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Volume 2016 | Issue 1  
*Spring/Summer 2016*

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2016

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### Recommended Citation

Frank, Jonella (2016) "Lt. Gen. Flora D. Darpino: A Woman of "First" Inspiring Others to Follow," *Sooner Lawyer Archive*: Vol. 2016 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/soonerlawyer/vol2016/iss1/4>

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# Lt. Gen. Flora D. Darpino: A woman of “firsts” inspiring others to follow



Flora D. Darpino made history in September 2013 when she was sworn in as the 39th Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army, becoming the first woman to hold the position since the founding of the Army JAG Corps in 1775. Darpino visited the OU College of Law March 21 for a lunch and learn event coordinated by the Office of Career Development.

In the casual, relaxed atmosphere of the Sneed Lounge, Darpino spoke about her career, which began with a direct commission in 1987. She also answered students' questions on topics ranging from her international deployments to her daughters' opinions of their mother's JAG career.

Jessica Jacobsen, a third-year student who will become a judge advocate in the U.S. Coast Guard after graduation, attended the event to hear Darpino's thoughts on trends for women in the military and learn how she balances her career and family life.

Jacobsen recounted a story Darpino told about how her career began. "When she arrived at her first assignment, her supervisor said 'I told them I didn't want a woman, but they sent you anyway.' The lieutenant general said she always tries to see the glass half full and be optimistic,

so she took this statement and flipped it – the Army thought she was qualified to be at this post, and so they 'sent' her even though she was a woman," said Jacobsen. "She has navigated her career with this positive attitude and in a merit-based system like the military, she's been able to climb the ranks."

*"She has navigated her career with this positive attitude and in a merit-based system like the military, she's been able to climb the ranks."*

Darpino earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania; a juris doctor degree from Rutgers School of Law–Camden in New Jersey; and an LL.M. in military law from the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School.

As the judge advocate general, Darpino oversees the nearly 2,000 full-time judge advocates and civilian attorneys providing legal services to the Army. She spoke frankly about the Army's special



Lt. Gen. Darpino speaks with students during her visit to OU Law.

victims' counsel program established to provide guidance and support to victims of sexual assault and how it has positively impacted the military as a whole.

Darpino twice deployed to Iraq and, while away, missed special family moments. She expressed regret at having to miss a daughter's prom and graduation, but also told of the letter her daughter wrote expressing her understanding of the situation and her pride in the job her mother was undertaking.

Jacobsen called the lunch and learn with Darpino "a great opportunity to hear from a woman who has literally shattered a glass ceiling." Learning how Darpino balances her career with her family life makes Jacobsen hopeful for her own future. |SL|



OU Law Jurist in Residence Wayne E. Alley welcomes Darpino to the College of Law. Alley is a retired brigadier general in the U.S. Army, a retired judge of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma, and former dean of the OU College of Law.