



Automotive to Aviation

Grant Long

PIA 2014 Hagerstown Branch Campus, MD

Program Aviation Maintenance Technology (AMT)

Length 16 Months

Employment ... United States Army

Position Blackhawk Crew Chief

Becoming a soldier has been a longtime dream for PIA-Hagerstown graduate, Grant Long. However, after a knee injury that required surgery, Grant's dream seemed out of reach.

As a native to Washington County, Maryland, Grant's father first learned about PIA.

"I knew I was interested in mechanics, and I liked working on cars, so I came to an open house with my dad," Grant said. "I will admit I was unsure about aviation at first, but after the first few months, PIA showed me my passion for aviation that I wouldn't have found otherwise. I love it."

Today, Grant is a United States Army Blackhawk Crew Chief.

"The Army saw something in me," Grant said. "I couldn't join before, but with my PIA work, they wanted me. I was sworn in three months before graduating, and then three weeks later, I left for boot camp."

Armed with his FAA Airframe & Powerplant License, Grant went to four months of Army Blackhawk training school, which he found "significantly easier than PIA." It was Grant's 16 months of aviation maintenance training at PIA-Hagerstown that prepared him for his military career.

Grant jumped right into his first assignment maintaining Blackhawk helicopters in South Korea for a year. After just five months, he was promoted to Crew Chief, a position of great responsibility, where Grant had in-flight duties in the back seat.

As a Blackhawk Crew Chief, Grant was still a part of the maintenance team, but he was also responsible for

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anyone in or around his aircraft. Duties range from everything to navigation, to combat, to supervisory roles.

"I had no idea I wanted to work on Blackhawks when I enlisted. I was prepared to do any aviation job the Army had for me. There were eight or nine options... in my opinion, I got the best one," Grant said. "I got really lucky."

Grant graduated in December of 2014 in a class of 21 students. He was comfortable with automotive repair, but he wasn't familiar with some of the shop work at PIA, such as electricity, airframe, and sheet metal. PIA doesn't require prior experience in aviation or mechanics, so Grant was able to learn everything from the ground up.

To this day, Grant is appreciative of his father introducing him to PIA. His father said, "Taking Grant to the Hagerstown open house was one of the best decisions I made for him because he committed to the school. As I have told many, I never paid PIA for Grant's education. Instead, I invested in Grant through PIA. I will be forever grateful to his classmates and instructors. What an awesome, awesome place!"

