

NAVAL MEDIA AWARD WINNING

# The 74

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## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

WE HIGHLIGHT FIVE REAGAN LEADERS WHO MAKE AN EVERYDAY DIFFERENCE

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# Trailblazers

Story and Photos by MC3 Kristina Walton

## A Women's History Month Tribute



Women's History Month is usually focused on the successful women of the past, packed with speeches about great leaders – many before our time - ranging everywhere from inspirational First Ladies, to women who were pioneers in their field or the backbone of social reform.

Today aboard USS Ronald Reagan there are influential female leaders who influence the lives and careers of everyday Sailors on a more personal level, whether it's because they're a great Division Officer (DIVO), a hard charging Leading Petty Officer (LPO), or because they set the example making daily operations run smoother.

Although their experiences and times in service are different, what these women have in common is that they've been successful in their respective fields and they've stood out because of their drive, their manner of communicating with their Sailors, and the experiences they've had in getting where they are today.

Lt. Cmdr. Danielle Williams, who has been in the Navy for 25 years, started out as a Seaman Recruit, and worked her way up to Petty Officer 2nd Class before her four-year mark in the Navy. After making 1st Class in 1997, she was commissioned and became a Naval Officer in 2002. Since the start of her career, she's obtained an Associate's Degree in computer studies, two Bachelor's Degrees in information systems and a Master's Degree in the management of information systems technology. She is currently working on her Doctorate in leadership divinity as she serves on Reagan as the Combat Systems Information Officer.

Lt. Laurie Canter, who has been in the Navy for almost 11 years, started out as a Soldier in the U.S. Army. She joined the Army out of high school and completed her first enlistment working in telecommunications. She then got out of the military and went to college, where she found out about the Navy's flight program. Canter says it was a surprise getting picked up for aviation, but she is now a Naval Flight Officer and the DIVO for Air Department's V-1 Division.

Lt. Gabrielle Jung, who has been in the Navy for 9 years, began her career as an undesignated Seaman in deck department, where she stayed for three years before striking to become a Dental Technician. After spending three more years in the Navy, she got out of the military where she finished her undergraduate studies and went to dental school. She later decided to come back into the Navy, where she was commissioned,

and she now serves as Reagan's only female dental officer.

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class Erica Winchell started out her career in the Navy nearly 12 years ago as an undesignated Airman where she was assigned to her ship's V-1 division in air department as a "blue shirt." Since then, she's become not only a Petty Officer 1st Class, but the LPO for Air Department's V-1 Division.

Logistics Specialist 3rd Class Tiara Anderson, who has been in the Navy almost 2 years, graduated "A" school at the top of her class and came to the fleet as a Petty Officer 3rd Class. She started out in Supply Department's S-8 division. Through her hard work she's built a reputation for herself as a go-getter and was moved into Supply Department's S-1 Division.

Although hard work is a huge factor in each woman's success, they have attributed many other factors as the most influential on their careers. For Anderson, Canter and Winchell, it was having a strong support system – whether it consisted of parents, friends, or their chain of command – to help them along when they needed it.

"While enduring all of the obstacles and trying to reach your goals you grow wearisome," said Anderson. "It's good to have a strong foundation and people who care to help motivate you and pick you up to keep you going."





Winchell said that her primary source of support was her chain of command.

"They pushed me really hard and didn't settle for anything," said Winchell. "And no matter how hard I fought them they continued to push me and guide me. In the Aviation Boatswain's Mate community, we haven't had a lot of high ranking females to look up to. I was lucky enough to work under Boatswain Rodgers, who was the first female AB LDO [Limited Duty Officer] at my first command, but other than that it's like I've always been the senior female even when I was just a young third class."

Canter also credits the people surrounding her for being the most influential factor in her career so far.

"Other people helping me out when I needed it and being able to talk to people and get career advice made a difference," said Canter. "I haven't always known what I was getting myself into."

For Williams, the credit for her success goes not only to her hard work, but to her daughter.

"I tell her all the time that she is the reason I strive as hard as I do," said Williams. "It's not so much doing it for myself but it's to ensure that she's proud of what I do and what I've done. In a sense, pave the way for her and



then her daughter after her. I had very humble beginnings so I push myself, not to compare with others, but to be great so I can ensure that I can make my family proud of what I do."

Jung said that for her, the struggles she went through and the lessons she learned in the beginning of her career were the most influential on her life and her career since then.

"My enlisted years probably contributed the most to my success," said Jung. "I was really young and immature so during that time it was hard to go through the whole process, you know, being in deck, but looking back it was a great experience that helped me build character and mature a lot."

Each woman identified their success – with or without their support system – as coming after some challenges and struggles of their own, but all of them remained driven and kept pushing toward their goals because they stayed positive.

"Just do the work," said Winchell. "And remember that no matter how bad of a day that you're having, it gets better."

Williams said that remembering to look at the positive aspects of situations you're put in can help you remain driven during hard times.

*"If you think taking the easy road is always the right road, you might want to remember that that's not always so"*

"No matter where you are or what you're doing take the positive from the experience and live in the moment," said Williams. "Connect with those around you and use all the lessons you've learned as guiding principles."

Canter said when she's faced with a new challenge she strives to follow three main points to get her through it.

"Stay positive, set a good example, and treat others as you want to be treated," said Canter. "If you can stick to those three things – especially with leadership or talking to new Sailors – you'll see that it applies to everything. I've been presented with several challenges throughout my career and just trying to do those things really helps, and it helps more than just yourself. Staying positive is contagious."

Jung said one of the most important lessons she learned in remaining positive to work toward her goals was to make the best of whatever situation she happened to find herself in.

"It's also important to take advantage of the opportunities that are given to you," said Jung. "That's something I should have picked up early on in my Navy career and I didn't realize until the last half of it how much I'd really missed out on. There were a lot of opportunities as far as education and training opportunities went that I just didn't care to know at the time."

Anderson said her best piece of advice for achieving goals is to put forth the extra effort to be good at what you do.

"Whatever I do, I try to be good at it," said Anderson. "Obviously nobody is going to be good at everything they do, but at least make the attempt. You want anything that has your name on it to reflect your hard work."

And at the core of each of their successes is a drive and a passion to pursue their dreams and to never give up.

"If you think taking the easy road is always the right road, you might want to remember that that's not always so," added Williams. "Anything worth having is worth fighting for, if that's what you truly want."



# WARRIOR ETHOS



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“I admire men of character,  
and I judge character not  
by how men deal with their  
superiors, but mostly how  
they deal with their subordinates,  
and that, to me, is where you  
find out what the character  
of a man is”

*GEN. H. NORMAN SCHWARTZKOPF  
UNITED STATES ARMY GENERAL*



USS RONALD REAGAN

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