

DR. PAMELA (WACEK) RODGERS '80



I received my congressman's newsletter announcing service academies would be accepting women in the Class of 1980. As I had no money for college and no family to pay my way, I reached out to his office.

His secretary asked me what service academy was my first choice. I knew about West Point but didn't know there were others. I asked her what the options were. She listed them all and I told her that I really

liked the ocean (never having seen it, mind you) and that I wanted to go with that Naval Academy place. A little more than four years later, they spit me out as a Navy ensign.

No legacy, no fancy story. Just a 17-year-old girl who was feeling patriotic and needed a way to pay for college.

SANDEE (IRWIN) YOUNG '80



It was a clear, crisp autumn morning in 1975. As I walked to my study room, I heard a voice behind me saying, 'Hold up, Sandee. I need to discuss something with you.' I turned, saw my guidance counselor, and smiled as he said, 'I think I have your college solution.'

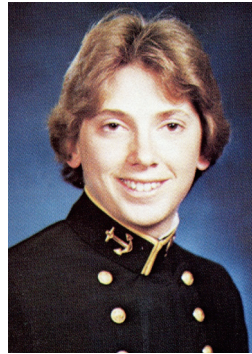
I listened with expectation. I thought about a full ride to college and the opportunity to serve our country as my father had done, and

the excitement grew. I really didn't think much about the fact that it would be the first year women would be attending the military academies. I thought I would get to go to college, and it would be free. I was 18, after all.

That night, I told my father that the military academies would be taking women the following year. And that I would be attending. Not that I was applying, that I would be attending. A bit bold, but again, I was 18. My father's face was at first full of shock. A second later, full of pride.

At that point, I did not care what I had to do to qualify, I was going.

SUSAN (STAPLER) CABRAL '80



My dad was the one who informed me (about the law change), as we attended a college night at my high school in the fall of 1975. He mentioned visiting the reps from the service academies that night.

I asked him 'What are service academies?' He responded, 'You know like the Air Force, Navy and West Point.' I replied, 'Oh, I've heard about West Point. No on that one!'

We went to the table representing the Naval Academy.

The brochure of the beautiful sailboat with the spinnaker and the water and scenery. It drew me—mostly because I grew up in the flat, desert-space of West Texas—but also because it was so vastly different from what I knew, and it was far away.

My dad asked me a few days later if I was willing to apply; and if so, he would put all his efforts helping me. I said yes. I began the application shortly after that college night.

USNA told me that if I didn't hear by 15 May, I was not selected. That date came and went—and no notification. I prepared to go to the University of Oklahoma. However, in late May, the admissions office called me and said I received an appointment to the Naval Academy, and I needed to let them know within a week. It took a few days, and counsel from my dad (try it for a year; and if you don't like it, come home) before accepting the appointment. ⚓



Sandee (Irwin) Young '80 was unwavering in her commitment to attend the Naval Academy. She told her father that she was only waiting for the law to change. She arrived in Annapolis on I-Day with the Class of 1980.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDEE (IRWIN) YOUNG '80