



Celebrating 50 years of NU Trailblazers!

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A Force to Be Reckoned With: Wendy Sampson Bluemmert '89



Wendy Sampson arrived at Norwich in 1985 with an Air Force ROTC scholarship. When she didn't have confirmation of continued funding following her freshman year, she enlisted in the National Guard and spent the summer in Army training. At the start of the fall semester Commandant Anthony Carbone heard she had enlisted so he called the Army and said Norwich needed her to return to college. He said they would find a way to help her with tuition. True to his word, they did, and so she came back.

The opposite of her high school in Union, New Jersey, Norwich had a very non-diverse population and very few students of color. "Parents put a lot of pressure on Black kids to go to college in the 1980s. Most of my friends went to HBCUs (historically Black college or universities). But I chose Norwich and there was no diversity." Wendy recalls that on arrival day there were eight Black students in her class but by graduation she was the only one remaining.



Self-discipline was her hallmark. "Say what you mean, mean what you say, and follow through," Wendy says. With that attitude Wendy threw herself headlong into Corps responsibilities, academic studies, playing rugby and being a Zoobie. Her perseverance and diligence were recognized.

In 1986, Wendy made Norwich history as the third female and first Black woman to earn the rank of Rook 5, leading freshmen rooks through their first year of Corps training.

She was held to the same standards and requirements as her male counterparts, with no exceptions. With fortitude and professionalism she led her freshmen with distinction.

Racist attitudes were more challenging than sustaining the position she held. Again, Wendy faced those situations with pragmatism. “It’s about understanding perceptions and trying to be an instigator for change through education. It’s important to recognize there are amazing people in all races, all religions, all walks of life.”

After four years at Norwich Wendy packed up the things she learned and went into the Army to apply them in life. She worked logistics and was stationed both domestically and overseas. After 30 years in the Army, she retired as a Lieutenant Colonel and is now a Civilian Program Manager for the Air Force at the Pentagon.

Reflecting on her time at Norwich, Wendy says “It was where I found my fit. Norwich gave me an opportunity that I would never have been afforded anywhere else as a young Black woman in the 1980s.”

“If I had one piece of advice to give young women today, it would be to be authentic. Don’t believe the hype, just be yourself.” In Wendy’s case, being authentic is a force to be reckoned with.

Records documenting the history of women at Norwich are available through the University Archives: <https://archives.norwich.edu>

Attend a Women Kicking Glass Event.

- Sunday, June 23, 2024 - [Washington DC Women Kicking Glass Reception](#), Military Women’s Memorial, Arlington, VA
- Friday, September 20, 2024 - [Women Kicking Glass Gala](#), Plumley Armory, Norwich

Sullivan Museum Seeking Women’s Uniforms and Other Objects for Women Kicking Glass Exhibit

The Sullivan Museum and History Center is planning an exhibit highlighting the history of Norwich women. In preparation for that exhibition, and to expand the museum’s collection, they are seeking women’s uniforms, athletic gear, mementos of student life and other items reflecting the experiences of Norwich women over the past 50 years. To learn more or to donate/loan items for this exhibit, contact Amber Wingerson at awingers@norwich.edu or 802-485-3288.