

## **USMA Featured History Alumni – LTC Beth Behn**

Branch:      Logistics Corps (LG)    

Current / Battalion Command Assignment / Dates: Jan 2013-Jan 2015

Years Assigned to West Point: 2004-2007; 2010-2012

*(1) Please tell us a little about yourself.*

I am originally from Cedar Falls, Iowa. I attended USMA and majored in International and Strategic History. Following graduation and commissioning into the Transportation Corps in 1994, my first duty station was Fort Eustis, VA where I served as a platoon leader, XO, detachment commander, and plans officer in the 24<sup>th</sup> Trans Battalion. After completing the Logistics Advanced Course, I served as a Battalion S-4 and Company Commander in the 180<sup>th</sup> Trans Battalion at Fort Hood, TX. During my second year of company command, I was selected to return to USMA as a faculty member. I attended graduate school at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, earning an MA in American History. I then taught from 2004-2007, with a 6-month Iraq deployment in the middle (2006). Following CGSC at Fort Leavenworth, I served as a BCT S-4 and SPO in 2ABCT, 4ID at Fort Carson, to include a 12-month deployment to Iraq. I returned to USMA as a second-time rotating faculty member in 2010. While teaching, I completed my PhD, defending my dissertation at UMass in November 2011. I was selected for battalion command in April 2012 and took command of the 26<sup>th</sup> BSB, 2ABCT, 3ID at Fort Stewart, GA on 9 January 2013. I am married and have two kids (ages 7 and 4).

*(2) What made you decide to come to USMA as a History instructor?*

The terrific experience I had as an undergraduate majoring in History was the primary reason that I wanted to return to USMA. I learned so much – about History and about the Army and about leadership – from my instructors and I wanted the opportunity to have that same impact on cadets. Additionally, I was excited about the opportunity to broaden my horizons by attending two years of graduate school at a civilian university.

*(3) Please tell us a little about your graduate school experience.*

My graduate school experience was phenomenal. It was a huge shift to go from commanding a truck company with 300 Soldiers at Fort Hood, TX to being a grad student at UMass Amherst. I gained invaluable exposure to the civilian academic environment while also contributing to the diversity of that environment. My fellow grad students and my professors were sincerely interested in learning about my military experiences, and I certainly benefitted from learning about perceptions of the military from my civilian counterparts. This exchange of information and perspectives is exactly what I think the Chief of Staff is talking about when he emphasizes “broadening” experiences.

*(4) How did your study of history in graduate school help prepare you for future assignments in the operational Army?*

Graduate school gave me the opportunity to sharpen my critical thinking skills and improve both my written and oral communication skills. It also gave me a historical perspective that I found to be invaluable when I returned to the operational Army. Having that historical perspective and being able to share it with both seniors and subordinates made me a more effective leader.

*(5) How did your faculty time prepare you for future assignments in the operational Army?*

My experiences working with and leading peers as a faculty member served me extremely well during my KD time as a Major, working first on a BCT staff as the S4 and later as a SPO. In those operational assignments, being able to communicate effectively and develop strong relationships with fellow Majors across the BCT and in sister units was absolutely essential. My USMA assignment provided me with ample opportunity to practice building those critical peer relationships, through work in the department and through my summer field training opportunities with cadets.

*(6) How was your West Point assignment in terms of family time and work-life balance?*

Our family had a terrific experience at West Point. I put in some long hours, to be sure, but also enjoyed a level of flexibility and autonomy that was refreshing. In addition to all of the activities and events available on West Point, the Hudson Valley has a great deal to offer. We were never at a loss for things to do and see on the weekends – and usually had the time to actually go and do those things.

*(7) What advice would you give to officers considering a faculty position at West Point?*

I wholly underestimated the professional growth that I would experience during graduate school and as a faculty member. I am unquestionably a more capable and effective leader in the operational Army due to the choice I made to earn an advanced degree at teach at West Point. It seems counterintuitive – and I would not have believed it unless I actually experienced it – but my two years as a civilian graduate student and my time as a faculty member in the History Department were two of the most important developmental positions to prepare me for battalion command.