



From Navigator to Drafter

Air Force veteran finds new career

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ROBERT BENDER '17 IS NOW AN ARCHITECTURAL DRAFTER AT OAK POINT ASSOCIATES.

Before graduating from UNH in May, Robert Bender '17 spent 20 years as an airman. That gave him plenty of time to think about his next career.

The Texas native, who received a degree in civil technology with a concentration in architectural technology and construction management, is now an architectural drafter at Oak Point Associates, an architectural and engineering firm based in Biddeford, Maine, with an office in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

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Bender's military life as a B-52 navigator in the U.S. Air Force had him deployed six times — to Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Diego Garcia (twice) and on flying missions into Afghanistan and Qatar — and stationed in Australia and Germany. Tours varied from six to 12 months. After retiring, he began exploring career possibilities and found the [Thompson School of Applied Science](#) civil technology major was just what he was looking for.

"I had a wonderful experience at UNH. I met so many great people, from the superb instructors at the Thompson School to the other students I interacted with in class."

"I had always been interested in how buildings, homes and general structures were designed and built," Bender says. "I spent a lot of time doing do-it-yourself home projects. I figured becoming a drafter would allow me to see and learn on both sides of that spectrum, how buildings get designed through direct interaction with architects and engineers and also the methods and processes of how they actually get constructed through on-site visits."

In addition to coursework, Bender did a summer internship at Oak Point, then continued with the company part-time while finishing up his degree. He now works in the company's Portsmouth office.

Bender offers high praise for the [UNH Military and Veteran's Affairs](#) staff, not only for their knowledge of required processes for veterans but also for their "constant support and encouragement," which he says "ensured my success at UNH."

"I had a wonderful experience at UNH. I met so many great people, from the superb instructors at the Thompson School to the other students I interacted with in class," Bender says. "Although I was older than the average student, I hope that by sharing some of my experiences and perspective I helped make their

experience rewarding as well."

Want information on veteran educational benefits? Find it here.

WRITTEN [Jody Record '95](#) | Communications and Public Affairs |

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