



Teacher's Pet

Retired Army NCO finds his calling working with animals after earning a degree in agriculture from Oregon State University.

by Marta Sauret

QUICK STATS /

School: Oregon State University

Location: Corvallis, Oregon

Web site: www.oregonstate.edu

Phone: (541) 737-1000

General Degree Programs: Agricultural Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering, Forestry, Health & Human, Sciences, Liberal Arts, Oceanic & Atmospheric Sciences, Pharmacy, Science, and Veterinary Medicine.

OSU's E-college Web site: ecampus.oregonstate.edu

E-college admissions contact: (800) 235-6559

E-college General Degree Programs: Environmental Sciences, General Agriculture, Liberal Studies and Natural Resources.



Oregon State University

For David Disselhorst, the Army was his family and his life for 21 years. Now that he's finally retired and recently graduated, he's making his life and his blood family his first priorities.

After trying nine different colleges during his winding career, Disselhorst acquired his bachelor's degree in General Agriculture from Oregon State University's (OSU) distance learning program.

OSU is a "major research university" in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Although learning through OSU isn't limited to students living in that area. Through its Ecampus (Online and Distance learning), OSU's Extended Campus is bringing quality educational opportunities to many students of all life habits throughout the country.

Among the concentrations available to Disselhorst through OSU's online campus (concentrations include Environmental Sciences, General Agriculture, Liberal Studies and Natural Resources); he chose

to dedicate his studies to general agriculture, something he's wanted to do all his life.

Now Disselhorst is a veterinary technician at Sul Ross State University, something he loves to do, yet something he still puts behind his family on the life-priority list. Disselhorst couldn't be doing what he's doing today if it hadn't been for the Army and a few other very important influences, he says.

G.I. Jobs interviewed him to find out about his determinations to get life just right, no matter how long it takes.

GIJ: Where did you graduate from?

DD: Oregon State University, but that was the culmination of nine different colleges. I had a hard time finding a degree program I was interested in. When I



David Disselhorst, U.S. Army

first joined the Army, all they had was business management and criminal justice. I figured if I was going to go through the trouble of getting a degree, I should get it in something I wanted, so I floundered around until I found OSU's General Agriculture degree.

GIJ: You just left the Army in the early summer. Does it still feel pretty new to not be in the service after 21 years?

DD: Extremely new! Just the fact that I have hair on my head, and I don't have to shave every morning will take a while to get used to. But I still find myself doing some things the same like getting up early and focusing on my day, prioritizing my tasks, and taking care of my responsibilities.

GIJ: What other feelings came to you when you left the Army?

DD: Nostalgia was probably the biggest feeling. At my retirement ceremony Lt. Col. Williamson (former commander) gave a little history of all the changes that have happened in my career. It was a little overwhelming. It was also emotional leaving my soldiers. I really enjoyed taking care of soldiers.

GIJ: After so many years of service, what made you leave?

DD: It was time to go and do something new, you know. It was time to let the young soldiers take charge.

GIJ: You graduated with a degree in general agriculture; what does that entail?

DD: It covered quite a variety of topics: agriculture, fish & wildlife, soils, rangeland management: all things that really interest me.

GIJ: Was there any influence from the Army towards the decision of this field of study?

DD: Only financially. There shouldn't be any reason for soldiers leaving the military without at least an associate's degree. As a

soldier, you have so many options on degrees and schools. It's a great opportunity.

GIJ: How else has the Army helped you in with school and career?

DD: Financially, I'm now getting the benefits of my retirement, and with school, the Army was a tremendous asset with tuition assistance and the GI Bill. Emotionally, the Army made an adult out of me. I was 24 years old, married, with one on the ground and one in the oven, and going nowhere. The Army taught me responsibility and discipline.

GIJ: You work as a vet technician at Sul Ross State University. That sounds pretty cool. What are your responsibilities?

DD: My main job is to keep the department supplied, clean and monitor any animals we have on site. I also get to teach labs and review course content. Once I earn my master's in animal science, I will get to teach classes, too.

GIJ: Do you have any crazy animal stories?

DD: My goodness, yes! There was the attack by the toothless poodle. He was going to town, gumming my hand. My side hurt because I was laughing so hard.

Then there was Rudy the dog, a 97 lb., bipolar Belgium Malinois. I went to the school's kennels to talk to one of the dog handlers, and Rudy was outside. I knew

better than to go into the exercise yard with the dog out and the handler inside. But Rudy came up to the fence and let me scratch him through the fence, wagging his tail and all. The handler came out of the kennels, so I figured it was safe to go inside. I opened the gate, walked in, and Rudy grabbed me by the cuff of my coat. Needless to say I froze, while Rudy dared me to move. The handler instantly called him off, and Rudy was all proud of himself, happy again, wagging his tail and letting me scratch him. Although it was funny afterwards, I didn't laugh quite so hard at the time!

GIJ: Does your life outside of work include a family?

DD: No, my life outside of my family includes work. The Army came first for over 21 years. Now my wife and daughters, and of course our three dogs, have top priority. Fortunately, I have some wonderful bosses that let me keep those priorities.

GIJ: It seems like for soldiers the Army is like a second family. Is that the experience you've had?

DD: Being away from your biological family, you have to adopt the Army as your second family, if you want to stay focused and sane. I did two overseas tours, and Thanksgiving and Christmas were always tough. But there were big get-togethers with lots of food and fun during those times. ★

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