

“A COURAGEOUS WHIM”

The Story of Beth Phillips - USAF – OIF



Beth Phillips grew up in Burton, Texas. Though both of her parents were Veterans, she had no intention of joining the military. Each of them served in the Air Force, with her dad's service including a tour in Vietnam.

Beth was the valedictorian of her graduating class in 1995, which she downplays by saying "It was a class of twenty-one." Receiving a scholarship, she entered Blinn College in Brenham, Texas. Beth found college to be altogether unsatisfying. Seemingly on a whim she decided to join the Air Force and told the recruiter she wanted to leave right away.

If you asked Beth back then why she joined the military, she would have replied "To get out of my hometown." What the twenty-one-year-old was unable to articulate was that she wanted discipline, structure, adventure, and camaraderie. This first step foreshadowed who she would become.

Military service matured her stubbornness into determination, and her unexpected boldness to resolute courage was showcased when she volunteered for combat years later.

Beth enlisted open general, which some services refer to as open contract or undesignated. Veterans either wince or laugh at the thought of that, but she had good scores and was selected to serve as a Signals Intelligence Analyst. After basic training, she reported to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where she learned basic and advanced Morse Code.

While at school an NCO approached her recognizing her last name. After a series of questions, the NCO informed her that her sister was inbound to the same MOS school. The sister was unable to tell Beth while in Basic Training. In an interesting twist of fate, their time at MOS school overlapped, and they went to the same first duty station in Hawaii.

In Hawaii Beth worked with the NSA and as she learned more about her job, her skills, and her interests, she soon trained to be a Fusion Analyst. Her next move was to Lackland AFB in Texas. The war in Iraq was in full swing by then. Beth wanted to actively participate in the Global War on Terrorism and volunteered for a year-long deployment to Iraq.

She took the reins in her career and volunteered while still pregnant, reasoning that her child

would be too young to remember her absence as an infant. This was a difficult decision to make but a display of sacrifice and moral courage. A few months after her son arrived, she departed for the Al Anbar province.

Beth was part of a joint team conducting weapons intelligence analysis. Her team traveled in and around Al Taqaddum and Habbaniyah, conducting forensics and post-blast analysis of IEDs.

Beth was the only woman on the team and shared mutual respect with her brothers. The combat tour was surreal. She describes it as the best, the hardest, and the most fulfilling time experienced in uniform.



At times it was terrifying, but the camaraderie was unmatched. She enjoyed working with Marines who were competent professionals, albeit with their own eccentric sub-culture. She didn't know it at the time, but she and the Marines would serve together again in the future.

Upon conclusion of the Iraq deployment, Beth returned to Texas for a year before moving overseas to Germany. She served there in uniform for over five years before retiring. Enjoying her time in Germany so much, and having established tremendous credibility as an intelligence analyst, she remained there for over six more years in civil service.

Eventually, it was time to return to the United States.

After so many years in the military and abroad, Beth moved to be closer to family.

Conducting an international move in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic presented tremendous challenges, but Beth had survived much greater difficulties in combat, so she took it all in stride. She settled close to her sister and parents, finding herself in eastern North Carolina in a community dominated by the presence of a Marine Corps base.

In addition to the years of experience working in intelligence in the Air Force and as a civil servant, Beth gained degrees in Communications, Applications Technology, and Occupational Education along the way. She was quickly snatched up by a leading defense industry contractor directly supporting the Marines. Though Beth is one of very few Air Force Veterans in the area, she feels quite at home amongst the likes of whom she went to war.

She is one of the few civilians in her workspace but makes significant contributions to the Marine unit she serves. She is fully integrated into the team and is sought out for her expertise and analysis. She likes the fact that Marines are "no-nonsense" when it comes to the mission but simultaneously engage in relentless humor, making coming to work a pleasure.

Since retiring Beth continues to enjoy travelling. On many of these trips, she is joined by several colleagues from her Air Force days. When asked her favorite destination Beth emphatically replied "Morocco!", where she's traveled to a whopping eight times. The warm people, delicious food, and authenticity of culture in a region reflecting such varied influences keep her coming back.

Looking back on her journey in the military Beth has very few regrets. The sense of mission and

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After nearly a decade I managed to check this box off my list. I was sitting on the outside on the first sunny day in a while. I saw this Cardinal in a bush across the yard. I patiently waited for him to take flight, the image I captured left me in awe. - **David Olmstead** | Canon EOS 90D | f/6.3 • 1/1000 • 600.00mm • ISO1000 | 32.3MP • 6960 x 4640

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The Stoned Vet has become the No. 1 Marine podcast in the world. Juan has earned a giant, gold Warhammer award to commemorate that status. The next step? "I'm going to be bigger than Joe Rogan."

Juan's show airs every Wednesday and Friday. Juan is a family man (with seven kids!), a fearless defender of freedom and American values, a Veteran advocate, and above all, a Marine.

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purpose, the deep bonds of camaraderie, and the discipline obtained have lasting impacts. One of the things she appreciates the most is having had the opportunity to lead, to influence the lives of others, guiding them to grow and serve.

In all her travel and adventures Beth Phillips recognizes that taking care of people is an honor and privilege. Not only did she do that in uniform, but she also continues to do that today. The current generation preparing for the next fight benefits from her faithful service. The impact she leaves on others carries her service beyond those fleeting years as an Airman.

“WHO YOU ARE SPEAKS
SO LOUDLY, I CANNOT
HEAR WHAT YOU ARE
SAYING.”

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*