



Carol Luecke Thomas

AIR FORCE BRIGADIER GENERAL

MEET **CAROL LUECKE THOMAS**, FHS CLASS OF 1966, TRAILBLAZING FEMALE MILITARY OFFICER AND STAFF NURSE.

Ascending to a top rank in the United States military is an accomplishment for anyone, especially a woman coming of age during the 1960s. Faribault alumna, Carol Luecke Thomas, made history when she was promoted to Brigadier General, becoming the first female officer to hold such a high rank in the Nevada Air National Guard.

In addition to her service as Brigadier General, Thomas has extensive experience in pediatrics, surgical recovery room protocol, wellness programs and home health. She taught pediatrics at the University of Nevada, Reno. She also taught military courses in combat casualty care, battlefield nursing and professional military education. She served as Nevada State Chief Nurse and then Assistant Adjutant General for the Nevada Air National Guard. She is a charter member of the Women in Military Service for America and a member of the National Guard Association of the United States.

Thomas graduated with honors from Faribault High School in 1966. In 1970, she graduated cum laude from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, S.D. with a Bachelor of Science Degree in nursing. She joined the Air Force after graduation because she had a strong sense of patriotism as well as her desire to do something for her country. She was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the USAF and received her basic training for medical officers in Texas.

After basic training, Thomas was stationed at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, WA. Once her commitment ended at Fairchild, she joined the Reserve and went to

flight school, becoming a flight nurse on C-141s out of Charleston, SC. There she met and married her husband. Her two pregnancies ended her flying career.

Later, her family moved to Reno, Nevada, where she joined the Air National Guard and gradually rose through the ranks. Eventually, her skills were recognized. She learned she was being considered for promotion to fill the position of Assistant Adjutant General for the Nevada Air National Guard. She explains her reaction to the news this way: "I, at first, had some heartburn about being selected as the first female general in the state, feeling that I was merely a token to break the glass ceiling, but I realized I had 'filled all the squares' like my male counterparts and, just because I didn't fly airplanes, I was still very much qualified." Many women leaders say such a reaction to a promotion is not unique.

Thomas adds, "Little did I ever dream that I would make the Air Force a career, nor get promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. It was a huge commitment through the years, balancing a full-time nursing career, raising a family, fulfilling all the necessary military requirements, and being deployed around the world."

Thomas feels she owes her success to her conservative religious upbringing. She attended Peace Lutheran School and Faribault Public Schools where she learned the importance of respect and community.

Many of Thomas' family members live in Faribault. She has two daughters, Amber in Phoenix and Rachel in Carson City, three grandchildren, and her significant other, Dick. Thomas currently lives in Maryland.