

Parachute rigger has no regrets about career choice

By RANDY MURRAY
ABNSOTD

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Wendy M. Jenner, senior airdrop systems technician with the Aerial Delivery Rigging Branch of the Airborne and Special Operations Test Directorate, reflected on her long military career with a friendly smile but few words, stating she has no regrets about choosing a career in the military.

"I've had a good career," said the Camp Hill, Pa., native, who joined the Air Force after graduating high school and spent the next six years as one of the few female crew chiefs for the F-15 fighter jet.

A large bay window behind Jenner's desk faces the tarmac at Pope Field, only recently transferred from the Air Force, reminding her of her connection to both services.

Jenner said she left the Air Force in 1985 to attend college but soon decided she missed military life, so she reenlisted, only this time as an Army parachute rigger.

"My first experience with a parachute was when I put one on my back at Jump School in 1988," she explained. "I've never looked back."

Twenty-two years and more than 200 parachute jumps later, Jenner can boast of numerous stateside assignments in the parachute rigging field, to include her appointment as a warrant officer in August 1995. In January 2002,



Courtesy photo

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Wendy Jenner, right, senior airdrop systems technician with the Airborne and Special Operations Test Directorate, conducts a jumpmaster parachute inspection on a test jumper before an airborne operation.

she became the first female parachute rigger warrant officer to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Upon her return to Fort Bragg in August 2003, Jenner became the first female airdrop systems technician to be assigned to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

In addition to her many "firsts," Jenner said she appreciates the opportunities the military has given her to see the world. Her overseas tours include Japan, Korea, Italy, Kuwait and Australia. In fact, she was the first female Soldier to serve

as a U.S./Australian exchange officer from 2007 to 2009. It was also her favorite assignment in her 28-year military career, she said.

"It was the experience of a lifetime," Jenner said, pointing to a large plaque and a photo hanging on her office wall. "I learned an enormous amount of information about the engineering side of (parachute) rigging with the Australian Defense Force. I had to learn everything in accordance with their procedures."

Having achieved her Australian test officer project certification at

the Australian Air Movements Training and Development Unit is a source of great pride for Jenner, who just as fondly remembers the friends she made and the opportunity she had to see the many wonders of the land "Down Under," as well as New Zealand and Tasmania.

When she returned to Fort Bragg in 2009, Jenner was assigned to the U.S. Army Operational Test Command, ABNSOTD, where she oversees all aspects of operational tests associated with fielding parachute equipment systems,

including development, testing, validation and documentation of all Army heavy equipment resupply testing and rigging.

In November 2010, Jenner was promoted to Chief Warrant Officer 5, still another first as a female Soldier in the parachute rigger career field.

Looking two years down the road toward possible retirement, Jenner said right now she's only "thinking" about retiring to her small horse farm in Moore County and pursuing a graduate degree in journalism or technical writing.

Jenner's military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (5th Award), Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal (5th Award), Army Good Conduct Medal (2nd Award), Air Force Good Conduct Medal, Global War on Terrorism Medals (Expeditionary and Service), Korea Defense Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Overseas Service Ribbon and Army Service Ribbon.

She has also earned the Master Parachutist Badge, Army Parachute Rigger Badge and Air Assault Badge, plus foreign services' jump wings from Italy, Australia, Canada, Germany and Belgium, and she is a recipient of the Order of St. Martin, patron saint of logisticians.

Fort Bragg set to host Operation Medicine Drop at North Post PX

By REGINALD ROGERS
PARAGLIDE

Imagine having numerous bottles of prescription medicine around your house that you've been meaning to dispose of but never had a chance to. Now suddenly, you find your 3 year old lying lifeless by the bathroom, next to an open bottle of your old pills.

To help prevent this scenario from happening, members of Fort Bragg and surrounding communities who have medicine that has expired or is no longer needed, can dispose of it, free of charge Saturday as the post sponsors Operation Medicine Drop.

The event is scheduled to take place at the North Post Exchange, beginning at 9 a.m. and lasting until 2 p.m. According to assistant fire chief Mark Melvin, all medicines will be accepted amnesty-free as the event is set to coincide with National Poison week, March 20 through Saturday.

"Operation Medicine Drop is a statewide initiative that we work in conjunction with Safe Kids —North Carolina and it's an opportunity for people to bring in unwanted medication, whether it be prescription or over-the-counter materials," Melvin said.

He explained that the reason behind the operation is to help prevent accidental poisoning from children getting into

medicine cabinets.

"It also provides an opportunity for people to discard their medicine in a proper way versus just putting them in the trash of flushing them down the toilet, where they may be released into the water system," Melvin added.

Local community members are invited to visit the North Post PX, where Melvin said the Directorate of Emergency Services will have personnel set up to accept the medicine. He said a licensed pharmacist will also be on site to ensure that the medicine is disposed of properly.

"On the 26th, we'll be set up in the parking lot at the PX and there will be signage and cones that will isolate our area," he said. "It's a complete amnesty drop and we'll take the prescription bottles and those that are purchased over-the-counter."

Melvin said those who decide to turn in their medicine may scratch off or mark through their name on the prescription bottles, but if possible, he said they should leave the name of the medicine intact.

"If you're bringing it in its original bottle, leave it in the bottle," he said. "That way it helps the pharmacist to identify the type of medicine you have. He has to classify the pill so that it gets properly disposed of. Some pills cannot be incinerated and others can. It is a controlled operation and we

will also accept veterinary medicine as well."

Melvin pointed out that this is the second year that the state has sponsored the operation, but it's the first year that Fort Bragg is hosting one of the drop points.

"Last year, even though we held it off post, the collection center that Fort Bragg manned, collected over 5,000 pills," he said. "We collected a little over two million in the state during that week and this year we're hoping to get more than that because last year, we had about 160 agencies that participated. At last count, we have 212 participating this year."

In addition to Safe Kids — North Carolina, the initiative is also a partnership with the North Carolina Department of Insurance, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, the State Bureau of Investigations and other local agencies throughout the state.

According to OMD talking points, the operation is part of a grassroots coalition that includes the Riverkeepers of North Carolina, community anti-drug coalitions and local agencies that are exploring issues surrounding safe medication disposal.

National Poison Week began Monday and will conclude Saturday. Fayetteville and other surrounding communities also held similar operations throughout

the week.

Operation Medicine Drop facts and figures

■ The average North Carolinian fills 14 prescriptions annually, which adds up to over 127 million prescriptions filled statewide each year. Studies show that as much as 40 percent of the drugs dispensed are

never used.

■ Since 1999, approximately 4,500 North Carolina citizens have died from prescription drug poisoning.

■ More than 75 percent of all unintentional poisonings occur in children under five years old.

■ One in five teens has

abused prescription stimulants and tranquilizers.

■ In 2004, the United States Geological Survey identified 100 different pharmaceuticals in surface water. Significant contamination is occurring in North Carolina and in over 80 percent of U.S. waterways that have been tested.



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