

Soldier chases dream

By Sirena Clark, Fort Campbell Courier 11 March 2022



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FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — Cpl. McKynzie Dragoo was just 17 years old when a Family friend was killed while serving in Afghanistan. At that moment, she knew she wanted to enlist in the U.S. Army.

At 26 years old, she followed through on that dream and shocked both Family and friends when she picked her current military occupational specialty – 15R, or attack helicopter repairer.

Assigned to D Troop, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Dragoo is one of the few female 15Rs in her unit.

Taking on the challenge

Dragoo worked at many different jobs before joining the Army. But none of them felt like a good match, and she couldn't shake her desire to work in aviation.

“It was a dream that I always had, and I knew it wouldn’t have still been on my heart if there wasn’t a purpose for it,” she said.

Dragoo said her decision to work with helicopters took most by surprise because she had no experience in mechanics, and that there were people who questioned whether she was cut out for it. Despite the lack of experience and the naysayers, she committed to her dream and didn’t let up until it became a reality. Her success came in part because her Family supported her every step of the way, she said.

“There were some people that doubted me and said they didn’t understand what I was doing because I didn’t have a background in mechanics, but I am very proud of where I’m at and how successful I’ve been able to be so far,” she said.

Dragoo said her journey to becoming a helicopter repairer wasn’t easy but that this was part of what attracted her to the military occupational specialty and pushing herself to the limit was what her mother taught her to do.

“I learned to fight for what I wanted. I learned that whatever I set my mind to I would be capable of. So, I think the MOS I chose was what I wanted, and I was going to pursue it no matter how hard it was going to be,” she said.

Too good to be true

When she arrived at her unit she was the only female in her section, a fact that intimidated her at first, she said.

“I was definitely nervous because coming into this you’re told that it is a male-dominated job and career,” Dragoo said. “But I was welcomed as soon as I got here and everyone in my unit has been very willing to teach me and help me, and I was never treated any differently.”

Dragoo said she never felt like she was any less than her peers because she started from zero learning about aircraft. Instead, people rallied to help her learn the ins and outs of a difficult and time-consuming MOS.

“My job isn’t one that you can learn overnight and be proficient in, so I have taken much pride in learning it to the best of my ability and making sure that the pilots that fly our aircrafts are safe,” she said. “I never worked as a maintainer/mechanic outside of the Army, so having the opportunity to learn how to work on aircraft and teach others how to do the same has

been very rewarding. It still at times feels too good to be true that I get the chance to work on Apache helicopters.”

Creating a legacy

Dragoo is the first woman in her Family to join the armed forces. This has given her many reasons to be proud of herself, she said.

“Being the first woman in my Family to serve gives me a sense of honor,” Dragoo said. “I know that the women in my Family are very proud, and I hope that I can create some kind of legacy for the generations in my Family to come. I hope that all women know that in whatever career path they choose, there is a place for them and that they can be an equal.”

Dragoo said she draws her strength and inspiration from other strong women in her Family, namely her mother, who she said taught her to never back down from a challenge and to always make her voice heard.

“My mother has been an inspiration to me throughout my life,” she said. “Our Family has been through tough trials and my mom has been one to never back down from a challenge, nor let it decide her fate.”

After completing her contract, Dragoo hopes to use her skills to pursue a degree in nursing. While not in the field of mechanics, she said it’s still in the same spirit of choosing paths that are in service to others because that’s the kind of woman she wants to be.

“I am still working on becoming the woman that I want to be, but I am proud of how far I’ve come,” she said. “I knew that I was created to do something that allowed me to serve others, and it took me a long time to figure out what that was.”