NEWS RELEASE

BORN TO LEAD: MARINE CORPS VETERAN TRACEY FETHERSON BLAZES HER OWN TRAIL

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When she began working for DICK'S Sporting Goods, Tracey Fetherson had to ask herself an important question: What to wear to work?

"I'm still figuring that out," said Tracey. "I'm used to wearing a uniform."

For eight years, Tracey served in the United States Marine Corps where she rose to the rank of Captain, a position held by few Black women, and led groups of up to 400 Marines. She’s been overseas and back and, in addition to serving the United States, Tracey's expertise has benefited other militaries and had a ripple effect around the world.

While she has proven she belongs with the toughest of the tough, Tracey is also a delightful and sharp-witted person who kept right on moving after her honorable discharge by working her way through the prestigious Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. She’s now a Senior Manager of Strategy and Innovation at DICK'S Sporting Goods and we are proud to support and salute Tracey and all our 1,400 teammates who have served this Veterans Day.

A born leader

To say Tracey was born to be a Marine isn't an overstatement. In fact, she was born to two Marines as her mother and father both served for 27 and 30 years, respectively. The youngest of three children, Tracey was born in

Okinawa, Japan to a sports-loving family. Her mother played for the Marines basketball team until she became pregnant with Tracey.

Tracey spent most of her young life in Quantico, Va. The importance of education as a groundwork for everything else was stressed to Tracey and her siblings from a young age. A natural leader, Tracey headed up multiple clubs and school organizations. She was a popular student who was somewhere between confident and talkative, depending on who you asked.

"My father would tell you I was always a confident kid," said Tracey. "I would tell you I was a kid who talked too much. The teachers would always say, 'Tracey's really bright, but she talks too much.'"

After graduating from the University of Virginia in 2010 with a Bachelors' Degree in Sociology, the self-proclaimed girl who talked too much listened to her heart and heard her true calling. Tracey was acutely aware of the opportunities the Marine Corps brought to the lives of her and her family members. She wanted to both give back and continue the service.

"I guess I was always supposed to be here," said Tracey. "For me, it was always about doing something that had a greater purpose. I always wanted to be a part of something that was bigger than myself and would advance the community I was in. I never liked being a bystander; I always wanted to be involved in something, especially if it was making things better."

Tracey quickly rose through the ranks and found herself in a leadership position as a Logistics Officer. As she continued her ascent, her platoons swelled from dozens to hundreds.

According to the Department of Defense, most Marines classify as white (about 72 percent) and male (about 90 percent). Tracey said that, although she always felt respected as a leader, there was an undercurrent to her gender and ethnicity.

"I never gave myself an opportunity to feel that," said Tracey. "I had a job I needed to do and do well so that nobody could ever question what I can be or what I look like. That's a very heavy burden to bear."

Tracey eventually led her Marines to the combat zone of Helmand Province, Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. They were tasked with a retrograde, meaning they needed to break down the base and bring the materials back home.

Upon arriving in Afghanistan, Tracey was informed that the route to the base went through a dangerous pass where four marines were killed by an IED blast just days before. Only 25 years-old, Tracey found herself tasked with

ensuring the safety of her entire platoon with nowhere to go but down a treacherous path. It was nerve-rattling, but Tracey zoned in and led her team to the base.

"You're scared, right? What happened was just a week ago," said Tracey. "So, you rely on your training with a rigorous focus on the mission."

A new challenge

Two years removed from active duty, Tracey faced the transition back to civilian life that many veterans must deal with. And for one of the few moments of her life, she was questioning herself.

Do I need to be a whole new person?
Will my leadership methods work on civilians?
Will the skills I honed carry over?

"A big part of my transition was understanding I learned a lot in eight years and it's still applicable now," said Tracey. "I'm not leading 200 Marines anymore, but the work I'm doing is still logistical. I'm still doing that in Strategy. My dad reminded me to lean on the experiences that I had as an Officer and there are so many skills that still apply."

The company's support of veterans was attractive to Tracey and inspired her to continue to progress without forgetting where she came from.

"The diversity of the company is a real highlight to veterans," said Tracey. "Veterans are the hidden demographic. We don't look a certain way. You can tell that I'm a Black woman, but you don't know that I served for eight years. Our differences are not always transparent to others. Hopefully that's something people remember with other veterans."

Everyone has their own challenges and struggles, however Tracey noted there is a stereotype that veterans by and large have trouble assimilating into society after serving. She's quick to note that, no, she did not grow up doing push-ups or live with a strict military family. Her parents were full of love, supportive and dealt with the exact same issues as other parents, such as coordinating school lunches and drop-offs for sports practices.

And after her eight years of service, Tracey fit right into her team at DICK'S. While she still exudes a few distinct Marine flourishes, such as answering a request with "Yes, sir" or "Yes, ma'am", she's also an affable teammate who enjoys a good cup of coffee, a clever problem-solver and, despite her initial concerns, quite fashionable.

"We're able to step out of the uniform and succeed," she said. "We are professionals like everybody else."

This Veterans Day and every day, DICK'S Sporting Goods would like to thank Tracey and all of our veterans for their service and sacrifice.