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More to Moore than first active duty female 12B

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – There will always be a first — the first to try something, the first to want to do something different or the first to make a leap into the unknown.

Of the 173 Soldiers graduating combat engineer Advanced Individual Training Friday, one of them is a first — Pvt. Abrianna Moore.

An Army directive released several months ago made it possible for Moore and other female Soldiers to join the combat engineer military occupational specialty 12B as a career choice.

Currently, there are more than 60 female Soldiers following in Moore's footsteps at Fort Leonard Wood.

"I was a little tomboy. My sister was the girlie-girl. She played with the Barbie dolls, and I played with the Legos, the Connect, anything I could build with," Moore said. "I always found it more interesting to work with my hands."

She now has that hands-on opportunity.

According to www.goarmy.com, combat engineers construct fighting positions, place and detonate explosives, conduct route clearance of obstacles and rivers, install firing systems for demolition and explosives and detect mines visually or with mine detectors.

"My plan was to go to a community college for architectural and civil engineering, and then, out of the blue, I decided to see about the military," Moore said. "While talking to my recruiters,

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they told me how fun it was to blow up stuff as a combat engineer. I said ‘sign me up,’ but then they told me it’s not open to women. I settled for carpentry and masonry specialist (military occupational specialty 12W).”

Moore’s mother, Nichol Mason, said their first trip to inquire about enlisting in the Army was a disappointment when her daughter found out she couldn’t be a combat engineer.

“We knew she was going to be an engineer of sorts. She is very logical and analytical at the same time,” Mason said in a telephone interview. “She loves math and science and always excelled in those areas. I would have preferred something without the verbiage ‘combat’ in it, but needless to say, she is an amazing young woman.”

While waiting for an eyeglass waiver for 12W, the stage was set for Moore’s dream to come true.

“It was the end of September when I went to (Military Entrance Processing Station) again to swear in and lock in my 12W job. The staff told me that slot was no longer available but 12B was now open to women,” Moore said.

Moore arrived at Fort Leonard Wood the next day.

Although she had just become the first active duty female 12B in the Army, the reality hadn’t sunk in.

“When I got to the 43rd (Adjutant General Reception Battalion), I didn’t know I was the first one. Then one of the drill sergeants there yelled out for the 12B females,” Moore recalled. “When she said ‘females’ I thought there was more than just me, but I was the only one to raise my hand. That’s when I thought ‘oh man, this is going to be tough.’”

Small in stature at just 5 foot, 3 inches tall, Moore, a native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, is very much like the bull associated with her zodiac sign Taurus, according to her mother.

“She is strong. She is bold. She’s as bold as a lion when she needs to be,” Mason said.

“She is very focused. When she sets her mind on something, she is going to make it happen but she won’t do anything that would tarnish her moral compass. I have learned so much from her,” added her mother.

Not a glory-seeker, Moore said she was somewhat reluctant to talk about her experience.

“I am not a cocky person. I don’t think anything big of myself. I am here just like everybody else,” she said.

Mason expressed to her daughter how her experience might help others.

“I told her that I knew this is not about her getting attention but that she has the ability and power

to influence so many people,” Mason said. “I couldn’t be any prouder. For her to be my youngest and blaze this trail — it’s kind of overwhelming. I just want her to do what is in her heart.”

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Among all of the challenges of becoming a Soldier and a combat engineer, Moore said she believes females can do whatever males can do. However, she said separating men and women isn’t what she’s all about.

“If you know you are capable and you want it, then go do it. Don’t give yourself any ‘ifs, ands or buts’ about it,” she said. “There’s nothing you can’t do. It’s a mindset — if you think you can’t, then you won’t, and if you’re going to do it, then don’t quit.”

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Enclosed: Photo

Photo Cutline: Pvt. Abrianna Moore marches with her platoon as part of the 24 kilometer ruck march during the Combat Engineer Field Training Exercise near the end of Combat Engineer Advanced Individual Training. She will become the first female combat engineer when she graduates One Station Unit Training Friday. U.S. Army Photo by Stephen Standifird, Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs

For more information, contact the Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command’s U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army’s largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting a colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.