

JOANNA COLLINS

S: Today is the tenth day of October, 1990 and here in the Coast Guard Academy Museum, I have Joanna Collins, a member of the class of 1987, ready to tell why she entered the service; what's been good, what's been bad, what she thinks about her career.

J: I originally wanted to be a ballet dancer and one day my ballet teacher set me down and started telling me why that wasn't going to happen. I appreciated her honesty. She went through a whole list of things. So anyhow, I had to think about a new career the day that happened in my freshman year of high school. I attended Our Lady of Mercy Academy Laurelton Hall which is a Catholic all-girls school down the road at Medford, Connecticut.

I started thinking about other things. Maybe I wanted to be a doctor, but I really hate blood. Then I thought about my grandfather who was a Navy Career officer, retired a captain, and was a pilot in several wars and I always enjoyed visiting him and my grandmother down in Virginia Beach where they were stationed toward the end of their career. I liked his friends and his stories. It sounded like something challenging, so I started considering Annapolis.

My family and my grandparents were both surprised about this change of careers, but my grandparents were excited that I was pursuing this and my parents were not wanting me to get my hopes up too high because they read the bulletin and saw how competitive it was to get in.

I started doing all the paperwork for that and set up a visit to see what the naval academy was like. My father suggested I look at the Coast Guard Academy as well. To tell you the truth, I had never heard of the Coast Guard Academy, even though I only lived 65 miles away. So I started giving the Coast Guard Academy a strong look. I made some calls, visited, talked to as many people as I could, some of the

admissions officers. It was very easy to make up my mind once I saw the Academy and met the people that were here. It was the place for me.

The naval academy was a bit overwhelming, just in size. You talk to one midshipman who said the women had it terrible there, during the summer cruises we went to France and Spain and the women had to stay on small boats near the shore. You talk to another midshipman and he'd say the women had it great, they got all the good shore jobs and prevents us from getting them. So, I really started to see you couldn't win, not to mention the fact that they couldn't find my paperwork when I went to the admissions office. I just didn't feel a very friendly feeling when I was down there. When I came to the Coast Guard Academy it was completely different. The admissions officers spent a lot of time with me. I got to talk to a lot of cadets and they seemed very enthusiastic about what they were doing.

S: Did you talk to the female cadets as well as the male?

J: Yes. I met all sorts of people and I just felt like I was part of it, even though I was just visiting for one day. I remember I was in a swim class and I got to be on one of their relay teams and I went to cross country practice. It was just more what I was used to going to a small high school.

S: All of this in one day?

J: I ended up having two overnight visits at the Academy. My parents came up for a dinner at the officers club and they got to meet the superintendent. My mother has a funny story: she was talking to Mrs. Nelson, the superintendent's wife, while they were in the bathroom in their separate stalls. That really impressed her; she thought it was very informal.

My mind was made up, and even though I knew I wanted to go to the Coast Guard Academy, my grandparents were not too pleased with my decision because they felt the Naval Academy was much more prestigious and that it would be crazy for me to give up that type of

opportunity. So they both really tried to talk me out of the Coast Guard Academy.

I got into the Academy in January of '83, which was fairly early to hear about college so I knew right away. I also heard from the University of Connecticut, which was really my back up school, earlier than that, but I still hadn't heard from Duke or William & Mary or the Naval Academy. I told Duke and William & Mary I was already accepted, but I waited to hear from the Naval Academy, just to make everyone happy, and I did get accepted, but I let them know right away I had made up my mind. I think my grandfather started to accept it. He couldn't have been more proud when he presented my commission four years later at the graduation ceremony. They've seen what I've done so far in the Coast Guard and the amount of responsibility you have right away and the fact that we don't really know what's going to happen with the DOD services with all the cutbacks. I think he realizes now that I made a good decision. Also, one of my other reasons is that the combat exclusion act doesn't effect the women in the Coast Guard. I felt like I was starting out on an equal basis. I wouldn't have wanted to go through four years at an academy and then only have limited choices. I think now that they're both happy that I'm doing what I'm doing. That's nice.

Even though I had that part of the military in my family, I still didn't really have the idea of what some of the things meant. For instance, a friend of my grandfather's wrote me a recommendation to the naval academy and sent me a letter and I thought the stationery was really nice because it had a blue flag with three stars on it. When I came to the Academy for reporting-in day, I was so enthusiastic, and I saw a cadet and said- Hi, my name is Joanna Collins. Little did I know it was a second class cadet who was about to pounce on us. He didn't want to burst my bubble just then, so he said- Hi, I'm Tim Atkins, nice to meet you. Years later, he reminded me of that story. He didn't quite know how to handle me.

I can remember at the end of reporting in day, swearing in. They hadn't really taught us all the military protocol, and I was too excited to even think about it. I remember seeing my grandfather talking to Admiral Nelson and going up and saying hi instead of saluting. My grandfather noticed; the Admiral didn't mention anything.

I was very enthusiastic and I really enjoyed swat summer. It was the most challenge I had ever felt, like I was finding what my limits were. Making a lot of friends. And it was nice to be close to home, although the first year, I wasn't always going home. I was trying to do my best and stay ahead of things as much as possible. My parents were always very supportive. In fact, they didn't want me to stay if I didn't want to, so they encouraged me to come home, saying if I didn't like it there, they'd be happy to have me at home. It was probably reverse psychology, because then I'd say it was great and I didn't want to go home. Some parents said: if you leave the academy, don't try to come home, and they're the people who didn't want to stay. So I don't know if they did it intentionally, but it worked pretty well.

When we did recruiting leave at the Academy, we had the chance to go to our own high schools over Thanksgiving and spring breaks, so I always had a chance to go back and visit my high school. One of the first visits, I found a lot of very worried nuns who had been saying prayers for me because they had heard that every morning you had to take cold showers at the academy. I don't know where they heard that, but they were all praying for me. I hope their prayers didn't go to waste. I was glad I got back to set the story straight. I have gone back quite a bit over the years and as an admissions officer now, I go back once a year. I've been trying to continue the tradition, but so far haven't got any of the Laurelton ladies to come to the Academy. I was the first person from my school to apply a military academy.

As I said, I was doing ballet in high school, and during my senior year, I decided to do an organized sport just to get the feeling of a team spirit. So I ran cross country because I always ran on my own anyhow. That was a lot of fun. The coach we had was a nice man with about fourteen kids of his own. Runs marathons. Bikes across country. Even though I wasn't a star athlete, he kept up with me during my time at the Academy, writing letters. He even came to my graduation and when I was running cross country, he brought the team up to the Academy to watch one of the meets. I did run cross country my first year here, and then I went into the gymnastics season. I didn't finish that; I sprained my ankle.

The following year, I decided to row crew, because we had this very dynamic coach who is in the Coast Guard, I'm not sure if he is a full commander now. His name is Ted Hanline. He was recruiting and his enthusiasm was pretty contagious, so I starting rowing crew. I did that for about a year a half. It was a very tough sport. You work hard and it's exhausting. A lot of technique, working as one unit with eight people, trying to match each persons moves, really make the most out of each stroke. With the cocks man yelling at you. That was great and the facilities were so incredible here, especially the indoor rowing tank. You got strong workouts throughout the whole year. That was a lot of fun.

I did that while studying and trying to do well in my studies as a math major, which was really a great major to chose. I looked through all the majors and eliminated the others. I knew I didn't want to be an engineer, I knew I didn't want to be a government major because I'd heard they had to write a lot of papers. Why be a management major because you're getting taught management skills at the Academy? So I took math just because I was good at it and it was the only one left. I had never seen a computer before, so I got to find out about them and do a lot of programming. I found it was a good major because basically, it taught you how to solve problems and that's what I like- coming out with the right answer. During my summer program after my first year, I went out on Eagle for five weeks and that was really great.

S: Was it a foreign cruise?

J: Well, Bermuda and Canada are a bit foreign. We started down in Bermuda in the tall ships race to Halifax, Nova Scotia and that was the race in '84 where one of the tall ships went down in a storm and the Eagle was called to try to rescue anyone. The storm was so strong, the wind was blowing so hard that even with the engines on full we were making no headway whatsoever. The storm really came out of nowhere, so we were without much preparation, everyone staggering up to the decks. The rain was coming down in sheets, felt like bullets hitting your skin. It was really miserable. And the sails were just ripping like sheets in the wind. The Eagle was knocked down, she came back up and a few people had some close calls during that storm. Gwen Kiley and John

Bergan and I were just hanging on. John was a big guy and had his arms around both of us. That was all we could do. We just waited out the storm. You could see the big waves coming over the deck and your friends down there washing around, not being able to hold on. It was scary. The Eagle did get us through it. Unfortunately, at least half of the lives on the other tall ship were lost. It was the Canadian Coast Guard ship nearby that helped.

We gave a lot of interviews after that. Unfortunately, my parents were home watching the news. My father was sitting there and my mother came in just in time to hear tall ship goes down, lives lost. My mother was becoming hysterical. She said: that's my daughter out there! He realized that it was another ship.

I also spent five weeks on the coast guard cutter *Galanton* that summer. A high point of that was the drug bust that we got, somewhere around the coast of North Carolina. There was a seventy foot converted shrimper and once we went on board it was easy to find 15000 pounds of marijuana. I got to be on the custody crew and we took our prisoners off and we drove the ship behind the cutter. We had two people per watch, one person at the helm and other at the radio doing checks with the cutter. I felt a bit like a pirate, with drugs on board, and you kind of had your own ship.

S: You were independent but following the Galanton?

J: Eventually, we got towed, but the first few two days we were out there independently. The person who was on my watch session was then commander Jim Smith who is now a Captain. He was one of the management instructors at the Academy. We had one tape to play the whole time, it was an Eagles tape. At night, no one wanted to sleep on the racks in this boat because it was really disgusting, so we just slept out on the deck. There was a big pile of line in the middle. The commander and I were on this big pile of line out in the open air. He was about 6'5" so I don't know he fit on it. Every five minutes you'd feel a wave crash over all of us and by the time we woke up, we had an inch of salt on us. There were no mirrors there, so we didn't realize how bad we looked until we finally made it back to the cutter and everyone looked at us like we'd

just come back from hell. Meanwhile we had a great time because when we weren't on watch, we were just laying out in the sun, listening to music. That was quite an experience. My first Coast Guard mission.

And then I came back for my second year. I was involved with rowing throughout the whole year. Had some nice times during some leave periods. I took advantage of the max flight that was available to us and took some trips. I should mention while I was on Eagle that summer and the tall ships race, I met a midshipman from the Royal Dutch Navy and we wanted to see each other again, so I subsequently took a few trips to Holland and he came here. That was really nice. His dad was a Colonel in the army in Holland and he had a chalet in the French Alps where I went skiing with his family. That was one of the nice things about the tall ships race, we met people from all over the world who were doing the exact same thing we were. The Soviet cadets, Polish, French, even if you didn't speak the language, you were able to communicate pretty well with everyone.

When I came back to school, third class year was probably my worst because you didn't have any responsibility. It wasn't like a fourth class, where you have to worry about everything and were constantly busy. And it wasn't like second class, where you're in charge of fourth class cadets. Third class, you're just expected to observe and pick up leadership style and I really didn't like that. I'd rather be doing something active. It was my least favorite year at the Academy, although you could kind of watch out for fourth class. I couldn't wait until I was second class and actually had a squad of my own to lead.

The summer before second class year started, I got to do cadre on board the Eagle. That was great because the fourth class had five day cruises on board the Eagle. I chose that over Chase Hall cadre, because I felt that the Eagle was more of a real teaching experience. We showed them how to do the different watches, how to bring in the sails, to do bagging wrinkles for the shaping gear. It was nice to be able to pass on something that you really enjoyed and cared about. During my time on the Eagle, I started being able to do some break in watches as an OOD; I got a taste of that also. So I knew then that I'd definitely be back on the Eagle as a first class cadet for five weeks.

During the rest of the summer, I was down in Fort Lauderdale for two weeks at a small boat station. That was very exciting, because Fort Lauderdale is always a busy station as far as search and rescue goes and law enforcement. Every other day we would switch- one day we'd be on a search and rescue boat, the other day we'd be on a law enforcement boat, on which you'd go out for eight hours patrols and do a lot of boardings, mostly in the inter coastal waterways. It was a good experience to interact with the people down there. Some people were getting boarded by everyone: customs, CEA, the marine police, the Coast Guard, sometimes you felt a little of their frustration. A lot of people were thankful and realized that what we were was very important. I got a lot of comments about women being in the Coast Guard now. So I guess we taught them in more than one way, but mostly it was just making sure they had all their safety equipment. We didn't have any drug busts. I met a few crazy boson mates who were driving forty-one footers. Going down the inter coastal waterway much too fast with no emergency in sight, causing a wake to go up either side. I'm sure we didn't drown any dogs or cats, but we could have. Hot shots. A lot of search and rescue calls were people who needed to be towed in. We did have one call for a boat that was on fire. We got to the scene of that just as the fire was put out. During our off time it was nice because the station is right on the edge of a national park with a lot of pine trees and also a beach. I never really experienced a regular Fort Lauderdale trip because I had a nice beach to go to right outside the gate. The station down there is kind of like a resort area, it's really gorgeous. Somehow I thought officers got to be on forty-one footers, but figured out that would not be a possibility.

I went to damage control school in Philadelphia at the navy base and went down to Mobile. The flight portion of our summer was down in Alabama was really good and helped me make my decision on aviation. When I first entered the Coast Guard Academy, that's what I was planning to do, because my grandfather was an aviator and although I'd never been in any type of plane in my life, I knew that's what I wanted to do. I got a lot of flight time, because the week-ends, when most people went down to New Orleans, I stayed to see if I could get more flight time. So I ended up getting about ten and a half hours, which included time on a 52, flight on a 65, flight on the falcon. My conclusion

was that I enjoyed it, I found flying very relaxing, but I didn't have that top gun, Tom Cruise feeling I thought I was supposed to have and I enjoyed being on ships more. It did give me a good respect for what the pilots do, but it wasn't for me.

S: Did you have any time in helicopters ?

J: Yes, I actually got to fly the 52, which is getting phased out right now. It's a smaller one pilot helicopter and I actually got to land on the water, hover, take off. The pilot was sitting next to me in case anything went wrong, but I flew it myself. That was a great summer. When I came back for the school years, I was squad leader and thinking back on it, my assistant squad leader and I were pretty tough on our fourth class. Not in a mean way, but in a way that would help them improve. I can remember doing push ups with them and reciting the mission and memorizing in dots. In some ways we got very involved in their lives; we didn't just inspect them everyday in formation. We were really concerned about how they were doing and making sure they were doing their best.

That year, I rowed crew part of the time, then I got together indoor soccer team with a group of women. We scheduled some meets with local colleges. It was an informal thing that we did. It was fun to try something new. I had always wanted to play soccer, it was a lot of fun.

My following summer, I went on the Eagle for five weeks, that was for the statue of liberty celebration in New York Harbor. Went up to the Halifax, Nova Scotia and then sailed down into New York Harbor. We were the first ship into the harbor and Walter Cronkite was on board. I always had a lot of respect for him and I had my camera, but I was too embarrassed to ask him if I could take a picture with him, so I gave my camera to a friend and told her I would go stand close to him and when she could get us both in, she should take it. So I started nonchalantly scooting in next to him, and he looked over and asked if I wanted my picture taken with him. And I said Yes Sir. He had a drink in his hand- the first time I ever saw anybody with a drink in their hand on the Eagle. I also think he was the only one who got to bring his wife on board for a trip. Anyway, he put his arm around me, I put my arm around him, and

the picture came out just great. I made a million copies and sent it as part of a Christmas card and signed it with love, Walter and JoAnna.

Part of that trip coming into New York Harbor, I was on the radio trying to keep all the smaller boats away from us, and the rest of the time I was in charge of the navigation plot detail, taking three minute fixes. All summer our team was not getting very good fixes, but all of a sudden we had these great things to shoot like the statue of liberty, the empire state building, and we got perfect fixes all the way into New York; that was pretty rewarding. We pulled into south street seaport and I remember seeing mayor Koch there, a very colorful person. I waved up at him and he waved back. The time that we spent in New York was incredible, they really pulled out the red carpets for us.. We had a big party at the Palladium. Somehow I managed to walk into the party where all the captains of the tall ships were being entertained, waiters in tuxedos walking around with hordoes. champagne. I wondered where all the younger people were, but I hung out there for awhile. Then I found out where the party was, which was a huge room with screens mounted on the ceiling showing the tall ships coming in and different scenes. It was very dramatic. There was dancing and they had great fireworks.

When I graduated, I went to the Coast Guard Cutter Buttonwood, a 180' buoy tender, about 1945 vintage. She's an old ship, but in great shape. My first CO was Terry Newell, who is a commander now, that was only for a short time. We had a very colorful mustang come on board named Denny K. Daniel. He was well known throughout the Eight District because he had worked his way up on all the different types of small and finally made it as lieutenant commander and CO of a 180 but he had been in the flak fleet all of his life. You either loved him or hated him and I was definitely on the loved him side. He did a lot of screaming and swearing. He drank coffee and smoked cigarettes constantly. He was a bit overweight. He was very funny- he'd tell stories about different weight classes, so to speak. After about three months, he had a heart attack while we were on one of our buoy trips, so he ended up retiring and we got another CO. Another funny story about Danny K. Daniel, his big thing was cleanliness. His term for dirt was mocas, which stands for musty, odorous, something. If you ever heard this call over the

IMC system you knew that was from the captain making a mocas call. So the mocas team had to be on alert with their mocas attack equipment and they'd run around and clean everything. It was an enjoyable way to clean up the ship. He's doing well now, although before he actually retired, he'd come to the ship and say how the doctor wanted him to exercise and he had one of those instruments that you attach to yourself to see how far you walk and he would walk to the refrigerator and back to the couch to add up mileage.

My next CO was Kevin Eldrige, who is a commander now. I learned a lot from him. He seemed like a leadership school put in action. I had two XOs, Ed Merkel and Dave Crankin. It was good, I learned something different from each person. It was nice being on a smaller ship because the second half of my tour I got to be operations officer and that was a great experience. It's not exciting and glamorous, although we did have a couple of search and rescue cases, it's really a hard working type of ship that goes out and does specific tasks, and that may be more rewarding than going on patrol when sometimes nothing happens. I got a lot of ship handling experience.

I wasn't sure what I wanted to do from there, if I wanted to go XO on a 110, but in a way I felt like I wanted a break after two years. The only good land job I saw on the list was at the Academy as admissions officer. Throughout my time as a cadet, I was always recruiting for the Academy, going to college nights, talking to prospective candidates. I never realized you could do that for a few years as an actual job. I already know I was good at it and I liked it and it wasn't far from home. So I pretty actively sought the job and got it. I've been here for over a year and it's a lot of fun because you get to travel and go to college fairs, give a lot of presentations, there's interaction with people. You have a big say in the make up of the incoming class. The fourth class who came in this summer were the first ones I had a lot to do with.

What made it even nicer was I went on the Eagle this summer with fourth class cadets, so I got to put faces with all the names. A lot of them were surprised when I knew what their first names were. Some I knew the middle initial. Our short cruise went from Newport, Rhode Island, to Portsmouth New Hampshire, back to New London. I did a lot of studying Eagle seamanship before I got on, there was a lot to remember, all the

lines, all the sails, all the commands. I didn't think I was going to have any problems with the normal handling, because I had done that a year before, but the Eagle is a lot more because you have to know about driving a normal ship plus what to do with 25000 square yards of sail. So I had my work cut out for me. I did a lot of break in watches for the first week and I felt ready to get qualified again and I did. It was pretty fun to have the big Eagle out of port from Portsmouth New Hampshire. I can always remember Captain Cummings standing up on top of the pilot house, bringing the ship in and out of port and it felt great to be up there, the captain on one side, the pilot on the other. Everyone is watching you, and the Eagle is so tremendous. That was great and I realized that I missed being on a ship. I definitely plan on going back to sea for my next tour after this, possibly back as an XL on a buoy tender 180.

S: You can you influence your next assignment to a considerable degree?

J: I think so. I've already talked to the detailers a couple of times and they said that I would have a good chance for that. It' on my dream sheet.

S: In all your seamanship, did you learn to -- a number of bollings?

J: We did the knot tying as cadets, to tell you the truth, that was not one of my strong suits.

S: Did you know there is a Spanish bolling and a French bolling? Have you ever heard of the dragon bolling? I think one of your swab groups might be interested in that. You might even catch one or two of your senior officers on that one.

J: Probably would. Another nice thing about being at the Academy are all the facilities that are here. Being involved with the cadets and the things that they do. I've been helping some of the women who've been having problems passing the PE test. Also working with the Genesis Club, it's mostly cadets with some ethnic background to do activities that they

would normally be involved with, like going to the African dance ensemble which is going to be performing tonight.

S: Are all the cadets required to attend such seminars?

J: The only thing that the cadets are required to do is two sports, either intercollegiate or intramural. The clubs are not required.

S: That is an opportunity to widen the perception of the individual cadet, to recognize that there are other cultures within the US and within the Coast Guard.

J: I don't know if that's the premise, I think the premise is more for the ethnic cultures to do things they enjoy - kind of a social club. I think I'm the only Irish person there, as one of the advisors. Some of the things they do, like the Hispanic heritage luncheon, a lot of cadets came to that.

S: About how many women are in the four classes?

J: Well, we have about 950 cadets, and I would say about fourteen percent.

S: About 125 women, with more in the fourth class?

J: That sounds about right. We have about 17 % in this years fourth class- one of our higher percentages. Our goal is to graduate 20% women. The main way to reach that goal is to get the word out to more women that this is an opportunity. because most women don't consider a military career. We need to let them know about it at a younger age so that they don't get talked out of staying in math and sciences while in high school. We are trying to increase the percentage of women and minorities at the Academy. That's what I spent a lot of my time doing as admissions officer.

S: I'd like to take along about half a dozen propaganda sheets with me for some high school people in my town.

J: We have a small pamphlet that gives info about the Academy and something to send in for more if they're interested.

S: If all the women in the service are as enthusiastic as you appear to be we will all greatly benefit.

J: I tended to overlook some significant things that happened as a first class cadet, one of which was at the beginning of the school year I lost one of my sisters. That was a very difficult situation and I definitely saw the Coast Guard family in action at that point. I got so much support from everyone at the Academy and there were many Coast Guard people at the funeral. Sometimes, as a cadet, you don't realize it's there until you really need it. Sometimes it seems cruel and impersonal because it's military and everything is towards training.

When I came back from emergency leave, I found I was a company commander for the next make. First I was regiment activities officer, which was great fun, you have three stripes and you're on regimental row, and I got to plan all the fun events for the corps, working closely with the social director. We had some fun events for the first class cadets. Being company commander was a major learning experience for me, to really be responsible for the 100 cadets in my company. Helping them if they got in trouble, encouraging them, recognizing people who had done well. I could put my own personality out there as a company commander. I worked closely with the company officer who was Lieutenant Eric Chapman, who is the CO of a 180 right now. There were a few times when I had to be unpopular with my classmates, but in general it was a great experience.

For the honor make, I got regimental activities officer again, so that was a lot of fun, especially graduation day, marching in the head of the whole corps with the regimental staff. It was a nice way to end my cadet career. So first class year was good, my experience on the Eagle, including getting qualified as an OOD that year, experience as company commander, although I had a lot more to learn. The Academy taught

you as much as they could in four years, but when you get out there, you learn twice as much in just a few months. Especially on a 180, there's only three junior officers on board, so you end up with a third of the collateral duties. By the time I left there I had about every collateral duty: morale officer, commissary officer, exchange, publications. You're about as well-rounded as you can get.

There are also things you couldn't be prepared for. One night one of my cooks wives came in and said she didn't want to go home because he had beaten her. She had several little kids. You're the OD in charge of this guy. There are situations like that where all you can really do is try to make them feel comfortable, talk to the XO, get them home safely and order him onto the ship for the night. The ending of that story was good because we scheduled them for family counseling and they ended up working out their problems.

In the Coast Guard we really get involved with our employees and that doesn't happen in the real world. I found myself figuring out financial problems for people and doing a lot of career counseling. I really like the interaction with people. People in the Coast Guard tend to have their hearts in the right spot. They don't mind spending extra time, making sure they're okay.

The other thing I've been able to do here at the Academy, because my hours are fairly normal, I've been able to go to night school. I'm getting my masters in business administration with emphasis in human resource management. I felt that was a good degree to get for a Coast Guard officer, because the main things are managing people and money. It's a lot of work and when I go on my recruiting trips, I have a lot of homework to bring with me, but its definitely worth it. I was ready to get into the academic setting for awhile after I came off the ship, especially in a graduate program. In my program, everyone is a professional going at night, so you learn just as much from the other people in the class as you do from the professor. The Hartford Graduate Center where I go, two of the professors were department heads at the Academy. There's also a retired navy captain who is a professor. A lot of military people, as well as civilians, with a lot of experience, so it's a good environment. I like doing it on my own so I can chose where I go after this.

The other aspect of my life that I haven't touched on but has a connection to the Coast Guard because they've been helping me to support my athletic endeavors in Olympic styleweightlifting. Two events in that sport are snatch and clean and jerk. You take a barbell with weights on it and bring it over your head, in one or two motions. I've been training for that over the past year. I went to the nationals this past May and the US military sports grant program gave me money to get me to Michigan and back.

S: How did you do?

J: I did well; I got a trophy about as tall as I am. There's not large numbers of women in the sport, so sometimes you may not have that much competition, but the women in the sport are very high quality. At a meet I went to, a woman in a higher weight class lifted the second most nationally in her weight class. A woman in a weight class below mine who was at the Olympic festival this year and got a bronze medal.

I think it's ridiculous to get a trophy that huge. Sometimes you may not have beat anybody, you may just have been competing yourself in your own weight class. What I get out of it is trying to improve my personal record. It gives me a goal when I'm at the gym working out. I know I'm working towards a competition. It involves a lot of technique, which keeps it interesting. It's nice to have a job where you can pursue other interests. The facilities here at the Academy are just great for training. My goal would be the 1992 Olympics. If I get that far, I'll be very happy. That will be the summer I get transferred.

S: You're counting on a four year tour here?

J: Three. I definitely would like to go to the Olympic Festival next year. I placed fourth in my weight class this past year and you had to place first through fourth to go to the festival, so next year I should be able to go to that, my more immediate goal.

S: You are making records not only academically but physically.

J: It's nice that the Coast Guard has supported me in doing that, when I was at the nationals I represented the Coast Guard. A lot of other people don't get that kind of support from their employers or in their communities.

S: Lots of luck to you, young lady and I thank you for sharing your recollections of a short but active career. I wish you luck in all your endeavors. I don't think you need luck, you just need another good wish.