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COMM 413

13 April 2021

Honoring Chief Kersey

Chief Jennifer Kersey is a retired Chief Master Sergeant in the United States Air Force who has served for thirty years. Through those years, she has been a part of a number of teams and organizations. She served as a part of the Superintendent 4th Mission Support Group, Security Forces Squadron, 9th Air Expeditionary Task Force-Levantine, the 437th Airlift Wing Security Forces Manager, an Air Combat Commander, and a Commander Chief. Chief Kersey holds the same title now, but she is serving in a role that is completely different than any of her previous positions. Due to her love for the Air Force, she couldn't seem to completely walk away from the military in her civilian life. She now serves here at The Citadel in first battalion as Bravo Company's TAC officer. "I love the cadets here. I love working with and for them and learning more about them every day."



Chief tells me about her time in the service as a woman and how that affected her in and outside of the Air Force. We briefly spoke about the trials that she faced and how she felt that she had to prove herself to her male counterparts. She explained to me how much she cared about the respect of those around her and how much more she valued the essence of teamwork.

As she began to move up in ranks within the Air Force, her work ethic and character spoke for themselves. She was awarded for her commitment and passion for her country, branch, and her fellow airmen and women. When asked what she would tell a young girl looking to be in a leadership position in or out of the military, her answer was golden: “Work hard. You don’t have to be the best— just do the best you can in whatever you can. The people around you will appreciate your contribution to the team, men and women alike.” This response speaks volumes to her perspective and drive in everything that she is involved in.



While in the service, Chief met and married her husband, who is currently a Lieutenant Colonel Infantry officer in the United States Army. The two of them married early in her career and have two children together. After being temporarily stationed in Charleston on her last mission, Chief Kersey and Lieutenant Kersey decided to plant roots here in the Lowcountry and keep their family here. Soon after that decision was made, Chief began considering another tough choice. “I knew it was time. Yes, it was hard, but in some ways, it felt right,” she explained when asked about her process of retirement. She told me that she was surprised by

how unnatural her transition was back into civilian life with her family. She describes how weird it felt seeing her family every day and being able to make breakfast for her kids in the morning. Chief felt as though the normal seemed so out of place and that the military life that they had adapted to as a family was uncomfortably shifting: “At first it was weird because we weren’t used to seeing each other so much. My husband and I made schedule for certain things and when I retired it was weird.”



Looking back on her career and life, Chief tells me that she would not trade a bit of it for the world. “I got into the military on accident. I knew I wanted to go to college, but my single mother could not pay for it. I felt like contracting would be the only way for me to get my education. I planned on doing my five years and getting out, but I fell in love and 25 years later



I’m happy I did.” She feels as though the things that she faced in the military have effectively prepared her for the life that she knows now as a civilian. She sat in front of me and seemed to have nostalgic love in her eyes that told a story of their own. In this interview, Retired Chief

Master Sergeant Jennifer Kersey shows us the importance of being grounded and confidently shouldering the struggles that life throws at us.

