Army leadership visits USMA

U.S. Military Academy leadership briefed Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. James C. McConville and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston (above) on the preparations West Point has made to operate in a COVID-19 environment and welcome back the Corps of Cadets during their visit to the academy Wednesday. McConville and Grinston also visited the COVID-19 ward at Keller Army Community Hospital and ate a socially distanced lunch in the Cadet Mess Hall (below) with members of the Class of 2020.

PHOTOS BY TARNISH PRIDE/USMA PAO

USMA PAO continues to provide comprehensive resources across the West Point community through the West Point Coronavirus webpage at www.westpoint.edu/coronavirus, and it has released external messages on USMA social media platforms.

For more information, contact the West Point Public Affairs Office at paoinformation@westpoint.edu.

See page 2 for a story on the Class of 2020 preparing for graduation after its return to West Point.

See pages 4-7, 12-13 for a story on West Point’s Women of the Long Gray Line.

See pages 8-11 for Class of 2020 members’ narratives on their West Point experience.
Class of 2020 settling in, preparing for graduation after return to West Point

By Brandon O'Connor
PV Assistant Editor

After a five-day process, the members of the U.S. Military Academy’s Class of 2020 finished arriving back at the academy Saturday and began a 14-day controlled monitoring period before their graduation ceremony June 13.

The members of the class were officially commissioned as second lieutenants May 23, the day their graduation ceremony was originally scheduled for before it was pushed back due to COVID-19. Once they arrived back at West Point, many of them pinned on their second lieutenant “butter bars” for the first time as they began the transition from cadet to Army officer.

The 14-day controlled monitoring period will be used to perform the various out-processing tasks the members of the class must complete before leaving the academy behind and entering into the Army.

The members of the class have to turn in their cadet IDs and have them replaced by second lieutenant ones. They have to finish medical checks that were left undone because they left for spring break and then didn’t return for two months because of a global pandemic.

They have to return equipment, receive their orders and pack up their rooms in the barracks so they can move to their Basic Officer Leaders Course locations and then eventually to their initial duty post.

The members of the class are divided into different cohorts to prevent a possible spread of COVID-19, although each returnee in the barracks tested negative upon arrival back at the academy. Each cohort has been assigned a specific area where the members are allowed to do physical training in. They also eat meals and perform the various out-processing tasks with the members of their cohort.

“Normally there are 12 people at a table, but they’re having us be with only two other people (in the mess hall),” Maddie Miller, a member of the Class of 2020, said. “The food is already set for us at the mess hall so there’s no one coming around and bringing us trays of food, like they did during the school year. It’s different, but it makes sense.”

Miller and her cohort arrived back at the academy May 28 and thus far their schedule has not required them to start any of the out-processing tasks. That has given her and her roommate Emma Powless a chance to pack up their room except for necessities they still need and spend time with their classmates in their cohort areas. Fortunately, we have the apron right here from Washington (statue) over. It’s a little different but I think everyone’s adapted to it pretty well.”

The Class of 2020 will come together one last time before they spread out to Army offi   cer. “It’s actually been awesome to be back in the sense of seeing people and to get closure on our four-year experience here,” Powless said. “I think West Point had said, ‘Alright, we’re going to ship your stuff to you. Now go have a nice Army career,’ that would have been a really interesting way to enter the Army and I don’t think we would have gotten the closure on this crazy four-year experience that we would have liked to have.”

Along with out-processing, the soon to be graduates are taking part in physical training sessions and courses on leading within a COVID-19 environment among their cohorts.

The members of the class have also had the chance to participate in events scheduled by the Directorate of Cadet Activities including a virtual DJ night, a video game tournament, exclusive virtual concerts and more.

They’ve also found unique ways to spend their time together as they conclude their cadet careers such as holding socially distanced painting parties in the courtyard of their barracks.

“For PT, everyone knows to distance the 6 feet apart and…,” Mac Viljac, a member of the Class of 2020, said. “We move in different groups to wherever we’re doing our PT. In that other free time, you can be out in your certain company one last time before they spread out throughout the country.

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COVID-19 and your mental health

By Robert K. Lanier
Public Affairs Officer, Keller Army Community Hospital

May was Mental Health Awareness Month, but as the month of May concluded the awareness of your health—specifically mental health during this pandemic—is still paramount.

We are familiar with viruses like the common cold and flu, but COVID-19 is new and presents a situation that none of us could have imagined a few short months ago. COVID-19 has resulted in business closures, social distancing and quarantine measures which have disrupted our daily lives.

There are small things everyone can do while practicing social distancing or self-quarantine, to help reduce the amount of anxiety they are experiencing. This includes, but is not limited to, talking to a friend and asking them to be your support, finding ways to clear your mind, taking a walk or using a meditation application, or using resources like the Crisis Text Line (Text “MHA” to 741741).

Realize what you can control and focus on those things that can provide you with some comfort.

Be aware of the signs of anxiety. While it’s normal to be worried and stressed, people with anxiety tend to be more exaggerated in their feelings of worry and tension. Some symptoms include stomach/digestive problems, increased heart rate or changes in energy and difficulty sleeping.

Understand that your concerns are valid and your anxiety is real. The statistics prove that one out of five people will experience a mental health condition, and five out of five people will go through a challenge that affects their mental health.

Seeking help is a sign of “strength” not weakness.

If you are taking steps to manage worry and anxiety during this pandemic, but those steps don’t seem to be helping, there are resources you can utilize. By seeking help, you can improve your lifestyle and the lives of those around you. Visit https://www.mentalhealth.gov/get-help for more information.

WHEN ANXIETY WON'T LET UP

If you’re taking steps to manage worry and anxiety during the COVID-19 crisis but they don’t seem to be helping, there are additional resources you can take advantage of.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health Screening</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit mhascreening.org to check your symptoms.</td>
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<th>Crisis Hotlines and Textlines</th>
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<td>If you are in crisis or or thinking about suicide, get connected to a local crisis center and get in touch with someone immediately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or text “MHA” to 741741.</td>
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Find more information and resources about COVID-19 and mental health at mhanational.org/covid19.

Keller Corner: Update on Coronavirus

Keller Army Community Hospital is taking steps to maintain social distancing while continuing to serve our beneficiaries by providing ‘In-car’ dispensing.

This service is available during the pharmacy hours, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Beneficiaries will need to call the pharmacy to ensure we have your medications filled prior to coming to the pharmacy.

Refill prescriptions can still be called in to the refill line for pick up after two business days.

When you arrive at the pharmacy, pull in to the numbered pharmacy parking spaces and call the pharmacy for a hospital representative to bring your medications to your car.

This service is available for all beneficiaries and is the preferred medication dispensing method.

The pharmacy inside the hospital is still open and serving patients who have been seen in the hospital that day.

Any patients who are under a restriction of movement (self-quarantine or self-isolation) should not leave their quarantine/isolation area.

In Brief:

• Prior to arriving at the pharmacy, call 845-938-2271/6199/3812 so we can start process your medication prior to your arrival at the KACH Pharmacy. We will coordinate a time for you to come pick up your medication within about two hours.

• When you arrive at the pharmacy, pull in to one of the numbered pharmacy parking spaces, and call the pharmacy again at 845-938-2271/6199/3812 to have a hospital representative bring out your medications to you.

Additional information:

• If you have hardcopy (paper) prescriptions, let us know when you arrive and we will come collect them.

• If you are picking up controlled substances, please bring your own pen to use when signing for your medications.

KACH Immunizations Clinic to schedule appointments

Keller Army Community Hospital will resume scheduling immunization appointments.

In an effort to accommodate our population needing vaccines while maintaining the safety of all of our beneficiaries, appointments will be scheduled for:

1. Any healthy beneficiary 11 years or older (parent must call to make appointment).
2. Any active duty servicemember who needs updated immunizations for MEDPROS.
3. Any travel related vaccines after an appointment with one of our providers has taken place.

To schedule an appointment, call the KACH Appointment Center at 845-938-7992.

KACH Pharamacy Curbside Pick-up

By Robert K. Lanier
Public Affairs Officer, Keller Army Community Hospital

For a one-stop shop of all updated coronavirus information, Keller Army Community Hospital notifications, how to stop the spread of COVID-19, federal/state/local guidance and the U.S. Military Academy and Army Garrison West Point webpages, visit https://kach.amedd.army.mil/West-Point-COVID-19-INFO/.
Women of the Long Gray Line

More than 5,000 women have graduated from the U.S. Military Academy since 1980

By Brandon O'Connor
PV Assistant Editor

At 5:31 p.m. on Dec. 3, 2018, the engines on the Russian Soyuz MS-11 spacecraft roared to life on a launch pad in Kazakhstan. As bright orange flames erupted from the engines, the spacecraft lifted off the ground and began its journey to the International Space Station.

Dressed in a white and blue spacesuit, Army astronaut Lt. Col. Anne McClain sat in the windowless capsule along with a Russian cosmonaut and a Canadian astronaut. It was her first launch, and she says at first it felt like she was in the simulator where she’d spent countless hours preparing for this moment. Then the spacecraft started to rumble as the engines ignited and it hit her that, “Oh gosh, this is different. This is the real day.”

Eight minutes after ignition, the third and final stage of the engine came off the vehicle and threw the three passengers forward. McClain’s stomach flipped and she felt like she was upside down. Just minutes after sitting on a launch pad in Asia, she and her crewmates were already in orbit more than 200 miles above the Earth. This, she realized, is what weightlessness felt like.

Then the shrouds covering the capsule’s windows came off and a view she’d been looking forward to since she was 3 years old came into view.

“I look out and for the first time I see a sunrise over the Earth, just 8 1/2 minutes after sitting on the launch pad, and what an amazing kind of transition in your mind of where you are,” McClain said.

McClain is a Class of 2002 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, where the history department is fond of saying, “Much of the history we teach was made by people we taught.” After learning about famous members of the Long Gray Line at the academy, McClain was now making history of her own.

A West Point graduate first flew to space in 1965, when Frank Borman launched aboard Gemini 7. He was followed by graduates who flew on Apollo missions, walked on the moon and launched to the International Space Station aboard space shuttles, but until that December day in 2018, no female graduate of the academy had ever left Earth behind and traveled to space.

Women were first admitted to West Point in 1976 and in May 1980, 62 graduated, forever changing the academy. In the 39 years since, 5,140 women have added their names to the Register of Graduates and joined the Long Gray Line that stretches back to 1802.

McClain is the lone astronaut among the group, but the women of West Point have made their mark both in the Army and on the country as a whole. They have led the Corps of Cadets as the first captain, and also served as the commandant and dean at the academy.

They have led Soldiers as generals and started multi-million-dollar corporations. They have proved their toughness by earning Ranger and Sapper tabs—and in some cases both. Four of them—Jaimie Leonard, Laura Walker, Emily Perez and Sara Cullen—have given their lives in service of the United States.

As West Point Class of 1980 graduate Sue Fulton said, they have changed the world.

“I decided I was going to love it” Out of the more than 5,000 women who have graduated from West Point, one has been able to break through to become a senior leader in the Army. Retired Lt. Gen. Nadja
West, who graduated from West Point in 1982, spent the final years of her Army career as the 44th U.S. Army Surgeon General and the commander of U.S. Army Medical Command. West, the first black woman to become a three-star general in the Army, is the highest-ranking female to have graduated from West Point.

In 1939, her father boarded a train and traveled to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, in part because it was a free train ride with his friend. The Army was still segregated at the time and the base in Arizona was where the Buffalo Soldiers were based and the “colored troops” had to go to get trained. During his time in Arizona, West said her dad saw the white Soldiers training them go from thinking of the black Soldiers as others to embracing them as fellow Soldiers. The change gave him hope, and he served for 33 years and encouraged his children to do the same.

West’s sisters would serve in the Women’s Army Corps, Women’s Auxiliary Air Force and the Navy as women were slowly integrated into the Armed Forces. Her brother, James Grammer, set a path she eventually followed and graduated from West Point in 1976, the last graduating class to attend a male only academy. Two years after his graduation, West arrived at West Point as the minority of the minority as a black female cadet.

As a member of the third class to include women, West said she was able to look at the women in the classes of 1980 and 1981 and pull encouragement from the fact that they had survived. The women in the upper classes also worked to toughen up the naïve 17-year-old girl, who was getting yelled at for the first time in her life, being called cruel names she says she didn’t even understand at the time, and was liable to cry at the drop of a hat.

“The guys would come and yell and then I’d start crying,” West said. “One of (the Class of 1980 women) said, ‘You’ve got to stop that because you’re making us all look bad.’ They were trying to say you’ve got to be tough because everyone’s watching you and your actions reflect on all of us.”

A third generation of her family recently began serving in the military as her son, Keegan West, followed in her footsteps and graduated from West Point in the Class of 2019. Four decades after her mom entered the academy, he attended a place that had drastically changed. Women now make up nearly a quarter of the Corps and they are allowed to enter any branch they choose. The change was brought home to West when she asked him what it was like being at the academy with women and he couldn’t even grasp what it would be like without them. It was all he knew.

“They’re cadets. They’re not black cadets, or white cadets or female cadets, they’re cadets,” West said. “We still identify. We still count. Unfortunately, that’s human. That’s the American society. We have to put a person in a box and categorize them. But, it’s great just to see that it’s no big deal.”

The list of female West Point graduates leading at the Army’s senior levels might be short, but in recent years women have taken on major leadership roles at West Point itself by serving as both Commandant of Cadets and Dean of the Academic Board.

Future Commandant Maj. Gen. Diana Holland graduated from West Point in 1990, a decade after the first class with women, but her infatuation with the academy had started years before. Her father and grandfather had both served in the Marines and—at the age of 6—Holland decided she too would one day serve in the military. From a young age her father had told her she could be anything she wanted, and although she admits serving in the military might not have been what he had in mind, he supported her from the start and suggested she one day become an officer.

Her vague goal of serving in the military turned into a crystallized plan when she was 10 after an encyclopedia introduced her to West Point for the first time. The photos of the granite walls, the Hudson River and its reputation as the most challenging sold her on West Point being the place for her.

“I was completely taken by it and it captured my imagination,” Holland said.

In junior high school, she somehow got hold of an application to the academy and began charting her course. She joined a softball team before eventually playing basketball in high school—even if it might not have been the right sport for someone who was only 5-foot-1—because being an athlete would make her more competitive when she applied to West Point. She also joined the JROTC program in high school, through which she eventually got her nomination to the academy.

Thirty-five years later, Holland can still remember the day the envelope came in the mail with her appointment to West Point. Standing in the same room as her dad, they both held their breath as she opened the envelope, pulled out a vinyl folder and read that she had been accepted to the academy’s Class of 1990.

“It was an emotional moment. I’ll just put that way. It was amazing,” Holland said.

She arrived at the academy having already practiced how to report to the cadet in the red sash on Reception Day and with some of the new cadet knowledge already committed to memory. But despite her years of preparation, Beast Barracks still proved to be challenging and made her start to question whether West Point was the place for her after all.

At the beginning of the academic year, as doubts continued to creep into her mind, Holland found herself standing on the Plain along with her company for a cadet parade. As she marched at the back of the formation, the upperclass cadet behind her began to yell at her to keep up with the line in front of her because, much like basketball, parade marching can be challenging for someone barely over 5-feet-tall.

Then they turned down the straightaway for the review. A crowd sat in the stands on her right, the Hellcats were playing loudly for the cadets and spectators to hear, and directly in front of her the American flag flew high above Trophy Point. That is when it sunk in. This is where she had wanted to be since she was 6 years old. She didn’t have to do it. She had the privilege of being there.

“At that moment, I decided I was going to love it,” Holland said. “I was going to embrace every day because not very many people get that opportunity. I wasn’t going to complain about it.”

See WOWP, PAGE 6
Holland graduated in 1990 with a degree in history and branched engineers. From the moment she received her diploma and set off on her Army career, she knew she wanted to return to the academy as a professor, which she did from 1999-2002. After her time as a professor, she went to Fort Stewart, then U.S. Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base. She also made a stop in Hawaii and the Pentagon, with multiple deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq mixed in, before finding herself at Fort Drum wearing the star of a brigadier general.

In December 2015, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno informed her that her next post would be as Commandant of Cadets at West Point, marking the first time a woman would hold the position.

“I said, ‘Sir, are you serious?’” Holland recalled. “He just said ‘Yes, I’m serious,’ and he turned around and he walked away. It was stunning.”

Holland’s goal after graduating was to return to the academy as a professor so she could give back to a place that had a profound impact on her life, but, she said, she never expected to be back as a senior leader. In that role, she was able to make an indelible mark on the academy.

One of those marks was pushing for boxing to be taught to women for the first time, starting with the Class of 2020. The Secretary of Defense had decided requirements should be the same for men and women, Holland said, and boxing stood out as something that still needed to be integrated. So, she made it happen.

“I hope to inspire people, whether it’s men or women or cadets, or Soldiers or officers or whomever,” Holland said. “I am passionate about my service. My goal is to help create an environment where people can achieve their potential and reach their dreams. That’s what I do in this job. That’s what I tried to look for ways to do at West Point and anywhere I go.”

Holland served as commandant until the summer of 2017 and then became the commander of the South Atlantic Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. She was promoted to major general in 2019 and, in three years with USACE, has had to oversee responses to multiple major hurricanes that have severely damaged Puerto Rico and the Florida panhandle.

Thirty years into her Army career, that feeling from the Plain has never left her and she said she plans to continue to serve until the day the Army tells her it has no more room for her, because every step of the way she has found it to be the, “most egalitarian, merit based profession” available. Whether it is during her career or after she retires, she wants to help other women learn that about the Army.

“I think it is a great place for women and any person of any background. We compete,” Holland said. “My experience has been it’s the most inclusive, team-oriented organization that I could be a part of. I think that is a powerful message for America’s youth, particularly women.”

Holland started her term as commandant in December 2015, becoming the first woman to hold a senior leader position at West Point. Her stint as the sole female on the leadership team was short-lived, though, as Brig. Gen. Cindy Jebb was named Dean of the Academic Board in June 2016 after serving as the head of the Department of Social Sciences.

Jebb grew up only 30 minutes south of West Point but admits she knew almost nothing about the academy until she stumbled upon an article highlighting West Point’s first women’s basketball team in a women’s sports magazine she subscribed to. The article talked about the values instilled in cadets while they are at West Point, and the chance to be a part of something bigger than herself immediately spoke to her.

She graduated high school in 1978 and enrolled at the academy as part of only the third class to include women, along with West. She arrived at a time when women were still sparsely spread throughout the Corps of Cadets. Jebb’s cadet company, for instance, had women from her own class in it and some from the Class of 1980, but none from the Class of 1981.

Jebb found her place at the academy through athletics. While it was the basketball team that had originally attracted her to West Point, after arriving she played on the volleyball team instead. There, she was able to find a semblance of community.

Being on the team awarded her once in a lifetime opportunities such as playing in the first volleyball match between West Point and the U.S. Naval Academy. It also was a chance to break away from the stress and struggles of cadet life, especially those that came with being a woman at an academy still adjusting to their existence. Much like
the women in that first class, Jebb said her and her classmates’ cadet careers were still rife with challenges.

Some of the more terrible things—such as sexual assaults—Jebb said she didn’t learn about until years after graduation as she continued to grow closer to her classmates through annual reunions. Even though she was never assaulted herself, looking back nearly 40 years since her graduation and talking about that time, she pauses and collects her thoughts before asserting, “I think it’s safe to say we were probably all sexually harassed. There wasn’t always a welcoming environment. I think people would tell you, there were a lot of times you were the only woman in the class and that kind of thing. It was different than it is today.”

Jebb branched military intelligence after graduation and began her career with two goals in mind. She wanted to be a company commander and to return to West Point as a professor. Despite being some tough experiences during her cadet career—the faculty had left an overwhelmingly positive impression on her, and she wanted to give back.

She accomplished her first goal by becoming a company commander at Fort Hood, Texas. In 1992, she accomplished the second when she returned to the academy to teach international relations and comparative politics. Her career eventually took her away from the academy for a few years, but in 1998 she came back as senior faculty and has continued to serve there for most of the years since. She became the deputy head of the Department of Social Sciences in 2005 and was named department head in 2013. Then, in 2016, she was named the Dean of the Academic Board at West Point, becoming the first woman to hold the position. With Jebb as dean and Holland as commandant, the academy had taken a step that may not have seemed possible in 1976 when women first arrived as cadets.

“We used to laugh that it was the only time that we had to make sure we had the right hat,” Jebb said. “I thought the institution didn’t blink to have two senior women in the leader team. That, to me, said a lot. Whatever talents that we both brought, that’s what the institution wanted.”

Jebb just finished her fourth academic year as a member of the senior leadership team and during that time she has worked to modernize the curriculum and class schedule. She has also helped the academy to have tough conversations about how women are treated at the academy, in the Army and in society as a whole, that no one was ready to have when she was a cadet. There is still room to grow, she admits, but considerable progress has been made in terms of diversity and the treatment of people of different sexes and races.

“I talked about some tough times at the academy, but overall, I’ll always be indebted to this academy in terms of my own development and setting me up to be able to contribute to the Army,” Jebb said. “That’s what inspires me now. Knowing that we are developing our staff, faculty and cadets all with the eye on developing leadership of character for the country.”

“Be the change you seek”

Until Holland and Jebb stepped into their roles in 2015 and 2016, respectively, no woman had served as a senior leader at West Point. Only a decade after the first class of women graduated, however, a female cadet was chosen to lead the Corps of Cadets as first captain.

Col. Kristin Baker, a member of the Class of 1990 along with Holland, took on the role in the summer of 1989 and led the Corps during her first year. The interviews for first captain took place at the end of the previous academic year, and she first realized she had a chance after being selected to command the second detail of Cadet Basic Training. But even with the potential on the horizon, there were people who still had doubts that the academy was ready for a female first captain, including Baker’s own father who had graduated from West Point in the Class of 1966, which was chronicled in the book “The Long Gray Line.”

“I remember calling and asking my dad and I’m like, ‘Hey, dad, what do you think about a woman being the first captain?’ He said, ‘It’ll never happen. The academy’s not ready for it. That’s not going to happen,’” Baker recalled. “It wasn’t in my realm of expectation.”

For most of high school, West Point itself wasn’t on her mind, let alone the fact that one day she would become the first female to lead the Corps. Although he was a grad, Baker’s father didn’t talk about the academy much. But during a family trip he made the decision to stop by the West Point Museum and she became fascinated by the academy and decided to apply. On a future visit to the academy, she had the chance to meet with the coach of the women’s soccer team, which was becoming an intercollegiate team the next season. The chance to play soccer at the collegiate level sold Baker once and for all on the academy, and she enrolled as a member of the Class of 1990.

Academy leadership might have proved Baker’s dad wrong when they chose her to be first captain, but—as Baker quickly found out after being selected—in many ways the academy wasn’t ready for the implications of the decision. They brought out a reporter from the New York Times to do a story and once it hit, the media storm began.

Leading March Back from Lake Frederick as the commander of CBT II and newly named first captain, Baker turned down the road toward the superintendent’s house and found it lined with cameras and media. At the conclusion of the march, she was whisked from interview to interview, and the next morning she found herself in a limo headed to New York City to be featured on the national morning shows. She then realized she hadn’t even called home and told her parents about her new position.

“I pick up this phone in the back of the limo and I am like ‘Hey, mom and dad, you’re never going to believe where I am,’” Baker said. “I remember my dad; he was just kind of stunned. I said, ‘So they decided I’m going to be first captain.’”

The attention wouldn’t let up throughout her year leading the Corps, and Baker said it was only possible because she had a staff that was able to handle many of the day-to-day operations of running the Corps while she served as the face of the academy. Although she is sure there were some negative opinions of her having the position, both within the Corps and outside it, Baker said she did not experience much pushback and, for the most part, felt accepted by her fellow cadets.

There were incredible high moments during that year such as meeting Ronald Reagan and Arthur Ashe. Then, as she entered the Army, Baker said she found that holding the position had been truly valuable. Even as a junior officer, she understood what went into the decision-making process at the highest levels and the amount of pressure they were under. She had sat in meetings at a young age where decisions were made that subordinates didn’t understand and was able to carry those lessons with her throughout her career.

After graduation, she branched military intelligence and was stationed in Germany, her first of multiple stints in the country. Her career also took her to Texas, Hawaii and eventually the Pentagon from where she retired last week following a 30-year career.

It was a career that took her around the world, but looking back at all she accomplished, Baker was cognizant that because of the time she joined the Army, not every door was open to her. Because certain branches were closed to her and other women, from the moment she entered the Army, Baker said she was aware she was a “second class citizen.” She could never hope to become chief of staff and lead the Army like she had the Corps because there was no available route to that job. At the time, she and other female officers weren’t even allowed to be division commanders, she said. So, instead of focusing on what she couldn’t be, she worked to become the best military intelligence officer she could be.

Many of those paths that were closed to Baker and other women throughout the last 40 years have since been unblocked as women can now branch infantry and armor as well as attend Ranger School.
**IN FOCUS: "WITH VISION WE LEAD" CLASS OF 2020**

Compiled by Eric S. Bartelt  
PV Managing Editor  

The U.S. Military Academy Class of 2020 will graduate 1,123 cadets on June 13. Those graduating represent 83% of the 1,302 cadets who entered West Point nearly 13 years ago.  

Due to COVID-19 delaying graduation, members of the Class of 2020 commissioned May 23 during an oath of commissioning ceremony from remote locations. It marked another unique venture for the new second lieutenants of the Class of 2020 within their 47-month journey.

Over four weeks, The Pointer View series titled, “With Vision We Lead,” named after the class motto, involves various members of the class telling stories of their West Point experience.

In honor of the members of the 22nd graduating class of West Point, here is the second installment of a four-part series of their journey in their own words ...

**Class of 2020 member Haley Watson**

**PV:** What do those words mean to you?  
**HW:** “When my class first voted on the motto, ‘With Vision We Lead’ during plebe year, I could just sense from the culture and coaching staff that we were heading in a different direction than we had been going before. We were going up. We began placing middle of the pack at the conference track meets my plebe year and yearling year, but by cow and firstie year, we were competing for conference championship titles. The program transformed into a force to be reckoned with. Navy had no answers.

“Army track was sending people to the NCAA meet and breaking every record on the board. To be a part of something like that and watch it grow and continue to flourish is such a humbling honor. Getting to be a leader my senior year of people who are some of the greatest, most hardworking and talented people this world has to offer is my greatest achievement at West Point.”

**PV:** What is your best achievement at West Point?  
**HW:** “Being a track team captain and a part of one of the best women’s track programs in the history of our school has been the honor of my life.

“When I first joined the program my plebe year, you could just sense from the culture and coaching staff that we were heading in a different direction than we had been going before. We were going up. We began placing middle of the pack at the conference track meets my plebe year and yearling year, but by cow and firstie year, we were competing for conference championship titles. The program transformed into a force to be reckoned with. Navy had no answers.

“Army track was sending people to the NCAA meet and breaking every record on the board. To be a part of something like that and watch it grow and continue to flourish is such a humbling honor. Getting to be a leader my senior year of people who are some of the greatest, most hardworking and talented people this world has to offer is my greatest achievement at West Point.”

**PV:** What services and leadership mean to you as you start your career as an Army officer?  
**HW:** “Service and leadership mean the path I have chosen will not always be the one of least resistance. I think back to our speaker from the Class of 1970 at our commissioning ceremony and he said that we are living in the first stanza of the alma mater: ‘Let Duty be well performed. Honor be e’er untarned. Country be ever armed. West Point, by thee.’ As a leader of character, those words are your call to action. We have our entire careers in front of us, where we must make the conscious decision every day to perform our duties honorable in a way that makes our country proud.

“Whenever I get to end of my life, having fully lived as a leader of character, I can hope the last stanza of the alma mater is true: ‘And when our work is done, Our course on earth is run, May it be said, ‘Well done’ Be thou at peace.’”

**PV:** What advice would you give to the underclassmen or to your younger self from four years ago with what you know now from your academic experience?  
**HW:** “The best advice I have for underclassmen is probably not traditional on the surface, some might even consider it unsound, but it is one of the things I wish I would have known the most. It is OK to lose an hour of studying for a test or skim the last 20 pages instead of reading the textbook cover to cover if it means you get to spend more time with your classmates and friends.

“I regret turning down invitations to the firstie club after spirit dinner on Thursday nights because I thought I had too much homework to do. I always told myself after spring break of firstie year, when all branches, posts and scholarships were in the bag, I would take people up on the invitations to go to trivia night or to company Arvin Gym basketball scramble Sunday afternoon.

“But as we know, ‘after spring break of firstie year’ never came for me and my classmates. I regret I didn’t just take a little hit on my academics or physical scores because the times that I did get out of my comfort zone and say ‘yes’ to things like the dance class at Cullum Hall that cut into my homework time, I look back and feel no regret at all. Your grades will survive and buff out and the memories you have from being a part of something bigger than yourself are much more worth it than any percentage in a class, APFT score or military grade.”

**PV:** What is your favorite memory/top moments in your time at West Point?  
**HW:** “There are so many moments I feel like it is challenging just to pick one. One that sticks out to me is the time during plebe year where me and the other D-2 Dragon plebes all got together and did an American Idol competition. We all planned songs and sang them (jokingly) and voted on who was the best singer. “My favorite memories have been with my company mates and track teammates. I owe them for every smile they brought to my face. I also really loved my CLDT Sandhurst experience in the United Kingdom and Germany. It was one of the coolest things I have ever been a part of, and it was such an awesome experience to work with people from a foreign military on a field training exercise.”

**PV:** Through this collective experience everyone has gone through, from your perspective, how has the Class of 2020 united together and motivated each other during the COVID-19 crisis?  
**HW:** “The biggest way we have come together is to just mourn our losses together. COVID-19 took away a lot from our class. It continues to as well. We don’t have the luxury of pushing milestones off or parading across the Plain at a different time. It is over for us. Our final sports seasons were taken from us. Many of us left for spring break and it was unknowingly the last time we would see a lot of our classmates. The biggest way we have united is by reaching out virtually and empathizing with the communal and individual losses.

“There is also an extreme amount of ambiguity with the future for a lot of us and having other people in similar situations provides a sense of comfort. People feel sad and cynical, but whenever you have someone in your exact same shoes to vocalize those feelings to, it becomes a lot easier to manage.”

**PV:** What was the biggest hurdle you faced during the crisis? What did you find out about yourself and your resilience, whether it was physically or mentally, in overcoming this situation and driving toward graduation?  
**HW:** “The biggest hurdle for me was first dealing with the loss of things I have worked toward and looked forward to for a long time like Projects Day, my final outdoor track season, recognition of the plebes, the Graduation Parade or even the graduation leave celebrations and trips.

“A lot of these milestone events that happen in the spring of firstie year are not going to be able to be replicated online or pushed to a later date or anything like that. They are just over and that has been a hard pill to swallow. I had a hard time coping with all of those things at the same time, but my family was incredibly supportive and helped me through it. I also talked to a lot of classmates who were feeling the same way and that was helpful as well.

“The second hurdle was looking toward a very...
ambiguous future. I do not know if my scholarships will be able to continue in the fall. A lot of my classmates have no idea what their BOLC class will look like or how the virus is going to impact their future units. For a lot of people, there is a great deal of anxiety confronting the unknown. For so long, you have a picture of what your time after West Point is going to look like, and most people really are looking forward to it, but for my class, that picture of our future has completely shifted. So dealing with the ambiguity the future now presents has been a great challenge for me during this pandemic.

“The biggest thing I have learned about myself is that there is no sense in comparing losses. Everyone has lost something from this pandemic. Some losses have been very small, and others have lost much greater like a family member to COVID-19. When we get into a headspace where we tell ourselves to not be sad about a loss, no matter the size, we are invalidating our feeling and emotions, and therefore never coming to terms with it. I felt silly at the beginning for being sad about missing out on nights eating in the mess hall one last time—it is really nice to put the team before yourself. At indoor Army Navy my cow year, we were neck and neck coming down to the final race, the 4x800 meter relay. The winner of the relay would win the entire meet. I remember Coach Smith talking to me days before and saying that it could very well come down to the wire, and although I would have already run two other races that day, I would have to perform and run the fastest race of my life as the anchor leg.

“Well, that very scenario happened. I had to run the anchor leg and win the 4x800 to beat Navy. It was so nerve wracking, but it forced me to have to perform my best under pressure because people were all counting on me. My teammates in the relay ran their fastest races and gave me the baton in a great and competitive position. We broke the Army-Navy meet record and won that day. It built confidence that I could perform in the face of adversity when people needed me to... which will hopefully transfer to other areas for the rest of my life.”

**PV:** What branch did you choose and why?

**HW:** “I am going to be an Army Aviator! I chose aviation because I love the versatility of the branch. You get the best of both worlds with aviation—you learn an incredibly unique skill and you also get the diverse personnel management and leadership you get in other branches of the Army.

“I am so excited to fly and be a part of the aviation community. Aviation’s motto is ‘Above the best!’ Meaning we fly above and support the best Soldiers the nation has to offer. I really like the idea of being a part of a greater battlefield picture as an aviator helping to expand the capabilities of the ground force.”
SEYER, cont’d from Page 9 ——

was physically or mentally, in overcoming this situation and drive toward graduation?
KS: “The biggest hurdle I have faced during this crisis was my wedding date. My fiancé Jack and I were supposed to get married on June 13. Now that our graduation date has moved (to June 13), and we have had to cancel all our plans. Finding a way to get married and incorporate both of our families, mine is in Texas and his is in New York, has been incredibly challenging.

“I had been quarantining in New York with Jack and due to the DOD travel restriction have not been home since spring break. We (got) legally married on May 24 and hope to hold the larger ceremony/celebration next summer. It was incredibly emotional and mentally challenging for me … that my family was not at my wedding.”

PV: What are you looking forward to the most when returning to West Point?
KS: “I am most looking forward to seeing my friends and ending our time as cadets together, as much as we can.”

PV: Historically, similar to your last two months, this will be a unique graduation that no class previously has experienced, what is your hope and anticipation for your graduation day?
KS: “I hope that graduation day is as normal as it can be. I just want to have that feeling of singing the Alma Mater for the first time as an alum and tossing our hats into the air.”

PV: Describe what tossing your hat in the air will mean to you, completing your journey at West Point?
KS: “Tossing my hat into the air will mean that I officially made it. I ‘defied the odds’ and made it work.”

PV: You were the SCUSA commander this past year … talk about that experience of meeting many different people from different universities and the issues that were talked about that jumped out to you?
KS: “SCUSA was one of the best things I did while at the academy. Being able to plan and organize such a large event not only taught me a lot about the Army’s way of preparing and executing events, but also gave me the opportunity to interact with some amazing people.

“The student delegates from civilian universities, the over 30 international delegates from 19 different countries, the senior delegates who are practitioners and professionals in their fields, and the amazing panelists and keynote speakers provided me the opportunity to hear many different perspectives about U.S. foreign policy.

“Also, to most civilian delegates we are their first interaction with the Armed Forces and to be able to provide them with an inside look that most people don’t get to cadet life was an amazing opportunity.”

PV: You were a corps squad athlete with the swimming and diving team, talk about your experience! Best dive/meet you had at Army?
KS: “My experience on the swim and dive team was tough. After not being able to compete my junior year and thinking I would never compete again, to end my senior year as a member of the Patriot League Championship team I couldn’t have had a better group of people who supported me no matter what.

“I owe everything to my AWSD teammates, my diving teammates, my athletic trainers Sam and Gillian, my strength coaches Joe, Grubb and Kourtney, and my coaches PJ and Chris. I would never have gotten on a diving board again if it hadn’t been for the encouragement and belief in me. I can’t thank them enough.

“The best meet I had at Army was my senior meet. Not because I dove great, because I don’t recall that I did particularly well, but because of what it represented.

“I worked my way back to a spot on the team and to compete again for the Army Women’s Swimming and Diving Team.”

“My West Point Experience”
In her own words … by Kathryn Seyer

Looking back now and reflecting on what my 47-month experience has been, I couldn’t imagine ending it any other way than celebrating with my classmates.

The phrase “cooperate to graduate” holds a special place in my heart as I had tons of family, friends, classmates, instructors, coaches and trainers around me through the finish line known as graduation and commissioning.

My first two years at the academy were pretty normal. I focused on school and eventually decided on majoring in systems engineering with a minor in aeronautical engineering. I was on the Army Women’s Swim and Dive team as a diver. It took me a little bit longer to balance school and being a corps squad athlete, but I eventually made it work.

I became friends with my company mates, the H-I Roothawgs. I even joined a club, the staff that puts together the annual Student Conference on U.S. Affairs (SCUSA). All in all, I settled into my daily routine and by the end of my yearling year I had placed at the Patriot League Conference Championships, made friendships I knew would last a lifetime, made the Dean’s List every semester, went to Israel as a Peace and Dialogue Leadership Initiative Fellow, been selected to be the Chief of Staff for SCUSA 70, had an awesome AIAD at Redstone Arsenal working with the Aviation Test Flight Directorate and was on my way to affirming my commitment to the academy and the Army.

Then I jumped off of a cliff, literally. The last weekend before my cow year, I decided to go cliff jumping. When I landed in the water, my foot hit a rock and shattered my calcaneus, my heel bone. I had to get airlifted out of the gorge I was in and taken immediately to a hospital.

I flew up to Walter Reed a couple of days later to get surgery and then headed back to West Point for reorganization week. When I got to Walter Reed, my surgeons gave me a chance at walking. I was devastated. I didn’t know what to do. My TAC officer sent me the affirmation counseling to sign a few days after the first hard conversation with the surgeons. That was the moment that I decided I would do whatever it took to give myself the opportunity to graduate.

I think my parents were a little nervous that my expectation was a little too high to put on myself, but they supported me and were there through it all. After waiting at Walter Reed for two weeks for the swelling in my foot to go down enough to operate, I told my surgeon that I had signed the affirmation paperwork and the only way I wouldn’t be graduating was if the Army decided to kick me out.

The surgery was as successful as it could have been and after waiting at Walter Reed a week post-op, I finally got the go-ahead to return to West Point. But this return had one condition, I could not walk for three-and-a-half months and I had to use a knee scooter to get around post.

I was a little nervous as I had already missed the first three weeks of the academic year, but I reminded myself of the commitment I made and went back to school. The next couple of months were tough. I felt like I should have listened to the surgeons and left the academy. The only thing I could focus on was school, and I really felt behind all of my classmates physically.

The progress was incredibly slow and by Christmas break I could only walk with a boot on for about 10 hours a day. Anything past that and I was writhing in pain. Over Christmas break, I had a serious conversation with my parents about leaving the academy. But, I decided to stick it out and see if I could make it to the end of cow year.

I leaned on my company mates heavily and they were there for me through thick and thin. I made it to the end of cow year, but still had to pass the real test — CLDT.

I thought CLDT was going to physically tough, and I was right, but even more than that it was emotionally tough. On June 6, 2019, our CLDT company and the Class of 2020 lost Cadet Christopher Morgan. Chris and I had recently become friends as I began dating a member of the wrestling team, my now fiance. Jack. Chris knew how to light up a room and I remember the fun we had down at the Firstie Club and bonfires at South Dock during the previous Grad Week.

Our class, and especially F Company, really came together that day and in the rest
I learned the true meaning of resiliency. Resiliency isn’t about just sucking it up, forgetting what you went through and continuing on. It’s about finding the strength to fight every second of every day, but also being willing to lean on the people around you.

I could not and would not have made it through CLDT without the support and encouragement from my entire platoon and company. They were there for me in more ways than one could have imagined. Seeing the love the wrestling team and the rest of my class had for Chris and for one another and their strength in the days after losing Chris, it gave me the hope that we were going to get through it and that he was with us and would be with us every day following.

We all made it through CLDT and the rest of the summer and eventually got to firstie year. After thinking I would never be able to dive again due to my heel, I got back on the boards and was able to compete at every meet for Army this season.

I was the commander for SCUSA 71 where I got to meet and talk with some of the smartest, most intellectually gifted people I had ever met. I bonded with my teammates like I never had before, made new friendships that will last a lifetime and began to understand the incredible responsibility that was waiting for us at the end of this road on May 23.

I thought that firstie year would just fly by and go off without a hitch. But, on Oct. 22, 2019, H-1 lost a member of our family, Kade Kurita. I again saw the strength of my classmates, company mates and cadets around West Point as we all grieved the loss of Kade. Kade taught me how to be intentional with every conversation you have with someone. Whenever Kade saw one of his friends, he always made sure to ask how they were whenever he could. He genuinely cared and would be willing to sit there for hours listening to you if you were having a bad day.

That is the biggest piece of leadership knowledge I gained at West Point, to always be willing to listen, and I learned it from Kade. As the weeks passed on, our class reached more milestones—Branch Night (ESSAYONS!), I finally took an IOCT (and passed on my first try!), 100th Night, Post Night and I couldn’t imagine how fast it seemed to fly by.

My diving career ended with a trip to the Patriot League Championships and my teammates and I were excited to spend the rest of our nights down at the Firstie Club.

I was looking forward to closing out my time at the academy with the people who had supported me through the disaster that was cow year and firstie summer. Then, COVID-19 happened and we lost the end of our firstie year.

I’m sure some Old Grads are saying it’s a fitting end for a class that only had half a plebe year, but either way it is a tough reality to face. Our class, and the academy as a whole, had to quickly adapt to online classes, virtual TAC leadership discussions and my personal favorite Zoom Happy Hours.

After eight weeks of West Point Online version, the Class of 2020 finally made it to the end of the academic year! But our time at West Point is far from over. Last week, we started heading back to the banks of the Hudson to end our time as cadets and transition into being second lieutenants.

I look forward to seeing my friends and getting to thank my instructors, TACs, trainers, mentors and coaches for helping me get to the finish line. My time at the academy was a lot different and a lot harder than I ever thought it would be, but I wouldn’t trade it for the world.

I met my best friends and the people who have shaped me into the leader and person I am today. Against all odds, I will be graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and commissioning as an Engineer officer in the U.S. Army!
“I think probably one of the best things that’s happened in the last 10 years was allowing women to compete to get into Ranger School,” Baker said. “Not everybody wants to do it, but guess what, that doesn’t mean that some people can’t. I just think that was a really important decision.

“It’s such an amazing change to allow women to compete at that level,” she added. “I think a lot of people don’t understand the perspective that you have when you don’t even have an opportunity to compete for the highest levels of leadership in the Army.”

Female cadets at West Point were first able to branch infantry and armor in the Class of 2016, a change Holland helped oversee as commandant. The new directive came after branches had already been assigned for the class, so Holland had to work with the Army to switch the branches for female cadets interested in following the newly available career paths.

The gates to Ranger School had already been opened to women in September 2014, even though serving in the infantry was not yet an option for them. In early 2015, 19 women arrived ready to take on the challenge. Among them was a 37-year-old mother of two.

Lt. Col. Lisa Jaster’s dad graduated from West Point in 1968, but it was not he who originally inspired her to look into the academy. It was Class of 1980 graduate Carol Barkalow, who first piqued Jaster’s interest. In 1990, Barkalow published the book “In the Men’s House,” which chronicled her time at West Point in the first class to include women and the first few years of her Army career. Soon after its publication, a copy founds its way into the hands of a 12-year-old junior high student living in a small town in Wisconsin.

Before she read the book, Jaster was a dancer. After reading it, she traded in her ballet slippers for running shoes and basketball sneakers because she felt those activities aligned more with what West Point would be looking for in a future cadet.

She also made sure her local congressman Tom Petri knew that he would be hearing from her when it was time for a nomination to the academy. Each year, starting in seventh grade and through her junior year of high school, Jaster cut out one of her school pictures and mailed it along with a letter to Petri’s office. She would talk some about Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield, but mostly she wanted Petri to know that she was graduating from high school in 1996 and would be looking for a nomination to West Point when the time came. When Jaster arrived at his office for a nomination interview, Petri had each of her photos together in an envelope.

She arrived at the academy on June 30, 1996, ending a six-year journey of preparation and embarking on a new one that would take her to South Korea, on multiple deployments to the Middle East and, eventually, to Ranger School as a 37-year-old member of the Reserve.

Jaster graduated from West Point in the Class of 2000, the 20th to include women. In the two decades between the Class of 1980’s graduation and her own, the academy had already become a considerably more inclusive place for women, she said. It was apparent that women were still in the minority, which became most obvious when she was forced to play multiple intramural sports because the teams had to meet their quotas for female participants. But it was the differing standards of fitness expected of men and women that Jaster said she found the most disappointing.

Jaster, who majored in civil engineering, branched engineers after graduation and started her career at Fort Stewart, Georgia. In 2002, she deployed to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. If she had been her father’s son, Jaster guesses she would have more directly followed in his footsteps—branch armor, earn a Ranger tab and then try and go special forces. But as a female officer, she had to get creative in mapping out her career including becoming a company commander in an ordnance company because there were no positions open to women in the engineers when she was stationed in South Korea.

She stayed on active duty until February 2007 before getting out of the Army to start a family. The plan was always to get back in, she said, and in 2012 she joined the Army Reserve as a captain. While serving in a Drilling Individual Mobilization Augmentee unit in 2014, one of those doors that had been closed to her was thrown open by her sergeant major, something she said she still has not forgiven him for.

“He sent me an email and said, ‘Did you know that the Army put out that women can go to Ranger School and if you’re interested send in your social security number,’” Jaster said. “I wrote him back and said, ‘No, I was not aware sergeant major. I don’t care. I like room service.’”

Her rejection fell on deaf ears as her sergeant major and her husband worked together to convince her to take a chance. Jaster’s argument was that “younger, fitter ladies” who had their whole careers ahead of them should be the ones attending the school, not a 37-year-old who entered West Point in 1996. Her husband’s argument, which was ultimately successful, was what if you don’t do it and no one is successful? What would she think then?

“It’s kind of that old quote, ‘Be the change you seek,’” Jaster said. “I don’t feel like my opportunities were stripped from me because I was a woman. I just believe my path is very different, because I am a woman.”

The announcement came out in late September 2014. She had to decide by the end of October, and then in early 2015 she and 18 other women arrived at Ranger
School. Because she served in an IMA unit, she didn’t have all the Army issued equipment needed for Ranger School, so she bought her own and showed up with a Mary Kay brand hand mirror, a CamelBak that was sort of the right camo pattern and other self-purchased equipment.

Arriving at the gates on day zero, she had that same “I get to be here” feeling of excitement she’d felt on Reception Day at West Point. But, unlike her classmates whose careers were riding on passing or failing the course, she had nothing to lose. If she passed, she proved what could be accomplished by a female Reserve officer whose Army career had started almost two decades earlier. If she failed, she would go home to her unit, her civilian job and a husband who believed in her even when she didn’t believe in herself.

The average Ranger School graduate is a 23-year-old male, but in October 2015 Jaster became the first female Reserve Soldier and third female overall to graduate from Ranger School.

“There was a level of this is terrible, because that’s how Army things are, but all in all it was an amazing experience,” Jaster said. “I had the privilege and I was allowed in all it was an amazing experience,” Jaster said. “I had some highs and some lows, but overall, I think if you asked me 20 years ago, would I do it again? I would have said no,” Hildreth said. “If you ask me now looking back, I’d say probably yes. That’s a matter of time and perspective that you can have looking back at maybe what were unpleasant experiences and reframing them and the way that it affected the rest of your life.”

Hildreth branched aviation after graduation, with the plan to work in aviation maintenance. Everyone in the branch had to learn to fly first, so she did before being stationed in South Korea.

Learning to fly was natural for Hildreth. Long before she had considered attending West Point and joining the Army, she had flown through the skies with her parents. They both had pilot licenses and owned a Cesna 172. That experience led her to the aviation branch and the desire to work in maintenance.

Hildreth finished her Army career at Hunter Army Airfield before transitioning to the civilian world. Her time as an aviation maintenance officer would not be wasted, though. After spending more than a decade working for General Electric, DynCorp and Lockheed Martin, in 2003 she returned to her aviation roots and started M1 Support Services with a business partner.

They built the company from the ground up and 17 years later have contracts with the Army, Navy and Air Force to repair planes and helicopters and employ more than 7,000 people throughout the world.

“It’s been very rewarding,” Hildreth said. “We competed very early as a small company against some very large companies and were able to provide a good case to whichever government agency we were bidding to that we could perform the work, even though we were smaller than some of our competitors.”

When McClain and Hildreth graduated from West Point, they were the first female West Point graduates to fly to space. Lt. Col. Anne McClain, Class of 2002, said it took 10,000 right decisions from the age of 3 to become the first woman to join the Long Gray Line, the first female Reserve Soldier and the first female West Point graduate to fly to space.

“To walk through those gates, and I wouldn’t said. “I had the privilege and I was allowed in all it was an amazing experience,” Jaster because that’s how Army things are, but all the blows that came from cadets and faculty predecessors had knocked down the doors to seize them. Instead of having to ask to be included, she was given a seat at the table.

And 40 years after they walked across the stage and received their diplomas from West Point, that is the legacy of the women in the Class of 1980. They showed up, took the blows that came from cadets and faculty alike, and refused to be beaten. They broke through a door that had been closed to the generations before them and walked through it allowing those who came after to not just walk, but fly.

(Editor’s note: This is the second in a three-part series. Part three next week will highlight current female cadets at West Point.)
COVID-19: MWR facility and program updates

The following services remain open or just recently reopened:
- Dog Parks—Please limit groups and cleanup after yourself.
- West Point Bowling Center—Open 11 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Monday through Sunday. Food delivery and pick up only.
- Round Pond Recreation Area and Lake Frederick Recreation Area—Permitted fishing and passive recreation only, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. For West Point fishing permits, create an online account at https://westpoint.isportsman.net.
- Morgan Farm Pet Grooming—Now accepting reservations. You must call ahead for an appointment at 845-938-3926. Also, if you’re PCS ing away from West Point this summer and will be checking out of your RV Storage site, Morgan Farm would like to hear from you. Contact Trish at Morgan Farm at 845-938-3926.
- (NEW) Stony Child Development Center—The CDC is open for key and essential customers only. Eligible patrons have received direct notification via their Chain of Command.
- (NEW) CYS Parent Central Services—Effective as of Monday, the CYS Parent Central Services is open by appointment only. To schedule an appointment, call 845-938-4458/0939/3969 between the hours of 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

The following services are closed or canceled (until further notice):
- MWR Administrative Offices.
- Army Community Service—Recommend using MilitaryOneSource.mil.
- Arts & Crafts—Classes are canceled. Virtual classes are available via the Arts & Crafts Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/westpointartsandcrafts.
- Auto Skills Center—Closed. Important note from New York State DMV: All N.Y. State motor vehicle inspections expiring after March 31 have been extended until further notice.
- BOSS.
- (UPDATED) CYS (All programs closed except for Stony CDC and Parent Central Services, see above)—All Youth Sports and Instructional programs for the Spring season are canceled. CYS staff is currently refunding/giving household credits in accordance with IMCOM guidance. SAC Summer Camp canceled through July 3. Re-assessment decision will be July 6 for remainder of summer.
- MWR Fitness Center.
- Intramural Sports.
- Leisure Travel.
- Outdoor Recreation—All camping/lodging reservations canceled until further notice. The Bull Pond lottery reservation is postponed until further notice.
- Recreational Swimming
  - Season opening postponed until further notice. This includes Long Pond Swim Area, Round Pond Swim Area, Lake Frederick Swim Area, and Crandall Pool inside Arvin Cadet Physical Development Center.
- Special Events:
  - West Point 5K/10K, Army Birthday Run, (June 13) canceled.
  - Check out our #MWRAtHome digital events/competitions on our Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/westpointfmwr.
  - Tronsrue Marksmanship Center—Closed, all classes are canceled.
  - West Point Club:
    - Dinner-To-Go is closed.
    - All events and personal reservations are canceled currently.
  - West Point Golf Course.
- Please check the MWR facebook page for updates as things progress at https://www.facebook.com/westpointfmwr.

COMMUNITY FEATURED ITEM
West Point Tax Center closed and IRS extension
The West Point Tax Center is officially closed. However, the IRS has extended the federal income tax filing and payment deadlines. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the IRS is automatically extending the federal income tax filing and payment deadlines until July 15.
This extension applies to all taxpayers, including individuals, trusts and estates, corporations and other non-corporate tax filers as well as those who pay self-employment tax.
Taxpayers do not need to file any additional forms or call the IRS to qualify for this automatic federal tax filing and payment relief.
Please note, the extension does not apply to state income tax filings or payments. Check with your state of residence for state income tax filing and payment deadlines.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS
LRC CIF appointments for retiring, ETSing military personnel
Due to COVID-19, all military personnel who will be retiring or ETSing and require clearing through the Logistics Readiness Center West Point Central Issue Facility (CIF) will be required to make an appointment by phone.
To make an appointment, call 845-938-4562 or 845-938-1835.

Logistics Readiness Center message
We regret to inform the community that the SMURF buses are indefinitely suspended due to lack of drivers. The Transportation and Maintenance Division will continue to provide a bus for handicapped patrons from 7 a.m.-6 p.m. To call for that service, call 938-4468 or 938-2018.
The taxi service was suspended at the beginning of the current COVID-19 crisis in an effort to mitigate the spread of the virus. We regret any inconvenience this may cause.

Legal Assistance Office information
Have a legal question? For example, are you wondering how you can legally terminate or extend a lease?
- Contact the West Point Legal Assistance Office. The Legal Assistance Office’s physical location is closed in response to COVID-19.
- Limited services are available by calling 845-938-4541.
- Leave a voicemail with your name, phone number and brief message describing your situation. You may also email marilyn.shenton@westpoint.army.mil for assistance. Messages are reviewed every two hours during normal business hours.

RiverFest canceled
Cornwall-on-Hudson’s RiverFest scheduled for June 7 at Donahue Park in Cornwall-on-Hudson is canceled. RiverFest, a celebration of the Hudson River and scenic Donahue Park held the first weekend in June, has been a Hudson Valley tradition for more than 20 years.
For details, contact Wynn Gold at 914-475-2582.
By Ryan Fairbrother
Army West Point Men’s Lacrosse

It began in 2008, when I was in the fifth grade. I attended an Army vs. Navy lacrosse game in Michie Stadium with my father and close family friend Rick Bifulco, who was the team captain in 1976. The first thing I remember from the trip was the cadets passing time between classes. It seemed so synchronized, so harmonious. Seeing each student wearing the same uniform and walking at a similarly brisk pace was almost mesmerizing.

The location on the Hudson River was beautiful, and the stone buildings made me feel like I was standing in history. It was overwhelming.

All that said, my lasting impression of West Point that weekend was the physical play and intensity of the Army lacrosse team. The men were warriors the way they played with such recklessness and such passion. I knew it was something special.

In the succeeding seasons, I was fortunate to spend many of my Saturdays as a water boy for the team. This was the perfect excuse to spend time with the guys on the field and in the locker room. No matter the outcome, there was an indescribable way in which they held themselves and treated each other. I tried my best to emulate them because they were exactly who I wanted to be.

As a teenager, I was your average high school lacrosse and soccer player from Pittsford, New York. Though Upstate New York is an area known for producing tremendous lacrosse players, I was never the most gifted or skilled athlete on the field. Instead, I earned my playing time through tough play and an unyielding effort. Such is the case, my path to becoming a West Point lacrosse player was different than most.

After trying to showcase myself at one or two prospect camps, I stopped attending because there was only one place I wanted to go. I was willing to do whatever it took for me to have “Army” written across the front of my jersey. I stayed determined with my calls, contacting the coaches as often as I could.

At times I thought I would not achieve my dream, but finally I received an offer uncommonly late in my senior year. I could not have been any more excited, yet nervous. I knew I was on my way.

Going to West Point was not a dream. It was a goal. I remember vividly walking with my father from the law department to the lacrosse facility. My dream was just beginning.

I took such enormous pride in being a part of the Army lacrosse family, especially in sharing that title with my teammates and alumni. All members putting in maximum effort to achieve our goals, both on and off the field.

We have gone through highs and lows, have endured laughs and cries, felt joy and sadness, and experienced both victory and defeat. All of these have made us extremely close. We have done all of these together, as a family.

Outside of athletics, the law department provided me the resources and support to stimulate a sincere interest in academics. The faculty and fellow “law dogs” took me in and treated me as one of their own.

My hometown friends and classmates Maddie and Gunnar have built a relationship that will last an eternity. My four-year roommates Alex and Ian have stood by my side every day, a support system that I will appreciate forever. I am forever thankful for the brothers and sisters I’ve gained through my West Point journey.

There is no dream without my family back home. My father, mother, sister, grandparents, aunts and uncles who have shown me unconditional love and supported me from the beginning. You enabled my success, and I will forever be in debt to you.

The past four years have flown by. Although the days sometimes were excruciatingly long, the time has gone by too fast. I would be willing to do almost anything to play in one more game, or participate in one more practice, even on a frozen tundra, the unbearable wind tunnel that is Michie Stadium—just to compete with my teammates.

To my fellow seniors: Matt, Alex, Connor, Peter, Sean, Miles, Bennett, Tom, Ethan, Anthony and Luke—I could not have done this without you. You are my brothers forever, and a part of my family. I have learned so much from all of you both individually and collectively as a group. Although our time was cut short, no one can take away what we accomplished together.

To my teammates, past and present, thank you for being there. When times were hard you knew when to push me, and you knew when to support me. You made me a great follower, so I could later lead. You made me a great teammate, so I could be a better man.

You set the tone which enabled the program’s success and demonstrated how to be a tight knit group, a family.

To my coaches, mentors, teammates, friends, and family, thank you for helping me live out my dream to be an Army lacrosse player, and a West Point graduate. For this, I am eternally grateful.

—Ryan Fairbrother, 24 (R)