



# Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

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## First in Combat: Jana Hurst Raymond '90



"When I was a teenager, I got the bug to fly," says **Jana (Hurst) Raymond '90**. "My friends and family and even my guidance counselor asked why I would want to do that. I said, 'why not?'"

Following high school, Jana attended the University of Kentucky in her hometown of Lexington, KY. While there, she started inquiring about military service. Very few recruiters encouraged her desire to finish her degree and fly. But one Navy recruiter saw her passion and helped Jana apply for a Naval Officer training program called Broadened Opportunity for Office Selection and Training (BOOST). Successful completion of the program guaranteed a full 4-year NROTC scholarship. "If you failed out of BOOST, which had a 50% fail rate, you ended up in the fleet enlisted. Every rate I wanted, from Air Crew to Avionics Electrician to Diver, was closed to women. I ended up going in non-rated, with the assumption that I would finish BOOST and get my scholarship."

Upon graduation a year later, she accepted an NROTC scholarship to attend Norwich University.

"At Norwich, I always felt supported," Jana says. "When I told Bruce Stewart (Director of Admissions) I wanted to fly in the Navy, he didn't look at me like I was crazy. When I told Don Wallace (Professor of Engineering) I wanted to double major in math and mechanical engineering, he told me how I could do it."



In 1990 Jana became Norwich's first woman to commission as a Naval Aviator. After earning her wings of gold, she spent several years in a land-based tactical electronic warfare squadron, VAQ-34, as a back-seater in the F/A-18B combat aircraft. On April 28, 1993, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin announced an end to the Combat Exclusion Policy that prohibited women from serving in aviation-based combat roles. With this policy change, women could enter fighter, bomber and attack helicopter careers for the first time. Jana was among the first to fly in a combat role.

In November 1994, the first twenty-two air wing females deployed on the USS Abraham Lincoln. “They put 500 women on a carrier of 5,000 people. There were reporters and cameras everywhere,” Jana recalls. “Some people were very supportive. But there were some who would get in our face and blatantly say awful things and do awful things that were not fair. I just hunkered down and did my job.”

Jana completed two tours with VS-29, a torpedo bomber squadron flying S-3B aircraft. After completing her shore tour, she moved to the Naval Reserves, retiring from the Navy in 2012 with a total of 1,000 flight hours and 199 carrier landings.

After the Navy, Jana pivoted to a civilian career in intelligence, working for the US State Department, then the Office of Naval Intelligence, and most recently as Chief of Staff for the National Maritime Intelligence-Integration Office.

Jana’s trailblazing career as a Naval aviator was followed by other Norwich women. **Nicole (deBrauwere) Lewandowski** ’03, **Michelle Austin** ’12, and **Lauren (Burns) Lobkowicz** ’16 among them.

“Women are still in the minority in the Navy,” Jana says. “Now I help young people find the support and identity they need to succeed in the workplace. I say to them ‘don’t let someone else tell you what you can or can’t do.’”

Jana is married to CDR Brian Raymond, USN (Ret), also class of 1990. They have four sons, two are currently enrolled at Norwich. Matthew is NU class of 2025 and James is class of 2027

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

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

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### **Women Kicking Glass is hosting Dressing for Success**

An event providing our female students with professional work attire and support to succeed in work and life.

Help fill our clothes racks. We are seeking donations of gently worn and fashionable women’s work outfits.

**[See more here.](#)**