

MAKING HERSTORY AS AN OVERSEAS ENGINEER

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I am an anomalous civic leader serving as President of the Filipino Ladies Association of Guam. To begin with, before a few years ago I was always shy and disdained attention. When I decided to be involved with our civic community, I immersed myself with various challenging positions and found such volunteer work richly rewarding.

I was born and reared in Kalibo, Aklan, Philippines and come from a family of modest yet comfortable means. Upon graduation from a trade school and completion of one year at Aklan College, I begged my parents to send me to the University of Santo Tomas (UST) in Manila. Fortunately, I was accepted in the College of Engineering. I belonged to the class where women were enrolled for the first time in the Electronics Engineering program. After successfully completing the program, I took the Philippine Professional Engineering examination in Electronics and Communications Engineering with confidence and passed. Then a friend, who was leaving for a work abroad, recommended me to Foxboro, an international company known for quality production. I was accepted, and thus, I began my career as an Electronics Engineer specializing in instrumentation.

Later, while still employed with Foxboro, a charming American gentleman asked me to marry him. During that time, I was also considering an overseas job opportunity. In the end, I chose to marry that wonderful gentleman who goes by the name of Calvin E. Holloway, Sr. We are happily married and blessed with three beautiful children, two girls and a boy.

My marriage to Calvin meant leaving Foxboro there in Manila and moving to Guam. I should mention that before I agreed to marry Calvin I asked him: Would he permit me to pursue my career? His response was supportive and encouraging.

After arriving in Guam, I sought to further my engineering skills. My first job in Guam was as Junior Engineer II with the Government of Guam, Department of Public Works. The work was related to civil engineering. It was interesting, challenging, and enhanced my skills as an overall Engineer. A little more than a year, I was offered a position with the United States Navy Public Works Center as Electronics Engineer. I started as a GS-7, an entry level for the professional career ladder in the US civil service. After a year, I was promoted to GS-9 and later to GS-11.

I work with the Energy Monitoring and Control System (EMCS) to monitor and control air conditioning for all naval buildings and industrial facilities. In this work unit we police the thermostats and act as energy czars for the navy of Guam. My goal is to reach GS-14, senior management position. However, with 'downsizing' of all military forces in Guam, the prospects are bleak at this time.

During my stint with both the Government of Guam and the US Navy, my biggest obstacle had been the way my male engineer counterparts regarded me. Not only did they see a woman inching her way into men's territory, they also saw a nonwhite. Soon after employment with the US Navy, my graduation from engineering school in the Philippines was questioned, unlike my contemporaries who graduated from US universities. I requested the UST to send a copy of my transcript directly to a University Evaluation Center, which evaluated my transcript and sent the results to the Navy Personnel Office here in Guam. My UST credentials either met or surpassed US University standards.

Each time I received a promotion, it was preceded by my genuine efforts to be twice as competent as my male contemporaries to receive equal recognition. Thus, I worked many long hours without extra compensation and studied the system until I mastered all the intricacies of the systems. To enhance my engineering skills, I have actively sought out opportunities for training sponsored by the US Navy at various mainland institutions such as the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Point Magu Navy Center in California, Naval Engineering Command in Hawaii, and other local courses. After completing some energy courses, I successfully passed the National Energy Certification examinations administered by the Association of Energy Engineers. I was the first female in Guam to become a Certified Energy Manager and Certified Demand Side Manager. I have passed the national Engineer in Training (EIT) examination, which is a prerequisite for the national Professional Engineer (PE) examination for engineers. I am in the process of preparing for the PE examination as soon as I become eligible. This will culminate my immediate career goals.

I encourage any woman to pursue a career as an Electronics Engineer. It is a challenging and rewarding profession. There are many splendid opportunities. Fortunately, the US federal government has an Equal Employment Opportunity Program, which enhances our female representation in the engineering profession. There may be some obstacles, but hard work, honesty, intelligence, passion, tenacity, and confidence can address these obstacles. You will work mostly with men. Try to get along with them based on total mutual respect. Please recognize that they can do some things better and that you can do some things better. Once that understanding is achieved, the friendship will grow. The most salient advice I can offer to anyone is to listen when another one is speaking.

Listen, listen, and please learn to listen. If you have nothing to say, do not say it. Such effort is wasted energy and does not enhance your image. In addition, be patient. If you are not, learn to be patient. It has been a 200-year struggle for gender equality in the United States. I hope that the insights of the female engineer in America can enhance your profession in any country of the world.