




MERCY COLLEGE ALUMNI

Where are they now?

<i>Introducing:</i>	<i>Virginia Morris (Nee Wotton) Class of 1990</i>
<i>Virginia, Thank you for sharing your story!</i>	
<i>Tell us what it was like for you attending College?</i> <p>I have fond memories of my time at Mercy College. It was a place that allowed me to grow into the individual I am today and taught me self-discipline and how to respect others who may not be like you.</p> <p>I loved representing the school in many sports, and believe it gave us a great opportunity to try and play many sports over our time at the school. It was a good balance between academics and sport. I felt safe and supported while attending Mercy College.</p> <p>I have fond memories of all my teachers and was thankful for them in guiding us through our years at Mercy College.</p>	
<i>Did you set out with a career plan?</i> <p>I had always had an interest in joining the Defence Force. As a young girl I wanted to join the Navy, and in Year 10 completed work experience with the Navy, but when it came time to join, they didn't have any positions available.</p> <p>After completing Year 12, I joined the Army Reserves and loved every moment of it, so in 1994 I joined the Regular Army.</p> <p><i>I think I always knew that I wanted to serve my country.</i></p>	



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What were the significant milestones that have impacted your life journey so far?

I was very lucky to have a supportive family. My mum worked hard to singlehandedly support myself and my two sisters to gain a great education and wonderful start in life.

I joined the Regular Army on 19 September 1994 and after completing three months of basic training, I was allocated to the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps and was sent to Portsea, Victoria and Ingleburn, New South Wales to complete my Basic Medical Assistant Training.

Throughout my career, which has now spanned over 25 years, I have completed a number of promotion courses, and as a female in a male dominated field have performed well to be where I am today. The day I was appointed as a Regimental Sergeant Major (there are only 12 female RSM's out of about 100 positions in the Army at present) was a dream come true when I reached this rank/position to be the senior soldier within my posted unit.





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I am fortunate to have a supportive husband who has been by my side for 24 years (married for 18 years), and has helped me to be able to achieve my goals, and enjoy being a mother. I have two wonderful children Tyson (17) and Molly (13).



As a family we love to travel and have visited many countries which have included Asia, Europe and USA.

Where has your career path taken you in terms of connecting with wider organisations, meeting people of varying cultures; locally and internationally?

I have had many opportunities with my career to experience all aspects of Australia but also different parts of the world. I have been to every state of Australia, both urban and rural communities. My most domestic adventure was support to the Prime Minister at the time, Tony Abbott, in a place called Bamaga and Thursday Island. I was privileged enough to have a team of 80 soldiers who support him, visit these remote areas of Australia, which are untapped beautiful areas of this great country of ours.

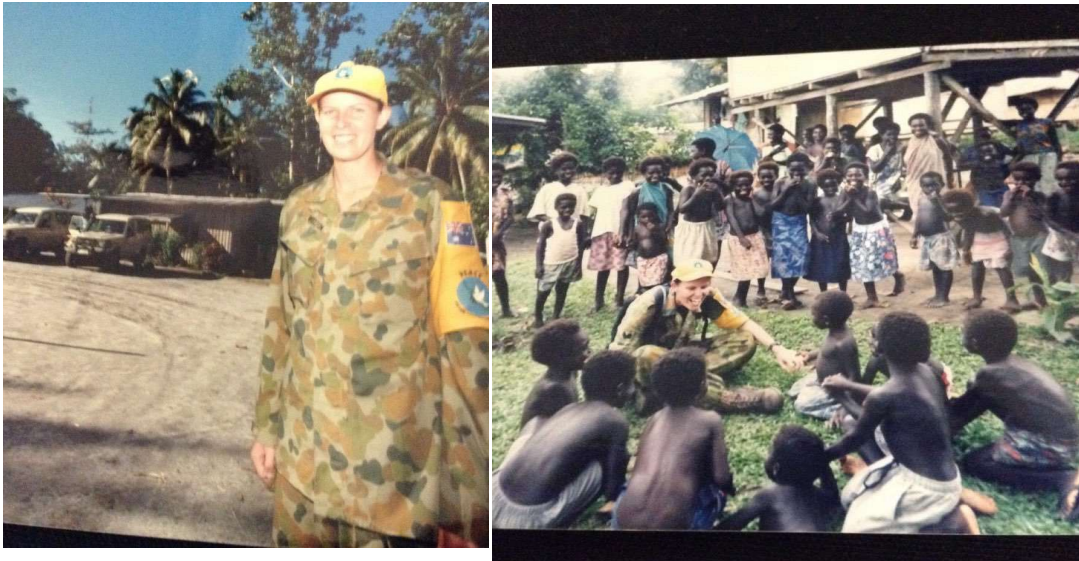


In 1998, I was deployed to Bougainville for a period of 4 months, as a Peacekeeper to support the local people due to Bougainville Civil War. This was my first time overseas, and it was a beautiful country, that had been through a lot. I have such fond memories of this time. I had my first patient pass away, I was able to deliver a baby, and we were in a village where the children had never seen white people. Being able to be in the villages and learn about their culture was an amazing experience.



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In 2001, I was lucky enough to be sent to Malaysia (Butterworth) for a period of 4 months. During this time, we got to train with the Malaysian, Thai and Singaporean Soldiers. We got an opportunity to see many parts of these countries, and the lessons that I learnt on the different cultures, has made me a better person.

In 2010/2011, I was deployed to Afghanistan. This was for a period of 7 months, and although a very rewarding experience, it was also a very scary time in my life. At that stage my children were only 7 and 3 years old. My role while in Afghanistan was working with the US Army and other countries where I co-ordinated over 3000 aeromedical evacuations of coalition soldiers, Afghanistan Soldiers, Police and civilians. This experience changed my life, I have made life-long friends from all over the world.





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In most recent times I was deployed in Jan – Mar 2020, back to my home state of Victoria on the military operation Bushfire Assist 19/20. During this time, we were located in North Eastern Victoria, assisting the Upper Murray Region to get back on their feet after the devastating fires that went through that region during the New Year period. This was a wonderful experience being able to assist the local agencies and also the local populace to get back to business as usual; well, as best as they could. This made me really proud to be able to assist the people of Australia, and it showed how resilient we are, and how communities come together in a time of need.

I have also had many opportunities to travel with Defence to represent the Australian Defence Force in both Softball and Basketball both here in Australia and also in New Zealand on several occasions.



Have you maintained any school friendships?

As I moved away from Melbourne a few years after leaving school, I don't get the opportunity to visit as much as I would like to.

I am thankful though for Facebook, as this has allowed me to reconnect with many of the girls that were in my year level, but also others who were either above or below me in years. This gives me great joy to be able to see the success that they have had over the years, and hopefully in the years to come I will get the opportunity to attend a reunion with them all.

***It is hard to believe that this year marks 30 years
since leaving Mercy College!***



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What's next for you?

I still continue to enjoy what I do, and look forward to continuing with my career in the Army. I am about to find out what my next job will be next year, which will be a very exciting time. I am currently posted in Brisbane, and due to school and work commitments for my husband and children, we have been apart for the past four years as they live in Townsville. We are looking forward to this next posting where ever it is in Australia, as we will be able to live together as a family again in the future.

I am also completing a Bachelor of Organisational Leadership, so hoping to finish this in the next couple of years.

What message of encouragement, advice would you give to current students?

I look back at my time at school, and like we all do, we probably wish we had done things differently. I wasn't the greatest of students academically, and there are probably some of my teachers reading this who agree!

What I will say is that if you give your all, and have a passion channel then make it a mission to make it true. I look back over the past 25 years in the Army, which has been a challenging but very rewarding experience. I have felt I have always had to perform that little bit harder, because I am a female, but my mantra has been to remain confident in my abilities, and with this in mind, it has led me to where I am today.

Don't ever give up, life can be hard, there are so many challenges out there for us all, but these challenges make us who we are. I never doubted I wanted the opportunity to serve my country, I have had a wonderful career to date, the people I have met and the places I have worked in and visited are amazing. There have been times that I have felt very scared or alone, but that has made me, what I believe to be, the strong confident woman I am today.

If you are thinking about a career in the Defence, I highly recommend it, there are so many opportunities for young women. I am happy to speak with you if you are considering it as a choice, so please make contact.

I hope I have shown present and past students, that you can have a demanding and successful career while maintaining a fulfilling relationship with family and friends on the home front, but as the famous quote says: *You can have it all, just not all at once.*

Continue to work hard, enjoy your schooling years, you will look back in years to come and be thankful for the values you have been taught and will continue to use for the rest of your life.

What a pleasure it has been to connect with you Virginia. Your proud service to our country during war and peace times is our greatest honour!