

Young Alums

Report From the Field

Katie Connors '96

I began law school in the fall of 2001 at American University in Washington, D.C. The morning of September 11, 2001, I watched the North Tower of the World Trade Center spew smoke and flames into the clear blue sky. I heard the report of the second plane hitting the South Tower. I left my apartment and headed towards the parking lot at school, afraid to be late to my Contracts class. I was still unaware that my innocence, and our country's innocence, would soon be destroyed. As I boarded the shuttle bus to take me from the parking lot to the law school, I heard words that would soon become a standard



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component of my vocabulary: Terrorism, Hijackers, Panic, Tragedy. I heard that the Pentagon was on fire, that there might be flames on the Mall in downtown Washington. I arrived at school, gathered around TV screens with my classmates and watched the Towers crumble to the ground.

I had started law school just a few weeks earlier a very different individual. I planned on combining my bachelor's degree in Biology with my law degree and practicing patent law. After September 11th, I questioned this capitalistic goal. I wanted to make a contribution to my country. I watched hundreds line up to donate blood. I watched young men and women sign up to defend their country and the values their country instilled in them – Liberty, Justice, Freedom. I knew that my contribution would best be made with my intellect. That is why I joined the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Corps.

I entered active duty January 3, 2005 and began training at Fort Lee, Virginia. My



instructors taught me I was a soldier first, lawyer second. I learned how to wear the uniform, how to salute, to march and fire a weapon. I learned how to shape and mold my beret so as not to look "French" or like a chef. After four weeks of "soldier" training, I went to Charlottesville, Virginia with my 90 other classmates. The U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School is located there, right next to the University of Virginia's law school. I spent 10 weeks learning everything from estate planning and family law to contract and fiscal law to criminal law according to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

On April 16, I flew for 14½ hours direct from Washington-Dulles Airport to Seoul Incheon Airport in Seoul, South Korea. Army personnel greeted me and shuttled me to the post in Seoul, Yongsan, where I spent my final night in a nice hotel before being shuttled up "north" to Area 1. Area 1 encompasses all of the Army posts between Seoul and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). I was welcomed to the 2nd

Infantry Division by the Warrior Replacement Company and began a lengthy inprocessing program.

After completing inprocessing, I was delivered to my new duty station, Camp Red Cloud, located in the city of Uijongbu (WEE-jong-boo), South Korea. I am the only Legal Assistance Attorney for Camp Red Cloud and the other surrounding Army posts including Camp Essayons, Camp Eagle and Camp Stanley. I provide free legal services to service members, Department of Defense civilians and contractors, and their family members. These services include counseling on family law issues, financial

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and debt-management issues, wills and estate planning and military administrative matters. The most



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common issues I see are divorce, child custody and support issues and debt-management issues. I see approximately 4 to 5 clients a day. I value this experience because it is unlikely that I would experience daily contact with clients in the civilian legal sector. Talking to clients every day makes me feel like I make a difference in people's lives, while also serving my country.

In addition to my daily duties as a Legal Assistance Attorney, I am also an Operational Law Attorney. In Korea, we have several simulated war games exercises every year. During these exercises, I advise the Fires Brigade Commander, who commands artillery assets, on the law of war, rules of engagement, and targeting decisions. This is an extremely interesting component of my job. It is also important to develop these legal skills now in a training environment, because I may utilize them later, during combat operations.

There are difficulties being 7,000 miles away from home in an unfamiliar country. I miss my friends and family. It is hard to communicate over the phone due to the 13-hour time difference. Thankfully, email and online ordering via the internet makes life a little more bearable.

Ultimately, I feel that joining the Army JAG Corps was the best decision for me as an individual and also for my career. I was chosen by the U.S. Army to serve my country while also developing my legal skills. I look forward to that challenge, and embrace the diverse opportunities that emerge from this experience.