

Honoring Ameris Bank's Heroes

2026-06-25

As America prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday, we're proud to recognize the veterans across Ameris Bank whose leadership, service and dedication helped secure the freedoms we enjoy today.

Meet Natalie Torres, Navy Active Duty, 1994-1998 | Navy Reserves, 1998-2007

- What was your role/Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)?

I was a SH3 Ship Serviceman 3rd This MOS was in supply; we had many different duties. We did the entire ship's laundry, we were the barbers and hairdressers, and I ran the ship's stores and filled the soda and geedunk (candy and chips) machines. All the money that was profited from sales went to the Morale, Welfare and Recreation, which allowed sailors to go to extracurricular activities such as tickets to concerts and sporting events.

- What inspired you to join the military?

To see the world and follow in my family's history of military service. All the men in my immediate family served: grandpa, dad and brother.

- What were some of the most impactful experiences or lessons that you took from your time in the military?

Seeing the world; I traveled to many countries. I volunteered in Korea at orphanages and there were so many children who were not wanted, but they were so grateful just to spend the day with us sailors. Also, realizing how free we are here in the United States. I visited Bahrain in 1997, and women had to be covered and could not walk in front of a man but behind them, and there were military all over with machine guns everywhere. Kind of eye opening.

- What drew you to a career in banking?

I always did cash handling, and I have a strong background in customer service, so this was an easy fit for me. Before retail banking, I worked at Citi in the commercial cards fraud department, so I created rules to block

purchase and travel cards if the wrong type of charge hit the cards. But here at Ameris Bank, we have a real work-life balance, and I wouldn't want to work anywhere else.

- How do you translate your military skills into a corporate environment?

I learned to take pride in everything that I do. Also, in uniform you must always be well groomed and care about your appearance. I learned respect for others and met people from all walks of life, so I don't feel anyone is better than anyone else. Treat people the way you want to be treated, which has been instrumental in my becoming a leader at Ameris Bank.

- Can you give an example of a time when your military training helped you succeed at work?

I have a strong work ethic due to my military service. Being on time has always been very important in the military and it is ingrained in me now. I also truly enjoy helping people, which is what I feel I do when I am opening accounts and assisting someone find their banking needs and fulfilling them.

Meet Terrell Mathis, United States Marine Corps Lance Corporal | 1990-1994

- What was your role/Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)?

I was a Radio Operator "Desert Storm Veteran."

- What inspired you to join the military?

I joined the Marines because I wanted to be the best.

- What were some of the most impactful experiences or lessons that you took from your time in the military?

The Marines inspired me to always push forward in life and never give up.

- What drew you to a career in banking?

I really like that banking is actually helping someone. When a customer comes in, they are in need of help financially and I am happy to be able to service them.

- How do you translate your military skills into a corporate environment?

The military taught me discipline and time management, which works perfectly in a corporate environment.

- Can you give an example of a time when your military training helped you succeed at work?

To work as team, from my manager to my colleagues to my own team, everything works better when you work as team.

Meet Mark Nix, United States Army National Guard | 1989-1998

- What was your role/Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)?

I went to Ft. Benning in Columbus, GA and did my basic training and advanced individual training to earn my MOS 11B/11M. At first, I was in a mechanized infantry unit with the 48th Infantry Brigade in the Georgia Army National Guard from 1989 to 1991. Then from 1991 to 1997, I was in the Alabama Army National Guard and

went back to school to Ft. Leonard Wood in Missouri to get the MOS 62B heavy equipment mechanic and I was part of the 158th Maintenance Battalion. In May 1996, our unit was called up to go help with the Bosnian War. I came back home in January 1997 and transferred back to the 48th Infantry Brigade and got out November 1998.

- What inspired you to join the military?

My ex-brother-in-law asked me to join his unit, and I said yes at age 19.

- What were some of the most impactful experiences or lessons that you took from your time in the military?

The structure and the discipline were the two main areas. It made me a better person.

- What drew you to a career in banking?

I was a manager at Kay Jewelers, and I hired a person from the Army to manage a store in another city. One day, he got a job in banking and then recruited me to join in April 2009. We both came over in management with Regions Bank at the time.

- How do you translate your military skills into a corporate environment?

It was very easy. I do believe it is all skill or will; I have all the willpower to learn and just need to learn the new skill. Once I learn the new skill, the next is then continuing to learn and grow my skills.

- Can you give an example of a time when your military training helped you succeed at work?

I believe in leaving no one behind. I always teach everyone what I know and grow their skills if they have the willpower to grow. I believe training them as a branch manager/CEO to run their own business where one day they can get promoted to the next level. I never fear anyone taking over my job; in fact, I want them to take over my job and have everyone being able to help every customer no matter what they need. Instead of saying, "Mark is not here today, you will have to come back tomorrow when he is here." No one should have to wait for what they need at the time they need the service.

Meet Scott Kelbel, United States Army 2nd Battalion – 128th Infantry | Wisconsin Army National Guard and First Sergeant | Light Infantry – Air Assault | 1982- 2003

- What was your role/Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)?

I had many different roles in my 20 years. I started my career in the Signal Corps working in tactical communications, as a communications chief and a communication security custodian. I also served as an intelligence analyst, in state emergency planning, as a battalion and brigade communications sergeant, and I ended my career as a light infantry – air assault first sergeant.

- What inspired you to join the military?

My older brother was in the military, and I joined to receive education incentives and benefits.

- What were some of the most impactful experiences or lessons that you took from your time in the military?

I learned a tremendous amount; however, there are four impactful lessons I learned:

Respect goes both ways ... if you give it, you will likely receive it.

Don't rest when you think you have won the battle, only rest when the battle is over.

Choose the difficult right answer over the easy wrong answer.

Always give your absolute best effort — when you do, no matter the outcome, you will never have to live with the regrets of wondering, "What if I had tried harder/tried a different approach/etc.?"

- What drew you to a career in banking?

A position in equipment finance was suggested to me by a close friend 22 years ago when I wasn't even looking for a new job.

- How do you translate your military skills into a corporate environment?

The framework for how I took care of my military was communication, planning, training and execution. As a military leader, I gave my best effort to clearly communicate the mission to the team, plan and train for a successful mission, and act with proper execution. This works in all aspects of life.

- Can you give an example of a time when your military training helped you succeed at work?

When I was with a previous company, I was challenged with the task of growing the financing operations, which included hiring, training, modifying operations and gaining acceptance of the plan by the executive team. The method I used was clear communication with the executive team to gain their acceptance of the plan and their support, planning that involved several departments, hiring and training, and executing the plan. The plan worked better than I had projected and in a shorter time frame than expected.

Meet Tim Banik, United States Marine Corps | 2006-2010 | Reserves | 2010-2014 | Corporal

- What was your role/Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)?

I was an MOS 0352 – antitank missile gunner, which is a combat-focused job responsible for delivering medium and heavy anti-armor fire to support infantry, light armored reconnaissance and tank battalions, as well as the Marine Air-Ground Task Force. While on active duty, I served four years as part of the 2nd Tank Battalion 2nd TOW Platoon. The 2nd Tank Battalion (2nd Tanks) was an armored battalion of the United States Marine Corps (USMC), which was based out of the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. It fell under the command of the 2nd Marine Division and the II Marine Expeditionary Force. Beginning in 2020, the USMC deactivated all its tank battalions, which meant 2nd TOW Platoon had also been deactivated. The 2nd Tank Battalion was deactivated on May 5, 2021, after 79 years of service.

I served two combat deployments with the 2nd TOW Platoon, which was made up of about 75 infantry Marines. My first deployment was in 2007 when I was 19 years old and was to Al Anbar Province in Fallujah, Iraq. My platoon had a big area of operation since we were a mobile unit using Humvees and oversaw security on a portion of road called MSR (main supply route) MOBILE.

My second deployment was to Sinjar, Iraq, which was close to the Syrian border. I was a squad leader during this deployment and oversaw four Marines and one Navy corpsman. We lived out of our trucks during this deployment for about five months conducting combat operations in our area of operation.

- What inspired you to join the military?

My older brother joined the Marines a few years before me when the Iraq War began. I was 15 at the time, and knew I wanted to serve my country during its time of need.

- What were some of the most impactful experiences or lessons that you took from your time in the military?
I learned many things from my service:

Humans do extraordinary things when a team/unit is completely in sync. I watched years of training pay off in moments where it was needed most.

If everyone on a team isn't on the same page, then tragedy could be right around the corner. Training/practice is important to succeed and to find the best solution to an issue.

Always take everyone's input to mind when you are a leader. If someone else has a better plan/idea, USE IT.

- What drew you to a career in banking?

I had a family friend in the industry who was willing to give me a shot.

- How do you translate your military skills into a corporate environment?

I have found some of the hardest workers in the industry are veterans. We know how to put our heads down and work hard.

- Can you give an example of a time when your military training helped you succeed at work?

The military teaches you discipline: It is important to show up on time, work hard, follow orders, best respectful, put your best foot forward and most importantly, to do your best to lead by example.

Meet Wintrell Collins, United States Army | 1993-1996 | Private First Class | Fort Clayton, Panama

- What was your role/Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)?

My MOS was 31F — Network Switching Systems Operator-Maintainer, which was a communications specialty.

- What inspired you to join the military?

Growing up in a military family inspired me to join the Army, and the prospect of traveling while serving was particularly exciting to me as a young woman in the 90s.

- What were some of the most impactful experiences or lessons that you took from your time in the military?

I absolutely loved basic training. It challenged me mentally and physically while providing discipline and structure. After straining my ribs during a training exercise, I discovered my ability to push through discomfort and remain focused on the mission. That experience strengthened my resilience and taught me to face challenges with determination and commitment to the greater good.

- What drew you to a career in banking?

My banking career began in the Accounting department, where I built a strong foundation in financial operations. I like the challenge and structure of working within clearly defined regulatory frameworks.

- How do you translate your military skills into a corporate environment?

I approach my corporate environment the same way I did in the military by breaking down the complex issues to build a strong foundation.

- Can you give an example of a time when your military training helped you succeed at work?

One example of how my military training helped me succeed at work was during a high-pressure situation where we were dealing with a sudden spike in workload and tight deadlines. In the military, I was trained to stay calm, prioritize tasks and execute under pressure. I applied those same principles by quickly assessing what needed immediate attention, delegating tasks clearly and maintaining open communication with my team. As a result, we were able to meet our deadlines without sacrificing quality, and the situation actually strengthened team cohesion. My military background taught me discipline, adaptability and accountability, which directly contributed to that success.

Meet Bailey Harper, United States Navy I Petty Officer Second Class - Torpedoman (Subs) / Aviation Machinist Mate
| 2014-2019

- What was your role/Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)?

I was a torpedoman (submarine weapons specialist) and was an aviation mechanic on helicopters.

- What inspired you to join the military?

I wanted to see the world, travel and serve my country.

- What were some of the most impactful experiences or lessons that you took from your time in the military?

Experiencing different cultures around the world, making lifelong friends and getting out of my comfort zone.

- What drew you to a career in banking?

I got my degree in criminal justice and was interested in working in the corporate security field with Ameris.

- How do you translate your military skills into a corporate environment?

It taught me how to operate in high-pressure environments, stay organized and execute with accountability.

- Can you give an example of a time when your military training helped you succeed at work?

I learned how to stay calm and not get overwhelmed when multiple urgent issues come up at once with competing deadlines.

Meet Patricia Henry, United States Navy I Seaman | 1988-1989

- What was your role/Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)?

I was a Radioman stationed in Scotland, and was honorably discharged for medical reasons.

- What inspired you to join the military?

I was looking for a way out — time to grow up and felt this would be the perfect starting point, not to mention

I grew up with military family.

- What were some of the most impactful experiences or lessons that you took from your time in the military?
The experiences I took from my time in the military were accountability, dependability and the importance of teamwork and respect.
- What drew you to a career in banking?
The ability to empower customers and provide significant life goals along with the stability of job security.
- How do you translate your military skills into a corporate environment?
My military service instilled a deep action-oriented approach to integrity with the key focus on accountability, moral courage and strict adherence to ethical standards.
- Can you give an example of a time when your military training helped you succeed at work?
There have been times we have had disgruntled customers, and by the time they left the branch, they were smiling. I credit this to the training I received while in the military.