

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March 2004



Marjorie Stinson

WOMEN INSPIRING HOPE AND POSSIBILITY

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Preface

Janice W. Heretick, Editor of the *Army Logistician*, Army Logistics Management College, Fort Lee, Virginia, served as a participant in the Topical Research Intern Program at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) from March 24 to April 18, 2003. She conducted the necessary research to prepare this report. The Institute thanks Janice Heretick for her contributions to the research efforts of DEOMI.

Scope

The Topical Research Intern Program provides the opportunity for Service members and civilians of the Department of Defense (DoD) and U.S. Coast Guard to work on a diversity/equal opportunity project while on a 30-day tour of duty at the Institute. During their tour, the interns use a variety of primary and secondary source materials to compile research pertaining to an issue of importance to equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) personnel, supervisors, and other leaders throughout the Services. The resulting publications (such as this one) are intended as resource and educational materials and do not represent official policy statements or endorsements by the DoD, U.S. Coast Guard or any of their agencies. The publications are distributed to EO/EEO personnel and senior officials to aid them in their duties. To reach the widest audience possible, the publications are posted on the Internet at: <https://www.patrick.af.mil/deomi/deomi.htm>.

On the cover: Marjorie Stinson (1896-1975) was the ninth woman in the United States to earn her pilot's license and with her brothers and sister established Stinson Airfield in San Antonio, Texas. During WWI the business was expanded to include a flight school where Stinson became the first woman inducted into the U.S. Aviation Reserve Corps, training American and Canadian pilots. After the war, she was a barnstormer, airmail pilot, and became a draftsman with the Aeronautical Division of the U.S. Navy.

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the official position of DEOMI, the military Services, Department of Defense, or U.S. Coast Guard.

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History Of Women In The Military

Introduction

The goals of this project were to report interesting items of military history that forged the Armed Forces of today and to complement this year's women's history month observance theme, "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility."

Most Americans know very little about women's military history because most documentation covers men's roles

Whether one applauds or deplors their presence and their actions, women have always been part of war. To ignore this fact, grossly distorts our understanding of human history. Linda Grant DePauw, President, The MINERVA Center (10:25)

in combat. Researching information on women's roles in combat involves piecing together accounts from letters, stories, myths, and legends, instead of examining history books. There are many written records of male soldiers' non-combat roles, such as potato peeler, boot polisher, or medical specialist, but women who performed these same duties were called "nurses," not soldiers. (10:17) Some sources refer to these women as "prostitutes" because they slept beside their husbands, sons, or fathers on the battlefield. (10:20)

Even nurses who played an essential combat role have been given little credit for their accomplishments. They endured poor living and working conditions, worked under fire, were captured and even killed during war. Their contributions have been

downplayed and overlooked because they served selflessly and did not demand recognition. (28:73-74)

Women have served the U.S. military in many capacities since the beginning of our nation, but were not given permanent military status in the armed forces until 1948. Before that time, they served during wartime as volunteers or civilian contractors. When wars ended, women were promptly discharged with little recognition or compensation. (11) Until the early 1990's, women were prohibited from engaging in combat, although they often found themselves exposed to it.

It was never the case that women did not want to serve their country, but they had to overcome numerous barriers in order to be "allowed" to do so and be recognized. It is noteworthy that a significant portion of the American population remained an untapped resource and was discouraged or prevented from performing a difficult but necessary service because of attitudes and traditions, not because they were incapable or unwilling. Our national attitudes and traditions should not discourage anyone from contributing to the best of their abilities without interference.

From the beginning of time, nothing was accomplished without women...and nothing has been ignored more than their accomplishments. B.A. Wilson (36)

Before 1860

Since the early colonial days, American women have defended their personal property as well as our communities and nation. There is little documentation of the part women played in conflict and war prior to 1860. However, along with the few records that were kept, many stories have been passed down through generations, preserving tales of women's bravery and determination. We know women served as nurses, laundresses, seamstresses, cooks, and couriers and also fired weapons and served as spies.

During the many Indian skirmishes that occurred as the colonists moved westward, it stands to reason that women were involved in protecting their homes and families from attack and in supporting their husbands and other male family members in overcoming the Indian population. A story from that time period provides a historical view of the bravery of colonial women. In 1697, Hannah Duston was taken captive by a small band of Indians. They killed her newborn baby and took Hannah hostage. Following a march of over 100 miles, to the area now known as Concord, New Hampshire, at her first opportunity, she seized a hatchet and killed nine of the Indians. Hannah returned to her hometown near Haverhill, New Hampshire, carrying the scalps of those she killed. The General Court in Boston awarded her a bounty for the scalps. In 1861, Hannah Duston was honored with two monuments. She was the first American woman to be honored by such a memorial. (10:114-115)

There are many stories of women

who served during the Revolutionary War as couriers, nurses, cannon firers, bullet molders, and in other roles. It was not necessary for women or men to officially join the Army to participate in the fighting, as most battles were small scale and local. (10:125) The Continental Army authorized three to six women per company to cook, sew, and wash clothes in exchange for rations for themselves and their children. Some also provided medical services. (16:4)

There were eyewitness accounts of women taking over combat roles when their husbands were wounded or killed in action. Historians recently verified the actions of an Oneida Indian woman named Tyonajanegen. She aided her Continental Army officer husband by staying at his side for weeks and continually loading his gun after he was shot in the wrist. (39)



Mary Hays McCauley “Molly Pitcher”

Print: Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-665. (20)

Nearly every school child is told the tale of Molly Pitcher. According to most written accounts, Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, followed her husband on the battlefield, supporting him as well as other soldiers. She earned the nickname Molly Pitcher because she brought pitchers of water to injured and exhausted soldiers.

According to the story, in June 1778, when her husband collapsed from the heat, during the battle of Monmouth Courthouse, New Jersey, she replaced him at his cannon and fought the rest of the battle in his place. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania awarded “Molly McKolly” a pension in 1822. Although we know Mary McCauley did something special during the war, there is no documentation of what it was or that she indeed was nicknamed Molly Pitcher. (34) Some claim that Molly was really Margaret Cochran Corbin, who was wounded in the war and disabled for life in 1776. In 1779, Congress awarded her a disability pension. (16:3-5) We don't know if there really was one Molly Pitcher, but the fact remains that women were seen on the battlefield with the Continental Army and many of them could have been models for Molly. (33)

Army regulations did not allow women to enlist, so when the American Revolutionary War began, many women masqueraded as men in order to serve their country. (16:5) Deborah Samson (Gannett) was one such lady. In 1778, she enlisted in the Army as “Robert Shirliffe,” served for three years, and was wounded twice. (37) She was granted an honorable discharge when a doctor discovered she was a woman.

She later received a pension from the Massachusetts legislature. The *Congressional Reporter* documents her experiences as an example of “female heroism, fidelity, and courage.” (26)

Little information is available about women participating in the War of 1812, although we do know that many served as nurses. In fact, Commodore Stephen Decatur named two female nurses in his ship's log, showing they both were aboard the *United States* before and after the ship set sail in May 1813. (38)

Historians also have uncovered information about a woman named Lucy Brewer who supposedly served for three years disguised as a man named “Nicholas (or George) Baker” on the *USS Constitution*. (25:106) Others claim there is no evidence to prove that Lucy was real. In fact, several fiction books about swashbuckling young women on ships were written by Nathan Coverley, Jr., after the war was over. One of his books told the tale of Lucy Brewer. (10:152) The Historical Division of the U.S. Marine Corps acknowledges her as the “legendary first woman Marine” and proceeds to say that, whether true or not, the story of Lucy Brewer makes a “wonderful addition to the colorful legends about the Marine Corps.” (34)

Two stories about women appear in several references about the Mexican War of 1846 to 1848. Records show that Sarah Borginis became the principal cook at Fort Brown, Texas, after enlisting with her husband. When the Mexicans attacked Fort Brown, she was given a musket and took part in the battles while continuing to cook for the soldiers. As a result of her bravery,

General Zachary Taylor made her the first female colonel of the U.S. Army, although without commensurate pay and benefits. She later was buried with full military honors. (37) Elizabeth C. Newcume (sometimes spelled Newcom) enlisted and served 10 months, fighting in Missouri and Colorado, while dressed in male attire and using the name "Bill." (38) When it was discovered that she was a woman, she was discharged. However, she was later compensated with money and land for her service. (33)

The Civil War 1861-1865

Although researchers are finding that a great deal of information exists about the Civil War, most of it is preserved in private collections. Trying to piece together the details documenting women's roles is a great undertaking that will continue indefinitely.

The founder of the American Red Cross, Clara Barton, is listed in most history books. At the outbreak of the Civil War, after learning that much of the suffering at the front was caused by a lack of supplies, as a nurse she single-handedly organized supply depots. Affectionately called the "angel of the battlefield," she was appointed a superintendent of nurses. (5)

Many women initially became involved in the Civil War as "camp followers." They followed their husbands, fathers, or brothers to war, thinking they would continue to maintain a home and cook, sew, and wash clothes, even though the Union and Confederate Armies provided such services on a limited basis. Although the women were unpaid volunteers, they were expected to



Isabelle "Belle" Boyd

Photo: Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-BH82-4864A. (20)

follow military orders and were punished for not doing so. As the war progressed, women served as saboteurs, scouts, smugglers, and couriers. (10:157-160) They destroyed bridges and buildings and cut telegraph wires for their countrymen. (16:5-6)

Many female spies who supplied information determined the outcome of battles for both sides. Isabelle "Belle" Boyd was one of the best-known female spies for the Confederacy. She circulated among the Union soldiers, gathering information and carrying it back to Confederate leaders. She risked her life many times and is credited with helping the South win many battles. She was finally caught, tried as a spy, and served 17 months in prison. (20)

We know that both the Union and Confederate armies prohibited women from enlisting. However, it is clear that

many women donned male clothing and performed combat tasks without formally enlisting or calling attention to themselves. It is estimated that 400 women dressed as men and joined the armies of both sides. Although the male soldiers might have been surprised to see them in battle, they usually did not report the women's presence as long as they conducted themselves properly. (10:148)

Because women soldiers constantly risked discovery, they often avoided hospitals and suffered while treating their own wounds and illnesses. Sarah Edmonds, serving as "Franklin Thompson," was wounded while carrying mail in Michigan. She wrote:

Had I been what I represented myself to be, I should have gone to the hospital and had the surgeon make an examination of my injuries, and placed myself in his hands for medical treatment—and saved years of suffering. But being a woman I felt compelled to suffer in silence and endure it the best I could, in order to escape detection of my sex. I would rather have been shot dead than to have been known to be a woman and sent away from the Army under guard as a criminal.

Later, when she became ill, she deserted instead of risking exposure and penalties. (10:155)

One of the more interesting male imposters was Loreta Janeta Velasquez. When her husband left to serve in the war, she bought a Confederate uniform, glued on a mustache and beard, and led a troop of soldiers through several battles. When she was wounded, her gender was revealed and she gave up her position.

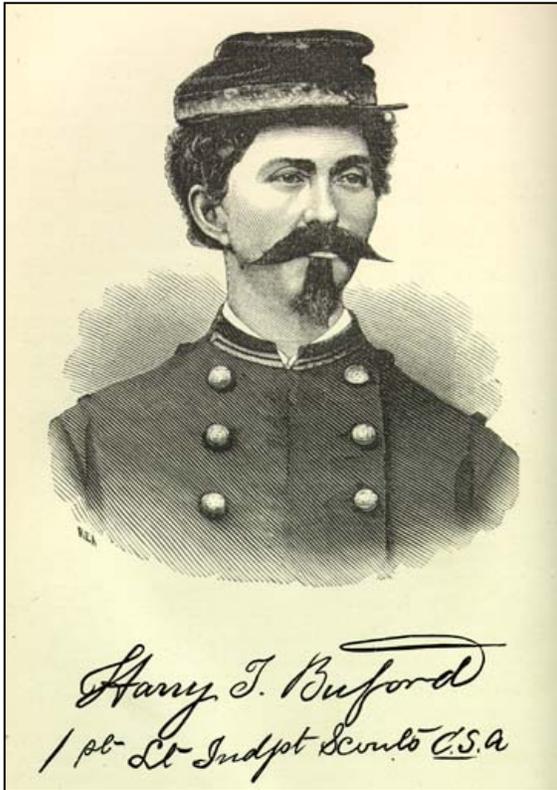
She later enlisted in the infantry, and eventually secured a commission in the cavalry. She was involved in several more battles before being wounded again. Because she could not be promoted, she left the army and headed West to look for gold. (16:6) Her experiences were recorded in an autobiography, *The Woman in Battle*, which is embellished with so many adventures that historians challenge its authenticity. Most, however, believe that much of what she claimed was true. (10:153)

Women in War, a book written by Frank Moore in 1866, documents the story of a young woman named Emily who disguised herself as a male soldier. She was fatally wounded, and as she lay dying, she dictated the following telegram to her father:

Forgive your dying daughter. I have but a few moments to live. My native soil drinks my blood. I expected to deliver my country but the fates would not have it so. I am content to die. Pray forgive me.... Emily (7)

Whether or not the story is true, it represents the strength and determination of the women who gave their lives during the war.

Medical care was the most important contribution made by women during the Civil War. More than 10,000 women served as nurses. Patient care was greatly improved and more successful than in the past. (10:156) Much of the credit goes to Dorothea Dix, who volunteered in 1861 for appointment as the Superintendent of Women Nurses and recruited and trained more than 6,000 Union nurses. The Union Army



Artwork from *The Woman in Battle: A Narrative of the Exploits Adventures and Travels of Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Confederate States Army.* Richmond, VA: Dustin, Gilman & Co., 1876.

nurses formed the U.S. Sanitary Commission, which coordinated, standardized, and controlled patient care, medical supplies, and sanitation standards. The dedicated, organized, and courageous nurses worked endless shifts under the worst possible conditions, without adequate supplies, equipment, and facilities. Although the Army realized the important contributions of the nurses, they were not considered essential to the Army. When the war ended, all female nurses were sent home. (16:7-8)

Dr. Mary Edwards Walker was one of the earliest women's activists; she insisted on wearing pants because they were more

adaptable to her work. She often recommended that all women wear more comfortable clothing. She wore pants and a suit coat even on her wedding day. (10:159) Because she was a college-trained doctor, she offered her services to the Union Army as a doctor, but was rejected because female doctors were not accepted in the Service. She then joined the Union Army as a nurse and served for three years. In 1864, she was commissioned as a lieutenant and appointed assistant surgeon of the Medical Corps, making her the first female doctor in the Army. In addition to providing many hours of medical service, she was held prisoner of war by the Confederate Army for four months. When she was arrested, Confederate Captain B. J. Semmes wrote:

This morning we were all amused and disgusted too at the sight of a thing that nothing but the debased and the depraved Yankee nation could produce, a female doctor. She was taken prisoner yesterday and brought in by the pickets this morning. She was dressed in the full uniform of a Federal Surgeon, boots hat & all & wore a cloak...She was about 25 or 28 years old, but not good looking and of course had tongue enough for a regiment of men. I was in hopes the General would have had her dressed in a homespun frock and bonnet and sent back to the Yankee lines, or put in a lunatic asylum. (10:159)

In 1866, Dr. Walker was awarded the Medal of Honor. (16:7) In 1917, the Army decided that noncombatants were not eligible for the Medal, and her award was withdrawn. She refused to return the medal and wore it until her death. In 1976, a special act of Congress restored her Medal. To this day, she is the only woman to have received that decoration. (10:159-160)

Mary Edwards Walker

Photo: Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ 62-15558. (20)



The Spanish American War 1898

When the United States formally intervened to aid in Cuba's quest for independence from Spain, men were recruited for an Army that would fight the Spanish American War. Before the war barely got off the ground, an epidemic of typhoid fever spread through the Army camps. The medical treatment facilities were unsanitary and understaffed for handling the large number of sick and wounded. (34) Because the Army was unable to recruit enough men to provide medical treatment, Congress authorized the Army to appoint women as Army nurses under contract, but without military

status. Some 1,500 women were recruited and served for approximately four years. (16:8)

Clara Louise Maass volunteered to serve as a contract nurse several times in various locations. After the war, she participated in a volunteer experimental program in Cuba to determine the cause of yellow fever. She contracted yellow fever during the experiment and died. The U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp in her honor in 1976. (34)

It was emphasized that the nurses were civilian contract workers and not to be confused with soldiers who cared for the sick. (10:202) Although medical care was much more organized and effective under direct military control, most Army personnel opposed giving military status to women. At first, Surgeon General George M. Sternberg had concerns about granting military status to women, but he had seen firsthand that the contract nurses were indispensable during the Civil War and thought



Print: Courtesy United States Postal Service. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved. (20)

they needed to be a permanent part of the Army during conflicts. He asked Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee, Acting Assistant Surgeon General in charge of the newly established Nurse Corps Division, to draft legislation for Congress that would give nurses military status. (16:8) Dr. McGee was instrumental in subsequently recruiting nurses and supporting efforts that would make them a part of the military. (34)

Congress approved the formation of the Army Nurse Corps as an auxiliary of the Army under the Army Reorganization Act of 1901 (10:203) The auxiliary Navy Nurse Corps became a reality in 1908. Although the women in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps are considered the first military women with permanent status (38), the nurses were not given military rank, equal pay, retirement, disability, or other veteran's benefits. (16:9)

World War I 1917-1918

The enthusiasm for battle was high in the first years of the twentieth century.



Camp Thomas, Chickamauga Park, Georgia. Sternberg Hospital, Third Army Corps. Nurses and convalescent patients. Ca. 1898. (Army) National Archives photograph courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.

Men and women alike felt they could display courage and heroism in the proper environment. (10:209) Many women wanted the experience of participating in battle. The difference during World War I was that women no longer tried to disguise themselves as men; they enlisted in the Services and could proudly wear uniforms.

When the United States entered the war in April 1917, it did not have to recruit nurses because the Army and Navy Nurse Corps had been established a few years earlier. The nurses, although lacking military rank and benefits, were considered part of the military and could quickly be sent overseas. (16:12)

Nurses had to deal with mass casualties for the first time. Weapons in this war were more sophisticated tanks and machine guns. Mustard gas killed more men than any other weapon. The gas caused the body to rot, blistered the skin, blinded the eyes, and arrested the ability to breathe. The nurses did their best to keep the men comfortable but eventually had to strap the dying men to their beds while they suffered in extreme pain for weeks on end. (3)

In addition to dealing with horrific wounds and illnesses, more than 160 nurses served as reconstruction aides. The aides assisted amputees in adjusting to their handicaps and becoming functional members of society. The job they performed is similar to the rehabilitation specialist of today. (3)

In March 1917, the Navy, recognizing the need for additional women to provide support for the war that was certain to come, created a new rating, yeoman (F). Although they were not allowed to go to sea and could not advance to the same

high rank as men, women were provided with uniforms, incurred a four-year service obligation, and earned military rank and status, pay, and benefits.

(16:12) The “yeomanettes” became part of the Naval Coast Defense Reserve and, in addition to performing clerical tasks, worked as radio electricians, drafters, fingerprint experts, translators, camouflage designers, and recruiters. (10:225) Navy regulations prohibited women from serving at sea, but all yeomen had to be assigned to ships; the Navy assigned yeomanettes to sunken tugboats or other unseaworthy vessels. (16:12)

In 1918, the Marines, seeing how well this program worked for the Navy, enrolled women in the Marine Corps Reserve to perform clerical duties. The

women enrolled as “marine (F)” and were referred to as marinettes. (16:12) Both Services saw the benefit of employing the women stateside to free more men to go to the combat units. Without the women, the Services would not have had enough people to perform the necessary jobs. In all, 12,500 women yeomen and 305 women marines enlisted in the military Services for the first time. (10:225-226) The Coast Guard, although performing a small role at the time, enlisted a few women to serve at the Coast Guard headquarters. (16:12)

There is evidence that Army leaders wanted women workers other than nurses, but the Secretary of War would not permit it. General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe (AEF),



San Francisco Yeomanettes attached to the Naval Reserve, Twelfth District. June 1918. San Francisco Bulletin. (War Department.) Exact date shot unknown. National Archives photograph courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.

however, proceeded without authorization and issued a call for women to serve as military switchboard operators. Approximately 7,000 women applied, but only those who could speak French were considered. The 233 who were accepted for service took an enlistment oath, purchased uniforms, and completed two weeks of training in communications and self-defense before being sent to France. They became known as the "Hello Girls." The switchboards were always open, so the Hello Girls worked long hours with little rest; they were usually housed in barracks that had been abandoned as inadequate for male soldiers. The Hello Girls were known for their happy voices and dedication, despite their working conditions. Once, when a fire broke out in the switchboard building, the women

remained at the switchboards while other soldiers fought the fire. They felt they could not leave their posts because an intense battle was being fought at Argonne and many communications were coming in between the generals and their foot soldiers. (10:226-228)

The Hello Girls were praised in the newspapers for their bravery and they were awarded service medals when the war ended. Then, without warning, they were sent civilian service termination letters instead of honorable military discharges because (despite what the women were told when they were recruited) the Army still considered them contract civilians. They were offered an unofficial veteran status of sorts in 1977, after many of them had died of old age; the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars gave them membership



American telephone girls on arrival for "hello" duty in France. They all can speak both English and French. March 1918. Q.M. Sgt. Leon H. Caverly. Army. Exact date shot unknown. National Archives photograph courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.

privileges. Although one of their uniforms is displayed in the Smithsonian Institution, they are rarely mentioned in military history books. (35)

Other than nurses, the only military women to serve overseas in the war were these 233 switchboard operators (10:226), and 50 stenographers. (38) During the war, 34,000 women served in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps and in the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. (16:10) More than 400 military nurses died in the line of duty, most from a contagious form of influenza. (38)

When the war ended, everyone was tired of the stress and happy to resume normal activities; but women could not stay in the Service even if they desired. At the end of the war, all women (except nurses in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps) were discharged. (38) The official position read:

In view of the present military situation it is believed no longer desirable that arrangements be made to form military organizations composed of women.... A continuation of the war would have required the United States in completing its program for the year 1919 to make a much more extended use of women...to replace men sent overseas or men shifted to heavy work which men alone can do. (29:10)

For this and many other reasons, the number of women in the Services rapidly declined.

One woman who remained in the military and ultimately served for over 30 years, Grace Murray Hopper, was a computer-programming pioneer who made a huge impact on the technology of the future. She joined the Naval Reserve



*Commodore Grace Hopper.
National Archives photograph courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.*

during World War I and continued to work for the Navy as a reservist until 1966, when she retired as a captain.

In 1952, Hopper developed the first computer program that translated programming language instructions into machine-readable code. The program became the basis for the universal programming language, COBOL.

She was asked to retire at age 60, but a year later, in 1967, she was recalled to active duty and tasked with standardizing the Navy's computer programming languages.

Hopper retired in 1983. She was one of the first females to achieve the rank of rear admiral. She died in 1992, and in 1996 the Navy christened the *USS Hopper (DDG 70)*, in her honor. (2)

World War II 1941-1945

In 1920, the Army Reorganization Act granted military nurses the status of officers with "relative rank" from second lieutenant to major, but they were not given the rights and privileges generally accorded those ranks. (40)

In 1925, the 1916 Naval Reserve Act was changed to read "male citizens" instead of "citizens" as enlistment qualifications. Women could no longer enlist in the Navy and Marines without Congressional approval. (16:17) The number of women in the Services continued to decline.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Services once again began recruiting women. (38) Recruitment of women was a big undertaking. Posters urged women to join the Services and "free a man to fight." (35)

In 1942, the War Department was still in desperate need of women to fill support roles and free men for combat. Amid much controversy, Congress passed legislation to form the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Despite complaints and the fact that the bill did not authorize women equal pay, benefits, or military rank, 5,200 women applied for 30 officer positions in less than a week. (26:131) Ovetta Culp Hobby was named director of the Corps and later commissioned as a colonel. (34) Also in 1942, the Navy was permitted to establish the Navy Women's Reserve, or WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). These women would not be designated as an auxiliary.

The first director of the WAVES was

Lieutenant Commander Mildred McAfee. (34) Even later in 1942, the Coast Guard established the Women's Reserve of the Coast Guard, or SPARs, derived from the Coast guard motto, "Semper Paratus-Always Ready." (16:27) The SPARs served stateside as storekeepers, clerks, photographers, pharmacist's mates, and cooks. Lieutenant Commander Dorothy C. Stratton was named director of the SPARs. (34)

In 1943, the Marine Corps created the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, and women served stateside in jobs such as clerk, cook, mechanic, and driver. (38) Major Ruth Cheney Streeter was named director of the Women Marines. (34)

Because of the more liberal policies adopted by the Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines, the WAACs eventually began to resent their auxiliary status with fewer benefits. (16:24) The WAACs became WACs (Women's Army Corps) in 1943, which brought changes to policies and attitudes. (38)

When the WAAC bill went into effect, it included a list of the jobs women could perform; pilot wasn't on the list. Even though nearly 3,000 American women had learned to fly, they had a difficult time convincing the Army to allow them to fly. But in September 1942, the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) was formed. (23:20-21) The WAFS were responsible for taking delivery of repaired aircraft and flying them to stateside pickup points. Male pilots then flew the aircraft into battle zones. (23:51) At the same time, Jacqueline Cochran started the Women's Flying Training Detachment, a training school that gave women pilots the skills

Oveta Culp Hobby, 1941 Director, Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and later director of the Women's Army Corps. Photo: Courtesy National Archives, Still Pictures Branch, SC-208544.



Captain Mildred H. McAfee, USNR, Director of the WAVES. U.S. Navy photograph from the Naval Historical Center.

Captain Dorothy Stratton, USCGR, Director of the SPARS. U.S. Coast Guard photo from the USCG Historical Center.



Ruth Cheney Streeter was the first director of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, serving from February 13, 1943 to December 7, 1945. Photo: Courtesy National Archives, Still Picture Branch, 127-GR10460.

they needed to fly military planes. (23:18) The two groups were combined in the summer of 1943 and renamed the Women's Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs. The WASPs were not only responsible for ferrying aircraft, but they also tested aircraft that had been repaired. In addition, they played the role of enemy pilots in battle scenarios to give soldiers practice shooting live ammunition at enemy aircraft. (23:61) The WASPs earned less pay than male pilots who did the same type of flying and were not provided military insurance. (23:21)

Jackie Cochran set more speed, distance, and altitude records than any other pilot of her time. She was the first woman to break the sound barrier and was the first woman inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame. (23:18) For their service during the war, Nancy Love received an Air Medal and Jackie Cochran got a Distinguished Service Medal (23:79), but most of the WASPs received no special awards. Although many had hoped to make military service a career, the WASPs were disbanded when the war ended and many never flew another aircraft. The official WASP records were sealed, marked "Classified," and stored away for 30 years. (32) According to one WASP, "We were the best-kept secret of the war." (23:80)

More than 400,000 women volunteered to serve in the war, and 460 died, approximately 30 of them from hostile fire. (35) For the first time, women entered nontraditional military careers, such as auto mechanics, truck drivers, pilots, radio operators, and cryptographers. More than 80,000

WAVES filled shore billets in jobs such as communications, intelligence, supply, medicine, and administration. (40)

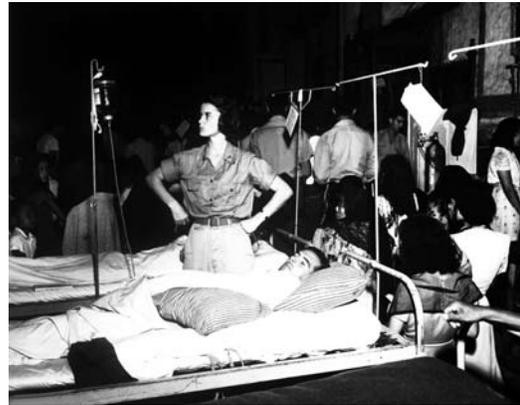
For a short time, from 1943 to 1945, the Marines had an all-woman band. Despite the objections from male officers, 67 women (no more than 48 at a time) were assigned duty with the band. They wore the same uniforms as other women Marines, complete with the required girdle, hose, and skirt that could sometimes interfered with marching. The band played 510 official performances in 23 months. Because of the pressure to prove themselves, the women strove to excel and became outstanding performers. In February 1944, they played during an NBC radio broadcast at the Camp Lejeune base theater to recognize the anniversary of the Women's Reserve. After that, they became celebrities of a sort and began to follow a head-spinning performance itinerary. In the summer of 1944, the band averaged 28 performances a month. They often had no publicity, advance notice of itinerary, type of music to be played, and unreliable transportation that sometimes left them stranded. As the war wound down, there was no longer a recognized need for lifting spirits, so they played their last concert in November 1945. (4:44-48)



Left: Recruiting poster, 1944, by Steele Savage. National Archives artwork courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.

Right: U.S. Coast Guard recruiting poster from USCG's web history page.

1st Lt. Phyllis Hocking adjusts glucose injection apparatus for a GI patient in the 36th Evacuation Hospital, Palo, Leyte, P.I., quartered in the Church of the Transfiguration, as the congregation kneels during Christmas Eve services. December 24, 1944. Army Staff. National Archives photograph courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.



Some 14,000 WACs served in many locations around the world. (26:133) Many served in harsh living conditions, and most were closer to the front lines than women had ever been. (26:135) Despite the prohibition against women serving in combat, many women were exposed to sniper fire and enemy bombing. (14:xix) The women of the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard were not sent overseas until the war was almost over.

Once again, many women, more than 67,000, served in the traditional role as nurse. (21:12) For the first time, females served with men on Naval hospital ships and in Alaska, Australia,





Left: U.S. Naval Recruiting Station. 1917. Poster by Howard C. Christy.

Right: U.S. Marines recruiting poster by Howard C. Christy.

National Archives artwork courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.



the Pacific, Africa, and Europe. (16:92) Navy nurses served onboard ships “all over the world.” They cared for thousands of soldiers, sometimes without adequate medicine, clean water, and supplies. At times they were dealing with thousands of cases of communicable disease and dysentery. (26:133-139; 262, 267) More than 200 Army nurses lost their lives in the war. The Japanese held 67 Army nurses and 16 Navy nurses as prisoners of war for three years. Five Navy nurses also were held for three months in Guam. Thirteen flight nurses died on duty in aircraft crashes. (34)

A number of women received first-time awards for their service in World War II. Sixteen women received the Purple Heart, 565 the Bronze Star, and over 700 WACs received medals and citations, including the first Legion of Merit. (34) Nurses received 1,619 medals, citations, and commendations during the war, including the Distinguished Flying Cross. Sixteen medals were awarded posthumously to nurses who died under fire. (34)

On the whole, European commanders were proud of women’s accomplishments and the women were treated fairly well. On the other hand, the women serving in

the Southwest Pacific were resented by the male soldiers and often did not receive awards and promotions they deserved. The women were demoralized and humiliated, and the hostility affected them for many years. Contributing to the problem was the fact that many of the men believed the women needed to be guarded and protected, which shaped attitudes about the women's ability to perform. Despite the mostly menial tasks they performed and their mistreatment by men, most women were committed to their jobs and were never a discipline problem. (26:139-143) Even when they gained some acceptance, they had to continually earn it by consistently overachieving. This was generally the prevailing situation for many years to come. (16:22) Despite the ambitious recruiting efforts at the beginning of the war, women once again were considered expendable and most were demobilized when the war ended. (38)

The Korean War 1950-1953

When World War II was over and the wave of patriotism was subsiding, women were sent back home to traditional civilian roles. Little interest was shown

in keeping a female military contingent. But a few high ranking officers had been so impressed with the women's performance during the war that they helped to draft legislation making women a permanent part of the Services.

The Army-Navy Nurse Act of 1947 established the permanent nurse corps for both Services. Nurses could become officers up to the grade of lieutenant colonel or commander. The Chief of the Corps could serve as a temporary colonel or captain. In 1949, the Air Force followed suit and established its own nurse corps. Also in 1949, two new women's components were established—the Army Medical Specialists Corps and the Air Force Medical Specialists Corps. There were then nine women's Service components: the WACs, WAVES, WAF, Women Marines, the three nurse corps, and the two medical specialist corps. (16:108-109)

When President Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act in 1948, women finally had permanent military status. The Act opened the door for women to serve in peacetime and provided a means for mobilizing women in the event of war. But there were still limits to what they could do and what benefits they would receive. They could join the active and reserve Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and the newly created Air Force. (38) But the number of women on active duty could not exceed 2 percent of the force, the number of high-ranking female officers in each service branch was limited, and certain career fields were not open to women, particularly those where there was a potential for combat. (16:119-120)

That same year, the President signed the Selective Service Act of 1948, authorizing a peacetime draft of men. There was then less incentive for recruiting women to fill the military ranks in peacetime, and their numbers dropped. (16:129)

When the conflict began in Korea, all of the Services stepped up their recruiting efforts; but they were unsuccessful in getting the numbers they wanted. (16:155-156) By 1951, only 1% of the total military force was female, even though a goal was set for the maximum 2%. Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall was convinced to form a committee of 50 prominent women to recruit women for the Services. The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) was charged with informing the public about the need for women recruits and the benefits and prestige for military women. Their effort to recruit 72,000 young women was a failure. (10:267)

There were many reasons that could have contributed to this failure. Americans were tired of war and wanted to return to a normal way of life. With new and more challenging jobs opening to women, they could make more money in civilian jobs. Women were aware of the negative attitude toward military women that still existed, and the possibilities for a successful military career were almost nonexistent. And the standards that women had to meet to qualify for military service were so high that it was difficult for recruiters to convince women to apply. When the decision was made to allow married women to leave the Service early, the

women who already were in the Service left in droves. The women simply had no incentive to stay in the service.

(16:155-156) The Secretary of the Army was so concerned that he began to draft legislation to draft women, but the war was dying down, interest in it was low, and there no longer was a need for additional Service members. (8:267)

Although no war was declared and no peace was concluded, the combat activity in Korea was significant. Approximately 22,000 American women, a third of whom were nurses, served in Korea. Many of the nurses were veterans of World War II who had joined the reserves and were recalled to active duty. One of those women was Captain Lillian Kinkela Keil, a member of the Air Force Nurse Corps. She flew more than 200 air evacuation missions during WWII and flew several hundred more missions during the Korean War. She was one of the most decorated nurses of all times receiving the European African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with Four Battle Stars; Air Medal with Three Oak Leaf Clusters; Presidential Unit Citation with One Oak Leaf Cluster; Korean Service Medal with Seven Battle Stars; American Campaign Medal; United Defense Medal; and Presidential Citation, Republic of Korea. She also was the inspiration for the 1953 movie "Flight Nurse." (34)

Over 120,000 women served on active duty during the Korean era. As in the past, the military refused to send any women other than nurses into the combat zone. Most of the military women replaced military men stateside so that men could go overseas. (10:266) WACs and WAFs did serve in several Far East

locations, including Japan and Okinawa (16:150), and Navy nurses served on hospital ships. Many of the nurses served in Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals, or MASH, an acronym that most people recognize from the popular television series by that name. However, little information is available about the women who served during that campaign. (34) Sixteen nurses lost their lives in the theater, none from direct hostile fire. (40)

For the next ten years, no emphasis was placed on recruitment, and there were rumors that women might once again be eliminated from the peacetime Army. (10:267)

Vietnam War Era 1965-1975

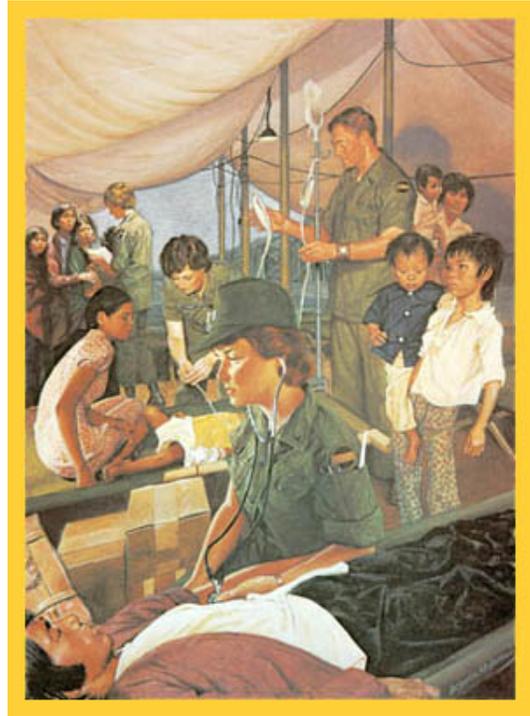
By 1955, the number of women in the Services was down to 35,000. Until 1967, the military maintained a small token force of women who were not appreciated. Although they had the mental and educational capacity to succeed, the women had no career potential and there was no pressure on, or incentive for, the military community to better utilize their female members. Women leaders had a growing concern about their futures with the military. (16:158-159) Other than during the Lebanon crisis in 1958, when military nurses were deployed to support over 10,000 troops, and during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, when nurses participated in medical support operations worldwide, very little changed despite the efforts of DACOWITS. (38) With the draft producing more than enough men (although less educated and prepared for service than volunteers), women's

military programs continued to decline. Just when the programs seemed to be in jeopardy, the Department of Defense began to look for alternate sources of manpower to address the developing problems in Vietnam and the growing threat of communism in many areas of the world.

Both Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson encouraged the recruitment of women. President Johnson stated, "The under-utilization of American women continues to be the most tragic and most senseless waste of this century. It is a waste we can no longer afford." But military leaders saw no need to recruit women. (16:177-179)

Physical appearance of the women in the military grew in importance in the sixties. New emphasis was placed on looking like and behaving like a lady. Basic training included such things as applying makeup and choosing appropriate hairstyles. The more attractive women were assigned to front office positions, regardless of their technical capabilities and education. Women were increasingly prevented from entering more specialized fields, particularly those that could expose them to combat. By 1965, 70% of enlisted women were performing clerical and administrative work and 23% were assigned to medical tasks. Very little was provided in the way of combat training, strength and endurance building, or self-defense instruction. Women were becoming more separated from the military way of life and were once again disenchanted with military service. (16:181-185)

In 1966, on hearing that qualified women volunteers were being turned



Operation New Life, 1975, Vietnam. An Army nurse checks an injured Vietnamese. More than 130,000 refugees were evacuated to the U.S. Artwork courtesy of the Army Center of Military History, The American Soldier Series 4.

away and recruits were waiting for months to report for duty due to artificial ceilings placed on women, DACOWITS asked the Department of Defense to take action to expand women's programs. The Marines, and later the Army, Navy, and Air Force, agreed to small expansions of their women's programs. When the draft was extended in 1967, the Services were encouraged to fill as many positions as possible with volunteers to cut down on the number of male draftees. (16:189-191)

Finally, on November 8, 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Public Law 90-130, which removed restrictions on the careers of female officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force,

and Marine Corps. The law eliminated the 2% cap on the number of women serving and the ceiling on the highest grade they could achieve. Although this was an opportunity for women to move ahead, there weren't enough noncombat slots for them to move into. Other barriers to advancement in the Services remained. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps still maintained separate promotion systems for women, and the Army continued to keep the women in the separate WAC. In addition, they continued to impose limits on the Service schools that prepared officers for general or admiral rank, which women still could not hold. Women still were subject to separation for reasons of pregnancy or family responsibilities, and they still were restricted from serving on aircraft and ships that could engage in combat. (16:192-202)

The elimination of the 2% ceiling resulted in women joining the Services in increasing numbers. After the draft ended, women became a significant portion of the all-volunteer force. (16:203)

Two and a half years after many of the restrictions on female officers' careers were removed, the first women were promoted to brigadier general. The first promotion went to Anna Mae Hays, Chief of the Army Nurse Corps, who had served in three wars and was currently leading a force of 5,000 nurses in Vietnam. That same month, in June 1970, Elizabeth P. Hoisington, the Director of WAC, was also promoted to brigadier general. In 1971, the Air Force promoted Jeanne M. Holm, the WAF Director, and E. Ann Hoefly, Chief of the Nurse Corps. Finally, in July 1972,

Alene B. Duerk, Chief of the Navy Nurse Corps, became the first female rear admiral, the Navy's equivalent to brigadier general. It was ten years before the Marines promoted Margaret Brewer to brigadier general; by that time the Army and Air Force had their first female major generals. (16:202-203)

Some 7,000 military women served in Southeast Asia, most of whom were nurses. Nurses served in field hospitals, mobile surgical hospitals, evacuation hospitals, and hospital ships in and around Vietnam and Thailand. One nurse died from hostile fire, another in an air crash, and six more died in the line of duty. (38) Four Navy nurses were injured during a bombing and became the first women to receive the Purple Heart in Vietnam. (16:242)

Many women returned from Vietnam with combat decorations. Many also returned with physical and psychological wounds. They endured dangerous and rugged conditions under the threat of hostile fire. The nurses, in particular,



Nurses care for a patient at the 24th Evacuation Hospital, Long Binh, Vietnam. Photograph from Office of the Surgeon General, Office of Medical History website. (24)



Nurses at the 18th Surgical Hospital in Vietnam. Photograph from Office of the Surgeon General, Office of Medical History website. (24)

were exposed to combat more than many of the other military personnel assigned to locations farther away from direct combat. (16:207) But many of the women were frustrated by the Services' lack of confidence in them and that they were not trained to defend themselves or others. They had not been prepared for combat. Brigadier General Evelyn Foote, U. S. Army, (Retired), said:

When I was in Vietnam in 1967, I was not weapons qualified. In fact, we were not permitted to carry weapons. I was up along the Cambodian border once with a field artillery battalion. The only thing I could do was run around carrying a purse--I called it my "M-16 purse". I was wearing a baseball cap, no helmet, no flak jacket, no weapons, nothing. I was a liability to that unit. Women in the Army don't want to be liabilities. They want to be assets, partners in defense with their male counterparts. (18:10)

All of the women who went to Vietnam were volunteers. (11) Women Marines and over 600 WAFs and 500

WACs were stationed in Vietnam. Also, over 6,000 Army, Navy, and Air Force nurses and medical specialists were there. Yet very little information about their participation was preserved by the Services. The accomplishments of military nurses were barely mentioned in the official records. During the past 20 years, reports, letters, and books have been written and recorded by the women who were there. (34)

When Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972 (which was never ratified), a new focus was placed on eliminating sex discrimination in the military. When the draft ended in 1973 and the military became an all-volunteer force, the Services continued to exclude women from certain career fields based on their physical abilities and the regulatory exclusion of women from combat. (16:255)

In 1972, women became eligible for the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). Defensive weapons training began. The following year, the Army opened pilot training to women and eight women were enrolled in the Navy's program. By 1974, all Services were training women as noncombat pilots. In a few months, the Army had its first woman helicopter pilot. News reports said these were the first women to fly military aircraft. The former WASPs came out in force and lobbied Congress for recognition of their efforts in World War II. In November 1977, President Carter signed the WASP bill, making it official that they had served on "active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States." As a result, many women received honorable discharges and were given awards from other organizations

and special groups. (23:83)

In 1975, the Department of Defense decided that women could elect to stay in the service during and after a pregnancy, and Congress approved women for the Service's military academies. (38)

Diane Carlson Evans, a former Army nurse who served in Vietnam, founded the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project in 1984. She was the first woman to lead a campaign to build a national monument to recognize military and civilian women for their patriotic service. (31) Although the names of the eight military women who died in Vietnam were inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the statues of the three servicemen accompanying the Wall did not reflect the women who had served. Many of the 250,000 women veterans worked with Evans to locate information on the women who had served and to place three statues representing those women near the Wall. They also proposed to plant eight trees on the site to commemorate each of the women who died in Vietnam. Congress authorized the Vietnam Women's Memorial in 1988, and it was dedicated in 1993. (34)

Post Vietnam Era and War in the Persian Gulf 1976-1991

After the War in Vietnam, women inched closer to being accepted on the battlefield. In 1977, the Marines began training 22 women for combat at Quantico, Virginia. Then in 1978, following a class action suit, the Navy began assigning women to seagoing ships that were not expected to be used in combat and also agreed to assign women to combat vessels for not more than 180 days when needed. The Coast

Guard had already assigned women to two of its ships in 1977. The Army allowed women on the battlefield, but not in combat positions. Later in 1978, the WACs were disestablished and the women became part of the regular Army. Although some of the women were sad to see the Corps go, they would enjoy many of the same benefits and rewards as the men.

For several years, the Services tried to determine how to use women in combat or in combat-related jobs and how to assess their physical capabilities. The Army rated all of its positions according to the probability of exposure to combat and allowed women in all but the positions with the highest exposure potential.

In 1983, the Army sent 200 women to Grenada as part of Operation Urgent Fury. Coast Guard women served aboard ships, and Air Force women served as pilots, engineers, and loadmasters for aircraft used in the operation. The female aircrews were subjected to hostile fire during the



Nurse with a patient at the 5th MASH in Saudi Arabia 1990. (Photograph from Office of the Surgeon General, Office of Medical History website. (24)

takeover of the Cuban-occupied island. However, none of the women who served there were considered as having been in combat. (36)

In 1986, women served as aircraft commanders, co-pilots, navigators, and fuel-boom operators on tankers that refueled bombers in the Libyan air strike. (8) And in 1987, the *USS Acadia*, a destroyer tender, was sent to the Persian Gulf with 248 women sailors aboard to repair the *USS Stark* that had been damaged by Iraqi missiles. (8)

In 1988, the "risk rule" was issued, which barred women from noncombat units where the risk was as great as that in combat units. (17)

In 1989, Operation Just Cause began in Panama. Approximately 750 women participated in the invasion and capture of General Manuel Noriega. Women served as radio operators, signalers, tank crew members and military police.

(22:21-24) Army women flew helicopters that brought supplies to the troops, often under enemy fire. Air Force women delivered cargo and conducted air-refueling missions, also under fire. Women such as Captain Linda Bray served as MPs. Captain Bray led 30 soldiers in taking over an attack-dog training kennel, where the troops engaged in a three-hour firefight and recovered enemy weapons hidden in the compound. The idea of a woman in combat was a novelty, and the news and photographs of Captain Bray received mixed reviews. (16:434) Women made up more than 4% of the invasion force; however, once again they were not considered as having been in combat. Only men were given the Army's combat infantryman badge for valor under fire in Panama, because women weren't "allowed" to serve in the Infantry. (36) However, three female helicopter pilots



Lieutenant Commander Darlene M. Iskra, 1990, the first female commander of a Navy ship. National Archives photograph courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.

were nominated for Air Medals, two with the V for valor. (16:435)

Women made a number of important gains during the next few years as the situation in the Middle East heated up. In 1990, Lieutenant Commander Darlene Iskra became the first woman to command a U.S. Navy ship. In 1991, Congress repealed the ban on women flying in combat. And in 1992, the first active duty female Coast Guard officer was promoted to captain (O6).

When talks between Iraq and Kuwait failed to solve problems over oil prices, Saddam Hussein sent his armies into Kuwait. After attempts to reach a peaceful resolution failed, the United States began Operation Desert Shield in August 1990 to help Kuwait. Desert Storm began in January, and the U.S. and its allies attacked the assets of Iraq. By the end of February and less than 100 days, Kuwait was liberated. (34)

Seven percent of the active force sent to the Gulf region were women, and 17 percent of the reserves were women. Over 40,000 women reportedly did everything but engage in direct combat during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, although many said they fired weapons and carried out other combat-related duties while there. Several thousand more served stateside. (34) Fifteen women died, five of them from hostile fire. Two Army women were taken prisoner by the Iraqi army. (38) A few years later, one of the POWs reported that she had been molested while in captivity, but she kept quiet because she didn't want to be the reason for keeping women out of combat. She went on to serve in Bosnia. (17)

Before the Gulf War, some continued

to claim the public would never accept women being taken prisoner or shipped home in body bags. However, the public handled it well, and their families proudly recognized the women as heroines. (17)

1991-2000

In the mid-1990's, women forged ahead, achieving even higher ranks than before. The Army and Marine Corps named their first women lieutenant generals, and the Navy, its first woman vice admiral and two African American women rear admirals. Additionally, the Coast Guard named a woman as the



Spec. Melissa Rathbun-Nealy, the first female to be taken as a prisoner of war by Iraqi forces during Operation Desert Storm, holds her mother's hand as she listens to a speech by Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney upon her return to the United States along with other former POWs. National Archives photograph courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.

Northeast District Commander.

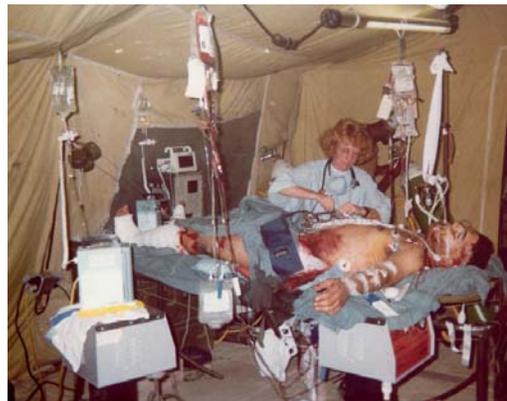
Following Desert Storm, the issue of women in combat came to the forefront. Military women could no longer avoid combat because there were no clear battle lines. Combat had occurred in all areas of the theater of operations. According to the Defense Manpower Data Center, between 1992 and 1994 more than 1,000 women were sent to Somalia during Operation Restore Hope. More than 1,200 women were sent to Haiti in 1995. Women also served in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Kosovo. Although these women deployed primarily as peacekeeping forces, many witnessed or participated in ground combat; if shot at, they returned fire. (34)

In 1993, Congress eliminated the combat exclusion law. The Secretary of Defense directed the military Services to begin training women for combat positions and to begin assigning women to ships and aircraft with combat missions. Before the Act was passed, the Senate Armed Services Committee conducted hearings to consider removing the ban on women flying combat missions. Air Force General Merrill A. "Tony" McPeak testified that, based on first-hand experience, he felt that some women do as well if not better than male pilots and agreed the law banning female combat pilots didn't make sense. However, later that day, when asked if he had to choose between a highly qualified female pilot and a less qualified male pilot to fly with him into combat, he said he would choose the man even if it were not in the best interest of national security. (16:483) In the same hearing, former Marine

Commandant General Robert H. Barrow said, "Women can't do it!...they are... unfit to do it. [Women in combat units would] ...destroy the Marine Corps." (16:483)

In 1994, even more combat positions were opened to women when the Secretary of Defense eliminated the "risk rule" (which identified certain jobs as too dangerous for women). Women were still excluded from units that could be engaged in direct ground combat with the enemy or in units that must collocate and remain with ground combat units. They also could not serve in units where the costs of berthing or privacy are prohibitive. They could not serve in units that engaged in long-range reconnaissance operations or in special operation forces missions. And they could not serve in jobs they were not physically able to perform. (7) That year, the Army assigned its first women as combat pilots. (38) A few years later, women were serving in combat air missions, firing cruise missiles, and dropping bombs.

In 1993, Dr. Sheila E. Widnall became



Nurse tending to patient in the ICU in Somalia in 1993. Photograph from Office of the Surgeon General, Office of Medical History website. (24)

the first woman secretary of a military service (Air Force). (38) That same year, the first woman was assigned to guard the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. (15)

In 1994, despite all of their accomplishments, negative attitudes about women still remained. A female F-14 pilot crashed while approaching the flight deck of the *USS Abraham Lincoln*; many assumed it was because she was not qualified. Some men claimed that the Navy held women to lower standards than men and that women were not as qualified to pilot the F-14. Never before had a pilot's training and qualifications been questioned after



Dr. Sheila E. Widnall, first woman secretary of the U.S Air Force. National Archives photograph courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.

a crash. An investigation was launched, and the Navy maintained that the female pilot was “average to above average” and the crash was most likely due to pilot error. The pilot's mother gave records to the media that showed her daughter graduated third out of seven pilots in her class. The Navy then investigated further and found that almost no pilot could have saved the aircraft after the left engine had stalled on the approach. It wasn't pilot error, but rather equipment failure, that caused the crash. (41:293-295)

Recruitment numbers were looking good for all of the Services, and they began to get comfortable with the increasing numbers of women in the ranks. Then in 1996, something was exposed that proved to be a great embarrassment to the Army and caused the Department to re-look its policies and programs. Male drill sergeants and other instructors of Advanced Individual Training at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, were accused of engaging in sexual acts with the female trainees. During the investigation that followed, 50 victims were identified, 20 instructors were suspended from duty, and one staff sergeant was sent to prison for 25 years. Although women had more or less gained acceptance in the military, some still believed that the situation in Aberdeen showed why women shouldn't be in the military. (13) It is incredible to think that many saw the behavior of the harassers and molesters as acceptable because the women shouldn't have been there.

A Senior Review Panel on Sexual Harassment was formed by the Secretary of the Army to investigate

how this had occurred and how to correct the problem. Major General Richard S. Siegfried and Brigadier General Evelyn "Pat" Foote led the panel in discovering that forms of sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and other gender-based problems were occurring throughout the Army. The panel found that Equal Opportunity (EO) and Human Resources training was of poor quality and lacked attention and emphasis from Army leaders. The Army then increased the number of EO Advisor positions, tightened the criteria for drill sergeants, mandated prevention of sexual harassment (POSH) training twice a year, implemented consideration of others training, and required leaders to administer annual climate surveys. It has still been reported that many complaints are not filed due to fear of retaliation and that training is often boring, repetitive, and ineffective. (13)

As of 1997, women could serve in certain types of combat units, but they could not hold a position that might put them in the middle of combat. "The biggest stumbling block for the advent of women serving in combat is mostly men," said Retired Air Force Brigadier General Wilma Vaught during the dedication ceremony for the Women in Military Service for America Memorial. "That's changing as we get new people up the ladder who are used to working with women." In 1998, the Navy gave five women command of combatant ships, and the first female fighter pilot fired missiles and dropped laser-guided bombs over Afghanistan.

In 1999, the first women graduated from Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel.

The Year 2000 and Beyond

As of 2000, 600 women were military pilots and hundreds more were qualified navigators. (23:84-85) That was the year that the Navy sent its first warship commanded by a woman to the Persian Gulf. Commander Kathleen McGrath was the first American woman to take a warship to sea. In October 2000, two Navy women died in Yemen on the *USS Cole* when it was attacked by a suicide bomber. (38)

In 2001, the unthinkable happened. Terrorists commandeered American commercial aircraft and crashed them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Along with many other military and civilian personnel, eight women died while on military duty at the Pentagon when the aircraft struck the building. Operation Enduring Freedom was immediately underway, with a mission to fight world terrorism. U.S. Central Command reported that 1,800 women were involved in the first few days. (38) The first all-female crew flew an air-refueling mission into Afghanistan during the operation.

In 2002, the first woman Marine was killed in a hostile fire zone when her aircraft crashed, an enlisted Marine died in a helicopter crash over Pakistan, and an Air Force staff sergeant was killed in a crash during takeoff in Afghanistan. (38) Although the danger of military service was obvious, the number of female Army recruits rose to 22.3% in 2001. (13) Women made up 15% of the Army, 13% of the Navy, 19% of the Air Force, and 6% of the Marines. (12)

In April 2002, the Army decided that



General Wilma L. Vaught, USAF (Ret.), President of the Women In Military Service For America (WIMSA) Memorial Foundation. Photograph by SSgt Renee Sitler courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.

its new Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RSTA) teams should be classified as combat units, thereby preventing women from serving in them. The 15 women in training for these positions were reassigned, but some feared this could set a precedent for reclassifying other positions. There no longer was a definite combat zone on the modern battlefield; so to prevent them from seeing combat, it appeared that women would have to be accepted in all positions or excluded from most. Although the Army said that the RSTA positions evolved into direct combat slots, women's advocates said it was just another lost opportunity for women to be promoted. Plus, this decision came only weeks after the Pentagon dismissed all of the DACOWITS committee

members and rewrote the committee's charter placing limits on issues the panel could explore. The members appointed in October 2002 were instructed to address only the issues pertaining to military families, recruitment, readiness, and retention. (19)

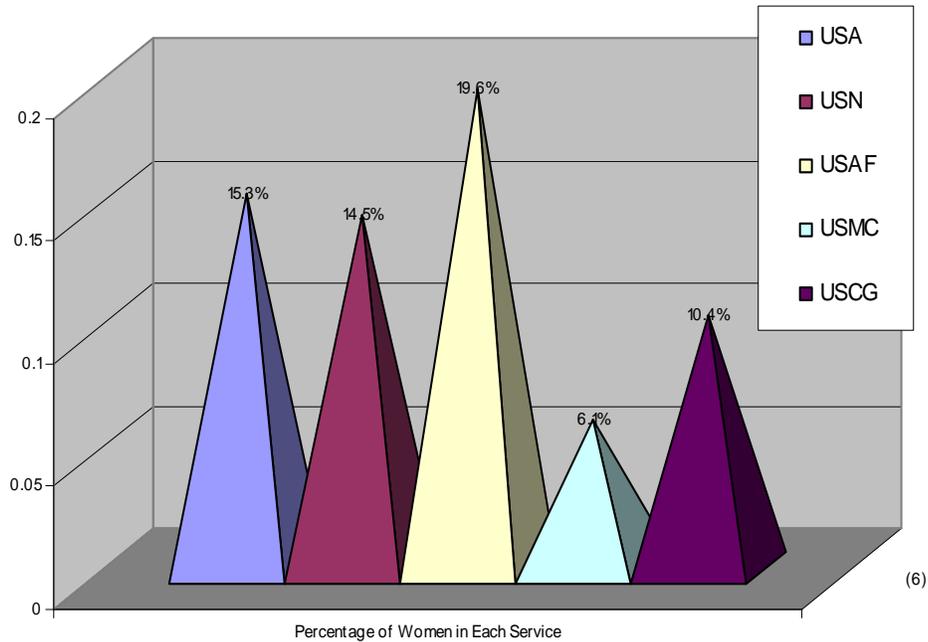
At the first meeting of the 2003 DACOWITS, Morris Petersen of the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences reported that, based on a recent survey of officers and enlisted personnel, women have gained acceptance and men have gained confidence in their abilities. Attrition rates are nearly the same for both sexes. He stated that most men said women are just as capable of handling the jobs as men. (27)

On the other hand, there was still significant opposition toward allowing women in combat. Military Center for Readiness president Elaine Connelly said earlier that same year, "Women in combat units endanger male morale and military performance." (17)

In early 2003, women made up 15% of the active duty Armed Services population. They were a very diverse group (almost 1/2 non-White), and well educated (nearly 1/5 had a bachelor's degree or above). Approximately 16% of the women were officers. The average age of the active duty woman was 27.6 years, over 40% were married and 33% had children. (9) But many occupational fields and positions were still closed to women. Refer to the Appendix for detailed explanation.

At the time this report was written, the United States was involved in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Women faced more combat during this war than in any

Women on Active Duty as of March 2003



Air Force Capt. Jennifer Wilson is the first female B-2 pilot to fly a combat mission. U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Richard Freeland, April 2003. Photograph from website, Defend America.

previous conflicts, although we do not yet have numbers to report. One of the more emotional events reported in every form of media was the rescue of a female prisoner of war, Private First Class Jessica Lynch. Her maintenance company had been attacked, and she and others in her unit were captured, tortured, and imprisoned. One member of the company, Private First Class Lori Piestewa, was killed during the ambush. U.S. Forces later recovered seven other soldiers, including another woman, Specialist Shoshana Johnson. Despite the military's position that women will not be directly involved in combat, these occurrences prove that on today's battlefield everyone is vulnerable. A Red Cross van was fired upon by Iraqi soldiers. It is no longer clear where the combat and combat support areas operate on a battlefield. (30)

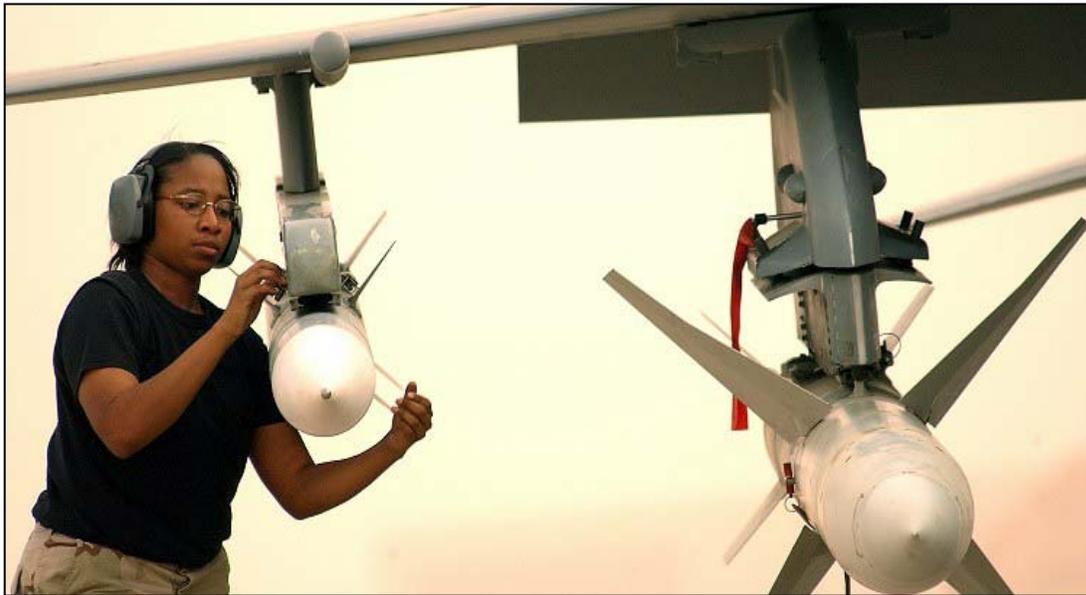
Conclusion

Now that women are being trained properly and performing nearly the same tasks as men, most just want to be placed on equal ground and be recognized as soldiers, not as female soldiers. They carry out their duties and responsibilities as well as the men, even in combat situations. Carolyn Becraft, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Clinton administration stated, “Their inclusion in the military has been quite seamless. There have been ups and downs, but they now are a larger percentage of the military and they have higher ranks, and, by all accounts, they're performing very well.” (12)

When women no longer are a novelty in the military, they will be integrated, accepted, and bonded with the men in their units. (30)

Organizations such as the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation will continue to document the experiences of military women. Recording and recognizing accomplishments of the past will provide a platform for the future.

We can hope that the accomplishments of all people are recognized and appreciated and that those who strive to do more will not be discouraged by negative attitudes and beliefs of others.



Senior Airman Kimberly Herring, a weapons loader assigned to the 363rd Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron, pulls weapon pins off an F-16 Fighting Falcon prior to its takeoff at a forward-deployed location in South-west Asia March 2003. Herring is deployed from the 77th Fighter Squadron, Shaw Air Force Base, S.C. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Hannen, courtesy of the Defense Visual Information Center.

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Military Positions Closed To Women As Of January 2003

Army - 91% Of Occupations Open To Women

--- Occupational Fields Closed To Women: The Infantry, Armor, Cannon Field Artillery, Short-Range Air Defense Artillery, And Special Forces.

70% Of Positions Open To Women

--- Positions Closed To Women Are The Following Units Below Brigade Level: Infantry, Armor, Special Forces (Including Functional Ranger Regiments), Field Artillery Battalions, Combat Engineer Companies, Ground Surveillance Radar Platoons, And Air Defense Artillery Battalions.

Navy - 97% Of Occupations Open To Women

--- Occupational Fields Closed To Women:

---- Officers: Submarine Warfare And Special Warfare (SEALS).

---- Enlisted: Special Warfare And The Following Three Ratings Particular To Submarine Service: Fire Control Technician, Missile Technician, And Sonar Technician.

Marine Corps - 93% Of Occupations Open To Women

--- Occupational Fields Closed To Women: Infantry, Armor, Field Artillery, Security Force Guard Protecting Nuclear Material, Close-Quarter Battle Teams, And 15 Occupations That Either Co-Locate With Ground Combat Troops Or Involve Reconnaissance.

62% Of Positions Are Open To Women

--- Positions Closed To Women: Infantry Regiments And Below, Artillery Battalions And Below, All Armored Units, Combat Engineer Battalions, Reconnaissance Units, River Assault Craft Units, Low-Altitude Air Defense Units, And Fleet Anti-Terrorism Units

Air Force - 99% Of Positions And Occupations Are Open To Women

--- Positions Closed To Women:

Officers:

---- Closed: Combat Control.

---- Restricted: Special Operations Force (SOF), Rotary Aircraft (MH-53/MH-60 Helicopters), Weather Officer Assignments With Infantry Or SOF, And Combat Liaison Officer Assignments With Infantry Battalions.

Enlisted:

---- Closed: Combat Control, Tactical Air Command And Control, And Para Rescue.

---- Restricted: Flight Engineer/Gunner Aboard MH-53/MH-60 Helicopters; Weather, Ground Radio Control And Radio Communications Collocated With Direct Ground Combat Units.

Coast Guard All Occupations Are Open To Women (ABC news.com)