

PASSAGES

Kraxberger Pinned Command Sergeant Major

On Sept. 9, Denise Kraxberger made history as she became the first female command sergeant major in the Oregon Army National Guard. She is the daughter of Everett and Mary Jean Downey (deceased) of Oregon City, and granddaughter of Margaret Harney Downey (deceased).

Maj. Gen. Alexander Burgin, the adjutant general, and Kraxberger's husband, Don, pinned her in front of a large audience of family, friends, and co-workers at the Army Aviation Facility in Salem. She now holds the position of command sergeant major for the 641st Medical Battalion in Salem, Ore.

Kraxberger originally joined the Oregon Army National Guard in November 1974. Her reason for enlisting: "My Mom made me do it!" She had the choice of going to college or joining the National Guard. Since she wasn't ready to return to school yet, just having graduated from high school that year, she chose the National Guard for a three-year enlistment. Now, 26 years later, she has made history. Her career has taken her from recruiting to military pay to personnel, and the list goes on.

Being married for 23 years with two children is a challenge for any soldier and

Happy Birthday, Natasha LaDawn. I love you very much. Thank you for everything that you have done for me throughout the years. You're the best friend that I have ever had. I love you, cuz.

Felicia Ann

Merry Christmas Dad, Gail, and Eddie. I love you and miss you lots.

Selina

Happy Belated Birthday to Cousin Roberta Patten in Alaska on Nov. 12.

Selina and Scott

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to my family and friends. May you enter the new year safely.

Hugs and kisses, Wendi Schamp

Season's Greetings to all, especially the family who knows who they are. We miss you and haven't forgotten you.

Love, Sarah Jean Sjaastad and Nancy Dewane



Kraxberger remembers the worst times for her family and herself. Her son, DJ, was just a baby when she left for a school for five weeks. Another time was when she left for annual training and her daughter, Devon, broke out with chicken pox. She thanks her family and in-laws for their support during these times. DJ is now 15 and a sophomore at McNary High School, and Devon is 19 and a McNary graduate. Both were very proud to see their mother honored by her peers.

"I'm still here because I enjoy working with and helping soldiers. The Guard has been good to me and taught me a lot. I think we have our act together, and serve our country and state well," Kraxberger said. Future career goals for Kraxberger include becoming the first female state command sergeant major.

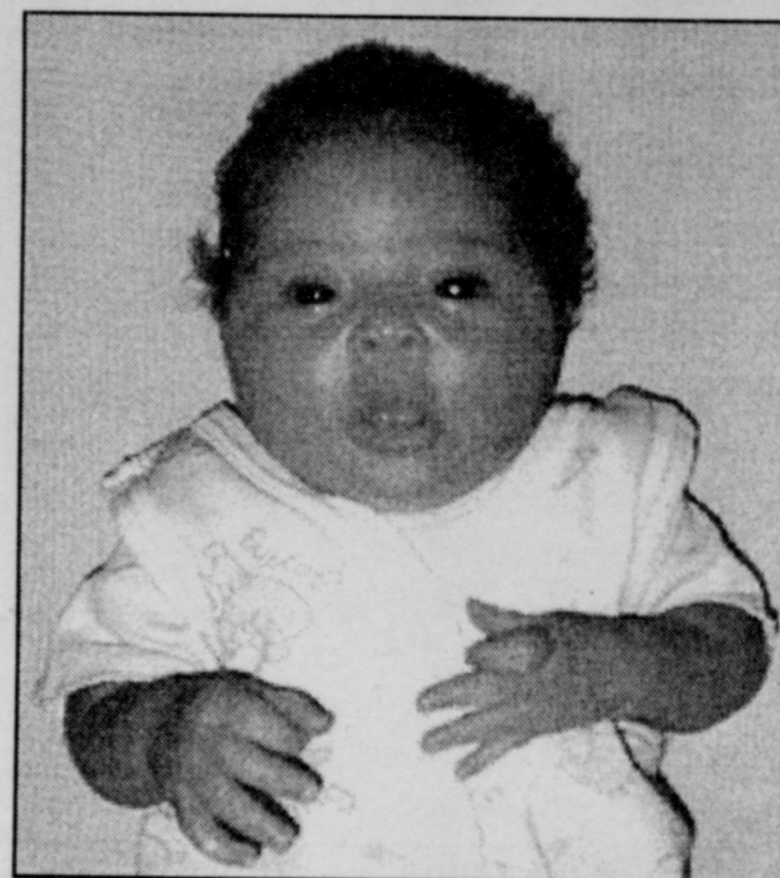
Congratulations to Sgt. Maj. Denise Kraxberger. On Sept. 9, 2000, Denise was promoted to sergeant major. Only three people hold this title in Oregon; the other two are men.

Denise is the daughter of Everett W. (Buck) Downey and Mary Jean Goodell Downey. She went into the National Guard right after high school, attending its six-month school. She came back and went to work in Salem at the National Guard Armory. This young sergeant major will retire in about three years.

I am telling you this because I want her to know how very proud and honored this family is to have her in it. I know Mom smiles down from heaven and says, "I told you you could do it. I love you." Denise, it is an honor to be your big sister and I love you. We (your father, brothers, and I) are very proud to say "Way to go Nise. We all love you, little sister."

Love, Jolyne

P.S. Belated Happy Birthday in November; you're almost as old as me (ha ha).



Welcome to the family, baby Yolanda Gheit-Sigh (Blue Jay) Vera-Simmons. Born on Oct. 11, 2000, she weighed 7 pounds, 4 ounces and was 18- inches long. Proud parents are Yolanda Vera-Simmons and Fernando Vera of Tennessee. Grandparents are Leonda and Roberto Villetas of Gervais, Ore., and Caroline Moreno of Mexico. Yolanda joins brother Fernando and sisters Yvette and Carolina.

Happy Birthday to Graham; it's your 20th. We love you even though we don't see you a lot!

Love, your other family!

I'd like to take time to say Happy Birthday to my special grandchildren and great-grandchildren on their December birthdays – Tommy, Tiffany, Sydney, Robert IV, and Bobby Jo. You all are loved.

And in this year 2000 for all my family – the Hibdons, the Brandts, the Vander Arks, the Lynchs, the Stuarts, and the Rilatos clan, happy birthday and happy anniversary to all of you. You are all loved and special to me.

And a special, very special, thanks to Robbie and Lisa Rilatos for baby Tyson, born on Nov. 12, which would have been Rob's and my 48th wedding anniversary. Thanks Robbie and Lisa.

I want to take this time to thank the Lord for all the special blessings and miracles that he has allowed me in my lifetime. For my precious sons and daughters and for all my beautiful family that he has given me. I will always be indebted to him.

I am a very proud mom, grandma, and great-grandma, Maxine Rilatos.