



Hispanic female OCS candidate continues family tradition of military service



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Story by Alun Thomas 

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PHOENIX – With a long family history of military service, there was never any doubt that Briana Hanks would one day serve her nation.

Hanks' father, uncle, great-uncle and great-grandfather all served their nation over the past 60 years, in both the Army and Marines.

Now Hanks is closer to her goal of serving, having been accepted to Officer Candidate School following a board appearance at the Phoenix Recruiting Battalion headquarters, Oct. 25.

Hanks, 23, a native of Tempe, Ariz., said her parents always worked hard while she was growing up and inspired her to further her education.

“Neither of my parents went to college and I made it my goal to be the first one in my family who did,” Hanks said. “My mother came to the U.S. from Mexico at the age of 12 and later married my father. I wanted to prove to them that all their sacrifices they made were worth it.”

Hanks said she pushed herself to successfully gain three degrees,

“I got a degree in general studies from Mesa Community College, before transferring to ASU (Arizona State University),” she continued. “There I earned two more degrees in political science and English. My parents were proud of me and the hard work paid off.”

While deciding on her future, Hanks thought back to her father's stories about serving in the Army in the 1980's.

“My father was in the Army for four years. He was in Berlin when the wall came down in 1989,” Hanks said. “I started thinking about becoming the fourth generation in my family history to serve.”

Hanks said her family's military lineage involved service in Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam and World War II, giving her the impetus to make the decision to try and enlist.

“I wanted to join right out of high school, but I knew I had to go to college first ... I didn't want to throw that opportunity away,” Hanks said. “After college I intended to enlist and become an officer later. But when I realized my end goal was to be an officer, I thought why wait?”

“My mother always used to tell me, ‘if you don't ask for it, the answer will be no.’ So I had to go for it,” she said.

Hanks turned to the recruiters at Tempe Recruiting Station to learn more about her options for becoming an officer and wasn't let down.

“They were immediately receptive. Everyone at the recruiting station has been supportive of me, even when my mother was reluctant about the idea,” Hanks said.

Hanks said she chose Adjutant General as her favored branch, aided in part by her interest in politics.

“When I realized I wanted to be an officer and go to OCS, I knew I needed some life experiences before I leave for my training,” she said. “So I volunteered for the upcoming elections to get people registered to vote. I also worked for a local candidate’s campaign.”

Looking for more experience, Hanks went to Europe for four months, visiting countries such as England, the Netherlands, France and Germany, all of which she feels has prepared her nicely for the Army training ahead.

“I’m definitely excited and my recruiters have been helping keep me in shape,” Hanks said. “I’m stepping out of my comfort zone and can’t wait for the journey ahead.”

Hanks said she can easily see herself making the Army a career.

“I can see myself doing this for 20 years or more and then moving to a career in politics,” she said. “I feel there aren’t enough veterans in politics and that’s something I aspire to achieve. Veterans need a strong voice.”

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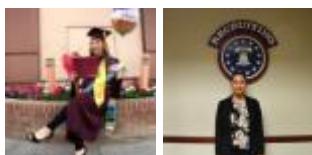
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