We Are Family Too

Military Outreach Committee Family Initiative

Prepared for the DoD Comprehensive Review Working Group

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April 2010

29 April 2010

Dear General Ham and Mr. Johnson:

The Military Outreach Committee (MOC), composed of retired and former officers and senior enlisted personnel with a longstanding interest in repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), has previously corresponded with your Comprehensive Review Working Group (CRWG) to offer our assistance in your study on how best to implement a policy whereby gay and lesbian men and women can serve honorably and openly in the military. As part of that process, we are pleased to present our family initiative, "We are Family Too."

"We are Family Too" is based on the historical precedent set by the successful implementation of the Women at Sea program wherein letters from female naval officers, describing why they felt they were not being treated fairly and equally, were used by the Chief of Naval Operations in formulating new Navy policy expanding opportunities for Navy women. Similarly, the Military Outreach Committee feels that some of the best sources of direct information for the CRWG are the experiences of former military gay and lesbian members.

The primary goal of this initiative is to provide valuable information to the CRWG so its members can better understand the impact of the DADT policy upon those most affected by the law. Additionally, the information contained in these letters will complement the data obtained by polling of the military workforce and their family members.

Attached are thirty-seven (37) letters and biographies, representing all five branches of the Armed Forces. The letters bear witness to the inequality and stress imposed on a segment of our military workforce who have to serve under the severe constraints of speech and conduct contained in the current DADT law, constraints that apply only to gay, lesbian and bisexual men and women and not to their heterosexual counterparts. Repealing DADT will simply allow ALL men and women who don the uniform in defense of their nation to serve under the exact same rules and regulations.

Very respectfully submitted,

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We are Family Too

A Military Outreach Committee Initiative

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19 April 2010

Dear Sue,

I grew up on Army bases all over the world and it wasn't long before I decided on a career in the Army. My father deployed for Operation Desert Shield during my senior year. Since we were stationed in Germany, the entire Army base felt like a ghost town. Fellow students at my high school were forced to become the guardians of their younger siblings because Mom, Dad or both parents were deployed. The community changed, but people found strength they didn't know they had. That experience confirmed my desire to be an Army officer, to be a part of this community that overcame challenges together. Once I made that decision, accepting an offer at the United States Military Academy at West Point was an easy choice.

I graduated from West Point in 1995 as an engineer officer. I chose engineers because it was the closest a woman could come to combat. I was immediately deployed to Bosnia for Operation Joint Endeavor. My platoon built bridges throughout Bosnia, opening routes of supply and creating freedom of movement for local elections. Altogether my platoon built five bridges and fixed numerous roads. My platoon also built the largest bridge built by US forces since World War II. We accomplished all of this while maintaining a 100% operational rate of all vehicles, the best in the brigade.

The next year I deployed to Croatia and Bosnia as a staff officer and soon was chosen as a junior staff officer at the Corps headquarters in Heidelberg. After a year, the commanding general made the unprecedented decision to have me fill the role of aide-de-camp, typically a job for someone three ranks higher. As aide, I deployed for a third time to the Balkans, this time to Albania in support of the air war in Kosovo. This time, however, I had a girlfriend back home for the first time. When the unit re-deployed to Germany, the rest of the soldiers were greeted by their families while I walked past the fanfare and drove home to my girlfriend's apartment to celebrate my homecoming on our own.

With my 5-year West Point commitment fast approaching, I soon decided to leave the service. Many people wondered why I threw away a promising career, including my father (an Army general) and brother (another West Pointer and career officer). I found it impossible to live a lie. I had been taught at West Point to hate lies and half-truths. The

conundrum of living a lie while serving my country became too much to bear and I resigned from active duty in August of 2000.

After I resigned I found out that many of my soldiers knew I was gay. My face is an open book and falling in love for the first time must have been easy to read from soldiers I served with so closely. They never said a word during my service, but afterwards senior NCOs and officers told me of their support for ending Don't Ask Don't Tell. I didn't know it when I was on active duty, but I was truly a part of the Army family, a family that supports its members no matter who they love. All that mattered to them was that I was a good officer who put soldiers and mission first.

My real family has also become incredibly supportive of my coming out. My father was a career officer and former JAG. My brother is currently serving and expects to stay in for his entire career. While it was difficult to tell them, they have since welcomed my partner into the family in ways that I never imagined.

I recommend the immediate end of Don't Ask Don't Tell and unit level training similar to sexual harassment training to facilitate the integration of openly gay service members. There is no need for separate bathrooms, barracks, etc. Gay service members are currently serving now, they just have to lie about who they are. I also suggest that the Department of Defense reach out to the numerous gay soldiers who left the service to welcome them back as service members. Finally, DoD should work with organizations like Knights Out that can help facilitate training.

I left the Army as a promising officer, rated the best of seven aides the CG had in his 30 year military career. I left despite joining the Army with every intention of making it a career, a life. The Army is a tough place to make a living, but I was willing to make the sacrifices, to deploy three times in four years, to live in a tent with ten men for nine months, to wade through hip deep mud. But, I was not willing to give up sharing a life with someone. It is time to end this failed law and welcome the dedicated gay and lesbian service members who just want to continue serving their country.

Sincerely,

Bridget Altenburg /s/
West Point 1995
Former Captain, U.S. Army

Former Captain Bridget Altenburg, U.S. Army

Bridget Altenburg is an Army "BRAT", West Point graduate and former Army Engineer Officer. Bridget decided to join the Army during her senior year of high school when her father's unit deployed to Desert Storm. By the time the 1st Armored Division returned the following spring, Bridget had received a nomination to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Bridget's first duty station was Camp Bedrock, Bosnia-Herzegovina. During her nine months in Bosnia, her platoon of 34 soldiers built numerous bridges and roads, helping to improve freedom of movement for the former warring factions. Bridget found herself back in the former Yugoslavia the following year when her unit conducted bridge exercises on the Sava River. Two years later, she served as the V Corps aide-de-camp during the war in Kosovo as her third and final deployment to the Balkans. Bridget left after her five-year military commitment because of the stress of living a lie under "Don't Ask Don't Tell." She graduated from Columbia Business School in May 2002 and worked in corporate America until 2008. In 2008 she joined the Academy for Urban School Leadership, a non-profit teacher training and school turnaround organization recognized by President Obama and Secretary Duncan as a national model for school improvement.

Bridget lives in Chicago with her partner, Colleen. In her spare time she trains and competes in triathlons. Bridget completed her first ironman triathlon in 2004. She and Colleen are expecting their first child in August.

20 April 2010

Dear Sue,

West Point is at the core of my being. I spent 9 years there - first as a cadet, then associate professor, and finally, the Superintendent's Aide-de-Camp — nearly a third of my more than 30 years in uniform. My daughter was born there in 1977. It was at the Military Academy where I first learned the ideals of "Duty, Honor, Country" and then later tried to instill those in our cadets and my own children.

So when Chairman of the JCS, Admiral Mike Mullen, cited his own personal beliefs during his testimony before congress on February 2nd, his words rang true in my own heart. He said that it comes down to personal and institutional integrity. Integrity — isn't that the unifying thread of Duty, Honor, Country? My experience proves that honest, open communication is truly the foundation of unit cohesion, be it a military unit or a family unit.

For me, it took more years than it does for most others to come to grips with my own feelings and realize who I was. My focus was on being a good cadet, so I could become a good soldier. I studied diligently to get the grades that would let me join the Corps of Engineers. I stayed in top physical condition to become an Airborne Ranger — that's what all the Jody-calls proclaimed was the ultimate goal. While still a cadet, I volunteered for Vietnam, because leading others in combat was the ultimate calling of a true soldier. While achieving all this, I suppressed feelings inside that confused me and ran counter to the then-prevailing notion of what it was to be a man.

Being a combat engineer in Vietnam was incredibly motivating. Near the end of my one-year tour, the opportunity arose to command a combat engineer company there, so I jumped at the chance and extended for another six months. Command was demanding but incredibly gratifying. Once stateside, I commanded another company at Fort Bragg, then went to grad school to get my Master of Science in Electrical Engineering. My successes led to a Below-the-Zone promotion to Major. I was teaching at West Point when the selection list came out, had just been named as a finalist in USMA's Best Instructor of the Year competition, and then was chosen by Lt. General Andrew J. Goodpaster to be his Aide-de-Camp — my career was really taking off. But something was missing.

I was doing all the "right" things — married with two beautiful children, passed the exam to become a Registered Professional Engineer and earned an MBA. A tour in Germany provided me the chance to be a Battalion S-3. Success at

that level caused me to be named as the Brigade S-3, as we undertook the largest troop construction project in the history of the Corps of Engineers in peacetime. I was directing the operations of 4,500 engineer soldiers, concentrated at Grafenwohr, Germany and the work involved brought me national recognition in the Society of American Military Engineers for engineering management, as well as selection to LTC and COL, including command at both levels. But with the confidence growing from that success, I was overcoming the belief that I had to suppress my own feelings and conform to the "norms" of others' expectations.

Finally, following two tours at the HQ of the US Army Corps of Engineers and command of two of their districts, I realized my feelings for what they were. I was gay. My wife and I divorced, amicably, based on "irreconcilable differences." To this day, I remain indebted to her for not trying to "out" me and ruin my career. We finished raising our high school aged children, and I'm now closer to them than I've ever been. The honesty has opened up doors for frank discussions about subjects we always dodged — by unspoken mutual consent. Our daughter gave us our first grandson, and our son added two more. I love them all, as any father would.

These experiences — from my years at West Point, my 26+ years on active duty, my interactions with my own family — all taught me the value of honest, open communication. The words of our Chairman Mullen echo loud and clear: "No matter how I look at the issue, I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens."

However, I'm more than merely "troubled". I'm appalled, because discrimination is AGAINST the law in all but one of our federal departments, while in the Department of Defense, discrimination IS the law. We continue to deny the freedom to serve openly and honestly to those who are defending those very freedoms. When a court of law requires people to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," we have a law that forces half-truths and equivocations. And finally, when the Cadet Prayer urges us to "never be content with a half-truth when the whole can be won," let's do all we can to repeal Don't Ask Don't Tell. We all deserve to freely serve the cause of freedom.

With great sincerity,

Stewart Bornhoft /s/
Colonel, US Army Retired

Colonel Stewart Bornhoft, U.S.Army (Ret.)

Colonel Stewart Bornhoft graduated from West Point in 1969, and initially reported to Fort Benning, Georgia, to become Airborne and Ranger qualified, before serving in the 47th Combat Engineer Battalion (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, NC. He then volunteered for Vietnam, where he was a Platoon Leader and Company Executive Officer. He volunteered to extend his combat tour and was given command of D Company, 26th Combat Engineer Battalion and then HHC of the 196th Infantry Brigade, before returning to Fort Bragg as a Battalion Adjutant. There, he also commanded his third company – B, 548th Engineer Battalion (Construction) – before attending the Infantry Officers Advance Course at Fort Benning.

He earned a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering from Georgia Tech and returned to the US Military Academy to teach Electrical Engineering to the cadets. While there, at night, he obtained his MBA from Long Island University. Subsequently, he was selected by the Superintendent of USMA, Lt. Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster, to be his Aide-de-Camp for two years.

Following Command and General Staff College, he served in Germany with the 18th Engineer Brigade for three years as an S-3 Operations Officer, first at battalion and then brigade level. In the latter slot, he was also designated as the Deputy Task Force Commander for a 4,500 member engineer unit building the largest troop construction project ever undertaken by the Corps of Engineers in peacetime – the USAREUR Range Upgrade program – which provided state-of-the-art ranges for the Army's latest main battle tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. His service there earned him national recognition for his engineering management skills, and he was presented the 1984 Wheeler Medal for Engineering Achievement by the Society of American Military Engineers.

Selected for LTC-level command, he returned to the states to serve for a year as an Assistant Director of Military Programs in the HQ of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) before assuming command of the Charleston District of USACE, only one of four districts commanded by a LTC. After attending the Army War College in Carlisle, PA, he became Executive Director of Military Programs in HQ USACE and was again selected for command, this time at the COL level.

He took command of the Omaha District, the largest district in the USACE, in 1991, where he led a 1,700 member workforce spread across 10 mid-western states. In his final tour of duty, Colonel Bornhoft was the Director of Public Works at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Near the end of that tour, he was called to Oklahoma City by the Commander of Third Army to be the Secretary of the Army's Defense Coordinating Officer on-site, during the rescue and recovery effort following the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in April 1995.

Colonel Bornhoft retired in September 1995, and his awards include the Legion of Merit (with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters), the Bronze Star (with OLC), the Meritorious Service Medal (with 2 OLCs), the Air Medal (with 3 awards), the Army Commendation Medal (with 2 OLCs), the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Parachutist Badge and the Ranger Tab. In addition, he has served as President of the Society of American Military Engineers for three posts (San Diego, Omaha, and Charleston), President of the West

Point Society of Omaha, and achieved the second highest level in Toastmasters International. He has been a registered Professional Engineer in Virginia since 1979 and became a credentialed Project Management Professional in 2006.

He lives with his partner, Stephen, in Southern California, and has two grown children and three grandsons.

Dear Sue, *22 April 2010*

I come from a working-class Southern Baptist family in rural Georgia. The oldest of four children, I attended North Georgia College thanks to a ROTC scholarship. I served, thereafter, almost twelve years as an active duty Military Intelligence Army officer – form 1984 through 1996.

My career included overseas assignments in South Korea and Germany, and stateside assignments in Arizona and South Carolina. I served my final years in the Army working in Washington, DC, for the Defense Intelligence Agency at the Pentagon, on the Joint Staff (Directorate for Intelligence). My military awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, The Joint Staff Commendation Medal and the Parachutist Badge. I credit my military service, along with the values instilled by my parents, with helping to make me the person who I am today.

I am one of the approximately one million gay and lesbian Veterans of the US Military. While on active duty, I had to hide, evade, and deceive as a condition of service. If knowledge of my sexuality became public, I would have been involuntarily discharged. I would place my years of military service alongside those of any other Soldier. I was proud to serve, indeed my Army service stands today as one of my proudest achievements.

I left the Army in January 1996, while working at the Pentagon and after obtaining the rank of Major. I left because I could no longer reconcile the tension between service to country and subjugating my identity. I am now a shareholder in an Atlanta law firm.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell is an affront to the Army's core values of integrity and personal courage. I am proud, today, to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with those many thousands of Veterans who are fighting to repeal this bad law. Gay and lesbian Americans are already serving, often with distinction, in uniform. It is well past time that our nation's military treats the service and sacrifice of its gay troops with the dignity and respect afforded to every other.

Sincerely,

Jeffery M. Cleghorn, Esq. /s/
Former U.S. Army Major

Former Major Jeffery M. Cleghorn, U.S. Army

Jeffery M. Cleghorn is a Named Partner with the law firm of Kitchens New Cleghorn, LLC, with offices in Atlanta and Athens, Georgia.

Jeff is a 1984 distinguished military graduate of North Georgia College in Dahlonega, where he received a B.A. in Political Science. After graduation, he received a commission in the United States Army as a Military Intelligence Officer. Jeff's military career included overseas assignments in South Korea and Germany, stateside assignments in Arizona and South Carolina, and his final assignment in Washington, DC, at the Defense Intelligence Agency, on the Joint Staff (Directorate for Intelligence). His military awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Staff Commendation Medal and the Parachutist Badge.

Jeff left the Army in 1996 at the rank of Major and went to law school at The George Washington University. In 1999, he began his legal career as a Staff Attorney with the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), where he represented LGBT military personnel in matters relating to the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) law and the Defense Department's treatment of its gay and lesbian personnel. Jeff also worked as a consultant to the University of California's Michael D. Palm Center from 2003 through 2005; he currently serves on SLDN's Board of Directors.

Jeff has appeared as a legal analyst on CNN, C-SPAN, FOX News' *The O'Reilly Factor*, MSNBC, and NPR. He has authored opinion pieces advocating for gay and lesbian equality for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Army Times*, the *Marine Corps Times*, the *Navy Times*, the *Air Force Times, Advocate.com,* and has appeared in local television and radio outlets around the country. He has spoken extensively about DADT to military, veterans and academic audiences, including the United States Army War College, Harvard University, University of Virginia, Hofstra University, and the University of Florida.

Jeff lives in Midtown Atlanta with his life partner, Kevin T. Kirby, and their dog George.

19 April 2010

Dear Beth,

I graduated West Point in 1980 and was commissioned in the Signal Corps. Like so many, I didn't really come to grips with my sexual orientation until later — in fact, I would say I didn't think of myself as a lesbian until I was a Lieutenant in Germany.

I feel that, for gay and lesbian Soldiers, there are two Armies. For awhile, I served in the first: no one cared about my orientation, they cared about the mission. In this Army, I met SP5 Ronnie C. Riley (not his real name). Our Signal Company was collocated in garrison with 2nd Support Command, including the Personnel Services & Administration Battalion that supported VII Corps. And EVERYONE knew Riley - he was the smartest personnel clerk in the Corps; he knew how to make MILPERCEN work, and commanders who needed help managing the system knew that Riley was their go-to guy. Charismatic and personable, he was also the swishiest queen I have ever met in my life! Six feet tall but as stereotypically limp-wristed and lispy as the worst caricature, he nevertheless took no crap from anyone - and he was widely respected.

People like Riley gave me the courage to be honest to some of my fellow LTs - and instead of ruining my friendships, it strengthened them.

Unfortunately, I didn't spend my whole career in THAT Army. I soon discovered the other.

We got a new Battalion Commander, and he was on a mission: to root out any gays and lesbians from his command. He held his first health & welfare inspection after he heard rumors that there were lesbians in the unit. Calling the officers together on a Friday evening, he informed us that we'd be going through the barracks at 2am Sunday morning, focusing on "who's in whose beds." Soon after, I became a target. One of my Soldiers — a SP4 Soldier of the Year, twice selected Soldier of the Quarter — was rumored to be a lesbian. One night in the field, she returned late from a courier run. Pouncing on his opportunity, the commander demanded I start paperwork for a court-martial. I strongly protested his over-reaction, and he relieved me of my duties, calling the Corps JAG to try to prefer charges against me based on his belief that I must be in an illicit relationship with the Soldier.

Ultimately the absurd charges were dropped for lack of evidence, but the wide-ranging investigation took months, during which time I was ostracized by the unit. No one dared sit next to me in the mess hall except an unfortunate male Captain in a similar situation, and a courageous black WO who was our friend. ("It ain't nothin' but a thing" he would say, indifferent to the stares and comments of others). In the course of the investigation, I was asked several times whether I was a lesbian. To my never-ending shame, I lied.

Fortunately, I was able to get myself reassigned to a newly-forming CEWI (MI) Brigade. Because of my performance, nine months later I was selected over two more senior officers to command the new Signal Company as a 1LT. I built and led B Company, 307th MI, from formation with 30-odd troops to our full complement of 200-plus Soldiers - and went to the field fully mission-capable six months earlier than objective, exceeding goals of 90% communications reliability in field operations.

I left the Army when my tour ended. I never forgave myself for lying — and I had no stomach for finding myself in that situation again — in that "other" Army.

It's all about command climate. Commanders who set the tone that gay and lesbian Soldiers are accepted, supported, and held to the same standard as others will have no issue with repealing DADT — in fact will thrive. Commanders who are hung up on this issue will struggle — and so will their units — but whether they know it or not, they are already struggling, because some of their Soldiers live in fear of their own comrades.

In my work with Knights Out, I get emails from gay graduates on Active Duty. Many of them serve in the kinds of units where they are accepted… Here is one example (identifying information deleted):

> So I ran into a staff sergeant I used to work with... We got to talking and I had the chance to meet his boyfriend and they're a great couple. He's waiting out the rest of his commitment until he gets out--just can't continue living his life hiding. Well, through him I've realized that the other female in his section as well as one of my NCOs are also both lesbians. The sergeant who works for me is an amazing NCO - she's incredibly good at her job – and I finally had a chance to speak to her offline. She told me she isn't re-enlisting because she can't continue being in the Army without getting the same benefits and recognition a married straight couple would get. She's had a girlfriend for several years, and if she could, would be married to her. But she's a junior NCO so she's

been stuck living in the barracks not receiving any housing allowance, and just can't continue on. This is another perfect example of how much the Army is losing.

How much longer?

Respectfully,

Brenda S. "Sue" Fulton /s/
USMA '80
Former CPT, SC

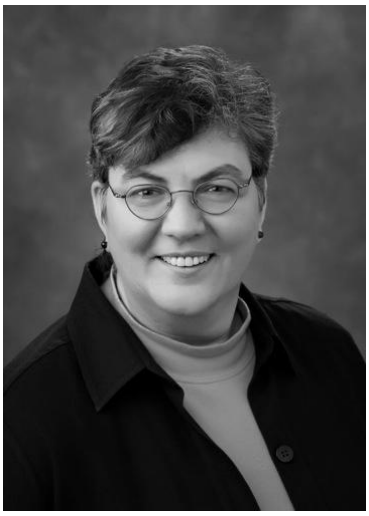
Former Captain Sue Fulton, U.S. Army

West Point Class of 1980
Knights Out Communications Director

Brenda S. "Sue" Fulton is a 1980 West Point graduate, part of the first class to admit women, and a Founding Board member of Knights Out, an organization of LGBT West Point grads and their allies.

A Florida native, Fulton was commissioned in the Army Signal Corps and served for five years in Germany. She commanded a Military Intelligence company before leaving the Army at the rank of Captain.

Upon returning to the States, Fulton began a career in brand management. In 1993, she became active with the Campaign for Military Service, later SLDN, and has devoted her free time in support of gays in the military since then. Fulton is currently a brand director at a pharmaceutical company and lives in North Plainfield, NJ, with her partner Penny Gnesin. She serves as Communications Director for Knights Out.



April 20, 2010

Dear Sue,

After graduating from West Point in 1980 I served for twelve years as an active duty Signal Officer. The highlight of my service, and my life, was commanding A Company, 123rd Signal Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division. I enjoyed an immensely rewarding and promising military career, and I will always consider leading soldiers a singular privilege.
In 1992 I submitted my unqualified resignation from the Army, in opposition to the military's policy on gay and lesbian servicemembers. I resigned, as a matter of conscience, under the pre- 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy. On my way to a high-profile assignment with the White House Communications Agency, I had recently acknowledged my orientation, and I decided that I could not go through the rest of my career dissembling and equivocating about my very identity and my family.
After leaving the military I joined the Campaign for Military Service in lobbying to lift the gay ban; I was hopeful that I might soon be back in uniform and able to serve with integrity. When Don't Ask, Don't Tell became law I was bitterly disappointed, and became a founding member of the Board of Directors of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), which helps men and women facing harassment and discharge because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. I submit that Don't Ask, Don't Tell is a tragically misguided policy because it codifies deception in the ranks and underestimates the capacity of soldiers to build strong bonds of trust in the most diverse units. During my years of service as a platoon leader, company commander and staff officer, I observed that gay and lesbian soldiers, including those who courageously attempted to serve openly, were often among the most competent and respected members of their teams. When leaders hold soldiers to high standards of conduct and refuse to tolerate any form of discrimination that might undermine cohesion and readiness, gays and lesbians can serve with distinction and units can accomplish great things.
In 2008, having worked for over ten years in diverse industries as an Information Technology systems architect, I completed a Reynolds Fellowship in Social Entrepreneurship at New York University. Through the Reynolds Program I joined Casebook, a technology startup incubated

by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Casebook applies emerging technologies in social networking, visual media and analytics to providing better tools for frontline caseworkers in Human Services, including Child Welfare and Family Homelessness Prevention. I now direct Research and Analytics for this exciting new social venture. I believe that strong human services and human capital development infrastructures are every bit as important to our national security as renewed physical and financial infrastructures.

Although I am inspired by my new civilian career and the opportunities it presents to strengthen families and communities, I miss military service. As a commander, I lived for my soldiers, looking for every opportunity to help them grow and succeed. When I walked away from my military career, I felt not only stripped of my sense of professional identity, but also rejected by and alienated from the Army as my extended family. My loved ones, including my elderly parents, felt the dislocation too. They were proud of my service to my country, and deeply worried and angry that I had to leave a profession that was so clearly my calling.

Thank you for considering my story. I look forward to the day when all men and women can serve their country without compromising their integrity, and all military families feel welcome and respected for their commitment to keeping our nation strong.

Sincerely,

Andrea L. Hollen /s/
Major (ret.), U.S. Army
USMA Class of 1980

Major Andrea Hollen, U.S. Army, (Ret.)
West Point Class of 1980

In 1980 Andrea Hollen became the first woman to graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point.

After studies in Modern History at Oxford University under a Rhodes Scholarship, she served as an active duty Signal officer for 10 years, commanding A Company, 123rd Signal Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division. In 1992, after her promotion to Major, Andrea submitted her unqualified resignation from the military in opposition to the military's policy against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender servicemembers. (She resigned under the old 1981 law, not DADT.) She had recently acknowledged her orientation, and did not want to lie on a security clearance document required for a position with the White House Communications Agency.

Andrea is a founding member of the Board of Directors of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), which provides legal assistance to men and women facing harassment and discharge under DADT, and she is proud to be an Out Knight. Andrea recently completed a Reynolds Fellowship in Social Entrepreneurship at New York University, and now works for a Baltimore-based foundation focused on revitalizing communities and strengthening families. She is applying emerging technologies to creating cutting-edge tools for frontline caseworkers in Child Welfare. She has lived in Baltimore City for two years, and is a member of the West Baltimore Coalition.

19 April 2010

Dear Sue,

The purpose of this letter is to briefly outline my experiences as a cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point and to describe some of the devastating effects that the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy had on me, my family, and other fellow patriots.

As a child, I always knew I wanted to be in the military. When I was in the 7th grade (long before I even realized I was gay), I found out about the United States Military Academy at West Point and decided that was where I wanted to go to school. At first, I was drawn merely to the pomp and circumstance, but as I grew older I developed a sense of wanting to serve my country as an officer in the United States Army and help protect the freedoms that we enjoy. I embraced the West Point values of Duty, Honor, and Country; and the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Later in life, when I discovered my sexual identity, my desire to serve my country did not subside; in fact, it was stronger than ever. I knew about the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy prior to joining, but at the time I held my desire to serve above my sexual identity. I planned on serving out a full career in the Army and the optimist in me wanted to try to effect a change in DADT from within.

I was discharged from West Point in April 2002 at the end of my Plebe (freshman) year for violating the DADT policy. My commanding officer was given information that I had a profile posted on a "gay" website. The Academy said that by having a profile on that site, I was making a statement of my sexual orientation and "demonstrating a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts." It did not matter to them that I was in the top fifth of my class — all that mattered was that I "might be gay."

Following my discharge, I received condolences and letters of support from a number of classmates. They all expressed their shock from hearing the news of my discharge and their outrage at the policies that led to it. They expressed their respect for me, valued my potential as an Army leader, and related their disappointment in the military's discriminatory and antiquated policy. Several of them even said they thought I was well on my way to earning the rank of "First Captain", the highest-ranking cadet position within the United States Corps of Cadets.

In fact, I had earned the honor of representing our class as Cadet Command Sergeant Major for Plebe-Parent Weekend.

After leaving West Point, dusting myself off and getting back on my feet, I enrolled in a state university, where I studied Spanish, French, Russian, German, and Psychology. I now work full-time in law enforcement, which is proving to be a very enjoyable and fulfilling career. I still miss West Point and the Army, and am greatly saddened that I was never able to walk with my classmates at graduation and pursue my lifelong dreams of an Army career. I hold no grudges and I still value the West Point and Army missions, and would reenlist in a heartbeat if given the opportunity. The time for change is now.

Respectfully,

Harry Clay Leak II /s/
USMA Class of 2005

Former West Point Cadet Harry Clay Leak

Knights Out Member

Clay Leak grew up in Glenwood Springs, Colorado and graduated from Glenwood Springs High School in 2000. Following high school, Clay was wait-listed at West Point; in order to enhance his military preparedness, he enrolled in the ROTC program at New Mexico Military Institute (NMMI), and was selected for a full-ride scholarship. Clay attended ROTC Basic Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in the summer of 2000, before his first year at NMMI..

At the end of that year, Clay was appointed to West Point with the Class of 2005. Clay thrived in the atmosphere at West Point; during freshman (Plebe) year, he earned the honor of representing his class as Cadet Command Sergeant Major during Plebe-Parent Weekend. Near the end of his Plebe year, Clay's lifelong dream of serving as an officer in the United States Army was cut short due to the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

After leaving West Point, Clay graduated from the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU) with a dual major in Spanish and Psychology. Clay continued to seek out service and leadership opportunities, active in student government and employed part-time with the University of Colorado Police Department, all while taking a full load of classes and maintaining a high grade point average (GPA).

Clay now works for a local government agency, where he has been able to continue to serve the community in which he lives and works. He also frequently gives presentations to local classes and community groups about his experiences in the Army and at West Point, and about the effects of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy

19 April 2010

Dear Sue,

Thanks for affording me the opportunity to share what it was like for me when my sexuality and integrity came into direct conflict with U.S. Army regulations.

I'd like to start by stating perhaps an obvious truism: Love is confusing. As a friend and a chaplain, I have counseled many as they tried to navigate the toughest of love's questions – Is this the person I should marry? Is this infatuation or love, and how can I know the difference? Should I take the relationship to the next level? Anyone who has experienced love has asked themselves, and their friends, families, and colleagues questions such as these as they discern and try to make sense of it all.

The first time I fell in love, it was just as confusing. I knew I was in love, but the fact that the person I was in love with was a woman was a severe test for me. I had never been in a relationship with a woman and didn't see myself as gay. Yet the fact remained — I was in love. Adding to the confusion, and the fear of the whole experience (love can be scary enough on its own!), was the fact that I had just graduated from West Point and was serving as a 2LT at Schofield Barracks.

I had gone to West Point, to a large degree, because of the honor code. Integrity has always been, of all the values, the one I hold most dear. My mother had graduated from UCLA and I remember clearly the day she told me how disappointed she was when she saw some of the students from her class buying and selling papers they had written. At that moment I thought, "Nope, that is not going to happen to me. I am going to go to a school that matches my desire and need for honesty and integrity. A cadet will not lie, cheat, nor steal, nor tolerate those who do. Yes, that's me!"

Given the facts, then, that I was in love with a woman and I could not lie about it, it isn't hard to see the internal and external crisis that I found myself in as a brand new LT on a small island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

The easiest thing for me to do, and the course of action I tried to encourage myself to take for more than a year, would have been to run from love. But that wasn't an option. I was not, and am not, a quitter; I do not run from what I find difficult. And since lying was also out of the question, I just kept trying to make sense of the situation by myself. I thought about approaching others to talk with, but having heard the horror stories of removals from duty and investigations, I decided better of it. The thought of the shame of having just graduated from the

Academy and then being interrogated and kicked out of the Service for something I wasn't even sure I was, was too much to bear.
Two asides come to mind here. First, when the military does repeal the law, they will have to pay particular attention to dealing with the culture of fear and secrecy that it has created and cultivated over the past 50 years among a whole group of its soldiers. For many of them, to start living in full integrity again may take much work and many assurances. Second, one of the problems I see with the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy and the discussions surrounding it, is that they seem to assume soldiers have themselves, love, and sexuality all figured out. That certainly wasn't the case for me and I don't know many 19, 20 or even that many 25 year olds who aren't a least a little confused by it all.
In the short three years that I was active duty, I was Airborne and Air Assault (first female Distinguished Honor Graduate), received the Expert Field Medical Badge, and volunteered to go to Desert Storm. The values of physical work, integrity, service and team building made the Army an almost ideal place for me. I may have stayed in the Army had I felt more a part of the team. I was well-liked and had friends, but not being able to share the biggest struggle in my life (and the biggest joy) with my peers and military friends prevented me from really forming the kind of friendships that one needs to feel an integral part of the team — that which is needed for unit cohesion among the officer corps and with the troops, what is necessary to continue to risk life and limb for each other. In the end we risk everything not only for our country, but for our country personified in and by our buddies, members of that integral team.
Where I would like to see the Army go, if I can be so bold, is to helping soldiers develop healthy understandings of what it is to be a good soldier, divorced from antiquated stereotypes about gender and gender roles. "Macho" has no place in the modern professional Army; put downs and negative comparisons to the feminine are hurtful to the Esprit de Corps of the Forces. I would hope for more emphasis on creating a culture of respect for difference - developing unit cohesion based on the values of inclusion and diversity, not in spite of them.
If you have any questions or would like to discuss what I've written further, please don't hesitate to contact me.
Thank you again for this opportunity to share.
Sincerely,

Laura Slattery/s/
Former First Lieutenant, U.S. Army

Former First Lieutenant Laura Slattery, U.S. Army
West Point Class of 1988
Knights Out Member

Laura Slattery is a 1988 graduate of the US Military Academy. As a cadet she concentrated in National Security and Public Affairs and was captain of the Women's Softball Team. Upon graduation, she was stationed in Hawaii as an officer in the 25th Infantry Division (Light). During that time she earned her Airborne wings, became the first female Air Assault School Distinguished Honor Graduate, and earned the Expert Field Medical Badge. During the First Gulf War, though her unit was not being deployed, Laura volunteered to go to Iraq. Due to the needs of the Army, however, she was not sent. She resigned her commission in September of 1991 after three years of active duty service.

Since leaving the military, she has worked as an international volunteer in Mexico and El Salvador, chaplain in a hospital, high school teacher, Catholic Worker, and nonviolence activist. She received her Masters in Theology from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA in 1998 and then a New Voices Fellowship to work as the GLBTQ Coordinator and International Coordinator of the From Violence to Wholeness Program of Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service. She has facilitated nonviolence trainings in East Timor, Colombia, and throughout the US. In 2003, she was arrested and served three months in federal prison for engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience at Fort Benning, Georgia in an effort to call attention to and close the U.S. Army's School of the Americas/Whinsec, which is alleged to have taught torture to Latin American soldiers.

Today, Laura continues her work of trying to close the SOA/Whinsec and of engaging others to be involved in society to bring about change. She lives in the Bay Area with her domestic partner of over six years, Cile.

20 April 2010

Dear Sue,

I retired from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel in October 2008 after more than 21 years of active duty service. After graduating from West Point in 1987 I was commissioned in the infantry where I commanded combat soldiers at the platoon and company level. I am Airborne and Ranger qualified. I've served in both Gulf Wars as well as in Bosnia. The last six years of my Army career were spent at the Pentagon where I routinely interacted with senior military leaders to include the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Secretary of the Army. I loved the army and had a very successful military career, but felt compelled to retire rather than continue living under the discriminatory policy of DADT.

In 2005 and again in 2006 I was board-selected for Lieutenant Colonel command positions. At the time I was living in the Metro Washington, DC area with my partner. I chose to decline both of these career-enhancing positions because I knew that I couldn't take him with me. The Army would not recognize our relationship and I knew that the more rural areas where I would be placed in command would be much less tolerant of me as a gay service members. Consequently, the Army lost a fully qualified 21 year veteran because of DADT.

While more than 13,000 qualified service members have been kicked out of the military under the discriminatory policy of DADT, I believe equally as tragic is the countless number of service members (like me) who have chosen to leave the service rather than continue to endure the hardships of living in silence and being forced to lie about who we are. Unfortunately, there is no way to quantify this loss, so it goes uncounted.

Many would argue that the military is not ready to lift the ban or that it might make some straight service members uncomfortable. I can assure you that during my more than 21 years of service, I was always judged by my performance and ability to do my job. I gained the respect of my peers and subordinates alike because I was technically competent, genuinely cared for my soldiers, and accomplished the mission no matter how challenging. My professionalism and competence were in no way diminished because of whom I happened to love.

I realize that some Americans may be uncomfortable with gays and lesbians. Unfortunately, this is overwhelmingly the result of fear based on ignorance because they don't personally know any gays or lesbians. My overwhelming experience has been that as people know me, they see me as a caring person rather than as something to be feared. Bottom line: their ignorance and prejudice disappear as they get to know me as a person. Ignorance leads to fear and bigotry. Unfortunately, the DADT policy feeds that ignorance in two ways:

- *The policy itself implies there is something wrong with being gay and therefore helps justify and rationalize the prejudice of those who oppose gays and lesbians.*
- *By forcing gays and lesbians to serve in silence, DADT prevents the vast majority of straight service members from actually knowing GLBT service members, which would thereby reduce the ignorance and irrational fear about this community.*

As a cadet at West Point, I was taught that Honor was "choosing the harder right rather than the easier wrong." This was not always easy to do, but this guidance served me well throughout my military career. While it may be easier to keep the status quo regarding DADT, I urge our military leaders to do the honorable thing (to choose the harder right rather than the easier wrong) and end discrimination in the military by lifting the DADT policy.

Jeffrey R.Voigt /s/
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret.)

Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey R. Voigt, U.S. Army (Ret.)

Jeffrey Voigt was commissioned as an Infantry Officer from the United States Military Academy in 1987. His first assignment was as a rifle platoon leader in the Berlin Brigade where he watched the fall of the Berlin Wall. He deployed to the Persian Gulf in 1992 to support the first Gulf War as a provisional transportation company commander in charge of more than 180 troops and 80 vehicles.

Jeff commanded a light infantry company with the 9th Infantry Regiment from 1994-95 in Fort Lewis, WA. After command, Jeff went to the Defense Language Institute to study Spanish for his follow-on assignment to the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, GA as a Special Operations Instructor Team Chief.

Jeff served in Bosnia in 1996 as a civil affairs officer and then transitioned into the Army's Acquisition Corps where he worked on the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and Abram's Tank Programs. In 2004, he led a battle damage assessment team for the 3rd Infantry Division as it invaded Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Upon his return from Iraq, Jeff was assigned to the Pentagon where he was the primary staff officer responsible for the vehicle armoring kit effort. In this role, Jeff briefed senior Army leaders on a routine basis to ensure the rapid deployment of quality armor to US soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. He retired from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel after more than 21 years of commissioned service.

Jeff earned his MS in Industrial Engineering from the University of Central Florida in 2000. He is PMP (Program Management Professional) certified and currently works as an Acquisition Program Management consultant in the Washington, DC area.

16 April 2010

Dear Sue,

I came to consciousness against the echoes of the Vietnam War, coming from the TV in the other room. The first time I heard of soldiers was when my third grade teacher, Miss Gattis, announced she was going to marry one. He had just returned from Vietnam and he came to our tiny Texas town to claim what was his. I had thought Miss Gattis was going to wait for me, and when I realized she wasn't, I decided that whatever a soldier was, it was something I didn't like.

Thirteen years later my godmother, Marion Dent, sat in the bleachers overlooking the West Point parade ground and wrote me a letter about what it means to be a soldier and a human being. Marion Dent was the wife of my father's West Point roommate, best friend, Air Force F-100 wingman, and best man. While her husband flew missions over Southeast Asia, Marion marched in Washington against the Vietnam war. Yet she encouraged me to join the Academy and serve the nation as a soldier. The day I received her letter, I applied for admission to the United States Military Academy.

As a cadet at West Point and a commissioned active-duty aviation officer, I was formed by the men who survived Vietnam. They taught me how to fight, how to live, and how to be. They had dutifully faced death—together and alone—and done what was asked of them by a nation that, for a time, turned its back on them. Their lives illustrated the stark differences that exist at times between the bidding of elected officials and the values that the U.S. represents. These men led me and my academy classmates into action in Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and back to the Persian Gulf.

Through their example I came to understand the near-impossible paradoxes and moral complexities that warriors face. They are bound on one side by an oath of office—a promise to the nation to support and defend the constitution and fight and win our wars—and on the other side by a promise to protect, defend, and lead the soldiers who stare back at them at every formation. I dedicated my life to examining the intricate arguments that sustain that tension. I learned to appreciate the absolutely elegant simplicity of right and wrong in even the most knotty moral decisions. Not ease, but simplicity, born of a clear sense of fundamental values. Choices that honor those values produce a sense of harmonious certainty that any leader will recognize. To shrink from decisions simply because they will provoke controversy is to fail

the nation and the soldiers who have entrusted their lives to their leader.

Those are the lessons I learned as I proudly served my nation as a soldier and a leader. Since leaving military service, I have become increasingly less patient with public leaders—and us, their followers—who refuse to learn the same lessons. As a nation, we seem to be lying to ourselves about courage and leadership. We are afraid to challenge the assumptions of our institutions even as we respect their foundations. A notable example of our failure is the unwillingness to lift the unconstitutional and incoherent policy, commonly called "don't ask, don't tell," that prohibits homosexuals from serving openly in our armed forces. They are told they can serve only if they treat their sexuality as a secret they must hide from the world. And in the next breath they are told that a soldier never lies.

It is unconscionable to me that we as citizens, capable of influencing public policy and law, are catatonic in the face of the opportunity to join forces against fear and ignorance. In the past few years, we have found ourselves shocked and horrified by the duplicitous nature of leaders in higher echelons of trusted domains—corporate, political, papal. But are the rest of us any less complicit in the immoral contradiction that is "don't ask, don't tell"?

And it is immoral. In 1990, my West Point classmate, professional colleague, and close friend, Tommie Bates, unable to reconcile his integrity with the Army's policy against homosexuals, submitted his paperwork to bring his service to the nation to an honorable end. His resignation was halted on the desk of an assignment officer in Washington on the eve of Saddam Hussein's assault on Kuwait in August of that year. Tommie went to the Gulf War as a field artillery officer and so distinguished himself that he was asked to become the aide-de-camp of his division's commanding general. He was killed shortly thereafter. We not only failed Tommie, we failed his family, his soldiers, and ourselves when we chose to stop his resignation and send him to war. Either he was fit to serve or he was not. The Army told him, in effect, "We don't want your kind." Then it held up his paperwork and sent him to Kuwait to die. It was a clear failure to demonstrate allegiance to the moral imperatives of public leadership, and I am outraged by it.

It was shortly after Tommie's death that I was asked to serve as a professor at the United States Military Academy. As the director of the curriculum's core course on leadership, I used to ask my cadet students to come to class for the first lesson prepared to introduce themselves nonverbally. I told them that there were no boundaries other than their own. I saw many acts of courage over those years, but none more compelling than the performance of Lorna

Case. A tall, awkward young woman, Lorna told us that there were times that she felt ostracized and unfit to attend West Point. At such times she would sing to remind herself of who she was. She asked to sing to us by way of introduction. Then she unfolded her six-foot, two-inch frame—it seemed to take an entire minute for her to reach her full height—and she sang, beautifully, a Negro spiritual from way deep down in our collective history. She took up all the space in that classroom for four minutes. Here was a cadet, an outsider because of her appearance, her gender, and her talents, and she willingly shared them all with us. I was transported to the many times through the years, as an athlete, an officer, and an aviator, that I felt exactly like her. I wasn't the only one in the classroom who felt that way. At one time or another, every cadet in that room had experienced what it means to be an outsider, and with that spiritual, Lorna Case connected each one of us to our own struggles, and to one other. There we were, a community, truly trusting each other for the first time, because of one woman's act of courage.

I often think about finding trust and courage and freedom inside the morass that often characterizes our nation's social, political, and legal systems. And I always come back to Marion Dent, Tommie Bates, and Lorna Case. They each taught me about a kind of courage that isn't found at the point of a bayonet. Their courage is that of people who stand up without armor or weapons or protection of any kind, who risk more than their lives to defend us against the forces that violate what we stand for. Actions like theirs are what bind our country together—not a fight against an enemy carefully defined by political expediency or economic imperatives.

When our nation was younger, we took comfort in myths that today seem wrongheaded, even un-American. We told ourselves that Native Americans were vermin and that the nation's expansion and security required their extermination. We told ourselves that (1) we couldn't let women vote in our elections, because they didn't have the intellectual acumen to make sound decisions, (2) black Americans could not serve in our armed forces alongside whites because integration would impair unit cohesion and, (3) if women were admitted to the U.S. service academies, the quality and integrity of the education of combat leaders would diminish catastrophically. The eerie echo of those sentiments can today be heard in the official rationalizations for don't ask, don't tell

But I believe in the beauty and power of dissent and dialectic. I also believe that patience is the beginning of wisdom. And though our own wisdom seems slow in coming, I believe it will eventually manifest itself in hearts and mind, policy and law. I cannot know when don't ask, don't tell will be flung onto the

same ash heap that holds the doctrine of manifest destiny, suffrage for white males only, and the segregated, all-male military, but I trust the people of the U.S. and their leaders, despite their infuriating, persistent obtuseness. I trust their dedication to service and to justice, even in the face of daunting opposition. I also trust this nation's history and the logical inevitability of an idea whose time has come.

And I believe in the courage of Marion Dent, Tommie Bates, Lorna Case, and the men who taught me and led me at West Point and on active duty. They, not the craven policymakers and public officials, are the models of moral leadership who guide my beliefs and actions.

Respectfully,

Lissa V. Young /s/
Former Major, U.S. Army

LISSA V. YOUNG is a 1986 graduate of West Point. After 16 years on active duty, selection for promotion to lieutenant colonel, and permanent assignment as an academy professor directing leadership education at the United States Military Academy, Young was asked to resign her commission because of the Army's "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

Former Major Lissa V. Young, U.S. Army

Lissa Young is a 1986 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point where she majored in General Engineering and Comparative Literature. She was the first woman in history to be selected to be the Commander of Cadet Field Training at Camp Buckner and the first woman in history to be selected to be the Deputy Brigade Commander of the Corps of Cadets.

Lissa was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army Aviation Corps, as a rotary wing aviator. She served on active duty in a variety of capacities for 16 years.

Lissa served with the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colorado. She served as a UH-1H (Iroquois) Assault Flight Platoon Leader, OH-58C (Kiowa) Target Acquisition and Aerial Reconnaissance Flight Platoon Leader, Assistant Operations Officer for an Aviation Battalion, and Executive Officer for an Intermediate Aviation Maintenance Company. While serving in this assignment, Lissa Young became the first woman in Army Aviation history to fly combat training missions with the 1-4 Attack Battalion and 2-7 Cavalry Squadron at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California.

Lissa was assigned to the 159th Aviation Group in the 18th Airborne Corps of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. She served with distinction there as a CH-47D (Chinook) Heavy Lift Flight Platoon Leader, a Battalion Adjutant for a Heavy Lift Aviation Battalion, and Company Commander for an UH-1H (Iroquois) Assault Helicopter Company. Lissa was decorated during this assignment for the role she played in standing up an aviation command coordination center in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew in Miami, Florida. She was also the first rotary wing aviation commander in the XVIII Airborne Corps to create a 24 hour ready reaction airborne command and control platform for the Corps Commander.

Lissa Young then served as Chief of the Regional Heavy Lift Training Team for the 5th Army in Olathe, Kansas. While there she attended the University of Kansas and completed her M.A. in Social Psychology/Organizational Leadership. Her Master's Thesis was published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Volume 75, Number 2 in August of 1998. The work is titled "All That You Can Be: Stereotyping of Self and Others in a Military Context."

After completing graduate school, Lissa served on the faculty of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the United States Military Academy at West Point. She instructed the Military Leadership core course; served as Course Director for that course; and served as Assistant Professor for the Department of Behavioral Sciences & Leadership.

After teaching at West Point, Lissa attended the United States Army's Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas where she received Special Skill Identifiers in International Strategy and Executive Leadership and Management.

After graduating from the Command and General Staff College, Lissa was selected to take command of the United States Army's High Altitude Search and Rescue Aviation unit in Alaska. This team is the Army's elite high altitude rotary wing rescue organization responsible for all mountain rescues above 10,000 feet.

While there, Lissa was selected for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and by the United States Military Academy to be an Academy Professor assigned to the Strategic Leadership and Management Program within the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership.

Lissa tenured her resignation from the United States Army in September of 2002 due to the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy.

From 2003 to 2007, Lissa served as Raytheon Company's lead sales representative for air traffic control systems in the Middle East. She covered all of the airports in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

In the Fall of 2007, Lissa was awarded a Presidential Fellowship by Harvard University, and is currently there pursuing her doctorate in intellectual history.

Additional Biographic Info:

Medals Awarded:

United States Army Service Ribbon
National Defense Service Ribbon
United States Army Humanitarian Service Medal
United States Army Achievement Medal with Three Oak Leaf Clusters
United States Army Commendation Medal with Two Oak Leaf Clusters
United States Army Meritorious Service Medal with Two Oak Leaf Clusters

United States Army Aircraft Qualifications:

UH-1H Iroquois Utility Helicopter – 500 hours
OH-58A Scout Observation Helicopter – 250 hours
OH-58A+ Scout Observation Helicopter – 250 hours
OH-58C Kiowa Observation Helicopter – 100 hours
CH-47D Chinook Cargo Helicopter – 500 hours

Special Schools Attended:

Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Management Course
United States Army Aviation Maintenance Manager's Course
United States Army Supply Officer's Course
United States Army Battalion Adjutant Personnel Manager's Course
United States Army Aviation Officer's Basic Course
United States Army Aviation Officer's Advanced Course
United States Army Combined Arms and Services Staff School
United States Army Command and General Staff College
United States Army Arctic Survival and War Fighting Course
United States Army Air Assault Badge
United States Army Airborne (Paratrooper) Badge
United States Army Senior Aviator Badge
International Strategist Special Skill Identifier
Executive Management Special Skill Identifier

19 April 2010

To the Working Group:

I hope this letter will be of assistance in your efforts to plan the effective transition to open service by gay and lesbian servicemembers in the armed forces of the United States.

I don't think of "my story" as being especially compelling, as I had no particular problem hiding my sexuality. I was a college athlete, tall, popular. And later, I was an officer in the Navy with a Regular commission, as I was a graduate of the Duke and Harvard NROTC programs. Indeed I was in the last class to be commissioned from Harvard, in 1971, aboard the USS Constitution, our Navy's flagship. All three television networks and numerous national newspapers covered the event since Harvard had a special historic relationship with the US Navy, long predating the establishment of the Naval Academy. Harvard has supplied more admirals to our Navy than any other school except the Academy. And, of course, this was during the Vietnam War, so the end of Harvard's role was noteworthy in that context too. Indeed, it symbolized the emerging split between the elite of our society and the military that protects it. That split continues today and it is detrimental to both. But today the split - the reason some of our best schools deny ROTC programs on campus - is because the discrimination against gay servicemembers violates the non-discrimination policies of the Universities. Even schools that allow such programs do so because they must have government funds, which would be denied if the ROTC programs are prohibited. They are required to compromise their principles. This is another example of the dissonance caused by this policy. There should be a happy and mutually beneficial relationship between our best schools and our military - the country and the military and society in general would be stronger if that were the case.

As to my own story, I began 4 years of active duty as a Naval officer at that commissioning ceremony. I was always a "4.0" officer — I was competitive and, trite as it may sound, I always felt the only way to do something was to do it the best. I had attended Duke and Harvard on an NROTC scholarship. I probably would have found my way out of Southeastern Kentucky (the heart of Appalachia) anyway but that scholarship helped a lot. My family was patriotic to a fault - my father had gone to Canada to enlist in WWII since he was too old to do so in the US. (Just the opposite of the reason to go to Canada for my generation!)

Later, when the US got into the war, he transferred to the Army Air Force. His brother, my uncle, was also a pilot in the US Navy. Later he commanded an aircraft carrier. My older brother attended the Naval Academy and was a career officer, also a pilot. He married the daughter and sister of Academy grads. So as you see, I was heavily influenced by the military all my life. And yet…I knew I could not remain there myself. There was just too much risk of having an excellent career ended just because I was gay.

And what one did if one were discovered to be gay in those days, having disgraced one's family, self, and hometown, was to commit suicide. It was the "honorable" way out then.

So I left active duty, stayed in the Reserve for several years, eventually retiring as a Commander. The admiral in charge of our Reserve program suggested many times to me that I should stay in and would be virtually assured of achieving flag rank myself. But again, as I grew increasingly senior, I also grew increasingly vulnerable and, frankly, intolerant of that risk and the mentality behind it. And I have enjoyed a certain success in civilian life. Having come from Appalachia, I now live on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan and have a fashionable country home in Connecticut. I have served as trustee of 3 schools, including Duke. I have 2 honorary degrees for support of education in Appalachia. I am currently on 4 other boards, primarily supporting the arts, and have served on many others in the past. My career was in Finance in New York, where I became a senior executive of a major financial firm. I mention all this to suggest that my talents and drive might have been useful to the Navy. While I do not regret leaving the military, I sometimes wonder about the road not taken. I have to think I would have been a real asset to the Navy, but the anti-gay policy would have been an unbearable burden. I am thankful I was smart enough to realize that and depart, but I think it was such a waste for the Navy.

So now I volunteer my time and resources to changing such a self destructive policy, not out of a vendetta, since I had a fine time in the military, but simply because it is wrong — in every way.

Sincerely,

Thomas C. Clark /s/
Commander, USNR (ret)

Commander Thomas C. Clark, U.S. Naval Reserve, (Ret.)

Mr. Clark actively volunteers in the not-for-profit community in New York and nationwide. He has received two honorary doctorates in recognition of his support of education in Appalachia and is chairman emeritus of the board of trustees of Union College in Kentucky. Mr. Clark is currently on the boards of the Concert Artists Guild and the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, and has worked with several other organizations specializing in opera, dance, theater, symphonic music, education, public television, and legal aid services.

In January 2006, Mr. Clark retired from his position as division president and managing director of U.S. Trust Company, N.A, where he had worked since 1978 in a variety of positions in corporate and private banking. He served on the boards of six of the company's subsidiary companies, and eventually became chief credit officer of the U.S. Trust Corporation. He served the banking industry as founding chairman of the Private Lending Roundtable of the Risk Management Association and chaired the American Banking Association Private Banking Division.

As a Duke University undergraduate, Mr. Clark was both an A.B. Duke Scholar and a Navy Scholar. He was a varsity letterman on the swim team, president of the Men's Glee Club, a member of the Chapel Choir, and business manager of The Archive. After graduating with honors in 1969 with a bachelor of arts in economics, he was nominated by Duke for a Rhodes Scholarship. He received his MBA from Harvard University, and served as an active duty officer for the U.S. Navy during Vietnam.

Mr. Clark is a past president of the Duke Alumni Association, and has been a member of the Duke Alumni Association board since 1998. Representing the Duke Alumni Association, Mr. Clark became a voting member of the Board of Trustees in 2007.

Mr. Clark resides in Manhattan and Litchfield County, Connecticut, with his partner, John M. Davis.

21 April 2010

To My Country,

I was born and raised in a close-knit Navy family and upon college graduation quickly decided to become a naval officer. My dad (USNA '33) was away for most of the WWII years and after the war he was away from the family many months at a time, with my mother being the primary parent of the three children The Navy always came first in our immediate family decision making (In later years I refer to this additional force in our family or in my own career as "Big Daddy Navy"). For my dad, one of our WWII submarine heroes, love of the Navy and the seas always came before family. My vision of the U.S. Navy before Women Officer Candidate School (1960) was one of adventure and family sacrifice; to that vision, as I lived the life of a naval officer, I added duty, honor, challenges, personal sacrifice, and the camaraderie of wonderful shipmates. Until my retirement, a large percentage of my best friends were either Navy Juniors, or naval officers and their wives or partners. I was close to my parents and shared their friends.

My family, both immediate and extended, was deeply affected by the Navy and its sub-culture. My values and those of the Navy matched well, with one huge exception: Early in my naval career I began to realize that I might be a lesbian or a bisexual. As much as I tried to be otherwise (refer "My Navy Too", a creative memoir, Cedar Hollow Press, 1998), I ultimately decided that I was a woman-identified woman. In that I was assigned to three intelligence billets, carrying clearances, it was especially difficult to live with the sword of Damocles above my head, always fearful that I might be "discovered". Early in my career I decided that if Big Daddy Navy found out my secret, I would reluctantly and immediately resign.

At the same time, my career and attendant fitness reports developed exceptionally well. Two examples: (1) I was selected for PG School and was one of 37 naval officers (one woman, 36 men) at the School of International Service, American University in 1964. I stood #1 in 37 upon graduation. For the first time I faced discrimination as a woman in assignments; usually those at the top of the class were given preference in billets. However, first I was turned down as a USNA faculty member because ("you are too attractive, wait till you have more grey hair") and then I was rejected by CNO for an OP61 billet. He said, "If I want to use f… or s… , any swear word, I won't have a woman around." My billet

after American Univ. was unsatisfying; after a year I requested reassignment and landed a top-notch intelligence billet at SACLANT. (2) While at the Naval War College on the faculty, I was commissioned by the Chief of Naval Personnel to write a study regarding utilization of Navy women; this study became one of the conceptual benchmarks for ADM Zumwalt to move ahead with opening up opportunities for women. I also was the first (and probably only) 0-4 to graduate from the Naval Warfare Course which is for 0-5s and 0-6s.

I was selected as one of the first women to command a shore activity. Given that (a) I was the command's first CO and its mission was a new concept (Personnel Support Activities), and (b) we were 20% short in our enlisted personnel, it was a challenging billet! But the hardest part of the tour related to my sexual orientation. During the two-and-a-half years as commanding officer, I discharged about 8 young men and women for cause of homosexuality. Even though my detailer was set to issue me orders to an 0-6 billet (with expectations that I would make captain), those discharges were the tipping point for me. My integrity could no longer live in this state of being untruthful to myself and others. My dad, by then a retired admiral and who knew my sexual orientation, was very disappointed in my decision and counseled me to stay in. I took early retirement, with sadness and regret.

Since retirement (for the 4th time), I've expended considerable energy toward repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell law/policy, speaking on national and local NPR stations, writing op-eds and articles and lobbying Congress, on behalf of those 66,000 or more young military men and women who happen to be gay or lesbian (Note: 43% of the military's GLB population are women). Having participated in the conceptualization and implementation of the Navy's Women-at-Sea Program/workshops, I have strong feelings about recommended steps to be taken at this point insofar as how to implement repeal. Below are a few specifics:

- Stop the politicizing of the issue within the military and follow the leadership of SecDef and ChJCS.
- Put some gay/lesbian service members (retired) on the CRWG immediately, at least in a consultant capacity. The CRWG is missing an important piece to the solution — military retired gays and lesbians.
- Be not too concerned about the polling data from troops/families. Take it with a grain of salt. With regard to GLB persons, the filters of troops/families are strong, askew, and likely often they create shadowy images.
- Conduct (6-12) training sessions with CRWG members regarding the GLB sub-culture (similar to Education and Training packages to be developed by CRWG.) Could be monitored as a pilot program.
- Release Part I (Survey) of Study upon its completion so that the Congress can have advance information upon which to base its voting.

- Strive for transparency among the four bureaucracies involved in repeal (the House, Senate, White House and Pentagon). Ensure intra-bureaucracy communication.
- Complete the other three parts of the Study with alacrity. The keys to successful implementation will be (1) strong leadership and management, and (2) high quality Education and Training packages. Study implementation of Race Relations and Women at Sea/other women-in-military packages for background and lessons learned. Also, study packages from churches, PFLAG, and other venues regarding familiarization with the GLB community.

Our military leaders need to take a deep breath and, with a dispassionate eye, determine how to take care of all members of our military family. My dad long ago told me "the military is an autocracy within a democracy." I witnessed the "autocracy" behave with remarkable equanimity regarding our democracy's cultural changes which affected our Navy's well-being — from the carrier fantail riots to the true integration of women into seagoing and flying billets. We did it then; we can do it now to include another minority group within our family. We must ask ourselves, "What is best for the nation's security" while simultaneously asking, "What is equitable treatment for our gay and lesbian members"?

Very respectfully,

Beth F. Coye /s/
Commander, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Commander Beth F. Coye, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Commander Coye served twenty-one years as a U.S. Navy line officer. Her tours included recruiting duty, Intelligence (3), Human Resource Management, and commanding officer. She was one of the Navy's first women COs of a shore command.

Commander Coye's academic background includes a B.A. in Political Science (Wellesley College), an M.A. in International Relations (American University) and a Certificate in Naval Warfare (Naval War College). She has taught at several colleges and universities, including the Naval War College, Newport, RI; Mesa College, San Diego, CA; San Diego State College, and the University of San Diego. Her academic fields include American Government,, International Relations, Women's Studies and Human Resource Management. Commander Coye has published several articles including in the *Naval War College Review* and the *Naval Institute Proceedings*. Since her Navy retirement, she has served on numerous boards, including Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, and has been an active leader in the Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Church where she is Past President and currently Chair of the Endowment Trust and Lead in the Strategic Plan and Leadership Training. She is the publisher and overall editor and creator of *My Navy Too*, Cedar Hollow Press, 1998. a creative memoir that addresses issues related to minorities in the military (both women, and gays and lesbians).

In recent years Commander Coye has worked closely with Servicemembers Legal Defense Network as a member of the Military Advisory Council, including participating in the 2006 and 2007 SLDN Lobby Days. She has written many articles and point papers and spoken out on National Public Radio, locally and nationally, regarding the military's policy of Don't Ask Don't Tell and its effect on military gays and lesbians.

April 13, 2010

Dear Beth,

First, a quick overview of my career: I am a retired Navy Captain and I served 29½ years as a naval intelligence officer. My assignments included both operational and administrative positions including a tour as the Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander at the Office of Naval Intelligence. During my career I received several awards: three Legion of Merits, three Meritorious Service Medals, three Navy Commendation Medals and the Navy Achievement Medal. I now live with my partner of 19 years, Lynne Kennedy, in Alexandria, Virginia.

When I first joined the Navy, I had no idea that I was gay. I was well into my career when I realized this fact, but I was doing well as evidenced by the awards and promotions I was receiving. In addition, I really enjoyed what I was doing and felt I was making a difference. So I opted to continue to serve, even though I knew that I would have to hide my true identity.

For most of my career in the Navy, I lived two lives and went to work each day wondering if that would be my last. Whenever the admiral would call me to his office, 99.9 percent of me was certain that it was to discuss an operational issue. But there was always that fear in the back of my mind that somehow I had been "outed," and he was calling me to his office to tell me that I was fired. So many simple things that straight people take for granted could have ended my career, even a comment such as "My partner and I went to the movies last night."

In spite of the stress of living under "don't ask, don't tell" and the constant fear of losing my job, somehow my partner, Lynne Kennedy, an openly gay reference librarian at the Library of Congress, and I had learned to deal with the policy and make the requisite sacrifices. I pretended to be straight and played the games most gays in the military are all too familiar with -- not daring to have a picture of Lynne on my desk, being reluctant to go out to dinner with her, telling her not to call me at work except in a real emergency, not going to church together, avoiding shopping for groceries together and generally staying out of sight of anyone I knew when we were together. I didn't want to have to lie about who Lynne was or have someone conclude that we were more than casual friends.

But it was the events of September 11, 2001, that caused me to appreciate fully the true impact of "don't ask, don't tell" on our lives. At 8:30 a.m. on September 11, I went to a meeting in the Pentagon. At 9:30 a.m. I left that meeting. At 9:37 a.m., American Airlines Flight No. 77 slammed into the Pentagon and destroyed the exact space I had left less than eight minutes earlier, killing seven of my colleagues. In the days and weeks that followed, I went to several funerals and memorial services for shipmates who had been killed. Most of my co-workers attended these services with their spouses whose support was critical at this difficult time, yet I was forced to go alone.

As the numbness began to wear off, it hit me how incredibly alone Lynne would have been had I been killed. The military is known for how it pulls together and helps people; we talk of the "military family," which is a way of saying we always look after each other, especially in times of need. But none of that support would have been available for Lynne, because under "don't ask, don't tell," she couldn't exist. In fact, Lynne would have been one of the last people to know had I been killed, because nowhere in my paperwork or emergency contact information had I dared to list her name.

This realization caused us to stop and reassess exactly what was most important in our lives. During that process, we realized that the "don't ask, don't tell" policy was causing us to make a much bigger sacrifice than either of us had ever admitted. Eight months later, in June 2002, I retired after more than 29 years in the U.S. Navy, an organization I will always love and respect.

We are now committed to doing everything we possibly can to get rid of "don't ask, don't tell" so that our military can finally be open to all qualified and motivated individuals who want to serve their country.

As a retired naval officer, I am especially pleased with the leadership that Navy Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has demonstrated on repeal of "don't ask, don't tell." I believe that the end of the policy is in sight. I have every confidence that our military will easily adjust to this change and that with strong leadership, we will ultimately be stronger and better for it.

Ironically, it was in the military that I learned to work with people of different backgrounds, different religions, different ethnicities and

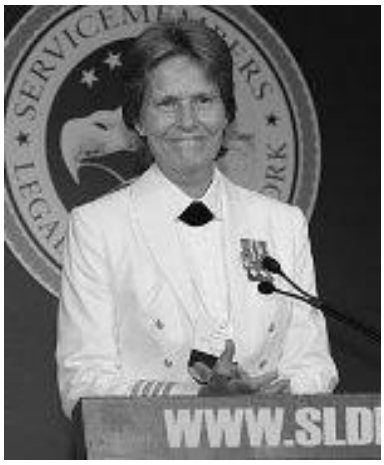
different skin colors and to focus on getting the mission accomplished. I learned the importance of respecting everyone and judging people on their performance and abilities, not on a preconceived prejudice.

Twenty-six countries allow gays to serve openly in their militaries, and from all reports, things are going just fine. This is the right step for our country, our military and for gay people both currently serving and those who would like to be part of the world's finest military. I have great love and respect for our country, but I know we can do better than "don't ask, don't tell."

Capt Joan E. Darrah, USN (ret) /s/

Captain Joan E. Darrah, U.S.Navy (Ret.)

Captain Joan E. Darrah joined the Navy in 1973 and served as a Naval Intelligence officer. Highlights of her career include attending the Naval War College in 1981. After graduating, she then served as the Aide and Flag Secretary to the President of the Naval War College. Other assignments included Deputy Director of the Human Resources Directorate at the Office of Naval Intelligence and the Intelligence Community Senior Detailer and Community Manager at the Bureau of Naval Personnel. From June 1997 until July 2000, she was assigned as the Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander at the Office of Naval Intelligence. Her final assignment was on the staff of the Director of Naval Intelligence where she was the Officer and Enlisted Community Manager from July 2000 until June 2002 when she retired. Captain Darrah's personal decorations include the Legion of Merit (three awards), Meritorious Service Medal (three awards), the Navy Commendation Medal (three awards), and the Navy Achievement Medal. Since her retirement, she has been very active in working to repeal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” She is a member of the Board of Trustees at the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church and Vice President of the New Alexandria Citizens Association. In the warmer months, she teaches sailing at the Belle Haven Marina. Captain Darrah lives with Lynne Kennedy, her partner since 1990, in Alexandria, Virginia.



20 April 2010

Dear Commander Coye,

Fifteen years ago, a Navy Chief said something to a young sailor that I have carried with me as one of my fondest military memories and one of the best reasons why "don't ask, don't tell" doesn't make any sense. The sailor was a 20-year-old E-2 who had recently arrived at a military training facility in San Diego to learn her Navy job. She was from a small town in North Carolina and had never met any real life "homo-sexshulls" until the day she met me. She had overheard me talking to my girlfriend on the payphone in the hallway one evening and turned me in to the authorities, saying she refused to stay in the same barracks as a lesbian. The Chief took us both aside and gave us a chance to speak about the problem, and after hearing her rave about why she was so afraid to share a bathroom with me, he looked at her and said (and I'm paraphrasing because I don't remember verbatim), "You are soon going out there to the real Navy, and you are going to work with all types of people – black, white, male, female, Christian, atheist, heterosexual, and homosexual – and none of that matters. All that matters is the uniform and those stripes on the sleeve -- and the mission. You may not like everyone you meet; they may have different opinions and beliefs than you – but you have to respect that uniform. You're all a part of the same team, and it's YOU who disrupts the mission when you stop to hate someone else because they're different. Grow up and get back to work!" My shipmate and I both learned a valuable lesson that day. She learned she was wrong by losing focus of what is truly important in the military; I learned that I was right: That there's no rationale behind the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, and that once you break through a person's misconceptions and prejudices, the end result is a more cohesive team. Five months after we met with the Chief, this same E-2 apologized to me for treating me unfairly, and we eventually became good friends. That moment set the tone for at least 80% of the days, weeks, and years that made up my military career.

You see, my life can be divided into two completely distinctive stages: the years before I told my friends and family I am gay, and the years afterward. The first two decades of my life were full of secrets and lies. I never got close to people; I kept everyone at an arm's length because I was afraid they'd realize I'm gay. Then at 23, I made the decision to come out, and I quickly discovered that not only was I much happier with myself, but others were happier around me. When I enlisted in the Navy in 1995, I understood what "don't ask, don't tell" was, but I refused

to let it drag me back into a life of secrecy, lies, and misery. I preferred to hold onto the belief that if all these good-ole boys (and girls) from my small Southern town can accept me, surely the men and women who serve this country will accept me too.

I could fill not only a letter, but a book with the stories of how people accepted and respected me when I was in the Navy; but my career wasn't without its share of struggles. I played an almost-daily game of Russian roulette with my career, and with every passing year, I had more and more to lose. It wasn't until I arrived at my last duty station – a recruiting command in New York – that I truly understood the psychological, emotional, even physical consequences of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

As the Public Affairs Petty Officer at Navy Recruiting District New York, and an E-6 by this time, I had troops working for me who frequently sought me for advice. I remember one E-4 who was depressed (almost suicidal) because his boyfriend had broken off their relationship. I was in no position to give him psychological counseling, but he clearly needed to talk to a professional. If I had advised him to explain his situation to a doctor, psychologist, or Chaplain, he would have run the risk of being kicked out of the Navy – so the only thing I could do was advise him to speak to one of these people, but not reveal he was gay. Even in his emotional turmoil, this sailor had to filter his conversation; he had to remember to use "she" instead of "he," and "my girlfriend Sally" instead of "my boyfriend Steve." I thought this was horribly unfair to a young sailor who was one of the best troops I had; he had voluntarily signed up to serve his country as his heterosexual counterparts did, and he deserved access to the same medical treatment, counseling and support services, and other benefits his shipmates received.

"Don't ask, don't tell" is a policy that allows homosexual troops to serve, but humiliates us at least twice a year by forcing all service members to sit through an anti-homosexual training class and sign a form that acknowledges what constitutes "homosexual behavior" and the consequences of engaging in it. "Don't ask, don't tell" allows gays and lesbians to serve, but denies us the right to be honest if we're talking to a counselor or Chaplain, and puts our careers in jeopardy if we contract a sexually transmitted disease and we tell the doctor how we got it. "Don't ask, don't tell" is a policy that gives gay service members two horrible choices: 1. Lie, conceal who you are and never make any true friends, or 2. Trust people enough to tell them you're gay (as I did) and run the risk they're going to turn you in later. "Don't ask, don't tell" is the ethical and moral equivalent of saying African Americans can join an all-white

country club as long as they "act white," paint their faces, and never reveal to anyone that they're not Caucasian.
For nearly 12 years, I fought against this policy by showing people that, yes, I am a lesbian, but more importantly, I am a Navy sailor. I am a hard-working sailor with integrity who believes in honor, courage, and commitment. After seeing some of my best troops suffer under this policy, I could no longer stay silent. I felt that to acquiesce meant that I agreed with the policy, and I could no longer do that, so I made the toughest decision of my entire career: to make an official declaration that I am gay and let the military kick me out.
There's hardly a day that goes by that I'm not at least a little sad that I am no longer a part of the best thing I ever had going on in my life: my Navy career. The day I got kicked out felt like more than just losing a job; it was like being shunned from your family or kicked off a winning team. And the part that stings the most is that I wasn't kicked out for being a bad sailor; I was discharged for being honest with my Commander about my sexual orientation, something that never once affected my job performance or the respect and admiration I received from my fellow shipmates.
I say it's time we stop finding reasons and excuses to discriminate and focus on the things that are important: the mission, the team, the freedom, equality, and tolerance that we as Americans stand for. It's time we take my Chief's advice: to grow up and get back to work.
Very Respectfully,

Former First Class Petty Officer Rhonda Kaye Davis, U.S. Navy /s/

Former Petty Officer First Class Rhonda Davis, U.S. Navy

Rhonda Davis is from the small town of Buena Vista, Virginia. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from James Madison University (JMU) with a B.A. degree in 1992 and went on to take graduate courses and teach English at JMU before joining the Navy in 1995. For the next four years, Rhonda served as a Radioman in Rota Spain and later, aboard the USNS Concord in Norfolk, Virginia.

After successfully completing a four-year commitment, Rhonda decided not to re-enlist, but remained in the active reserves, serving in a Mobile Inshore Undersea War Unit in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia for nearly two years.

In September 2000, Rhonda took a job at a language school in Poland, teaching English and Spanish for a one-semester term, then returned to the U.S. and re-joined the military. The exotic travel and lifestyle of the Navy called her back, despite DADT, and she re-entered as a Navy journalist. After graduating top of the class in both the Defense Information School's Journalism and Broadcasting courses, Rhonda accepted an assignment at the American Forces Network, Yokota Air Base, Japan. There, she worked in all areas of journalism and broadcasting, including news production, directing, reporting, TV news anchor, radio DJ for Eagle 810, and Operations Manager.

Among her awards and decorations are: 6 civilian broadcasting awards for radio and television spots, 2 Navy Chief of Information awards for Best Radio Entertainment Program and Best Informational Program, 3 Air Force Media awards, an Air Force Commendation Medal for meritorious service to the Air Force, the Navy's Good Conduct Medal, 2 National Defense Service Medals, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, 4 Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbons, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Armed Forces Services Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, numerous photography awards, and was voted Pacific Stars & Stripes AFN Personality 2004.

In January 2006, Rhonda transferred to Navy Recruiting District New York where she served as Public Affairs Officer until being discharged for homosexual admission in July of the same year. She had earned the rank of E-6 (Petty Officer First Class).

April 15, 2010

Dear Beth,

Thanks for the opportunity to tell my story.

First, a brief bio – I am a retired Navy Reserve Captain. I served 12+ years on active duty and 17 years in the Reserve. I retired having received five Meritorious Service Medals and four Navy Commendation Medals. I am also the mother of two terrific daughters and am now a GS-15 at FEMA, and very proud to be back in public service.

I was commissioned in 1973 in the first co-ed class at OCS and received accolades as the first female battalion commander. I had an incredibly successful active duty career – as a junior lieutenant commander my detailer told me that I had the best record in his drawer – yes, that was back in the days when our detailers held all of our records in their drawer! He went on to nominate me as the first female Director of SECNAV's White House Liaison Office. I interviewed and was selected for the position; less than two years later I was submitting my resignation after my ex-husband threatened to out me if I did not resign.

I joined the Navy not having any idea that I was gay. Early in my career I had a brief relationship with a woman, but we ended it quickly because we both were so committed to our Navy careers. I fell in love with my husband, a Naval aviator, and was convinced that we would be married forever. We had two beautiful daughters; shortly thereafter, while my husband was on deployment, I came in contact again with the woman I'd been involved with before our marriage and it became clear that I was living a lie. When he returned, not being someone who can lie, I told him everything and asked for a divorce. What I didn't realize at the time was that I was not only ending my picture perfect career, but that of the woman I loved. She was a front-running naval officer who realized before I did that she would soon be outed by my husband. She resigned shortly thereafter.

Realizing the high profile job for which I had just been selected, my husband allowed me to accept the orders to D.C. with the understanding that I would be out of the Navy within two years. He stayed behind in Norfolk and refused to allow me to take our daughters with me. He knew I could not take him to court because I would have to out myself. I

visited them every weekend. One weekend he decided that my visits were too upsetting and that I could only see them at Christmas. My father intervened with him and convinced him to reverse that decision. After six months, custody of the girls became too much for him and he allowed me to take them to D.C., but I could not go to court to obtain court-ordered support payments for fear of being outed. He did provide child support – he was an excellent father -- but he made all the decisions about what support was appropriate. I felt completely powerless.

A year after leaving active duty I joined the Selected Reserve. I missed my Navy career tremendously and was willing to risk being outed in order to resume it. In the beginning I didn't know if that month's drill might not be my last,wondering if my husband would make good on his threat. His anger had abated and he decided that my monthly trips to D.C. would give him a good opportunity to see his daughters. I had an incredible career in the Reserve. I didn't spend a day out of pay, and held three command positions (including one for a unit that was recalled for Desert Storm).

One might wonder how bad this could be – I still retired as an O-6. But as a woman who prided herself on always being honest, it was incredibly difficult to raise my daughters and have to tell them that they couldn't tell anyone that their mother was a lesbian. I knew that when my clearance updates would occur that people who knew us would be questioned. I felt like such a hypocrite. My parents had tremendous pride in my career and accomplishments as well, but I know they were always terrified that I would be outed.

The most terrifying day occurred most unexpectedly when I was being interviewed by an investigator who was updating my ex-husband's clearance. Much to my surprise, when I responded to his question about why we were divorced with my standard, "we grew apart during his deployment", the investigator said he had been told it was due to homosexuality on my part. Clearly my ex-husband had been talking. I denied it, truthfully, as there were in fact many other reasons for the divorce. When I asked why that was even an issue for my husband's clearance he asked me if I was not active in the Reserve. I kept my composure but after he left I dissolved in tears, convinced that my then 17-year career would be over. For months after that I went to my drill weekend fully expecting to be told it would be my last.

I'm one of the lucky ones. I made it through and was able to serve and retire with distinction, with my parents and daughters, and even my ex-husband and his wife, present to honor my service. But there are so many others who either chose to leave because they couldn't stand the pressure of never being able to be truthful about their lives, never joined in the first place, or were kicked out of the service once their homosexuality became known. We are all just loyal Americans who simply want to serve our country.

During my 29 years of service I watched the Navy fight racial discrimination and fully integrate women into the force – both with very fierce opposition present at every turn. I know that when this law is changed, if the leadership of the military accepts it and moves out smartly, as they always have in the past, the full integration of gays and lesbians in our military will occur smoothly.

We are supposed to be the beacon of hope for equality for all people in the world, yet we trail almost every military on this issue. The time has come to allow us all to serve – openly and proudly.

Best regards,

Sandy Geiselman /s/
CAPT, USNR (Ret.)

Captain Sandy Geiselman, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Sandy Geiselman is Director, Strategic Resource Management Office, Protection and National Preparedness at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Prior to her tenure at FEMA, she served as Chief of Staff for the SBINet Program at L-3 Communications, Director of Development for the Center for Women's Business Research, and Divisional Vice-President of Sales and Business Development at the Pfaltzgraff Co.

Before her time at Pfaltzgraff, Geiselman had a 12-year career as an active duty naval officer. After joining Pfaltzgraff in 1986, she continued her naval career in the Naval Reserve and retired as a Captain in August 2002.

Geiselman's naval assignments were diverse. As she launched her naval career, she was the only woman Battalion Commander in the first co-ed class at Officers' Candidate School. Being the first or only woman to serve in a particular assignment became a pattern in her naval career which culminated in her being the first woman to serve as Director of the White House Liaison Office for the Secretary of the Navy. Geiselman was also selected to command three different reserve units, one of which was recalled for Desert Storm.

During her distinguished naval career, she was awarded five Meritorious Service medals and four Navy Commendation medals.

She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Grove City College and a Masters of Business Administration from Loyola College. She has also served on the Board of Directors for the Habitat for Humanity in York, PA and is currently serving on the Military Advisory Council of the Servicemembers' Legal Defense Network.

15 April 2010

To My Country:

Growing up in a working class neighborhood in a military town with multiple bases where most people were serving, had served and/or were federal civil servants or employed in defense industries, everyone was a patriot in support of the military. In my own family, just about every man had served in the Army at least 3 years and I had one uncle who was a career Army officer. The sight of military uniforms was normal, the sound of Air Force jets was an everyday occurrence and attending my first aircraft carrier christening at age seven left me in awe of her mighty power. In high school I joined NJROTC and found my own calling to join the Navy and see the world.

In 1978 I received a NROTC scholarship at a time when the quota for women nationwide was about 50 slots per year, joined the elite drill team, became the first female Battalion Commander at the University of Virginia and completed engineering school in four years. I turned down a Surface Line commission due to the limited opportunities for women on tenders and auxiliaries in favor of a commission in the Civil Engineer Corps where I could apply my construction and engineering education.

I progressed quickly and successfully through the community milestones, of facility management, construction contracting, SEABEE positions, overseas assignments, graduate school, and headquarters staff positions at LANTFLT, NAVFAC and OSD. As a woman in a primarily male career field, I never felt harassed or denied opportunities, in fact I always was proud to say I thought I received more opportunities and earlier responsibilities as a Naval officer than I would have as a civilian woman in a similar field. I took the tough assignments, serving in three shipyards, and was one of the first women officers assigned to a SEABEE Battalion, deployed to Saudi Arabia during the first week of Desert Shield as a company commander, and transferred to the Philippines two weeks after a volcanic eruption for disaster recovery. I stayed through the closure of Subic Bay.

On 9-11, I was assigned to the OSD staff in the Pentagon but happened to be traveling with a senior political appointee in California that day. We made our arrangements to fly back to DC on a Marine Corps jet that evening through the eerie quiet and drive up to the smoked-filled Pentagon the next morning. Through the day and into the night, it took

hours to reach loved ones to assure them I was alright and to reach my own spouse who was serving in the Pentagon and survived unharmed. The event strengthened my commitment to my military career choice.

With exactly twenty-one years of service, I became only the third woman ever promoted to the rank of Captain in the Civil Engineer Corps' 135 year history. I was assigned to the Navy Public Works Center in San Diego as Executive Officer responsible for 1600 personnel delivering $400 million dollars a year in facility services to shore installations in the region. I was at the top of my game and looking forward to O-6 command as my next assignment.

At the same time my career was flourishing my twenty-one year marriage to a fellow Naval officer was on the rocks. With extended separations and a bi-coastal marriage, I was able to keep up normal appearances that we were still a couple until the divorce was almost final. Ironically, while I was dealing with the grief of divorce and also struggling with my own sexual orientation, the woman I was confiding in turned out to be a lesbian and she became my life partner. Suddenly I went from being a couple, entertaining the wardroom at my house, and talking about weekend plans at work, to a "single" who no longer could speak about what I did on the weekend much less invite military guests home to meet my partner. Every day I had to live a lie at work, pretending not to be interested in dating or making up stories about just going out with friends. As a senior officer I understood the DADT rules and knew I was taking a serious risk which could cost me my career and retirement. No one ever asked and I never told, but for 18 months I looked over my shoulder afraid I would be discovered.

Funny, I say I understood DADT but looking back I realize just how little I really did comprehend. As a junior officer I had attended legal officer training for non-JAG officers and been responsible for administratively separating personnel due to commission of a serious offense, non-support of dependents, failure to meet weight standards and other transgressions but never had I dealt with gay or lesbian issues. During preparations for deployment to Desert Shield, I saw first hand the dedication of personnel trying to meet their obligations, at great sacrifice, such as single parents flying their children cross-country to caregivers and I also the dark side of people trying to escape their obligation by asking for discharge under the sole-surviving son provisions, even though they did not meet the requirements. Never did I have anyone try to escape deployment by declaring he or she was gay. For years I had served side by side with

Federal employees that I new were gay and suspected that some military members were as well, although they never told. Their sexual orientation never bothered me and it never occurred to me to think that it would disturb unit cohesion. I found that inappropriate conduct and poor leadership were much more common causes of poor command climate. Never did I think about pursuing a person for separation because of sexual orientation.

Weighing the options of continued service to my Country under false pretenses with possible separation under DADT against my desires to live openly with my partner, I made the tough choice to retire after one tour as an O-6. Many people were surprised and disappointed by my early retirement but I could not tell them the real reasons for my decision. Even in my first civilian job marketing to Defense commands, I could not be honest about my sexual orientation to my former peers for fear that it would taint my qualifications for contracts. Only after cutting all my job ties to the Department of Defense, did I feel comfortable coming out to others.

When I came out to my family my mother was very casual and accepting of my partner, having met her before and suspecting that we were more than just friends; my sisters were very accepting as well. Funny, only after discovering my own sexual orientation did I realize that my bachelor uncle, a retired Army officer, was also gay and had been hiding under my nose.

I still love my Country and the Navy but could not serve in a military that does not respect my contributions as a person. Now is the time to end Don't Ask, Don't Tell and start judging people based on their contributions and conduct rather than their sexual orientation.

April F. Heinze /s/
CAPT, CEC, USN (ret.)
San Diego, CA

Captain April F. Heinze, CEC, USN (Ret.)

Captain April Heinze is a 1982 NROTC graduate of the University of Virginia's school of engineering. Following her commissioning as a Navy Civil Engineer Corps officer, she served on active duty for more than 23 years in various public works management, facilities engineering, real estate services, energy management and construction contracting positions on Navy installations. April also served on several senior staffs including the Commander, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Naval Facilities Engineering Command and the Office of the Secretary of Defense where she was responsible for various base operations support policies and programs.

During her Navy career, April was a leader in the integration of women into the military's civil engineer and construction forces. In 1989, she became one of the first women officers assigned to a Navy Construction Battalion (SEABEE) and in 1990 she deployed to Saudi Arabia as a Company Commander during the first week of Desert Shield to support the Marines Expeditionary Force. In 1991 she was one of the first officers assigned to disaster recovery in Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines following the volcanic eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. In 2003, April became the third women ever promoted to Captain in the Civil Engineer Corps and she was assigned as the Executive Officer, Navy Public Works Center, San Diego, where she was responsible for 1600 employees providing $400 million dollars of facility, vehicle and utility services annually to multiple bases in the region.She completed advanced education including a Master of Science degree in Engineering from the University of Washington, Naval War College (off campus program), and the Advanced Executive Program at Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University. She is a licensed Mechanical Engineer in California.

Captain Heinze's military awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, three Meritorious Service Medals, three Navy Commendation Medals and the Navy Achievement Medal.

Following retirement from the Navy in 2005, April joined Carter & Burgess (now part of Jacobs Engineering) as a Vice President for Federal Programs. Since 2007, she has worked as the Director of General Services for the County of San Diego, California responsible for public facilities operations and management, capital programs, real estate transactions, energy and sustainability programs, and public fleet management.

April served on the SLDN Military Advisory Council from 2009 to 2010 and joined the Board of Directors in 2010.

17 April 2010

Dear Beth,

My name is Jeremy Johnson. I am a former Petty Officer First Class who came out to my Commanding Officer in 2007 after serving ten years in the Navy.

I knew I was gay when I joined, but as an adolescent with little understanding or grasp of the world I lived in, I wasn't able to recognize the consequences of agreeing to abide by Don't Ask, Don't Tell. I assumed it would be easy to keep quiet. I was wrong. As years passed and I gained rank, I became more invested in the Navy Core Values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. As you'll see below, it was nearly impossible to live those values under the law; I regularly felt compelled to violate it.

- *Violation 1. I came out to my family in 1999 immediately after my first assignment. I knew that if a Top Secret clearance was ever required, an investigation would reveal that I violated the disclosure portion of the law. I risked it as a matter of mental well-being. I needed a support structure, one I should have been able to find within my units and in the military's "excellent mental health care facilities". Since Federal law restricted my access to these, I used my family instead.*
- *Violation 2. In 2002, I sought medical help for my policy-related stress in spite of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, knowing the doctor could decide to "out" me. I had a job to do and it was either "get help" or let my work suffer. Luckily, I was assigned to a civilian Army social worker who kept our sessions within the confines of his office. During this time, I was diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder; it took a year of therapy and medication to conquer it.*
- *Violation 3. Despite the law, I learned to find heterosexual uniformed friends I could confide in. I was stationed overseas for six years and needed support. I also found gay/lesbian servicemembers. By the time my career was near the end, I was hosting GLB Sailors at my home, where they could be themselves. We would sit and talk without fear. They never had to switch their pronouns when talking about love and their hopes for a future.*

- *Un-cohesion. I made the decision to live away from the bases and my co-workers whenever possible (to avoid being seen with gay friends and the resulting stigma of "guilt by association"). During my tour at Fort Meade, my position as an instructor, combined with the proximity of places like Arundel Mills Mall, made this very difficult. To hang out with gay friends and avoid being seen by students, I felt forced to drive to places that were "out of the way".*
- *Defiance. Despite instructions from the higher chain of command, I noticed an increasing failure at each of my commands to include information about the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy in our annual sexual harassment training. Everyone should know their rights. Whenever possible, I volunteered to teach this class and reinserted it. On more than one occasion, I was approached by people in the class who thanked me for clarifying what the rules are and how they work.*

The law/policy is insidious. It placates most opponents, but can, has and will continue to damage and even destroy lives. I worked for at least two enlisted gay men. Both were well-respected for their work and leadership. After retiring, one E-7 succumbed to alcoholism that began during his career as a coping strategy and he passed away less than a year later due to kidney failure. The other man, also an E-7, served for seventeen years and finally came to the conclusion that the stress was too great to continue. He "told" his Commanding Officer (who initially refused his "admission"). He spent several months after his discharge getting help for depression.

In 2000, while in uniform, I began to fight back. I wrote to every Senator, conversed with members of civilian advocacy groups, donated to gay rights groups and spoke up to defend others from rumor and character assassinations. Today, I'm moving on but trying to give voice to the voiceless. It is this voice that I hope you'll hear; I hope this insight is useful. Thank you for your work and good luck with it.

Very Respectfully,
Jeremy Johnson, /s/
Former First Class Petty Officer, U.S. Navy

Note: This is the letter that 1MC Johnson wrote to his CO, requesting discharge.

March 6, 2007

Captain Goff,

I have served the United States Navy in an Honorable fashion since I joined in December of 1996. In ten years of service, I have made every effort to make a difference in the lives of the people I have both worked for and supervised.

At Yokota Air Base, I did my best to learn my new trade in a joint service environment and pass it on to those around me.

In Italy, as a newly-frocked Third Class Petty Officer, I worked to bring an un-designated Sailor into our rate and he is now a First Class Petty Officer.

In Washington, D.C., I served a high profile tour as a broadcast "A" school instructor, not really to teach journalism, but to be at the career gateway where I could help new Sailors prepare for their lives in the active fleet once they graduated. It was one of the richest and most rewarding experiences I've ever had.

In Greece, I inherited a cable TV-based radio station with no existing leadership or "On-Air" professionalism and institutionalized it to DoD standards within nine months, bringing it online in time to launch the first "over-the-air" military radio station in Greece since 1995.

I am proud of all of these accomplishments. What I am not proud of however, is my forced lack of Integrity. Throughout my career, I've had to practice a duality that requires me to serve my country under false pretenses.

I am a homosexual American citizen and while I fight to defend the rights of free speech and a democratic legislature process, I suffer because these very same freedoms are denied to me as a gay Sailor. I can not write to my congressional members and tell them my story without risking my career.

On a regular and increasing basis, I am hearing and even *reading* (in shipboard e-mail) demeaning remarks and comments belittling homosexuals. While I was once willing to endure these comments and give up my otherwise constitutionally guaranteed freedom to defend myself (were I black, Asian, etc.), I now find I'm unwilling and unable to continue.

Therefore, I am *respectfully* requesting that you, my Commanding Officer, endorse my request to be administratively separated from the U.S. Navy on the grounds of a "homosexual statement". (MILPERSMAN 1910-148)

I realize I'm asking for an RE-4 discharge and forfeiting the right to return to military service. This request comes because I value the Navy core values of "Honor, Courage and Commitment" more than the moral dilemma of whether to complete another year of service and accept government benefits based on another day, week or month of carrying on my life as a liar.

While I've remained silent, men like Army PFC Barry Winchell and Navy SN Allan Schindler, both killed by fellow service members, suffered the physical repercussions of mere perception.

Men like gay Marine Sgt. Eric Alva, the first soldier to be injured in Iraq, were unable to call home to a "significant other" because they weren't allowed to have one in the first place, let alone communicate with them.

In fact, under the policy, Sgt. Alva wasn't even allowed to mention his sexuality to friends or family.

Living with the ever-present worry of being "outed" is a sacrifice that has affected me both mentally and physically (for anxiety and lack of sleep) and unless the Navy leaves me no other options, I would like return to a civilian lifestyle.

I recently received my profile sheet from the 2007 Chief's exam and my score was in the 91 percentile. I have made the eligibility list and I realize that I stand a decent chance of picking up E-7. However, I have no intention of submitting a "package" or even of accepting the promotion if selected.

In Italy, I worked for a Chief who had 16-years of service and was one of the most professional and outstanding khakis I've ever known. Unfortunately, one year after he transferred to Boston, he realized that the same sacrifice I've described above was too difficult for even a 17-year Sailor and worked with his Commanding Officer to exit the Navy.

His CO considered him a valuable asset and she asked him to reconsider his statement, even refusing initially to let him go.

By no stretch of the imagination has his discharge made his life *easier*, but it *has* made him immeasurably happier.

One of my former "A" school students, JO1 Rhonda Davis, made national headlines in 2006 for standing on the Brooklyn

Bridge during a rally and announcing on the radio that she wanted equality so she could be with her Asian girlfriend.

When approached by her CO, he told her that if it wasn't her who made the comment "*I'd like to marry my Japanese girlfriend*" on the radio, all she had to do was deny it and the whole thing would go away.

After considering for a moment, she replied, "Sir, I believe you have the facts wrong." He asked what she meant, presumably hoping she would say that it wasn't her. She replied, "My girlfriend is Korean."

He laughed and though he said he would miss her dedication, he worked with her to let her exit the military under Honorable Conditions and she now works in the civilian sector… also much happier, though also notably disappointed that she gave up an 11-year military career she loved.

Regardless of geography or rank, two more years of living under these conditions would be unbearable for me. I'm losing respect for myself.

Air Force Technical Sgt. Leonard Matlovich, a gay Vietnam veteran who passed away in 1988 was buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C. with this simple statement on his tombstone:

"When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one."

It's a contradiction and observation that describes the way I feel about my service. Wanted, yet unsupported. I awake every morning and look into the mirror at the face of a hypocrite.

I know that you have the option of denying this request based on "needs of the Navy", but I am risking humiliation and ridicule by my shipmates at this command to humbly ask for your assistance.

Please help me by giving me the opportunity to restore my dignity and my life by living it as an Honest Man.

Very Respectfully,
Jeremy Johnson, /s/
MC1 (SW)

Freedom lies in being bold.
- Robert Frost

Former First Class Petty Officer Jeremy Johnson, U.S. Navy

Jeremy Johnson joined the Navy in 1996 from Atlanta, Ga. After graduating boot camp from Great Lakes, Ill., Jeremy attended the joint service Defense Information School at Ft. Meade, Md. and graduated as a JOSN (Navy Journalist Seaman).

From 1997-1999, Jeremy was assigned to AFN Tokyo at Yokota Air Base where he worked on a regional newscast, anchored the local newscast and hosted an afternoon radio show. He transferred to Italy in 1999 as an E-4.

From 1999-2001, Jeremy worked for the Sixth Fleet Public Affairs staff aboard USS LaSalle (AGF 3) in Gaeta, Italy and was responsible for writing press releases, capturing events through photography, running the Fleet Hometown News Program and training junior personnel on public affairs policy for Sixth Fleet. He was recommended, screened and accepted as an instructor at the Defense Information School and transferred to Ft. Meade as an E-5 with an Enlisted Surface Warfare qualification.

From 2001-2004, Jeremy worked at the Defense Information School where he taught television broadcast journalism to more than 300 students over 3 years. He was placed in charge of the reserve broadcast course and helped to update and rewrite the courses for a newer generation of students. He earned the Navy's Master Training Specialist qualification and transferred as an E-6 to Greece in 2004.

From 2004-2005, Jeremy was assigned to Naval Base Souda Bay in Crete, Greece where we was placed in charge of radio operations approximately 10 months before the first live AFN radio station in Greece in nearly 10 years was launched. In preparation, he established a station brand and rules of operation for the local DJs. He also created a complete broadcast schedule and worked to train the staff on contingency operations. In 2005, he transferred to Guam.

From 2005-2007, Jeremy's final assignment was with USS Frank Cable (AS 40) at Polaris Point, Guam. There he was responsible for the ship's public affairs mission and running the ship's website. In March of 2007, Jeremy submitted a letter to his commanding officer admitting his homosexuality and received an honorable RE-4 discharge May 22, 2007.

April 18, 2010

Dear Beth,

I joined the Navy in 1995 when I entered the Naval Academy. At the Academy, I majored in Physics, and I was commissioned in 1999. Upon graduation from the Naval Academy I became a Surface Warfare Officer, and I received orders to the cruiser USS SHILOH. I was excited and happy to go serve on a combatant ship.

At the Academy, we didn't have much in the way of personal lives, so no one ever asked me too many questions, but when I got to my ship, it was different. It was difficult being on the ship and having to lie, or tell half-truths, to my shipmates because of my sexuality. Under Don't Ask, Don't Tell, answering the simplest questions can get you kicked out. If a shipmate asked me what I did last weekend, I couldn't react like a normal human being and say, "Hey, I went to a great new restaurant with my partner. You should try it out." An answer like that would have gotten me kicked out of the Navy. I found that if you don't interact like that with your shipmates, they think you're weird for avoiding simple questions, an it undermines working together as a team, because they feel like they can't trust you.

So after being on the ship for a while, I wrote a letter to my commanding officer and told him I was a lesbian because I felt like I was being forced to lie on a daily basis. I did not want to get out of the Navy. I wanted to stay and serve honorably, and to maintain my integrity by not lying about who I was.

After I wrote the letter, I continued to do my job on the ship to the best of my ability. We went on a six-month deployment to the middle east. I qualified as Officer-of –the-Deck, and was chosen to be the Officer-of-the-Deck during General Quarters, which was a great honor.

During all this time, I am proud to say I did not lie. I had come out in my letter officially, and I came out slowly over time to my shipmates. I expected negative responses. I got none. Everyone I talked to was positive, and the universal attitude was that Don't Ask, Don't Tell was dumb. I served openly for two years and four months. That is a long time, and was partly due to the fact that no one was in a hurry to get rid of me. I wasn't a problem sailor: I was a good junior officer who happened to be openly gay.

One thing that happened during the time I was serving openly was the Captain's choosing me to represent the ship in a shiphandling competition. I was the only officer chosen from the ship to compete. My sexual orientation was known to my shipmates by this time. Nobody griped about the Captain choosing someone being processed for discharge under Don't Ask, Don't Tell to represent the ship. Instead, a couple of my fellow junior officers congratulated me and wished me luck in the competition. I competed by showing the Admiral my ship-driving skills, and won the competition.

During the time I was serving openly, I earned my Sea Service Deployment ribbon and my Surface Warfare Officer pin. During my pin ceremony, the Captain took his own pin off of his chest and pinned it on mine. That was one of my proudest moments.

My open service had a positive impact on the ship's morale. I was able to treat my shipmates like human beings, and we could interact on a personal level. One time I was walking down the passageway on the ship, and a Senior Chief Petty Officer stopped me and asked, "Ma'am, may I speak to you for a minute?" My first thought was, "Uh-oh, what is this going to be about?" We stepped into an empty room, and he pulled out his wallet. He showed me a picture of a teenage boy: "This is my son, and he's gay, and I'm really proud of him." I was so shocked, I didn't know what to say. Finally, I said, "Wow! Thanks, Senior Chief." We could not have had that interaction if I was not out. Normal people interact, and talk about their families.

I was on the ship, in an overseas port, when the USS COLE was bombed. We were ordered to put to sea immediately, and the Captain chose me to be Officer of the Deck, coordinating the underway. I was also on the ship on September 11, 2001. We put to sea on that day fully expecting that we were going to war. We ended up being assigned to protect the west coast for several weeks. During those emergencies, no one cared a bit about my sexual orientation. The sailors who worked for me looked to me for leadership, and the officers I worked for looked to me for performance of my duties.

My commanding officer wrote in my Fitness Report in 2002 that my "sexual orientation has not disrupted good order and discipline onboard USS SHILOH." Don't Ask, Don't Tell has long been defended as necessary to preserve good order and discipline. It seems to me that the Captain of

a ship in the United States Navy is the most qualified judge of good order and discipline among his crew.

On my assignment after I left the ship, my new commanding officer awarded me the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, which is an individual award, based on the work I did for him. He knew about my orientation from the first moment I arrived at his command, but it made no difference to him.

I made a commitment to the Navy when I joined to serve five years after graduation from the Naval Academy. I've only gotten to serve three and a half so far. I want the opportunity to live up to my commitment, and serve out the rest of my time with honor. The way I see it, I owe at least year and a half more of service to my country. If not for Don't Ask, Don't Tell, I would still be serving honorably.

Sincerely,

Jenny Kopfstein /s/
Former Lieutenant Junior Grade, U.S. Navy

Former Lieutenant Junior Grade Jenny Kopfstein, U.S. Navy

Jenny Kopfstein joined the United States Navy when she entered the United States Naval Academy in 1995. She graduated from the Naval Academy with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics on May 26, 1999, and was selected as a Surface Warfare Officer.

She attended Surface Warfare Officer's School in Newport, Rhode Island - a school dedicated to teaching shipboard systems and operations, and then proceeded to her first duty station onboard the U.S.S. SHILOH (CG-67). The SHILOH's homeport is in San Diego, CA.

During her Navy career, Ms. Kopfstein qualified as Officer of the Deck Underway, and earned her Surface Warfare Officer Pin. She was named COMCRUDESGRU3's Junior Officer Shiphandler of the Year in 2000. She led the Admin Division initially, and then became the ship's Ordinance Officer. Between 15 and 20 sailors worked for her at any given time on the ship. Her collateral duty was as the ship's Legal Officer.

Ms. Kopfstein participated in Operation Noble Eagle, defending the west coast of the United States against a possible attack after September 11th, 2001, as well as Operation Southern Watch, enforcing the no-fly zone over southern Iraq, during a six-month deployment to the middle east.

After serving on the ship for approximately two years, she was assigned to the Tax Center at the Naval Legal Services Office in San Diego. She was named the Officer in Charge after only four months, and was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement medal for her service there.

On October 31, 2002, Ms. Kopfstein was discharged under Don't Ask, Don't Tell after two years and four months of open service.

After her discharge, she worked at a defense contracting company for four years as a manager. She is currently a law student at the University of San Diego School of Law.

Ms. Kopfstein's military awards include the Navy Achievement Medal, Meritorious Unit Commendation (2), Battle "E" Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal (2), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, Navy Expert Rifle Medal, Navy Expert Pistol Shot Medal, and Surface Warfare Qualification Breast Insignia.

April 14, 2010

Commander Coye,

I am writing to you to provide my personal experience and perspective, as a Navy veteran, for you to share with the Pentagon Working Group preparing for the repeal of the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy.

I am a first generation American, born in 1946 to Holocaust refugee parents who fled Nazi Germany. My Father escaped the persecution of Jews in Berlin, fleeing first to London where he endured the Nazi 'Blitz' nightly air raids, and later to New York where he went to work as a lawyer in the wartime offices of the Jewish Agency where he helped fellow German Jews trying to track the whereabouts of their families and bring them out of the horror in Europe. My mother fled from Frankfort after 'Krystalnacht' (The Night of Broken Glass) in 1938. Her nightmare journey to freedom brought her face to face with Gestapo officers at the Dutch German boarder railway station, she was in hiding in Holland for months, and then crossed the North Atlantic by ship to arrive at Ellis Island as an illegal without papers. After a period of internment, she was released when a bond was paid. My parents first met at the Jewish Agency where she sought my father's assistance in bringing her parents out of the Terezenstadt Concentration Camp (unsuccessfully, they perished in the gas chambers of Auschwitz).

My parents reared me with one golden aphorism, "There is nothing more precious than American freedom." That formed the basis of my personal beliefs. In 1968, in college, I saw student anti-war protestors burn the American flag. As a young idealistic first generation American, I was profoundly offended, and decided, "Its time to pay my country back for my family's freedom." I left college and volunteered to join the United States Navy, despite being gay, determined to serve our nation that gave my parents refuge during WWII.

From winter boot camp at Great Lakes, I was sent directly to the USS FORRESTAL to replace one of the 134 sailors killed in the catastrophic shipboard fire the year before. I was assigned to V2 Division (Catapult Launch and Recovery) where so many sailors had died in the first moments of the explosions and fire on the flight deck. By chance, my college background and ability to type were noticed; I became the division Yeoman. Later I served at CINCLANTFLT, and was a founding crew member of CAG 70 – a helicopter squadron headquarters.

I loved the Navy and was among the first to become a Petty Officer Second Class in under four years in Admiral Zumwalt's 'New Navy.' There was considerable effort to urge me to reenlist; but after four lonely years of hiding who I was as a gay man, I declined in order to be able to live freely without the constant fear of denunciation as a homosexual, much as my parent's generation had lived in terror of being discovered as Jews in Nazi Germany.

Later on I became an Administrative Supply Tech for the USAR, a dual status civilian/military position where I eventually rose to the rank of Sergeant First Class (E7). As a senior NCO and mid level GS employee, I had considerable responsibility and respect from superiors and subordinates. And once again found myself fearing discovery and also conflicted about having to hide who I was. For the second and final time, I left military service to live freely as a gay man, taking with me some ten years of training, experience, and leadership.

I remain forever proud of my decade of service to my country, and I would not hesitate to do so again were I given the opportunity.

I'm editor of Gay Military Signal, a webzine focused on telling the stories of lesbian and gay veterans' service from WWII to the present. In interviewing those veterans, I ask each one, "You knew you were gay when you volunteered, what were you thinking?" The nearly universal answer was a patriotic determination to serve. I gladly volunteer to provide what insight I have in the process of preparing the Navy for integrating openly serving homosexuals.

In brief, it goes without saying that the most important factor in successfully integrating lesbian and gay service members into the Navy is leadership. This not only requires a clear unified message down the chain of command for all personnel to be aware that gay shipmates are now welcome. It also requires every single petty officer from the leading Chief of the Navy on down to be on board with zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind against any shipmate. That is already a Navy policy; which only needs reiteration and sensitivity training.

Denny Meyer /s/ USN YN2, USAR SFC

Former Second Class Petty Officer Denny Meyer and Former USAR Sergeant First Class

Denny Meyer has been an activist for 50 years, since he joined an NAACP picket line at the age of 13 in 1960. He has fought for Black civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, and transgender rights. Multiply disabled and working via the internet, he is currently the national Public Affairs Officer of American Veterans For Equal Rights (the LGBT veterans' service organization); president of the NY Chapter of AVER; editor of GayMilitarySignal.com advocating for the repeal of the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy; and Media Director of Transgender American Veterans Association.

Denny is a first generation American, his parents having been WWII Holocaust refugees; his mother was an illegal immigrant who arrived at Ellis Island in 1938 without papers. In 1968, at the height of the war in Vietnam, Denny volunteered to join the US Navy, "in order to pay my country back for my family's freedom, for taking in my family during WWII." He did this despite being gay, knowing he'd have to sacrifice his own freedom and live in a deep camouflage closet. He served for ten years in the Navy and later in the Army Reserve, leaving as a Sergeant First Class.

After his life partner died of AIDS, and he survived a battle with cancer, Denny founded the New York Chapter of American Veterans For Equal Rights, devoting his time to advocating the right of all LGBT Americans to choose to volunteer to serve our country, helping LGBT veterans and service members deal with discrimination, and speaking out publicly. He has spoken at Brown, Harvard, and Columbia universities and with national and international news media.

In 2004, as he battled cancer for the second time, Denny and his chapter officers organized a grassroots 15-month effort which resulted in the passage of the nation's first "Don't Ask Don't Tell" repeal resolution by the New York City Council. This led to a nationwide movement of similar resolutions by cities, organizations, and the State of California.
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April 15, 2010

Dear Beth,

I realized as a junior at the Naval Academy that my body's dimensions were a little too short for me to pursue my dream of becoming a pilot. Having loved sailing on Puget Sound as a youngster, surface warfare became my second choice. Being on the water is what the "real" Navy is all about, right? After my graduation from USNA in May of 1989 I received orders to report to a Knox-class frigate, USS Kirk (FF 1087), homeported in Long Beach, California. After a six-month stint at Surface Warfare Officers School in Coronado, I took an apartment with a straight classmate in Long Beach, whose ship was also there.

I imagined long hours, hot and dirty conditions, and the pollution of Los Angeles. What I found onboard Kirk was a phenomenal commanding officer, a very strong group of 30 enlisted men with whom I was charged as the CIC Officer, excellent morale, and workdays that passed quickly. I enjoyed my job. Going to sea took a little bit of getting used to, making sure that my car was parked in a place where it would not be ticketed or towed, and pushing through the workdays that followed a midwatch. I loved the sound of the bow of the ship slowly slicing through the Pacific on an otherwise silent, moonlit night – with the only lights being the reflection of radar repeater green on watch stander's face, and a dim red glow on the navigational chart.

I took every precaution to prevent my gay life and my Navy life from crossing. Sometime near the end of my first year onboard, I moved far away from the Naval Station Long Beach so that I could move in with my partner at the time. Living in Laguna Beach meant we could be ourselves and not worry about crossing paths with my shipmates – who I often saw in and around Long Beach. It was worth the 90-minute drive and the extra money I spent on gas. In Laguna I did not have to always be on guard, eyes peeled for Navy people who might have known me. It was the most freedom I had ever known.

Amongst 12 junior officers onboard Kirk, I was the first to qualify as Officer of the Deck. I enjoyed the responsibility of leading the bridge team, and found that I had a natural knack for understanding the goings on at sea. In the spring of 1992 the ship spent two weeks at sea for Refresher Training, in preparation for a deployment to the Persian Gulf in August. When August came, my partner could not come to see me off

as did the other Navy families. He told me he would write to me often, and we devised a plan so that if anyone were to read over my shoulder, or snoop through my things, they would not see a romantic letter from my boyfriend, Nick.

One of the things I enjoyed most about my time in the Navy was seeing the world. On our way to the Gulf, we visited Japan and South Korea. Once north of the Strait of Hormuz, we broke away from the carrier battle group on a diplomatic mission, pulling into ports of our allies and holding events. That tasking took us to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. When mail call was announced, there was always a small pile of letters for me, most of which were from NP and contained safe updates on what was going on with him back in California. Those letters helped the time pass, as did the ship's training exercises when we were at sea. Despite one action-packed midwatch when an Iranian amphibious assault ship came at us full speed in a game of Chicken, I never once felt like I was in danger of being harmed. Until it came time to return home.

Our last port visit in the Middle East was to Muscat, Oman. It was just before Christmas, and I had been shopping for gifts for my family in Oregon and Washington State. Pleased with my purchases, but a bit sad that my Christmas would be spent away from them, my thoughts were with my family as I returned from liberty and requested permission to come aboard from the Officer of the Deck. Permission granted, I carried my plastic bags of tea pots, pirated cassette tapes, and other trinkets across the brow.

As I walked past the wooden podium on the quarterdeck, I saw an open letter. With familiar handwriting. I tried to be as discreet as possible in getting a closer look at it. It was Nick's handwriting, on a letter I had not received. As if I were shoplifting, with as smooth a gesture as possible, I reached out and stole my letter from the podium. I had been gone just over four months at that point, and Nick had become anxious for my return. In total violation of our agreement about his letters, he wrote me a steamy, very descriptive, romantic letter. A three-pager. My heart sank, thoughts raced, and paranoia began to set in as I began to read. He signed it, "Love, Nick."

Someone had opened the letter, and it had found its way to the quarterdeck. I had no idea who opened it. Was it the postal clerk? How many people read it? Was I in danger? What was going to happen?

Should I go back ashore and call my family? I knew that gay sailors had mysteriously disappeared on deployments in decades past, and I considered that to be a real possibility for me. I could say nothing to the captain… He would ask to see the letter. I was totally powerless and I feared for my life. That afternoon we got underway, to cross the Indian Ocean on our way to Western Australia.

Once on our way, I tried to never be alone. I remember standing bridge watches, not paying much attention to what was going on around me because I was focused on deciding whether to sink or swim should I find myself assaulted by shipmates in the night and thrown overboard. It was too easy to picture myself popping to the surface of the black, swirling water, with a lone white stern light rapidly fading off toward the horizon as the water around me became still. I decided that if that happened I would forego my superior swimming abilities and just sink.

The best part of this part of the story is that we reached Australia with me still onboard. As days passed, and Long Beach got closer and closer, I became less concerned that my safety was in jeopardy. But I realized that the only danger I ever felt on that six-month experience was from my own shipmates, in a scary scenario in which I was completely powerless.

I loved being at sea. I enjoyed my job as a division officer. I had a knack for watchstanding. I earned my Surface Warfare pin and was highly regarded onboard. I enjoyed the responsibility of being Command Duty Officer in port. But nothing could possibly compensate for what happened to me on deployment.

My ship's last day in the Navy was my last day in the Navy – August 6, 1993. I was selected to serve as the Officer of the Deck for the decommissioning ceremony, which I did with honor and pride in my choker whites and lieutenant shoulder boards. It was my 26th birthday. After the ceremony, I got in my car, drove off the Naval Station Long Beach for the last time, with the intention of never looking back.

Sincerely,

Jeff Petrie /s/
Former Lieutenant, U.S. Navy
USNA '89
Washington, DC

Former Lieutenant Jeff Petrie, U.S. Navy

Born: August 6, 1967, Ellensburg, Washington
High School: South Eugene High School, Eugene, Oregon, 1985
College: United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, BS Economics, 1989
Qualified: Surface Warfare Officer, 1992

Member: Service Academy Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association, 1992–present
Chair: Service Academy Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association, 2009–present
Founder: USNA Out, the first-ever out GLBT alumni group of any U.S. service academy, 2003
Chair: USNA Out, 2003–2009

Achieving national status in gymnastics while growing up in Oregon, Jeff Petrie was recruited by many colleges during his senior year at South Eugene High School. At the urging of his grandfather, who had served as a Navy officer in WWII, Petrie chose to attend the Naval Academy. As a midshipman, he competed on the men's varsity gymnastics team, and was elected by his teammates to be Team Captain senior year. Petrie graduated in May 1989 with a B.S. in Economics.

As a newly-commissioned ensign, Petrie's first billet was Assistant Varsity Gymnastics Coach at Navy, a temporary position he held until December 1989. In January of 1990 he moved to Coronado, California to attend Surface Warfare Officers School before reporting aboard USS Kirk (FF 1087) in Long Beach. As a junior officer, Petrie excelled. Over the course of over eight years in the Navy, he became increasingly frustrated with ;living under DADT.. With no hope for change on the horizon, Lieutenant Petrie resigned his commission and left the Navy on his 26th birthday – having served the time he owed for his USNA education. As a gay man and civilian, Petrie shuffled through several challenging years, during which he slowly replenished the self-pride that the military's policy had eroded. In 2000 he took a position working in the Membership Department of the Legion of Honor art museum in San Francisco, the only major art museum in the country that honors veterans with art. Living in the Bay Area helped inspire him to lead a "coming out" of civilian gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) Naval Academy alumni in 2003, when he founded and led the first-ever out GLBT alumni group of any United States service academy, called USNA Out. Since that time, GLBT alumni from the Air Force Academy and West Point have followed suit and started out groups of their own, and USNA Out has flourished and grown to over 160 diverse civilian members with a wide range of talents and experiences. These people who were once invisible can now be seen.

Currently Petrie serves as the 2010 Chairman of the Board for the Service Academy Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association, while concurrently serving as a board member for USNA Out. In his day job, Petrie is now in his 10th year of art museum membership fundraising, employed by The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. He also serves on the Advisory Committee for the national Art Museum Membership Management Network, and as Co-Chair of the Eastern Museum Membership Directors Group. Petrie lives in the Dupont Circle neighborhood of the nation's capital, where the legalization of gay marriage has him pondering the idea of finding a good husband.

19 April 2010

Dear Beth,

I retired after 20 years of military service in the United States Navy. I never planned on making it career, it just worked out that way-I enjoyed the work I did and I was mentoring young people. I joined in 1986, and just kept re-enlisting until I found myself a Chief Petty Officer, twenty years later.

The adverse impact I suffered from under DADT was the trust I couldn't share with fellow shipmates. Here I was, a Senior Enlisted leader, entrusted with millions of dollars worth of equipment, and a "mentor" to over 300 sailors; yet, I couldn't let these same sailors who would die for me into my life. There are simple things that senior enlisted military personnel do for their subordinates. It is not a written part of the job description; it just is.

When I was a young sailor, it was not uncommon for me and other young sailors to be invited into the homes of our Senior Enlisted leaders, who are a living example of the Navy's core values of honor, courage and commitment. A barbeque on a Saturday, helping out with home improvement projects, going to the beach, or helping someone move were commonplace events, and they not only helped us be a team, they made us family.

Yet when I finally attained the rank where I could do the same for young sailors in the military, my life took on a precarious balancing act. I am a natural at being a big sister, so it was perfectly normal for me to want to help sailors, no matter who they were. When it came time to help a sailor, I would be there to help, but my life couldn't be transparent. I had to put up boundaries. My private life was not public knowledge, yet having a partner at home who couldn't be a part of professional life was very taxing. I wasn't free to invite someone to my home. How do you explain your living situation with a regulation clearly prohibiting it? As badly as I wanted to show trust to my fellow sailors, I didn't want to burden them with the knowledge I was breaking the regulation of DADT.

It slowly became clear to me that most of my shipmates just didn't care. When you spend 24 hours a day, for years with three hundred people, they figure things out about you, things you've left unsaid, that you

didn't realize were obvious, things that are just an intrinsic part of your personality. Today's young people are very independent, maybe it's a result of being from homes that are dual working parents or single working parent households. They don't need to be told the difference between right and wrong, for they've been figuring it out for years on their own.

There were young sailors, who thought they "knew" about me, who would open up with such simple things as telling me that their brother was gay or a woman in their life "back home" was coming out as a lesbian. Trust is a two-way street. If these same sailors are sharing with me information about their lives, it is sort of natural to reciprocate. But here I am, presented with such sensitive information, and I can't show these same sailors that I trust them. That has a payback, and if a person perceives that trust isn't shared, that grows in negative ways. I had to take the leap of faith. While not lying about the gender of the person I was spending my time with, I did limit information about the importance of the person I was spending my time with, by calling her my "roommate," or minimizing her role in my life.

This lack of trust can become demoralizing. I've watched junior sailors struggle under DADT.

I have watched young gay sailors, starting to have disciplinary problems because of problems in their personal lives, not be able to seek out the resources or aid of a senior enlisted. Their problems just grow until they seem insurmountable, with no one to turn to for help because of DADT. It's heartbreaking, to try and help this person, yet they can't even verbalize their problem because just doing so would subject them to a discharge. Here I was, a gay senior enlisted, who might have gone through a similar situation but I couldn't disclose my own life experience because of DADT.

You learn when to take that leap of faith, to do the right thing in the interest of a sailor's welfare and hope it doesn't come back to haunt you.

Sometimes a gay sailor who is having a hard time adjusting because they feel like a fish out of water in the military environment, will become a happier and productive sailor just knowing that there is someone "like them" in the senior enlisted ranks that they can talk to openly. But the closet can be used against you. If someone decides they don't like you, they can use that information against you.

During the deployment, there are so many small important things that add to overall stress. If something happened to my partner while I was on deployment, I wouldn't have been able to go back home to help. If I had been wounded while deployed, my partner wouldn't have been notified, because she is not officially my family. My biological family would have been notified, with my partner left completely in the dark.

Emails had to be generic, no "I love you's" for six months, no participation in family events the ship's Ombudsman puts together.

This is just a quick summary of what the same deployment can be like for different shipmates.

I've seen sailors on my ship discharged because of DADT, in turn creating more work for those still onboard ship. As a senior enlisted in charge of 24-30 divisional personnel, and as a Chief to the rest of the 300 sailors onboard, each with highly specialized training, if I lose just one of my sailors due to DADT, it puts more work on those who stay. My lost sailor's skills now have to be performed by others who didn't get the same training. That was professional training allotted in a quota to the command, now gone. It takes time to get that specialized quota filled, especially since that quota was planned in advance, and was expected to be filled for 3-5 years. The watches my lost sailor usually stood, have now been put on the backs of those who stay. What can't be counted is any extra work that my sailor was handling — anything from working in the "pooled labor division", called Food Service Attendants onboard ship, to collateral duties, such as divisional career counselor, educational services, safety rep, you name it. Those that stay behind literally shoulder that work that HAS to be done, and go on. That also takes away from time my other sailors could of have been spending with loved ones at home.

Very Respectfully,

ETC(SW) Lee Quillian /s/
U.S. Navy, (Ret.)

Chief Petty Officer Lee Quillian, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Retired October 2006

Awards Received

Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (x2)
Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (x4)
Battle "E" Efficiency Ribbons (x5)
Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal
Global War on Terrorism Service Medal
Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal
Meritorious Unit Citations (x3)
Navy Unit Citation

Tours of duty

USS DIXON AS-37
FLEET AREA CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE FACILITY
USS CAPE COD AD-43
USS LONG BEACH CG-9
USS PAUL F. FOSTER DD-964
FLEET TRAINING CENTER SAN DIEGO, CA
USS HIGGINS DDG-76
NAVY CENTER FOR TACTICAL SYSTEMS INTEROPERABILITY

Career highlights:

-Among first enlisted women to deploy on a combatant ship (one of two enlisted on the USS LONG BEACH)

-Earned more battle efficiency ("Battle E's") awards than most sailors ever get. This is a teamwork award.

-Attaining the rank of Chief Petty Officer.

-Participated in the first Tomahawk missile launches of the second Gulf War in 2003

20 April 2010

Dear Commander Coye,

I really never wanted anything more in my life than to be a career officer. My entire childhood I was exposed to abuse, violence, and crime. I came out of it all with a simple, yet overwhelming desire to serve. When my first attempt at getting into the Naval Academy failed, I waited restlessly until I turned eighteen. On my birthday I signed my enlistment, and set off to prove myself to the Academy. I was eager to leave the cruelty of my past life behind and join a true family.

I knew I was gay, but it was irrelevant to me then. I was convinced that the current policy would protect me. I knew that based on merit and achievement I would excel in the military, in spite of it. I am young, smart, masculine, and athletic. I relished military life, but I grossly underestimated the toll it would take on my own life.

It really is not so much the documented abuse I was subjected to by my superiors who instigated the paperwork that charged that I was gay and punished me for it extensively.

It was more about the inhumanity of a standing law that allowed for it. In silencing me it put me in danger for over two years in the Middle East. That forced me to lie endlessly to young men that I admired and would gladly give my life for. A policy that had me living like a fugitive.

Three and a half years later, when I finally earned my place at the Naval Academy Preparatory School, the true weight of the policy really hit me. I was forced to dig deep and question whether I deserved the life DADT had forced on me. I was forced to question the institution that would condone and endorse this kind of treatment of its members. The only thing I had ever done wrong per se was to want the same thing my straight counterparts wanted: a brotherhood and something to stand for.

At NAPS I realized that a career, a lifetime, of service under DADT would be a forfeiture of my basic human rights. It would be forfeiture of basic job security, peace of mind, and meaningful relationships, particularly with my fellow straight service members whom I was forced to deceive and betray.

I never would have imagined back in late 2007 when I was discharged for coming out, that such courageous figures would arise such as Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen to speak on behalf of the integrity of each of us and the institution as a whole. I am a junior now, a year ahead of my peers I left at NAPS, and in an odd twist of fate there now exists the chance that I can beat them to a commission if we see a repeal in the next year.

They say some people are just born designed for military service. It's the way we are wired, and the only thing that makes us happy. For too many of us, it's the only family we ever had. I am sure now, more than ever, after all the loss and hardship under DADT, that all I want to do is serve as a career military officer

Very respectfully,

Joseph Christopher Rocha /s/
Former Petty Officer Third Class, U.S. Navy

Former Petty Officer Third Class Joseph Christopher Rocha, U.S. Navy

Joseph Christopher Rocha enlisted in the U.S. on April 27th 2004, seeking an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy in hopes to become a Marine Corps Officer. He successfully graduated from Master At Arms School and chose a billet to Bahrain seeking an IA billet to Iraq or Afghanistan. When this option failed to be available he worked his way up through security into the Bahrain K-9 explosive handler unit. In August of 2005 he was sent back stateside to graduate from Military Working Dog Handler School. He served a total of 28 months in the Fifth Fleet AOR, performing explosive detection and anti terrorism missions. In June of 2007 he reported to the Naval Academy Preparatory School en route to the US Naval Academy. On Oct 14th 2007 he was honorably discharged on the grounds of homosexual omission. Petty Officer Rocha is an expert in the 9mm hand gun and the M16 riffle and earned both his Good Conduct ribbon and Naval Marine Corps Achievement Medal while serving overseas.

15 April 2010

Dear CDR Coye,

Please include my comments in the package presented to the Pentagon Working Group.

As a member of the Military Advisory Council of SLDN and a fairly recent retiree from the Navy (2001), I lived and served under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell". If 1993 was not the right time to permit open service of gay service members, then 2010 certainly is.

Considering my 20 years of active service spanned pre and post DADT periods and as odd as it might sound, the period following the enactment of DADT was probably more stressful for me. But even before that, I made decisions about duty station requests and engagement of fellow service colleagues with the knowledge that I had to hide the fact that I was gay. In fact, it was not until half-way through my navy career that I was able to connect with other gay service members and feel more comfortable with who I was.

As a member of the Navy Medical Department, I was in a slightly more accepting environment than many gay line shipmates. However, I also was Captain of the Navy Service Rifle Team and represented the Navy at Interservice and National competitions. Most of my teammates there were Line enlisted and officers and this was a more "hard charging and hard talking" environment. In both situations, and especially after DADT, I was forced to make excuses or make up stories about why I didn't date or wasn't married. It was sad that I felt unable to tell people who I thought were friends about the "other half" of my life.

In addition, many of my career decisions were made with a backdrop of "where can I go where it might be easier to hide". Ultimately, these frequent moves and final assignments at BUMED and the Pentagon may have cost a promotion. However, being in Washington, DC was a much more comfortable place to live with the secret I was hiding and permitted me to live with my partner.

An interesting anecdote occurred while I was at TMA as Tricare Medical Director. My boss, another physician, in discussing a news

article about someone being discharged under DADT stated, " with all the gays and lesbians in medicine, we could not run the medical departments without them". As a medical professional, I can say affirmatively that forcing gay and lesbian service members to hide their identity is emotionally draining and does not promote effective and efficient use of this vital segment of the active duty force. Furthermore, although recruitment, in general, has been meeting goals, there are numerous specialties in medicine that experience a critical shortage. I trust my thoughts and experiences are helpful and our efforts help overturn DADT this year.

Commander John H. Varga, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy (Ret) /s/

Commander John H. Varga, (MC), U.S. Navy (Ret.)

A native of Columbus, Ohio, Doctor Varga received a Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology in 1977 and Doctor of Medicine degree in 1981 from the Ohio State University and a Masters in Health Policy in 2001 from the George Washington University. He is a Board Certified Ophthalmologist, having completed an internship at Naval Medical Center, San Diego, CA, in 1982 and a residency at the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, MD, in 1986. He completed fellowship training in Ophthalmic Pathology at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in 1991 and in Cornea surgery at the McGee Eye Institute in Oklahoma City in 1992.

Commissioned in the Naval Reserve in 1977, Doctor Varga entered active duty in June 1981. His clinical medicine assignments include: Naval Medical Center, San Diego, CA; USS Belleau Wood (LHA 3); National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, MD; Naval Hospital, Millington, TN; U.S. Naval Hospital, Naples, Italy; Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Washington, DC; and Naval Hospital, Charleston, SC. His administrative assignments include: Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Washington, DC; Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Pentagon, Washington, DC; and TRICARE Management Activity (TMA), Falls Church, VA.

Doctor Varga retired in 2001 with over 20 years active service in the Navy. He was active in the evaluation of Tricare contracts with a final assignment as Director, Financial Analysis and Integration in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, TRICARE Management Activity, Resource Management Office.

His military awards include: Defense Superior Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (2 awards), Joint Service Commendation Medal (2 awards), Navy Commendation Medal (2 awards), Army Commendation Medal, Air Force Achievement Medal, National Defense Medal, and Distinguished Marksman Badge.

Currently, Doctor Varga is a Physician Informaticist at the Office of Health Information, Veterans Health Administration. Recent other positions have included health informatics work with the Military Health System, Cerner Corporation, 3M, and EDS/HP.

Doctor Varga is a Fellow of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, American College of Surgeons and Health Information Management and Systems Society, a Diplomate of the American College of Physician Executives, the American College of Healthcare Executives, the American Board of Quality Assurance and Utilization Review Physicians, the American Board of Managed Care Medicine, and is a Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality, Healthcare Information Management, and Project Manager. He holds memberships in the American Medical Association, National Association for Healthcare Quality, and the Association of Military Surgeons. He is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Surgery at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and previously held faculty positions at the University of Oklahoma and the Medical University of South Carolina.

15 April 2010

To My Country:

I would like to start this letter by expressing my gratitude for listening to my point of view on the subject of being able to serve as an openly gay member of the military, in my case the United States Navy. Never did I think I would have this opportunity; I'm so amazed and impressed with my country right now because we are having this dialogue, my feelings and emotions are beyond words.

I write this letter as I head to the funeral for my last grandparent and am introspective of the value and impact of family. She was the mother of my father. My father served his country with such distinction and I am so proud of him, as was his country when it distinguished him with the rank of Rear Admiral (lower half). My father was the son of a barber and his wife from Dubuque, Iowa. He was motivated to join the Navy by a display of personal artifacts of the first priest to die in World War II at Pearl Harbor, who was a chaplain at Loras College. Passing that display often while he was at college, my father was so inspired by the story of the priest, who gave his life helping sailors out of a sinking ship in the attack, that he was motivated to do something greater with his life and join the Navy. He passed this sense of patriotism and commitment to a greater good and duty to me, and I was privileged to honor it by accepting a commission in the United States Navy in 1994 after graduating from the University of Virginia N.R.O.T.C program as a distinguished Naval graduate, with a Bachelor's in electrical engineering.

After almost 9 years of active duty military service, which included 4 years as a Surface Warfare Officer with two deployments to the Persian Gulf, and study at the Naval Postgraduate School to become an Electrical Engineer, I decided to come out to my parents. I came out for many reasons. First of all, because I heard my dad express the sentiment that he thought I was not in a married relationship (to a girl) because I was in a selfish phase and that I didn't know how to share my life, unbeknownst to him that I was being forced to hide my true life or even being prevented from sharing it under Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

I also felt as if my dad was not far off the mark. I was being pretty selfish not sharing who I was with everyone. It resulted in me feeling like I was a half person. Half of me was invested in my career, the Navy, and the other half was invested in being a person; neither of which added up to a whole. One can take half-living for only so long.

So I came out to my family, and along came with it the familial upheaval. My parents were for the most part very accepting in their process of understanding they had a gay son. My father and my mother both tried to convince me that I could stay in the Navy for the rest of my twenty year service for a retirement because it made good financial sense, and if I did it for ten years I could do it for ten more years. The story held true in my father's mind, until we were at a convention together and a retired General friend of his, upon hearing I was getting out of the Navy, decided to talk to me further, and decided that it was his right to discuss my dating and personal life, to the point I had to agree with him that I had dates with girls on many nights and that I was "popular with the ladies", in his words. It took but one look to my father that said, "Note this, as we will discuss this later in regards to my sentiments about your getting out of the Navy." I didn't have to discuss the details at dinner that night, as I just had to mention the occurrence at the conference with the General. My father and mother had already discussed it and had come to the conclusion that they understood my decision. They saw that I was forced to lie outright to the General because he had the presumption to think I was straight and it was his right to inquire as such. I did not receive any more objections regarding my resigning my commission from that point.

My father, a retired Rear Admiral, has always supported the notion that an individual's capacity to serve is and should be based upon his or her ability to serve competently, not upon sexual orientation. He held this belief before I came out, when he spoke to my N.R.O.T.C unit in college. He still holds this belief and is learning and acting on the fact that he has a voice that can offer a valuable dialogue in this process. I am so very proud that he is now speaking his opinion on this subject freely and isn't concerned about what others might think, but is concerned more about what is the right thing to do.

His voice isn't the only one that is important in this matter in my family. My mother, who held our family of four children together over many extended deployments where my father was gone to Vietnam, from beginning to end, with no known return date given, has a powerful say in this matter. When we began our discussion on Don't Ask, Don't Tell, her opinion on the matter was that she was just a Navy wife and wasn't directly affected by this. My mother was and always is a humble person and I was shocked by her response. She is the mother of a gay son, one who served for 11 years on active duty and achieved the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Her husband was on active duty for 35 years, serving at sea and at shore. She knows what a command environment is, what leadership entails, and how to do the right thing. She knows that I

served an honorable 11 years, and that had I not been serving under Don't Ask, Don't Tell, it might have been more. I laugh now, because I've expressed these sentiments to Mom, and she's taken it on board. She's found her voice, as I found mine when I came out, and if she could, she'd walk into lawmakers' offices who oppose repealing DADT and give them her a piece of her mind. She's of Irish descent after all and the fiery personality isn't denied or diminished by any rank or office. I will always love her for that and her devotion to her family.

I've only spoken once publicly about being gay and having served the military as an officer. I was afraid that my motivation for accepting a commission would be somehow muddled, confused for the simple desire to serve my country, as was demonstrated to me so honorably by my father and those he served with. I served with nothing but honor and respect. Because our country has decided to have this important and much needed dialogue about free and open service, I am now choosing to speak up as a voice of someone who served as a warfighter but left early because of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. I look forward to the chance to discuss this with you further, and explain my position that we should do away with DADT and allow gay and lesbian service members to serve openly and honestly.

Very Respectfully.

Craig A. Wilgenbusch /s/
Former Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy Reserve

Former Lieutenant Commander Craig A. Wilgenbusch, U.S.Naval Reserve

LCDR Craig A. Wilgenbusch, USNR had more than 10 years of active duty experience.

LCDR Wilgenbusch started his career as a Surface Warfare Officer. He served on *USS Valley Force (CG 50)* as a the OI Division Officer and the Auxiliaries Officer, obtaining the qualification of Officer of the Deck (OOD) while on a deployment to the Persian Gulf in 1997 to enforce United Nations interdictions. His second tour was on board *USS Essex (*LHD 2) as the Fire Control Officer, responsible for the ships self-defense and electronic warfare systems. While on board, he lead the ship through combat systems qualification of a new missile system, completed a deployment to the Persian Gulf in 1998, and obtained the qualifications of Officer of the Deck, Air Warfare Coordinator, and Tactical Action Officer.

After over 4 years as a Surface Warfare Officer, LCDR Wilgenbusch was laterally transferred to the Engineering Duty Officer community, working mostly in the area of Signals Intelligence research and development at Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center. Throughout his military career he has gained extensive expertise in the areas of government personnel management and financial management planning systems. Lieutenant Commander Wilgenbusch currently serves as a Department of the Navy civil servant program manager, a supervisor managing Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) in addition to Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) development for the Navy's west coast research and development lab. In this role, Wilgenbusch manages a branch of 13 personnel with six main projects, overseeing a combined project budget of nearly $10 million a year.

Lieutenant Commander Wilgenbusch graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA in 2001 and earned his B.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Virginia in 1994. He is an N.R.O.T.C. Distinguished Naval Graduate. He now resides in San Diego, CA.

Dear Commander Coye, *22 April 2010*

When I first decided to enter the NROTC program, my goal was to use the Navy as a springboard toward a political career in local government in my hometown. I was not out to myself at that time and assumed that, in due time, I would be almost automatically blessed with a wife and children, all of which would support both my military career and my political aspirations. These hopes endured for years despite the fact that I never desired to date or pursue any girl romantically.

During the summer before my senior year of college, I finally came out while attending my first-class midshipman cruise on an exchange with the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom. For the first time in my life, I was exposed to service members of another nation's military (and a strong U.S. ally, at that) who were legally entitled to serve while being open about their sexual orientation. I learned that, despite some residual cultural discrimination against gays in the military of the UK, my British counterparts were able to be open about their personal lives without fear of formal reprisals and without fear of losing their opportunity to serve their nation in the military. For the first time in my life, I verbalized to both myself and another human being (a few of the British midshipmen I was serving with) that I was gay, even though I had never yet acted on my sexuality in any physical sense.

When I returned to my NROTC unit that fall of my senior year, I had some big questions regarding my ability to serve now that I had personally come to terms with my sexual orientation. As I kept in touch with my British midshipmen friends in the UK, I heard their stories of being able to take their same-sex boyfriends/girlfriends to command functions and how, as they considered whether to accept their commissions, their commanding officers were willing to meet with their prospective partners to discuss life as a Royal Navy spouse. In addition to making their decisions about accepting a commission in the Royal Navy, they were also struggling with one of the other biggest decisions in any human being's life- — whether or not to make a long-term commitment and share their lives fully with their significant other. They correctly assessed that- — like the U.S. Navy- — embarking on a career in the Royal Navy would have a significant impact on their partners, and they were able to address this decision holistically just as their fellow heterosexual colleagues were encouraged to do. When I contrasted this state of affairs for my British midshipmen friends with that facing myself and other gay midshipmen of the U.S. Navy, I was forced to realize that the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell was extremely inadequate

in allowing me to pursue the same balanced, healthy family life as was sought after by virtually all of my fellow heterosexual midshipmen.

Despite my concerns about maintaining healthy personal relationships in the face of the threats posed by Don't Ask, Don't Tell, I decided that my duty to serve as an officer under the terms of my NROTC contract was too great to be ignored. I decided to charge ahead toward commissioning rather than come out to my NROTC command and face discharge for my sexuality alone, an aspect of my identity that did not compromise my ability to perform as an outstanding midshipman. I pursued a Surface Warfare designation, and by the time of our NROTC ship selections that spring, I was ranked as one of the top Surface-Warfare-option midshipman in the nation. I had one of the top picks of any new officer posting available worldwide. The harsh realities of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, caused me to fear being too far away from a support network, and so I happily chose a ship based in a large city, where I had a great gay support network to help me through any tough times in the Navy under Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

As it turned out, my life as a gay Surface Warfare Officer was not a happy one for me. I enjoyed serving on my ship overall, and was proud of the accomplishments of my command. However, because I had to hide a core aspect of my identity, I could not effectively bond with my fellow officers or enlisted personnel on the levels expected by custom and tradition. While every member of the ship's crew had to endure some degree of sacrifice when we were away from home and out to sea, all of my heterosexual coworkers could openly incorporate their families or loved ones into their military experience as much as possible. Wardroom events included boyfriends or girlfriends of straight officers. Ship events incorporated families as much as possible into the team that made up our ship. Every late-night watch on the bridge or in the Combat Information Center included conversations by coworkers about their lives back home and what they were missing. I had to remain either completely silent or extremely guarded, lest the slightest wrong comment come out that might be too clear a direct statement of my homosexuality. I was instructed as a junior officer on the virtues of intrusive leadership, all the while knowing that I had to conceal almost every personal event of my life off of the ship from anyone around me, defying the close personal bonds that I saw among the straight officers in their lives on and off the ship.

The pressure of remaining closeted on the ship under Don't Ask, Don't Tell was the primary cause of my extreme unhappiness during that period of my life. Every period at sea became a 24/7 lockdown of my natural expression. I endured harassment from my chain-of-

command which varied from one-way talks from my department head on the negative perceptions of being perceived as a "known homosexual" to the ship's captain himself referring to me as "Vanna White" or "The Pink Shirt" in front of the assembled wardroom. These comments were not made in good humor, and the policy did not allow me to take these conversations or nicknames in the same stride as the personal quirks noted of the straight officers. The policy does not allow gay servicemembers to take such comments lightly and as merely humorous when we know that acknowledging our orientation could cost us our entire careers.

Bitterly unhappy but still loving the Navy, I tried to find a way out that could allow me to serve in an environment where I may have more steady access to a support network. I thought that I could endure Don't Ask, Don't Tell if only I wasn't cut off from my personal life with long at-sea periods. After many talks with my Captain, he explained that if he wrote me a Letter of Non-Attainment (of my SWO pin), I would receive an honorable discharge. Believing my mental health to be at stake, I accepted this offer and left active duty after a little more than two years. There is no doubt in my mind that, had Don't Ask, Don't Tell been repealed before then, I would have happily remained on active duty as a Surface Warfare Officer. However, given the state of affairs under the policy and my treatment on the ship, I could not approach the same healthy, balanced life sought after by my heterosexual coworkers.

I entered the drilling Reserve, and was recalled involuntarily just over one year later from my Reserve unit. I was assigned to a unit and began training for a deployment to the Middle East. After enduring a pre-deployment command investigation into my sexuality based on the hearsay of an officer (which proved inconclusive), I deployed to the Middle East and served happily there, OCONUS for seven months. I found that I was able to have a support network around the base of people to talk to, and that openness made all the difference in my ability to cope with being away from home. Since my return, I have remained on active duty as a Navy Officer Recruiter, and am proud to serve in a capacity that permits me healthy access to supportive, loving friends and family.

I want to see Don't Ask, Don't Tell overturned because I love serving my nation as a Naval Officer and I want other gay men and women to consider a life of service as well. Although the military has unique challenges and sacrifices for all, I consider the burden of silence required under Don't Ask, Don't Tell to be both an unacceptable danger to the health of those currently in the service as well as a deterrent to gay men and women who consider military service among their career

options. I want the chance to pursue a healthy, long-term relationship just as most of my heterosexual coworkers do, but find that I am thwarted in this effort by the fact that many prospective partners are turned off by the threats posed by Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

I long to adopt children someday with a partner, but also want to pursue a Naval career. Under the current policy, that combination is not possible without actively concealing even the very existence of such a family from every person who works with me. This is unacceptable in a Navy that places family advocacy among its top personnel goals, and it does a disservice to our nation in hindering the growth of our gay servicemembers. Thank you for your consideration of these central life issues as you examine the implementation of full repeal. Your support is essential to the healthy lives of tens-of-thousands of gay men and women on active duty.

Sincerely,
Lieutenant X., U.S. Navy /s/

Lieutenant X

LT X graduated from the X University and was commissioned through the NROTC program. He has served in Navy positions both overseas and in Navy towns.

LT X mobilized, deploying to Middle East. Upon demobilization, LT X accepted orders to a Recruiting District where he continues to serve today. He is proud to be a part of bringing the best and the brightest into the U.S. Navy—A Global Force for Good!

If Not Now, When?

Tom Carpenter

My family has a long and proud military history. We have fought in every war from the Revolution through the present conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am an Army brat. My father was a paratrooper who jumped in combat during the Second World War. He met my mother while she was serving in the Red Cross in Japan at the end of the war. They were one of the first marriages in occupied Japan after the war. It was her second because her first husband was killed on Christmas day during the Battle of the Bulge. My father fought in Korea and Viet Nam and retired after 30 years of service as a Colonel. He died in 1994 as a result of exposure to Agent Orange while he was in Viet Nam.

As you can imagine, when I decided to go to the Naval Academy, my family was surprised. In retrospect, what is even more incredible is that the late J. Strom Thurmond appointed me. I had a distinguished military record at Annapolis. I was one of six Midshipmen Battalion Commanders. Upon graduation, I returned to my roots when I was commissioned as a U.S. Marine. After attending the Basic School, I went on to finish flight school and proudly pinned on the wings of a Naval Aviator.

On active duty, I accumulated over 2000 hours flying the A-4 Skyhawk. I commanded a Platoon of grunts when I was an Air Liaison Officer with the 2nd Marine Division. I was also one of three Nuclear Delivery Pilots in my last two squadrons. When I left the Corps, as a Captain serving with the famous Blacksheep Squadron, I was the youngest Squadron Operations Officer in the Marine Corps. So why did I give up a promising military career? That was the question asked of me by my Commanding Officer and my fellow pilots.

This was one of the most difficult decisions of my life. I loved being a Marine and flying was my life. The problem was I had fallen in love with another Marine Officer and he was not a she. Both of us had done our best to comport with what was expected of us by our families and religious beliefs. Courtland was an Air Force brat and a Mormon.

At the time we met at Cherry Point, I was engaged to be married and my fiancé and I were in the process of sending out invitations to our wedding at the Naval Academy Chapel. Courtland wanted me to marry

her because he felt it was the best thing for my family, my career and me. I had sublimated who I really was for years. I was lying to her and to myself. I was about to enter into a marriage that was likely doomed to failure. In an effort to do what was expected of me and to be "normal", I was about to ruin her life. I finally realized I couldn't do this to her and we broke off our engagement. By this time, Courtland had told me he was going to get as far away from me as he could so that I could make this marriage work. He took orders to MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii while I was being transferred to MCAS Beaufort, S.C.We couldn't have been farther apart and I couldn't have been more depressed. Not a good place to be for a single-seat attack jet driver.

We spent the next year trying to get orders to the same base. We even volunteered for Viet Nam. Eventually, we both were able to arrange orders to MCAS Iwakuni Japan, He went to an F-4 Squadron and I was again flying the A-4. Even though we thought we really were finally together, we were not. Because we flew different aircraft we had nothing socially in common. I remember the grief he got when I was night flying and he was the duty officer at his squadron and I radioed him to find out how he was doing. All his fellow aviators, fighter pilots, wanted to know why he was getting a call from someone from another squadron, particularly an attack squadron. It put the spotlight on him. More telling was the time I was the duty officer at my squadron when I received a call reporting an F-4 from his squadron had crashed on take off. Courtland was scheduled to fly that day. I heard there was an unsuccessful attempted low-level ejection. The names of the crew were not forthcoming, but the rumors were flying that the helmet of one of the pilots had been found, his head separated from the his body. My mind raced, as I knew I would be the last one to find out if Courtland had been killed. Shortly thereafter, I received a phone call and the voice was Courtland's telling me he was all right but that the dead pilot was one of our best friends who was married, had two children and knew of and respected our relationship. The loss of such a good man broke our hearts.

From Japan we returned to California where I was stationed at El Toro. It was during this tour that my career ended. We were living in Oceanside when we met a Mustang Marine Major at local bar called the Capri Lounge. He had recently returned from his second Viet Nam tour where he had been wounded and highly decorated. The Major was a few months away from retirement when he was picked up by the Shore Patrol when they busted the bar because it had been placed off limits by the Commanding General of Camp Pendleton. We never saw him again

and heard he had been discharged with no retirement. This was a watershed event for both of us.

We had struggled for years trying to square the core values, learned through our families, church, the Academy and the Marines with the fact that we were living a lie. It was an impossible dilemma. This, coupled with what we saw happen to a man we respected, who had served his Corps and Country for decades with honor and distinction, forced us to make a difficult decision. We were compelled to resign so we could live honestly without fear of being fired from the profession we had spent our entire lives preparing for. The sword of Damocles was ever present and ever threatening.

Many of my classmates and friends from Annapolis went on to have very successful careers. The stars fell on my class including at least three four star Admirals. It would be presumptuous of me to suggest I would have achieved the same level of accomplishment. What is undeniable is that, having been deep-selected for every promotion until I resigned, I was on the fast track. Because I wanted to live a truthful life with the person I loved, this tough decision became clear. Had he been a she, I am certain we both would have retired after full and distinguished careers. This was a personal loss for us and, I submit, a loss to our country. Some 30 years later this same injustice continues. We now have an opportunity to allow talented and dedicated men and women to serve their country with honor and integrity without regard to their sexual orientation.

If not now, when?

Tom Carpenter /s/
Former Captain, U.S. Marine Corps
Class of 1970, U.S. Naval Academy

Former Captain Tom Carpenter, U.S.Marine Corps (1970-1976)

A distinguished military graduate of the class of 1970 of the U.S. Naval Academy, Tom Carpenter received a regular commission in the United States Marine Corps. After completing infantry training at The Basic School in 1971, he was assigned to the Naval Aviation Training Command and later designated a Naval Aviator. After advanced training with VMAT 201 he was assigned as a pilot with Marine Attack Squadrons VMA 331, VMA 211 and VMA 214. He was designated one of three Nuclear Delivery Pilots in his squadron and in his last assignment with the famous "Black Sheep" squadron was the youngest Operations Officer in Marine Corps Aviation. As a result of the then-existing regulation and exclusion of gays in the military, Carpenter resigned his commission in 1976, at the rank of Captain. While on active duty he accumulated more than 2500 hours in the A-4 Skyhawk. He later joined the Marine Reserves and continued his service until 1980. From 1978 through 1983, Tom was a pilot for Continental Airlines, flying the Boeing 727.

While flying for Continental, Tom attended Golden State University School of Law in San Francisco. Graduating in 1980, he moved to Los Angeles where he joined the firm of Kern and Wooley. In 1986, he made a lateral move and became a member of Bronson, Bronson and McKinnon, LLP. At Bronson he was a member of the Los Angeles office management committee and headed the Products Liability Group. He has been lead counsel on numerous civil jury trials representing both defendants and plaintiffs.

In 2005, after 25 years of practice, Carpenter retired as partner from the law firm of Shaw, Terhar and La Montagne, LLP where he was a trial lawyer specializing in Aviation litigation, products liability, entertainment and commercial litigation. He is a member of the Bars of Alaska, California and Colorado, and a Judge Pro Tem of the Los Angeles Superior Court.

Tom became a principal in a strategic consulting firm in 2008. Tom currently serves on the Board of Directors for Servicemembers Legal Defense Network. He was co-chair of the SLDN board from 1998-2005. He lives in Los Angeles with his spouse of 16 years, Art Andrade.

20 April 2010

Dear Pentagon Working Group,

My name is Brian Fricke. I am from Knoxville, Tennessee and in 2000 after graduation from high school; I joined the United States Marine Corps. I joined because I wanted to be part of the great legacy that is the Marines. I had a sense of duty early in life and was active in the local Boy Scout "Police Explorer" program. I enlisted 3 of my peers prior to bootcamp; I was very motivated and ready to earn my Eagle, Globe and Anchor. After boot camp I went on to a 6 month Avionics course followed by an additional 3 months of CH-53E Superstallion technical training. My first duty station was in MCAS Miramar. Three months after arriving, my unit was sent to Okinawa Japan for 12 months. I had assimilated well into Corps and at this roughly 2 ½ year mark, earned Corporal and was placed into a Staff billet. It would also mark my first violation of Don't Ask Don't Tell.

I was working on the aircraft, night shift, performing routine maintenance with one of my fellow Marines. He was telling story after story of his sexual conquests in town with graphic detail. I knew I couldn't say I was gay — but thought how unfair that he could flaunt his sexual achievements so blatantly. It was then that I spoke up and simply said, "You know I'm not into girls, right?" The silence was deafening. I thought that the aircraft would fall apart, the engines crash to the flight deck and the Commandant would storm over to escort me to the gate. Finally Corporal Mavencamp said — "Oh, No big deal."

"No big deal" is truly what my peers thought about my being gay. I was still a Marine, still retained my honor, courage and commitment to the Corps. I was an expert rifleman, a Grey belt in MCMAP (earlier than the rest of the unit) and was still Corporal Fricke.

What makes gays in the military a "Big Deal" is a policy in place that makes gays in the military a "Big Deal". It is a self-fulfilling prophecy — a cowardly policy that is used to hide behind because of society's obsession with machismo. More than not wanting to appear supportive, many don't want to appear sympathetic to the discharges. In person, to the gay or lesbian they know — they say they don't have a problem. If they get into a group — most are content to not speak out in defense of their friend who is gay. Again, this is because of how others may perceive

them rather than what is right.

I went on to do a 9 month tour in Iraq in 2004 and acquire a Top Secret Clearance and 7 medals. Like many before me — my skills, talents and abilities, my very life -— were offered in defense of a Nation's freedoms and the right to the pursuit of happiness.

Gays and Lesbians have the additional burden of hiding a piece of their identity. I returned from Iraq to a grateful, yet unfamiliar crowd of faces. My partner, now of 7 years, couldn't be there to greet me because of the risk of being outed. The reality is, no one would have cared, we just fought the same fight, side by side with unwavering dedication to duty; and that's what really matters. That's what wins wars, wins hearts and what each man should be judged by — his character.

Very Respectfully Submitted,

-Brian R Fricke /s/
Former Sergeant, USMC

Moral and Disciplined

Brett Edward Stout

The atmosphere of MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Station) is one of bleached floors, beige walls, and florescent lighting. But the air is colored with nostalgic waxing over white busses, yellow footprints, and black boot polish. As I moved through MEPS I spent time having medical check-ups, taking tests, filling out paperwork, and preparing to take my oath of service. Just before raising my hand and covering my heart, one last form was placed in front of me. The questions were mostly obvious, one last inquiry if I was an alcoholic, if I was addicted to drugs, if I'd been convicted of a felony, and question 7, if I'd ever engaged in homosexual conduct. On top of equating homosexuality to a felony conviction or narcotics abuse, I found its placement odd. Even stranger were the instructions given after many in the room had already begun checking boxes down the list.

"On the form you'll notice question number 7. The military's policy of Don't Ask; Don't Tell dictates that you do not have to answer that question."

Many in the room chuckled or scoffed. I didn't. I immediately felt small and out of place. Just seconds earlier I'd felt invincible and confident that six years of competitive swimming would surely give me an athletic advantage during the physical and emotional gauntlet I would soon endure. While my sexuality wasn't something I was ready to define, my past included same-sex contact.

Since it was 4 years after the policy had gone into effect, it shocked me to see the question still there on the page. It was plainly stated on an official government questionnaire with the verbal option to ignore it. While the scope of the question's presence may have escaped some, the cruel spinning coin of DADT became vividly clear to me. Minutes before being sworn in and months before having my first Eagle Globe and Anchor placed in my hand, I already felt the spiteful reality of the policy; not asking was unenforceable in practice and not telling was in and of itself an admission. Still, I couldn't bring myself to break my own moral code. I left the answer blank.

This blank answer plagued my studies at the Defense Language Institute in California, my recon training in Hawaii, and my efforts at

the Classified Materials Control Center. While attention on the issue faded and flared, my blank answer remained present. Each day that it wore away at my resolve, the policy that prevented my answering gave growing power to the malicious actions of those who continued to ask.

As a Marine, you're taught to fear nothing, to always act with honor, courage and commitment, and to trust completely in your brothers. Over time, the policy of silence worked to unravel my fearlessness and unhinge my trust. But, to this day, I refuse to yield my honor, my courage, or my commitment to a Marine Corps I love and to the Marines I would still sacrifice my life protecting.

It was almost two years into my tour of duty before fear finally got the better of me. As I strove to prove myself worthy to join 1st Radio Battalion's Recon unit, I listened, half in disbelief, to my friend's warnings as he informed me of my First Sergeant's intentions to prevent the integration of "that faggot" into his recon unit. Ironic that the person charged with my well-being volunteered to be the champion of my ruin. With my informant's help, I successfully countered an attempt to undermine my passing the recon screening, a false allegation of insubordination, and being bypassed to join recon team training. Ultimately, despite proving myself physically, mentally, and tactically, I was undermined by my own roommate while I slept.

On a quiet night on duty, after retiring from my post, my roommate took the duty keys from my night stand and I was pushed forth for punishment. I was given a disciplinary action on my page 11 next to my numerous letters of appreciation and commendation. I was then tortured with 21 days of 24 hour duty, which only ended when I was so sleep deprived I was unable to keep up academically in my recon team training. Soon after, I was transferred out of the unit to an obscure office in S-2, the Classified Materials Control Center (CMCC.) It was after all this that fear finally took hold, after hearing of the brutal and fatal beating of Private Barry Winchell a few months before the incident, I took half of my paycheck and rented a room off base out of fear for my life. I was required to maintain the image of keeping a room on base which I was afraid to live in for the next 3 years.

However, my drive and ambition refused to yield. Within three months at the CMCC I'd made a permanent and undeniable mark on my new billet. The office was in a state of complete disorganization and I moved swiftly to bring order to it. I standardized all documents used for the admittance, transfer, and destruction of the battalion's classified information and created an efficient filing system for record keeping. I mapped, tracked, and physically handled every classified item in my charge. I created the first database for tracking the more than 13,000

classified items in the Battalion's possession. In order to accomplish all of this, I also personally rewrote the battalion order defining my job so that I had the power to carry out the billet to which I'd been assigned.

Two month's into my efforts a second member, a Corporal, was brought in to assist the office. In the end, despite the fact that this new Corporal was thousands of miles away while I did this work, the Gunnery Sgt in charge of my office felt the level of skill involved seemed beyond the abilities of "some faggot" who'd found his way into his battalion. Several months later I watched silently as that Corporal was awarded a Navy Marine Corps Achievement Medal. We said nothing to one another when I was forced to shake his hand as he took credit for the passion of my efforts. Soon after, I arrived at my office to discover my keycard no longer worked, I'd been transferred to another company without a word.

Despite all this, I love the Marine Corps and I'd do it again. That isn't to say that I don't wish things had been different for me and different for my brothers. We all deserve more than a blank answer to an ignored question. It couldn't have been easy for those who disagreed with the way I was treated to have felt so muzzled that they couldn't come to my defense. It must have been even harder for those who were compelled to comply directly with the unethical actions of my leaders. I hold no lack of love for them for staying silent. The policy as it stands doesn't only affect the gays and lesbians who are serving; it is also affects the people who are forced to take up a position of silence for or against them. The policy robs those like me and the falsely accused of untainted avenues of recourse and makes a confusing proclamation that those who are honest cannot be proud or patriotic; cannot be honorable, courageous, or committed. This proclamation is wrong. Because I am honorable, because I have the courage, and because I am committed, I speak out. Gays and lesbians, the Marine Corps, and our armed forces at large can be better; deserve to be better, and will be better. The time has come that sooner, not later, we stop being an ignored question and start answering proudly; we are more than gay, we are all green and we too are Marines.

Brett Edward Stout /s/
Former Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps

Former Corporal Brett Edward Stout, U.S. Marine Corps

Experience

8/2009-Present Here Media New York, NY

Web Producer

Handle all instances of abuse for Gay.com and assist in developing the site's web strategy.

12/2008-6/2009 Landlocked Film Festival Iowa City, IA

Assistant Public Relations Coordinator

Re-organized the Festival's Staff and operations, streamlining the film selection and daily operations. Organized all efforts of hospitality of both the delegates and guests.

10/2006-5/2007 Gold's Gym Coralville, IA

General Manager

Directed sales, events, and the facility's day-to-day operations in addition to coordinating the successful training and supervision of new and experiences personal trainers.

9/2004-4/2006 US Cellular Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Associate Services Representative

Member of the exclusively selected team to handle calls from company associates on their associate accounts.

8/2002 – 7/2003 HGLCF & Rainbow Film Festival Honolulu, HI

Executive Director

Increased attendance by rebranding and restructuring the festival, doubling festival revenues and attendance over a three-year period.

6/1997 – 6/2002 United States Marine Corps USA

Russian Linguist; Classified Materials Custodian; Rifle and Pistol Coach

Performed Russian interpretation for tactical and civilian purposes. Managed and reorganized operations of the Classified Materials Control Center, which the battalion recognized as increasing security by 60%.

Education

6/2009 **B.A. in Russian Language** University of Iowa (3.42 GPA) Iowa City, IA

2/1999 **Diploma,** Defense Language Institute Monterey, CA

Attended the world's most prestigious language school, DLI operated by the US Army.

Skills

Russian Language, Public Relations, Event Planning, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign

Published Work Royer (Documentary, 2008), Sugar-baby Bridge (Novel, Breur Media Corporation 2008), MiddleGround (Film Short 2009), Action Reaction (Column, ACCESSline, 2009)

17 April 2010

Dear MG Laich,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my military history and my story of how "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" impacted my military career.

A lot of people ask why I decided to join the Air Force. I was fortunate to grow up as an Air Force brat. My dad and stepdad both retired from the Air Force after serving 20 years. It only made sense that I would eventually follow their footsteps and serve as well. I didn't go in the Air Force right after high school; I chose to attend college first. After my first year at the University of Alabama at Birmingham I decided to take a break after realizing that pre-med and biology was not the direction I wanted to go. I moved to Virginia with my family shortly after and decided to join the Air Force. I talked to the recruiter in November of 1995 and was off to Lackland AFB for basic training by March 1996.

I hadn't realized I was gay when I went into the Air Force and didn't know anything about the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy since I never gave it any thought. In 1993, when this law was enacted I lived in a small town in Alabama where I was active in my local Southern Baptist church. I don't remember this issue coming up at all during that time.

After basic training, I attended technical school at Sheppard AFB in Wichita Falls, TX to learn about F-15 Aircraft Armament Systems. My first assignment was Langley AFB in Virginia in the 27th Fighter Squadron. It was here that I started realizing I was gay but kept it to myself. I excelled as an airman, receiving many awards from Airman of the Quarter to winning Load Crew of the Quarter. While deployed to Saudi Arabia for Operation Southern Watch, I was handpicked for a no-notice deployment to Kuwait in response to an In-Flight Emergency for one of our aircraft.

I eventually received a new assignment to Elmendorf AFB in Alaska with the 90th Fighter Squadron. After being at the 90th for less than a year I was selected to work at Weapons Standardization as one of the lead crew members who would train and evaluate load crews on loading bombs and missiles on F-15E aircraft. I eventually tested for SSgt (E-5)

and was promoted my first try. At this time I had started taking classes at the University of Alaska Anchorage and I also attended Airman Leadership School graduating as a Distinguished Graduate.

After reenlisting for another 4 years I started investigating AFROTC programs at the suggestion of my friends and supervisors. My boyfriend, who was an AFROTC cadet, also encouraged me to apply for AFROTC. I decided to apply and to my surprise I was selected under the Professional Officer Course – Early Release Program. I was discharged from active duty in August 2001 and signed by AFROTC contract the next day. I succeeded in the cadet corp, starting off as a Flight Commander, moving up to Operations Officer, and eventually Logistics Group Commander. I was one of three cadets who created our detachment's Arnold Air Society chapter; our AFROTC detachment was only a year old when I joined. I was considered for the Wing Commander position but by that time my DADT investigation had already started. I was ranked first in my class and had received my pilot slot a few months earlier by the time I was dis-enrolled from AFROTC in August 2002.

So how does someone who was on the right path for a successful career as an Air Force officer lose everything? It all comes down to one fellow cadet going to my commander and telling him that they knew I was gay and that I was in a relationship with another cadet. I said nothing in response when I spoke to the JAG officer investigating the allegations against me. I told him I had no comment. The Air Force lost a cadet who showed the potential to be an outstanding officer based upon a statement by one cadet.

Respectfully,

David Hall /s/
Former Air Force SSgt.

Former Staff Sergeant David Hall, U.S. Air Force

David Hall is a former U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant. He joined the Air Force on March 6, 1996, following in the footsteps of his father and step-father, who each served over 20 years in the Air Force.

After basic training, Hall graduated from tech school with the second-highest score in his class and was assigned to the 27th Fighter Squadron at Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, Virginia.

At Langley, Hall was one of the top airmen in his flight. He worked as a weapons loader, winning several loading competitions and the Airman of the Quarter award. While based at Langley, Hall did a three-month assignment in Saudi Arabia, and was handpicked to go to Kuwait to help fix aircraft.

David was also assigned to Elmendorf AFB in Anchorage, Alaska, assigned to the 90th Fighter Squadron and Weapons Standardization Section. While at Elmendorf AFB, he was a distinguished graduate from Airman Leadership School (ALS).

After receiving a strong recommendation from his active duty commander, Hall was honorably discharged as an enlisted member from the Air Force in August 2001 following his acceptance to the Air Force ROTC in May 2001. At that time, Hall had served five years and attained the rank of Staff Sergeant (E-5) with an Aircraft Armament Systems specialty.

During his active duty service, Hall received numerous awards including, the Air Force Achievement Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Air Force Longevity Service Award, Air Force Training Ribbon, NCO Professional Military Education Ribbon, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Air Force Outstanding Unit Ward, and Air Force Good Conduct Medal.

In March 2002, Hall received a coveted slot to train to be a pilot—an honor given to approximately 500 cadets nationwide each year. At the time Hall received this honor, he had the highest ranking of all the Air Force ROTC juniors in his detachment. After returning from field training in June 2002, Hall was interviewed by a Air Force JAG officer after a fellow cadet made allegations that he was gay and in a relationship with another cadet. Hall was dis-enrolled from AFROTC on August 21, 2002.

After leaving the Air Force AROTC Hall continued his education at the University of Alaska, Anchorage while working for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). After graduation, Hall moved to Washington DC where he now works for Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) as the Development Director and Information Technology Manager.

15 April 2010

Dear Colonel Preston,

First, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share my story. As you continue to study the concerns of the force with implementing the President's initiative to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), I encourage you to seek out as many stories from our veterans affected by DADT to help shed light on this subject.

I have always had an interest in serving in the US military as a little boy. Both my grandfathers served in the Korean conflict, an uncle in Vietnam and I soon became the first of my generation to serve in today's military, followed by my brother and a few of my cousins.

When I entered the United States Air Force in February of 2001, I was not sure what to expect. Even though I had family members that had served in the military, I never once experienced military life until I had entered. Never once been on a base, learned of the customs & courtesies and I knew no such law that required someone to lie. I succeeded through my training, was promoted Senior Airman Below-the-Zone, promoted to Staff Sergeant at first attempt and received many recognition awards in my first four years of service.

Although successful in my job as a Precision Measurement Equipment Laboratory (PMEL) technician, I was still coming to terms of me being a gay man. Even though I was raised to be accepting to diversity, I still struggled with my faith that told me it was a sin. I couldn't talk to the chaplain corps mainly due to some articles I had read regarding gays discharged because a chaplain did report the homosexual statements made by a troop; I just couldn't risk my career. So I continued to internalize my struggle with accepting myself, my faith and how I must live under DADT.

As my separation date approached, many of my supervisors met with me to give career-counseling advice required by the Enlisted Force Structure AFI. They all said the same thing, "Tony-you need to consider re-enlisting, you are the kind of Airman that the USAF needs to retain, you have a bright future in the USAF and it would be a great loss to the force to see you leave." They of course wanted to know the reasons why I wanted to leave, and I always replied with "I don't like wearing hats."

Even though the truth was I don't like living a lie under DADT, but I couldn't exactly tell them this because of the law.

Eventually, I changed my mind and figured a new way that I would be able to manage to live under DADT. I applied for cross training into C-130 Loadmaster and was accepted. I figured the high ops-tempo; frequent deployments and lack of down time would make for a great environment to keep me so busy that I just wouldn't have time to be gay. I thought it was a brilliant plan. Plus I really wanted to experience the operation side of the Air Force after being locked up in a laboratory for several years.

As a distinguished graduate from Loadmaster training, I quickly established myself as a top-notch troop with the 37th Airlift Squadron, Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Within four months of my arrival, I had completed my upgrade training and was mission ready. I deployed to Ali Al Salem in support of OIF. I decided half way through my deployment that it was no longer acceptable for me to lie to my crewmembers. I didn't want to compromise the mission, so I delayed coming out to my crewmembers until I returned to Germany. I ended up avoiding them as much as possible. They later nick named me "vapor" because as soon as we hit the ground, I would disappear. I didn't avoid them because I didn't like them, I avoided them because I respected them enough to not have to lie and burden them with my secret.

When I arrived in Germany, I sent an email to my First Sergeant to tell him I wanted to speak with my commander about being gay and not wanting to abide by DADT any longer. My commander said I served honorably and they would be there to support me in my transition back to civilian life. Unfortunately they felt forced to discharge me for disclosing that I was in fact gay.

I started to tell everyone of my situation and it caused several Airmen to become upset that the USAF was firing me for being gay. These Airmen understood the law, but was not feeling that the USAF really cared for its people by implementing this policy. It also was stated to represent that the "good ole boys club" was alive and well in the military. All my past supervisors from the ranks of E7 to E9 wrote character reference letters that requested my retention. My commander and first sergeant said my character, performance and honorable service was not at question…it was merely a legal matter.

Upon my discharge, I was hired by global contractor KBR to fill a technical position in Iraq. I was quickly discovered by a retired Chief Master Sergeant, now task-order manager with KBR. He pulled me to manage the technical operations at Bagram, Afghanistan. I was once again working with the same Airmen I had worked for on active duty, but this time openly gay. No one had a problem with me being gay and all said this, "Tony- we all knew you were gay the whole time you were in the Air Force, we just didn't care." I continue to work with military members that know me as a gay man and it has caused no mission impact due to this knowledge. I also stay in contact with many active duty members that I have got to know in my seven years of service. They have truly become part of my extended military family.

Now is the time to restore dignity and respect within our military community. I urge you to take necessary actions to help end this misguided policy.

Very Respectfully,

Anthony Loverde, SSgt, USAF /s/
(Separated)

Former Staff Sergeant Anthony J. Loverde, U.S. Air Force

Separated effective 13 July 2008

SSgt Anthony Loverde entered the Air Force in February 2001. He held two specialty careers in both the maintenance and operation fields. As a Precision Measurement Equipment Laboratory (PMEL) technician he ensured reliable and accurate weapon systems in USAFE, SWA, and CONUS. He was awarded early promotion with Senior Airman Below the Zone, garnered Distinguish Graduate from the USAF Airman Leadership School and obtained his 7-level proficiency within his first four years of service. After completion of his initial enlistment, he was accepted to cross train into a critical manned career field as a C-130 Loadmaster.

SSgt Loverde deployed twice to Southwest Asia in support of OEF and OIF. His last deployment earned him and his fellow crewmembers two Air Medals for the 61 combat missions flown into Iraq in face of small arms fire, surface to air missiles and inclement weather.

SSgt Loverde was honorably discharged in July 2008. Within three weeks of separation, he accepted employment in Iraq to support the US Army mission as a defense contractor. He held several posts in Iraq and Afghanistan before returning to California in May 2009. He now is seeking a masters degree at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, CA.

EDUCATION

2003 Associate in Applied Science degree in Electronic Systems Technology, Community College of the Air Force
2004 Airman Leadership School, Kapaun AB, Germany
2007 Bachelor of Science degree in Technical Management, Embry Riddle University Worldwide, Daytona Beach, FL
2008 Associate in Applied Science degree in Aviation Operations, Community College of the Air Force

ASSIGNMENTS

1. February 2001 – April 2001, trainee, Basic Military Training, Lackland AFB Texas
2. April 2001 – December 2001, student, PMEL, Keelser AFB, MS
3. December 2001 – January 2005, PMEL Journeyman, 86th Maintenance Squadron, Ramstein AFB, Germany
4. January 2005 - July 2007, PMEL Craftsman, 412th Maintenance Squadron, Edwards AFB, CA
(September 2005 – January 2006, PMEL Craftsman, 379th Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron, Southwest Asia)
5. July 2007 – July 2008, C-130 Loadmaster Journeyman, 37th Airlift Squadron, Ramstein AB, Germany
(December 2007 – April 2008, C-130 Loadmaster Journeyman, 386th Expeditionary Operations Group, Ali Al Salem AB, Kuwait)

MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Air Medal with one oak leaf cluster
Air Force Commendation Medal

15 April 2010

Dear Colonel Preston,

I am very excited to be able to express my experiences and some ideas related to my military service and how DADT has personally affected me and those I love. This opportunity gives me a voice that can be heard by those who have the power to implement positive change in our Armed Forces. My military experience is in the United States Air Force, an organization that has captured my imagination since I was a boy, and continues to do so.

I decided to begin my Air Force career after attending some college because I lacked the direction, drive and focus to complete a degree program. Eager to prove myself as a man and yearning to be a part of something bigger than myself, as so many young people do, I enlisted. I had obvious technical inclinations—my ASVAB scores were in the upper third percentile, giving me basically any choice of AFSC. I wanted a challenge, I chose avionics. Now I had a very clear direction and a structure that allowed me to focus. I graduated Electronics Principles as Top Graduate for leadership and for maintaining a perfect 100 percent average. My first duty station was at Aviano AB, Italy. What an amazing experience that was for me, and I continued to excel. In my first year serving in the field, 2004, I was named Airman of the Month, then Airman of the Quarter, and then I was the recipient of the annual Lieutenant General Leo Marquez Maintenance Award for the 31st Maintenance Group. My accomplishments earned me an early promotion to Senior Airman, "Below-the-Zone" as they call it. My physical fitness was also exceptional, earning a perfect 100 points on the fitness test two years consecutively. I fittingly served as a physical training leader where I taught and encouraged others to improve their fitness. After Aviano I was ordered to Edwards AFB where I supported the testing and development of the Airborne Laser. During my deployment to Kuwait, where I served in an anti-terrorism unit for four months, I was recognized by our expeditionary commander and was awarded a second achievement medal for additional volunteer work. I was the model Airman… or was I?

I am homosexual and no one knew. It is repeatedly conveyed that homosexuality is not acceptable and not compatible with military life. In order to see this one just has to reference the Homosexual Policy training that is required annually by all Airmen. This had always troubled me deeply. It was terrifying to know that if I was to let someone know part of what I truly was, a gay man, then I could be punished and discharged

under the UCMJ, especially after everything that I had worked towards and accomplished. On countless occasions I would have to lie about or hide my true identity. For example, there are many moments when fellow airmen would speak of their family and relationships with the opposite sex or things of that nature. If I would have honestly contributed to these social exchanges, I would have undoubtedly revealed my sexuality. The policy forced me to portray myself as a heterosexual male—a blatant lie. I was constantly plagued by fear; these situations would cause much anxiety and it eventually began to undermine my self-esteem.

My first term was coming to an end and it was time to decide whether or not to reenlist. Also, on my first attempt, I had tested well enough to receive a line number for my promotion to Staff Sergeant. I decided to decline the promotion and to separate from the Air Force. One of the biggest factors in that decision was the military's policy on homosexuality and the fear it instilled. The fear accumulated and intensified over time; I realized that I could not subject myself to it any longer.

Sometimes people ask if I would have reenlisted if DADT was repealed at that time. I always answer, "Oh yeah, in a heartbeat."

In addition to retaining and attracting more competent and talented individuals to military service, repealing DADT would remove the crippling fear from so many gay men and women who are currently serving.

I would also like to address the relationship between tolerance and professionalism. I have witnessed that many perceive the homosexual policy as reinforcement for their prejudice against gays and lesbians, almost as if this was government sanctioned bigotry. This promotes highly unprofessional behavior: inappropriate jokes, sexual harassment, unjust reprisal, "witch hunts" etc. The same attitude has also permeated the civil service culture partly because many civil servants are prior military and they frequently work alongside active duty members. Therefore repealing would actually enhance the level of professionalism throughout the ranks. Those who cannot achieve this level of professionalism are most likely ill suited to effectively serve in the military of our great country. It just needs to be made clear that repealing DADT is not an invitation for sexual harassment and other misconducts because zero tolerance for these violations would still be enforced to the fullest extent.

Since I have separated from active duty, I have come out to just about everyone with whom I have served. I had to do this in order to reaffirm my integrity, a value that I continue to try to uphold. My relationships,

personal and professional, have only been strengthened as a result. Many of them have shared locker rooms and barracks with me. The vast majority have continued to completely support me and have said they would have no reservations to serve with me again. In fact, I still do, except now as a civil servant.

I am very fortunate that I have been given the opportunity to serve the Air Force as a civilian. I maintained F-16 fighters for a while, but now I work in a Special Instrumentation division at Edwards AFB. It is very exciting work where we perform various electrical and electronic modifications to aircraft, such as F-16s, T-38s, C-130s, and C-17s, in order to collect flight test data, thereby improving current designs and advancing our knowledge in the aerospace field.

I will be forever grateful for the knowledge and experience that I gained in the military which fostered my technical career. And I remain in awe of what the men and women in uniform accomplish each day. I am so proud that I was once one of them. However, I often wonder how much stronger our military could be if it had adopted a policy of non-discrimination, not one that masquerades as such.

Sincerely,

Charles Ryan McCrory /s/
Former Senior Airman, USAF

18 April 2010

Dear MG Laich,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my military story with you and tell you about my call to duty.

I come from a long line of American patriots who served in uniform. My eighth and ninth generation grandfathers fought in the Continental Army during the Revolution, the younger of which was on Gen Washington's bodyguard detail. I have a portrait of Washington Crossing the Delaware in my study that shows a man holding a musket at the stern of the boat, very likely Thomas Preston, Jr.

Another three ancestors fought in Georgia Regiments during the Civil War and more recently my father answered the call during World War II where he served as a P-47 fighter pilot in the Pacific Theater, followed by a 30-year career in the Army Air Corps and then US Air Force. I grew up in the Air Force and developed a passion for the mission, lifestyle and travel that took our family around the world and was punctuated by indelible events. As a ten- and eleven-year old, I watched B-52s labor off the runway from Anderson AFB, Guam to fly their round trip missions to North Vietnam during the three-year Rolling Thunder Campaign.

With that backdrop it should come as no surprise that I sought a career in the military. I was lucky enough to obtain a four-year scholarship for Air Force ROTC and emerged with my class #1 ranking and Distinguished Graduate. In pilot training I earned a fighter assignment and earned two Top Gun awards in the fighter training pipeline.

My career was filled with rewarding assignments and opportunities to fly, conduct scientific research, work staff jobs and command. My first squadron command was a 1,000-person technical training unit where we won every major award available. I absolutely reveled in command and worked that job 14-hours a day with enthusiasm. I was fortunate to command two other units, including a provisional squadron in Saudi Arabia providing base support and protection to the JTF-SWA Commander and staff in the wake of the Khobar Towers bombings.

As enjoyable and satisfying as the missions and assignments were, the hands-down highlight of my 26-year career was associating with the highest quality force in the world. The personnel in the Air Force, as well as my colleagues in the sister services, were such a delight to serve with. There's no better cross section of society in terms of education, capability, camaraderie and commitment than the US military. That's the primary reason I chose to stay in the Air Force even when so many fellow pilots exited for the airlines in the 1980s.

During my career I witnessed a change in attitudes toward minorities in the ranks. When I joined in 1978, it was not uncommon to hear racist or sexist jokes around the squadron, even from senior officers. As women and racial minorities gained greater roles in the force, including rank and position, I saw that behavior virtually disappear. I attribute that change over time to education in the accession programs and a zero-tolerance policy for bigotry throughout the military.

Also during my career, I faced a personal crisis with my sexual orientation. I realized part way through my career that I was indeed a gay man, had always been a gay man and had simply played the straight role to fit in my beloved Air Force and preserve my career. By the time DADT became law, I had lived an entirely straight life with straight friends and straight partners, but I was not being honest with myself and, worse, was misleading some very nice female officers, who only hoped for a future together.

When I took my first squadron command after DADT became law, I was a 39-year old, never married, single man. Since I wasn't a priest, there was really only one explanation for that status. My First Sergeant beat around the bush but never asked if I was gay, and soon the squadron realized I was there to help them perform to their best ability, take care of their careers and provide for their families. We had the most successful unit in the training command and I was rewarded by the commanding general with back-to-back squadron commands.

When I retired in 2004, I came out to my family – no one was surprised and my Mom said she and my Dad (deceased in 1999) were absolutely fine with it, but they could never bring it up as long as I was active duty facing periodic reinvestigations. They were all just so sad that I had to hide who I was all those years. Likewise, my military friends one-by-one found out and each and every one has been very supportive, even those

still on active duty. The resounding chorus from all of them is "Why in the world did we make you do that?"

Today, with the Obama Administration's commitment to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell, I'm confident the military will address the challenge to integrate the "last remaining minority" with the same rigor it integrated women and other minorities. Since we estimate more than 66,000 gays and lesbians are currently serving in the US Armed Forces, I am convinced we will not see a blip on the radar screen when the ban on openly gay service is lifted. All service members will perform their duties to the same high standards we've come to expect, with the only difference being our gay and lesbian comrades can stop the charade of who they really are. You probably won't notice the change because everyone is professional, and performance, respect and behavior will still be the measures of success.

We have a chance to show our leaders we can get this right. It's time to change that old military policy of "homosexuality is incompatible with military service" to "bigotry is incompatible with military service."

Very Respectfully,

TERREL S. PRESTON /s/
Col, USAF (Ret)

BIOGRAPHY

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

COLONEL TERREL S. PRESTON

Retired effective 1 July 2004

Colonel Terrel S. Preston served on active duty in the United States Air Force for 26 years as pilot, operations analyst, communications officer and unit commander. A Distinguished Graduate of Air Force ROTC at Florida State University, Colonel Preston held a variety of positions in flying operations, scientific research, squadron command, and staff functions from base level to Major Command, Unified Command, DoD Agency and the Air Staff.

During his career, Colonel Preston earned two Top Gun awards in fighter training, served on two aircraft acquisition test teams, piloted 30 JCS-directed missions over Central America under hostile fire, commanded three squadrons (including a provisional unit in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm), enjoyed three Pentagon assignments and attended three professional military courses in residence, including the Royal College of Defence Studies in London with senior officers from 40 countries.

Colonel Preston is retired in Houston, Texas.

EDUCATION:

1977 Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, Florida State University
1983 Squadron Officers School, Maxwell AFB, AL
1989 Master of Science in Systems Technology-C3, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA
1992 Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, VA
2000 Royal College of Defence Studies, London, UK

ASSIGNMENTS:

1978-1979 Student Pilot, 37th Flying Training Wing, Laughlin AFB, TX

1979-1980 F-4E Pilot, 21st Tactical Fighter Squadron, George AFB, CA
1980-1982 Weapon Systems Analyst, Air Force Test & Eval Center, Kirtland AFB, NM
1982-1985 AC-130H Spectre Pilot, 16th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, FL
1985-1987 Electronic Warfare Operations Analyst, Tactical Air Warfare Center, FL
1987-1989 Student, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA
1989-1992 Chief, C3 Architecture Branch, US Special Operations Command, FL
1992-1994 Chief, C4I Architecture Division, HQ USAF, Pentagon
1994-1996 Commander, 342d Training Squadron, Lackland AFB, TX
1996-1997 Commander, 37th Training Support Squadron, Lackland AFB, TX and deployed Commander, 4409th Support Squadron, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
1997-1999 Chief, National Military Command Center Operations Division, Joint Staff Support Center, Defense Information Systems Agency, Pentagon
1999 Chief, Bosnia Command & Control Augmentation Program Management Office, Defense Information Systems Agency, Arlington, VA
2000 Student, Royal College of Defence Studies, London, United Kingdom
2001-2002 Chief, Mission Systems Division, Air Force Space Command, CO
2002-2003 Chief, C4ISR Architecture and Technology Division, Deputy Chief of Staff for Warfighting Integration, HQ USAF, Pentagon
2003-2004 Deputy Director, C4ISR Architecture and Assessment, Deputy Chief of Staff for Warfighting Integration, HQ USAF, Pentagon
2004 Retirement, Hall of Heroes, Pentagon

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

Defense Superior Service Medal
Legion of Merit
Defense Meritorious Service Medal
Meritorious Service Medal (2 OLC)
Air Medal
Air Force Commendation Medal (2 OLC)
Joint Service Achievement Medal
Air Force Achievement Medal
National Defense Medal
Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal
Navy Expert Pistol Medal

Dear Colonel Preston, 19 April 2010

My name is Kim Schroeder, and in my former career, I was Captain Kim Schroeder. I attended the United States Air Force Academy from 1989 to 1993 and then served in the Air Force from 1993 to 1999. In the Air Force, I was a Logistics Plans Officer, more specifically, I was a Mobility Officer. I was also stationed in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where I used my mobility skills for deployment and redeployment in concert with having access to and assisting with the war planning into and out of the Area of Responsibility. After serving 6 years in active duty, I separated just before my next assignments to Aviano, Italy and then most likely, South Korea.

I enjoyed most every part of serving in the Air Force. Having grown up an Army brat, I was used to moving with my family and constantly meeting new friends and then saying goodbye. My dad was an Airborne Ranger in the Army, fought in Vietnam, flew helicopters and retired a Lt Colonel. I'm still proud to be called his daughter. His dad also served in the Army and fought in Normandy in World War II. At my Grandpa's funeral, they presented me with his flag. It was one of the saddest but proudest days of my life. You could probably say that I was groomed to becoming an officer. I fit the lifestyle. I grew up loving the country my Dad and Grandpa fought for so it was natural for me to want to do the same.

However, for the ten years I wore my uniform, I had a secret. I kept that secret from all my classmates, my friends, and my family. For years, I did everything I could to prove this secret wrong, but it never went away. I tried cutting myself. I tried "figuring myself out" by choosing a degree in Human Behavior and then entering a Masters program in Counseling. I tried praying. I prayed every day for years for God to please take this from me. And then I tried getting counseling. But the counselor told me not to waste my money. I was gay and there wasn't anything she could do that was going to change that fact.

So here I was, gay in the Air Force, and scared to death. I arrived in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia a couple of days after the Riyadh Embassy bombings and left shortly before the bombing at Khobar Towers—where I was living in Saudi Arabia. And fear for my life was second to the fear I had for someone finding out I was gay. I never let anyone know that I was gay, so I was never able to truly connect with my classmates and squadron like everyone else. They couldn't know me, or it would put them in a position to turn me in.

It's ironic, one of the first things we are required to memorize at the Air Force Academy, is the Honor Code "We will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor

tolerate among us anyone who does." This Honor Code is the foundation of the Air Force and of an officer's character and it is the standard of integrity by which leaders are measured. And every single day for ten years, I was asked to lie. And I did. And after graduating from the Academy and serving my country, I separated. I separated because I could not live in fear under DADT anymore. My country was asking me to live a life of separateness and isolation but then encouraged family and cohesiveness for everyone else. I separated because I couldn't imagine living my life without a companion, without my own family, which was what the Air Force was telling me was my only choice. It was one thing to hide a relationship being stationed in the States, but I would not be able to continue this being overseas. So I chose to live a life where I could love who I wanted to love and not live in fear, but in turn, I gave up what I believed I was destined to do. I loved being in the Air Force. I was good at it. It was the place I felt most proud to be an American. I felt proud to serve my country. So it's bittersweet to know that I took an oath to serve my country that I was willing to give my life to defend, but this same country wasn't willing to defend me. With DADT, my country does not stand for what our Constitution stands for, which is equal protection. With DADT, my country does not stand up for our Declaration of Independence, the moral standard for which the United States should strive.

It doesn't get any simpler than those few words within that document so it reads ("We hold these truths ....") The Armed Forces of the United States has lost and continues to lose good soldiers every day. We are brave, committed and strong Americans who love our country and are willing to die to protect it. All soldiers, no matter what race, color, sex, religion or sexual orientation, are held to the same rule of law and standards and are fighting for the honor of the same flag. Bottom line is that we are all Americans. Therefore, it is finally time to repeal DADT and let every willing American woman or man serve openly and freely. As in our country's history of segregation and then integration of black Americans and women into the military, there was a clear case of right and wrong. Segregation was clearly wrong. I believe in the America where all men are created equal and I believe America will soon believe it too. This country is too good not to do this next right thing.

Sincerely,

Former Captain Kimberly N. Schroeder, USAF /s/

19 April 2010

Dear Pentagon Working Group,

I am a retired Air Force Colonel whose 22 year career culminated as the Mission Support Group Commander at Andrews Air Force Base. I enjoyed a wonderful career and had some fabulous experiences. One of the most rewarding times in my career was during Desert Storm/Provide Comfort, when I was a young Captain serving as the OIC of the Services Division at Incirlik. I was responsible for Services support to the base and for the tent city that grew in support of deployed forces. My team that ensured this support was made up of a handful of permanent party military, contractor, and deployed personnel. They did a great job of meeting the challenges thrown their way and it was a very exciting time.

I was married at that time to a great guy and what I had yet no clue about was that my life would soon change in ways I never expected. The bottom line about this part of the story is, while still married, and increasingly in the years following the end of my marriage, I began to understand I had feelings for women. This realization did not come easily or painlessly. I struggled throughout my "transition" but knew I had finally found myself when I met my current partner.

When I entered the Air Force, I had no idea I would eventually realize I was a lesbian. What I now know, is that my sexual orientation had nothing to do with my dedication to country. I grew up in an Army family (my father was a Green Beret) and joining the Air Force made me feel like I'd come home. The Air Force and I were a natural fit and by accounts of my superiors, I excelled at leadership from a junior rank. I retired with 22 years of service, but could have given much more. I was a two-time "Best in Air Force" winner in my career field, and was promoted one year below-the-zone to Major, and two-years below-the-zone to Colonel. What drove me out primarily was the inability to be "authentically" myself.

Now that I am retired, my partner and I are very happily living totally "out" in a conservative active adult community in Tucson, Arizona. We learned early on that if we were just ourselves and demonstrated that we were okay with that, most others would be okay with it too. We are extremely active in our community and grateful that we can be

ourselves. That is what all our service members deserve…the freedom to be who they are and the ability to "bring their whole selves" to their service.

In my experience, many service members, especially the younger ones, already know who in their units are homosexual. To pretend they don't exist is just silly and counterproductive. What escapes me, is just what is everyone afraid of? Religious beliefs aside, I imagine some people are afraid of change, much the same way as when we fully integrated blacks and women into the Armed Forces. It reminds me of one of our deployed commanders at Batman during Desert Storm. Upon arriving at that location, he issued an order that only men would be allowed to deploy to his site. As I recall, that didn't go over very well, as it shouldn't have. Would it have been easier to command a group of just men? Probably, but that's not what leadership is about. True leadership doesn't place constraints on the followers, it unleashes their potential.

Rightfully so, the Air Force stresses the importance of diversity and I truly believe it is one of our strengths as a service and as a nation. It is time to ensure all our service members know that we value their service and the unique contributions each of them makes.

I am hopeful that as with the desegregation of the military in the 1950's, DoD will once again lead the way on doing what is right. Thanks for the opportunity to weigh in, and for your time to listen.

Very Respectfully,

Colonel Linda M. Thomas, U.S. Air Force (Ret.) /s/

Colonel Linda M. Thomas, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)

Colonel Linda Thomas was the Commander, 316th Mission Support Group, Andrews AFB, Maryland. The Group provides all base services and community support to the 316th Wing and tenant units assigned to Andrews AFB including the 89th Airlift Wing and its Presidential Air Force One and Executive mission. One of the largest Groups in the U.S. Air Force—the 316th Mission Support Group includes the Civil Engineer Squadron, Services Squadron, Mission Support Squadron, Contracting Squadron, Logistics Readiness Squadron, and the Security Forces Squadron.

Colonel Thomas entered the Air Force in May 1985 upon completing Officers Training School. She commanded the 62d Services Squadron at Travis Air Force Base, California. She has served in a variety of capacities at various levels to include base, major command, and Headquarters U.S. Air Force to include one year as Deputy Support Group Commander at Travis Air Force Base.

EDUCATION:

1982 Bachelor of Science in Technology, Cameron University, Lawton, OK

1992 Squadron Officers School, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL

1992 Master's Degree in Public Administration, Troy State University, Troy, AL

1999 Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL

2003 Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. September 1985 – May 1988, Operations Officer, 60th Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Division, McChord Air Force Base, Washington
2. May 1988 – October 1988, Financial Operations Officer for the MWR Division 39th Combat Support Squadron, Incirlik Air Base, Turkey
3. October 1988 – December 1989, Executive Officer, 39th Support Squadron, Incirlik Air Base, Turkey
4. December 1989 – May 1992, Staff Services Officer, 39th Services Division, Incirlik Air Base, Turkey
5. May 1992 – September 1993, Deputy Chief, 52d Services Squadron, Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany

6. September 1993 – July 1994, Chief, Military Support Flight, and Commander, Plans and Force Management Flight, 52d Morale, Welfare, Recreation and Services Squadron, Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany
7. July 1994 – October 1995, Executive Officer, Directorate of Services, Headquarters, United States Air Forces Europe, Ramstein Air Base, Germany
8. October 1995 – August 1998, Executive Officer, Chief, Manpower and Organization, and Chief of Fitness and Nonappropriated Funds Programs, Directorate of Services, Headquarters United States Air Force, The Pentagon, Washington, DC
9. August 1998 – July 1999, Student, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama
10. July 1999 – July 2001, Commander, 60th Services Squadron, Travis Air Force Base, California
11. July 2001 – July 2002, Deputy Commander, 60th Support Group, Travis Air Force Base, California
12. July 2002 – June 2003, Student, Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama
13. June 2003 - May 2004, Chief, Readiness Division, Directorate of Services, Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, Hickam Air Base, Hawaii
14. May 2004 – June 2005, Deputy Commander, 89th Mission Support Group, Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland
15. June 2005 – July 2006, Commander, 89th Mission Support Group, Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland
16. July 2006 – present, Commander, 316th Mission Support Group, Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland

MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters
Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters
Air Force Achievement Medal
Air Force Services Outstanding Military Manager 1991 and 1993

19 April 2010

Dear Beth,

My name is Anne L. Burkhardt ,USCG LCDR (Ret) (Note: and I am not a lesbian, but a supportive straight ally). I hold a Bachelor of Science in Biology, with minors in Chemistry and Marine Studies. I enlisted in 1982 and advanced from Seaman Recruit to Sonar Technician First Class (ST1) in 3 ½ years, before selection to Officer Candidate School. I served aboard five ships and spent nine wonderfully challenging years at sea. After serving 21 years in the United States Coast Guard, I retired to pursue a career more in line with my original degree. I am now an owner/operator of a small vegetable farm and plant nursery. As an enlisted crewman aboard two mixed crew cutters, I lost a good friend due to Don't Ask Don't Tell. I watched her struggle, for over a year, to fit in. She was a hard worker and she loved the service but she became frustrated and depressed that she was not "allowed" to be true to herself. She finally gave up and was honorably discharged for "Unsuitability".

Later, as an Executive Officer aboard a Buoy Tender with mixed crew, I had to counsel and eventually discharge another woman due to Don't Ask Don't Tell. She was an outstanding engineer and sailor. After promotion to Machinist Mate First Class (MK1) she was given leadership of the Auxiliary Division. She was accepted within the traditionally male rate and was respected by her peers. Everyone on the ship was confused and angry to see her cast aside just because she wasn't heterosexual. I felt anger towards the service for making me enforce such an unjust and arbitrary regulation.

Throughout my career, I served or worked closely with several gay women. Each and every one of them was an expert in her chosen rate/specialty. None of them caused any harm to the service, nor to the good order and discipline of their commands. All have long since retired, some directly as a result of Don't Ask Don't Tell and others just got tired of hiding the truth. Most still had much more to give to the Coast Guard and it was a great loss to the service when they decided to leave.

The UCMJ should be updated to reflect the current laws of the nation. It is not illegal to be gay, and many states now even sanction same sex marriages. Homosexual service men and women are people who love their country, just as much as heterosexual members. They should not have to choose between serving their nation and following their hearts.

Respectfully,
Lieutenant Commander A. L. Burkhardt, USCG (Ret.) /s/

20 April 2010

Al,

As I reflect back over my life in general and my Coast Guard career in particular, there are two events that stand out: The first is a memory of my dad going through a drawer in his desk looking for his savings bonds. He needed to cash some in and was reflecting on his time in the Navy. To no one in particular he stated, "If I had stayed in I would be retiring about now." Dad had told me a few stories of his time aboard the USS Dixie during the Korean War and although many of his memories were of war, he loved the Navy, sea life and took pride in his service. He often spoke of missing opportunities by not re-upping when his enlistment ended.

The second event that stands out happened years later. I was stationed on the USCGC Gallatin after volunteering to be one of the first women assigned to a US combatant vessel. It was "an experiment" to see if women could successfully be integrated into the crew. With just 2 vessels involved, it was up to the crews involved to prove that one's sex had nothing to do with ability. That aside, what stands out in my memory was the sight of all the families and loved ones waiting on the pier for the ship to tie-up so they could be re-united with their loved ones. Hundreds of eyes searching for a sight of "their" person scanned the decks. Screams of joy from children as families are re-united when the crew is finally granted liberty, punctuated by the clanging of boots running across the gangplank. Those of us who were single — and the women in particular — might as well have been invisible. There was no one there for us. Many of the crew's wives viewed us as just trying to get their husbands. It was and still is, a horrible feeling of aloneness.

Those two memories, one of opportunities, another of separateness, have come into play throughout my Coast Guard career. I enlisted in 1976 into a service I had never heard of. Growing up in southern California outside March AFB I experienced the military through the eyes of my friends and high school JROTC. I wanted to join the Air Force but quickly changed my mind when I was told women don't work on the flight line. Months later on I eagerly joined the Coast Guard Reserve knowing only that they rode around in little boats and I could do any job I could qualify for. When I heard about experimental sea duty for women… the words of my father echoed in my head. I re-enlisted into the

regular Coast Guard and went to sea, just to make sure I didn't miss out in case the experiment failed. We must have done something right…I hear women will soon be stationed on submarines!

I loved what I did as a Boatswains Mate and became very proud of the Coast Guard, the Gallatin, and the missions we achieved. The lessons learned came with a price though. Some crewmembers were quickly reassigned because they refused to serve with women. There were fights, one stabbing, date rapes, double standards and serious hazing. There were also compliments, a marriage or two, open acceptance, good leadership, growth and accountability. After the first year and notoriety wore off, we knew we were crewmates. We worked, stood watch, ate, fought fires, launched endless flight ops and performed many operations side by side. We trusted each other with our lives because that was our job, we trained for it and we were good at it. We were a team.

Several years into my career I became aware that I was gay. I had seen the investigations, heard the stories, felt the fear even before I knew about myself. Names thrown around, trust no longer given and wariness of wondering who might be watching and listening. There really was no one for me to turn to. My family accepted it but it was my father who was most accepting and supportive. Ironically enough it was a chief I worked for who took me aside to tell me it didn't matter; it was my ability to do my job that mattered to him. I was part of a small team at the time and pretty much they all knew but it was never an issue. What freedom there was with that! I did not flaunt myself but I did not hide behind a false identity either. Again, we were a team and had a job to do and that was all that mattered. Actually it worked out better since I was the only woman in the unit. The wives no longer worried that I might be interested in their husbands. That alone made life easier for the guys.

As much as I loved my job I was always keenly aware that I could lose it all in a heartbeat. As a woman in a male dominated rate I already stood out. The higher in rank I rose the more visibility my jobs had. One of my collateral duties, 13th District Federal Women's Program Manager, took me to many units. My face was on posters everywhere as someone women could come to for advice. I worried about the credibility of my position should my sexual orientation become public. Eventually I found myself not wanting to step forward and take up challenges because I wanted to make it "safely" to retirement. I would probably still be in

the Coast Guard today were it not for Don't Ask, Don't Tell. There were jobs I turned down, opportunities missed because I was afraid I would be found out and lose all I had worked for. When I retired after 21 years I even had 2 retirement parties, one was the official one, it was well-attended and all the right things were said. It was the second that I remember as my true retirement party.

I speak out now because I could not then. The leadership skills I learned have enabled me to help make the military a stronger force by assisting others who are affected by DADT. I was contacted by a straight, active duty chief who had gay people working for her, She wanted to know how she could convey to them that it was the job that mattered. DADT would not allow her to discuss it, yet it was getting in the way of the job to do. Déjà vu.

I joined a new VSO (Veterans Service Organization) called AVER (American Veterans for Equal Rights) and now serve as National Vice President. Every day we help men and women who are serving their country and fighting for rights they do not enjoy themselves. They serve abroad and must face that loneliness of not having their partners and children there when they return, or are injured. They also face the certainty that their partners/spouses will not be notified or honored should their partner be killed in action.

DADT hurts the Coast Guard, the military and our country. I never pulled anyone out of the water who cared whether I was male, female, black, red, gay, bisexual, short or tall. They only cared that I was there to help them. Much like the experiment with women at sea, once we learn that we are all the same the job becomes easier. We will truly then be a team.

Judi Carey, /s/
BMC, USCG (Ret.)

Chief Petty Officer Judi Carey, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.)

Judi Carey served from 1976-1997 in the US Coast Guard, and retired as a Chief Boatswain's Mate. Early in her first enlistment sh**e** was chosen as one of the first women to serve aboard ship. She served from 1977-1980 aboard *USCGC Gallatin.* Subsequent tours included federal law enforcement instructor tours and Executive Petty Officer of Recruiting Office Albuquerque, NM. After retirement Judi moved outside Renton, Washington and raised her nephew who is now serving in the US Marine Corps. Judi is co-owner of Zippy Fish Ltd, a chocolate company. She is the former Chapter President of AVER Puget Sound and currently holds the office of National Vice President of AVER. She is also a member of the Disabled American Veterans. Her hobbies include remodeling and dog powered sports. Judi is in a committed relationship with Marion Massaro, a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner in Bellingham, Washington.

19 April 2010

Dear Beth,

I just watched on the news a touching video of a small boy rushing into his returning father's arms. I, too, have memories of waiting for my father to come home from overseas. I know the feeling of gladness to know your father is safe and now you are too. My family had many Christmases and other holidays without him there with us. As a military family, we made many sacrifices for our country.

My father came from humble beginnings and served his country admirably. His service includes the Georgia National Guard, Navy and Army during WW2, Korea and Viet Nam. After serving for 29 years, he retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. My life until age 18 was spent as an "Army Brat." This life gave me such important skills as making instant friends no matter where I live and an appreciation and tolerance towards all cultures. My mother, a small town Georgia girl, was CINChome. She raised four children while living in eight states. She was our stronghold even while missing her husband during times of war. Military spouses are some of the strongest people I know. They learn to be adaptive to people of all backgrounds and support one another when faced with military moves and missions. They lose their prejudices when faced with the adversity of military living.

This heritage gave me a strong belief in my country. I have studied our country's history and am proud to be a veteran. I served 21 years in the U.S. Coast Guard and retired in 2004. I enlisted in 1979 after all rates were open to women. I chose a non-traditional and challenging rate. As a Machinery Technician, I served aboard one of the first USCG cutters that allowed women-- USCGC CHASE. We faced many hurdles to true acceptance. A derogatory letter, for men's eyes only, was passed around the crew. We got a copy of it and felt humiliated. The men we served with side-by-side were laughing at us. The women met with the Commanding Officer to express our frustration of not feeling a part of the crew. After this meeting, the CO talked to the wardroom and Chief's mess and laid down the law. His leadership made the difference in our acceptance as crewmembers. The women now felt that they were part of the crew and were here to stay. We trained with them in GITMO and would be there as crewmembers to meet all ship's missions.

Working hard in the engine room gave me the confidence that my career options were unlimited. I was challenged, overworked and proud of my accomplishments. Parents and family members attended many ceremonies throughout my career--boot camp, "A" school and Officer Candidate School graduations and the christening of my second ship, USCGC LEGARE of which I am a plankowner.

I am very proud to have been a part of the first group of women to serve at sea, a major change for the Armed Forces. However, always in the back of my mind was the realization that my Coast Guard career could be taken away any minute no matter my accomplishments. The government that I served, I also feared. I feared the service would find out that I was gay. Even though I was recognized with many performance awards, I lived with the knowledge that any complaint or suspicion could lead to a shameful discharge or resignation. That thought haunted me throughout my career. However, my feeling of indignation overrides any thought of shirking back from writing this letter. I, and gays currently serving on active duty should not have to live in fear of the government and organization that we serve with honor. We have done nothing wrong. Although we are accused of living a lie by being gay and serving our country, I believe the anti-homosexual policies leave gays with few other options. My civil disobedience of serving my country while denying my sexual orientation was my choice.

The current "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy needs to be repealed. All Americans should be able to serve their country openly and with human dignity, and no American should fear their government. The first step is to decriminalize homosexuality in the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and all other statutes that govern military personnel. Homosexuality is not a crime in the United States and it shouldn't be reflected as one in the UCMJ. The UCMJ should be updated to identify sexual based crimes that are similarly stated in state and federal laws. The second is to accept legal marriages from states that allow same sex couples to marry and give the proper benefits befitting a married couple. This patchwork of laws will eventually be resolved in the future. Lastly, anti-discrimination protections should be added to current policies to insure a person's performance be judged on its own merits and not on his or her sexuality. Leadership from the top down will ensure the success of embracing diversity.

Judy A. Persall /s/
LCDR, USCG (Ret.)

Lieutenant Commander Judy A. Persall, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.)

Lieutenant Commander Persall enlisted in the U. S. Coast Guard in 1979. After graduating Machinery Technician "A" School, she reported aboard the USCG Cutter CHASE, homeported in Boston, Massachusetts and worked in the Main Propulsion Division for two years. As one of the first group of women to serve aboard cutters, she overcame many obstacles and became one of the first female Throttleman, a watch position that controls engine room responses to emergencies as well as routine responses to bridge commands. Her next duty station was Station Boston where she was boat engineer and participated in Search and Rescue missions. After serving as an engineering instructor where she taught various classes on theory of operations and maintenance of Boilers, Evaporators and Oily Water Separators, at Training Center, Yorktown, VA. She attended Officer Candidate School in 1989.

As a new officer, she was a Plankowner and Damage Control Assistant aboard the USCG Cutter LEGARE homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia. Its missions included drug seizures and rescue of Haitians and others who attempted to come to the U.S. in unseaworthy crafts. Her next duty station was Marine Safety Office, Charleston, South Carolina where her responsibilities included Senior Investigations Officer whose duties included investigating Merchant Mariners and conducting trials concerning actions against their licenses. As Chief, Inspections Department, she inspected large commercial vessels at local shipyards and any marine casualties involving commercial vessels in the area such as passenger and ferry boats.

At Training Center, Yorktown, she was an instructor in the Contingency Planning Department and later served as Chief, Contingency Planning Department of Marine Safety Office, San Francisco Bay. Plans included preparation for Y2K, Earthquakes, Floods and Military Outload. After 9-11, she was instrumental in implementing a new Boarding Officer program that served as the nation's first. This program led the way for vetting commercial vessels transiting local waters and provided standards for boarding team process when boarding and inspecting vessels before they enter local waters. This program led the nationwide response and her efforts led to receiving the prestigious USCG 9-11 medal awarded for superior leadership.

Other awards include: Meritorious Service Medal; Coast Guard Commendation Medal, Coast Guard Achievement Medal, Commandant's Letter of Commendation Ribbon, Sea Service Ribbon and others.

After honorable service of 21 years, LCDR Persall retired before her O-5 selection board from the Coast Guard in 2004 because of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. She no longer wanted to live in fear. Since retirement, she participated in recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina and Rita struck Louisiana. Working for a group of 60 churches, she set up their system of providing lodging, equipment and safety oversight for volunteer work groups that assisted homeowners clean out their damage homes. Other employment includes REI, an outdoor equipment store.

20 April 2010

Dear Beth,

Although my dad was not career Army, he did serve for 8 years and had two tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot. I've always felt the need to serve my country and I believe that desire comes from my family's history of service (my dad's service in the Army, my uncle's service in the Coast Guard, my brother's service in the Navy and both my paternal and maternal grandfathers' service in the Army). My perspective doesn't come from being a true military brat, since I spent only the first four years of my life as one, but I do feel like I grew up in a military family since my parents (especially my dad) were rather strict with regard to customs, courtesies and behaviors expected of my brother and me. We had some pretty explicit rules and regs we were required to follow. Rules that I noticed early on in my childhood that no other kids within our circle of friends had to follow.

Having said that, with regard to the question of what my parents think about DADT, that's an interesting one... Let's focus this on my dad since my mom is, and always has been, more open-minded (what mother isn't, really?). Had you asked my dad how he felt about gays serving openly in the military back when I was married to a fellow Coastie, I'm certain that his answer would be much different than it is today. I came out to my parents about six months after telling them I was getting a divorce and they embraced my partner immediately (they had met her on a previous visit when I was stationed in Alameda, so they already knew her). Don't get me wrong, it was not an instantaneous Kumbaya-fest. My parents are both die-hard Republicans and it took some Q & A to get everything really out in the open and understood.

Now jump to present day - I pulled the plug on a very successful military career quite early in order to live a truthful life with no fear of retribution. How ironic that it was my dad who so intently tried to get me to "stick it out" a few more years. He said "but you can retire as a full Commander or even a Captain, I just know it!" Yep, I'm sure I would have... The reason for the difference in his viewpoint is quite simple — it had become PERSONAL to him as his daughter was denied equal rights and had to depart the service much too early.

Final thoughts... I served honorably as both an enlisted member and an

officer and enjoyed full freedom the first half my career, only to be later denied once I became true to myself. I did not become a different person when I got a divorce and united my life with my partner's – I was still that same intelligent and hard-working leader I had always been. In fact, the latter part of my career is when I exceeded many of my own expectations, having attended Officer Candidate School, then serving as the Executive Officer in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, running the only Coast Guard unit standing following hurricane Katrina.

And my career ended on the highest note possible with my dream job as Chief of Waterways Management for Sector Seattle. Prior to what I call "my early retirement", I was in charge of the largest and most diverse waterway in the Nation, which included the largest Vessel Traffic Service and Federal Aids to Navigation areas of responsibility in the Coast Guard.

No Beth, nothing changed with regard to my dedication and service. The only part of the true me that DID have to change is that I had to hide/lie. I think that's what really drove me to get out early. I am not a liar and to be expected to do so on a daily basis is not in my character. I miss my Coast Guard family dearly and I had so much more to offer, however, I missed living a truthful and open life much more.

Best regards,

Diana J. Wickman /s/
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.)

Lieutenant Commander Diana J. Wickman, USCG (Ret)

Lieutenant Commander Diana Wickman enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1987 and arrived at her first duty station, Air Station Port Angeles, Washington, on her 22nd birthday. She served as a boat crewman and also attained her enlisted rate as a Storekeeper while stationed at Port Angeles. She served subsequent tours of duty in Honolulu, Hawaii and Alameda, California prior to attending Officer Candidate School in 1997 in Yorktown, Virginia.

As an officer, she served in the education and budget fields prior to attaining her Marine Environmental Specialty in 2000. LCDR Wickman was Chief of Waterways Management and Port Safety and Security in San Francisco, where she was instrumental in creating the first Port Closure and Sea Marshall Vessel Escort contingency plans for the Coast Guard following the terrorist attacks on September 11th.

Her following tour of duty was as Executive Officer of Marine Safety Unit Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she led the only remaining Coast Guard unit within the vicinity of New Orleans during hurricane Katrina.

Her career came full-circle in 2007 when she accepted the position as Chief of Waterways Management in Seattle, responsible for over 3,500 square miles of the very waters she started her career upon as a boat crewman some twenty years earlier. While in this position, LCDR Wickman also managed one of the largest Vessel Traffic Services and Federal Aids to Navigation Systems in the Nation, responsible for the safe navigation of over 200,000 commercial vessel traffic movements annually.

Some of LCDR Wickman's commendations include: a Meritorious Service Medal, six Coast Guard Commendation Medals, a Coast Guard Achievement Medal, and three enlisted Good Conduct Medals.

LCDR Wickman retired early from the Coast Guard in 2009, one year short of attaining full O-4 retired pay, out of fear of losing her pension and fatigue in keeping up a false front.