

Dear Deborah Sampson,

Although you may not be with us today, your courageous actions still have a lasting effect on America's female soldiers. I know some are still uninformed about you and the heroic things you've done for America, but what you've risked, what you've dared, is the next level of bravery.

At a young age, your father abandoned your family and your mother sent you and your siblings to separate homes. Yet, you still believed in hope. When you worked as an indentured servant for Jeremiah Thomas' family, where you weren't allowed to go to school (because Jeremiah Thomas didn't believe in education for women), that didn't bring you down either. You learned from the Thomas' sons sharing schoolwork. You even became successful as a teacher!

A weaver, farmer, and woodworker, you were a woman of many talents. Your adaptability, determination, and hard work show your vigor to contribute and proves how women can be capable of many things.

You and other women disapproved of how men were always superior. Women have lives. Women matter. So why was the world disagreeing? The others were too scared to battle against it, but you weren't.

We knew you weren't going to leave without a fight when you said, ***"Why can I not fight for my country, too?"***

As Timothy Thayer, you joined the army. However, days later, a resident recognized you. Unfortunately, your time in the army was over. You failed; you were caught hiding your gender. But even after being kicked out of your church and having to pay money to the army (although you weren't punished by them), you tried again. This time you enlisted as Robert Shirtliff in one of the most elite groups of soldiers there was, with the tallest and strongest men. Who then would think that there'd be a female in a troop of most valiant men?

A month later, you engaged in combat in New York. You got shot in the thigh and a sword cut in your head. Despite these injuries, you rejected the doctor's aid because you were afraid your gender would be revealed. The doctor tended to your head, but before they could treat your leg, you took out the bullet yourself with cheap supplies, though it never healed.

You were courageous and chose to continue your fight, not just for independence for America, but for free rights for women. You unfortunately became ill in the summer and had to go to a doctor. When you became unconscious, your secret was finally out. The doctor had figured out your gender. You had to tell the army, now.

However, impressed and surprised by your excellent performance as a woman, you were honorably discharged on October 25, 1783. The Deborah Sampson Act was passed in 2020 to make sure female soldiers get proper healthcare, childcare, and counseling. Deborah Sampson Day in Massachusetts is on May 23.

Deborah Sampson, you have changed America for the better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Devasenaa Venkatesan".

Devasenaa Venkatesan