**JODIE L. BOX**

Brick Location: A8

My career in the U.S. Army began on November 25, 1975. At the time I was in college at the University of Central Florida looking for new experiences and challenges. My father had wanted me to join the Armed Forces as he had retired from the U.S. Navy, but I had no desire to join at the time. After my first year of college, I decided it was time to venture out on my own and try the military route. I decided on the U.S. Army and in 1975 women were starting to join the service at a rapid pace.

I chose the maintenance field as an occupation because I wanted a career in a field other than a cook or clerk typist. Most women were offered only those types of jobs even in 1975. I went to basic training at Ft. McClellan, Alabama, and spent my first Thanksgiving away from home. I was very homesick, but so were the rest of my fellow soldiers. I finally graduated and felt very proud of myself for completing such a difficult 9 weeks.

I went on to my Advanced Individual Training at Ft. Jackson, SC. I was the only female in a class of 46 soldiers and I knew this was not going to be easy. It was still a “Man’s Army” and women were not quite welcome. I studied hard and graduated top of my class and proved that women were capable of contributing to the mission.

I went on to be stationed at Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia, and then on to Germany for 3 years. While in Germany, I competed for a position as a General’s chauffer in Frankfurt. Again, I was the only female to compete. After a very grueling day of inspections and interviews, I was selected as the 3rd Support Command General’s chauffer. There had never been a female General’s driver before.

After Germany, I re-enlisted and went to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Being from Florida, this was heaven to me! I spent 5 wonderful years in Hawaii and then my dream job vanished. I was transferred back to the mainland to attend U.S. Army Drill Sergeant’s School. This was one of the hardest schools in the Army. After many weeks of training, graduation came and I received my “hat”. The Drill Sergeant hat is one of the most coveted items to possess in the Army. Any veteran can remember their Drill Sergeant and the stories that go along with their basic training.

I was then stationed at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Maryland, as a Drill Sergeant. My first class was all females as at that time only women could train women and men could only train men. I volunteered for an Army experiment to consider having women Drill Sergeants train men as well as women. It was very successful and I was the first female Drill Sergeant to train male recruits. After 3 years of challenging and exciting work, I finished my tour, proud but exhausted.

After 10 years of traveling around the world and meeting people from all walks of life, I decided to get out of the Army and go back to Florida. I am proud to say I served with the best of the best and was very fortunate to be able to open manyt doors for women soldiers that were closed to me.

Submitted by:

Jodie L. Box

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