



Local Artist visits DEOMI, shares military experiences, obstacles to graduating students.

Debi Pettigrew, a local Space Coast artist, second from left, was pleased to present a drawing she was asked to create by Army Sergeant Major Mike Crummedyo, far right, on behalf of EOARCC 19CD last October. Also pictured are Mr. Chris Brown, the acting DEOMI Commandant at the time, far left, and Chief Master Sergeant Gloria Weatherspoon, DEOMI's Senior Enlisted Advisor, second from right.

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Patrick AFB, Fla. During the most recent DEOMI Reserve Component Course graduation, local Artist Discovery Coach Debi Pettigrew presented a gift drawing of the current DEOMI facility that was first opened in January, 2004 here on Patrick Air Force Base.

"I received a phone call from Sergeant Major Mike Crummedyo, a student in DEOMI Class 19CD. He was looking for a local artist to do a rendering of the DEOMI Building to present to the new Commandant, Air Force Col. Aimee Storm, at the most recent Reserve Equal Opportunity Course," she said.

At this point, Ms. Pettigrew knew very little about DEOMI and the Sergeant Major knew even less about her military background.

That changed after their first conversation. "He told me that DEOMI (then known as the Defense Race Relations Institute) first opened in 1971, one year before I joined the Air Force in 1972," said Debi Rose, her last name at the time.

Without the resources available to get the appropriate education and degree, she decided to put her commercial artist career on hold.



This is the first in a series of four Woman's History Month features.

When she learned the GI Bill was available after her term of service, she didn't hesitate to join the Air Force, she said.

It turns out she was the first female operator in the field.

“To be honest, I wasn't surprised to be the only female in my first assignment with the 644th Radar Squadron, she said.

“At this point I told Sergeant Major about my experiences, including the obstacles I had to overcome as the first female manual radar operator in the Air Force Defense Command, previously an all-male dominated field in Aerospace Warning & Control Systems Operations.

“The first thing I had to deal with was the general belief by the men that I was not going to be able to do the job,” she said. “This was evident when they tried to put me in the office of the First Sergeant. to do administrative and secretarial work for him, despite the Air Force's investment in my training,” she said with a knowing smile.

“I often felt that being a military female working in a previously male-dominated field, I was always under a microscope and felt I had to outperform my colleagues to be accepted,” she added.

It seems to have paid off because in 1976, she was recognized on her annual appraisal.

- Sergeant Rose is an outstanding NCO whose services in the section are invaluable. She is exceptionally well versed in all aspects of her job and continually strives for more and better ways to get the job done.

- I have observed Sergeant Rose daily in the performance of her duties and concur that she is one of the most superior younger Sergeants that I have had the pleasure to work for me.

- Sergeant Rose supports the USAF Equal Opportunity Program.

She was then asked what benefits she thinks DEOMI brings to the Department of Defense.

“The short answer is everything positive and progressive,” she said. “When I sat in the audience of that 19CD Class, I was overwhelmed with the number of women from all branches of the military crossing the stage to receive their diplomas,” she added proudly.

“I couldn't help comparing that to my experiences of feeling so alone 47 years ago,” she said.

“Then you couple that with meeting the new Commandant and other female leaders and it was a very emotional moment for me realizing how far the military has come in terms of equal opportunity and treatment.

“In my view, it's as if the DoD grew from behind the EO/EEO culture to the forefront. Well done!” she said with conviction.

