

Spotlight on Sharon J. Hunt-Carden

As most of you know, I married Bob Carlson right out of high school. He was a bit of a “Bad Boy”, with his purple car and oh so handsome. You might have read about how it ended on the front page of the Azusa Herald. He killed our refrigerator and stove with a 22 rifle. There was ketchup and mayo all over the place. So now what is a girl to do now? “I know, I’ll join the Navy.” So I was off to Bainbridge, Maryland for boot camp. That was when I met Pat Hospie, aka Hospie Co. 19. She was an elegant black gal from New York and I was a white “bumpkin” from some town called Azusa. How was I to know in 1962 there was a lot of prejudice. But she sure did! Against all odds we became the best of friends and still are to this day.



Sharon – US Army



Pat Hospie and Sharon in chow line – US Navy

A bit of history, in 1962 we were called WAVES, Women’s Auxiliary Voluntary Emergency Services. Then we were WINS, Women in the Naval Service. Now, I believe we are simply called Sailors. My first duty station was Naval Air Station, Lemoore, California. In 1962 there wasn’t a lot of respect for women in the military, so it was a bit hard. There was a saying the guys used, “Join the Navy and ride the WAVES.” Even with that I was proud to be a part of the military. President Kennedy’s death sent shock waves through our barracks. That was when I really felt the camaraderie of the military. I met and married my 2nd husband. We became officially pregnant on my 21st birthday. Even though I had a miscarriage, the military automatically discharged me. Now they have maternity uniforms. How times have changed.

In 1980 I enlisted in the Naval Reserves for extra money to buy a Corvette. For three years I realized how much I missed being in uniform and part of the military. I also observed what the recruiters were doing. Since The Good Lord decided I would never be a mother, recruiting for me was my maternal calling. In 1983 I perused a position in recruiting. The Recruiter in charge let me know “no way” because women didn’t succeed in recruiting. But I was determined. So I hopped into my Corvette and went to San Diego to meet with the Admiral to plead my case. On July 5th at the age of 40 I left a good paying job with Lockheed to go back on active duty as a recruiter. Against all odds, I was the top recruiter for three years.

At the age of 43 I was convinced recruiting for the Army National Guard was the best for my advancement...”so “I’m in the Army Now”. Little did I know that I would have to carry an M16 and be in “The Field” trying to find my out of the woods with a compass. They gave me a back pack that weighed at least 50 pounds. I didn’t know a canteen cup from a coffee cup. So I was off to Utah in October, Indiana in March, and back to Indiana in October the next year. Didn’t they know I was a Southern California girl? A lot of people asked why I switched to the Army. Well, I was tired of wearing black in the winter and white in the summer and my favorite



Sharon & the Rodriguez triplets

color is green. A girl needs a new outfit now and then! All my recruits were special, but the most memorable were my three girls... identical triplets, Lordes, Lorena and Lupe. Only the last name is on military uniforms. Therefore it was Rodriguez, Rodriguez and Rodriguez. But the girls and the drill sergeant made it through boot camp.



Sharon J. Carden - Sergeant First Class

My last take on women in the military... My boot camp Company Commander had a saying, "First you are a lady, then you are a WAVE" and I never forgot that. As a recruiter I wanted to portray not only the military side but the female side. Most times I wore a skirt, heels and had my nails polished. I was challenged with regulations concerning my military appearance and polished nails, but won my case. When I gave my husband this picture for his desk, his Major had a fit and fell in it! He called Eddie on the carpet stating it was inappropriate because I was still in the military. Get a life, Major, and enjoy it!

In the early '90s I was transferred to Ventura, California and hung up my combat boots in 1997. It was there I became a sailor again with my first sailboat, "Great Day". Being on the docks was a great getaway from everyday life. Sailing to the nearby Anacapa Islands was awesome. Being anchored for days at a time was serenity at its best. While at sea the dolphins would play in the wake of the boat and sometimes there was a whale or two. But the sea can be angry at times. There were a few times I questioned my love for sailing. But the whole aura of the sea, the docks and serenity resulted in living aboard Evening Star, a 45ft Morgan.

In 1994 I found my soul mate and we married the next year. Eddie and I were stationed together in Ventura. He is the best thing that has ever happened to me and the nicest person I have ever met. Since I married a younger man, he is still working. He is a security manager at Tri State Racing and Gaming Resort. His daughter, Sarah, is a college student in Sacramento. His oldest daughter, Amy, lives in Riverside with her husband and three children... so far! Amy's husband, Liam, was a professor at Azusa Pacific for a couple of years and now is teaching at Cal Poly Pomona. He also is a Navy Reserve officer and recently returned from Afghanistan.

After my retirement we moved to Carson City, Nevada. California was too expensive and crowded. Nevada didn't work so we found ourselves in Myrtle, South Carolina for six years. From there it was West "By God" Virginia. How in the world did we end up here? Another soldier we served with in Ventura retired here. Judy is a wonderful friend. We took care of her dogs while she was in Afghanistan. As we visited her over the next few years we realized that "West By God" was a great place to retire, so here we are! It's a beautiful state with mountains, rivers and the four seasons.

Life is good. We both have pretty good health considering we are "in the process"—the aging process that is, except I leave out the word aging. I've had a few surgeries here and there and broke most of my ribs falling off a stool. Caution: Do not have one foot on a stool and the other in the kitchen sink while painting the inside of your cabinets! Last May I had my right hip replaced and in November I had the left one done. Now I am the Bionic Woman from Azusa and set off all the bells and whistles at the airport.

We have a little trailer getaway on the Potomac River in Little Orleans, Maryland. It sits on 40 acres of private property among trees and trails. It's not unusual to see hoards of wild turkeys, deer and other wild life. There is no TV reception or cell phone service because it is so secluded. In the summer we tube or canoe down the river and may even take up fishing. It's a serene life we share with Lucy, our beagle I got at a yard sale and Molly our cat. Who could ask for anything more?

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