

PATRICIA MARIE CAIN

1929 – 2007

U.S. AIR FORCE, FIRST LIEUTENANT

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Patricia “Pat” Marie Lord was born in

Boston, Massachusetts, on May 29, 1929, to Elizabeth Lord (née O’Neil) and Everett Lord. Together, the couple had five children. Patricia was the middle child among her three brothers and sister, most of whom, including Pat, were known for their thick, red hair.

Elizabeth managed the household and took care of Pat and her siblings as they grew up in a northside Boston neighborhood named Everett, like their father. Everett himself worked as a salesperson for a wholesale oil refinery business. This was a booming business, as American energy demands were soaring amid the growing availability of automobiles. By 1930, American cars were consuming 15 billion gallons of gasoline annually. Everett’s job paid the bills and rent as the country entered the tumultuous 1930s.

This was more than many families could say at the time, since the Great Depression sent the American economy into a spiral only five months after Pat was born. The stock market crash sent American businesses, factories, and markets reeling, and affected almost a third of Boston’s laboring population. Thankfully, Pat’s father was not among Boston’s jobless. He kept his salesman position through the decade.

By 1940, the Lord family had purchased a home in the burgeoning Boston suburb of Medford. Pat and her siblings spent some of their early years in

a neighborhood of single-family homes with new parks, schools, hospitals, and other amenities for the upper-middle-class.

Pat’s world at this time also offered new opportunities and challenges. Only two decades prior, the passage of the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote. New female voters began pushing for greater rights and privileges throughout the 1920s and advocated for greater



Cain Family collection



An exhausted cadet sleeps off the day’s training at Lackland Air Force Base, 1949.

University of
North Carolina,
Greensboro, Women
Veterans Historical
Project

autonomy in work and education. Patricia Lord came of age as these expanded rights took on new significance during World War II.

The family was still in Medford when Japanese forces struck Pearl Harbor, dragging the United States into global conflict. Pat’s world transformed as coastal cities instituted mandatory nighttime blackouts and mobilized for war. Everett registered for the draft and entered the Army soon thereafter. The military assigned him to the Quartermaster Corps, where his background in sales and distribution could be applied to military logistics.

As Pat completed eighth grade in 1943, the Army transferred Everett to Washington, D.C. The Lord family promptly relocated to the nation’s capital, and Pat entered high school that fall while the family settled into their home. The city was growing rapidly. Washington’s population doubled in the process of fulfilling the federal government’s rapid wartime expansion.

Pat and her siblings observed construction workers building massive new military administrative buildings like the Pentagon. Military personnel were everywhere, guarding sensitive installations or staffing the many military bureaus headquartered in the area. By the time the war ended in 1945, the Washington, D.C., area would never be the same. But neither would Pat and her family.

As Pat prepared to enter her final semester of high school, her mother Elizabeth passed away. The family laid her to rest in Arlington National Cemetery on December 10, 1946. The Lord family remained in D.C., and Pat completed high school in 1947. The family had always been devout Catholics, and she picked up work as a secretary in the Office of Education of Catholic Schools in the United States of America. Her father Everett remained in the Army and achieved the rank of captain. In 1949, perhaps following in Everett’s footsteps, Pat left her clerical job and looked toward the military for future opportunities.

Pat volunteered for the U.S. Air Force and started basic training on April 1, 1949, as an Airman Second Class. The year prior, the Air Force instituted a program called Women in the Air Force (WAF) to encourage female service. The Air Force based WAF trainees at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, where they underwent an 11-week course introducing them to military life. The first group of recruits for the WAF program completed their training and graduated at Lackland only four months before Pat arrived.

In San Antonio, Pat lived in a private barracks with a roommate while she completed the mandatory 350 hours of instruction. Lectures included specialized talks on nuclear fission and instrument repair. Other topics targeted at servicewomen,

however, were less progressive. The Air Force added lectures on “control of sex emotions,” and policies mandated that female personnel be discharged from the military if they married or became pregnant. Private Lord completed basic training that summer, and the Air Force assigned her to the 1210th Women’s Air Force (WAF) squadron located in Washington, D.C.

The return to Washington brought Pat back into a new stage of the Lord family. While she had been training in Texas, her father Everett had remarried to Agnes Syverson. Pat’s two younger brothers still lived at home, but had steady jobs. Her older brother Edward was back in Boston with a wife and two children, and sister Irene was also married and working as a government secretary in Washington.

Pat’s first major assignment was as a military stenographer. The Air Force commonly referred to these service members as “steno techs” and their duties included typing and transcribing administrative reports, medical filings, or legal proceedings. During her enlistment period, Pat studied a year of Military Science at the University of Maryland, which she completed in 1950. Around the same time, she advanced to senior steno tech, and eventually rose from private to technical sergeant. Her prior clerical background from the Office of Education of Catholic Schools probably gave her an edge in this field.

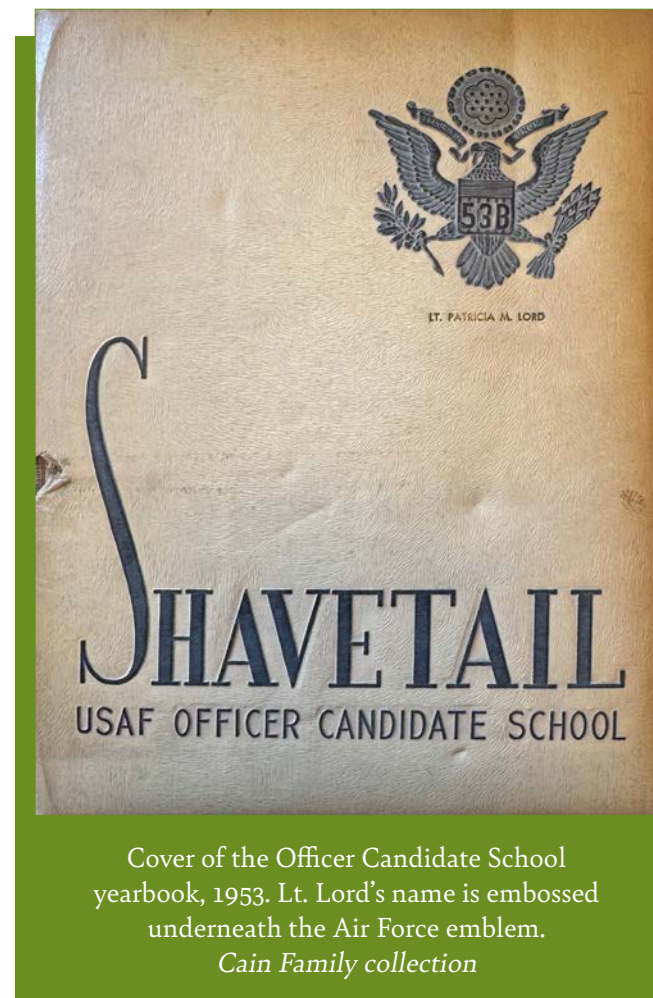
However, Patricia’s ambitions reached farther than enlisted steno tech. On March 28, 1952, the Air Force approved her application for Officer Candidate School (OCS), to commence when she completed her term of enlistment. On January 5, 1953, Patricia returned to Lackland Air Force Base and began a five-month OCS course specializing in Administration. That summer, Second Lieutenant Patricia M. Lord graduated and entered the Air Force Reserve.

Pat thrived in her new role as an Air Force officer. She graduated from the Air Force’s Supply Officers Course, following in her father’s quartermaster footsteps. The Air Force assigned Pat to the 746th

Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron based at Oklahoma City Air Force Station. The unit was responsible for monitoring and guarding an area encompassing Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Pat served as the Air Station Supply Officer, managing three supply accounts and overseeing the dizzying array of materials needed to keep the base working at peak efficiency. Pat excelled in this position and received a promotion to first lieutenant.

In Oklahoma City, Patricia met Robert Emmett Cain at a military social gathering. She outranked her new paramour—Robert was an Air Force technical sergeant—but the pair’s courtship rapidly turned into love. By February 1957, she was referring to Robert as “dearest darling.”

Pat obtained the marriage license paperwork, and with the help of her stepmother Agnes, set about shopping for a wedding dress and planning the



Cover of the Officer Candidate School yearbook, 1953. Lt. Lord’s name is embossed underneath the Air Force emblem.
Cain Family collection

reception. There remained much to navigate, and Agnes Lord worked hard to ease Robert into the family. Writing on the stationery of Major Everett J. Lord, on November 1, 1957, Agnes discussed options for the wedding ceremony. Should it be at the Lords’ family church, St. Mary’s Chapel, or at the Bolling Air Force Base, with a potential reception at the Officers Club at Fort McNair? Even for a family of logisticians, there was much to discuss.

At the time, Air Force policy insisted female personnel leave the service upon marriage. Upon her betrothal to Robert, Pat requested an honorable discharge on September 2, 1958. Her superiors approved it the following day and scheduled her separation from military service for January 1959.

Patricia left the military after almost ten years of service and embarked on a new life as a civilian. Pat and Robert married shortly thereafter at St. Mary’s Chapel in Alexandria, Virginia. The couple returned to Oklahoma City after the wedding and welcomed their only child, Margaret Elizabeth Cain, on February 13, 1960. The family remained in Oklahoma while Robert was in the Air Force, but frequently returned to Washington, D.C., to visit family and friends. During their journeys, they stopped in Charleston, West Virginia, and grew to like the area.

Following Robert’s discharge from the Air Force, the family relocated to Alexandria, Virginia. Pat found work with Virginia Electric Power and completed courses at George Mason University. She fought hard for equal pay and opportunities for women in the workplace, carrying forward the legacy of the women who had fought for the right to serve during World War II.

When their daughter Margaret married Jose Flores in 1985, the ceremony took place in St. Mary’s Chapel in Old Town Alexandria, where Pat and Robert were joined together decades before. Soon after, Pat and Robert retired to Charleston, West Virginia. Margaret and Joe Flores made the move to Charleston at the same time, and the



Patricia and grandchildren late in life.
Cain Family collection

multi-generational family shared a duplex home in Charleston’s downtown area. Pat and Robert occupied the downstairs area, and the Flores family lived upstairs.

Pat’s grandchildren, Chris, Jessica, and Ana never knew a time when their grandmother was not present and active in their lives. Her military training never wavered—she rose every morning at 6:00 a.m., kept her home immaculate, and frequently sewed and ironed clothing for the children. The Air Force had not schooled Pat in the culinary arts, however, and Pat’s grandchildren fondly joked that she was not much of a cook. The family matriarch preferred to eat ramen noodles.

Patricia remained a faithful Catholic, and became a proactive member of Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral in downtown Charleston. Finding one summer’s Saturday Mass services far too hot, Pat quizzed the priest about the cost of air conditioning—then

appeared the following week with a check covering extra utilities.

Pat was a member of the Disabled Veterans of America, swam at the local YMCA, frequented the symphony, and enjoyed taking her granddaughters to performances of “The Nutcracker” each Christmas. Her grandchildren fondly remembered her caring nature, as well as the snacks and candies she stocked for their visits.

Pat was never formally part of any women’s rights groups, but she lived a life that modeled the changing role of women in America. Her military service translated into political activism and community involvement. Not only did she volunteer at local polling locations during elections, she was known to quiz family members to ensure that they understood the issues and candidates. Never one to back down from her convictions, family lore suggests that one political argument in the Cain home resulted in a chair being set on fire. For 20 years, Pat and Robert were the family’s bedrock in Charleston. They occasionally took trips, but preferred being home. In retrospect, Pat’s family believes that she began experiencing the impact of early-onset Alzheimer’s sometime before 2000. When Pat’s health started to wane, Robert remained at her side, ensuring a steady supply of her preferred black coffee and washing her famous red hair. As she neared the end of her life, Pat instructed the family to stock plenty of rosé to serve at her funeral mass. She passed away on December 3, 2007.

According to Pat’s wishes, her family interred her in West Virginia National Cemetery so she could remain in her beloved adopted state. Robert resettled in Manassas, Virginia, to be closer to Margaret, Jose, and his grandchildren. On his 82nd birthday, Robert Cain passed away surrounded by his family. As he requested, the family buried him next to Pat in their beloved adopted state of West Virginia.

Pat lives on in the memories of her grandchildren,

who knew her as a beloved family figure—with a strong military bearing and strict nature, but a tender and ever-present influence on their lives. Jessica followed in her grandmother’s footsteps, building her own career as a U.S. Army Human Resources warrant officer. Chris reports that not only does he have a daughter who shares Pat’s middle name, but he speaks frequently about his grandmother to his children, so that they too can benefit from her life’s work. Ana treasures the experience of being in her grandmother’s home, where pictures of Pat and the many women in military service were proud reminders of the family’s contributions to the nation.



PLACE OF INTERMENT:
West Virginia National Cemetery
SECTION 7
SITE 654



LEFT TO RIGHT: Patricia’s husband Robert Cain, granddaughter Jessica Tyus , and a member of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter at Patricia’s funeral service in the West Virginia National Cemetery, 2007.

Cain Family collection

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The West Virginia National Cemeteries Project is a program of the West Virginia Humanities Council, funded in part by the Veterans Legacy Grant Program of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and initiated in 2021. Biographies produced as part of this program are composed by West Virginia high school students and West Virginia University graduate students and PhD candidates, who conduct original research on veterans interred at the Grafton National Cemetery or the West Virginia National Cemetery, both of which are located in Grafton, Taylor County, West Virginia.

As home to one of the nation’s first national cemeteries—founded shortly after the Civil War—the community of Grafton has longstanding traditions of honoring America’s veterans, including the longest continuously celebrated Memorial Day parade in the United States. The Grafton National Cemetery, located in the heart of the city and founded in 1867, is typically the endpoint of each year’s parade. Since the Grafton National Cemetery began to run short of space during the 1960s, the West Virginia National Cemetery was dedicated in 1987, just a few miles outside of Grafton.

The West Virginia Humanities Council is proud to thank the following organizations for their participation in the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project: West Virginia Archives and History, the West Virginia University history department, Taylor County Historical and Genealogical Society, Taylor County Public Library, Grafton High School, and University High School, among many others.

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For readability, bibliographies have been omitted from this publication. Student research for these biographies relies heavily on primary sources—census records, city directories, draft cards, muster rolls, and more—made available digitally through Ancestry and Fold3. Yearbook repositories and the digitized collections of many universities and archives have been invaluable resources. Most newspaper research was conducted digitally via Newspapers.com, NewspaperArchives, and the Library of Congress’s *Chronicling America* database.

Servicemembers’ Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) and Individual Deceased Personnel Files (IDPFs) are another essential part of project research, provided free of charge in most cases by the National Archives through standard records requests.

As the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project has grown and matured, the team has found that new sources sometimes surface for veterans researched in prior project years. To better maintain a “living bibliography” of all its veterans, a single master document is kept up on the project’s webpage under the “Programs” tab at www.wvhumanities.org.

Views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Archives of the United States, or any other federal agency. For more information about the Veterans Legacy Memorial and the Veterans Legacy Grant Program, visit www.vlm cem.va.gov.

