

Tally Parham

Legal Eagle: Attorney, pilot, and mom Tally Parham pushes the envelope

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Photographs by: Paul Mehaffey



Tally Parham is a study in contrasts: growing up, she took ballet, but also Okinawan karate. She is delicately featured and soft-spoken; however, when she speaks, it may well be about the time she launched an 800-pound missile from her F16 fighter jet while flying in a combat mission over Baghdad.

Alice Witherspoon Wilson Parham (known as Tally) is a major in the Air National Guard whose early introduction to flying, via her father's acrobatic plane, ignited in her a passion—not just for flying airplanes—but specifically F16 fighter jets. The day she read the headlines in 1993 that the Combat Exclusion bill, excluding women from military combat roles, was repealed, she was on the phone to McEntire Air National Guard Base in Eastover, South Carolina, to schedule an interview.

In the meantime, Tally went to law school, finishing the bar two weeks before she began her pilot training. She is now a partner at the Wyche, Burgess, Freeman, and Parham firm which has an office in Greenville and also Columbia, where she lives with her husband, Rob (also an F16 pilot), and their children, Wyatt and Mia. “Flying F16s was the most thrilling, exciting, fulfilling thing that I’d ever done,” she says. “It was incredibly challenging—physically and mentally—and what made it so fulfilling was that your success was objectively measured.”

The gleam in her eye is still there when she talks about flying, though it is rivaled only by that of the pride in her children. “It is very challenging to have children, and know whether you’re doing the right thing.” But for this litigator, mom, and major, keeping everyone flying right is one mission that doesn’t seem so impossible.

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