



# Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

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## Taking Chances: Linnea Peterson '78



After being accepted to Norwich in the summer of 1974, Linnea Peterson received a call from Colonel John Wadsworth asking if she was interested in joining the Corps of Cadets. "I said, 'sure, I'll do that', though I didn't know what I was getting into until I showed up in August," Lin recalls. The 'aha' moment came at convocation when President Hart said, "After 150 years, Norwich University welcomes four young women into the freshmen class."

Lin found Norwich stressful at first. "It was a double education because you have both academics and the military side." Each year at brought new 'firsts.' Women had never held positions of rank, been platoon leaders, or commanded a company. Lin decided she really liked the military lifestyle. She was elected Class Officer and served on the Honor Committee. In her junior year she was chosen to be a platoon sergeant and in her senior year, a company commander.



She was enrolled in the Air Force ROTC program when she met her future husband, Jim Westberg '76 who was commissioning in the Marine Corps. Lin switched gears and began pursuing Marine officer commissioning. A week after Lin and Jim returned from their honeymoon, she arrived at Marine Officer Candidate School in Quantico, Virginia with 50 other women. "I realized that was another first, that no women had gone through Marine OCS integrated totally with the men." The physical challenges were harder. Lin dislocated her knee and after rehabilitating, she decided to return to the Air Force where she was commissioned in 1980.

Lin applied to be the woman liaison officer while at Air Force Officer Training School but her squadron commander said he wanted her to

apply to be the Wing Commander, which was the top position. When Lin expressed skepticism that she was ready for the job he said, "I've been watching you for six weeks and that's definitely what you should do." "That was a huge confidence builder," Lin says and when she was chosen for the job, she decided she wanted to be that kind of support for other women.

Lin went on to train as an Executive Officer and was assigned to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, where her husband was stationed. Lin worked in the B-52 maintenance squadron, became a General's Aide and Protocol Officer. From Guam the Westbergs moved to Denver where Jim began a civilian career and Lin worked in an Air Force training squadron as Squadron Commander. She was able to cross train into contracts and became a Contracting Officer working on major systems acquisitions. In 1988, after eight years of service, Lin left active duty to raise her family. She went on to have a career in business and subsequently education.

Lin is proud to be a legacy graduate with five family members who attended Norwich. "I think my military and civilian careers were easy because of my Norwich experience. Self-confidence creates respect. I wasn't born with that; Norwich developed it in me."

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

In 1972, Vermont College merged with Norwich University. 2024 marks the **50th anniversary** of the first women to live on the Northfield campus and the first to join the NU Corps of Cadets—  
two years prior to the US Service Academies!

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**Share your Norwich experience in the Women Kicking Glass Oral History Project!**

Call 1-866-456-1993 or email [customerservice@publishingconcepts.com](mailto:customerservice@publishingconcepts.com) for a personalized link to share your story and photos.

**The deadline for contributions is January 19, 2024.**