

An Interview with Veterans

What influenced your decision to enlist in the military?

Nathon Anglin: A belief that it is one's duty to serve the country and community in some way, whether military, civil service or another way of "giving back."

Christie Apker: 9/11

Danny Fulton: Many men in my family have served in the U.S. military in each of its branches. I always knew I would continue the tradition since I was young, but when I was in sixth grade, I watched the terror attack on the Twin Towers happen in real time on T.V. and that only solidified my reason to serve.

Patrick Hills: My family has a proud tradition of serving in the military, which we can trace back to the Civil War. My grandfather was an officer in the U.S. Navy and on board the USS Utah, when it was sunk on Dec. 7, 1941 in Pearl Harbor. He survived the sinking and went on to serve 23 years in the Navy. My father was a naval officer during the Vietnam era, who also served 23 years in the Navy. I wanted to continue the family tradition of serving my country in the U.S. military. I knew the military could help me learn a trade, get experience and mature as a person. My son, who recently graduated from college, has also joined the U.S. Marines as an officer, continuing the family tradition.

Jarrold Irvin: I was just searching for something better than what I had. I recall coming home from work and thinking, "I have to do something." So I picked up the phone and called the Army recruiting office.

Ryan Williams: Living in a small town without many opportunities, it was a chance to get out and see the world.

Jeffrey Yancey: My father was career Air Force, serving in WWII and Korea. I was aimless at that age, without many alternative prospects. I quit school my senior year of high school. In 1968, at the height of the Vietnam conflict, I figured it would not be unlikely I would be drafted, so I joined the Marines, knowing if I actually went to war, I would have the best training and best chances of survival.

Linda Yobbagy-Finn: I was teaching health and physical education classes at an elementary and junior-senior high school in Pennsylvania, when I was furloughed. I was working on my master's degree in sports medicine, but there were no teaching positions available at that time. So I talked to a Navy recruiter and enlisted.

What are some of the skills and experience you gained in the military?

Nathon Anglin: I was attached to the VP (patrol) squadrons out of Moffett Field. These were anti-submarine squadrons. I was a photogenic lab technician. We processed films from the aircraft for purposes of mapping and intelligence, and photographed things for historical records and forensics.

Christie Apker: Engineering work, such as carpentry and masonry.

Danny Fulton: Teamwork, leadership, stress handling and dedication to mission accomplishment. My Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) code was for radar maintenance and technician for Air Traffic Control. I was trained in electronics and radar maintenance troubleshooting and operation.

Patrick Hills: Learning about people and their customs, representing the U.S. in a positive manner in foreign countries, conducting repairs on nuclear powered submarines, working inside reactor chambers, welding, reading blue prints, pipefitting, plumbing, shipboard and aviation firefighting.

Jarrold Irvin: Listen to instructions and follow them. As my career progressed, I learned more about dealing with people and with leadership. Once the Army sent me to school to learn how to manage its Equal Opportunity Program at a technical level. I discovered not only a passion for equity, but for training as well.

Ryan Williams: Civil engineering—carpentry, welding, sheet metal and masonry.

Jeffrey Yancey: My billet (personnel position) was an administrative specialist. In addition to administrative specialist, post-Vietnam, I trained new officers in firearms tactics at Basic School (for new officers who just graduated from the Officer Training Academy), was a member of the Quantico Riot Control Unit, worked on the Marine Corps shooting team and performed some prisoner transports, on occasion. My last duty station was Marine Corps Headquarters, right across the street from the Pentagon, working in a top secret role with G-3 Worldwide Readiness Central.

Linda Yobbagy-Finn: I worked as a yeoman in the commanding officer's office in my squadron. Then I worked in the squadron safety office, where I worked with aviators in keeping their flying manuals updated, updating proficiency skills, and compiling data for aircraft accident/incident reports.

Was DOC your first job post-military? If not, what types of jobs did you have in between?

Nathon Anglin: To start with, I was homeless. I got a job tending bar first, and got a trailer in a park in Garden City, Idaho. I worked at a newspaper for a while with my experience in a photographic lab. I got disillusioned with that, picked up and headed to Arizona where I repaired appliances. There I met another veteran who has having the same problems, who had found his calling as a state trooper. I drifted for quite a while longer, changing jobs and scenery. I tried to reenlist, but had been out too long to just go back. By then, I had a wife and child. I enlisted in the Oregon National Guard trying to get a back door entrance into full time service. One day, when talking to my brother-in-law, who was a Vietnam veteran, he said he found his niche at the Washington State Penitentiary, so I applied.

Patrick Hills: Yes, I began my career with DOC straight out of college as a correctional officer at the Washington State Penitentiary.

Ryan Williams: I had a year break between the military and DOC. I worked for the carpenters union, but it was a bad time for construction. I ended up filling a temporary role in the Air Force Reserves loading deployment pallets for C-17s (military transport aircraft).

Jeffrey Yancey: While I was still in the Marine Corps, I worked part time as an armed security guard for private companies during my off-hours. When I separated, I began attending community college full time on the GI Bill, as I had earned a GED while in Vietnam, but left after a year or so due to finances. I went to work at the company my father worked at, a private military defense contractor in North Virginia doing software engineering on weapons and tactical systems.

What were some of the general challenges you faced transitioning back to civilian life?

Danny Fulton: It was hard adjusting to normal routine responsibilities of the average adult. In the military, I was always told where to go and what time to be there, as well as what to do and how to do it. For example, I never scheduled my own medical/dental exams. I also never had to deal with retirement planning or choosing a health care plan. I was comparing absolutely every aspect of everyday life to how it was in the Marine Corps. Trying to weigh my successes and contributions to society as a civilian versus those while I served. You were serving the greatest purpose a person can while serving in the armed forces—to fight and defend America. Doing anything else at first could be disheartening and almost worthless. But over time, I began to realize my purpose in society and how beneficial my contributions really are.

Patrick Hills: Detoxing from military life took some time, about six months to a year after leaving. The military takes care of your every need: clothing, medical, housing, transportation,

when you get up in the morning, when to go to bed, what your job was, and where you are going to be sent around the world. It takes a while to reorganize yourself and plan your own day. I remember lots of times after being out of the military, jumping out of bed in the middle of the night and standing at attention, thinking I was late for muster or watch. Or waking up and not knowing where I was, which country I was in, or which ship I was on.

Ryan Williams: It was difficult. The military takes care of everything for you. It's a big challenge to work in a different environment.

Jeffrey Yancey: Fear of failure and a general confusion about what to do with my life. Though I was employed and responsible, I only existed in "the now," without any real aspirations or planning for the future.

What were your employment related challenges?

Nathon Anglin: I was refused employment being told that they "do not hire killers," and other not-so-nice things. I was refused housing with the same statements.

Christine Apker: The only challenge I really faced was getting all of my DOC mandatory training up to date. Since I missed the regular rotation, I had to travel long distances to get back into compliance. In particular, I had to redo the firearms academy, as I let my certification lapse for two years. When I was due to go (for training), I did not because I wanted to get my caseload squared away as much as possible before my deployment to make it easier for whomever had to backfill me. This combined with my 12 month deployment required me to take the full week's training over again and out of town. After being away from home for a year, the last thing I wanted to do was have to be away for a week for employment.

Danny Fulton: It's not that people don't work hard or aren't goal driven. The circumstances aren't as severe or life threatening, whereas in the military, that's all you know a job to be. I was trained to treat every environment and task as if lives depended on it. Jobs I immediately had (after), that wasn't the case and I had to adjust my approach towards my application and such. Adjusting my use of terminologies, lingo and basic conversational skills were challenging at times, too. What may have been considered everyday workplace conversation in the Marine Corps was definitely not equivalent in the civilian world.

Patrick Hills: When I came back home, most of my high school friends were graduating from college and beginning their new careers and lives. I had four years of active duty in the military, but not the education. I was away from home for so long, everyone else had moved on with their lives. I didn't have the employment connections in my hometown and I felt like I had been left behind.

Jarrold Irvin: Learning how to translate my experience into terms and concepts that are relatable to non-veterans, and getting to know myself outside the Army was a challenge. Trying

to figure out how my knowledge, skills, and how my abilities fit into a civilian workplace was a challenge.

What led you to seek employment with DOC?

Christie Apker: A steady, reliable career with benefits.

Danny Fulton: I met a guy who currently works at DOC and told him about my trade skills and experience. He thought I would be a great fit. I never thought of it to begin with, but after having worked in the Marine industry for a few years and dealing with hours of commuting and constant traveling, I saw an opportunity here that just seemed perfect.

Patrick Hills: My bachelor's degree in college was in criminal justice. I was interested in the field and the fastest way into state service at the time was applying at the prison level. I was from Walla Walla and the Penitentiary was hiring.

Jarrod Irvin: One of the things I came to know about myself during my transition was that I was not going to be happy working for a business whose ultimate goal was to make money; I needed to do something that helped people. I remember the motto on the state's website that said, "work that matters." That's what I wanted.

What makes DOC a veteran-friendly employer? What have you observed in your current job that supports veterans?

Nathon Anglin: Things have changed greatly over the years. Veterans are not treated like they used to be. DOC is a veteran friendly place. My experience as a veteran is seen as an advantage.

Christie Apker: I've found with both my federal and state deployments that DOC human resources staff are very well-versed in federal and state laws regarding deployed workers. DOC works hard to ensure all laws and rights are being followed. I also find it very admirable we (state workers) are given paid leave for military duties, which helps with some of the financial loss that we, as citizen soldiers, sometimes face.

Danny Fulton: It certainly helped that everyone on my interview board was a veteran and provided comparisons of the job to the military. Asking about how to handle situations and looking for actual substance and logic in my answers versus a definitive correct answer was also helpful. In the military, there is never any "perfect" way to handle a situation or accomplish a mission. By having so many veterans around you at your place of employment, I feel comfort knowing there are other people like me who have received similar training and have shared similar life experiences.

Patrick Hills: The application for employment is vet-friendly, with [applicable \(veteran's\) preference](#) and extra points toward scores. Celebrating Veteran's Day around the office is always nice because others recognize your service.

Jarrold Irvin: In my time with DOC, I've come to know many veterans. Many in my workplace have shared stories with me that have really helped me better understand not only DOC, but state government in general.

Ryan Williams: During Correctional Officer Core training, I was able to use my GI Bill which financially helped me transition into DOC better.

Jeffrey Yancey: My co-workers are supportive in every way and make it known they appreciate my service. I and the other male officer in my unit, an Iraq Army veteran, have received several certificates of appreciation and little gifts over the years. Also there are good vibes between all the other local community corrections officers who are veterans. There are quite a few. Law enforcement is a natural career draw for those formerly serving in the military.

Linda Yobbagy-Finn: We have a very active veteran committee here at the Penitentiary and they are always involved in supporting our veterans. I'm very proud of the work they've done and continue to do. Each year, during Veteran's Day, there is a recognition event for our veterans and I've been a participant in those programs.

Are there any skills in the military you use at your current job?

Nathon Anglin: A firm understanding of "chain of command." Skills interacting with people of different cultures and backgrounds. I deal with people under community supervision in a manner that was learned in the service: consistency and structure. It seems to work. They know what to expect from me in any situation and that's returned with the same expectations.

Danny Fulton: As an electronics technician, I do a lot of troubleshooting and problem solving. In the military, you constantly find yourself in stressful and sometimes impossible situations. But I was trained to adapt and overcome any situation and never accept failure as an option. All of these things are key when it comes to safety and mission success.

Patrick Hills: As a community corrections officer, we use our communication skills the most. I learned to be a better listener, keep an open mind, and be more tolerant, no one is perfect, everyone makes mistakes, and as long as people keep trying and don't give up, they will never lose. Respect one another and treat people the way you would want to be treated. We are all human beings on this planet. We are all in this together.

Jarrold Irvin: I believe I honed my work-ethic in the military, which is something I bring every day to DOC. I was also able to attend the Department of Defense's Equal Opportunity

Management Institute. The lessons I learned were crucial to me being able to help DOC in its Equity Diversity, Inclusion and Respect efforts.

Jeffrey Yancey: Familiarity with weapons and weapon handling, tactics, strategy, teamwork, and since I was an administrative specialist, the ability to type well and process documents efficiently.

Linda Yobbagy Finn: I learned loyalty to the organization, respect for my superiors, attention to detail, completing the job and not relying on others to do my work. Also dedication and support for my fellow staff members.

For those who have ever been on active duty during employment with DOC, how has DOC supported you during your service?

Christie Apker: While service members are deployed and serving their community, DOC still has a mission and job to do: improve public safety. It still has an obligation to the communities it serves and staff working who are not deployed. We, as civilian soldiers, are expected to serve when called and accepted this when we enlisted. The only thing we expect from our civilian employers is that they abide by state and federal laws and reinstate us to our positions we had prior to our activations. Having served with hundreds of soldiers who were not employed by DOC on multiple state and federal activations, I must say that DOC does a great job at doing this.

What do you like most about working at DOC?

Christie Apker: Professional standards and consistency.

Danny Fulton: The sense of camaraderie around here. It definitely reminds me of my time spent in the Marine Corps.

Patrick Hills: Coming to work every day, not knowing exactly what is going to happen. Human beings are very unpredictable and you never know what a person is going to do. It is exciting adapting to new challenges and new situations every day. It keeps you on your toes and keeps your mind working. I enjoy sharing life experiences with people in hopes that they will learn something from them and put the knowledge to work in a positive and productive manner.

Ryan Williams: It's the closest type of career that relates to military structure. It has a rank structure to move into different positions for people who want to move up after a certain time, or do something different while still keeping the same job classification.

Jarrold Irvin: Hands down—the people.

What advice would you give veterans seeking work?

Danny Fulton: Pursue jobs you know you can excel at and you feel you are perfect for. It's o.k. to have high expectations, but keep them realistic and tempered. Always remember that a job is a job. It may not seem like a great fit at first, but do your best and work hard. Sometimes that's all it takes to get your foot in the door. Interview time is game time. Just like any inspection you have ever had in the military, a job interview is an inspection of you as a potential employee. Press your shirt, straighten you tie, shine your shoes, get a haircut, shower and shave and show out.

Patrick Hills: Apply for employment with DOC. State service is similar to federal service. If they're interested in the criminal justice system, this is a great place to begin their careers. The state has good benefits, including medical, dental, pay and retirement. You are treated well and have rights.

Jarrold Irvin: The advice I give to every veteran who is looking for employment with the state is to talk with others who are already state employees. Whether it's an informational interview or reviewing a resume, bridging the gap between one's military experience and a state employer's needs becomes much easier when there is a shared language.

Ryan Williams: Find an employee doing the same job you are looking into. Mostly through the hiring process, you only get to talk to management and administrative staff. At DOC, there are many officers who are willing to talk to vets looking for employment and I am one of them.

Jeffrey Yancey: Explore many different possibilities within the department to see what suits you best, in terms of experience and desire.

Linda Yobbagy-Finn: I would recommend DOC due to the fact it is veteran friendly and it provides excellent wages and benefits.