look forward to making a lasting impact in higher education and aspire to serve as a college president one day.”

JoAnn Kelley and her daughters are a testament to the lasting influence of Norwich University. As with many legacy families, JoAnn’s experiences at Norwich influenced her children’s lives and careers, and created a deep connected to the values and community that defined their paths.

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!

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SECRETARY OF THE ARMY WASHINGTON

Cadets, Faculty, and Alumni of Norwich University:

It is my pleasure to congratulate you as you celebrate 50 years of trailblazing women in the Norwich University Corps of Cadets. In keeping with Norwich's tradition and reputation for pioneering new frontiers, it is no surprise that the school known as "the birthplace of ROTC" would be one of the first to incorporate women into their Corps of Cadets.

Norwich was instrumental in setting the conditions for women to serve at all levels of the U.S. military, laying the practical foundation for the service academies and producing strong leaders who served as mentors and inspiration for cohorts of military women. These conditions ensured that future generations of women could realize their full potential, serve their nation, and lead with distinction.

From the first days of Lima Company and the women who joined the Corps in 1974 to the more than 5,500 women who have graduated since, Norwich women have faced any challenge and boldly said, "Essayons!" I am proud that many of these women chose to serve in the Army, [starting with Donna Rix](#), who commissioned in 1979. As all positions and ranks within our military opened to women, [Norwich graduates like Katie Hathaway](#), class of 2012, were among the first women in the Army to volunteer to lead soldiers in combat units.

Congratulations to Norwich University and the Norwich women around the world on achieving this historic milestone. There is no doubt that Norwich University and its graduates will continue to make history and set themselves apart as trailblazers for our military and our nation.

Sincerely,

Christine E. Wormuth