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An Interesting Combination

Personal statements from our veterans on why they chose to study German at CofC



**PICTURED FROM
LEFT: MATTHEW
MORRIS, ANNA
KELLEY, AND
DENICEE BECKER**

Coffee and a Conversation

I recently had an amazing opportunity to sit down with some of our veteran German majors over coffee. We had the chance to talk about their experiences in the military, their reasons for choosing to study German, and their opinion of the program here at the College of Charleston. Included in this piece are some of their statements as well as pictures.

Ruthie Foster - Student Worker for the Department of German and Russian Studies

Matthew Morris

What did you do/where did you serve in the US military?

2311 Ammunition Technician (Essentially the Supply Chain Management/Global Logistics of Bullets and Bombs. I, generally, just tell civilians I was an explosives expert, because that is all most people understand. I handled the storage, shipment, inspection, and occasional disposal of bullets/explosives.) I served in the United States Marine Corps.



What's it been like to study in the German program at CofC?

It has been wonderful. The teachers are extremely encouraging and supportive. I think that kind of comes with being a part of the Humanities. The German Department encourages new ways of thinking and seeing the world, while offering a strong foundation in German Language/Culture/Literacy. I consider myself lucky to be a part of the German Department.

Why did you decide to major in German and what are your career goals?

I've always loved languages. I consider language a bridge between cultures. I kind of stumbled into German, because it fit my schedule and I already had some interest and my passions for it grew from there. My goal is to be a German and History teacher.



Denicee Becker

What did you do/where did you serve in the US military?

I was a German linguist in the Army and was stationed in West Berlin at the listening station called Field Station Berlin. I was stationed there from July 1988 to July 1991 and I was responsible for transcribing, translating, and evaluating East German military radio communications. I had originally wanted to pursue a career as a German teacher after I got out of the Army but I was married to someone in the Air Force and would not have been in one place long enough to finish my degree. My GI bill was good for the time but would not have covered out of state tuition for a full four-year degree. I bounced around through other interesting careers in the mortgage and technology industries until I was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2008. While going through three years of cancer treatment I was unable to work. After I was in recovery I decided that I didn't want to try to compete in the IT industry and I did not want to go into corporate management but I did want to return to work.



Why did you decide to major in German and what are your career goals?

One of my greatest regrets after getting out of the Army was not maintaining my German language proficiency so I started looking at colleges that had Foreign Language Teaching degrees. When I found that the College of Charleston had the degree and that I could major in German, my search ended and my quest for admittance began. Upon graduation from the College I plan on pursuing my graduate degree with the intention of becoming a German teacher. My long-term goal would be to teach German at the college level.

What's it been like to study in the German program at CofC?

The best thing about studying German at the College is the professors and the courses. I feel they genuinely care about encouraging us to think about the world differently. I have looked at other colleges' German course offerings and they have not seemed as interesting. I also like that had I chosen to go into a business program I could have taken German business courses to supplement the English business courses. All the professors in my German classes have been excellent and if I weren't student teaching next semester I would take Dr. Koerner's theater class again. I would also want to take Dr. Nenno's LTGR 270 class.



Anna Kelley

What did you do/where did you serve in the US military?

As a reservist in the USMC, I served out of Atlanta at the Naval Air Station that previously occupied the space now being used by the Army and Air Force in Marietta, GA. My job in Aviation Life Support Systems circled around any and all things safety and survival for pilots in any case of emergency, to include identification badges on flight-suits to simple seat-survival kits, breathing oxygen units, inflatables, and backpack and compression-packed parachutes. My specialty was F/A-18 ejection seat systems and parachutes.

At the dawn of Operation Iraqi/Enduring Freedom, I worked as an active duty Marine out of Camp Pendleton, San Diego, CA inspecting, repairing, repacking, and equipping our war-fighters and pilots serving in-theater in Iraq. I then served for the remainder of Operation Iraqi/Enduring Freedom back in Atlanta with VMFA-142, the Flying Gators, packing my most favorite of all things -- the F/A-18 ejection seat parachute.



What's it been like to study in the German program at CofC?

I have found the German Department to be extremely supportive. The professors and students alike are enthusiastic and focused. They have been cheerleading me along the way and show only respect to family obligations. My experience as a non-traditional student, mom, wife, and generally "old person," has been so much fun and rewarding. My only regret is not returning sooner

Why did you decide to major in German and what are your career goals?

I was beginning my 300-level Spanish courses at North Georgia College & State University (Now University of North Georgia) as a Spanish major when I joined the Marine Corps as a reservist. I had hopes of finishing my degree and later commissioning as an officer and working in a linguist or language teacher position within the DOD. However, less than 2 months after graduating my MOS school, the Taliban struck the heart of our country and my husband (fiance' at the time) and I were placed on stand-by for activation. This was the first time since Desert Storm (1990) that reservists had been activated. My husband and I both spent 1.5 years on active duty supporting the campaigns of the war on terror. Once we finally returned home, life began and our college educations were put on what seemed to be an indefinite hold. My husband was able to complete his degree in Supply Chain Management and Logistics while working for the DOD as a civilian in 2015 by using his Post 9-11 GI Bill. And after working as a dental assistant for 14 years, I finally was able to return to finish my language degree using my VA Benefits. This time, I chose the German Dept. South Carolina has a competitive market of German companies, so the choice to switch to a German major was an easy choice. With a BA in German and a minor in Linguistics, I plan to continue my education into grad school and teach college-level German language courses, coupled with translating at the professional level.