Monica Ramsey Jordan ‘87

Choosing a unique career path can lead to great success. Case in point: Monica Ramsey Jordan’s distinguished career as a Major in the United States Air Force.

A strong math and science student at HB, Monica had always planned to study medicine. In fact, she says, “I was accepted to every college I applied to and I was supposed to go to Dartmouth.” But by the end of her senior year, something felt wrong. “My parents had made a grand financial sacrifice sending me to HB. Then I realized (college) would be another four-year obligation to my family.” So Monica joined the United States Air Force instead.

“It was only supposed to be for four years,” she notes. “After that I was going to finish my education and become a doctor.” As soon as Monica arrived at her first Air Force base, where she was being trained as an avionics technician for F-15 fighter jets and a computer operator, “I started taking college courses,” she says.

But then Monica’s initial four year commitment morphed into active duty. As is common in military careers, Jordan was transferred multiple times to different Air Force bases throughout the country. “Every time you get an assignment to move, you have to start with another school,” she says. “Sometimes I would even have to start over.” And somewhere along the line she realized she actually wanted to study engineering more than medicine. She also married at a young age and by 21 had a daughter, Krystina.

Still, she persisted and pursued her education. In 2001, eleven years after she first enlisted, Monica completed her Bachelor’s Degree in Mathematics from the University of Maryland. In 2002, she received her commission at Officer Training School; she later earned an M.S. in Engineering Systems Management as well.

During her nearly thirty-year military career she has worked on projects ranging from classified message processing for the Defense Intelligence Agency to managing acquisitions for the Chemical Biological Directorate’s $520 million Chemical Biological Defense Program. She was working in the Pentagon on 9/11 – “you really realize safety is something you took for granted,” she says of the tragic event - and she’s also been awarded a Joint Service Commendation Medal, four Air Force Commendation Medals and two Air Force Achievement Medals.

Now, after a successful military career, she is preparing to retire from the Air Force in 2018. In the next chapter of her life, Monica’s looking to help women achieve financial stability and independence via an organization she founded in 2014 called *Purse Strings.* Looking back at her own unconventional path, Monica’s advice for young women just starting out is simple: “Find what you enjoy - not what people have told you you’re good at – and decide for yourself using the higher power inside you to really find and practice your passion.”