

SHE SERVED

Celebrating Women Veterans

MAGAZINE



INSIDE ISSUE 10:
35 WOMEN WARRIORS OF THE COMBAT
VETERANS MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION
TELL THEIR STORIES OF SERVICE,
SACRIFICE AND STRENGTH



DON'T WAIT ANOTHER DAY TO CALL AND ASK FOR HELP.

VA Resources for Women

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Veteran Crisis
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988 (press 1)

Caregiver
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Hotline:
1-800-827-1000

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HOST A VETERAN PHOTO SHOOT

To host a **She Served** event visit:
www.sheservedinitiative.org

General criteria: The space needs to be indoors, and approximately 20x20' in size, with at least an 8' ceiling height (preferably 10') with electrical outlets.

Photoshoot Details: Photoshoots are reserved for female veterans only. Each Veteran will get a 30-minute professional photoshoot. They can bring props or mementos to be used during the session.

As the host you should be aware that each Veteran that wants to participate will need to fill out an intake form of basic information, provide a short biography of their military career and post military life, and provide a clear photo of themselves in uniform (their official service photo is best, but other photos of them in uniform are acceptable if it is clear and in focus so that their face is recognizable). I can comfortably accommodate approximately 10 women a day if the timeslots are scheduled in advance.

Expenses: I do not charge the Veteran or the host a photoshoot fee. However, as you can imagine I do have expenses. I ask the host to provide suitable lodging, air fare and/or reimbursement for gas, and my meals during the photoshoot. Visit <https://sheservedinitiative.org/hosting/> for all the details then contact us to be a host!

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At the **She Served Initiative**, we're always grateful for the opportunity to work with repeat hosts—especially when they're as passionate and dedicated as Kathryn Wilgus. Kathryn, Vice President of Villagers for Veterans, has long been one of our most valued supporters. You may remember the She Served magazine special edition we created in collaboration with Villagers for Veterans, celebrating women Veterans with powerful stories and imagery.

In addition to her leadership with Villagers for Veterans, Kathryn is a full member of the **Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association®** (CVMA®), where she remains actively involved. When she learned that the 2025 CVMA National Convention would be held in Athens, Georgia, she saw an opportunity—and reached out to bring She Served along.

Thanks to her initiative, we had the incredible honor of photographing 35 female members of the CVMA during the convention. To say this was a powerful experience would be an

understatement.

These women represent the strength, resilience, and deep camaraderie that defines the entire Veteran community. Each woman we met brought her own story of service and sacrifice—from combat zones to community advocacy—and it was clear that their commitment to each other remains strong long after their military service ends.

What stood out most was the unwavering sense of patriotism and pride that filled the entire convention. The camaraderie and support from fellow members only deepened the energy and reinforced a powerful sense of unity and belonging among all Veterans.

Our team left Athens feeling honored and inspired. This photoshoot was more than just portraits—it was about visibility, voice, and respect for women who've worn the uniform and served on the front lines.

We're grateful to Kathryn and the entire CVMA community for allowing us to shine a light on these incredible women.

Martina Schmidt



Thirty-five members of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association®, representing chapters from across the United States.



Celebrating Women Veterans

Anita

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Anita Jackson served in the United States Marine Corps from November 1988 to July 2000 as an aviation operations specialist. Her role was crucial in ensuring mission readiness and safe flight operations across multiple units and duty stations. From coordinating airfield services to compiling flight logs and managing technical data for air missions, Anita's administrative and logistical precision ensured aircraft could safely execute their operations. One of her proudest achievements was developing a mishap database at MCAS Cherry Point North Carolina, that allowed her unit to analyze trends and implement preventive measures, reducing risk and saving lives. She also broke barriers as one of three women to qualify as a C-12 crew chief at MCAS El Toro, California, completing flight training outside her regular squadron duties.

Anita supported a six-month WestPac deployment with a F/A-18D squadron that included assignments in Japan, Singapore, and Alaska. Her most valuable takeaway from the Marine Corps is the dual-leadership philosophy of mission accomplishment and troop welfare—principles she has carried into every aspect of her personal and professional life.

Anita's connection to the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®) began serendipitously in 2009 when a road trip led her to a hotel full of Veterans who welcomed her as one of their own. Years later, after a reintroduction to the group, she joined and quickly became deeply involved, eventually serving as the Arkansas State Public Relations Officer. In a full-circle moment, she realized the same firepit gathering that introduced her to the CVMA® years earlier was now part of her story as a member. Through the organization, she found the camaraderie and purpose that echoed her days in uniform. Now living in Arkansas near her mother and son, Anita is a proud mother to two accomplished adult children and comes from a long lineage of United States Navy and Marine Corps Veterans. She transitioned from military service into law enforcement, working across city, county, state, and federal agencies before medically retiring in 2018. Today, she continues to serve Veterans as a VA Disability Rater.

If you've ever heard the phrase, "Assuming I am like most women is your first mistake," then you already have a glimpse into what sets women Veterans apart. We didn't start out this way—military service transforms us. Through discipline, hardship, and duty, we become warriors. While we remain loving, feminine, and nurturing, we also carry within us a fierce warrior spirit—loyal not only to those we love but to those who cannot defend themselves.

What the public should understand is to never underestimate a woman Veteran. She may be the kindest, most soft-spoken person in the room, but behind her eyes is someone who has been trained, tested, and hardened by experience. Her confidence isn't arrogance—it's earned. It's the kind that comes from standing tall through adversity and knowing exactly what she's capable of.



WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“Life is too short
to be unhappy.”



ROAD NAME: CRAY-ON
CHAPTER: AR 7-3
SUPPORT MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"You alone are enough.
You have nothing to
prove to anybody."
~ Bell Lujan



ROAD NAME: BELLE
CHAPTER: GA 25-4
AUXILIARY MEMBER

Bell

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Bell Lujan served in the United States Army from 1986 to 1990 as a Motor Transport Operator (88M). During her time in service, she hauled M1 Abrams tanks and critical supplies to training locations, participating in demanding day and night missions at Fort Irwin. One of her most memorable moments came when her vehicle ran out of fuel mid-mission. With determination and teamwork, she and her battle buddy siphoned fuel from an auxiliary tank to complete the assignment, proving that grit and ingenuity often make the difference. Her service extended beyond traditional training exercises. In 1988, she supported the massive wildfire response during the Yellowstone fires by transporting essential supplies from Fort Carson, Colorado. For Bell, the most significant takeaway from her time in uniform was the honor of serving her country.

After leaving active duty, Bell continued her commitment to the military community by supporting her husband, Gary “Coolshot” Lujan, through his five combat deployments during his Army career. That same commitment led her to the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®), where she joined as an Auxiliary member. While others might choose a Supporter role, she felt called to stand beside her husband just as she had during his deployments. Within the CVMA®, Bell found not only purpose but also family. She has contributed to numerous Veteran support missions and served in several leadership roles, including more than four years as the Auxiliary National President.

Family remains the cornerstone of Bell's life. Married to Gary for 35 years, they have two children, three grandchildren, and a shared love for motorcycle riding. Now retired from a career in insurance, Bell enjoys her time riding her trike alongside Gary and fellow CVMA® members, giving back to her community, and mentoring others within her local Auxiliary chapter.

Bell wants the public to know that women Veterans are capable of anything they set their minds to. Though diminutive in size, she drove massive 18-wheel trucks during her service and changed the tires herself, refusing to let gender define her capabilities.

To the women Veterans who could use some guidance, Bell offers this: don't be afraid to reach out and make sure you only surround yourself with people who love and support you. Your sister Veterans are here for you, you don't have to be alone.



Brittany

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Brittany Welts served as a Human Resource Specialist in the United States Army National Guard 2012 to 2017. She managed personnel records, awards, pay, and benefits to ensure proper support for soldiers and their families. During her deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, she created a battalion-wide tracking system for personnel records, review periods, and certifications. She also taught a course to non-commissioned officers on writing military awards and developed a step-by-step guide that significantly increased approval rates after identifying frequent submission errors.

Completing the Army Basic Instructor Course was a pivotal experience that improved Brittany's communication skills and expanded her ability to train others. Another important takeaway was learning how to face her faults and work with them. She developed a new perspective on problem-solving, which helped her understand others more deeply and introduced her to the broader world beyond her home state of New Hampshire.

Today, Brittany works as a case manager with the United Veterans Benefits Agency, helping veterans navigate the VA claims process. She assists clients navigating the Veteran Administration (VA) process, benefit-related issues, and ensures that Veterans receive the support they've earned. She thrives in making sure each veteran feels seen, heard, and supported throughout the process.

Brittany joined the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® to stay connected with others who understand military life. What began as a need to stay close to her military family evolved into finding a welcoming, supportive space where her story was heard. She now hopes to share that story to support other Veterans, particularly those facing mental health challenges.

Activities that Brittany participates in include events like run-to-homebase, retreats hosted by Project New Hope, and Project Refit. She is passionate about ending the stigma around mental health and helping Veterans access resources. She enjoys crafting, paddleboarding, LEGOs, travel, and being part of high-energy community events. The public should understand that women Veterans are unique, not because of limitations, but because of perseverance. For a long time, Brittany has known that many feel like they don't fit in any longer. While women make up a small fraction of those who serve, they continue to break barriers through tenacity, a desire to serve a greater cause, and a deep need for sisterhood.

To women adjusting to life after the military, Brittany offers this perspective: give yourself grace. Whether the change is mental, physical, or environmental, it takes time to adjust—and that's okay. After years of living one way, anyone would need time to transition. She emphasizes the "power in the pause," encouraging others to care for themselves, ask for help when needed, and remember that their worth is not diminished by the challenges they face. "You matter," she says simply—and she means it.





WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“Empathy is the
antidote to shame.”

~ Brène Brown

ROAD NAME: DORA
CHAPTER: NH 5-1
FULL MEMBER

Carla

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Carla Cavanagh began her military career in the United States Army Reserve in 1983, serving nine years before transferring to the Army National Guard in 1992, where she completed a distinguished 31-year career, totaling 40 years of military service. She served as a combat medic and flight medic. Her responsibilities included providing care, conducting training for Ohio medics and managing National Guard soldiers; physical exams. She taught Combat Lifesaving and completed the Master Resilience Trainer program. As a Physician Assistant, she was commissioned and assigned to the Army Medical Specialist Corps, responsible for health readiness of flight and support staff while maintaining a full-time job as a civilian firefighter-paramedic.

Deployed to Honduras then Saudi Arabia during the Persian Gulf War and Iraq, Carla received many awards. Self-awareness, discipline, integrity, and a sense of patriotism were her significant takeaways.

Carla's family includes her daughter Clare and partner Mike. She credits Mike's support during the final years of her service with helping her finish strong. His support is ongoing, and he attends Veteran events with her even though he is not a veteran. Carla is proud to have many family members who have served or are currently serving.

Since retiring, Carla has continued to work as a Physician Assistant in integrative medicine and is a licensed massage therapist, specializing in trauma release and myofascial techniques. She works with Veterans and first responders.

Carla was drawn to the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® as an avid rider and a supporter of Veteran initiatives. She participates in the annual Tour of Honor motorcycle ride (<https://www.tourofhonor.com>) honoring American heroes by visiting memorials across the U.S. from April through October. Mike and Carla also host fellow riders through (<https://bikerbunks.com>) and Bunk-a-Biker (<https://www.bunkabiker.com>). They enjoy welcoming fellow riders into their home, embracing the belief that a stranger is just a friend they haven't met yet.

Patriotically, Carla has served as a public election official for several years. She is passionate about her family and motorcycles. She rides on- and off-road and enjoys riding with women and veterans, especially on bike tours.

Carla wants the public to understand that women are Veterans first. While career options were once limited, women have served in vital roles across every conflict and war. Military service isn't for everyone, and that includes both men and women. As advice to women transitioning to civilian life, Carla has personally learned the importance of leading by example. Don't be discouraged by those who doubt your abilities, acknowledge that being the only woman, or one of few, can come with added scrutiny. Carla suggests focusing on personal strengths instead of comparing yourself to others. Growth is ongoing and every day is a school day.



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Well behaved women
seldom make history."
~ Laurel Thatcher
Ulrich



ROAD NAME: HURRICANE
CHAPTER: OH 12-3
FULL MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent."

~ Madeleine Albright

ROAD NAME: BIONIC SARGE

CHAPTER: FL 20-4

SUPPORT MEMBER



Charlotte

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Charlotte Wilson served 11 years in the United States Army as a member of the Women's Army Corps. During the Vietnam era, she worked as an operating room technician, scrubbing in and circulating during surgical procedures for service members wounded in combat. Within the operating room, Wilson witnessed innovation born out of necessity. Faced with devastating injuries, surgical teams developed new procedures on the spot. Surgeons would go home, create a medical device, bring it in to be sterilized, and use it in the next operation. Many of those life- and limb-saving tools and techniques are still used today.

Wilson is the daughter of a World War II Veteran who served in the Army Air Forces and was stationed in the Australian bush. After his death, she discovered his military records and learned he had received two Bronze Stars—something he had never spoken of. She now understands how common it was for WWII Veterans to remain silent about their experiences.

Now retired, Wilson continues her lifelong commitment to service. She actively supports both her fellow Veterans and the broader community. Her volunteer work includes AIDS Action, Boston's Newbury Street community, Women's Health Care, the AIDS Walk, and the Harbor to the Bay 126-mile bike ride.

She also serves as a Home Depot Veteran liaison for beautification projects at the VA hospital and at a women Veterans' transition home in the Boston area. She is involved in suicide prevention initiatives, the Villagers for Veterans organization, Ashley's Cottage and Ashley's House.

For years, Charlotte believed she couldn't join the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA) since she hadn't served in-country—until Full Member Kathryn Wilgus informed her about Support Membership and sponsored her. Now an active member, Charlotte is grateful to be part of a group where veterans truly help Veterans.

Charlotte is passionate about supporting her military sisters. While she admits she doesn't always have all the answers, she says, "I'll always find a way to help." Her personal "wind therapy" is motorcycling, and she rides across the country.

To the public, she offers this reminder: "Women served. We spilled blood and died too—right next to our brothers. Acknowledge us. Help us. Thank us."

Her message to fellow women Veterans is equally powerful: "Everyone has different issues. It's important we listen to each other and make sure every woman Veteran knows her benefits and gets enrolled in the VA. It can be a minefield, but seek help. Knowing someone is in your corner matters."



Celebrating Women Veterans

Cheryl

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Cheryl Benoit served in the United States Army from 1984–2015 as a supply sergeant and later as a property book officer. She managed the procurement, distribution, and accountability of supplies and equipment. As a Property Book Officer, she maintained equipment accountability for a battalion and four subordinate units. She was known for maintaining strict accountability standards to ensure unit readiness.

Deployments for Cheryl included: Saudi Arabia in 1990 in support of Operation Desert Storm and to Kuwait in 2003 for Operation Iraqi Freedom. These experiences broadened her understanding of international military operations and strengthened her connection to fellow soldiers. After retiring from the Army, she worked for the federal government and later retired from that role as well. She now spends time with family and plans to travel.

Cheryl's involvement with the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® began after meeting a fellow soldier during a ride. She applied to her local chapter and now serves as Chapter Commander of CVMA® AR 7-5. She helps coordinate rides, fundraising events, and outreach efforts to support Veterans across the region. Cheryl finds continued purpose in this work and values the connection it brings to others with shared experiences.

Family has been central to Cheryl's life since 1995, when she and her husband, Eric, began their life together. They have seven children—five sons and two daughters. One of their sons passed away ten years ago. They also have eight grandchildren, one of whom passed away shortly after birth. Cheryl openly acknowledges these losses and credits her family's strength and unity for carrying them through grief. Four of the grandchildren live in Wisconsin, and the others are in Arkansas. She enjoys planning road trips to visit them.

Riding motorcycles, participating in events that combine travel with service, and spending time with family are Cheryl's primary passions. She enjoys both on- and off-road rides and regularly joins Veterans and women riders on tours.

Cheryl believes the public needs to recognize that women are Veterans. Although women make up a smaller percentage of the military, they perform the same duties as men and are held to the same standards. To women who may be struggling, Cheryl offers this advice: "Remember, we women are very strong. Even though it may not seem like it at times, the strength is always there. I like to be positive about things. No matter how bad things may be, I always try to look for the bright side of things."



WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“Women, whether subtly or vociferously, have always been a tremendous power in the destiny of the world.” ~ Eleanor Roosevelt



ROAD NAME: TURTLE
CHAPTER: AR 7-5
FULL MEMBER

PATCH ON MY BACK

MY VEST IS FULL OF PATCHES
BOTH OLD AND NEW,
IT TELLS A STORY OF THE PLACES THAT I'VE BEEN
AND THINGS THAT I DO;
MOST ON THE FRONT AND LAYERED IN A STACK,
BUT NONE TELL THE STORY LIKE THE PATCH ON MY BACK.
I EARNED IT IN BATTLE AS A COMBAT VET,
IT'S A CONSTANT REMINDER TO NEVER FORGET;
THE FIRST THING YOU WILL NOTICE IS THE SKULL AND SPADE,
A BLEAK REMINDER THAT THE DEBT OF WAR IS NEVER PAID;
EVERY COLOR HAS A MEANING AND A STORY TO TELL,
AND EVERY STORY HAS A MEANING WE KNOW ALL TOO WELL;
TO SHOW UNITY AS WARRIORS WE USE THE MILITARY GOLD,
FOR EVERY BRANCH OF SERVICE BOTH NEW AND OLD;
RED REPRESENTS THE BLOOD THAT MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS HAVE BLED,
NOT ALL KNOWN BY ME, BUT A TEAR FOR EACH I HAVE SHED;
WITH HEAVY HEARTS WE DISPLAY THE SOLEMN COLOR BLACK,
FOR THE MISSING,
THE PRISONERS
AND THOSE WHO NEVER MAKE IT BACK;
YES, I KNOW THAT IT IS JUST CLOTH AND THREAD,
BUT BECAUSE OF WHAT IT MEANS, I WILL RESPECT IT UNTIL THE DAY THAT
I AM DEAD!

This powerful poem, CVMA Patch on My Back, modified and updated by Robert "Bocephus" Passen (FM9592), is a tribute to the deep meaning behind the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®) back patch. More than just a piece of fabric, the patch represents a veteran's service, sacrifice, and continued camaraderie. The poem describes how each color and symbol—especially the skull and spade—tells a story of combat, remembrance, and unity among those who've served. It honors the bloodshed, the fallen, the missing, and the emotional weight carried by combat Veterans. Through vivid imagery and heartfelt words, the poem reflects the pride, respect, and unwavering bond shared by CVMA members, making clear that while the patch is made of cloth and thread, its meaning is sacred.

RIDING FOR CAMARADERIE AND PURPOSE: COMBAT VETERANS MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION

The thunder of engines. The open road stretching endlessly ahead. The camaraderie forged in service, now carried forward on two wheels. For the men and women of the **Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®)**, motorcycles are more than just machines—they're a bridge between past duty and present mission.

Founded to provide support and camaraderie, CVMA is an international wide nonprofit dedicated to giving back to those who have served. More than just a riding association, its members—Veterans from all branches of service—use their passion for motorcycles to reconnect, raise awareness about Veteran issues, and drive charitable efforts that support their fellow warriors. Whether it's organizing benefit rides, assisting Veterans in need, or simply offering a place of understanding and solidarity, the CVMA is committed to honoring the sacrifices of those who donned the uniform.

Operating under the guidelines of a 501(c)(19) nonprofit, the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, Inc. is fully dedicated to charitable initiatives. It makes distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt under Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, ensuring resources are directed where they matter most. Remaining strictly non-partisan, CVMA does not endorse political candidates or make campaign contributions—its focus remains solely on Veteran welfare and support.

At the heart of CVMA lies a powerful set of objectives:

- **Camaraderie:** Strengthening bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood among combat Veterans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces.
- **Advocacy & Awareness:** Shedding light on the challenges faced by POWs, MIAs, and Veterans suffering from PTSD, TBI, and other combat-related medical conditions.
- **Support & Charity:** Strengthening Veteran organizations and improving communications between motorcycle associations and Veterans' groups.
- **Public Engagement:** Changing perceptions by promoting motorcycle riding as a positive and constructive activity in the eyes of the public, media, and law enforcement.

Through these guiding principles, CVMA continues to uphold the spirit of service, ensuring that no veteran ever rides alone—both in life and on the road. Whether roaring down the highway in formation or lending a hand to those in need, CVMA members prove that duty, devotion, sisterhood and brotherhood don't end at discharge. They simply take on new roads. ~ Mason

Robert 'MASON' McCloud, National Public Relations Officer Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®)



Jasmine "Rosie" Smierciak, BJ "Kardes" Call and Jonathan "Cap" Hoort.



Mark "Crank" Collum and Jaimie "Gypsy" Hill.

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"Success is not final,
failure is not fatal:
It's the courage to
continue that counts."
~ Winston Churchill



ROAD NAME: CATCH 22
CHAPTER: MO 4-11
FULL MEMBER

Christina

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Currently stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, Command Sgt. Major **Christina Schoener** leads the 787th Military Police Battalion, overseeing five One Station Unit Training Companies. These units are responsible for transforming civilians into military police professionals over a rigorous 19-week course. Her journey through the ranks has included roles such as training NCO, platoon sergeant, senior drill sergeant, and multiple sergeant major positions. Throughout her career, she has exemplified leadership, mentorship and dedication.

Schoener's decision to join the Army was deeply personal. "I joined the Army as a promise to my uncle," she said. "He served honorably in Germany and unfortunately suffered from an incurable disease and was forced to retire from military service." Schoener had followed in her uncle's footsteps in many ways, including playing basketball. "I gave up my basketball scholarship to join the Army, a promise I made him days before his passing," she said.

Christina served in Operation Enduring Freedom, earning the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Combat Star and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal. Of her service, she reflects, "It's not about the individual — it's about the team and building strong, lasting relationships with the men and women to your left and right."

Even while on active duty, Christina dedicates much of her personal time to the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®), drawn by its mission to support fellow Veterans. "Although still on active duty, I give the majority of my free time to the CVMA® and get out within the community to be seen — and to let others know there is support available."

She and her husband, soon-to-be retired Master Sgt. Brice Schoener, have two teenage daughters. Christina balances a demanding military career with family life and extensive community involvement. She coaches a U15 soccer team and supports Waynesville High School through a military partnership program. Her entrepreneurial spirit also shines through a business that supports Pink Veterans, a breast cancer awareness team led by 1st Sgt. (Ret.) Barbara Balcom.

When asked what the public should know about women Veterans, she responds with characteristic humility and humor: "Women Veterans will kick ass, take names, and you'll never hear about them; stay humble."

Though she hasn't transitioned to civilian life yet, her advice to others rings true: "I'm not a civilian yet... give me all of the advice!"



Darci

BY TONYA GAGE

Darci Dean served in the United States Air Force from May 17, 1995, to October 1, 1998, as a member of Security Forces. Her duties began at Lackland Air Force Base, where she completed both basic and law enforcement training, followed by Air Base Ground Defense training at Fort Dix, New Jersey. She was first stationed at Vance AFB, Oklahoma, where she carried out flight line security, base entry control, and law enforcement duties. During a temporary assignment at San Vito Air Station in Italy, she expanded her role to include desk sergeant and armorer. Her final duty station was Osan Air Base in South Korea, where she again performed flight line and base security duties while immersing herself in the culture.

While she didn't serve in a combat zone, Darci earned the NATO Medal for supporting operations related to the former Yugoslavia during her assignment in Italy. San Vito served as a staging ground for multi-branch deployments, making it a pivotal point in NATO missions.

Darci initially joined the military to leave her small Oregon hometown and earn money for college, but her time in service instilled a deep sense of patriotism and pride. With a long family tradition of military service, she now watches her daughter continue that legacy in the Air Force.

Her connection to service continues through the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®), which she joined after seeing the impact of Veterans helping veterans. What began as an auxiliary membership evolved into full support membership, complete with her own motorcycle.

Today, Darci is a Head Start preschool teacher, preparing children from underserved communities for kindergarten. She supports families beyond the classroom by connecting them with vital resources, from parenting tips to healthcare.

A proud wife, mother, and new grandmother, Darci fills her free time with camping, mountain trail riding, and travel—having visited 49 of the United States.

To those unfamiliar with women Veterans, Darci wants to make one thing clear: "We served too." And to fellow women Veterans adjusting to civilian life, her advice is simple—"Find your passion."





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Your struggles do not
define you but they can
refine you."

ROAD NAME: ROGUE
CHAPTER: UT 49-4
SUPPORT MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“Never look down on
others, unless you
are lifting them up.” ~
Jesse Jackson



ROAD NAME: FEISTY VIXEN
CHAPTER: MS 44-1
FULL MEMBER

Dona

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Dona Marie White served in the United States Air Force from 1994 to 2014, where she specialized in personnel and human resources. During her deployment to Al Udeid, Qatar, from October 2003 to February 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, she was part of the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing's Personnel Support for Contingency Operations (PERSCO). Her role was vital as she ensured total force accountability, updated and maintained deployment records, and coordinated with home units to manage personnel files. Most significantly, she took part in two casualty notifications, ensuring families were informed with care and dignity. Dona reflects that her time in the military shaped her leadership philosophy: train your team well and trust them to complete the mission. This mindset has helped her succeed in college and professional settings outside the military.

Today, Dona remains active in the Veteran community through her involvement with the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA). “I like the CVMA mission of vets helping vets,” she said. “I wanted to be part of an organization that helps Veterans in the community. It has helped me make connections and find a sense of family.”

She regularly participates in events such as fundraisers and burial escorts. One experience that stands out is being part of the escort for The Wall That Heals—a traveling replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial—which deeply honored the memory of those who served. Outside of her advocacy work, Dona enjoys traveling, riding her motorcycle, and spending time with friends and family. Her commitment to service now extends to her community involvement and support for fellow Veterans navigating civilian life. She encourages women veterans to tap into available resources, such as those offered by the U.S. Department of Veteran Administration, and to seek support networks online and locally.

“Your service doesn’t have to define you, but it is part of you—and you should be proud of it,” she said.

Dona also reminds the public that women Veterans serve under the same conditions as their male counterparts and deserve equal respect.



Isabel

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Isabel Lira's journey in the United States Marine Corps began on Nov. 18, 1986, and spanned three decades until her retirement on Dec. 1, 2016. While her official title was supply administration specialist, her responsibilities extended far beyond the basics. "I requisitioned and tracked incoming parts, received and distributed them to units so they could repair major items," she said. From 2005 to 2007, she led a team of eight Marines as the SNCOIC of supply in a maintenance battalion, overseeing operations that helped improve repair turnaround times.

During a six-month deployment to Iraq, Isabel served as the SNCOIC of customer service, securing mission-essential items that weren't yet cataloged in the standard supply system. "My job was to teach my Marines to be better at their jobs," she said. "That's what leadership meant to me."

Looking back on her military career, Isabel says confidence was the most significant takeaway. "I learned to be confident in my job and never back away from a fight I believed in," she said. "I loved teaching fellow Marines—senior or junior, officer or enlisted—how to be great supply Marines."

Isabel is now fully retired but remains deeply engaged in community service. She volunteers as the adjutant for the American Legion, assists at a local food pantry, cooks for her church's senior members, and serves as a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) in Marion County, Ill. She's also active with the Romans Warrior Foundation, the Mission South Central ramp-building initiative, and more.

Isabel and her husband, Michael, also a retired Marine, have been married for nearly eight years. Together, they have a blended family of seven children, five of whom followed in their parents' footsteps and joined the Marine Corps.

Isabel joined the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA)® in 2019, inspired by her husband's involvement and a strong desire to continue serving the Veteran community. She hoped to make a difference for both retired and active service members. Isabel is passionate about advocating for women Veterans and wants the public to know: "We are warriors just like the men. We will not be forgotten. We are proud, if not more proud, because we are fewer in number."

For women transitioning from military to civilian life, her advice is clear: "Do not change who you are when you leave the military. Stay strong. Stand tall. Always keep the confidence the military taught you."





WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"I believe in being strong when everything seems to be going wrong. I believe that happy girls are the prettiest girls. I believe that tomorrow is another day, and I believe in miracles."
~ Audrey Hepburn

ROAD NAME: MGUNZ
CHAPTER: IL 24-5
FULL MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“We are all broken,
that’s how the light
gets in.”
~ Ernest Hemingway



ROAD NAME: JAC MAC
CHAPTER: PA 22-9
SUPPORT MEMBER

Jacquelyn

BY BILL BEAN

Jacquelyn Dipko, a Veteran of both the United States Army and the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, served from January 2003 to March 2011. As a signal support systems specialist, she handled the installation and maintenance of radios, antennas, encryption equipment, and other communications gear.

Straight out of training, she became the only communications soldier in an active duty Army aviation unit—immediately stepping into the role of Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC). “It wasn’t easy as a young private,” she said. “But I was it—the only comm-Soldier in the entire company.”

Though she never deployed—being pregnant when her unit received orders—Jacquelyn remained committed. She transferred to the Pennsylvania National Guard and volunteered for two additional deployments, though her specialty was not required. Her efforts did not go unnoticed and she was honored with the Army Good Conduct Medal.

For Jacquelyn, the Army’s most lasting gift was confidence. “Before the Army, I lacked belief in myself and my abilities,” she said. “Through training, active duty, and the Guard, I learned to trust in myself. There’s nothing life can throw at me that I can’t handle.”

After leaving the military, Jacquelyn struggled to feel connected. “I wasn’t a soldier anymore, but I wasn’t a civilian either,” she said. That changed when she found the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®), where she now serves as public relations officer for Chapter PA 22-9. “CVMA® gave me a place to belong again,” she said. “It’s like a unit—only on the civilian side. We support Veterans across the country.”

Jacquelyn is the proud mother of two: her daughter is in nursing school, and her son is currently in basic training with the U.S. Navy. After raising them as a single mother, she is now engaged to a fellow CVMA® member and has moved across the state and belongs to his chapter. She recently retired from the United States Federal Bureau of Prisons, where she worked as a senior officer specialist. In her spare time, she enjoys riding, baking, and quiet nights at home.

Jacquelyn’s message to the public is to “Stop assuming only men are veterans. Women are Veterans too. And we’re usually nicer!”

To women adjusting to civilian life, she offers this advice: “Start slow. Set boundaries. Find a ‘go-to’ person and a ‘trigger word’ they’ll recognize when you need help. Visit your local VA. You’re never alone.”



Celebrating Women Veterans

Janie

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Janie Myers served with distinction in the United States Marine Corps from February 2006 to December 2016, forging a career marked by resilience, innovation, and unwavering commitment. Her journey began in supply and logistics, but she ultimately found her calling as an advanced contingency contracting officer. In this role, she was responsible for securing critical services and resources—from water and ice in field operations to outfitting mission-ready rooms for military pilots.

Throughout her career, Janie demonstrated initiative and impact. As a supply specialist, she ensured accountability for more than 2,000 major weapon systems and maintained ammunition readiness during deployment. Later, as a contract specialist, she helped develop web-based safety training that became a MarineNet standard used Corps-wide. These efforts underscore her dedication to not just supporting the mission, but improving it.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, Janie supported Marine Aircraft Group 16 and Army Command C CO 1-214th Aviation Battalion. Her logistical coordination ensured safe transitions of weapons and ammunition between units—a mission-critical responsibility that enhanced both operations and troop safety.

Transitioning from the military came with its own challenges. “The fear of the unknown can be terrifying,” she says. “But have the intestinal fortitude to invest in yourself.” Her advice to women adjusting to civilian life is powerful: know that you are not alone. “You belong to an elite group of men and women who have your six.”

Today, Janie works for the government as a contracting officer supporting the Reverse Engineering Technical Data Initiative and Emulation of Microcircuits Programs. These projects breathe new life into obsolete military parts, including those used in the head-up display (HUD) for F-15 Eagle fighter jets.

Janie also continues her service to the Veteran community as the Full Female Member Liaison for the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® National Store. She collaborated on a custom tank top design now available for purchase and is actively working on future projects that support female members.

At home, Janie enjoys a full, joyful life with her husband of 19 years and their three children. A lover of the outdoors, Halloween, and creative arts, she brings the same passion and energy to her hobbies that she brought to her military service.



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“When you get tired,
learn to rest, not quit.”
~ Bansky



ROAD NAME: FUSE
CHAPTER: OH 12-1
FULL MEMBER



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“I’ve loved the stars
too fondly to be fearful
of the night.”
~ Sarah Williams

ROAD NAME: PRINCESS LEIA
CHAPTER: NC 15-2
FULL MEMBER

Jenn

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Jenn Moreau served in the United States Air Force and North Carolina Air National Guard from 1994 to 2024. Her 30-year military career included roles in aircraft maintenance, avionics, medical equipment repair, first sergeant leadership, and quality assurance. During her 12 years on active duty, she worked on multiple aircraft platforms and was a six-year member of the honor guard. As a senior Airman (E-4), she made history as the lowest-ranking test director for heavy aircraft in U.S. Air Force history—a record that still stands.

Following 9/11, Jenn deployed four times in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS). Upon transitioning to the North Carolina Air Guard, she served in a medevac unit maintaining medical equipment used to transport wounded service members back stateside. She later served four years as a first sergeant, and concluded her career in aircraft quality assurance, earning the rank of senior master sergeant (E-8) through the highly competitive STEP-II promotion program. Jenn's service was recognized with multiple achievement and meritorious service medals. However, some of her most meaningful awards came from the civilian community: the Police Medal of Honor from her law enforcement career and the Hero Award from the Sons of the American Revolution.

Now a patrol lieutenant for a city police department, Jenn leads a team of officers, managing administrative operations, responding to priority calls, and providing field support. Certified as a general instructor, she mentors others in both tactical and leadership skills.

Jenn is the North Carolina Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®) State Secretary and a life member of her local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) post. Each year, she volunteers with organizations including Special Olympics, Toys for Tots, and her local state Veterans home.

The public needs to understand that women Veterans are not symbolic hires or diversity campaigns. Every woman who served met the same mental and physical standards required for her role—and many have proven their strength in life-or-death situations.

To fellow women Veterans, Jenn offers this advice, civilian society often resists assertive women, but don't mistake adaptation for weakness. Learn how to communicate strategically. You still have the strength, discipline, and intelligence to lead.



Celebrating Women Veterans

Kathryn

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Kathryn Wilgus served in the United States Army from 1987 to 1996 as an operating room technician, then continued her military journey in the U.S. Navy from 2004 to 2015 as an operating room nurse. Her unique role allowed her to care for some of the military's most critically injured service members—both as a surgical technician and as a nurse. Wilgus completed two tours in Afghanistan and was awarded the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and the Bronze German Armed Forces Schützenschnur. Among the many highlights of her career, she says the greatest honor was simply the ability “to serve those who serve.” In addition to her clinical work, Wilgus mentored other operating room nurses, advised Afghan national nurses on medical training, and participated in female engagement teams that worked directly with Afghan women.

Military service runs in her family, too—her twin sister served more than 27 years in the U.S. Army. The two are known by friends as the “Army/Navy Twins.”

Though a trauma nurse by trade for over two decades, Wilgus is deeply involved in serving the veteran community through multiple organizations. She is vice president of Villagers for Veterans, which recently opened Ashley's Cottage and is working toward launching Ashley's House, both designed to support women veterans in transition. She is also active with her local chapters of the Kiwanis Club, Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, American Legion, and the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®).

After returning from deployment in Afghanistan, Kathryn spotted a CVMA member in Virginia. She asked what they were about and learned she qualified to join. She waited until retirement and returned to Florida, still unsure how to find a chapter—until she met another member. Since then, she served as Quartermaster and XO for her chapter. Kathryn joined to find other brothers and sisters to ride with—people who also wanted to give back and support Veterans in our community.

Wilgus's adventurous spirit doesn't stop at service. She holds a diploma in baking and pastry from the Art Institute and is an avid baker. She's also a thrill-seeker: bungee jumping, skydiving, hang gliding, ziplining, scuba diving, racing cars at over 180 mph, and even climbing to the top of the Köln Cathedral in Germany. She has also flown in a glider plane, hot air balloon, ultralight aircraft—and seeks out adventure wherever she goes.

One of her strongest passions is raising awareness about the long and often overlooked history of women in the military. “Women have been serving this country since the Revolutionary War in 1775,” she says. “We deserve recognition.”

To her fellow women Veterans, Wilgus offers this advice: “Educate—don't tolerate. Wear something showing your military branch. Say something about your service. Let the public see our women in service doing great things in the community. Don't hide your service—many just haven't seen us yet. Don't let them take away our honor. We owe it to the women who came before us, and we must help those coming after us shine brighter.”



Celebrating Women Veterans

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“Alone we can do so little,
together we can do so
much.”

~ Helen Keller



ROAD NAME: DEUCE
CHAPTER FL 20-4
FULL MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“You must be willing to
get your hands dirty
to make a difference.”
~ General Ann
Dunwoody



ROAD NAME: MOUSE
CHAPTER: LA 6-1
FULL MEMBER

Kimberly

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Kimberly D. Long served in the United States Army and the Louisiana Army National Guard for 39 years. Her career began in Active Duty as a Military Intelligence Analyst before she transitioned to the National Guard. There she held multiple roles including HR Sergeant, Military Police Officer, and Personnel Manager.

Initially, Kimberly wasn't tall enough to join the Military Police (MP), but determination and timing later brought her into the MP rank. She then found herself on the front lines of history. Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Kimberly and her unit were responsible for safety, security, and recovery operations in New Orleans. She recalls wading through waist-high floodwaters into the Cajun Superdome, witnessing both human desperation and compassion.

Kimberly's service also included a six-month humanitarian mission in Haiti after the devastating 7.0 earthquake, where she served as personal security non-commissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) supporting engineer efforts, medical outreach, and MP operations. In Iraq, she led the Badging Cell, conducting background checks on third-country nationals, an essential part of force protection. Kimberly concluded her military service as Command Sergeant Major of the Louisiana Training Center, overseeing logistics support for the state's main training installation.

Kimberly took from her military career the knowledge that, "Service for your nation and her civilians is the utmost honor." She also believes deeply in the importance of global perspective, more Americans should see how the other half lives.

Kimberly was drawn to the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA) through her husband Mike "Eagle", himself a highly involved Vietnam veteran and member. She initially served as a National Auxiliary PR Officer in 2008. Upon returning from Iraq in 2010, she earned her full member patch. Having spent most of her adult life in uniform, she finds it easier to connect with fellow Veterans than civilians.

Family is at the center of Kimberly's life. She and Mike have two daughters, five grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter. Both are members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the American Legion. Since retiring from her civilian role as a systems administrator for the Louisiana National Guard Training Center, Kimberly, a self-proclaimed geek, continues part-time IT work. In her free time, she enjoys genealogy, reading, motorcycle rides, and photo restoration.

Kimberly had simple but profound advice for her fellow female Veterans: "Embrace who you are. Never apologize. Find your tribe—and serve. If you're struggling, ask for help. There's no shame."



Celebrating Women Veterans

Kristi

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Kristi Hickey served in the United States Army from 1994 to 2016 as a CH-47F Chinook Helicopter Instructor Pilot. For the first 10 years, she was a CH-47D Chinook Flight Engineer, achieving the rank of E-6. She was then selected to become a warrant officer (WO) and following Warrant Officer Candidate School she attended the U.S. Army Flight School, where she graduated with honors. In 2005, she began flying Chinooks and did so for another 12 years.

Kristi's final duty station was B Company, 3-25 General Support Aviation Battalion "Hillclimbers." The "Hillclimbers" were originally in the 147th Aviation Company and was the first Chinook company in Vietnam after the 1st Cav. The unit is still active today. As part of that unit, she made history as the unit's first female standardization pilot. Upon retiring, Kristi was left with the knowledge that she significantly helped pave the way for strong female leaders in the U.S. Army Aviation.

Kristi was deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq for Operation Enduring Freedom and with B Co 3-10 GSAB Colossal. She was awarded three Air Medals during her service. The first recognized her for logging 400+ accident/incident-free flight hours in Bagram, Afghanistan. Her second medal was awarded from serving as flight lead on a 27-ship air assault mission. She earned her third Air Medal after flying more than 500 accident/incident-free hours using night vision goggles.

Today, Kristi continues flying Chinooks—now the new Block II version—as a civilian contractor. As the team lead for the CH-47F New Equipment Training Team (NETT), she is responsible for training new and experienced CH-47F Chinook helicopter crews on the aircraft's systems, procedures, and operational capabilities. Her post military flying experiences included flying tourists over glaciers in Alaska to the important responsibility of flying U.S.S. Arizona survivors over Pearl Harbor, HI. She is also in a movie. "Above The Best" retells the extremely tragic loss of helicopter crew 'Colossal 31' in Afghanistan in 2006."

Kristi is married to Attila Benoit, a combat Navy Veteran and full member of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®). Together, they have two sons: Gavin (28) and Jakob (27).

It was the CVMA® mission—Veterans helping Veterans—that resonated with Kristi and inspired her to get involved. She finds great reward in giving back and currently serves as the local chapter secretary. In this role, she also helps meet the needs of Veterans in her community. Her passion for motorcycles, service, and paying it forward aligns perfectly with the CVMA® mission.

"We have the determination of a man with the heart/passion of a woman, which makes us powerful," is Kristi's declaration to the public, intended to help educate others on the strength and value of women who have served—and continue to serve—our country.



WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"The only thing we have
to fear is fear itself. ~
Franklin D. Roosevelt



ROAD NAME : KRAZY HOOKER
CHAPTER: AL 28-6
FULL MEMBER



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“If your actions create
a legacy that inspires
others to dream
more, learn more, do
more, and become
more, then you are an
excellent leader.”
~ Dolly Parton

ROAD NAME: LADY JAYE
CHAPTER: AL 28-2
AUXILIARY MEMBER

Lisa

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Lisa Janeway proudly served in the United States Navy from 1999 to 2006, where she worked as a Hospital Corpsman. Her assignments took her from the Naval Hospital to the operating room aboard the USNS Mercy, providing critical care and surgical support. Her role required exceptional technical skill and compassion, especially in high-pressure environments.

During her time in uniform, Lisa supported the Global War on Terrorism, earning recognition for her dedication and service. Her contributions aboard the Mercy and in critical care demonstrated the vital role of medical personnel in both peacetime and conflict operations. Reflecting on those years, Lisa shared, “Learn to embrace the ‘suck’—it’s all temporary,” a mindset that helped her endure tough days and find strength in adversity.

After transitioning to civilian life, Lisa found camaraderie and connection through the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA). “I found my people,” she said. “I love my CVMA family.” For Lisa, the CVMA provided a sisterhood that mirrored the close bonds she had in service—a support system she cherishes deeply. Lisa’s dedication to Veterans didn’t end with her military career. Today, she works for the Department of Veterans Affairs, speaking with Veterans daily—helping them navigate care, offering support, or simply being someone to talk to. “Some of them just want to chat,” she said. “It’s my dream job.”

Her service to others extends into her community, where she led a deodorant drive for the women’s breast center at her local VA in Alabama—part of her ongoing mission to support and uplift female Veterans.

A proud wife, mother, and grandmother, Lisa and her husband have been together for 25 years. Two of their four children followed in her footsteps, serving in the Army and the Air Force. They now enjoy the joy of four grandchildren. Lisa is also an avid traveler—visiting five countries in a single month—and is always planning her next adventure.

To women transitioning out of military life, Lisa offers simple but powerful advice: “Find your tribe and take one day at a time.”



VETERANS ON ON AND OFF



PICTURED LEF TO RIGHT: VETERANS AND CVMA MEMBERS SUNI BERGER, MELINDA TOPICZ, RHONDA WAUGH AND KATHRYN WILGUS

N A MISSION: F THE ROAD



Lori

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Lori Sala served in the United States Army from 1991-1995 as a Unit Supply Specialist (92Y), responsible for procurement, distribution, and accountability of equipment and supplies. She worked in the S-4 section supporting logistics operations and maintained contact with the Property Book Office ensuring availability of heavy engineering equipment and vehicles. After completing her active duty service in 1995, she joined the Arizona Army National Guard serving as the unit armorer. She spent most of her time at the range assisting soldiers with weapons maintenance and qualifications. Her military service reinforced her sense of honor and duty contributing to who she is today.

While Lori did not deploy to a war zone, she did support two Joint Task Force-6 missions along the U.S.-Mexico border. Her battalion built roads and buildings for the Border Patrol.

Lori and her husband, Carlos“DJ”, both veterans, joined the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®) to stay connected to the Veteran community and give back. She currently serves as her chapter’s Quartermaster, while Carlos is the Executive Officer. Lori is very proud of her husband’s accomplishments within the CVMA® and she calls him her “ride or die.” She and her husband love to get out with their CVMA® folks and ride. Lori is also extremely proud of her grown daughter who has created a great family of her own. Last but not least are their two princess rescue dogs.

Lori works as a psychiatric registered nurse. She began pursuing nursing shortly after leaving active duty. Her responsibilities include patient care focused on behavioral health, emotional regulation, and supporting individuals through recovery and crisis.

Outside of work, Lori co-owns a business specializing in embroidery, sewing, and woodworking. She frequently sews patches onto motorcycle vests and handles finishing work in the shop, including sanding, staining, and painting. She and her husband are also involved in the Vets for Vets organization and support local Veteran-focused clubs and associations such as the American Legion.

It’s important for the public to know that women Veterans are everywhere and often don’t fit the stereotypes people may expect. A simple thank-you for your service goes a long way and can make a real difference, Lori can say this based on her own personal experience.

Lori’s advice to women Veterans is to seek out community and connection. She recommends joining veteran organizations, listening to the stories of those who came before, and volunteering to support others. She also encourages women to explore their VA benefits, including disability if applicable, and to speak up when they need help.



WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“Don’t get so busy
making a living that you
forget to make a life.”

~ Dolly Parton



ROAD NAME: RATCHED
CHAPTER: CO 3-1
SUPPORT MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“Pressure makes
diamonds,”
~ General George
Patton



ROAD NAME: GLOWSTICK
CHAPTER: MO 4-11
FULL MEMBER

Magdalin

BY KATHERINE LORIO

Magdalin Espinoza proudly served in the United States Army from July 2005 to September 2014, where she held the unique role of animal care sergeant—one of the most specialized and lesser-known military occupations. She led teams of other specialists and coordinated the medical care for more than 85 military working dogs, even during her deployment to Afghanistan with the 49th Mine Dog Detachment.

Her final assignment was as non-commissioned officer in charge at Engineer Canine Company, where she not only ensured the readiness of canine units but also served as Equal Opportunity Representative, SHARP representative and Unit Prevention Leader. Her work extended across multiple commands and military hospitals, earning her commendations including the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two stars, an Army Commendation Medal and a Regional Command East coin for supporting units outside her assignment.

She describes her proudest moment as escorting a military working dog back to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., from Afghanistan—a task assigned by leadership that trusted her expertise. “It was a true honor to train Soldiers, to provide medical care for these amazing animals and to see them in action,” she said.

Diagnosed with stage IV metastatic breast cancer in 2019, Magdalin left federal service to focus on her health—but never stopped serving. She is a devoted wife and mother of four and an advocate for women Veterans and breast cancer survivors. She volunteers with Pink Veterans, a nonprofit that offers emotional support and education to women facing breast cancer, and participates in the annual Susan G. Komen MORE THAN PINK Walk®. Her favorite quote, “Pressure makes diamonds,” reflects her ability to thrive through adversity.

After leaving the Army, Magdalin found herself missing the camaraderie of military life. She rediscovered it in 2023 through the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®), first as an auxiliary member. In April 2024, she earned full patch status after learning to ride her own motorcycle. She now serves as the public relations officer for Chapter MO 4-11 of the CVMA® and says riding gave her back the pride and sense of belonging she thought she had lost.

Magdalin encourages other women Veterans to stay connected. “The first two years out of service are the hardest,” she said. “Isolation isn’t the answer. Find your people again—you’re not alone.”



Melanie

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Melanie Lemon served in the United States Navy from Jan. 8, 2002, to Jan. 7, 2007, as a hospital corpsman—a role comparable to a civilian EMT, LPN, or medic. In that position, she provided medical care to service members, veterans, retirees, and military families.

“My job was to perform medical exams and minor procedures, clean and treat wounds, draw blood, and administer medications and vaccines,” she said. “It was hands-on, every day, caring for those who serve and their families.”

Melanie supported operations during the Global War on Terrorism and takes great pride in her contributions during a critical period in U.S. military history. She describes the lasting impact of her service not through awards or medals, but through the friendships she built along the way. “Lifelong friends,” she said, smiling. “And I continue to make new ones with other veterans every day.”

Today, Melanie serves the community in a new way—as a mobile phlebotomist. She travels across her state providing care to transplant patients, helping some of the most vulnerable individuals on their road to recovery.

Her commitment to serving others doesn’t stop with her day job. Melanie is a dedicated American Legion member, serving both as a post and district officer. Through this work, she continues to support Veterans and community outreach programs that align with her values. Outside of work and volunteer efforts, Melanie finds joy in simple pleasures and big adventures. She’s an avid reader, karaoke enthusiast, and motorcycle rider who frequently participates in charity rides. At home, she’s a proud “mom” to three affectionate cocker spaniels. She encourages fellow women Veterans to be proud of their service and to connect with others who understand.

“Breathe,” she said. “Appreciate that civilians do things differently. Join a Veterans organization—it helps. You don’t have to tell everyone everything about your time in service. And always be proud of what you’ve done.”

Melanie also wants the public to rethink how they view women who serve. “We’re not women Veterans—we’re Veterans who happen to be women. No more special, no more average. We deserve the same acknowledgment and appreciation as anyone who served.”



[illegible]



WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"Lead, follow or get out
of the way."

~ Thomas Paine and
General George
Patton

ROAD NAME: WAR DEPT
CHAPTER: FL 20-12
SUPPORT MEMBER

Melinda

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Melinda Topicz served in the United States Navy from 1970 to 1973 as a personnelman maintaining all aspects of personnel records. She made history as the first active-duty woman assigned to staff duty at Naval Station Key West, Fla., where she was posted to Fleet Sonar School. In that role, she also became the liaison responsible for establishing the first on-base female barracks to accommodate future women entering the school.

Melinda served during the Vietnam Era beginning a career rooted in work ethic, professionalism, and determination. She attended specialized training and accepted every assignment available in her field. She received the National Defense Service Medal.

Introduction to the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®) came through Melinda's husband. Unable to join one chapter due to quota limitations, she later found a new chapter that welcomed her. After attending several events, members encouraged her to apply, restoring the sense of camaraderie she had missed since active duty.

Military service runs deep in Melinda's family. Her parents served in WWII—her father in the Pacific and her mother at the Pentagon. Melinda's own journey came full circle when she met her husband, the very Navy recruiter who had enlisted her in 1970. They later reconnected at her first duty station and have now been married for nearly 53 years. Together, they are proud parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.

In 2024, the couple became the first married pair to participate in Honor Flight Tallahassee to Washington, D.C., accompanied by their son and daughter. For the first time, she felt seen, not as someone's dependent, but as a Veteran in her own right. It was a moment of pure recognition—one she will never forget.

Now retired after 36 years of federal service, she serves as her CVMA® chapter's Public Relations Officer. She remains active in the American Legion, American Veteran (AMVETS), Fleet Reserve Association, and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Auxiliary. Her passions include motorcycle trips, camping, crafts, and quilting.

Women Veterans served. Period. Just like the men, they served honorably and deserve to be seen as equals. They are not "step-Veterans" or support staff—they are Veterans. This is the truth that Melinda "War Dept" Topicz wants others to understand and remember.



NaKita Scott served in the Florida Army National Guard from 2003 to 2013 as a combat medic (68W) and behavioral health specialist (68X). As a combat medic, NaKita established aid stations and provided lifesaving care during missions and training exercises. While deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III, she worked in the treatment platoon and served in the base clinic. Her performance earned her roles of trust, including assistant to the first sergeant in the Tactical Operations Center and assistant to the post command sergeant major during her final duty station.

When she reclassified as a behavioral health specialist, she led suicide prevention and awareness training and conducted pre- and post-deployment behavioral health assessments across Florida. Affirming her place among those who stepped forward during wartime, NaKita was awarded the Army Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

For NaKita, military service meant family. While serving, she found bonds that crossed race, gender, religion and politics. That same spirit continues in her involvement with the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®). Encouraged to join by her husband, NaKita found renewed camaraderie and purpose in supporting her fellow veterans. Her road name, “Cherry Popper,” was inspired by her husband’s, “Virgin.”

Today, NaKita is a licensed clinical social worker and a full-time professor in the bachelor of social work program at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. She owns and operates Grace Counseling Services of Florida, a private practice in Winter Haven specializing in reproductive mental health, chronic illness and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Passionate about giving back, NaKita volunteers as lead therapist for Hope House, a maternity home. She also founded the Graceful Hope Foundation, a nonprofit organization offering pro bono and reduced-fee mental health care through graduate student interns.

The eldest of seven sisters, NaKita and her husband have a blended family of eight children and three grandchildren. She loves dancing, reading, baking, painting and riding her motorcycle on long-distance trips.

To NaKita, women Veterans are essential: “Our service is equally important. Although we are consistently overlooked, that does not make our contributions less.”





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“At this crucial time in
our lives... when every
day is a matter of
survival, I don’t think
you can help but be
involved.”
~ Nina Simone

ROAD NAME: CHERRY POPPER
CHAPTER: FL 20-17
MEMBERSHIP: FULL MEMBER



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“Fate whispers to the
warrior, ‘you can’t
withstand the storm’.
The warrior whispers
back, ‘I am the storm.’”
~ Jake Remington

ROADNAME: STORM
CHAPTER: WI 45-8
LIFE MEMBER

Natasha

BY JULIE MILLER

From February 2009 to August 2015, **Natasha Normand** served as both a 92G food service specialist and a 92F petroleum supply specialist in the United States Army. Stationed at Fort Riley under the 1st Infantry Division Combat Aviation Brigade, she worked in the dining facility and quickly rose above her peers, earning the title of Cook of the Quarter in a post-wide competition.

In 2010, she deployed to Taji, Iraq, during the transition between Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. There, she supported operations with the same grit, teamwork and sense of purpose that still guide her today.

“The military taught me discipline, camaraderie, and self-awareness,” she said. “That feeling of belonging and purpose—that’s something I carry with me.”

Today, she works as a diesel technician at All State Peterbilt of Tomah, turning wrenches in a career that demands precision and strength. Off the clock, she finds joy in riding her motorcycle, spending time with her daughter, Aurora Sue, and her loyal black Lab, Diesel.

As an active member of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association®, she was drawn by a sense of camaraderie and a mission of “vets helping vets.” “Camaraderie heals in ways I don’t even understand,” she said. “I wanted to give back.”

To her, being a woman Veteran is about breaking barriers—and supporting those coming behind. After leaving active duty, she faced a difficult road transitioning to civilian life. Battling compound Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, she developed a substance use disorder. But her story didn’t end there.

“I can proudly say I’m over eight years clean and sober,” she said. “It’s not easy, but it’s totally worth it. It will get better—and you’re not alone.”

“A Veteran is a Veteran, no matter their gender,” she said. “For any woman out there struggling, just know this: you are seen, you are strong, and help is out there.”



Celebrating Women Veterans

Rhonda

BY JULIE MILLER

Rhonda Waugh, a United States Navy Veteran, served from 1986 to 1994 with distinction as a radioman in communications and later as a senior enlisted advisor to the commanding officer. Her military career was defined by technical expertise, leadership and a readiness to deploy when her nation needed her most.

While in the Navy Reserves from 1995 to 2011, she was part of a commissioned unit equipped with the same high-grade communications gear used by active-duty commands—ready at a moment's notice. That preparedness was tested early when her unit was deployed ahead of schedule at the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, filling in for a unit in Kuwait that lacked the proper equipment. She was recalled to active duty by name following the 9/11 attacks, twice supporting the National Capital Region Casualty Assistance Calls Office. In 2009, she returned as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Officer in Charge of home-based troops.

She supported Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom and received the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, arriving in Kuwait while the region was still under hostile fire. Now in her second term as Virginia State Representative, Rhonda remains committed to veteran support. She helps lead the State Rep monthly call and chairs the National Policy Review Committee. Her dedication continues beyond official titles—she volunteers at her church, supports a local Christian radio station, and works as a certified life coach and GriefShare facilitator.

At home, she lives in a multigenerational household with her husband, a Marine Veteran and the current national chaplain; one of their sons and a grandson; and her 92-year-old father, a Korean War Veteran. "Life is never dull," she said.

As a member of the Combat Veteran Motorcycle Association, she describes riding as more of a lifestyle than a hobby and it gives her another avenue to support other Veterans. Her service dog "Peanut" rides along with her and has trekked more than 90,000 miles. Just ask and he'll show you all the patches he's earned.

She is passionate about supporting the elderly, especially veterans, and to take care of herself she enjoys walking and running. Her greatest takeaway from military service? "You will get out of it what you put into it."

To fellow women Veterans, she offers a reminder: "We ARE Veterans too. We do hard, tough jobs. We're leaders with compassion." Her advice for those transitioning to civilian life: "Don't try to do it alone. Be your brother's keeper. Embrace change—lean into the wave."



Celebrating Women Veterans

WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“You do what you gotta
do. There’s no option
to not, because it is
what it is.”



ROAD NAME : LOWSIDE
CHAPTER: VA 27-2
FULL MEMBER



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Life is either a daring
adventure or nothing."
~ Helen Keller

ROAD NAME: ROGUE
CHAPTER: TN 18-1
FULL MEMBER

Sarah

BY JULIE MILLER

Staff Sergeant **Sarah Lee**, a United States Army Veteran and founder of Waypoint Vets, began her military journey at 17 and served for eight years, deploying to Panama and Iraq with the Combat Engineers. Now a passionate advocate for veterans, Lee channels her experience into helping others heal through camaraderie and adventure.

Sarah deployed to Panama in 2002 with the 612th Combat Engineers, providing armed patrol security during a presidential address by Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso. Fluent in Spanish, she assisted with translations and worked closely with local law enforcement, including Commander Antonio Lam of the Panamanian National Police.

In 2004, at just 20 years old, she deployed to Iraq with the 216th Combat Engineers under the 1st Infantry Division, also known as the “Big Red One.” While in combat, she provided armed security, supported motor pool and supply duties, set up morale and welfare areas, cooked meals, and instructed on rifle and grenade ranges. One of her proudest moments was organizing a Thanksgiving dinner in Iraq. With support from her teacher parents and their school community back home, Lee helped coordinate food donations that brought a sense of normalcy and unity to her fellow soldiers amidst the chaos of war.

Her service earned her the Big Red One combat patch, the Hellfire Coin for Excellence in Combat, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

After an honorable discharge in 2009, She launched a successful photography business, driven by her belief in the importance of preserving memories. Following a life-threatening experience, she embarked on a 4,010-mile solo cycling journey across America, a transformative trip that ultimately inspired her next mission.

When she visited the Combat Veteran Motorcycle Association, Tennessee 18-1 chapter meeting in 2019, she joined immediately. The Combat Veteran Motorcycle Association’s consistent encouragement and support has been deeply instrumental in her nonprofit, Waypoint Vets.

Waypoint Vets, a nonprofit dedicated to uniting and empowering Veterans through adventure-based experiences. Since its launch, the organization has impacted over 400 veterans in 48 states, offering healing through nature, challenge, and connection—all at no cost to participants. Sarah, now a full-time volunteer, credits the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association and the power of continued service for her healing. She emphasizes that women in uniform are essential, noting that emotional intelligence and precision are as vital as strength in the military.

“There are no limits to this journey of self-discovery,” she said. “Helping others heal helps us heal too.”



Celebrating Women Veterans

When **Shar Nunley** stepped onto the yellow footprints in December 1987, she became part of a historic shift in the United States Marine Corps. That year marked the first round of integrated training in which women Marines completed the same boot camp as men.

After graduating from boot camp, she was named top Marine in her administrative school class. Her first deployment took her across the Pacific with her squadron of A-6E Intruder aircraft. In the Philippines, she completed Jungle Environmental Survival Training “Only a handful of women Marines had completed that school,” Shar said. “I wanted to be one of them.”

When her unit was activated for Desert Storm, all women Marines were placed on the non-deployable. When her home squadron stood down Shar didn’t want to be left behind. She voluntarily transferred to Marine Aircraft Group 11 and deployed with the 1st Force Service Support Group as a Postal clerk. Shar worked in box class, hauling 70-pound mailbags. “Alarms would go off — we’d don our suits and take cover. The all-clear would sound, and you’d be right back at it,” she said.

Shar’s service was recognized with numerous awards but, she feels the most meaningful recognition came years later, when the ban on combat roles was lifted and all combat jobs were open to women. “You don’t know you’re part of something historic until it’s over,” she said. “But you know you made a difference.”

After leaving the Marine Corps, Shar earned a degree in chemical engineering from the University of South Florida and built a career as a commercial construction project manager.

Today, she continues to serve as public relations officer for CVMA 20-10 (Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association) and Vice President of the Women Marines Association FL-2 Chapter. She says she was drawn to CVMA because of its “Final Mile” mission — ensuring that unclaimed veterans receive proper burial honors. Shar may have left active duty, but her mission continues — one door held open, one veteran honored, one ride at a time.

Her personal passions now include singing, riding motorcycles, and helping fellow Veterans. She is the proud mother of a 19-year-old son currently attending her alma mater on a scholarship.

To women transitioning out of the military she offers this advice: “Slow down and remember most civilians have never met a woman Veteran. Their reaction to you is about them — not you. Patriotism has no gender.”



COMBAT VETERANS MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION (CVMA)



Behind the scenes at a **She Served** photoshoot, it's all about fun and laughter. In between the serious shots, the Veterans let loose—making silly faces, goofing around, and cracking jokes that had everyone smiling. These outtakes show the playful side of the women we're honoring, and the genuine camaraderie that makes the day feel more like hanging out with friends than a photoshoot.



WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“As long as you make
good choices, what will
be will be.”

~ Sheree Robinson



ROAD NAME: BRAT
CHAPTER: CO 3-2
FULL MEMBER

Sheree

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Sheree Robinson proudly served in the United States Army from 1997 - 2012 as a human resources specialist. She was proud to have been the first grandchild on both sides of her family to join the military. During the course of her 15-year career, she played a vital role in personnel operations and administrative coordination at multiple duty stations, including Fort Eustis, Virginia, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and Fort Carson, Colorado.

Early in her service, Sheree was part of Hurricane Mitch relief efforts while stationed in Panama. Later, as an Operations Coordinator at Fort Bragg, she ensured unit-level tasks were executed efficiently by working directly with company leadership. At Fort Carson, she supported the Battalion S-1 office and later deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. There, she and one fellow soldier managed the workload of five—an experience that tested and proved her strength. She also participated in convoys during her deployment to update soldiers' personnel records, a critical and often overlooked function of wartime support.

Sheree's greatest takeaway from her military experience is that the hardest things are often the most worthwhile. The values of perseverance and service have followed her into civilian life and continue to guide her path.

Now serving as a human resources director at a senior living community, Sheree oversees hiring, employee relations, discipline, strategic planning, and reporting. She also teaches part-time at Colorado Technical University, where she draws on her real-world expertise to mentor the next generation of HR professionals, many of whom are veterans themselves. She also volunteered with the Society for Human Resources Management as a program coordinator.

Sheree was drawn to the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®) by the sense of camaraderie and the opportunity to give back to Veterans in need. She has served as committee lead for two poker runs hosted by her chapter and continues to be an active and passionate member.

At home, Sheree enjoys quality time with her family—especially now that two of her three sons are active-duty Army soldiers. She and her husband, her best friend and partner of 14 years, share a special bond strengthened during their joint deployment to Afghanistan.

Sheree wants the public to know: women Veterans are here—and yes, they ride motorcycles too. To fellow women Veterans, she offers this: never stop. Once you accomplish one goal, move on to the next. Never let the benefits that you earned while serving go to waste.



Celebrating Women Veterans

Sonya

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Sonya Leibowitz served from 2003-2023 in the United States Coast Guard. The Coast Guard was the solution to her desire to have a more meaningful purpose than her civilian law career offered. She found what was missing while serving others. For more than two decades, she embraced the values of teamwork, sacrifice, and belonging, experiencing what it truly means to be part of something greater than oneself. Initially, she served as a Judge Advocate General (JAG) Officer but was drawn towards operational planning and mission execution.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, stationed out of Forward Operating Base Shield in al-Rusafa, Iraq, as the team lead for the Law and Order Task Force, Sonya was required to travel across the region assisting Iraqi courts in prosecuting insurgents as well as help rebuild their fractured justice system during a pivotal time in the nation's history. She also provided important support during the Hurricane Katrina Relief Operations.

After retiring, Sonya pursued her long-held creative passion, photography and is now studying at Trident Technical College. With two semesters remaining, she's eager to use her artistic lens to capture stories and moments that matter.

In 2008, I was deployed to Iraq for six months, stationed at Forward Operating Base Shield in Rusafa, Iraq. Immediately upon my return from deployment, I was transferred from Virginia to South Carolina. Plagued by both physical injuries and the realities of returning to American society after living in a warzone, all while adjusting to living a new place, created challenges to say the least. During some of my deepest challenges, I met and became a member of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®). In the CVMA, I found a home and a family where I was able to recover physically and mentally.

There, she rediscovered camaraderie and a deep sense of purpose. Within the association, she has served in leadership at both the chapter and national levels, becoming the first woman to hold a national officer position, and serving as chapter commander of two chapters. Through her leadership, she hopes to inspire more women Veterans to step up and lead in spaces where they are often underrepresented.

Sonya is passionate about motorcycles, photography, the veteran community, and travel. Her experiences have taught her that strength doesn't mean going it alone.

To women Veterans navigating the challenges of civilian life, Sonya offers this wisdom: Don't hesitate to find and form connections. During her time on active duty and in the CVMA®, she has held leadership roles at many levels. Because she focused so heavily on appearing strong, she hesitated to build connections with other women Veterans. Over time, she realized those relationships were not only important—they were essential. These connections she formed were the only connections that provided her with understanding and acceptance.



WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"Proud member
of the Combat
Veterans Motorcycle
Association supporting
the mission of Vets
helping Vets!"
~ Sonya Leibowitz



ROAD NAME: RED SONYA
CHAPTER: SC 34-4
FULL MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to greatness.”

~ Oprah Winfrey



ROAD NAME : FREYJA
CHAPTER: FL 20-1
FULL MEMBER

Suni

BY BILL BEAN

Suni Berger served in the United States Air Force for over 21 years. She began her career in 1999 as a C-130 engine mechanic, working on the T56-A-7B/15 turboprop engines. She was responsible for diagnosing, modifying, and restoring the systems that kept aircraft flying safely — a task she describes as “complex, exacting, and rewarding.”

In 2006, she transitioned into logistics and war planning, where she orchestrated operations on a global scale. She coordinated airlift evacuations and the delivery of critical equipment, from drones to ribbon bridges. “One of the most impactful missions I worked on was coordinating the emergency evacuation of 200 personnel from Yemen during a base overrun,” she said. For that and other efforts, she earned the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and Joint Service Commendation Medal. She also supported other operations including Operation Northern Watch, Operation Enduring Freedom, and various Special Operations deployments. “You’re stronger than you think,” she said when reflecting on her years in uniform. “Failing doesn’t mean you can’t succeed — always have a solution for the problem.”

Now a program manager at Acron Aviation, a former division of L3Harris, Suni oversees authorized and licensed repair centers around the world.

In her spare time Suni is dedicated to supporting the veteran community. Through the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA), she organizes the annual “Christmas for Kids” drive, which supports children through donations and partnerships with local Veterans affairs offices. “I’ll never get over the excitement when the kids see the bikes and trailer roll up,” she said. “Their eyes light up when the guys come out carrying armloads of presents.”

Raised by a supportive network of parents, friends, and neighbors, Suni also raised a daughter of her own, born in 2003. “I could not have accomplished all I did without them,” she said. Now, she splits her time between Florida and Virginia, where she cares for her partner’s 13-year-old daughter while he is deployed.

Her advice to other women Veterans transitioning to civilian life is candid and heartfelt: “It’s scary out here, Sis. You’re brushed aside, ignored... but you know what you did. Brush it off, stand up, look around — your sisters are right in front of you, waiting with open arms.”

To the public, she offers this message: “We exist — and not just behind a desk. We also feel the call to serve our country, to protect our families and freedoms. We have been here, and we will be there for the wars to come.”



Tami

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Tami Richards served in the United States Navy from March 1993 to October 2003, paving the way for women in technical roles and combat-support operations.

As an Engineman and Elevator Technician, Tami's duties included maintaining diesel engines, running auxiliary generators, and overseeing all shipboard elevators. Her role required high-level mechanical skill and leadership to keep vital systems running aboard Navy vessels.

Tami was the first woman to attend and graduate with honors from the Navy's elevator C-school in San Francisco. She made history again when she became one of the first 17 women assigned to a warship. As the only elevator technician aboard the USS Gunston Hall, she developed a comprehensive maintenance and training program that brought the ship's elevator systems up to standard, earning her the Navy Achievement Medal.

During her deployment in the Mediterranean Sea, Tami's ship supported Marine landings into Iraq. At a time when female sailors were given the option to leave combat zones, Tami was one of only four women who chose to stay. She considers that decision one of her proudest moments, demonstrating courage and commitment to her team and mission.

Her most significant takeaway from her service is the value of teamwork and perseverance. "Mind over matter can bring great accomplishments," she said. Tami now applies those lessons in her civilian career, working as an executive sales manager for a power generation company focused on industrial systems for the healthcare sector.

Tami is deeply involved in community service as a member of the CVMA® Auxiliary, where she participates in charity rides and Veterans' outreach. She credits her husband, a fellow member, for introducing her to the organization, and she values the fellowship and purpose it brings.

Tami and her husband have been married for 30 years and have raised two children rooted in service. Her son is currently in Navy Boot Camp, and her daughter is attending a police academy. She beams with pride at their choice to serve. Now, Tami enjoys family time, cooking, and beach vacations. She's passionate about giving back and guided by her faith.

Tami wants the public to understand that women Veterans have had to overcome barriers just to serve—and they continue to bring unmatched resilience and innovation to every mission. Her advice to other women transitioning out of service: "Know your worth. Know you matter. Never give up and mentor those who come after you."



WORDS TO LIVE BY:

“There's no crying
in baseball.”
~ Movie: A League of
Their Own



ROAD NAME: GEARZ
CHAPTER: AL 28-7
AUXILIARY MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Alone we can do little;
together we can
do so much."
~ Helen Keller



ROAD NAME: BULLDAWG
CHAPTER: GA 25-6
FULL MEMBER

Tiffine

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Tiffine Carey dedicated 20 years of her life to the United States Navy, serving from November 1990 to November 2010. Both of her grandfathers served in the Navy during WW2, inspiring her to also choose the Navy. As a cryptologic technician networks (CTN1), Tiffine operated at the frontlines of cyber warfare, executing both offensive and defensive computer network operations. Her duties included protecting classified military systems, conducting cyber intelligence missions, and supporting secure communications across global operations.

Throughout her career, Tiffine contributed to major U.S. military operations including the Gulf War, War on Terror, Operation Enduring Freedom, the Iraq War, and the war in Afghanistan. Serving as part of elite cyber units, her efforts helped safeguard national security in a rapidly evolving digital battlefield. For Tiffine, the Navy instilled a deep sense of purpose and pride. “Fighting for the most elite country in the world, forming lifelong friendships, and receiving mentorship from people who molded me into who I am today were the greatest takeaways,” she said.

Joining the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® (CVMA®) offered a way to carry forward the camaraderie she found in uniform. “The CVMA® is an extension of family,” she said. “It’s given me the friendships and support of fellow Veterans and, most importantly, the chance to give back to others who’ve served.”

Today, Tiffine balances a successful civilian career with community involvement. She works as a project manager for One Diversified, where she oversees client projects from start to finish—coordinating teams, setting goals, and ensuring smooth execution. In addition to her corporate role, she is a small business owner, running Lapels Dry Cleaning in Evans, Ga.

Her passion for giving back is evident in her support of Compass for Hope, a local organization that helps individuals experiencing homelessness. Through her business, Tiffine provides resources and supports outreach programs aimed at helping people regain self-sufficiency. “It’s about finding ways to better lives, one person at a time,” she said.

Tiffine wants the public to better understand the role of women in the military. “We as women Veterans seem to get the short end of the stick when it comes to the respect of our military service and careers,” she said. “People need to realize that women’s strength, commitment, and determination should never be underestimated.”

To fellow women Veterans, Tiffine offers this reminder: “Never give up on your dreams. Be proud of your service, learn from your mistakes, and move forward—as a person, not just a sailor.”



Victoria

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Victoria Lemke proudly served in the United States Air Force from 1995-2025, specializing in munitions systems. Over the course of her 30-year career, she went from providing life-cycle logistical support for Air Force munitions to becoming the subject matter expert overseeing training, education, resource allocation, and logistics for the entire career field. From building bombs to advising on national-level policy, her career embodied leadership and operational excellence.

As a senior leader, Victoria played a key role in many operations, including Southern Watch, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, Inherent Resolve, Freedom's Sentinel, and Noble Eagle. Among her proudest moments was managing the flow of munitions into the European theater during Operation Iraqi Freedom and overseeing logistics for the deployment of the first "Mother Of All Bombs" in Central Command. While stationed in Turkey, she also supported the non-combatant evacuation of nearly 15,000 U.S. citizens from Lebanon—a remarkable achievement accomplished during an already demanding inspection and logistics mission. Her service was recognized with numerous awards, including the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, NATO Service Medal, Nuclear Deterrence Operations Medal, and Humanitarian Service Medal.

Though she accomplished much, Victoria values most, the relationships built during her Air Force career. Her peers and teams shaped her through both triumph and hardship. These bonds forged resilience, leadership, and purpose—defining the woman she is today and leaving a lasting impact on every part of her journey.

Now retired, Texas-based Veteran runs a small antique business and serves on the board of the Ammo Chiefs Association, providing educational and social support to the munitions community. Introduced to the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association® through her husband, a fellow Air Force Veteran, Victoria quickly embraced its mission. "I love the camaraderie and the chance to keep serving those who've sacrificed so much."

Victoria and her husband met while deployed to Kuwait and now share life with their rescue dog, who brings energy and joy to their home. Passionate about veterans' issues, animal welfare, and vintage treasures, Victoria looks forward to deepening her involvement in women veteran advocacy and dog rescue work.

Victoria wants the public to know that women Veterans served, sacrificed, and succeeded—and deserve to be seen, heard, and honored. She encourages fellow women Veterans to reach out, offer support, and lean on each other. "Together, we succeed."



Celebrating Women Veterans



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“Every day may not
be good...but there
is something good in
every day.”
~ Alice Morse Earle

ROAD NAME: AMMO CHIC
CHAPTER: TX 23-30
AUXILIARY MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"Women are
Veterans too."



ROAD NAME: YO
CHAPTER: TN 18-4
LIFE MEMBER

Yolanda

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Yolanda Gardner served for 20 years in the United States Navy from March 1984 until March 2004. She spent most of her military career in administrative roles at various commands. Her responsibilities included managing correspondence, official mail, command awards, and serving as ship's secretary. But her duties often extended beyond the desk, particularly while stationed aboard the USS Oldendorf, where she also served on the firefighting and damage control teams.

In September 1996, Yolanda made history as one of the first women assigned to the destroyer USS Oldendorf (DD 972). "This was one of the most exciting times in my career," she recalled. "The men were not accepting of us at first, but over time, we became a very tight-knit command. The guys knew they could depend on us to work as hard as they did." During her time on the destroyer, Yolanda participated in several major operations, including The Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) 1998 and a six-month deployment to the North Arabian Gulf. RIMPAC is the world's largest international maritime warfare exercise. 1998

After retiring from the Navy, Yolanda returned to her hometown of Atoka, Tenn., where she and her husband Scott share a blended family of eight children and three grandchildren.

Today, Yolanda stays active through the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association®, a group that brings together Veterans who share a passion for motorcycles and community service. "I was drawn to CVMA® because I needed that brother/sisterhood again," she said. "Even though we are all different, we've been through the same situations. I love riding motorcycles and helping Veterans—it's the best of both worlds." Her husband Scott is one of the first male members of the auxiliary of the CVMA®.

In addition to riding, Yolanda is an avid quilter, a hobby she picked up while stationed in Guam in 1989. Through the years, she has created quilts for friends, family, and fellow Veterans. One of her most meaningful projects was a quilt made for 9/11 survivor Will Jimeno, which won first place in a VA art contest. She has also sold two paintings to raise funds for the West Tennessee Veterans Home. Through all her endeavors, one mission remains clear: to support fellow veterans. "Whether it's helping with a claim or just being there for them to talk to, I want to help."

Yolanda would like the public to know that women Veterans work just as diligently as our male Veterans.

Yolanda offers this message to other women Veterans and those transitioning to civilian life: "Don't let your demons win. Reach out, talk to someone—you don't have to go through anything alone."



Celebrating Women Veterans

Tiffany

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Tiffany Kauffman served in the United States Army from 2003 to 2010 as a cargo specialist, a role that required her to keep missions moving across air, sea and land. She describes her work simply: “We ran logistics.”

Stateside, she trained others, maintained equipment and coordinated supply lines. Deployed overseas, her responsibilities expanded to building and closing bases, and at times, convoying between them to complete missions. One of her proudest moments came when she was chosen for her leadership and skill to work alongside the Navy Seabees. There, she trained an entire unit on how to operate specialized equipment so they could be self-sustained. For that work, she received a letter of commendation.

Kauffman deployed twice—first to Iraq in 2004–2005 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and again to Afghanistan in 2008–2009 for Operation Enduring Freedom. Over her seven years of service, she earned multiple awards, including the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal and the Combat Action Badge.

“The most significant takeaway from my time in uniform is the integrity and discipline that was instilled in me,” Kauffman said.

Life after the Army has been equally full. She met her husband, James Kauffman—himself a combat veteran and former military police officer—in 2011. They married in 2015 and are raising two children. Their son, Justin, 14, is passionate about soccer, while their daughter, Jasmine, 11, dreams of becoming an artist.

This spring, Kauffman reached a major milestone when she graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Occupational Safety and Health. She is also active with the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA), volunteering her time at community events, whether that means selling tickets, raffling items or simply lending a hand where needed. “What drew me to the CVMA was attending one of their bike nights,” she said. “I met some of my fellow brothers and sisters and felt an instant connection. It’s the camaraderie, the conversations and the support that keep me active.”

Creativity has become a central part of her post-service life as well. In 2023, she launched Chime Craft, a small business specializing in handmade jewelry, wreaths and dreamcatchers. “I enjoy making things,” she said, “and I’ve been able to turn that into something I can share with others.”

Her message for the public is simple: “Just know that we exist.” And to other women transitioning out of service, she offers advice born of experience: “Join a group or association with other Veterans and take advantage of all the resources available—you earned it.”



Celebrating Women Veterans

ROADNAME: PEANUT
CHAPTER: KY 1-3
FULL MEMBER

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"I've learned that
people will forget what
you said, people will
forget what you did,
but people will never
forget how you made
them feel."
~ Maya Angelou



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“I feel blessed with
serving my country
and community”
~ Kyra Rose



ROAD NAME: DESERT ROSE
CHAPTER: TN 18-4
FULL MEMBER

Kyra

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Kyra Rose served in the United States Army from 1979 to 1997. She had a diverse range of roles while serving in the military, including working in food services, serving as a prison guard and operating as a truck driver. She proudly supported Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

While serving, she received recognition for her dedication and service, earning various medals and commendations. One of her proudest moments was contributing to Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, where she played a vital role in supporting our troops overseas. Her military service taught her the value of traveling and forming deep and lasting friendships. It broadened her horizons and helped her appreciate the world's diversity.

Kyra is happily married to a fellow Veteran, and they have one daughter, two stepsons, and five wonderful grandchildren. In her retirement, she continues to give back to the community by volunteering as a firefighter with the local fire department.

Kyra is passionate about assisting fellow Veterans with navigating the challenges they face with the VA. It's a way for her to give back and support those who have served. In her free time Kyra loves to read.

A good friend first told Kyra about the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA) back in 2005. After doing some research, she decided to join—and now, 20 years later, she is still proud to be part of this incredible organization. At the 2006 National Convention, she learned that she was the first woman Full Member to attend Nationals and the second woman Full Member to join the CVMA. Over the past two decades, she has built lasting friendships and gained an extended family of brothers and sisters who share a deep bond through service and camaraderie.

Kyra would like to public to realize that women Veterans are a vital part of our nation's history and present. We proudly served our country, and it's important for the public to recognize and appreciate our contributions. We wear our hats with pride, and no, it's not our husbands!

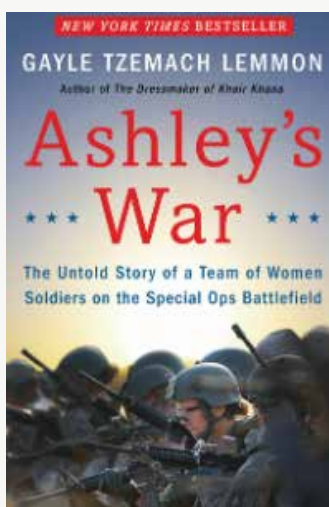
For her fellow Veterans Kyra has this advice: "Don't give up or give in. You can achieve anything you set your mind to. Your service has equipped you with the strength and resilience to overcome any obstacle. Keep pushing forward, and you'll continue to make a difference in your own life and the lives of others."



Recommended reading

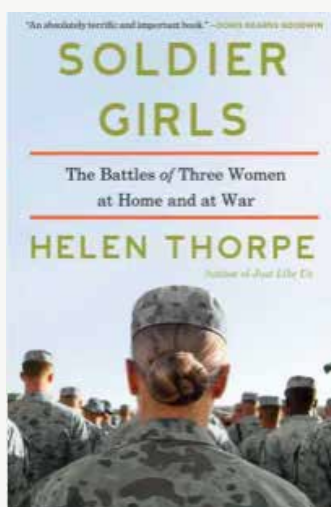
1

Ashley's War
By Gayle Tzemach Lemmon



2

Soldier Girls
by Helen Thorpe



3

Grit Factor
by Shannon Huffman Polson



As part of the She Served Initiative, we're proud to recommend the following books that highlight the courage, resilience, and unique experiences of women in the military. These powerful reads offer insight into the challenges and triumphs faced by female service members across different branches and roles.

Trigger warning: These books contain descriptions of combat and military trauma that may be difficult for some readers, particularly those who have experienced combat themselves. If you find yourself struggling while reading or reflecting on your own service, please know you're not alone. Support is available. To reach the Veterans Crisis Line call or text 988, then press 1, or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net). Confidential help is available 24/7 from caring, qualified responders—many of whom are Veterans themselves.

Recommended Titles

Ashley's War: The Untold Story of a Team of Women Soldiers on the Special Ops Battlefield by Gayle Tzemach Lemmon – The gripping story of female soldiers who served alongside special operations teams in Afghanistan.

Soldier Girls: The Battles of Three Women at Home and at War by Helen Thorpe – A compelling narrative that follows three women in the National Guard through multiple deployments and their journey back to civilian life.

The Grit Factor: Courage, Resilience, and Leadership in the Most Male-Dominated Organization in the World by Shannon Huffman Polson – A reflection on leadership and perseverance from one of the first women to fly Apache helicopters in the United States Army.

SUPPORTING WOMEN VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES IS A CRUCIAL STEP TOWARD FOSTERING EQUALITY & EMPOWERMENT. WOMEN WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE MILITARY BRING UNIQUE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES TO THE ENTREPRENEURIAL WORLD, AND BY SUPPORTING THEIR VENTURES, WE NOT ONLY ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SACRIFICE BUT ALSO HARNESS THEIR POTENTIAL AS VALUABLE CONTRIBUTORS TO OUR ECONOMY.



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<https://thepeachpitgeorgia.org>



www.WaypointVets.org

*Did you know **women** are the **fastest-growing** segment of the military and Veteran populations? That's just one of the reasons we bring you ...*
She Served.

*Every individual featured in this magazine is **unique**, yet they share **similar** experiences from active duty service to what happened in the days, months and years after She Served.*

*We hope the Veterans we featured in this issue of this magazine **inspired you** with examples of their leadership, resourcefulness, knowledge and sacrifice.*

Your generosity enables us to continue the She Served Initiative. Donations help us continue to tell the **amazing stories of our women Veterans**. Additionally, it furthers our mission to raise awareness that women served in the United States Military **and** are Veterans too.



You can make a donation on the website, <https://sheservedinitiative.org/donate> or scan the QR code.

She Served is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization registered in the State of Georgia.