

She's learning how to give orders

by Barbara Crane
Tundra Times reporter

Elvira Ticket is aiming for the top. "I want to see how far I can go," she said recently. "My goal is to be the first female first sergeant in the Alaska Army National Guard."

Ticket, 32, has been a Guard member for 14 years. A NANA shareholder, she was born in Kotzebue but raised in Selawik.

One day an Alaska Army Guard recruiter came to her high school in Selawik and talked to the students about enlisting.

Ticket's father had been in the Army, and she talked with her mother about signing up.

"My mother used to talk a lot about when my father was in the Army, about ironing his uniforms and getting him ready for annual training," Ticket said. "She told me it was good for my father and asked me, 'Why don't you join, too?'"

With her mother's permission, Ticket decided to enlist even though she was only in the 10th grade.

"I went to basic training in April," Ticket recalled, "and when I got home it was too late to go back to school. So I quit school and didn't go back until five years later."

Ticket said she considered taking the test for a General Education Diploma, but she decided she wanted a full high school education.

So she went back to high school for three years and earned her diploma.

Ticket credits the Army Guard with providing opportunities for education and training and encouraging her to grow.

"When I first joined, I didn't know anything," she said. "All I was good at was making copies. So they sent me for more training."

"The Army Guard is always sending me for more training so I can get better and learn new things."

Ticket says that sometimes high school students see her in her uniform and start asking questions about the Guard. She enjoys talking with young people and answering their questions.

"For some reason, the girls are usually scared to join," she said. "Maybe it's because they've heard awful stories about the basic training."

"I tell them I was scared, too, but it's not really that hard and I did OK."

She tells them about the benefits she's enjoyed.

"Joining the Guard is a way to go places and travel, too," she said. "I go to all the schools they throw at me — every one of them. I want to improve myself, and all the training is free."

Ticket is currently a staff sergeant working for the 3rd Battalion in Kotzebue. She's a personnel staff non-commissioned officer.

"We take care of anything to do with personnel — keep medical records, take care of pay problems, everything," she said.

Though she sometimes has to work extra hours to get her job done, Ticket says she enjoys it.

"I like supervising and helping people with their problems," she said. "It's a special job, and I like it."

One thing she has had to learn in the Army Guard is how to give orders.

"Some of the older guys still think a woman can't do a good job, and they have problems with taking orders from a woman," she said.

"With them I just have to make sure they know I really mean it when I give an order. It helps that I get a lot of support from my leaders."

Those problems are getting less common, though, and Ticket says she

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is very close to her fellow Guard members.

"I've learned that if I respect a private, he'll give me the same respect back," she said. "I can't treat someone bad just because I outrank him."

"We share duties and help each other out whenever we can. In the Guard, we're just one big family."



Elvira Ticket enlisted in the Army Guard while she was still in high school.

Photo by Barbara Crane