



Army remembers women JAG pioneers with exhibit

FORT LEE, Va. (Army News Service, Feb. 1, 2005) -- With the snip of a ribbon, Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Romig, the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General, and Brig. Gen. Coral Pietsch, the first and only female general officer in the JAG Corps, opened the "Women Pioneers in the JAG Corps" exhibit at the U.S. Army Women's Museum.

"I am very proud to participate in the opening of this exhibit honoring the history of the "women pioneers" of the Judge Advocate General's Corps," Romig said at the Jan. 19 ceremony. "The journey of women in our Corps began in May 1944, in the midst of World War II."

"Today, 61 years later, the Army again finds itself at war. This time, however, over 29 percent of the members of the JAG Corps are women—and this number continues to grow," said Romig, who went on to note that currently the JAG Corps has one of the highest percentages of women of any branch in the U.S. Army.

The new exhibit will feature images, documents, and memorabilia highlighting female "firsts" in the U.S. Army JAG Corps. The exhibit also includes a highlight on the career of Chief Warrant Officer-5 Sharon Swartworth. Swartworth, the first female (active Army Note 1/) Chief Warrant Officer-Five and the first female Regimental Warrant Officer of the Judge Advocate General's Corps was killed in November 2003 when the Blackhawk helicopter she was riding in was shot down near Tikrit, Iraq. "Sharon Swartworth is one of my personal heroes," remarked Romig who witnessed Swartworth's helicopter get shot down while flying in formation with his helicopter enroute to visit outlying troop locations in Iraq. (Note 1/ Warrant Officer Heritage Foundation Editors Note: Swartworth was the first active Army female promoted to CW5. CW5 Donna Foli, USAR Active Guard-Reserve, was the first female in the Army promoted to that grade.)

Romig noted that "others blazed a trail" by performing key jobs all over the JAG Corps such as installation, Corps and Division Staff Judge Advocates.

Recognizing the great contributions of others in the JAG Corps, Romig continued, "The women pioneers of the JAG Corps are not limited to those featured in the exhibit. They include the Soldiers manning tactical operation centers in Iraq and Afghanistan, performing trial and defense counsel duties along the de-militarized zone in Korea, and those advising commanders all throughout the Army," Romig said.

"Without the tremendous contributions of our women Soldiers, the JAG Corps and the Army simply could not function today," said Romig.

Pietsch spoke before the ribbon cutting ceremony on behalf of the women represented in the new exhibit. Pietsch, herself, is highlighted for being the first female JAG general officer and the first female Asian-American general officer.

"I am truly honored to be here today representing women all throughout the U.S. Army," said Pietsch.

Pietsch remarked, "In the thirty years since I have been a commissioned officer, I have witnessed the many opportunities that the Corps and the Army has to offer, not just to me, but all women who serve."

"It provides us an opportunity to serve in the largest law firm in the world and to learn from many tremendous leaders," she said.

"We must always do what we can no matter where we are, for together we will continue to make our Army and our world a better place when we leave it," said Pietsch. "Our nation continues to be the freest and richest nation on earth because men, and women, have gone into harm's way and continue to do so to protect our way of life."

"On behalf of all the honorees, we are honored and humbled to have our stories told in the same halls with the stories of so many other women pioneers who have forged a path for women in the Army," she said.

(Editor's note: Travis Edwards serves as the Fort Lee Strategic Outreach Officer.)