

MAJOR GENERAL SUSAN L. PAMERLEAU, USAF (RET.)

Distinguished UW Alumna

Coming to the University of Wyoming changed the course of Major General (ret.) Susan L. Pamerleau's life (B.A. sociology '68).

Before she served for 32 years in the U.S. Air Force and earned promotion to major general. Before she served as the first woman to command the Air Force Personnel Center. Before she was the first woman appointed to command the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps. Before she served on the International Military Staff at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Before she served as sheriff of Bexar County, Texas, the 11th largest sheriff's office in the nation, leading an organization of almost 2,000 personnel with a budget of over \$200 million and capital projects exceeding \$85 million. Before she was nominated to be the U.S. marshal for the Western District of Texas that encompasses San Antonio, El Paso and Austin.

Before all that, Pamerleau was a junior at the now-defunct Phillips University in Oklahoma. She was the yearbook editor,

on student senate, an officer in her sorority and a promising student. Then her parents moved to Casper, and her brother transferred to UW, so she decided to make the move too.

This move altered the course of her life. She graduated from UW with her bachelor's degree in sociology, but more importantly she decided to join the U.S. Air Force.

"I don't think I would've ever gone into the Air Force had I not been at the University of Wyoming," says Pamerleau. "My life would've taken a very different direction had I not come here."

In 1967, Public Law 90-130 changed the nature of the armed forces by allowing more women to join. Before that, U.S. law had limited the number of women in the military to 2 percent and the highest rank for a woman to that of lieutenant colonel. And so the military began actively recruiting women, including in a UW sorority dining room in November 1967.

Throughout her long and distinguished service to those things she loves, Pamerleau has earned many awards, including the Distinguished Service Medal and the Defense Superior Service Medal, the UW College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Alumni Award, and the Bexar County Pioneer Award for being the first woman elected sheriff, among others. Now she's a UW Distinguished Alumna.

These awards are so well deserved. Pamerleau unstintingly supports UW with her time and resources. In 2005, she created two scholarships for UW AFROTC students for leadership and academic excellence. Two years later, she established a bequest that will support scholarships for all UW AFROTC students in good standing, the Major General Susan L. Pamerleau Award. That's 50–100 students per year. In 2016, she created a scholarship for sociology students, the Major General Susan L. Pamerleau Sociology Scholarship. She has also supported other programs on campus, and she has served on the UW Foundation Board of Directors 2011–18.

"I haven't planned any of this," Pamerleau says. "It's been about what opportunities presented themselves—you know that it's the right thing to do. I'm so thankful to have the opportunity to continue serving in a meaningful way."



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