

being fabulous

# ...doing the ~~man~~ mundane

Ginger Rogers was quoted as saying, "I did everything Fred Astair did. Only backwards and in high heels."

As women, for generations, we have also acquired a reputation for being versatile, adaptable and able to "get the job done" with or without the correct tools.

Let me introduce myself. I'm Julie, the third child of four. Growing up as a middle child with siblings who had 4.0 averages or were good in sports or just blessed by being born the baby, I always searched for attention. I never really felt like I fit in and felt average with my grades in school and within my own family. Any attention I received was often as a result of acting goofy, and I seemed to relate better with males than females.

For years, at Halloween I would wear my dad's old Army fatigues. I think in the back of my mind I knew the military was my calling. After not meeting the Navy's entry score requirements, I looked into the paperwork and qualifications for the Army and was sworn into the United States Army on September 2006 a few months before I turned 18 years old.

Already insecure about my grades, my self-worth and what others saw in me,

I refused to let the short list on my recruiters job opportunities keep me from becoming all that I knew I could become. I saw cook, mechanic and a few other

things, but then I saw it: military police. I thought to myself, "I am going to be as hard core

as I possibly can." So I agreed to enlist for five years active duty serving as a military police officer. Let the challenges begin.

I left for basic training in Missouri, 13 days after my high school graduation. At 18, I was a scared little girl, headed into unfamiliar territory, on a plane for the first time in my life, unsure of what would become of me. Five months after arrival through participating in the training exercises, I went from overweight and not being able to run one lap around the track to running two miles in 18 minutes and was recognized for the most weight loss and best physical change during training.

It was after my graduation from basic training that my life changed dramatically. By then I was almost 19, still withdrawn and feeling alone, when my platoon sergeant gave me some advice about finding friends within the platoon. I'm not proud to admit, but it was the socializing and looking for acceptance that led to underage drinking, partying and witnessing crimes. My platoon eventually turned their backs on me. The last straw was when they caught me off base passed out in a soldier's truck. I was taken to my first sergeant and started the "Article 15 process" (a serious written warning). This was just the scare I needed to kick me into shape. I stayed out of trouble and made headway in my career, transferred to another unit in a different program and went to trainings. I completed my certificates and got promoted. And in 2008 I married a man who had a four-year-old daughter named Ciara from a previous marriage.

On November 5, 2009, I was a first responder for the mass shooting that took place at Fort Hood, near Killeen, Texas, which left 13 dead and injured more than 30 others. On October 14, 2010, I gave birth to our first child together. My husband was in Iraq, and my sister came to help me with the baby. However, my mother-in-law lived a few hours away in Charleston, and she was able to drive down for the birth. The long, drawn-out induction and extended hours of labor resulted in Jlynn being born by emergency cesarean due to complications. The medical techs took the baby and showed her to her daddy in Iraq via webcam. In July 2011 my husband came home from Iraq, and, with his other daughter also, we are all together as a family.

I became an armor for the unit working 12-plus hours a day. I was running close to my five-year contract, so I knew I was separating from the Army. In May 2012 Charleston became our forever home, and my husband separated from active duty in October 2012.

My husband is in Active Reserves and is still away more than he is home. I have our two daughters all year round except when my step-daughter is visiting her mother in Texas. I have two small home businesses that take up much of my time and am currently working on my bachelor's degree in network security. Despite the insecure, average girl I once was I look at where I've been, the challenges I've been through and can truly say I'm proud to call myself tenacious, to have served my country, to be a supporting wife and mother and to be hold my head high for simply being an overcomer.



*Do you know of a woman who has stepped into a typical man's role, job or career position & produced great results despite difficult strides accompanied by their sex?*

*We'd like to hear about her!*

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