

# Commitment to country spans *three generations* : 61 years of federal service and counting . . .

Jo Adail Stephenson | DCMA Public Affairs



*Army Col. Frank Steinbugl, Defense Contract Management Agency Detroit commander, swears in Sara Zunk, a new agency employee in the Keystone Program. Zunk became a third generation agency employee recently as she followed in the footsteps of her mother, Carrie Zunk, and her grandfather, Mack Smay, by raising her hand and being sworn into federal service. (Photos courtesy of DCMA Detroit)*

**W**hen Sara Zunk raised her hand and took the federal service oath of

office recently, she became a third generation agency employee following in the footsteps of her mother, Carrie Zunk, and her grandfather, Mack Smay.

The family’s stewardship with the agency began with Smay, who worked as a property administrator for the Defense Contract Management Agency. He retired with 31 years of federal service: 27 years with civil service and four years of military service with the Navy during the Korean War.

In 1982, Smay’s daughter, Carrie, continued the family tradition when she became a federal employee through the

agency’s intern program. A DCMA Detroit administrative contracting officer, Carrie recently completed 30 years of federal government service. The patriotism her father demonstrated left an indelible impression on Carrie. She remembers growing up with what she describes as the family’s “big belief in us to support the military.”

“As a kid, I can remember watching college basketball games. We would have to stand up for the Star Spangled Banner in the family room,” said Carrie. “Patriotism has always been something that has been handed down.”

Carrie passed that sense of patriotism on to her daughter, Sara, who recently began working for the agency as an intern — just like her mom.

“I like to be able to see who I am affecting and be able to have a direct effect,” Sara said. “Even when I go out and walk around in the community and see people in uniform, you get a sense of feeling — this is who I’m helping. I can see it.”

Her mother echoed this sentiment as she recalled a family visit to the nation’s capital. “We went on a trip to Washington with my mom and dad several summers ago and visited the Korean War Memorial. It was very moving because that was the time he served. What we do — it brings it home,” Carrie said.

She believes her daughter picked up the idea about working for DCMA naturally — much like she did. “I had the opportunity to work with my dad for



*It's all in the family as Sara Zunk (left) becomes a third generation agency employee. Her mother, Carrie Zunk, a Defense Contract Management Agency Detroit administrative contracting officer, just completed 30 years of federal government service. Her grandfather, Mack Smay, is a retired DCMA property administrator with 31 years of federal service, 27 years civil service and four years of military service with the Navy during the Korean War. (Photo courtesy of DCMA Detroit)*



*Army Col. Frank Steinbugl, Defense Contract Management Agency Detroit commander, congratulates Sara Zunk, a new agency employee in the Keystone Program.*

about nine years. I always felt DOD and DCMA were good employers,” Carrie said.

When Sara was quite young, Carrie began taking her to the agency’s annual Take Your Son or Daughter to Work Day. “My mom has been training me ever since I was really little,” Sara said jokingly. “She would say, ‘Government job, government job, we need young people.’”

Little did Sara know then she would eventually work for DCMA when she grew up.

Things fell into place when a position opened up within a month of her college graduation. Sara said her mom questioned her at first about applying for the position because her goal was to get her master’s degree and then start looking for jobs.

“It was in reverse order, but she said it’s a great opportunity even if it was just to get the interview experience,” Sara said.

Her mom left the choice up to her. “She didn’t try to sway me. She wanted it to be my decision.”

Sara decided to go for it. “When else am I going to get another opportunity

to apply? Might as well start it now.” She filled out her application at her grandparents’ house but said she received no pressure from her grandfather to apply. “He just stayed quiet and was very humble about it,” she said.

“The interview happened a week before my graduation,” Sara said.

“Go for the interview,” Carrie told her daughter. “You can never have too much interview experience. I’m very happy she did it. It was her decision.”

Right after graduation, Sara found out she had been selected for a cost price analyst job in the agency’s Keystone Intern Program.

Sara said she knew how her grandfather really felt when he, along with her mom, attended her swearing-in ceremony.

“Finally, the day came when I started and took my oath of office. He had the biggest smile on his face. I said to him ‘you cannot hide your excitement anymore.’”

What influenced Sara the most about growing up around DCMA was the flexibility her mom had to take time off

to take her to games, practices and other activities. “I understand I might not make as much (salary) as in private industry, but I will trade that for the ability to have a family life,” she explained.

Carrie said, “If you’re going to have a family, the federal government is a great employer. They’re understanding of family values and family commitments.”

One of the reasons Carrie joined the federal government was the ability to retire at a younger age. “Who would ever have thought I’d be so young at this point in my career,” she said. “I’ve done a lot of different ACO (administrative contracting officer) assignments over the years. It’s been a good career. It went by fast.”

And, on that subject, Sara shared something her mother said to her. “My mom said ‘I’m leaving, and it’s time for me to pass on my knowledge and make way for the new people.’”

Sara said she definitely has a resource in her mother. “I have her number, and I know where she lives.” 