

DAUGHTERS OF ATHENA:
AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE MILITARY
DURING WORLD WAR II

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
Chapter	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. THE ARMY LEADS THE WAY: BLESSING OR CURSE?.....	24
2. AMAZON’S OF THE AIR: WOMEN IN THE ARMY AIR CORPS.....	85
3. FOLLOWING THE WAVES TO COLLEGE: THE CRAFTING OF THE NAVY WAVES.....	145
4. “THEY ARE MARINES:” THE MARINE CORPS EXPERIENCE FOR AMERICAN WOMEN IN WORLD WAR II.....	196
5. STRATTON’S “COASTIES:” THE COAST GUARD WELCOMES THE SPARS.....	228
6. CONCLUSION.....	250
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 266
VITA.....	285
ABSTRACT.....	286

LIST OF TABLES

Educational Requirements for Female Officers.....	259
Levels of Education Among WASP.....	261
Education Levels Among Enlisted Personnel.....	263

INTRODUCTION
BARBARIANS, ABERRATIONS OR ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL? :
EXPOSING WOMEN'S HISTORICAL ROLE
IN MILITARY SERVICE

In the western world of antiquity, the notion of women engaging in military pursuits served as a fascinating aberration. Tales of Amazon women engaging Greek warriors in battle enthralled audiences. Ancient Greek kraters, reliefs and statues serve as silent witnesses to the Greek fascination with women who chose to defy convention and assume social positions reserved solely for males in contemporary society. Amazons personified the barbarism of the enemies of Greece and served as potent reminders of the dangers inherent in allowing women to operate independently of male guardians. The fifth century B.C. orator Lysias referred to them as “the daughters of Ares,” although some accounts claim that the Amazons worshipped Artemis. The legendary defeat of the Amazons served as proof of Greek superiority over their enemies. At the battle of Salamis in 480 B.C., Artemisia of Halicarnassus led a squadron of triremes in battle against the Greeks, winning grudging respect from Greek leaders, even as they branded her a treacherous and dangerous leader. Greek historian Herodotus claimed that her council to Persian King Xerxes proved more sound than any other advisors to the enemy of Greece. Though renowned as the cradle of democracy, Athens denied women political representation. Athenian women lived lives dominated by male guardians, restricted from politics and public life. Spartan society, in which women enjoyed marginally more freedom than their Athenian sisters, nevertheless expected women to fulfill their duty to the state by producing strong, strapping sons destined

to sacrifice their lives for Sparta. Greek men might revere Athena as the goddess of wisdom and war, but few wanted mortal women meddling in martial pursuits.¹

Roman militarism, steeped in tradition, also limited the imperial preoccupation with warfare and conquest to males. Many of their “barbarian” enemies harbored no such reservations about utilizing women on the battlefield. Historian Linda Grant De Pauw notes a Roman general’s admission that Celtic women displayed formidable force on the battlefield, engaging in hand-to-hand combat with Roman soldiers that felt comparable to a blow from a catapult. Nevertheless, the appearance of females on the battlefield brought condemnation from Roman military leaders. Boudicca, Britain’s warrior queen, earned the contempt of her enemies and a reputation with Romans as a wild barbarian – a reputation earned after annihilating the Roman Ninth Legion and sacking Londonium (modern London), as well as Camulodunum (Colchester). The Roman historian Tacitus vividly recounted the massacre of the enemies of Boudicca’s tribe, the Iceni. That other unpredictable female leader, Cleopatra, also earned the disdain of Romans appalled by her political machinations and her leadership of Egyptian ships supporting Mark Antony against Octavian at the battle

¹ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 26, 31, 131, 154, 220, 223, 253; In recent years, Jeannine Davis-Kimball, Ph.D., has conducted excavations in Kazakhstan, unearthing evidence of a matrilineal society in which women served as warriors. In her book, *Warrior Women: An Archeologist’s Search for Histories Hidden Heroines*, Davis-Kimball argues that these women may have served as the basis of the Amazon legend. Jeannine Davis-Kimball, Ph.D., *Warrior Women: An Archeologist’s Search for History’s Hidden Heroines* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 2002), 112-131; Sarah B. Pomeroy, Stanley M. Burstein, Walter Donlan, and Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 233; Antonia Frasier, *The Warrior Queens: The Legends and the Lives of the Women Who Have Led their Nations in War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 19-20, 32-34; James Smith Pierce, *From Abacus to Zeus: A Handbook of Art History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1998), 110; David Sacks, *Dictionary of the Ancient Greek World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 103; Linda Grant De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 60-61; “Herodotus: Artemisia at Salamis, 480 BCE,” Ancient History Sourcebook, www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/480artemisia.html (accessed 10 January 2009). Numerous examples of Greek art depicting Amazon warriors can be found throughout the world. The Musei di Agrigento in Sicily houses a superb red-figure krater depicting a battle between Greek and Amazon warriors. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York houses a fine Roman copy of a Greek bronze statue depicting a wounded Amazon.

of Actium. Palmyran Queen Zenobia successfully repelled Roman forces under Emperor Claudius but later succumbed to the Emperor Aurelian. After his successful siege of her capital, Aurelian marched the defeated queen, covered in gold, through Rome in an elaborate triumphal procession. Zenobia later married a senator and assimilated into Roman society. Nevertheless, Aurelian expressed grudging admiration for his defeated foe. As far as the Imperial Army was concerned, Roman women might cook, clean, or serve the personal needs of imperial troops, but their participation ended as nameless logistical support.²

After the fall of the Roman Empire, exceptional women emerged to further the interests of their county or noble family by assuming leadership roles during periods of turmoil. The legends of the irrepressible Eleanor of Aquitaine and enigmatic icon Joan of Arc spring easily to mind. The Greek historian Nicetas noted that armed women, dressed as men and evidently led by Eleanor, traveled with the French army on crusade. Joan mystified many with her inexplicable ability to lead an army of over four thousand infantry and archers. Many scholars argue that these examples of strong militant women only underscore their exceptionalism. They do not, critics argue, represent women at large but rather the aberration of war-like women across time. In their strength, they highlight the weakness of the common woman. Nevertheless, although they proved to be exceptional, their involvement in armed conflict and their manipulation of contemporary political establishments demonstrates that women could circumvent established social mores and intercede directly in military affairs in periods of upheaval. In Italy during the early 1400s,

² Davis-Kimball, *Warrior Women*, 212-213; Gerard J. DeGroot, "Arms and the Woman," in *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 10; Michael Grant, *History of Rome* (Engleton Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), 243-245, 284, 372-373; Frasier, *The Warrior Queens*, 39-40; De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 21, 75-80; "Description by Tacitus of the Rebellion of Boudicca (AD 60-61)," *Athena Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, www.athenapub.com/tacitus1.htm (accessed 10 January 2009).

renowned intellectual Christine de Pisan, a noblewoman, wrote extensively of the need for women to learn about military affairs for defense of family holdings. Extremely influential in her own time, as well as in subsequent ages, Pisan displayed a remarkable command of military strategy, tactics, and weaponry. Such demonstrations of military acumen foreshadow the plight of women in countries devastated by warfare in modern history.³

Prior to the twentieth century, written histories of military engagements seldom mentioned the roles women played in military establishments. Most early modern references refer to women who “followed the army” as little more than prostitutes and beggars, draining the army of supplies and robbing soldiers of their wages. Few schoolchildren learn about the contributions of women such as Mary Walker, who won the Congressional Medal of Honor for her service during the Civil War, or Clara Barton, who, among other notable accomplishments, served as a nurse during the War of 1898. Students might learn that Martha Washington often joined her husband while the Continental Army was in winter quarters. A few schoolchildren learn of Molly Pitcher, who assumed her husband's position beside a cannon after he was killed by British gunfire in the Revolutionary War. Accounts of Martha Washington's visits and the legend of Molly Pitcher reinforced the image of women as helpmates for their husbands, fulfilling to some extent the traditional domestic role deemed “proper” for women. Yet, these accounts only scratch the surface. As Holly Mayer demonstrated in her groundbreaking work, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and*

³ C. Warren Hollister, *Medieval History: A Short History, Eighth Edition* (Boston: Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill Co., Inc., 1998), 341-342; Alistair Horne, *La Belle France: A Short History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 19-20, 69; Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (New York: Book-of-the-Month Club by arrangement with Harvard University Press, 1996), 33, 38; Frasier, *The Warrior Queens*, 23-24; Historian Linda Grant De Pauw points out that although Joan of Arc wore men's clothes, she was commonly known as “la Pucelle,” the Maid, refuting arguments that Joan attempted to deceive the soldiers following her. De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 19, 91, 95-96. Brian Crim, “Silent Partners: Women and Warfare in Early Modern Europe,” in *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex CM20 2JE, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 22-26.

Community during the American Revolution, female camp followers served as much more than prostitutes and domestic companions. In fact, women served as essential personnel from early modern times through the present day.⁴

In early modern Europe, the conscription of the masses into the army changed the nature of European warfare. By the end of the sixteenth century, Knights required armor, provisions and personnel the state could ill afford. In addition, the knightly class proved tempestuous, wracked by political ambitions and infighting. Widespread introduction of hand-held, gunpowder weapons and improved artillery allowed a base-born peasant to kill a well-born knight. Warfare became an occupation of the masses. As historian Brian Crim notes, European sovereigns turned to the more cost effective alternative of mercenary armies, composed of young men and women, to replace the more costly and unreliable nobles. Commoners searching for a reliable income and a break from the drudgery of farming joined the armies in vast numbers. As a result, women engaged in the mechanization of warfare by serving as cooks, laundresses, medics, spies, saboteurs, sutlers and, in the confusion of battle, occasionally as combatants. As Europe seethed in conflict during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both male and female militants profited by the religious wars of the period. Of course, the presence of women in the armies of Europe sparked some criticism from the upper classes, who viewed these women as harbingers signaling the end of civilization itself. The chaotic nature of the armies also sparked controversy. Critics complained that the armies destroyed more than they protected. European rulers began to

⁴ Holly Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 270; DeGroot, "Arms and the Woman," 8, 10; Scott N. Hendrix, "In the Army: Women, Camp Followers and Gender Roles in the British Army in the French and Indian Wars, 1755-1765," in *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds. Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex CM20 2JE, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 46-47.

look for an efficient system of management to instill stability and professionalism within their unruly armies. Their solution would effectively displace women from their positions within the army establishment.⁵

The professionalization of logistical services effectively eliminated women from participation in the military. Prior to this action, women performed logistical services vital to the operation of the army. They acquired food and medical supplies, cared for the wounded, stripped and buried the dead, and often transported supplies from one site to another. Crim relates the testimony of nineteenth century historian Hans Delbruck, who noted that German women aided the Hungarian army. According to Delbruck,

“Seldom is one found who does not carry 50 or 60 pounds. Since the soldier carries provisions or other materials, he loads straw and wood on her, to say nothing of the fact that many of them carry one, two, or more children on their back. Normally, however, aside from the clothing they are wearing, they carry for the man one pair of breeches, one pair of stockings, one pair of shoes, two Hemmeter, one pan, one pot, one or two spoons, one sheet, one overcoat, one tent, and three poles. They receive no wood for cooking in their billets, so they pick it up on the way. And to add to their fatigue, they normally lead a small dog on a rope or even carry them in bad weather.”⁶

Despite Delbruck’s depiction of the backbreaking labor women in the army performed, it is worth noting that such hardship was rewarded with an income and benefits that exceeded that of other occupations open to women. Nevertheless, the professionalization of their duties

⁵ Crim, “Silent Partners” 14-31; DeGroot, “Arms and the Woman,” 8, 10; Hendrix, “In the Army,” 46-47.

⁶ Crim, “Silent Partners,” 28.

called for the replacement of women with men, effectively eliminating women from the army.⁷

Women participated in the American War for Independence through a wide variety of activities. Some women contributed to the political literature of the era. Many utilized their skills to produce uniforms or collect supplies for the army. Still other women labored to manage businesses or care for family farms while their men fought as soldiers. Women who chose to serve the army through direct participation provided the army with essential services that would later undergo professionalization. Women followed male relatives into the army for a variety of reasons. Historian Holly A. Mayer notes that although the army denied women official entry into the military, it permitted women to provide services to the army as civilians. Known collectively as “camp followers,” these women hailed from the poorest classes of colonial society. Their poverty often prompted scorn from contemporary observers. Most women simply lacked the financial resources to survive without the contributions of their sons, husbands, or brothers for extended periods of time. After 1776, British ransacking of colonial property rendered many families homeless. Some colonial women recognized an opportunity to earn income not otherwise available to them by working for the army. A few women, with or without male relatives, joined because of patriotic motives. While the soldiers often joined the army for the bounty or promises of land grants, their female relatives earned money cooking, cleaning and nursing wounded soldiers. Army leaders, cognizant of the fact that the army needed women to provide these services, issued rations and provided shelter for women hired into the army. Children often

⁷ Crim, “Silent Partners,” 14-31.

accompanied their mothers, drawing reduced rations from army stores. Thus, the army frequently resembled what Mayer terms a “continental community.”⁸

Women’s contributions to the army frequently stretched beyond domestic responsibilities to less conventional activities. During battle women working with artillery units hauled water required for the safe operation of cannons. It seems safely within the realm of logic to conclude that women frequently helped artillerymen operate weapons when male soldiers perished in battle. Indeed, the legend of “Molly Pitcher” originated from such an incident. After a battle, women often procured needed clothing, supplies and ammunition by stripping dead soldiers of their belongings. Female camp followers frequently buried the bodies of enemy soldiers. Other women aided the army and earned an income as sutlers, officially or unofficially acquiring supplies for the army from the surrounding area. Logistical supply posed a perpetual problem for the Continental Army. Sutlers efforts represented an attempt to ease the army’s supply shortages.⁹

The 1776 American Articles of War called for the presence of camp followers. Article 23 of Section XIII defined them as “all sutlers and retainers to the camp, and all persons whatsoever serving with the armies of the United States.” While army officers hired some women to work for the army and granted them rations and shelter in exchange for their

⁸ Melissa Lukeman Bohrer, *Glory, Passion, and Principle: The Story of Eight Remarkable Women at the Core of the American Revolution*. (New York: Atria Books, 2003), 156. American women often followed the army to avoid abuse by British soldiers. Fear of rape by marauding British soldiers prompted women to seek refuge with the American forces. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 5, 8, 122-123, 151; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston-Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 174; Linda Grant De Pauw, *Founding Mothers: Women in America in the Revolutionary Era*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 182; Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women’s Place in the Early South, 1700-1835* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 88; Cynthia A. Kierner, *Southern Women in the Revolution, 1776-1800: Personal and Political Narratives*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 2; Sondra Albano, “Military Recognition of Family Concerns: Revolutionary War to 1993,” *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Winter, 1994): 284.

⁹ Bohrer, *Glory, Passion, and Principle*, 157, 159; Walter Hart Blumenthal, *Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution*. (George MacMans Company, 1952), 84; De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 119.

services, other women followed the army in an unofficial capacity. Washington's famous order stipulating that all unnecessary women remain behind almost certainly refers to this dilemma. Unable to gain employment with the army, these women simply trailed behind the army, distracting soldiers and consuming valuable resources from the surrounding regions. Allegations of prostitution by women in the army probably originated as a result of these unsanctioned bands of camp followers. Historian Melissa Lukeman Bohrer acknowledges the presence of prostitutes among the camp followers. Nevertheless, she argues that prostitutes represented only a small minority of camp followers. On rare occasions, army officers banished promiscuous women and prostitutes from the encampment. Despite the problems inherent in these groups, Washington recognized that many women followed male relatives in his army. As a result, banning these women from all contact with the army might result in desertion by soldiers who felt duty-bound to protect their families. Thus, Washington begrudgingly allowed these women access to the camp while ordering that their drain on army supplies and troop movement remain minimal. Washington would not force these women to disperse; but neither would he encourage their presence. Women not hired into army service followed the army without the benefit of transportation or assistance. They walked, or they fell behind.¹⁰

In the nineteenth century, professionalization of the military began, as male servicemen undertook assignments previously discharged by female campfollowers. As a result, the army became an even more entrenched bastion of masculinity. American writers subsequently depreciated the role of women in military establishments, focusing instead on the heroic actions of male citizen soldiers. The scant historiographical record underscores

¹⁰ Bohrer, *Glory, Passion, and Principle*, 158; Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 5, 14, 112, 126; Blumenthal, *Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution*, 59, 80; De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 120.

the marginalization of female contributions to American war efforts. Nevertheless, women working for the army performed domestic services, aided in the acquisition and distribution of logistical resources, and, on rare occasions, participated in combat. A review of the extant historiography reveals recent efforts by historians to expose the role women played in the American army and reverse the historiographical marginalization of women who followed American forces.¹¹

During the Civil War, women chose sides and participated in the conflict. Professionalization of the army meant that women volunteering for duty with the army were often rejected, although many served in an unofficial capacity performing domestic duties for the camp or acting as spies. As a result, most women determined to aid the army participated officially or unofficially as nurses, often working endless hours in a torrent of blood and human suffering. Nurses working amid the chaos of battle sometimes paid the ultimate price for their service, as enemy bombardment seldom discriminated between the sexes. Medical of Honor recipient Dr. Mary Walker worked as a physician with the Union Army, despite the ridicule of men and women repelled by the sight of a female doctor. In at least one case, that of Kady C. Brownell, her husband's unit allowed her to stay by her husband's side, adopting her as the "daughter" of the regiment. Brownell served as the color guard in many engagements and received a minor wound at the First Battle of Bull Run. Her husband, proud of his plucky wife's service, later asserted that she used swords and guns in action during her service to the Union Army. Some women donned male clothing and enlisted as

¹¹ John Laffin addresses the marginalization of women participants in military establishments. Laffin notes that male military historians "resent the intrusion" of women into the military. Women whose actions gained notoriety became "freakish," "queer" or "old battle-axes." John Laffin, *Women in Battle*. (London, Abelard-Schuman Limited, 1967), 11-12.; Historian Cynthia A. Kierner argues that the American citizen-soldier in the Revolution embodied a patriotic ideal inaccessible to women. Kierner, *Beyond the Household*, 86; In her 1975 book *Founding Mother's*, Linda Grant De Pauw includes one other type of militant American women in her list of female participants – that of irregular female partisans affiliated with militia units. De Pauw, *Founding Mothers*, 179; Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 276; Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 179, 181-187.

solders. Both the Confederate and Union armies discovered women in the ranks, although the known percentage of female soldiers remained miniscule. Upon discovery, women received discharges from the army or imprisonment. Scant government documentation testifies to their service. Nevertheless, letters from soldiers, both male and female, reported the discoveries of female soldiers. In her book, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present*, historian Linda Grant De Pauw recounts a letter written by Col. Elijah H. C. Cavins to his wife. In his missive, Cavins regales his wife with the story of a heroic soldier promoted from corporal to sergeant for bravery at the battle of Fredericksburg. The sergeant in question received a discharge from the army when she gave birth to a child two months later. The destruction of the Confederate surgeon general's records during the siege of Richmond in 1865 makes the Civil War experience a bit more difficult to document. Nevertheless, the Civil War experience clearly demonstrates that some women maintained the will and strength necessary to join their brothers in the army.¹²

During the Spanish-American War, the government hired nurses to serve in Army and Navy hospitals. A few served aboard the hospital ship, *Relief*, while others attended to wounded soldiers in army camps in the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Hawaii. A total of 1,563 women served as nurses during the conflict. The presence of female nurses in military hospitals and in the field proved so successful that the government established a permanent

¹² De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 147-163; Gail Collins, *America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 193-207; "History Archive: Dr. Mary Walker, Surgeon, Civil War," Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc., www.womensmemorial.org/H&C/History/walker.html (accessed 28 November 2007); "Women Soldiers and Nurses of the American Civil War," American Civil War, www.americancivilwar.com/women/index.html (accessed 28 December 2007).

Army Nurse Corps in 1901. The Navy followed suit in 1908. Nevertheless, neither nursing corps received full rank and corresponding benefits until after World War I.¹³

After the turn of the twentieth century, international tensions in Europe escalated, as nations vied for economic supremacy and imperial conquests. Men and women in many European nations joined the war effort in a myriad of ways – perhaps most notably in the Soviet Union. The involvement of the United States in World War I, though long delayed by the nation’s reluctance to involve itself in old world rivalries, presented the United States with serious challenges concerning the ability of the U.S. military to engage in operations on such a large scale. Weapons were inadequate in quantity and outdated in design. Drafted American soldiers “crossed the pond” with little training. In addition, most American men lacked the clerical skills necessary to meet the logistical needs of the army and navy. This dearth of skilled clerical staff among army personnel resulted from the widespread integration of women into the workforce. Many women worked in industry or in clerical fields, performing the monotonous tasks society relegated to the female sex. Businesses routinely employed women as clerks, typists and telephone operators, believing that the tedious routine of such occupations suited the simple minds of females, leading to a feminization of these occupations. As a result, the American military faced a quandary: how would the military incorporate thousands of new male soldiers into the services and prosecute a world war without the aid of women? Yet the indoctrination of women into the official military establishment, beyond the roles of civilian employee or army nurse, received

¹³ “Early Years: Spanish-American War,” Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc., [www.womensmemorial.org/H&C/History/earlyyears\(spanam\).html](http://www.womensmemorial.org/H&C/History/earlyyears(spanam).html) (accessed 28 December 2007); “Highlights in the History of Military Women,” Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc., www.womensmemorial.org/H&C/Education/timeline.html (accessed 28 December 2007); De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 201-203. Nancy Goldman, “The Utilization of Women in the Military,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 406, The Military and American Society, (March 1973), 113.

widespread condemnation. In the face of such opposition from military leaders and American society, the army rejected the recruitment of the one segment of society most likely to possess the required skills due to gender discrimination. The Navy and Marine Corps; however, would follow a different path.¹⁴

Before World War I began, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels anticipated a critical manpower shortage in the event of American involvement in a large-scale conflict. As war seemed imminent, Daniels instructed his aides to search naval regulations governing the enlistments of naval personnel for any directives involving female enlistees. Naval aids discovered that regulations regarding enlistment of naval personnel contained ambiguous language calling for enlistment of “persons.” Recognizing that women at the very least qualified as “persons,” Daniels seized the opportunity, controversially instructing his aides to begin the process of enlisting female “yeomen.” The ambiguity of existing regulations meant that the enlistments could proceed without congressional debate or presidential authorization. Ultimately, 13,000 women enlisted as female yeomen in the Navy and Marine Corps, becoming the first women to earn full military status in America. When hostilities ended in 1918, female yeomen were placed on “inactive status.”¹⁵

While the United States debated the issue of women in the military during World War I, many American women joined European women serving as civilian employees and volunteers abroad. Military officers, short on male personnel to fill essential positions, recognized that they needed women to fill the gap. Official or not, women were hired extensively in the European theater. Serving as clerical staff, chauffeurs, medical aids,

¹⁴ Captain Linda L. Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*. (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, 1974), 3.

¹⁵ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 40-41; Gina DiNicolo, “Marching into the Corps.” *Military Officer*, November 2003: 62-64; De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 225.

nurses, orderlies, and telephone operators in the European theater, many women paid for personal expenses from their own funds. Nevertheless, women's groups came under significant scrutiny from critics who argued that women lacked the skills and resilience necessary to effectively serve in a war zone. In fact, volunteer organizations in Europe did suffer from chronic disorganization and high attrition rates among personnel. Few exercised any tangible discipline over personnel. Volunteers often relocated or resigned due to a lack of logistical support. Women found food scarce and lodging frequently unobtainable. Many complained that they spent copious amounts of time scrounging for the basic necessities of life. These symptoms resulted, critics argued, from the inherent weaknesses of women, namely physical and mental weakness, as well as a shortage of skills. Despite these criticisms, the experiences of military leaders dealing with female volunteers convinced many that an independent corps of women, operating under the auspices of the military establishment, might provide essential services during the conflict without the inherent unreliability of volunteer organizations. Nevertheless, recommendations to the War Department for a female auxiliary organization, including a congressional proposal, led to a dead-end. In December of 1917 the War Department denied such recommendations.¹⁶

On November 11, 1918, hostilities ended in Europe and the debate on women in the military withered away. Volunteer organizations gradually disbanded and female volunteers rejoined civilian society. Proponents within the military who previously advocated a women's corps ceased arguing with the establishment. Civilian proponents, however, continued to explore ways women might aid the military in future conflicts. As a growing number of women registered to vote, army leaders seeking their support created a new

¹⁶ Nancy Shea, *The Waacs* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1943), 10; Mattie Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953), 8-12.

position under the Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel titled “Director of Women’s Services” in 1920. In reality, the position held little real authority or respect. The first woman to hold this position, Anita Phipps, primarily served as a liaison between the army and the families of servicemen. Lacking full military status, her position seemed trivial to many of her colleagues. Phipps found little support for her position, particularly her plans for a woman’s army corps. During her tenure as Director of Women’s Services, Phipps drew up several plans to incorporate women into the military. She conducted research into past utilization of women into the military, including programs operated by the American Navy and Marine Corps, as well as the British government during World War I. Phipps concluded that a significant number of American women might fill vital positions as skilled and unskilled labor in the event of a national emergency. As presented, her comprehensive plan called for a women’s army corps organized as a separate unit led by female officers. As envisioned, the corps would receive full military benefits and status. Although her plan received some attention among military planners, the General Staff rejected the plan as unnecessary. In 1930, Phipps, frustrated by a decade of rejected proposals and a lack of support, requested a redefinition of her position and clarification of her responsibilities. In 1931, incoming Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur obliged Phipps, recommending that her position be terminated and declaring that her contributions to the military lacked significance.¹⁷

Phipps was not alone in recognizing the potential advantage of integrating women into the military in the event of a total war. Major Everett S. Hughes, a planner on the General Staff, drew up a plan to incorporate women into the military in 1928. The key,

¹⁷ Janann Sherman, ““They Either Need These Women or They Do Not”: Margaret Chase Smith and the Fight for Regular Status for Women in the Military.” *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 54, Issue 1 (January 1990): 58; Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 11-12.

according to Hughes, involved training women for their military responsibilities prior to conflict. Quite radical for its time, Hughes' plan, contrary to Phipps', argued that separation based on gender, denial of equal rank, and withholding full military benefits to women might prove counterproductive. Instead, Hughes argued that these issues potentially prevented quality recruits from enlisting and might lead to confusion. The Hughes Plan, unsurprisingly, met with rejection in 1931. Military leaders remained committed to cultural stereotypes rejecting the idea of women in military establishments, auxiliary or otherwise, until the very real threat of a total war with the Axis Powers emerged.¹⁸

Many military leaders were roused from their intractable positions excluding women from military service with the fall of France and the threat of a British defeat in 1939. Army Chief of Staff George Marshall and other army leaders recognized the need to liberate male soldiers from many of the clerical tasks necessary for the proper management of the army should America enter the war. Convinced that the military would need women in the next war, Marshall looked for a way to include women in the war effort on his terms, rather than allow politicians to dictate terms to the army. Marshall's staff began constructing a plan designed to limit women to domestic and service positions, maintaining a separation between male and female service personnel. Patterned after the New Deal Civilian Conservation Corps, the plan made little progress before 1940. Meanwhile, women's groups across the nation began calling for inclusion of women into the military and organizations focused on national defense. A Gallup Survey conducted in December of 1940 revealed that 48% of Americans supported the drafting of women between the ages of 21 to 35 for wartime jobs. The poll results revealed that more women than men supported such measures. Still struggling from the effects of the Great Depression, lower class Americans supported the

¹⁸ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 13-15.

measure more enthusiastically than middle and upper-class Americans. In addition, Americans surveyed indicated that they believed that a total war would require women to shoulder an equal burden of the war effort. Nevertheless, not all Americans supported calls for such radical measures. Many Americans viewed the drafting of women for war work and subsequent cultural adjustments regarding gendered stereotypes as alarmingly similar to communist and fascist ideologies.¹⁹

Not all Americans shied away from challenging existing stereotypes within and outside of military establishments. In fact, Congresswoman Edith Norse Rogers initially introduced a bill before Congress calling for enlistment and full military status for women in the army. Compelled to prevent the recurrence of the deplorable conditions encountered by female volunteers in World War I and determined to win compensation, as well as tangible benefits, for women, Rogers lobbied aggressively in Congress. Seeking support, she met with George Marshall in 1941 and informed him that she intended to introduce a bill into Congress authorizing the establishment of a women's corps complete with full military status. The Chief of Staff requested time to consider her proposal, while his staff desperately worked to complete a plan more acceptable to army leadership, while still appeasing the demands of Rogers and her supporters. Ultimately, Rogers compromised and agreed to introduce a plan calling for a corps of volunteers working with the army, but without military status. In May of 1941 Rogers introduced H.R. 4906 to Congress. As proposed, H.R. 4906 stipulated that apart from the Army Nurses Corps, the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps would function as the only women's organization to serve with the army. H.R. 4906 stipulated that only skilled women of reputable character would be accepted into the army.

¹⁹ D'Ann Campbel, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1984), 19; "Wartime Training of Women Backed" *New York Times*, 18 December 1940, 18; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 15-16.

As proposed, the bill initially aimed at an organization that would reflect positively upon the army while limiting the corps overall impact on the army as a whole. Despite the best efforts of Rogers and Marshall, H.R. 4906 came under intense criticism from politicians and civilian leaders.²⁰

By the fall of 1941, George Marshall's assessment of the country's military preparedness and the course of the war against the Axis powers convinced the Chief of Staff that he faced a serious man-power shortage in the event of American involvement in a two-front war. As a result, Marshall increased his efforts to promote an army women's auxiliary. He worked doggedly to convince lawmakers and the public that women could fill important positions in the army. Marshall argued that not only might women make important contributions to any future war effort, they were essential to the effective operation of the army. The general urged rapid passage of H.R. 4906 through Congress in order to allow implementation of preparations for a possible war. Marshall enlisted the aid of Oveta Culp Hobby, an influential civilian consultant to the army, to facilitate passage of the bill. Hobby possessed a comprehensive knowledge of the WAAC legislation, and her status as the sole female member of the War Department proved essential. Hobby, Marshall and Rogers

²⁰ Helen Rogan, "'A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny': The Women's Army Corps, 1942-1945," in *Mixed Company: Women in the Modern Army* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), 140-141; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 14-22; De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 249; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (28 May 2003); Sherman, "They Either Need These Women or They Do Not," 57; Corporal Jim Fox, "A Look at the History of Women in the Army," 28 May 1997, United States Army Public Affairs ArmyLINK News, <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/May1997/a19970528milwomen.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Nicole Ann Dombrowski, "Soldiers, Saints, or Sacrificial Lambs? Women's Relationship to Combat and the Fortification of the Home Front" in *Women in War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 54.

worked tirelessly throughout October and November of 1941 in order to convince politicians and the public of the advantages of a women's corps.²¹

The bombing of Pearl Harbor abruptly ended many objections to the WAAC bill in Congress. Suddenly, Marshall's warnings about a two-front war turned into a reality. The American Secretary of War approved the WAAC bill on December 24th, making the new women's auxiliary a reality. As the first women's organization designed to work with the military to win approval from Congress, the WAAC suffered the pitfalls inherent in being "first." It suffered the greatest amount of criticism and endured the most devastating attacks on its character of all women's organizations during the war. Perhaps this situation stemmed from its position as the most democratic of all the organizations, establishing the lowest standards for enlistment and hoping to recruit the largest number of female volunteers. Wearing comparatively plain khaki uniforms and training at designated military camps certainly hampered any appeal to Americans seeking images of glamorous American women serving their country. Close interaction with servicemen, both at home and abroad, aroused suspicions regarding the purpose and conduct of female personnel in the army. As a result, organizers for the Navy, Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard watched the progress of the WAAC carefully, hoping to avoid many of the pitfalls and criticisms the army encountered.²²

²¹ Ann Allen, "The News Media and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps: Protagonists for a Cause," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 50, Issue 2 (April 1986): 78; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 20-22; Rogan, "A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny," 129; William P. Hobby, Jr., "Oveta Culp Hobby," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, Copyright 1997, www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/HH/fho86.html (accessed 28 May 2003).

²² Sherman, "They Either Need These Women or They Do Not," 56; "Women's Corps Bill Likely to be Voted," *New York Times*, 23 January 1942, 22; "WAAC at Last," *Time*, 18 May 1942, 62-63; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 24-25; Congress, House, Committee on Military Affairs, *Hearings on HR 6293*, 77th Cong., 2nd sess., 20-21 January 1942; Congress, House, Committee on Military Affairs, *House Report 1705*, 77th Cong., 2nd sess., 28 January 1942; Congress, House, Committee on Military Affairs, *Hearings on HR 6293*, 77th Cong., 2nd sess., 28 January 1942; Congress, Senate, Committee on Military Affairs, *Hearings on S2240*,

The Air Force arm of the army proved significantly more receptive to the presence of women within its ranks. In reality, the notion of a contingent of women working with the air force started long before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Female pilots trained future combat pilots as part of the Civil Aeronautics Administration's pilot training program or worked as air traffic controllers. Chief of the Army Air Corps, General Henry "Hap" Arnold, began expansion of the Air Force in 1938 and utilized the Air Transport Command (which employed male and female pilots) in 1941. Ultimately, the Army Air Corps utilized the services of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), thanks in large part to the efforts of two dynamic and unconventional women – Nancy Harkness Love and Jacqueline Cockran. Both women boasted significant experience as pilots and enjoyed an international reputation as skilled aviatrix. As a result of their efforts, Arnold approved a trial program known as the Women's Flying Training Department (WFTD), which later evolved into the WASP, on 15 September 1942. The WASP never became an official arm of the air force. Women served as civilians working *with* the air force, although they followed military protocols and flew military aircraft. Their story serves as one of the most inspirational and tragic of all women's organizations due to discrimination as the war drew to a close.²³

77th Cong., 2nd sess., 6 February 1942; Congress, Senate, *Senate Report 1051, Calendar 1086*, 77th Cong., 2nd sess., 9 February 1942.

²³ De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 256; Molly Merriman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) of World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2-3, 7-9, 11-13; Ernestine Evans, "The Sky Is No Limit," *The Independent Woman*, Vol. 21, No. 11, Nov. 1942, 326-328, 346, MSS 250, Folder: 1942 – November, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; "Top Flight," *Harper's Bazaar*, June 1941, MSS 250, Folder: 1941 – May and June, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Leslie Haynesworth and David Toomey, *Amelia Earhart's Daughters: The Wild and Glorious Story of American Women Aviators from World War II to the Dawn of the Space Age*. (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1998), 5-7, 24-27; Rowland Carter, "The Ladies Join the Air forces," *Flying*, Vol. XXXI, No. 6, Dec. 1942, p. 67, MSS 250, Folder: 1942 – December, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Elizabeth R. Valentine, "No 1 Woman Flier," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 12, 1941, MSS 250, Folder: 1941- July, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.

The Navy pursued the development of a women's reserve cautiously. Many officers within the Navy believed that the civil service could fill any future manpower shortages. Others, such as Rear-Admiral Randall Jacobs, argued that issues of security and control of civil service personnel hindered the effective management of the Navy. As a result, he argued for enlisting women to fill future manpower shortages. Other Naval officers joined Jacobs' call for a women's reserve. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, they ultimately succeeded in securing such an organization. Unlike the newly minted WAAC, the Navy pushed for an organization that existed as a component of the Navy, rather than as an auxiliary. This decision allowed the Navy greater latitude in control and deployment of its female personnel. On 30 July 1942 the President signed Public Law 689 establishing the Women's Reserve of the United States Navy. The legislation also added Title V to the Naval Reserve Act of 1938, allowing for the creation of the Women's Reserve.²⁴

Although the government employed women as light-house keepers since the early days of the Republic, the Coast Guard also suffered from a continent of officers resistant to officially incorporating a women's reserve into its ranks. Nevertheless, the Coast Guard faced the same challenges that the Army and Navy encountered - a manpower shortage. As a result, the President signed Public Law 773 on 23 November 1942, establishing the Women's Reserve of the Coast Guard. Utilizing women primarily for clerical positions ashore, the Coast Guard aimed for a much smaller force of women who in most cases already possessed many of the skills required for their new jobs. Planners believed this strategy would facilitate

²⁴ Jean Ebbert and Marie-Beth Hall, *Crossed Currents: Navy Women in a Century of Change, 3rd Edition* (Washington, D.C.: Batsford Brassey, Inc., 1999), 32-34, 38-39; Major General Jeanne M. Holm, USAF, (Ret.), *In Defense of a Nation: Servicewomen in World War II* (Arlington, Virginia: Vandamere Press, 1998), 57-59; Letter from Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs to David I. Walsh, Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee, 11 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Elizabeth Allen Butler, *Navy Waves* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Wayside Press, Inc., 1988), 3.

the quick transfer of male personnel to duty at sea. Targeting a smaller force also allowed the Coast Guard to boast that it fulfilled its recruiting goals while the Army and Navy struggled for volunteers.²⁵

The Marine Corps resisted the creation of a women's reserve for as long as possible, afraid of tarnishing the elite image of the Corps. Marine Corps Commandant Thomas Holcomb initially resisted enlistment of a women's reserve by adjusting the maximum enlistment age for male recruits to thirty-six and lowering standards. Nevertheless, recruiting quotas lagged. Eventually, Holcomb and Corps leadership recognized that women could provide sufficient manpower to assume many positions in the continental United States, while allowing additional male Marines to transfer to the Pacific Theater. As a result, the President authorized the Marine Corps Women's Reserve on 7 November 1942 as an amendment to Public Law 689. As planned, the Marine Corps Women's Reserve aimed at a smaller contingent of women to fill its needs. This plan initially targeted a recruiting goal of 500 officers and 6000 enlisted women.²⁶

²⁵ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 97; Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "Securing the "Double V:" African-American and Japanese-American Women in the Military During World War II," *A Woman's War Too: U.S. Women in the Military During World War II*. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1996), 345; Thomas P. Ostrom, *USCG: 1790 to the Present*. (Oakland, Oregon: Red Anvil Press, 2006), 57; Susan Godson, *Serving Proudly: A History of Women in the U.S. Navy*. (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 112; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents: Navy Women in a Century of Change*, 56; "Women in the Coast Guard: Moments in History," U.S. Coast Guard, <http://www.uscg.mil/history/faqs/Women%20Chronology.html> (accessed 10 August 2007); John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007); Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007).

²⁶ Holm, 77-78; Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Allan R. Millet, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980) 374; Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "The Wartime History of the WAVES, SPARS, Women Marines, Army and Navy Nurses, and WASPs," *A Woman's War Too: U.S. Women in the Military in World War II*, Paula Nassen Poulos, ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1996), 51; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, *Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II* Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 3;

Over 500,000 women joined the military before the Japanese surrendered in 1945, provoking a variety of reactions from Americans divided between those who understood the needs of a country at war, those who hoped for more opportunities for women, and those who seemed determined to restrict women to strictly traditional roles. Female members of the American military challenged traditional ideologies by engaging in conventional and unconventional roles, far surpassing the expectations of supporters. Their experiences and new skills challenged their perceptions of themselves and American society. This study will explore the development and contributions of women to the military during World War II, perceptions of social class – whether real or imagined – between the different branches of the military, and the impact of military experience upon the lives of female veterans.

Colonel Mary V. Stremlow, *USMCR, Free a Marine to Fight: Women Marines in World War II*, World War II Commemorative Series, (Washington, D.C.: Marine Corps Historical Center, 1994), 1.

CHAPTER 1
THE ARMY LEADS THE WAY:
BLESSING OR CURSE?

The Army's women's auxiliary adopted the image of the Greek goddess Athena as their emblem in 1942. The choice proved curiously fitting. As a female deity, Athena was worshipped for her prowess in war and glorified for her wisdom by a society that strictly prohibited Greek women from assuming a public role in society. Greek society even refused to grant young girls names until after they married – the choice rested with their future husbands. After their marriage, wives lived lives overwhelmingly confined to the home. Thus, the choice of Athena as mascot for the WAAC/WAC serves as a curious analogy. Women in the Army in World War II found themselves at once praised for their service and rebuked for their audacity in entering the perceived exclusive domain of men.

Oveta Culp Hobby and her staff recognized the inherent challenges involved in creating a women's organization that functioned in the midst of a hyper-masculinized cultural institution. In the atmosphere of the 1940s, women walked a thin line when undertaking new roles in society. Even in a period of emergency, women needed to prove their competency without appearing to seriously challenge the status quo. Women could work welding new Liberty Ships in American harbors, but not expect to continue in that activity after the soldiers returned home. A Hispanic female laborer working in the defense industry in California might insure quality control during wartime, but could not expect to remain in that position after the men returned home looking for new jobs. Instead, she could expect to return to her job as a domestic worker earning minimum wage. It was one thing for

a WAAC to test weapons at an armory, quite another to fire a weapon in defense of the cause. After all, as historian D'Ann Campbell observed, "If women could do it, then it was not very manly." The success or failure of WAAC leadership would rest not just on the ability of its leaders to fashion together an organization that aided the Army and proved the competency of women, it also required new recruits to demonstrate acceptable skill levels and, most importantly, an exemplary character. Any hint of a deviation from respectable behavior, real or imagined, threatened to destroy the reputations of WAAC personnel and severely hamper any hope of continuing the program in the post-war period. With these considerations in mind, Hobby and her staff set about establishing guidelines for WAAC recruitment. The regulations they established, and later revised, would impact the public's perception of the WAAC enormously and set the precedent for the establishment of other women's organizations in the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

Hobby brought considerable professional and political experience to the WAAC organization. Recommended by Congresswoman Edith Norse Rogers, Hobby met planners desire for an energetic woman between the ages of 30 and 50 with proven leadership skills. Advantageously, Hobby also maintained relationships with key government officials in and out of the War Department, without the stigma attached to membership in high-pressure special interest groups. After earning a degree from the University of Texas, she worked as parliamentarian of the Texas Legislature. Subsequently, Hobby secured a position as executive vice president and assistant editor of the *Houston Post* before leaving to serve as assistant city attorney of Houston. Finally, her work as head of the Women's Division of the War Department's Bureau of Public Relations lent an air of professional integrity to the public image of the WAAC. Through her service on the pre-planning committee, Hobby

boasted a thorough knowledge of WAAC legislation and debates regarding the organization of the WAAC. Perhaps most importantly, Hobby enjoyed the support of George Marshall. Hobby's appointment on 16 May 1942 conferred on the new director the rank and insignia of colonel, though her compensation rested at levels equivalent to that of an Army major. In addition, WAAC regulations forbade WAAC officers from issuing orders to even the lowliest male private. Despite her illustrious career, Hobby did not enjoy positive press on all aspects of her life. Married to former Texas Governor William Hobby and the mother of two children, the director's personal life often became fodder for the media. Critics alleged that she enjoyed too many parties and social gatherings. Her fondness for "fancy hairdos and shocking hats" earned no accolades from Americans who believed the director should be plain and matronly.¹

American media sources provided unrelenting coverage on the progress of WAAC legislation. Seemingly endless debate prolonged passage of the bill. Some Congressmen viewed the development of a women's auxiliary working with the Army as a poor reflection on American manhood. "Think of the humiliation! What has become of American manhood?" Supporters believed that only the personal support of Marshall carried the bill through the House of Representatives. Finally, the bill's passage in the House of Representatives on 17 March 1942 seemed a confirmation that implementation of the WAAC program loomed on the horizon. A few organizations, both public and private, questioned whether the WAAC should draft women if enlistments proved inadequate. Indeed, a poll conducted at Hunter College indicated support for compulsory military service for women. However, the general public shied away from such a drastic measure. Many argued that the

¹Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 21-22, 28-29, 50; "Mrs. Hobby's Wacks: New Women's Auxiliary Will Girdle 25,000 for War," *Newsweek*, 30 March 1942, Vol. XIX, No. 21, 32; "'Major' Hobby's WAACs," *Time*, 25 May 1942, Vol. XXXIX, No. 22, 47.

drafting of women into service posed a threat to the institution of the traditional American family. Final passage of the legislation seemed far from assured.²

WAAC legislation won Senate approval on 14 May 1942 by a margin of 38 to 27. Under the new bill, 150,000 auxiliaries would be accepted, receive food, clothing and shelter from the Army, as well as pay commiserate with that of male soldiers. Secretary of War Henry Stimson confirmed the appointment of Hobby as Director that evening. President Roosevelt signed the bill as Public Law 554 on the 15th, and Army officials announced Hobby's appointment immediately. Major General Myron C. Kramer conducted a somber commissioning ceremony on 16 May 1942, reflecting Hobby's determination to convey a professional image of the WAAC to the American public.³

Initial media reports reflected positively upon the new corps. Certainly, a few outlets labeled the new organization the "Petticoat Army," and reporters frequently focused on issues incidental to the jobs WAACs assumed. At the first news conference conducted after Hobby's commissioning ceremony, reporters seemed more interested in the color of WAAC undergarments, nail polish and lipstick than in training plans for WAACs. Equally intriguing were regulations regarding dating between WAACs and male Army personnel. One inquiry posited the question of how the WAAC would handle the issue of illegitimate babies. Hobby informed the reporter that pregnant women, regardless of marital status, would receive discharges from the WAAC. In fact, throughout the war reporters ostensibly covering serious stories relating to the WAAC included information about WAAC dating habits. Nevertheless, in 1942 media outlets flooded the public with information regarding the details of WAAC recruitment. Hobby, in an effort to maintain a positive relationship with the

² Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 24-25, 28-29.

³ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 24-25, 28-29, 44-45, 47-48.

media, responded to all questions with forthright answers. In addition, the new director arranged for reporters to cover the first day of training for new WAAC recruits.⁴

Director Hobby's new office and fledgling staff immediately flew into a maelstrom of activity, as preparation for the recruitment of officers and the acquisition of training facilities consumed vast quantities of time. Continued interruptions by the media and well-meaning advisors complicated the completion of daily assignments, which routinely involved 14-hour days, seven days per week. Though Director Hobby held two press conferences weekly and conducted public interviews four times each week, critics labeled her as inaccessible. Nevertheless, Hobby warned her staff against gaining a reputation for inaccessibility. The warning reflected her sensibility regarding negative press and the role it played in public support.⁵

Newspapers and magazines often focused on the uniforms issued to WAAC members. Hobby hoped to provide the corps with an attractive, yet conservative, uniform. Noteworthy fashion designers submitted sketches for the WAAC uniform. The Quartermaster Corps, perhaps disgruntled over orders to outfit the new women's corps, vetoed most of the designs as a waste of material. Instead, the Quartermaster Corps adopted a basic design in khaki, so lacking in style that recruits to other branches of the services often stated that they simply could not countenance the thought of spending the duration of the war in a drab WAAC uniform. Newspapers catering to the curiosity of the American public printed photos of the proposed WAAC apparel. Undue attention often focused on the type and color of WAAC undergarments, to which WAAC leadership reported that the color of WAAC underwear remained restricted information. As adopted by the Army, the WAAC

⁴ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 48-49; "WAAC at Last," *Time*, 25 May 1942, Vol. XXXIX, No. 20, 62-63.

⁵ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 51-52.

uniform exuded a conservative and professional, if uninspiring, appearance. The WAAC uniform consisted of a jacket, skirt, blouse, tie, and sensible shoes. A small gold pin stamped with the image of Athena completed the ensemble. Army planners hoped uniformed WAACs conveyed a professional image to the American public.⁶

Issues of racial discrimination arose almost immediately after Hobby was commissioned as director of the WAAC. The African-American press harshly criticized the appointment of a southern woman as leader of the new corps. Hobby tried to reassure African-American leaders that minorities would serve in the WAAC. The new director could point to the participation of Dovey Johnson Roundtree, an African-American woman who helped draft WAAC legislation and policies regarding African-American recruits, as evidence that the WAAC would include African-Americans. In addition, Hobby announced that preliminary reports anticipated the enlistment of forty African-American women in the first group of officer candidates. Although WAAC policies toward African-American women remained more lenient than those of other branches of the service, minority women faced an uphill battle for equality. WAAC regulations, mirroring those of the regular Army, limited participation of African-Americans to 10.6% of WAAC enlistment. African-American enlistments never achieved even this low percentage. In spite of continued efforts by WAAC planners to attract recruits from the African-American community, discrimination by individual recruiters and the policy of segregation discouraged recruitment. At peak strength, African-American women accounted for only 4% of WAAC recruits. Many African-American women found they could earn higher salaries in the defense industry than

⁶ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 36-39; "What the WAACS Are Wearing," Effie Ward Kreimeyer Papers. Newspaper Clippings. Personal Property of Melanie Kirkland; "Lord and Taylor to Design Uniform," *Time*, 1 June 1942, 47; "Hunter Poll Favors Drafting of Women: duties at Side of Men Preferred by Most of Students, 16; William P. Hobby, Jr., "Oveta Culp Hobby," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, Copyright 1997, www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/HH/fho86.html (accessed 28 May 2003).

in the Army. In order to attract more recruits and ease tensions between African-American WAACs and Caucasian WAACs, Hobby enlisted the aid of civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune as special advisor to WAAC headquarters in Washington. Bethune counseled Hobby concerning African-American issues and worked tirelessly to improve conditions for African-American women.⁷

Other minority groups enlisted in the WAAC, though in comparatively smaller numbers. Eight hundred Native-Americans enlisted in the Army during World War II and approximately 350 Japanese women enlisted as translators. Similarly, the Army recruited Chinese-American women for work at the Military Intelligence Service Language School at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. These women overwhelmingly served as military translators, interpreting captured enemy documents and serving as liaisons between the United States Army and Chinese officials. The most renowned Chinese-American WAAC unit, named after Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, served with the Army Air Forces. Although they performed valuable work for the Army, they rarely received any accolades or recognition for their service.⁸

⁷ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 34, 58-59, 123, 589-595; Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, *We're in This War, Too: World War II Letters from American Women in Uniform*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 65, 71-78; Robert E. Cushman, "Civil Liberties," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 37, Issue 1 (February 1943), 49-56; Leisa D. Meyer, "Creating a Woman's Corp: Public Response to the WAAC/WAC and Questions of Citizenship," in *A Women's War Too: U.S. Women in the Military in World War II*, ed. Paula Nassen Poulos, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1996), 34.

⁸ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 589; Judith Bellafaire, "Native American Women Veterans," Women in Military Service for America Memorial, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.womensmemorial.org/NAHM.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Judith Bellafaire, "Asian-Pacific American Servicewomen in Defense of a Nation," Women in Military Service for America Memorial, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.womensmemorial.org/APA.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); "WAAC/WAC World War II Statistics," Army Women's Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia, www.awm.lee.army.mil/WAC.strength.htm (accessed 28 May 2003); Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "Securing the Double V: Japanese-American Women in the Military During World War II," in *A Women's War Too: U.S. Women in the Military in World War II*, Paula Nassen Poulos, ed., (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1996), 331.

Although Hispanic cultural norms frowned upon women working outside the home, many Hispanic women joined the WAAC. The Army encouraged enlistment of bilingual women, often utilizing their talents in such areas as cryptography and communications programs. WAAC recruiters also enlisted volunteers from the island of Puerto Rico. An estimated 1,500 Puerto Rican women applied to join the corps. WAAC organizers formed a unit of 200 Puerto Rican WAACs and assigned the group to the New York City Port of Embarkation.⁹

Newspaper and magazine articles reflected the prevailing opinion among the public regarding the WAAC. *Time* magazine published an article on 18 May 1942 entitled “WAAC at Last.” The author reassured readers that although the Army and WAAC officials endorsed the bill since it freed men for combat duty, Army leaders expected women to perform the “humbler” tasks of Army life. WAACs would initially serve in occupations such as clerks, cooks, chauffeurs, laundresses, switchboard operators, mail handlers, and Aircraft Warning Service workers. By framing the objectives of WAAC service within contemporary notions of women’s roles in society, government officials and WAAC leadership hoped to reduce public objections to the WAAC.¹⁰

Not all Americans appeared easily reassured. As WAAC organizers began recruitment of officers, public objections boiled to the surface. One woman, Katherine Lemoine of Cooperstown, New York, argued that women should join the military “the day

⁹ Judith Bellafaire, “Puerto Rican Servicewomen in Defense of the Nation,” Women in Military Service for America Memorial, <http://www.womensmemorial.PHHistory.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Judith Bellafaire, “The Contributions of Hispanic Servicewomen,” Women in Military Service for America Memorial, <http://www.womensmemorial.HisHistory.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); “WAAC/WAC World War II Statistics,” Army Women’s Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia, www.awm.lee.Army.mil/WAC.strength.htm (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 332, 478, 589; Letter dated 6 April 1945, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and official documents, MSS 117, Box 1, Fld 3, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University.

¹⁰ “WAAC at Last,” *Time*, 18 May 1942, 62-63.

that men bear children.”¹¹ Religious leaders also weighed in on the debate over women in the military, raising a hue-and-cry against women working outside the home. Many objected on the basis that the military environment might corrupt the values of WAAC recruits. Bishop E. Cassidy told his congregation that he hoped Catholic women refrained from joining the WAAC. According to Cassidy, the teachings of the Catholic Church opposed employment of women in military establishment. At a conference of Roman Catholic clergymen, leaders proclaimed the enlistment of women into the military “a serious menace to the home and foundation of a true Christian and democratic country.”¹² *The Brooklyn Tablet*, a conservative Christian periodical, took the argument one step further, labeling the formation of the WAACs “an opening wedge, intended to break down the traditional American and Christian opposition to removing women from the home and to degrade her by bringing back the pagan female goddess of de-sexed, lustful sterility.”¹³ Other religious authorities voiced concern regarding the welfare of children “abandoned” by their mothers. The National Catholic Welfare Conference feared that the government intended to use the war as an excuse to break down the American family and “assume control of children.”¹⁴ Conservative religious leaders across the nation feared that the WAAC threatened the foundation of American families, fostered child neglect and abuse, and plunged women into a world of sexual deviance.¹⁵

Despite opposition from government leaders, some religious leaders, and a large segment of the American public, many women from across the United States flooded Army

¹¹ “Enlistment of Women Opposed,” *New York Times*, 8 June 1942, 14.

¹² “Catholics V. WAACs,” *Time*, 18 June 1942, 39.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 29, 49; “Enlistment of Women Opposed,” *New York Times*, 8 June 1942, 14; “Bishop Assails the WAC,” *New York Times*, 19 May 1942, 16; “Catholics V. WAACs,” 39; “WAACs First Muster,” *Time*, 8 June 1942, 71-72.

recruitment centers. WAAC recruiters began accepting applications for the first officer's class on 27 May 1942. Approximately 30,000 inquires flooded the War Department and WAAC headquarters. Newspapers announced the beginning of WAAC recruitment, as well as requirements for WAAC officers. Journalists from across the nation warned applicants that the Army only accepted women with "excellent character." Hobby and her staff anticipated an initial officers training class of 450 recruits, reserving ninety positions for women already working as civilians in the aircraft warning service. Recruitment of auxiliary personnel, tentatively scheduled to begin training in September of 1942, officially targeted an estimated 25,000 women. Recruiting posters encouraged women to join the Army in order to end the war quickly and bring American soldiers home, reminding American women that "This is Our War – Join the WAAC."¹⁶

Hobby understood the role of the press in shaping public opinion. As a former journalist and newspaper editor, she hoped to maintain a positive relationship with the press. Sensationalized reports by the press could potentially destroy support for the WAAC among influential leaders within the government, military, and social establishments in America. Hobby assured journalists and the American public that WAACs would not be "Amazons rushing into battle," nor "butterflies fluttering about."¹⁷ Instead, Hobby consistently assured the public that WAAC personnel maintained serious objectives designed simply to aid the war effort. She insisted that women in the Army would behave honorably and within the

¹⁶ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 31, 35, 56; "WAAC Will Recruit For Officers Today," *New York Times*, 27 May 1942, 20; "Recruiting Opens Monday: First General WAAC Drive Seeks Business-Trained Women," *New York Times*, 16 July 1942, 14; "Women Here Rush for Army Service," *New York Times*, 19 May 1942, 16; "Letters, Telegrams, Phone Calls Pour In From Thousands Seeking to Join WAAC," *New York Times*, 26 May 1942, 18; "Recruiting Opens Monday: First General WAAC Drive Seeks Business-Trained Women," 14; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003).

¹⁷ Melissa Herbert, "Amazons or Butterflies: The Recruitment of Women into the Military During World War II," *Minerva Quarterly Report on Women and the Military*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (Summer 1991), 61.

boundaries of conventional American gender roles. WAAC recruits, supporters insisted, understood their roles as women and servants of the nation. By fashioning the image of WAACs as traditional American women, supporters hoped to enable the WAAC to serve the nation without appearing to threaten established American ideals regarding gender roles.¹⁸

Hobby and her staff faced a daunting challenge in bringing their plans into fruition. In part, their problems stemmed from the designation of the WAAC as an auxiliary unit assigned to work *with*, but not *in*, the Army itself. A reorganization of the War Department assigned the WAAC to the Administrative Services Division of the Army. From the beginning, General George Grunert, head of the Administrative Services Division, mirrored the attitude of many officers resistant to the WAAC. Grunert steadfastly argued for “postponement” of development of a women’s service organization before passage of the bill. His attitude mirrored that of many departments within the Army. As a result, Hobby and her eleven-member staff received little support and frequently encountered difficulty navigating the mountains of red tape within the division. To complicate matters further, a significant portion of the daily operations necessary to operate as a viable corps rested with Services of Supply, another department resistant to the WAAC. With little assistance forthcoming, WAAC staff muddled through the labyrinthine channels of Army procedure and prepared for recruitment and training of WAAC officers.¹⁹

In order to prevent negative press reports regarding women in the Army, WAAC recruiters attempted to screen out women whose characters might appear less than exemplary. Applicants answered questions regarding work experience, family life, parents,

¹⁸ Allen, “The News Media and the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps: Protagonists for a Cause,” 78; Judith Bellafaire, “The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service,” CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003)..

¹⁹ Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 50-51, 54-55.

travel experiences, personal interests, and health. Psychologists poured over applications searching for signs indicating stability and an acceptance of responsibility. Applicants whose applications hinted at mental instability or a propensity for changing jobs often received denials from the recruiting board. At the same time, promoters tried to emphasize the patriotism and nobility of women who joined the corps to replace a man for combat duty. WAAC leaders understood that women who joined the Army needed to exhibit a greater dedication and moral rectitude than civilian women. As a result, everyone involved, from General Marshall to the newly inducted recruit, promoted the WAAC as an extension of established cultural norms for women.²⁰

Candidates selected for the first officer class represented a group of women whose past employment experience qualified them for leadership positions. The Corps seemed poised to begin training on sound footing. Of the women selected, 99% demonstrated successful employment in the civilian workforce prior to recruitment. A full 90% boasted some college education, with many holding college degrees. Candidates included a former dean of women, personnel directors, a Red Cross official, office managers, lawyers, social workers, and teachers. The majority fell between the ages of 25 to 39, with 16% enlisting at under 25 years of age and 10% over 40 years old. Nevertheless, variables in qualifications existed among the officer class. WAAC legislation stipulated that recruiting efforts entail a set quota of women from each geographical area of the nation. As a result, WAAC planners selected the same number of candidates from areas boasting large numbers of qualified women as from regions yielding fewer numbers of qualified applicants. Consequently, WAAC planners rejected many highly-qualified women in favor of applicants with fewer

²⁰ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 56-58; Shea, *The Waacs*, " 36.86; Rogan, "A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny," 131; "WAAC Will Recruit for Officers Today," 20; "The First Candidate for WAAC is Sworn-In," *New York Times*, 9 July 1942, 24.

qualifications. Instead of selecting the “cream of the crop,” WAAC officers accepted candidates with a wide range of experience. As WAAC operations continued, the corps utilized this method to process eight officer classes chosen from the civilian population. Thereafter, officer class candidates hailed from the enlisted ranks. Women chosen for officer training reported to Fort Des Moines on 20 July 1942.²¹

Colonel Don C. Faith greeted the first WAAC officer candidates disembarking at Fort Des Moines, Iowa with a plan to train the women in values prized among regular Army personnel. Faith hoped his two-month struggle to prepare the former cavalry post into a training facility for WAAC recruits proved sufficient. The curriculum at Fort Des Moines called for adherence to Army protocols, punctuality, and precision. With WAACs exhibiting these qualities of leadership, Faith hoped to silence critics. Colonel Faith insisted that the Des Moines facility “will be no glamour girl’s playhouse.”²² Predictably, complications arose. Shortages in funding and supplies began immediately. The corps status as an auxiliary proved problematic, as its standing as a separate organization required justification by Hobby before allocation of resources took place. Much like a husband allocating his pleading wife grocery money, the Army forced the WAAC to justify standard operating expenses. In addition, the training of the WAAC at an Army post, though fitting from a military standpoint, failed to instill an image of the corps that inspired Americans. Critics arguing that the women volunteering for service aimed at upsetting traditional gender roles needed only to reference images of WAACs marching across an Army post to bolster their arguments.²³

²¹ Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 58; “WAACs First Muster,” 39; Shea, *The Waacs*, ” 88.

²² “WAAC Training Head Promises Hard Work, Not “Glamour Girls” Play.” *New York Times*, 2 June 1942.

²³ Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 59-60.

The first recruits for officer training arrived at Fort Des Moines on 20 July 1942. The press, determined to satisfy the public's curiosity, descended upon the facility in droves. Every conceivable angle of investigation received extensive coverage. In an effort to satisfy the public while minimizing the disruption caused by an eager press corps, WAAC leaders allowed the press access to Fort Des Moines only on the first day of training. WAAC representatives whisked new recruits arriving at the Des Moines train station to waiting trucks in order to avoid detention by throngs of press photographers. Once at the fort, the women began processing procedures. WAACs received regulation hairstyles, off the collar but not "mannish." Issuance of uniforms revealed that Army suppliers failed to compensate for the physical disparities between men and women. Most garments required extensive alterations. Press photographers eagerly photographed women modeling the few uniforms that fit. Newspapers published even trivial aspects of training camp life, including mess hall menus. At the end of the day, the press reluctantly left the post, unceremoniously heralding in the Army's two-week black-out of WAAC coverage. WAAC leadership believed this period allowed WAAC recruits to adjust to their new surroundings without interference or distractions.²⁴

During the following weeks, recruits completed the process of physical exams, inoculations and instruction in Army protocol. Director Hobby, present for the first week of training, addressed the new officer class with a message designed to serve as a mandate for the future. She pledged support and expressed admiration for allied women whose service

²⁴ Shea, *The Waacs*, 11; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 63-65; Leisa D. Meyer, "The Lesbian Treat: Within World War II," In *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, Nicole Ann Dombrowski, ed. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 13-15; "Processing Swift for Womens Army," 21, 26; Dombrowski, "Soldiers, Saints, or Sacrificial Lambs?," 19; Shea, *The Waacs*, 90; "Army's Most Unusual Rookies Are 'Processed' Into WAACs," *Newsweek*, 27 July 1942, Vol. XX, No. 4, 29-30.

aided in efforts to repel the enemy from their shores. According to Hobby, each woman present owed a debt to her nation and must accept a “date with destiny.”²⁵ Above all, the director admonished the women to adhere to values and conduct that reflected positively upon the image of the corps. WAAC recruits received instructions regarding dating policies and orders against drinking alcohol while in uniform. Though male soldiers drank publicly while in uniform, WAAC officers reminded women that they lived under constant scrutiny by an often hostile public. In essence, Hobby’s regulations aimed at assuring that WAAC personnel remained vigilant in their work habits and shunned even the suggestion of immorality.²⁶

WAAC recruits adhered to strict discipline and regimental systems of training. Trainers mustered women from their beds and outside to reveille by 5:45 a.m. Roll call commenced at 6:00 a.m., with an assembly and parade routines at 6:05 a.m. After marching to breakfast at 6:45 a.m., women attended classes until 5:00 p.m. Their studies included subjects required of male Army officers, with the exception of combat studies. Women’s studies included courses in sanitation, map reading, military customs, and first aid. In addition, WAAC organizers remained committed to producing WAACs schooled in military courtesy. Released from their daily classes, recruits ate their evening meal before devoting a required hour to independent studies. Before retiring, WAAC recruits attended to their uniforms and shoes. In summary, training programs stressed efficiency and moderation in personal and professional conduct among members of the WAAC.²⁷

²⁵ Rogan, “A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny,” 131; “WAACS: First Women Soldiers Join Army,” *Life* 7 September 1942, 75.

²⁶ “WAAC Pledge Is Sent to Britain and China: Mrs. Hobby Declares Women of the U.S. “Shall Be With You,” *New York Times*, 22 July 1942; Rogan, *A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny*,” 131; “WAACS: First Women Soldiers Join Army,” 75-80; Shea, *The Waacs*, 77, 104, 110-111.

²⁷ Shea, *The Waacs*, 71; Marie Bennett Alsmeyer, “Those Unseen, Unheard Arkansas Women: WAC, WAVES, and Women Marines of World War II,” *Minerva Quarterly Report on Women and the Military*, Vol.

WAAC Headquarters fell under additional pressure when Director Hobby, Colonel Faith and the WAAC staff at Fort Des Moines learned of General Marshall's directive calling for expansion of the WAAC organization even before its first officer class completed training. On June 13th, Marshall informed Army leadership that a "manpower crisis" existed within the Army necessitating the expansion and acceleration of WAAC training. Faced with such a shortage of manpower, Marshall's choices included shipping units into combat under strength or postponing deployments. Either move threatened strategic planning in the European Theater. As a result, expansion of the WAAC seemed a reasonable request despite the inherent difficulties involved in doing so during the initial training stage. Services of Supply, previously resistant to aiding the WAAC, changed course, drawing up expansion plans within days. Plans called for an increase from 12,000 to 63,000 auxiliaries within the following two years. Further increases would continue throughout the war.²⁸

Graduation day for the first 436 WAAC officer candidates came on 29 August 1942. The new WAAC officers faced rigorous assignments designed to set the corps on solid footing as it struggled to meet the challenges necessary to protect the nation, while at the same time preparing for expansion of the corps. Many of these new graduates prepared to serve at WAAC Headquarters or assumed positions as instructors at training facilities. Newly graduated WAAC officers replaced the majority of male Army personnel assigned to supervise subsequent WAAC graduating classes. Among the newly commissioned officers, Charity Adams Early became the first Africa-American woman to receive a commission in the U.S. Army. At the ceremony, Hobby delivered a stirring speech declaring that the faith

XII, No. 2 (Summer, 1994), 28; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 66-67; Litoff and Smith, *We're in This War, Too*, 83; Clarice F. Pollard, *Laugh, Cry and Remember: The Journal of a G.I. Lady* (Phoenix, Arizona: Journeys Press, 1991), 42.

²⁸ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 84-85, 97-98.

of American women across the nation rested on WAAC shoulders. Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers followed Director Hobby with an inspirational message reminding the new officers of their status as America's first female soldiers. She warned that the eyes of America watched every move they made. *Life* magazine dedicated eight pages of its 7 September 1942 edition to coverage of the first graduating class of WAAC officers. The article, entitled "WAAC: First Women Soldiers Join the Army," detailed plans to expand the corps. The author reported on the training program the new officers had completed. While noting that WAAC policies prohibited WAACs from arms training and that the women received ranks different from those of regular Army officers and noncoms, the author insisted that "WAACs are like any other soldiers." Nevertheless, *Life* assured readers that despite their indoctrination into military life, the women retained their femininity.²⁹

Enlistments of auxiliary personnel began in July of 1942. The training facility at Fort Des Moines, faced with an immediate need for a capacity increase of 20%, appropriated additional facilities in the city of Des Moines. The community exhibited a mixed response to the appropriation of community facilities. One man, allegedly indignant over Army requests that he move from his hotel to accommodate WAACs, committed suicide. Military planners instructed WAAC staff at Fort Des Moines to plan for the training of 125 new officer recruits weekly following the initial class. The War Department ordered the duration of WAAC training decreased in order to field women into Army units sooner. Instead of the projected three-month training period, new officers received six weeks of training. The needs of the

²⁹ "WAAC-WAC 1942-1944," U.S. Army Center of Military History, 15 January 1945, www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/topic/women/waac.html (accessed 28 May 2003); Shea, *The Waacs*, 91-94; Charity Adams Earley, *One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1989), 43; "WAACS: First Women Soldiers Join Army," 75-80.

two-front war demanded expediency. The WAAC would either adjust to its expanded role or risk appearing unequal to the task.³⁰

The first WAAC auxiliaries began training on 17 August 1942. The average auxiliary enlisted at a younger age than women in the first officer class and boasted a high-school education at enlistment. In September, officials reported over 3,000 WAACs enrolled in the corps training program. WAAC leaders hoped to train auxiliaries in numbers sufficient to release 450 men weekly for combat duty. During the first months of training, WAAC recruiters maintained high standards when enrolling women in the corps. As a group, WAAC recruits possessed a higher level of experience and competency levels than members of the regular Army or the public at large. A survey of September's recruits, overwhelmingly enlisted women without officer rank, found that 60% earned scores for ability and competency required only of officers in the regular Army. Only 0.8% tested in the lowest score range. Thus, by September of 1942 the WAAC embodied the high expectations of WAAC supporters. Maintaining those standards would prove challenging. In addition, the Army failed to release such figures to the public at large – an action that might have improved the image of the WAAC.³¹

Following basic training, WAAC auxiliaries often received specialized training in various occupations. WAACs assigned to the Signal Corps received specialized training at the Midland Radio and Television School in Kansas City, Missouri. Courses included

³⁰ Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); "WAACS & WAVES, *Life*, 15 March 1943, 72; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 61-63.

³¹ "How to Join the Women's Army Corps," Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and Official Documents, MSS 117, Box 1, Fld. 2, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 77; "Recruiting Opens Monday: First General WAAC Drive Seeks Business-Trained Women," 14.

cryptography and radio repair. Other specialist training courses included advanced administrative courses, motor transport courses, bakers and cooks school, communications courses, and courses in photography. Training methods such as these continued after the WAAC received full military status in 1943. In addition, WAAC officers often received training at the following Army schools:

- A. Adjutant General's School, Fort Washington;
- B. Holabird Ordnance and Motor Transport School in Maryland;
- C. Chemical Warfare School;
- D. Command and General Staff School;
- E. Special Services School;
- F. Quartermaster Army Exchange School.³²

The escalation of WAAC recruitment called for by General Marshall prompted the need for a second WAAC training center. After considerable debate, and objections raised by Colonel Hobby, Daytona Beach, Florida, became the chosen site for the second WAAC training center. The facility housed two advanced training courses in Administration and a Baker's and Cook's School. Hobby's concerns rested in the nature and character of the location. She noted that the city lacked the military atmosphere carefully cultivated around the Des Moines training center. Facilities for housing, education, and recreation at Daytona Beach relied heavily on appropriated hotels, apartments, tents and a myriad of other locations adapted for Army purposes. The presence of large numbers of tourists and naval personnel crowded onto the streets of the city elicited grave concern among WAAC leaders. In addition, Daytona Beach's recreational offerings, apart from the beach, consisted primarily of

³² "1725th Service Unit Headquarters and First Women's Army Auxiliary Corps Training Center, Fort Des Moines, Iowa, Weekly Schedule of Instruction." Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and Official Documents, MSS 117, Box 1, Fld. 7, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University; Shea, *The Waacs*, 23, 141-142; Selene H.C. Weise, *The Good Soldier: The Story of a Southwest Pacific Signal Corps WAC*. (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Burd Street Press, 1999), 19-21; "WAAC Will Train as Soldiers First," 24; Herbert, "Amazons or Butterflies: The Recruitment of Women into the Military During World War II," 57-58; Alsmeyer, "Those Unseen, Unheard Arkansas Women," 23-24.

nightclubs, a situation potentially harmful to the image of the WAACs as serious-minded and morally conservative American women. Nevertheless, War Department leaders ordered preparations for the new training facility, with a scheduled opening date of 1 December 1942. Media outlets wasted little time in covering the establishment of the new facility, generating coverage radically different in nature from that generated by the Des Moines training camp. Just as Hobby feared, the media descended upon the Florida town intent on catching a glimpse of WAACs in their new setting. *Life* magazine joined the frenzy of media outlets eagerly snapping photographs of bathing-suit clad women running through the surf. Media coverage of the Daytona Beach training facility fed the fears of WAAC leaders hoping to maintain an image of the WAAC as seriously devoted to the rigors of Army life and duty to the country. The decision to establish the facility in Daytona Beach led to a serious trivialization of WAAC training in national media reports.³³

By the close of 1942, WAAC organizers maintained two operational training centers and made plans for another new facility under construction. In spite of a chaotic start, 12,767 women swelled the ranks of WAAC rosters. The success of the WAAC throughout 1942 masked the formidable challenges ahead. The status of the WAAC as a civilian organization working *with* the Army quickly posed problems in the day-to-day operations of the corps. Civilian status placed all parties at a disadvantage. Questions regarding the chain-of-command, dismissal policies, disciplinary actions and civil rights plagued WAAC leaders. Hobby might assume the role as military commander over WAAC personnel, she might attempt to enforce compliance to military codes, but without the necessary authority to enforce compliance she lacked real power over her own corps. Needless to say, her

³³ Shea, *The Waacs*, 23, 75-76; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 78; "WAAC to Raise Reserve to 9,400: Duty in England Likely for Some." *New York Times*, 14 November 1942, 9; "WAACS & WAVES," 72-79.

subordinate officers operated at an even greater disadvantage. Government entities interacting with the WAAC lacked clarity regarding authorization of services rendered to WAAC personnel due to their auxiliary status. Highly placed government officials, such as the Secretary of War, Congressmen, the Chief of Finance, and the Chief of Staff, declared WAACs “persons in the military service.” Their endorsement of the WAAC organization stood in stark contrast to the Judge Advocate General, the Comptroller General and the Chief of Transportation, all of whom focused on the wording of WAAC legislation stipulating that WAAC personnel worked *with* the Army, but not *in* the Army. Consequently, benefits and services available to the WAAC often gained approval in one department and denial in another. Proponents of militarization argued that such action would streamline operations.³⁴

As Hobby’s staff grappled with the Army bureaucracy, WAAC personnel began to fill jobs in the Army, fulfilling their mission to replace men for combat duty. By 1943, WAACs labored in 157 different occupations. Dispersal plans for WAAC personnel in 1943 envisioned that the Army Air Forces would receive 54% of available WAAC personnel. Services of Supply retained 42% for its operations, while American Ground Forces received 4%. The WAAC revised dispersal plans as the war progressed in order to allow WAACs to serve overseas and to allocate personnel to classified projects. Designated as “WAAC Staff Directors,” WAAC officers received orders dispersing them among Army commands to act as liaisons between the Army and WAAC personnel in the field. Anticipating the eventual militarization of the WAAC, the Army addressed concerns regarding the specter of women commanding men by limiting the rank of WAAC Staff Directors. By requiring women to

³⁴ Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 110, 113-115.

conform to the Army's time-in-grade policies, the Army ensured that few women rose above the rank of captain before the war ended.³⁵

Acceptance of the WAAC within Army units varied widely. General Henry "Hap" Arnold welcomed WAACs into the service enthusiastically, encouraging his officers to incorporate women, later affectionately known as "Air WACs," into the Air Force to the fullest extent possible. Women served as parachute riggers, glider instructors, bombsight repair workers, clerical personnel, and a myriad of other positions in the Air Force. As a result of Arnold's acceptance, 50% of women assigned to the Air Force performed non-traditional assignments.³⁶

In contrast, Army Ground Forces resisted integration of women into its units. Lt. General Lesley J. McNair, Commanding General of Army Ground Forces, openly objected to the use of women in the military. He refused to allow the assignment of a WAAC Staff Director to his unit headquarters. Ultimately, the Army granted McNair's request for a decrease in the number of women assigned to Army Ground Forces. Of the WAACs assigned to McNair's command, 85% served as clerical workers or as motor pool drivers. Compared to other branches of the Army, WAACs unfortunate enough to receive assignments to Army Ground Forces encountered difficulties obtaining promotions and transfers.³⁷

³⁵ "Ladies in the Army," 85; "Col. Hobby Tells of Need for WACs," *New York Times*, 1 December 1943, 11; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 128-132.

³⁶ Rogan, *A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny*, 132; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 132; "It's a Woman's War, Too," *New York Times*, 17 January 1943, sec. 2, 3.; "WAACs Add Plane Jobs," *New York Times*, 15 December 1942, 24.

³⁷ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 132-134; Rogan, *A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny*, 132; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003).

Many commands utilized women extensively in assignments traditionally accepting of women in the civilian workforce. Employment of WAACs in the Army Service Forces allowed the corps to contribute significantly to units hard-hit by the manpower shortage. Army installations established around ports utilized WAAC personnel extensively for administrative purposes. The Medical Department also sent in requests for medical aids, clerks and drivers from WAAC units. The Transportation Service also submitted requests for women to serve as drivers and mechanics.³⁸

Technical services of the Army Service Forces employed thousands of women. The Ordnance Department alone employed hundreds of women at ten facilities across the United States and to units serving overseas. Often, women stationed at these facilities served as drivers, mechanics, technicians, and clerical staff. Though strictly prohibited from combat training by WAAC legislation, women stationed in ordnance units often tested weapons, gauged the velocity of bullets and shells, analyzed the effectiveness of various bombs, mixed gunpowder, and loaded shells. Officers at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds facility, in keeping with other technical services, recognized the advantages inherent in the employment of WAAC personnel at their facility. Unlike male personnel, women assigned to Aberdeen provided the facility with a stable workforce exempt from the dangers of reassignment to the front lines. As a result, Aberdeen utilized substantial numbers of WAAC personnel. The utilization of WAAC personnel at ordnance facilities proved highly successful in facilitating the distribution of munitions and maintaining standards of products shipped overseas to combat units. Ironically, the success of WAAC personnel at sites dedicated to the efficient management of weapons stands in stark contrast to conservative fears regarding the arming

³⁸ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 134; "Distribution, Versatility, and Excellence of WACs Serving with Army Service Forces," CMH Publication 2-2.1 BC, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/WWII/distw.html> (accessed 28 May 2003).

of women. Not trusted with the use of arms in combat or in defense of the nation, Uncle Sam nevertheless relied extensively on the judgment of women with respect to testing and distribution of guns and munitions.³⁹

The Chemical Warfare Service represented one of the most secretive divisions within the Army Service Forces and utilized WAAC personnel extensively. The successful integration of WAACs into the process for incorporating chemicals into the fabric of protective clothing, referred to as “impregnating,” led to recommendations that the process be turned over entirely to WAACs. The Staff Director assigned to the unit objected to the proposed name for the group – the WAAC Impregnating Company – due to the objectionable connotations WAAC critics would undoubtedly attach to the group. Instead, Army officials agreed to designate the group the WAAC Processing Company.⁴⁰

Many WAACs received assignments to units whose objectives remained highly classified for decades after the war ended. WAAC leaders placed women in responsible positions within the Manhattan Engineering District, more commonly known as the Manhattan Project. With production sites across the United States, the Corps of Engineers acquired significant numbers of WAAC personnel, as well as civilian women, to staff its facilities working to develop the bomb. The nature of the project, the development of the

³⁹ “Girl Mechanics Set Pace: Army Air Base Officer Says They Have Raised Shop Morale.” *New York Times*, 16 July 1942, 14; “Distribution, Versatility, and Excellence of WACs Serving with Army Service Forces,” CMH Publication 2-2.1 BC, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/WWII/distw.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); “The Corps Engages: WACs and the Bomb,” U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Office of History, <http://www.Army.mil/soldiers/oct2002/pdfs/corp/pdf> (accessed 28 May 2003); Judith Bellafaire, “The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service,” CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 134-135, 329; “Col. Hobby Tells of Need for WACS,” 11; “Women in Mens Jobs at Aberdeen Proving Grounds,” *New York Times*, 9 July 1942, 13.

⁴⁰ “Distribution, Versatility, and Excellence of WACs Serving with Army Service Forces,” CMH Publication 2-2.1 BC, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/WWII/distw.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Judith Bellafaire, “The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service,” CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 134, 322-323.

atomic bomb, required strict security. Assignment of WAACs to the project ensured military control of administrative and clerical personnel. A WAAC Staff Director selected each WAAC assigned to the project after extensive interviews. The first seventy-four WAACs reported for duty in June of 1943. By accepting the assignments, received only after demonstrative enthusiasm for the position, WAACs forfeited the opportunity to serve overseas, attend officer's school, or receive any credit for the sensitive work they performed. After the conclusion of the war, the War Department revealed that 442 women served in the Manhattan Project. Women not only served in administrative and clerical positions within the project, but also as skilled technicians. Corps members received numerous commendations for their valuable service after news of the successful testing of the atomic bomb became public. WAC units serving with the Engineering Corps received the Meritous Unit Service Award, while several individuals received Army Commendation Ribbons. One WAAC received the Legion of Merit Award. Nonetheless, the unique nature of the work carried out by the Manhattan Project allowed for abuses within the system. Most notably, many WAACs serving at the Pasco and Los Alamos facilities received assignments as bartenders, baby-sitters and domestic servants – all positions strictly prohibited by Army regulations. Strict security at the facilities hampered reporting of such abuses, as well as efforts to monitor WAACs by staff directors. Hobby eventually assigned Capt. Arlene G. Scheidenhelm as staff director assigned to the Corps of Engineers. Scheidenhelm reorganized units and reassigned individuals to more appropriate jobs. Her tenure as staff director ensured that women replaced men for military purposes rather than perform menial labor for Army officers.⁴¹

⁴¹ “Distribution, Versatility, and Excellence of WACs Serving with Army Service Forces,” CMH Publication 2-2.1 BC, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/WWII/distw.html>

WAACs received assignments to a variety of other services throughout the Army, including the Signal Corps, the Transportation Corps and the Quartermaster Corps. Analysis of Army programs concluded that 50% of work done in many of these programs, such as the Signal Corps, could be done by women. The Signal Corps utilized WAACs in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of war. WAACs often reported high job satisfaction in their work for the Signal Corps. Their work directly contributed to the war effort and provided intellectual challenges to the women involved. As late as June of 1944, shortages of trained WAACs assigned to the Signal Corps resulted in the conscription of Signal Corps candidates from other WAC specialties. Corps members received messages regarding incoming shipments and transmitted requisitions for additional supplies. WAACs reported that the work, if long and arduous, proved rewarding.⁴²

Approximately 13% of WAAC personnel worked for the Transportation Corps. WAACs assigned to the Transportation Corps received a wide variety of assignments. Corps members processed male service personnel transferring overseas from eight major ports of embarkation. Women also received training as radio operators and served aboard American hospital ships. As the war drew to a close, three ships, the *Larkspar*, the *Charles A. Stafford* and the *Blanche F. Sigman*, received WAACs as radio operators. Each ship received three enlisted WAACs and one officer. Despite the confinements of ship life, WACs frequently

(accessed 28 May 2003); "The Corps Engages: WACs and the Bomb," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Office of History, <http://www.Army.mil/soldiers/oct2002/pdfs/corp/pdf> (accessed 28 May 2003); Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); "Manhattan District WAC Detachment: The Role of Women in the Development of the Atomic Bomb," U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/topics/women/manwac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 326-329.

⁴² "Distribution, Versatility, and Excellence of WACs Serving with Army Service Forces," CMH Publication 2-2.1 BC, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/WWII/distw.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Weise, *The Good Soldier*, 22-23, 63; Irene Brion, *Lady GI: A Woman's War in the South Pacific*. (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1997), 90-91.

expressed enthusiasm for shipboard work. Activities often included assisting nurses with care for injured soldiers returning to the states. Occasionally, shipments of POWs broke the monotony, as the men regaled WAACs with stories of combat and capture. Other activities included daily calisthenics, physical training for officers and crew, informational broadcasts, and entertainment programs for patients. Off-duty activities aboard ship included sunbathing and excursions into port cities.⁴³

Other commands, such as the Quartermaster Corps, utilized fewer WAAC units. WAACs assigned to Quartermaster Corps often received assignments overseeing stockpiles of war material and coordinating new supply shipments. The rationale behind refusals to use WAACs extensively often rested on grounds that women lacked the physical strength necessary to carry out the job or noted that the jobs required interaction with combat areas restricted to male personnel. Women often proved these allegations false. Nevertheless, Quartermaster Corps continued to make limited use of WAAC personnel.⁴⁴

General Marshall's public endorsement of the corps conformed to the popular image of WAACs as overwhelmingly performing tasks that conformed to acceptable gendered

⁴³ "Distribution, Versatility, and Excellence of WACs Serving with Army Service Forces," CMH Publication 2-2.1 BC, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/WWII/distw.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Letter dated 30 May 1945, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and official documents, MSS 117, Box 1, Fld. 3, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 134; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); "Odyssey of a WAC," Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Photocopies of Newsclippings, MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 9, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University; Letter dated 21 June 1945, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Family Letters (June 1945-December 1945), MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 1, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University; Letter dated 7 April 1945, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Family Letters (June 1945-December 1945), MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 1, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University; "Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Photocopies of Newsclippings, MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 9, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University; "Suggestions Which Might Be of Value To Future WAC Teams Going Aboard A Hospital Ship," Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and official documents, MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 3, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University.

⁴⁴ Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 329-330.

roles. Nevertheless, Marshall remained open to evidence suggesting that women might fill more unorthodox roles within the military. His classified experiment utilizing WAACs in anti-aircraft batteries and searchlight units contradicted his public position on the issue of employment of women in mixed gender or combat units. Marshall and his staff selected 396 corps members from the 150th and 151st WAAC Technical Companies and the 62nd WAAC Operations Company to participate in the experiment. WAACs selected for the experiment trained with the Military District of Washington from 15 December 1942 to 15 April 1943. Assigned to the 36th Coast Guard Artillery Brigade, women operated two anti-aircraft batteries and local searchlight units under the direction of Colonel Edward W. Timberlake. Timberlake's reports indicated that the women encountered no difficulty in grasping tactical, technical, or maintenance data for the equipment. In fact, he reported that the women mastered the knowledge and skill more quickly than the "limited duty" servicemen with whom they worked. Fears of complications with mixed-gender units also proved unfounded. No reports of promiscuous behavior or sexual harassment reached officers. As a result, Timberlake recommended assignment of women to 60% of existing positions within the batteries. Timberlake's superior, Major General John T. Lewis, reviewed the data and concurred. In fact, Lewis requested 103 additional WAAC officers and 2,315 WAACs to replace male servicemen. Marshall's experiment confirmed that women met the intellectual, physical, and psychological requirements necessary to perform effectively in anti-aircraft batteries.⁴⁵

The success of Marshall's experiment presented the Army with a perplexing paradox. The results proved that new opportunities for the utilization of women existed within the

⁴⁵ Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," 303-304; Campbell, *Women in War with America: Private Lives in a Patriot Era*, 38-39.

military establishment. Lewis' endorsement indicated that individual commanders might encourage enlistment of women within mixed units or in fields classified as combat duty, such as anti-aircraft batteries. The facts spoke for themselves. The real dilemma confronting Marshall lay in the public response to placing women in combat units. Entrenched cultural mores in 1940 America recoiled against the prospect of armed women. The controversy over the integration of women into the military seemed to redefine the term "combatant," transforming it from a term applied to an individual possessing the *means* to fire a weapon to an individual with the *authority* to fire a weapon. Pending legislation designed to redesignate the WAAC as a military organization, rather than an auxiliary of the Army, further complicated Marshall's decision. The potential storm of controversy ensuing in the event of publication of the Army's findings threatened to kill the bill or lead to further constraints on the utilization of WAAC personnel. Marshall determined that the risk appeared too great. Marshall terminated the experiment and ordered the results of the experiment classified. In retrospect, his decision appeared to hinder progress to further opportunities for women. In 1943, Marshall's decision rested on his judgment of what enhanced the efficiency of Army operations. He settled for what he needed and knew he could get. Ultimately, the Army urgently needed women for clerical and support positions, not for anti-aircraft positions that could be handled by men unfit for combat duty.⁴⁶

A limited number of hand-picked WAACs transferred to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), headquartered in Washington, D.C. Highly educated and conversant in foreign languages, these women aided in the gathering and transfer of intelligence

⁴⁶ Meyer, "Creating a Women's Corp," 39-40; "Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," 305-306; Campbell, *Women in War with America: Private Lives in a Patriot Era*, 39.

information. As with WAACs assigned to the Manhattan Project, the Army entrusted women with classified materials and demanded secrecy from WAAC members.⁴⁷

The early success of the WAAC organization and continued demands for additional male soldiers for combat reinforced the latent issues of Army status for WAAC personnel. Though General Marshall previously endorsed the legislation establishing the WAAC as an auxiliary operating outside the regular Army establishment, the success of the program changed his mind. Conversion to full military status, if approved, conferred protections established by the Geneva Convention to WAAC personnel slated to serve overseas. Congressman Rogers read a statement from the War Department to fellow congressmen on 27 May 1943, stating that legislative restrictions hindered extensive stationing of WAACs overseas and might “severely hamper the War Department in making the most effective use of all Army personnel.”⁴⁸ As a result, Marshall now endorsed revisions to WAAC legislation granting full military status to the WAAC. He believed that the change in status would clarify logistical operations of the WAAC and allow greater distribution of WAAC personnel throughout the Army. During the debate process, several Congressional members argued against WAACs serving overseas. Advocates of the change to regular Army status countered these arguments by reminding opponents that WAACs already served overseas legally. The new legislative changes merely proposed granting additional benefits and protections to women, while allowing the Army to utilize their skills more effectively. Responding to the needs of the Army, Rogers began drafting a bill designed to give the WAAC full military status.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Survey, June Cotter Papers, MSS 435C, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University.

⁴⁸ Congress, House, House Journal, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 May 1943, 4998.

⁴⁹ Congress, House, House Journal, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 May 1943, 4992-5002; Judith Bellafaire, “The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service,” CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army

The bill encountered little resistance in the Senate, as both critics and supporters of the WAAC expressed their views. Passage of the bill in the House of Representatives proved more challenging, as proponents encountered stiff opposition. Supporters lauded the success of the program and lamented the inequitable nature of auxiliary status. They repeatedly cited the inherent difficulties encountered by WAAC officers in their quest to formulate WAAC policy. Though many Congressmen expressed doubts concerning the equality of the sexes, they acknowledged the valuable work carried out by WAACs in the field. Army leaders forwarded glowing reports praising the work of WAAC members in the United States and overseas. Nevertheless, several Congressmen mirrored the views of many Americans by questioning the abilities of women to function as valuable contributors to the war effort. A survey conducted in 1943 indicated that some American males believed that women lacked the capacity to make decisions without a man around to guide them. Staunch opponents lamented the formation of the corps and objected to further expansion of the organization or to the granting of additional benefits. Congressman Beverly Vincent from Kentucky argued that transportation of WAACs overseas utilized vital shipping space needed for troop deployment and delivery of war materials. Despite General Eisenhower's request for more WAAC personnel in overseas assignments, Vincent claimed that WAACs "are in the way" and demanded that Congress not embarrass the nation by continuing to send women overseas. Other Congressmen expressed doubts concerning the capacity of three women to fully replace three men until operational reports from Fort Sam Houston indicated that on average three women replaced four men in administrative and clerical positions. General Marshall's report to Congress cited improvements in efficiency in WAAC organization as

Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 118-119.

paramount to the effective administration of the Army. Marshall's arguments mirrored those of other Army witnesses, who testified to the potential improvements in the discipline, morale, and organization of the WAAC with the application of full military status.⁵⁰

Critics of the WAAC felt compelled to ridicule the organization even as many chose to vote in support of the bill. One Congressman from Texas reminded colleagues of his speeches in 1942, opposing military status for the WAAC. Nevertheless, the Congressman argued that the commissioning of women into other branches of the military with full military status, which had taken place subsequent to the establishment of the WAAC as an auxiliary organization, compelled Congress to treat the WAAC with equal consideration. Debate continued for several months, as WAAC promoters worried that passage of the bill, though imminent, might contain crippling provisions and further hamper the ability of the WAAC to accomplish its objectives.⁵¹

While Congress debated changes to WAAC legislation, WAAC numbers continued to increase, with 60,243 recruits by June of 1943. The marked increase in WAAC recruits resulted from heightened efforts by WAAC recruiters, reflecting a February 1943 decision to expand the WAAC exponentially. The conversion plan exposed a serious challenge to the acceleration of the program. WAAC planners delighted in the enthusiasm of the nation's women as they reported to recruiting stations. Nevertheless, they harbored serious doubts that new calls for 1,500,000 women would prove a realistic goal. Competition with women's organizations connected to the other military branches and the nation's reliance on women to sustain industry during the war posed significant obstacles to WAAC recruiting. Offering

⁵⁰ Congress, House, House Journal, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 May 1943, 4993-4996; Herbert, "Amazons or Butterflies: The Recruitment of Women into the Military During World War II," 35; "Aids WAAC Enlistments," *New York Times*, 30 March 1943, 32.

⁵¹ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 118-121; Congress, House, House Journal, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 May 1943, 4995.

full military status, including veteran's benefits and the prestige of training on a college campus, the Navy attracted many female recruits. The opportunity to earn high wages while retaining the freedom of a civilian encouraged many women to forgo military service in favor of lucrative jobs. As a result, the WAAC faced significant competition for quality personnel from inside and outside the military establishment. The WAAC offered none of the benefits customarily tied to military service and failed to provide the high salaries commiserate with civilian employment. Only the opportunity for overseas service distinguished the WAAC positively from other women's organizations.⁵²

Several other challenges confronted WAAC planners as they struggled to attract, enroll and train large numbers of volunteers. WAAC resources seemed pushed to the brink. Even with the third WAAC training center established at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, the WAAC program desperately needed additional resources and facilities. Services of Supply scrambled to find a site for a fourth and fifth training facility. The War Department ultimately designated Fort Devens, Massachusetts, as the fourth training center. The fifth training center, established at Camps Polk and Ruston in Louisiana and Camp Monticello in Arkansas, represented an uneasy compromise by Hobby and her staff. Previously utilized as prisoner-of-war camps, these three locations combined to form an extended, if inhospitable, training center. In the meantime, WAAC planners temporarily alleviated overcrowding by enrolling women into the WAAC and placing them on inactive duty until space opened in training facilities. However, this solution proved highly unpopular among the new recruits,

⁵² Some discrepancies regarding recruitment numbers exists. Treadwell's official account cites 60,243 recruits, while the WAAC Museum confirms only 50,603 recruits as of 31 August 1943. Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 120-121; Anne Bosanko Green, *One Woman's War: Letters Home from the Women's Army Corps 1944-1946*. (St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989), 3; "WAAC/WAC World War II Statistics," Army Women's Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia, www.awm.lee.Army.mil/WAC.strength.htm (accessed 28 May 2003).

who complained bitterly and publicly about the inconvenience of waiting for the call to active duty. In addition, minority women attributed the delay to discriminatory practices and the bigotry of recruiters. Unfortunately, the challenges of early 1943 paled in comparison to the slanderous attacks looming ahead. Future attacks targeting the character of the WAAC seemed to escalate in frequency and acrimony.⁵³

Hobby and her staff understood the importance of maintaining a professional image that adhered to high standards of moral conduct among WAAC personnel. For this reason, WAAC officers maintained a tight rein on new recruits, hoping to “weed-out” undesirable elements before they infested the entire organization. Their strategy involved strict screening of WAAC recruits and diligent oversight of WAACs in the field. WAAC Provost Marshal’s and Army M.P.’s monitored extracurricular activities and responded to incidents involving WAACs. Their diligence, they hoped, would ensure a positive image of the corps. Occasional scandals merited media attention and swift action by the Army. In 1942, the Army court-martialed WAAC Kathryn Gregory for being A.W.O.L. and also for dancing “a strenuous bump strip” at a popular burlesque theater. Nevertheless, the average WAAC, between the ages of 25 to 27 years old, surpassed Army men and the civilian population in basic qualifications and conducted herself honorably. Corps members seemed well suited to the carefully crafted image of female respectability.⁵⁴

As the first anniversary of the WAAC passed into history, the media reported relatively few serious attacks on the character of WAAC recruits. Notable military leaders,

⁵³ Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 102, 122-126; Shea, *The Waacs*, 76-77; Rogan, “*A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny*,” 132.

⁵⁴ Congress, House, 78th Cong., 1st sess., *House Journal*, 27 March 1943, 4992-5002; Alsmeyer, “Those Unseen, Unheard Arkansas Women,” 25; Litoff and Smith, *We’re in This War, Too*, 35; “Night Life Kept Under Control,” Effie Ward Kreimeyer Papers, Newspaper Clippings, Personal Property of Melanie Kirkland; “WAAC Candidate Honored: Party Given for Alice G. Gordon by Civil Women’s Club,” *New York Times*, 16 July 1942, 14; Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 192; “WAAC Strip-Teaser,” *Life*, 28 December 1942, Vol. 13, No. 26.

such as General Marshall and General Eisenhower, submitted glowing reports of WAAC service. Eisenhower, a firm convert to the notion of using women in non-combat roles, requested hundreds of additional WAACs for the European Theater. Eisenhower issued directives providing for the shipment of WAAC personnel overseas, even at the expense of ground forces. Many Army officers previously resistant to the integration of women into their units now enthusiastically requested more WAAC personnel. The number of jobs WAACs filled increased exponentially. As the WAAC celebrated its first anniversary, women served in all major domestic commands and two overseas theaters of operation. *Yank*, the Army's weekly publication, marked the first year of WAAC operations with an article detailing the contributions of the corps to the war effort. Entitled, "WAACS: The Corps Completes Its First Year Working Hard at Men's Army Jobs," the article lauded the corps as a "respected and valuable addition to the camps back home."⁵⁵

By all appearances, the WAAC seemed a rousing success. Statistical analysis indicated that WAAC personnel observed higher moral standards than the civilian population. At a rate approaching 0%, well below that of the civilian female population, incidents of venereal disease rarely occurred. Pregnancy rates among unmarried WAAC recruits rested at approximately one-fifth that of the civilian population. Despite this data and the best efforts of WAAC leaders, attacks upon the moral character of the WAAC began in the spring of 1943. From San Francisco to New York, unfounded rumors of WAACs with loose morals flourished. Dissemination of information regarding the behavior of WAAC personnel by the military failed to hinder the malicious gossip. In part, War Department policy during the WAACs first year of operations facilitated the spread of unfounded rumors.

⁵⁵ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 96, 379, 408; "WAACS: The Corps Completes Its First Year Working Hard at Men's Army Jobs," *Yank*, 4 June 1943, 6-7.

The department's Bureau of Public Relations failed to produce aggressive publicity campaigns for the WAAC during the crucial first year of operations. As a result, the WAAC lacked official channels for the promotion of information relevant to recruiting drives or for the defense of the organization against external attacks upon its character. Without positive statistical data from the Army to counteract the rumors, the public relied overwhelmingly on the media for information on the WAAC, while the mainstream media overwhelmingly joined in the feeding frenzy determined to bring down the WAAC.⁵⁶

In mid-1943, unsubstantiated rumors surfaced, alleging that 90% of WAACs served as prostitutes, with 40% of corps members awaiting discharges due to pregnancies. The most prevalent rumor alleged that a large percentage of WAAC recruits stationed overseas awaited return to the United States due to unplanned pregnancies. Igniting smoldering accusations of immorality by opponents of WAAC legislation, journalist John O'Donnel of the *Daily News of New York* composed a series of four articles dedicated to "exposing" the immorality of the WAAC. In his syndicated column, O'Donnel "revealed" that the Army distributed contraceptives and condoms to WAAC personnel, essentially sanctioning promiscuity by women serving with the Army. The decision to distribute the items, according to the journalist, stemmed from a "super secret" agreement between the War Department and Hobby. Furthermore, O'Donnel claimed that twenty-six WAACs serving overseas awaited a return voyage to the United States due to unplanned pregnancies. The number eventually reached 500. Hobby flatly denied the reports. The Army quickly disproved the story by revealing that of the 292 WAACs serving in North Africa, only three returned to the United States for health reasons. Of the three, one WAAC returned for a gall-bladder operation;

⁵⁶ Harriet Green Robinson, *The Gaylor WACs* (Leguna Beach, California: Laurel Press, 2001), 4; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 192-194.

another returned due to a nervous disorder; and the third WAAC, a married WAAC, pregnant by her husband before leaving for North Africa, returned to the United States. Secretary of State, Henry Stimson, angrily denied the rumors, declaring that any ensuing damage to WAAC recruiting and the reputation of the WAAC served to impede the war effort. General Marshall reiterated his support for the WAAC, proclaiming the moral character of the WAAC “excellent.” Marshall viewed the attack as “an inexcusable defamation of a fine organization.”⁵⁷ Editorialist Elsa Maxwell of the *New York Post* condemned O’Donnel’s accusations against the corps as unfounded. O’Donnel eventually retracted his allegations regarding the WAAC. Unfortunately, the episode severely damaged the image of the corps and encouraged latent hostilities against the WAAC from other sources.⁵⁸

In fact, the Army maintained a clear policy regarding pregnant members of the corps. Married women received honorable discharges. Unmarried pregnant women received summary discharges. Additionally, any woman found guilty of dishonorable conduct received a swift discharge from the corps. As a result, pregnancy rates averaged seventeen per thousand WAACs in 1943. In the last two years of the war, incidents of pregnancy increased to forty-nine per thousand in 1944 and sixty-eight per thousand in 1945. WAC policies regarding pregnancy eased marginally in the final years of the war. Pregnant WACs, married or unmarried, received honorable discharges. Aborted pregnancies resulted in

⁵⁷ “WAACS Fight Back: Sinister Rumors, Aimed at Destroying Their Reputation are Denounced,” *New York Times*, 27 June 1943, X9.

⁵⁸ “Elsa Maxwell’s Party Line,” *New York Post*, 17 June 1944, 12, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and Official Documents, MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld..3, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University; Weise, *The Good Soldier*, 206; Shea, *The Waacs*, 49-50; Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 201; Allen, “The News Media and the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps: Protagonists for a Cause,” 81; “WAACS Fight Back: Sinister Rumors, Aimed at Destroying Their Reputation are Denounced,” X9; Herbert, “Amazon’s and Butterflies: The Recruitment of Women into the Military During World War II,” 56; Judith Bellafaire, “The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service,” CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Stewart Robertson, “Join the WACS and See the World: Here’s How the One’s in North Africa Live, Work, and Play – and Why the Army Needs 550,000 More,” *Family Circle*, 19 November 1943, 8-9, 13, 19, 22.

immediate discharge from the Army, although conclusive evidence of such activity often proved difficult to obtain. In effect, Hobby and her staff worked to enforce a strict policy with regard to questionable behavior in an effort to mirror the values of contemporary America society.⁵⁹

Vicious gossip and slanderous accusations emerged from many surprising sources. Many critics continued to view the presence of women in the military as unnatural and degenerate. Verbal attacks against the corps often arose from the front lines through private letters from soldiers and Army nurses serving overseas. Their friends and families spread the gossip still further. The ensuing scandal, though fictitious, spread across the nation. American servicemen wrote tales of salacious behavior by WAAC members. One Army nurse wrote an Arkansas clergyman alleging that WAAC recruits serving overseas received monthly physical exams by a group of male physicians. According to the nurse, the women lined-up before the doctors, sans covering. She further alleged that the physicians forced the WAACs to view photographs of nude men during the exam. Naturally, the clergyman contacted state and federal officials, demanding an investigation into the allegations. The subsequent investigation revealed that the allegations lacked any factual basis. Furthermore, the investigators discovered that the nurse who penned the letter resided as a patient in a hospital with a diagnosis of psychoneurosis and a history of writing similar letters regarding women serving in military establishments. As in similar cases investigated by the War Department, the exposure of these allegations as patently false failed to lessen the story's impact or restore the reputation of the WAAC.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Campbell, *Women at War with America; Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 27-28; Shea, *The Waacs*, 49-50; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 201.

⁶⁰ Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 37; Sherman, "They Either Need These Women or They Do Not," 61; Allen, "The News Media and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps:

In spite of efforts to prevent questionable behavior among WAACs, gossip alleged that enlisted men found associating with WAACs socially received compulsory medical treatments for sexually transmitted diseases. Rumors spread throughout the military that Army doctors rejected virgins as unsuitable for WAAC service. The implication seemed obvious. WAAC slogans imploring women to join the WAAC to “release a man for duty” assumed scandalous connotations, prompting the Army to discontinue use of the slogan. Unnamed sources continued to claim that the Army provided WAACs with condoms. This allegation appeared in newspapers, accusing War Department officials and Hobby of reaching a secret agreement to provide WAACs with contraceptives and prophylactic “equipment” as part of an effort to secure equal rights for women serving overseas. According to the article, Eleanor Roosevelt supported the agreement because it guaranteed women “overseas rights” identical to those of America males. In fact, no such agreement ever existed. Journalist Ruth Gowan, stationed with WAACs in North Africa and England, assured the public that, “If Uncle Sam handed out contraceptives I got left out. And I understood I was to be issued the same equipment as WAACs.”⁶¹ An Army investigation ensued, attempting to discover the basis for such allegations. Investigators speculated that the rumors began in reference to a pamphlet distributed to WAAC recruits explaining female anatomy and the importance of hygiene. The pamphlet also included a discussion of sexually transmitted diseases, as well as information regarding menstruation and menopause. The pamphlet’s authors failed to include information regarding birth control since WAAC policy

Protagonists for a Cause,” 81; Campbell, “Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union,” 320; Weise, *The Good Soldier*, 206; Herbert, “Amazon’s and Butterflies: The Recruitment of Women into the Military During World War II,” 56; Meyer, “The Lesbian Threat: Within World War II,” 173; Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 197; Pollard, *Laugh, Cry and Remember*, xix.

⁶¹ Allen, “The News Media and the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps: Protagonists for a Cause,” 81.

forbade distribution of contraceptives or prophylactics. Distribution of such equipment might threaten the carefully guarded image WAAC leaders hoped to preserve. Ironically, as WAACs found themselves defending their honor, American soldiers serving in Italy openly enjoyed temporary leave in Naples, indulging in what they commonly referred to as “I&I” – intercourse and intoxication. According to Rick Atkinson, author of *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944*, the VD rate among soldiers in Mark Clark’s Fifth Army “exceeded one in ten for white soldiers-it was much higher for blacks-with the average gonorrhea infection in February requiring ten day’s recuperation.”⁶² In fact, Army doctors diagnosed 15% of all American soldiers confined to Army hospitals in Naples with VD. Although most Army commanders discouraged consorting with prostitutes, the American media failed to report the extent to which male soldiers indulged in promiscuous behavior. Apparently, unfounded speculation regarding innocent women made more enticing news.⁶³

Allegations regarding sexual misconduct occasionally extended to relations between WAACs. Rumors labeled the corps as a haven for homosexual activity. Conservative critics reasoned that only women deemed sexually “deviant” sought a life in the military, the traditional domain of American manhood. For some, even considering joining the Army raised questions regarding a woman’s sexuality. Men frequently associated women in the military with a desperate grab for male power by sexually deviant women. As a result, skeptics viewed the WAAC as a potential enclave for sexual perversion. WAAC officials foresaw the possibility for such gossip and attempted to screen out lesbians during the recruitment process. Hobby and her staff believed that incidents of lesbian activity among

⁶² Rick Atkinson, *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 449.

⁶³ Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 201-203; Allen, *The News Media and the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps: Protagonists for a Cause*,” 81; Atkinson, *The Day of Battle*, 446-449.

corps members occurred less frequently than among civilians. Women found guilty of engaging in homosexual behavior received swift discharges. Nevertheless, WAAC leaders rarely pursued policies aimed at discovering lesbians within the ranks. Inconspicuous expressions of homosexual behavior often received leniency and “guidance” measures aimed at teaching offenders to “control” their impulses. Ann Sloan, in an interview in 2000, stated that when she was stationed in San Antonio approximately thirty women were lesbians and “we just tried not to mix. We got along fairly well.”⁶⁴ The failure of the WAAC to pursue an aggressive policy towards lesbians within the ranks stemmed from Hobby’s fear that prosecution and subsequent discharges might generate adverse publicity, confirming the worst fears of the American public and instilling a poor public image of the WAAC. Instead, Hobby pursued an early version of “don’t ask, don’t tell” with regard to homosexuals in the Army.⁶⁵

As the slander campaign gained full momentum, War Department leaders and supporters of the WAAC speculated that the underlying force promoting the attack on the character of the WAAC lay in the war rooms of the enemy. Hobby and others suspected that Axis agents spread the rumors to curb the effective mobilization of the Army by hindering WAAC recruitment and preventing the distribution of WAACs into Army units. In part, the theory rested on the timing of the slander campaign. The rumors seemed to acquire added virulence following the commencement of Congressional hearings into the efficacy of conferring Army status of the WAAC. Hobby and other leaders concluded that the Axis

⁶⁴ Ann Sloan, Transcript of interview by Barry Basden. Oral History Program, Admiral Nimitz National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg, Texas, 11 September 2000, 9.

⁶⁵ Sherman, “They Either Need these Women or They Do Not,” 61; Meyer, “The Lesbian Threat: Within World War II,” 187, 189, 192, 195; Campbell, “Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union,” 320; Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 28; Litoff and Smith, *We’re in This War, Too*, 256.

aimed to prevent transfer of additional men to combat zones. Eleanor Roosevelt labeled the rumors “Nazi propaganda.” Editorialist Elsa Maxwell encouraged anyone hearing slanderous gossip against the WAAC to phone the Federal Bureau of Investigations. In May 1943, Director Hobby requested an investigation into what appeared an organized effort to discredit the WAAC. As an organization working with, but not in, the Army establishment, the Army lacked the jurisdictional right to pursue the investigation. Instead, Army leaders assigned the investigation to the FBI. Nevertheless, within one month the situation grew to proportions requiring the Army to intervene regardless of jurisdictional issues. The attack on the WAAC hindered recruiting efforts significantly and threatened to destroy the program. The ensuing investigation by the FBI and Army investigators revealed a widespread effort to discredit the WAAC. The evidence unearthed by investigators revealed a far different scenario than that envisioned by Hobby, Eleanor Roosevelt, and other WAAC supporters searching for an enemy plot to destroy the WAAC.⁶⁶

Evidence indicated that the smear campaign overwhelmingly originated from American sources. Foremost among the rumor mongers, Army personnel and the families of men deployed overseas contributed to vicious gossip concerning the role of the WAAC. Soldiers sent letters to family members criticizing the WAAC and promoting slanderous allegations regarding sexual misconduct. Many soldiers resented being released for hazardous combat duty by WAAC personnel. The investigators also concluded that jealous

⁶⁶ Weise, *The Good Soldier*, 206; Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 37; “Elsa Maxwell’s Party Line,” *New York Post*, 17 June 1944, 12, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers. Letters and Official Documents, MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 3, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University; “WAACs Fight Back: Sinister Rumors Aimed at Destroying Their Reputation are Denounced,” x9; “House Passes the smith Bill for Waves Overseas Service,” *New York Times*, 9 June 1943, 18; Bess Furman, “Recruiting For The WAC Fails to Fill Need: Compulsory Service Held only Way to Raise Corps to Desired Size,” *New York Times*, 5 December 1943, 10E; Sherman, “They Either Need these Women or They Do Not,” 61; Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 200-201; “Waves To Cross The Seas If House Sanction Carries,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 June 1943, 3; Pollard, *Laugh, Cry and Remmber*, 94-95, 215-216.

civilian women, gossips and disgruntled ex-WAACs also contributed to the stories circulating about WAAC behavior. Finally, the investigation attributed much of the gossip to conservatives convinced that women belonged at home and that non-traditional roles for women grew from New Deal policies. Investigators continued to investigate allegations of inappropriate behavior by corps personnel. In almost every case, the rumors proved unfounded. When rumors spread that numerous pregnant WAACs received medical attention at Lovell General Hospital, investigators descended in force on the hospital. They discovered that the hospital maintained no records of pregnant WAACs admitted as patients. In addition, investigators failed to find one soldier admitting to sexual intercourse with a WAAC.⁶⁷

In June of 1943, despite opposition from several leaders in Congress and a vicious slander campaign, the bill granting full military status to the WAAC received approval. The legislation officially changed the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps to the Women's Army Corp (WAC). Debate over the bill culminated in legislation riddled with revisions to the original bill. The legislation granted women additional benefits commiserate with those of male personnel, with a few significant exceptions. Hoping to limit the implementation of a women's corps into the Army structure, lawmakers limited the WAC to an operational term limit of the duration of the war plus six months. In so doing, they hoped women would return to their traditional roles in American society after the war. In order to limit radical challenges to the status quo, Congressional leaders imposed strict limits to the level of rank allowed WAC members. The WAC commanding officer, formerly titled "Director," now

⁶⁷ Allen, "The News Media and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps: Protagonists for a Cause," 81; Herbert, "Amazon's or Butterflies: The Recruitment of Women into the Military During World War II," 54; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 206-207.

obtained the rank of “Colonel,” the only female colonel allowed in the Army under the law. Legislation prevented the Colonel’s promotion to higher rank. The bill limited rank among other WAC officers to a maximum level of Lieutenant Colonel. Most importantly to regular male Army officers and the majority of congressmen, the legislation prohibited women from commanding men without specific orders from superior officers. In addition, the legislation strictly prohibited the assignment of women to combat duty. If assigned to high-risk positions, the legislation allowed for small-arms training for self-defense purposes only. The bill narrowly escaped further amendments limiting the size, scope, and veteran’s benefits offered to women, as well as their dependents.⁶⁸

Congressional passage of the WAC bill on 28 June 1943 required persistence by proponents of the WAC. As in 1942, General Marshall and supporters within the War Department lobbied vigorously for the bill’s approval. The President, no doubt prodded to swift action by Eleanor Roosevelt, signed the bill on 1 July 1943. WAC legislation provided the Army with ninety days to complete conversion. Final dissolution of the WAAC provoked a flurry of activity in WAAC headquarters. Working virtually around the clock, Hobby and her staff rushed to compile information packets and forward them to each WAAC in service. Women electing to complete the conversion to Army status received application forms and underwent Army medical examinations. In addition, the Army required that women hoping to serve in the WAC obtain recommendations from their commanding officers. The medical examination alone resulted in the discharge of hundreds of former WAACs due to the strict standards enforced by the Army for male personnel. Hobby

⁶⁸ Meyer, “The Lesbian Threat: Within World War II.” 84; Congress, house, House Journal, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 May 1943, 4992-5002; Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 219-220; “Manhattan District WAAC Detachment: The Role of Women in the Development of the Atomic Bomb,” U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmb-pg/topics/women/manwac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003).

objected strenuously to the physical exams, arguing that WAACs demonstrating satisfactory service records prior to the transition earned the right to serve in the new WAC. In particular, Hobby argued that women failing the vision test remained fully competent to carry out all assignments filled by WACs. Initially, the Army denied her requests for revisions to the tests. After alarming numbers of women failed the tests, at a time when the Army scrounged the nation for additional recruits, the Army reversed course and accepted Hobby's recommendations. The revised guidelines applied to subsequent applicants for transition into the Army. The Army scheduled 1 September 1943 as the formal date for the swearing-in of corps members transferring from the auxiliary corps to the WAC.⁶⁹

The conversion of the corps to Army status presented its members with the choice of enlisting in the Army or accepting an honorable discharge. Media outlets detailed the change in benefits and regulations granted to the corps after conversion to full Army status. *Time* magazine reported that the new legislation allowed the corps to shed its "stepsister status of auxiliaries." Women accepting honorable discharges cited a number of factors when making the decision to resign from the corps. The three-month delay in the transition from the WAAC to the WAC allowed the full effects of the smear campaign of 1943 to convince many women not to enlist in the Army. Family and friends, alarmed by the vicious gossip spread by the media and disgruntled soldiers on the front lines, urged women to return home. Other women cited changed family situations, such as the return of a spouse from the front-lines or an ill relative. Some women cited objectionable job assignments or the lure of

⁶⁹ House For Change in Name of WAACs," *New York Times*, 28 May 1943, 16; Sherman, "They Either Need These Women or They Do Not," 57; Pollard, *Laugh, Cry and Remember*, 88-89; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); "Senate Passes WAAC Bill: Measure Making Corps Part of Army Goes to the President," *New York Times*, 30 June 1943, 18; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 219, 221-223.

civilian employment, with its more lucrative salaries, as motivating factors in their return to civilian life. WAC investigators found that women assigned to positions in commands resistant to corps members more often elected to resign than those in commands accepting of women. For example, General Arnold's support for the WAACs under his command resulted in the highest reenlistment levels of the major commands. His efforts, which included an Army newsreel detailing the contributions of the WAAC to the Air Force, yielded positive results, with his command boasting the lowest average loss of WAAC personnel at 20%. In contrast, General McNair's personal hostility to integrating the WAAC into the Army Ground forces fostered a culture of disrespect that permeated his officer corps. As a result, McNair's command produced the highest percentage of WAAC losses at 34%.⁷⁰

In an effort to avert resignations resulting from the slander campaign and the influence of disapproving families, WAC leadership directed unit commanders to enlist women as soon as they completed the processing of its members. The date for the enlistment of officers, scheduled for September 1st remained fixed. All other enlistments of WAAC auxiliaries received approval as soon as WAC administration finished the paperwork. On August 2nd the Army admitted its first group of WACs. Subsequent enlistments continued throughout August. On 1 September 1943, all eligible WAAC officers received appointments in the WAC. Women choosing to convert to the WAC received a service ribbon to commemorate their dedication and service to the auxiliary corps. The WAAC officially ceased on September 30th. Average losses of 25% of WAAC personnel during the conversion process justified Hobby's confidence in the women under her command, who

⁷⁰ Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Campbell, *Women at War With America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 35; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 219, 228-229; "WAAC to WAC," *Time*, 12 July 1943, 65.

often cited patriotism and the opportunity to better their lives while serving their country as motivating factors in their decisions. Members of the newly appointed WAC now faced the challenge of contributing to the war effort amid a skeptical public atmosphere.⁷¹

The women who reenlisted in the WAC in 1943 constituted a diverse group of American women from across the nation. Many women came from rural areas in the North, with Southern women underrepresented. Approximately 42% of enlisted WACs possessed high school diplomas, while 20% claimed some degree of college education. Conversely, only 28% of the Army's enlisted men possessed a high-school diploma, with 11% claiming some degree of college education. Occupational backgrounds also varied among WACs, with approximately 50% hailing from clerical or sales positions. Ten percent of WACs boasted professional or managerial backgrounds. WACs with prior experience in industrial or mechanical work made up approximately 30% of WACs, while 5% claimed no prior work experience outside the home. As December of 1943 drew to a close, the embattled WAC numbered approximately 57,731 members. Although educational statistics compared favorably to that of male personnel, the WAC continued to compare unfavorably to other women's reserves, which maintained higher standards for enlistment and attracted more educated recruits.⁷²

WAC recruiters immediately faced the challenge of filling the burgeoning requests for WAC personnel from the field. Marshall requested 600,000 WACs to fill Army jobs and

⁷¹ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 224, 229-230; Campbell, *Women at War With America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 35; "WAAC-WAC 1942-1944," U.S. Army Center of Military History, 15 January 1945, www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/topic/women/waac.html (accessed 28 May 2003).

⁷² Historian D'Ann Campbell suggests that this situation may be attributed to the extreme masculinization of military service in the South. Campbell, *Women at War With America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 23-24; "And Still Daughters of Dixie Swell the Ranks of WAACs and WAVES in Uncle Sam's Service," Effie Ward Kreimeyer Papers. Newspaper Clippings. Personal Property of Melanie Kirkland; "WAAC/WAC World War II Statistics," Army Women's Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia, www.awm.lee.Army.mil/WAC.strength.htm (accessed 28 May 2003).

release servicemen for combat. Hobby expressed serious doubts concerning the feasibility of recruiting such a large number of women, observing that the Army historically proved unsuccessful at recruiting volunteer armies of comparable mass. In addition, recruiters faced the daunting task of attracting new recruits at a time when the American public harbored lingering doubts regarding the morality of the organization. As a result, recruiting campaigns evolved to stimulate new enlistments and revive the morale of discouraged WAC recruiters. An assortment of directives ensued, employing women's groups, national businesses, WAC members, War Department leaders, and outside consulting firms.⁷³

In order to boost WAC numbers, WAC leadership deviated from prior regulations aimed at recruiting educated and skilled American women by relaxing enlistment standards. Educational standards now stipulated two years of high school with a satisfactory score on an Army aptitude test. Women from a wide variety of vocations and backgrounds applied for the WAC. As a result, the WAC increased recruiting numbers at the expense of WAC standards of excellence, resulting in a lower percentage of educated personnel. While the WASP, the WAVES, the Coast Guard, and the Marine Corps maintained an image of professionalism, the WAC now boasted a seemingly uneducated and often unskilled element among the corps. New recruits often required more training. Although the new recruitment standards reflected the more democratic enlistment of Americans into the Army at large, it damaged the image of an organization already weakened by adverse, if false, reporting.⁷⁴

⁷³ Bess Furman, "Recruiting For the WAC Fails to Fill the Need: Compulsory Service Held Only Way to Raise Corps to Desired Size," *New York Times*, 5 December 1943, 10E; Herbert, "Amazon's or Butterflies: The Recruitment of Women Into the Military During World War II," 54; "Interesting War Job Made Easier by G-E Lamps," *Life*, 19 November 1944, 7; Pollard, *Laugh, Cry, and Remember*, xiii; Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 5, 40-41; Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," 320; "It's a Woman's War Too," sec. 2, 3; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 232.

⁷⁴ Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 36; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army

Promotional efforts to boost WAC recruiting involved a number of initiatives. Colonel Hobby spoke at countless public gatherings. General Marshall lent his support to the cause, insisting that WACs performed vital services for the Army. WAC pamphlets assured women that WACs led modest lives emulating a model for feminine decorum. WACs chosen to work in recruiting efforts compiled mailing lists, distributed brochures, canvassed neighborhoods, delivered speeches at public gatherings, marched in parades, and advertised in local media outlets. Nevertheless, recruiting efforts met with limited success, as many recruiters reported that the image of the WAC as an organization unsuitable for “nice girls” often hindered recruiting efforts.⁷⁵

The All-States Campaign began as an appeal from General Marshall to each state governor for assistance. Radio stations joined in the effort, inundating media outlets with over 17,000 messages. Newspapers printed advertisements for the WAC. Official WAC advertisements proclaimed, “America’s women have never failed...the Army now needs you.” Initial enlistment numbers appeared promising. However, the nation-wide program soon collided with the efforts of the War Manpower Commission (WMC) to recruit women for defense industry jobs. As a result, the WMC actively hindered publicity of WAC recruitment efforts in areas where defense industry facilities operated. The All-States Campaign lost considerable momentum due to the interference of the WMC. When the

Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); “Facts You Want To Know About the WAC.” Bess Darby Papers, MSS. 624C, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University.

⁷⁵ Judith Bellafaire, “The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service,” CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Allen, “The News Media and the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps: Protagonists for a Cause,” 79; “Col. Hobby Tells of Need for WACS,” 11; “Says More WAACs Will Go Overseas: But H.C. Peterson Warns Many More Are Needed At Once,” *New York Times*, 10 May 1943, 16; “73 Questions and Answers About the WAAC,” 1-4, 9-10, Effie Ward Kreimeyer Papers, Recruiting Pamphlet, Personal Property of Melanie Kirkland; Robinson, *The Gaylor WACS*, 4, 19, 41, 79, 107; “Recruiting Drive Spurred,” *New York Times*, 24 February 1943, 18; “WAACs To Get Recruiting Booth,” *New York Times*, 16 February 1943; Greenbaum, “Winning Recruits for WACs,” 12X; “Women Urged to Enlist: Officers for Waacs and Waves Join in an Appeal,” *New York Times*, 6 January 1943, 17.

campaign drew to a close on 7 December 1943, WAC recruiters reported 10,619 new recruits. Though far short of the 70,000 target, the All-States Campaign achieved greater results than any subsequent campaign. Perhaps more importantly, public opinion polls indicated a slight improvement in the public's perception of, as well as knowledge of, the WAC. Public opinion continued to improve, with WAC recruiting maintaining a modest level of 3,000 each month for the remainder of the war.⁷⁶

Improved recruiting figures and more favorable public opinion notwithstanding, the American war effort required a steady flow of replacements for combat service. As conceptualized by WAC promoters and Army leadership, the very mission of the WAC rested on its ability to replace servicemen in non-combat roles. Without drastically increased WAC recruiting, the Army still faced a critical shortage in its labor force. Efforts to recruit additional WAC personnel by offering assorted initiatives continued, including the Job-Station Campaign, offering new recruits choices in future assignments. Recruitment posters encouraged women to join with the promise of choices in jobs, branch-of-service, and assigned stations. Nevertheless, *Newsweek* speculated that American women lacked “any great sense of personal responsibility for helping fight this war.”⁷⁷ Drafting of American women, while a potential solution to meeting the needs of the Army, remained an extremely remote possibility. In its absence, the drafting of men over 35 and married fathers remained a viable, if undesirable option. The shortage of men available for the draft therefore created a

⁷⁶ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 239-256; “America's Women Have Never Failed... The Army Now Needs You!” *New York Times*, 28 November 1943, 4(s).

⁷⁷ “Hobby's Army,” *Newsweek*, 17 January 1944, Vol. XLIII, No. 3, 62.

unique situation for WAC members. Suddenly, the value of WAC recruits seemed to increase exponentially while WAC recruitment remained insufficient to meet the need.⁷⁸

As the new year approached, Army units on the homefront and overseas began requesting WAC units in increasing numbers. Eisenhower's North African command flooded Washington with requests for more WACs. With able-bodied enlisted men pulled from non-essential positions to fill posts in combat zones, many commands faced personnel shortages. Commands previously resistant to the admission of women, such as Medical Services, began placing requests for WAC units. Suddenly, the concept of utilizing women for non-combat services appeared justifiable to many former critics of the program.⁷⁹

The deployment of WACs to overseas assignments provided corps members with adventure and the chance to prove their mettle to a skeptical American public. Overseas service, unique to the WAC, remained a popular assignment for corps members before and after militarization. The 19 November 1943 edition of *The Family Circle* published an article, entitled "Join the WACs and See the World." According to the author, WACs in overseas assignments stayed, "up to their ears in the momentous mission that will decide the sort of world they come back to." Newspapers reported on community service efforts by WACs serving overseas, underscoring the traditional image of women as nurturers.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 21; "Join the WAC Now," Still Picture Records, Licon, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), National Archives at College Park, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland; "Sherman, "They Either Need These Women or They Do Not," 53; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 248-249.

⁷⁹ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 248-249.

⁸⁰ Robertson, "Join the WACS and See the World," 22; "Says More WAACs Will Go Overseas: But H. C. Peterson Warns Many More Are Needed At Once," 16; "WACS Find Plenty of Time for Fun during "Off Hours"," *The Seattle Star*, 14 April 1944, Clarice Pollard Papers, WAAC newsletters and posters, The Woman's Collection, Texas Christian University; Robertson, 8, 22; "WACS in Britain Adopt Missing Flyer's Child: 7 Year-Old Daughter of RAF Gunner Made a Private," *New York Times*, 23 December 1943, 16.

The Army required WACs preparing for overseas service to enroll in self-defense, swimming, and life-saving courses. Other classes taught corps members to navigate through hostile territory. Infiltration courses required women to crawl on their stomachs while male servicemen fired 50mm bullets over their heads. Obstacle courses, complete with ropes and cargo nets, prepared women for the experience of boarding transport ships. In addition, WACs received instructions regarding the proper adjustment of gas masks, as non-toxic gas bombs exploded around them in battlefield simulations. Practical instruction in dispersion and acquisition of protective cover prepared women for the dangers inherent in war zones. Finally, the Army required WACs to undergo additional medical examinations not required of servicemen. Women received physical examinations complete with pelvic exams. Clearly, concerns over the physical health and moral integrity of corps members transferring overseas remained paramount among Army leaders.⁸¹

By wars end, WACs served in North Africa, the Mediterranean, Europe, the South Pacific, China, India, Burma, and the Middle East. Overseas assignments typically entailed clerical and communications work. The first corps members to serve overseas, Martha Rogers, Mattie Pinette, Ruth Briggs, Alene Dreznel, and Louis Anderson, remained with Eisenhower's command throughout the war. The first WAAC unit deployed overseas, the 149th Post Headquarter Company, arrived in Algeria in January of 1943. Additional units began arriving in May, eventually serving throughout the European Theater. As of 31 January 1943, two hundred WAACs served in the North African Theater. The 6669th Headquarters Platoon, under the command of Mark Clark's Fifth Army, accompanied the Army from Algeria to Italy. Operating six to thirteen miles behind the front lines, the 6669th

⁸¹ "Says More WAACs Will Go Overseas: But H. C. Peterson Warns Many More Are Needed At Once," 16; Pollard, *Laugh, Cry and Remember*, 105, Weise, *The Good Soldier*, 31-32; Meyer, "The Lesbian Threat: Within World War II," 120.

performed tasks traditionally assumed by women in civilian sectors, handling administrative and clerical duties for the Army.⁸²

Corps members began arriving in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) in July of 1943, with initial battalions stationed in London. London WACs worked for Eisenhower's headquarters command and Eighth Air Force stations, where, among other tasks, they made maps, assessed combat films, and plotted troop movements. WACs accompanied headquarters staff of the Allied Expeditionary Force from London to Germany. Media coverage of WAC activities revealed corps members camped out in locations such as apple orchards in France. Journalists reported that the women lived in the most non-traditional of environments, often bathing with water from their helmets. WACs soon followed forces into Paris and flourished in the French capital despite the cold winter of 1943. Temperatures in schoolrooms and homes utilized by WAC personnel averaged between twenty to forty degrees. Nevertheless, attrition levels, psychological and medical, rested at levels consistent with male Army personnel. In August of 1943, 1,473 WAACs served in England and the North African Theater. By October of 1944, the War Department acknowledged double that number served in liberated France alone.⁸³

⁸² "WAACs in Africa "Office Jobs Can't Go Out With Officers," *The Stars and Stripes*, 2 February 1943, Vol. 3, No. 78, 1, 4; Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Rogan, "*A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny*," 133, 135; Weise, *The Good Soldier*, 22; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 106-107, 360-365; Shea, *The Waacs*, 210; "WAAC-WAC 1942-1944," U.S. Army Center of Military History, 15 January 1945, www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/topic/women/waac.html (accessed 28 May 2003); "WAAC/WAC World War II Statistics," Army Women's Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia, www.awm.lee.Army.mil/WAC.strength.htm (accessed 28 May 2003); "It's All in the Bag for WAACs," Effie Ward Kreimeyer Papers. Newspaper Clippings. Personal Property of Melanie Kirkland.

⁸³ Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); "WAAC-WAC 1942-1944," U.S. Army Center of Military History, 15 January 1945, www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/topic/women/waac.html (accessed 28 May 2003); Rogan, "*A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny*," 136; "WACS Shiver in Paris: Winter in the Fuel-Less French Capital Makes Life Cold and Uncomfortable for the Army's Girls," *Life*, 26 March 1945, 110-112;

WACs began serving in the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO) by May of 1944. Initially stationed in New Guinea, the Philippines, and Calcutta, women serving in the PTO faced more primitive conditions than women stationed in the ETO, as well as increased restrictions regarding off-duty activities and interactions with male servicemen. In order to “protect” women from servicemen starved for the companionship of an American woman, Army regulations often locked women within barbed-wire compounds composed of primitive housing or tent cities, except when under armed guard or traveling to a pre-approved activity. Women often complained of being treated like children or convicts. In addition, WACs faced the inherent dangers in transportation and primitive living conditions intrinsic to overseas service in the Pacific. As a result, WACs concerned for their safety often armed themselves with knives and machetes acquired during their travels. Evacuations of WACs due to poor health reinforced criticisms of WAC deployment in the PTO. Women worked long hours and complained of sleep deprivation due to the excessive heat. Many WACs experienced extreme weight loss while assigned to the PTO. Disease spread rapidly in the heat and humidity of the Pacific. WACs returning from service in the PTO hardly resembled the wholesome image of the American WAC promoted by War Department leaders.⁸⁴

The deployment of African-American WAC members to overseas service exposed many of the problems inherent in the segregationist policies of the American military.

“WAAC/WAC World War II Statistics,” Army Women’s Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia, www.awm.lee.army.mil/WAC.strength.htm (accessed 28 May 2003); “Hobby’s Army,” *Newsweek*, 17 January 1944, Vol. XLIII, No. 3, 57.

⁸⁴ Litoff and Smith, *We’re in This War, Too*, 178, 184, 198; Rogan, “*A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny*,” 136, 143; Judith Bellafaire, “The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service,” CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Barbara Lewis Burger, “Women at War: Still Pictures Relating to U.S. Women in the Military During World War II,” in *A Woman’s War Too: U.S. Women in the Military in World War II*. Ed by Paula Nassen Poulos. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1996), 285-286; Weise, *The Good Soldier*, 59, 78, 197, 201; Brion, *Lady GI*, 108-109, 116-118, 145-146.

Initially, WAC directives prohibited assignment of African-American units to overseas assignments. Hobby cited potential risks with placement of “uncontrolled small units near male Negro troops,” as well as the challenge of finding separate facilities for African-American units, as valid arguments against their deployment. Only the pressures of African-American special interest groups in the United States forced the Army to deploy African-American women to the ETO. WAC leaders transferred the 6888th Postal Battalion, composed exclusively of African-American women, to Europe in February of 1945. Under the command of Major Charity Adams Early, the 6888th immediately began operations redirecting mail to American service personnel throughout the ETO. Working seven days per week, twenty-four hours per day in three shifts, the 6888th processed mail to an estimated seven million U.S. servicemen. With few documented problems and a record of efficiency, the 6888th contributed positively to the image of mature efficiency cultivated by WAC leaders. In addition, they proved the ignorance of prejudicial policies in the United States.⁸⁵

Despite the success of the 6888th, WAC leadership limited deployment of additional African-American WACs to overseas posts, although a limited number served in Liberia. Although African-American interest groups lobbied WAC headquarters for deployment of African-American WACs to the PTO, no such deployments ensued. Historian Mattie Treadwell attributed this situation to the problems encountered by the WACs already stationed in the PTO and the potential difficulties involved with continuing segregationist

⁸⁵ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 599-600; Litoff and Smith, *We're in This War, Too*, 171; Francine D'Amico and Laurie Weinstein, “Military Prostitutes and the Hypersexualization of Military Women,” in *Gender Camouflage: Women and the U.S. Military*, (New York and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), 148-149, 151.

policies under extremely primitive conditions. The war ended before special interest groups achieved any breakthroughs in the PTO policy toward African-American WACs.⁸⁶

As the war in Europe ground to a conclusion, the majority of WACs stationed in the United States and overseas began preparations for a return to civilian life. “V-E Day” ended official combat operations in Europe. Army leaders lowered the number of WAC members authorized for overseas service to seven thousand. The process of decommissioning proved long and arduous, as WAC members anxiously anticipated a discharge from the Army and a return to civilian life. In reality, few Americans, male or female, joined the Army during World War II in order to secure permanent careers in the military. Most women joined for the duration, not for a long-term career. Once discharged, WACs received \$300.00 mustering out pay and a one-way ticket home, as well as a Honorable Discharge and a certificate detailing qualifications and training acquired while enlisted in the WAC. Weary from the upheaval of war, most WACs anticipated a return to the security of traditional American society.⁸⁷

Colonel Hobby, the vivacious director of the WAC, grew markedly older and weaker in 1945. Her health rapidly deteriorated, leading to her resignation in July. Her contribution to the war effort and her contributions to the progress of women’s rights received special recognition after the war. Foreign countries, as well as universities, acknowledged her

⁸⁶ “A Company of Negro WAACs was Reviewed by the Hon. Lester A. Walton, U.S. Minister to Liberia, Recently on a Visit to an American Camp Near Monrovia [Liberia]. The WAACs are Shown as They Lined Up for Review,” ca. 1941-1945, ARC #535837, Still Pictures Records, Licon, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), National Archives at College Park, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD; Threadwell, 600-601.

⁸⁷ Letter dated 26 July 1945, Letter dated 10 May 1945, Letter dated 11 September 1945, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and official documents, MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 3, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University; Pollard, *Laugh, Cry and Remember*, 211; “WAAC/WAC World War II Statistics,” Army Women’s Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia, www.awm.lee.Army.mil/WAC.strength.htm (accessed 28 May 2003); Letter dated 14 June 1996, June Cotter Papers, MSS. 435C, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University; Robinson, *The Gaylord WACs*, 204; Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriot Era*, 45.

contributions with medals and honorary degrees. Hobby's hand-picked replacement, Colonel Westray B. Boyce assumed command of WAC operations, impressing corps members with her unassuming manner. WACs praised her friendly demeanor and appreciated the intelligent questions she asked concerning their welfare. Like Hobby before her, Boyce enthusiastically promoted the accomplishments of the WAC.⁸⁸

Conscientious WAC officers focused on training women for post-war employment and the return to civilian life. WACs enrolled in courses designed to prepare them for civilian life during their off-duty hours. They studied subjects such as foreign language, typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, fashion design, and public relations – all classes that conformed to traditional employment patterns for women. WACs preparing for discharge also received a copy of a publication entitled, “Put Your Affairs In Order.” This publication, distributed by the Army, advised women of the requirements of discharge, explained the rights of discharged WACs, and detailed benefits available to veterans.⁸⁹

As WACs joined servicemen returning to the United States following the surrender of Japan, Army and media sources began preparing the public for their return. Media reports indicated that women longed to return to traditional roles as wives and mothers. Their wartime dedication and service assumed anomalous connotations. Journalists now assured the public that women retained their femininity despite their experiences. Corporal Patricia Kair, a WAC recruiter in New York City, proclaimed that like “almost every other girl who

⁸⁸ William P. Hobby, Jr., “Oveta Culp Hobby,” *The Handbook of Texas Online*, Copyright 1997, www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/HH/fho86.html (accessed 28 May 2003); Brion, *Lady GI*, 158-159; Letter dated 26 July 1945, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and official documents, MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 3, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University.

⁸⁹ Weise, *The Good Soldier*, 69; Letter dated 26 July 1945, Letter dated 10 May 1945; Letter dated 11 September 1945, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and official documents, MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 3, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University; “Put Your Affairs in Order” with Cover Letter, Edith M. Loughlin Carter Papers, Letters and official documents, MSS. 117, Box 1, Fld. 3, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University.

is a WAC now, I want to settle down and have a family and become a civilian non-entity after the war is over.”⁹⁰ Women wrote letters home expressing an eagerness to return to civilian life. Many WACs planned to use their wartime savings and GI benefits to finance post-war lives, often procuring VA loans for new homes.⁹¹

A significant minority of WACs hoped to remain in the Army after the war. African-American Private Thelma Giddings explained to journalist Beatrice Berg that she hoped to remain a surgical technician in the Army, instead of returning to domestic service. Giddings’ desire to remain in the Army underscored the limited opportunities available to minority women before and after the war. Like many women, Giddings hoped to utilize her wartime experiences to build a better post-war life.⁹²

During the war, three WACs received the Air Medal, ten women received the Soldier’s Medal for heroic deeds in non-combat actions, and sixteen women received Purple Hearts. Of those women receiving Purple Hearts, the majority earned their awards from injuries sustained in assaults from V-1 bombs while stationed in London. A total of 657 WACs received service medals and citations for service during World War II, overwhelmingly in the form of Bronze Stars and Good Conduct Medals.⁹³

Despite the discharge of thousands of WACs, their value as members of the American military survived the war in the minds of many American military leaders, prompting the Army to maintain a small contingent of WAC volunteers following the war. Several women

⁹⁰ Greenbaum, “Winning Recruits for WACS,” 12X.

⁹¹ Litoff and Smith, *We’re in This War, Too*, 91; Greenbaum, “Winning Recruits for WACS,” 12X; “When GI Girls Return,” 40; Weise, *The Good Soldier*, 69; Alsmeyer, “Those Unseen, Unheard Arkansas Women: WAC, WAVES, and Women Marines of World War II,” 19.

⁹² Litoff and Smith, *We’re in This War, Too*, 92; “When GI Girls Return,” 40.

⁹³ Judith Bellafaire, “The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service,” CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.Army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Separation with Honorable Discharge, Bess Darby Papers, MSS. 624C, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University; Treadwell, *The Women’s Army Corps*, 774.

received assignments in occupied Japan following that nation's surrender in 1945. As of December 1946, 3,342 WAC members remained stationed in overseas theaters. While the Army establishment confined post-war WAC programs to limited numbers, the WAC remained an active member of the military establishment, allowing for efficacious integration of future female enlistment into the Army.⁹⁴

Following the war, Eisenhower testified to the efficacy and success of the WAC program. Although he acknowledged his opposition to the corps before the war, "every phase of the record they compiled during the war convinced me of the error of my first reaction."⁹⁵ Predictably, other Army leaders disagreed with Eisenhower's assessment. General H. W. Baird, head of Far East Forces, acknowledged that WACs contributed to the war effort. Nevertheless, he argued that the difficulties of accommodating WACs outweighed their contribution. On 2 June 1948, Congress voted to allow women in the regular Army and reserves. The war record of WAC achievements effectively demonstrated the advantages garnered from corps service.⁹⁶

The implementation of WAC legislation and the response of American society to women enlisted in the military exposed tightly-held ideologies regarding the role of women in society. The War Department and advocates of WAAC/WAC legislation understood that only an organization promoting women in socially acceptable occupations could win Congressional approval and public support. By fashioning the WAAC as an extension of feminine roles into the military establishment, Congressman Rogers, Oveta Culp Hobby, and

⁹⁴ Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," 322; Litoff and Smith, *We're in This War, Too*, 181; Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 728-734, 772.

⁹⁵ Rogan, "*A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny*," 146.

⁹⁶ Rogan, "*A Debt to Democracy, a Date with Destiny*," 145-146; Alsmeyer, "Those Unseen, Unheard Arkansas Women: WAC, WAVES, and Women Marines of World War II," 19.

General George Marshall successfully shepherded the legislation through Congress and established the corps. Large numbers of women responded, joining the Army for a variety of reasons. Some women cited patriotic motivations, some women recognized the opportunity to improve their lives economically, and other women simply yearned for adventure. Whatever their motivation, they contributed to the development of an innovative organization determined to preserve the dignity of women while aiding the nation during a period of crisis. Their dedication paved the way for American women eager to accept the responsibilities of citizenship by defending their nation.

The WAC, as the “first” organization to work with the military in an official capacity, far exceeded the expectations of its supporters. Veteran’s overwhelmingly looked back with pride at their service in the Army – with justification. They performed their duties with little attention to glamour or public accolades. The WAC contributed on a much larger scale to the operations of the service than other women’s reserve and appealed to a larger demographic than other services. They served successfully in traditional and non-traditional roles, expanding the opportunities open to women in the military, as well as in American society. When the war ended, the women of the WAC could boast that they contributed to the Allied victory. Nevertheless, the WAC also suffered from their pioneering efforts. The Army’s initial grudging acceptance of the corps and failure to aggressively promote the WAC in its formative years allowed critics to level charges of ineptitude and promiscuity where none existed. The WACs enlistment of personnel with a wide variety of backgrounds and educational levels, while democratic in nature and still more stringent than requirements for drafted male personnel, allowed for a poor image of the corps. Images of women marching across military posts in ill-fitting, drab uniforms in many cases compared

unfavorably to photographs of young women training on college campuses or working in naval offices in Washington, D.C., far from a military base and dressed in crisp white uniforms. Although no critic penned the term “lower class” when referring to the WAC, the onslaught of negative press, in contrast to the comparative dearth of the same in regards to other women’s reserves, clearly indicates that the perception existed in comparison to other services. As a result, the legacy of the WAC remains mixed. In reality, it served as a resounding success by dedicated women determined to challenge themselves and society by joining the military. On the other hand, the reputation of the WAC remained tainted by the accusations and assumptions of uninformed, and at times malicious, Americans determined to confine women to traditional roles.

CHAPTER 2
AMAZONS OF THE AIR:
WOMEN IN THE ARMY AIR CORPS

The development, operation, and discharge of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) during World War II followed a path distinctly different from other women's service organizations. As historian Molly Merryman demonstrates in her book detailing the rise and fall of the WASP, the women involved not only volunteered to serve with the military; they did so in an occupation perceived by many as a distinctly masculine field – and an elite one at that. While women in other military branches served primarily in roles that conformed to contemporary gender constructs, they served in one of the most coveted jobs in the military establishment. WASP performed exceptionally well in an occupation perceived as glamorous and adventurous regardless of gender. Their work proved valuable to the war effort and often involved great risk. Thirty-eight women lost their lives while serving in the WASP organization. While the WASP confronted many of the same gender issues that other women's service organizations encountered, the negative press that emerged late in the war regarding the WASP had less to do with their skills or their sex than with the desire of civilian male pilots to avoid combat in the Pacific. Nevertheless, the attackers used gender rather than military expediency to push WASP from their coveted positions. The history of the WASP not only demonstrates their courage and skill, but also illustrates how far 1940s America was willing to stretch pre-war gender constructs to meet the needs of a two-front war. In addition, an examination of WASP history and the response of the American public to the female pilots raises intriguing questions regarding who was allowed to push the

boundaries of social constructs – and who was not. As exceptional women, did their status as an elite group exempt them from much of the criticism leveled against the WAC by conservative elements of society?¹

Just settling into his position as Chief of the Army Air Corps in September of 1938, General Henry "Hap" Arnold faced the daunting task of building an organization able to engage the German Air Force in the event of war. Germany's invasion of Austria in 1938 and the annexation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia following the signing of the Munich agreement left many in Washington anxious. Although the majority of Americans remained firmly committed to political disengagement, other American leaders doubted that this stance would remain a viable option given the aggressive nature of Hitler and the German state. Hitler's pilots had proven their expertise in the Spanish Civil War. Germany's ally, Japan, had utilized its air forces effectively in its continuing conquest of Asia. As a result, President Roosevelt planned for expansion of the Air Force in preparation for any future hostilities. Roosevelt directed Arnold to expand the number of trained pilots from 300 to 1,200. The president also planned an ambitious program to build thousands of new planes. Future events proved even these estimates inadequate for the task at hand. The Lend-Lease program and the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor led to calls for the production of even greater numbers of aircraft and trained pilots to fly them.

As Arnold prepared to expand the Air Force, American women quietly joined the effort to transform American men into trained fighter pilots. Thirty-five women served as instructors for the Civil Aeronautics Administration's Pilot Training program. One young

¹ Linda Grant DePauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 256; Molly Merryman, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of World War II*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2-3; "The Thirty-Eight: Above and Beyond," MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files Ba-Fifi, Folder: Fatalities, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

pilot, when questioned about his female instructor, replied, “Well, a woman taught me to walk – why shouldn’t one teach me to fly?” Women working for the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) also served as Junior Aircraft Communicators, as well as Airport Traffic Controllers. John Morris, Director of CAA Pilot Training, was quoted before the war as saying, “Before we get through this war, we’re going to need all the men and women instructors we can get.” Unfortunately, the CAA would prove significantly less supportive of female pilots in 1944.²

In January of 1939, Arnold commanded 1,650 officers, 16,000 enlisted men, and fewer than 2,000 planes, not all of which functioned as combat aircraft. By the time the Japanese thrust the United States into a two-front war in 1941, Arnold had expanded the Army Air Forces to 22,000 officers, 270,000 enlisted men, and 10,000 planes, most of them transport and cargo aircraft. As American factories retooled for production of aircraft to support the war effort, Arnold found himself still woefully short on pilots to ferry planes from factories to military bases. In 1942 alone, over 47,800 planes rolled off American assembly lines. By 1943, that number increased to 86,000. Arnold believed the solution to his dilemma rested with the Air Corps Ferrying Command, initially created in 1941 to ferry aircraft from American factories to British bases overseas. In July of 1942, the Air Corps Ferrying Command changed its name to the Air Transport Command (ATC) and expanded its operations.³

² Ernestine Evans, “The Sky Is No Limit,” *The Independent Woman*, Vol. 21, No. 11, Nov. 1942, 326-328, 346, MSS 250, Folder: 1942 – November, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “Top Flight,” *Harper’s Bazaar*, June 1941, MSS 250, Folder: 1941 – May and June, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Leslie Haynesworth and David Toomey, *Amelia Earhart’s Daughters: The Wild and Glorious Story of American Women Aviators from World War II to the Dawn of the Space Age*. (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1998), 24.

³ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 8-9; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart’s Daughters*, 24-25.

The expansion of the ATC only magnified the continued need for more pilots. As a result, the ATC relied heavily on civilian pilots to fill the gap. Female aviators and women's organizations, such as the Women Flyer's of America, began lobbying for jobs flying for the Civil Aeronautics Administration. In her daily newspaper column, Eleanor Roosevelt championed the cause of women flyers, writing that "women pilots, in this particular case, are a weapon waiting to be used." Within months, the ATC hired over 3,500 civilian pilots, many of whom later received commissions into the Army Air Force. When the war ended in 1945, records indicated that ATC pilots transported over 21,092 planes to foreign destinations and delivered 291,525 planes to bases within the United States during the war. Of these pilots, 141 women received assignments to the ATC, delivering 12,652 planes to domestic destinations. These aviators joined Allied women in England and the Soviet Union by serving their nation in the air during the war.⁴

The WASP program owed its existence to two experimental programs begun in the fall of 1942. The first, led by experienced pilot Nancy Harkness Love, the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) grew to a force of twenty-eight before it merged with the WASP program. Love enjoyed a reputation as an experienced pilot with twelve years in the cockpit. At 16 years old, the then Nancy Harkness obtained her private pilot's license.

⁴ Female pilots sparked some controversy in England as well as in the United States. British journalist C.G. Grey, writing for *The Aeroplane* magazine in 1939, argued that "The menace is the woman who thinks she ought to be flying a high-speed bomber when she really has not the intelligence to scrub the floor of a hospital." Commander Pauline Gower, director of the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) recalled after the war that ATA pilots tried to counter bias against female pilots by compiling an exemplary service record. At the height of the war, over 100 women flew for the ATA in Britain, including Americans, Austrians, South Africans, New Zealanders, Poles, and one Chilean pilot. Russian women also earned an impressive reputation as combat pilots in WWII. Valerie Moolman, *The Epic of Flight: Women Aloft*. (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1981), 135-139; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 10-11; "Feminine Fliers," *Newsweek*, December 1, 1941, MSS 250, Folder: 1941- December, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day," 1 September 1942, Texas Woman's University, www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/myday_eleanor.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); "How Women Flyers Fight Russia's Air War," *Aviation*, July 1944, 116-117, 255, Folder: 1944-July, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

Two years later, while attending Vassar College, she obtained commercial and transport licenses. Forced to leave Vassar due to financial stress during the Great Depression, Harkness landed a job as a sales representative for Beechcraft, a manufacturer of small planes. In 1935, Phoebe Omlie, special assistant for intelligence at the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, offered Harkness a job working for the Work Progress Administration's Airmarking Project. Harkness traveled the country convincing town leaders to mark the roofs of prominent buildings with the town's name. Such markings, utilized extensively in World War II, facilitated the navigation of aircraft across the United States. In 1935, Harkness married Robert Love, a Reserve Officer in the Army Air Corps. After their marriage, she and her husband operated an aviation company, Inter City Airways, in Boston, where Harkness Love flew as a pilot for the company. Inter City Airways participated in the Lend-Lease program by ferrying aircraft from the United States to Canada. In 1937, she placed in the Amelia Earhart Women's Open at the National Air Races. In addition, Harkness Love served as a test pilot for the United States Bureau of Air Commerce before the war.⁵

In 1940, Nancy Harkness Love presented a program to Colonel Robert Olds of the Army Air Corps Plans Division in which female pilots transported planes from factories to military bases, both within the United States and to Allied bases overseas. She claimed to know at least forty-nine female pilots qualified to participate in such a program. Initially, Olds tabled the proposal. He doubted there existed enough support for such a program as long as the United States remained officially neutral in the ongoing European conflict. Only

⁵ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 7, 11-12; Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 143-144; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart's Daughters*, 26-27; Karen Donnelly, *American Woman Pilots of World War II* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2004), 12; Rowland Carter, "The Ladies Join the Air Forces," *Flying*, Vol. XXXI, No. 6, Dec. 1942, p. 67, MSS 250, Folder: 1942 – December, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

after the bombing of Pearl Harbor would the proposal resurface. Colonel William Tunner, a colleague of Colonel Bob Love, learned that the colonel's wife enjoyed a reputation as an accomplished pilot. Tunner quickly hit upon a plan to solve one of his most pressing dilemmas. As head of the ATC, Tunner grew increasingly frustrated that the government drafted his most experienced male pilots into the Army Air Force as combat pilots. Consequently, new aircraft languished on runways due to a lack of qualified pilots to ferry the planes to military bases and transport facilities. As Cornelia Fort later observed, "delivering a trainer to Texas may be as important as delivering a bomber to Africa if you take the long view." Combat pilots without planes to fly served little purpose. However, female pilots, excluded from the draft, could provide the ATC with a stable work force exempt from the draft. Tunner met with Nancy Harkness Love and convinced her to draft a new proposal utilizing female pilots. He submitted the proposal to Brigadier General Harold George. George approved the program while Arnold recovered from a heart attack in 1942. Nancy Harkness Love, at 28-years old, became Director of the WAFS.⁶

Nancy Harkness Love initially proposed that the ferrying service hire women on the same basis as male pilots. According to her proposal, women would boast the same qualifications, earn the same salary, and participate in the same training program that male pilots undertook. Despite her recommendations, the ferrying command required far more of

⁶ Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 13-15; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 7, 11-12; Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 143-147; "Women's Airforce Service Pilots: WAFS," Texas Woman's University, <http://www.twu.edu/wasp/wafspage.htm> (accessed 30 July 2007); Cornelia Fort, "At the Twilight's Last Gleaming," *Eyes of the Eagle: Magazine for the 552nd Air Control Wing*, Vol. XXVI, No. 3, March 2004, 8; Rowland Carter, "The Ladies Join the Air Forces," *Flying*, Vol. XXXI, No. 6, Dec. 1942, 67, MSS 250, Folder: 1942 - December, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Nancy Harkness Love's husband, Lt. Col. Robert M. Love, served as Deputy Chief of Staff for the ATC; Memorandum Regarding Hiring Civilian Women Pilots, 15 September 1942, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderD.pdf (11 February 2008; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart's Daughters*, 43-44; Jean Hascall Cole, *Women Pilots of World War II*. (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1992), 2; Ann B. Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles: A Woman Military Test Pilot in World War II*. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 36-37.

female pilots than males, including more flight time and a high school diploma. These requirements made the female pilots more qualified than many male pilots in the ferrying command or in the Air Force, which still scrambled for male pilots to train for combat. Harkness Love's group remained relatively small, due in part to regulations requiring only volunteers between the ages of 21 and 35, with a high-school education, a minimum of five hundred hours flying time, a commercial pilots license, experience with cross-country flights, a 200-hp engine rating, and American citizenship. They reportedly earned \$3,000.00 per year as employees of the Civil Service. In addition, WAFS remained segregated into all-female squadrons. Qualified female pilots across the United States received letters and surveys requesting information regarding their qualifications to serve as pilots. Initially, twenty-eight women, including Love, met the stringent requirements and joined the WAFS. Dubbed "the Originals," this group of distinguished aviators included Gertrude Meserve, an experienced pilot who could boast of training hundreds of Harvard and MIT students to fly. Meserve also served two years as a Civilian Pilot Instructor for the Civil Aeronautics Administration. Betty Giles, a trained nurse, boasted ten years of flying experience and served as the president of the Ninety-Nine's, an organization of female aviators. Teresa James enjoyed a respectable reputation as an accomplished instructor in aerial acrobatics. Cornelia Fort also began her war-time career in the WAFS. Fort ran an aviation school in Hawaii before the war. On December 7, 1941, Fort was giving lessons when she spotted a plane bearing the Rising Sun emblem. "He passed so close under us that our celluloid windows rattled violently." Fort quickly took control of the plane and veered sharply away as the enemy peppered her plane with machine-gun fire. She landed safely, but two other planes from Fort's school failed to return. The planes and their pilots washed ashore weeks

later, riddled with bullet holes. Despite the enthusiastic enlistment of skilled pilots, Love intended for the WAFS to remain a small organization of highly-qualified women supplementing the all-male ferrying units. According to Fort, all WAFS pilots “realized what a spot we were on. We had to deliver the goods or else. Or else there wouldn’t ever be another chance for women pilots in any part of the service.” Following their acceptance into the WAFS, women received additional training flying military aircraft, as well as training in military procedures and regulations. Despite the orientation toward military protocols, the WAFS remained a civilian organization.⁷

WAFS began by flying Piper Cubs and PT-19s across the United States. In January of 1943, Love’s pilots split into four squadrons, with one squadron flying out of New Castle, Delaware. One squadron was based in Dallas, Texas, while Romulus, Michigan and Long Beach, California served as home for the two remaining squadrons. Before the war ended,

⁷ “Women’s Airforce Service Pilots: WAFS,” Texas Woman’s University, <http://www.twu.edu/wasp/wafspage.htm> (accessed 30 July 2007); Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 7, 11-12; Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 143-147. Approximately 100 American women possessed the skills and flight hours necessary for membership in the WAFS. In the fall of 1942, twenty-three women from across America, boasting an average of 1,100 hours of flying experience, reported for duty at the New Castle Army Base in Delaware; Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 14; “STATS: WASP Entrance Requirements,” Texas Woman’s University, <http://www.twu.edu/wasp/statspage.htm> (accessed 20 July 2007); Cornelia Fort, “At the Twilight’s Last Gleaming,” *Eyes of the Eagle: Magazine for the 552nd Air Control Wing*, Vol. XXVI, No. 3, March 2004, 8-9, MSS 250, Bos: Biofiles A-BA, Folder: Bernice L. Batten, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas. This article was printed posthumously as a first-hand account of why Fort joined the WAFS. Fort wrote the article two weeks before her death in 1943. Fort became the first American female pilot to die flying a military aircraft on 21 March 1943. One of the most accomplished female pilots in the WAFS, Fort accumulated 1,100 hours of flight time before her death; Ernestine Evans, “The Sky Is No Limit,” *The Independent Woman*, Vol. 21, No. 11, Nov. 1942, 326-328, 346, MSS 250, Folder: 1942 – November, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Rowland Carter, “The Ladies Join the Air Forces,” *Flying*, Vol. XXXI, No. 6, Dec. 1942, p. 67, 88, 96, MSS 250, Folder: 1942 – December, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “The WAFS,” *Look*, Feb. 9, 1943, p. 17-21, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Memorandum Regarding Hiring Civilian Women Pilots, 15 September 1942, [Online archival collection], [cited 11 February 2008]. Available at the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers at www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderD.pdf; Letter and Survey to All Women Holders of Licenses, 29 July 1941, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderA.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008).

female pilots flew virtually every type of aircraft the Army possessed, including P-38s, P-51s, B-29 Superfortresses, and P-59 jets.⁸

The second program, begun in September 1942, sprang from the imagination of famous female aviatrix Jackie Cochran. Cochran's reputation as a pilot remained above reproach. Before the war, Cochran enjoyed a recording-breaking career in aeronautics, winning several trophies for her flying abilities. Nevertheless, Cochran remained a controversial figure in American society throughout the war. Beautiful and glamorous, Cochran seemed larger than life. Critics charged that Cochran, married to millionaire Floyd Oldum, flaunted her luxurious lifestyle at a time when most Americans lived modestly amid mandatory rationing. In fact, Cochran's life began far less auspiciously. Born to a poor family in Florida, Cochran spent her early years with a foster family. Her new family bordered on starvation for much of her childhood. Schooling also remained largely out of reach for the young girl. Young Jackie received only two years of formal education. When she turned eight years old, Cochran's family moved to Columbus, Georgia and the family secured jobs in cotton mills. There, eight year-old Jackie worked twelve-hour shifts for six cents per hour. She used her first paycheck to purchase a pair of shoes – her first. Soon, Cochran became self-supporting. When the mill closed, she began working in a beauty salon. There Cochran learned to cut and arrange hair. She continued working in the salon until she turned eighteen years old. She then applied for nurses training, working for three years to earn her license. Cochran's lack of education ultimately led her to fail her licensing

⁸ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 147; "Women's Airforce Service Pilots: WAFS," Texas Woman's University, <http://www.twu.edu/wasp/wafspage.htm> (accessed 30 July 2007); "Our Women Pilots," *Air Force: The Official Journal of the U.S. Army Air Forces*, Sept. 1943, 10, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – September, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Material for Annual Report, 25 November 1944, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderM.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008); Jan Churchill, *On Wings of War: Theresa James, Aviator*. (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1992), 112-113.

exam – she could read but not write well. Nevertheless, she found work in the office of a local physician. Unfortunately, Cochran found the life of a nurse in a small, economically depressed town bleak. She returned briefly to Florida, securing a partnership in a local salon. She soon tired of life in laid-back Pensacola and longed for excitement. Packing her bags, she moved to New York City, where she found a job at Antoine’s Salon, located in Saks Fifth Avenue department store. Ever restless, Cochran divided her time between Antoine’s New York and Miami salons. In Miami, Cochran met her future husband, Floyd Oldum. Cochran detailed her plans to start a business selling cosmetics and Oldum advised Cochran to take flying lessons in order to reach more customers. Cochran eagerly accepted Oldum’s advice and soon became an accomplished pilot.⁹

In 1937, Cochran entered the Bendix International Air Race, winning the women’s purse and finishing third overall, ahead of most male competitors. Avid for new challenges, Cochran entered many more races and set a national record by flying from New York to Miami in four hours. In 1938, Cochran again entered the Bendix International Air Race, finishing in first place – one hour ahead of her competition. Perhaps more significantly, Cochran had flown the prototype for the P-47 Thunderbird, a plane later used by the Allies in the European Theater. Cochran’s performance in the Bendix race convinced military leaders of the plane’s capabilities. Her victory over men who later became general officers in the Air Force convinced many military leaders, including Hap Arnold, of her potential contributions to the war effort. In 1941, Cochran received the honor of serving as National President of the

⁹ Cochran later sparked criticism in England by arriving at airfields via a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce, wearing a mink coat. British observers considered this display of wealth poor form at a time when many British citizens were experiencing severe food and clothing shortages. Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 141-143; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 7, 11-13; Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 28, 32-33; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart’s Daughters*, 5-7, 16; Elizabeth R. Valentine, “No 1 Woman Flier,” *The New York Times Magazine*, July 12, 1941, MSS 250, Folder: 1941- July, The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas.

Ninety-Nines. In addition, she became the first woman to fly a bomber across the Atlantic Ocean.¹⁰

Cochran's promotion of female participation in the war effort began in 1939, when Cochran wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt suggesting that female pilots might support the military in the event of war. In early 1941, Cochran submitted a more detailed proposal creating a force of female pilots to assume responsibility for all ferrying operations. The proposal met with significant resistance in Air Force circles. In addition, Air Force training programs overwhelmingly focused on the training of male combat pilots. The training of female pilots simply seemed unimportant compared with the training of male combat pilots. Nevertheless, Arnold realized that America might need trained female pilots in the future. As a result, Arnold suggested Cochran recruit and direct a small group of American women to transport planes for the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA).¹¹

Officers of the Royal Air Force Ferry Command responded enthusiastically to Arnold's proposal but stipulated exacting qualifications for applicants. If accepted into the ATA, the British offered American pilots \$4,000.00 yearly for their services. British officials warned; however, that conditions in wartime Britain made flying precarious. In the spring of 1942, Cochran accompanied twenty-five American pilots to England to join the ATA. Cochran signed a contract offering her services to the ATA until such time as the

¹⁰ Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 27-28; Barbara Selby, "The Fifinellas," *Flying*, Vol. XXXIV, N. 1, July, 1943, p. 76, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; Richard N. Cowell, "St. Louis WASP – They've a Sting All Their Own," MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; "Jackie Cochran Ends Service as 99 Head," MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.

¹¹ Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 36; Letter from H.S. Arnold to members of the WASP, 1 October 1944, MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files Ba-Fi, File: Deactivation, 20 December 1944, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; Barbara Selby, "The Fifinellas," *Flying*, Vol. XXXIV, N. 1, July, 1943, p. 76, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; Richard N. Cowell, "St. Louis WASP – They've a Sting All Their Own," publication unknown, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.

American Army Air Force requested her services. The remaining twenty-five American pilots signed eighteen-month contracts with the ATA. Most completed their contracts, with a few staying in the ATA for the duration of the war. A few American pilots suffered injuries while in Britain, while one pilot, Mary Nicholson, died in an accident. Cochran maintained a very public image while in England, hoping to generate support for female pilots at home. Media stories chronicled the progress of the American pilots and their flamboyant leader. Cochran seemed to thrive on the publicity. She boasted that American women serving in Britain flew the “hottest” planes. In December of 1942, she reported that one female pilot ferried over fifty *Hurricanes* and *Spitfires* into service in Britain. In July of 1941, *The New York Times Magazine*, ran an article on Jackie Cochran, outlining her work in Britain and publishing her thoughts regarding women in aviation. Journalist Elizabeth R. Valentine reported that Cochran dismissed the idea of women serving as combat pilots, quoting the famous aviatrix as responding “When women start fighting then something really ghastly will have happened to the world.” Peppered among a rendition of Cochran’s accomplishments were trivial comments regarding Cochran’s appearance and feminine pursuits (the author noted that Cochran had once won a crocheting contest). Valentine assured readers that Cochran “certainly is no feminist.” Crocheting skills notwithstanding, Cochran earned a reputation as a consummate female aviator. General Arnold, increasingly concerned over pilot shortages in the United States, soon advised Cochran that the Army might need female pilots to ferry planes and perform non-combat flying duties in the United States. After consultations with Cochran in England, Arnold suggested that she return to the United States and organize such a force. Cochran returned to the United States six months

later, tasked with creating a women's organization to serve with the Army Air Force in the event of war.¹²

After American entry into the war, Cochran submitted a more expansive proposal for a military program training female pilots, ultimately gaining approval for her plan from General Arnold. Cochran's plan envisioned a women's organization that not only ferried planes from factories to military bases, but ultimately allowed female pilots to handle all military flights within the United States, enabling the Air Force to assign all male pilots to overseas duty. In 1941, 2,100 American women held pilot's licenses. Many of these women hailed from upper class homes, although women from working-class families often obtained a pilots license through the Civilian Pilot Training Program. Experienced pilots received questionnaires in the mail, requesting detailed information regarding their qualifications and availability for piloting positions. Soon rumors began to spread of government plans to utilize female pilots in support of the war effort. Although eventually a firm supporter of female pilots working with the military, Arnold later confessed that he "didn't know in 1941

¹² While on assignment transporting a single-engine training plane, Nicholson's aircraft crashed after it's propeller flew off in flight. Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 13; Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 141-143; Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 28, 32-33; Elizabeth R. Valentine, "No 1 Woman Flier," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 12, 1941, MSS 250, Folder: 1941- July, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; Rowland Carter, "The Ladies Join the Air Forces," *Flying*, Vol. XXXI, No. 6, Dec. 1942, 96, MSS 250, Folder: 1942 – December, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; Barbara Selby, "The Fifinellas," *Flying*, Vol. XXXIV, N. 1, July, 1943, 77, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; Richard N. Cowell, "St. Louis WASP – They've a Sting All Their Own," MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; Press Release Regarding Jacqueline Cochran's Appointment as Director of Women's Flying Training in Army, War Department Bureau of Public Relations, 14 September 1942, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderCC.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008); Form Letter Regarding the British Air Transport Auxiliary, undated, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderG.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008); Letter from Jacqueline Cochran to Major General B.K. Yount, Re: Jacqueline Cochran's Employment with the British Air Transport Auxiliary, 10 February 1943, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderE.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008); Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*; 112; C. Kay Larson, *Till I Come Marching Home: A Brief History of American Women in World War II*. (Pasadena, Maryland: The Minerva Center, 1995), 48; Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 36-37.

whether a slip of a young girl could fight the controls of a B-17 in the heavy weather they would naturally encounter in operational flying.” To his credit, Arnold elected to take a chance on the program. On 15 September 1942, Arnold approved the plan and appointed Cochran director of the trial program, known as the Women’s Flying Training Department (WFTD). Cochran proclaimed the program as “the greatest opportunity ever offered women pilots anywhere in the world.”¹³

Initially, Cochran’s fledgling organization found temporary training facilities at Howard Hughes Field in Houston, Texas. Classes began on 15 November 1942. Hughes Field, a municipal airport, housed Aviation Enterprises, a civilian aviation school before the war. Contracted by the Army, the school provided instruction to WFTD volunteers during their stay in Houston. Army oversight insured that the women received the training necessary to pilot military aircraft and familiarized women with Army Air Force regulations. Captain Paul C. Garrett, commander of the training school, advised new recruits to forget any

¹³ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 7, 11-13, 17; Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 13; Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 15, 33; Letter from H.S. Arnold to Members of the WASP, 1 October 1944, MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files Ba-Fi, File: Deactivation, 20 December 1944, The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas; “U.S. Hints at Forming a Flying Corps of Women to Ferry Planes to Airfield,” MSS 250, Folder: 1942 (no date), The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas; “Miss Cochran Ready to Organize 1500 Women Pilots,” MSS 250, Folder: 1942 (no date), The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas; “Aviatrix Calls for Women’s Air Corps Unit,” MSS 250, Folder: 1942 (no date), The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas; “Women’s Place in Air Defense,” MSS 250, Folder: 1942 (no date), The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas; “Women Aviators Praised As Teachers,” MSS 250, Folder: 1942 (no date), The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas; “Women Fliers Eager to Give Talents to U.S.,” MSS 250, Folder: 1942 (no date), The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas; Rowland Carter, “The Ladies Join the Air Forces,” *Flying*, Vol. XXXI, No. 6, Dec. 1942, 96, MSS 250, Folder: 1942 – December, The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas; Barbara Selby, “The Fifinellas,” *Flying*, Vol. XXXIV, N. 1, July 1943, 76-77, 166-167, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Women’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas; Press Release Regarding Jacqueline Cochran’s Appointment as Director of Women’s Flying Training in Army, War Department Bureau of Public Relations, 14 September 1942, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderCC.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008); Memorandum from General H.H. Arnold Appointing Jacqueline Cochran Director of the Office of Special Assistant for Women Pilots, 21 June 1943, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderHH.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008); Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 37.

notion of themselves as “pretty hot pilots” and learn to fly “the way the Army flies.” Nevertheless, the school appeared ill-prepared for WFTD training when the first class reported to the airfield. Equipment necessary for instruction in navigation and night flying required a Link trainer, a device the school initially lacked. Over time, the Army procured the equipment necessary to train the WFTD pilots.¹⁴

Requirements for WFTD volunteers initially stipulated pilots between the ages of 21 and 35 years of age with at least 200 hours of flight time before enlistment. The minimum age requirements for WASP would later be lowered to 18 years of age. Furthermore, WASP leaders lowered requirements for flight hours completed before enlistment to 35 hours, a change that would later provide fodder for critics of the program. Nevertheless, an unidentified Army spokesman commented that “The girls are a carefully-selected group to start with. They’re serious-minded young women whose ambition is to learn to fly and they go into the service determined to take advantage of the training offered them. They’re not the play-girl type or they wouldn’t be here.”¹⁵

The first trainees received little support from the Army – financially or emotionally. Women traveled to Houston at their own expense, and the initial class either secured their own lodging or received billeting assignments at the Rice Hotel. As civilians, they initially received no uniforms and many reported for duty in blue jeans or men’s trousers. In December, a shipment of khaki jumpsuits arrived for WFTD trainees. Unfortunately, they

¹⁴ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 147; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 17; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 113-114; Churchill, *On Wings of War*, 41-42.

¹⁵ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 147; Richard N. Cowell, “St. Louis WASP – They’ve a Sting All Their Own,” MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 113.

came in men's sizes far too large for many of the petite pilots. The jumpsuits soon earned the nickname "zoot suits" for their baggy fit.¹⁶

Volunteers began routine training with an early morning drive in the back of an Army truck. Dubbed the "Fifinellas" because of their official Disney-designed insignia – a female gremlin - women divided their time between flight training and ground-school instruction. WFTD trainees frequently found themselves flying obsolete and poorly maintained aircraft. Cochran referred to the planes at the Houston field as "claptrap equipment." In ground school, women learned everything from meteorology to engine repair and disassembly. After a full day of instruction, they assembled for an hour of calisthenics, followed by a hot meal. Finally, Army trucks reappeared and transported the women back to their lodgings. On 24 April 1943, the first WFTD class graduated with ceremonies at Ellington Field in Houston. Dorothy Young proudly received her wings, becoming the first graduate of the program and the organizations first wing commander.¹⁷

In May of 1943, the WFTD moved to new quarters at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas. Located in West Texas, amid scrub brush and mesquite trees, Avenger Field lacked any semblance of luxury or glamour. Dust storms appeared often, and the hot Texas summers made many recruits from cooler climates miserable. Despite its isolated locale and the scorching summer sun, Avenger Field figured fondly in the memories of many former pilots. A training program for male pilots already operated at Avenger Field. In order to

¹⁶ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 147, Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 35; "Girl Pilots," *Life*, Vol. 14, No. 29, 19 July 1943, 76; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 17; Barbara Selby, "The Fifinellas," *Flying*, Vol. XXXIV, N. 1, July, 1943, p. 166, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart's Daughters*, 58-61.

¹⁷ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 149; Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 35; Barbara Selby, "The Fifinellas," *Flying*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, July 1943, 76-77, 166, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; John Stuart, "The WASP," *Flying*, January, 1944, 163, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – January, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart's Daughters*, 61-62; Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 41-42.

avoid controversy, the Air Force elected to eliminate the program for male trainees and limit enrollment in the Sweetwater flight school to women. Commanded by Army personnel, the airfield adhered to strict Army discipline, although civilian instructors continued to train women to fly according to Army regulations. Women lived in eight huts divided into barracks, with six pilots per room or “bay.” One larger building held classrooms for training and a “ready room,” where pilots prepared to fly their assigned routes. The Army also built a control tower and an airplane hanger. A secured gate restricted access in and out of Avenger Field, leading to the facility’s nickname, “Cochran’s Convent.” Cochran later recalled a number of “emergency landings” made by curious male pilots to Avenger Field. Air Force leaders soon warned male pilots against suspicious “emergencies” requiring stops at Avenger Field. WASP regulations also strictly forbade unapproved media contacts. Details of the program and the contributions of WASP remained largely protected from the general public. Regulations prohibited photographs of landing fields, aircraft, and installations without written consent from post intelligence officers. WASP overwhelmingly obeyed this directive. In part, this policy aimed to prevent media reports regarding the deaths of WASP. Cochran believed that such reports might lead to public outcries against the program. This policy, while limiting much negative publicity, meant that the public never developed a clear image of WASP objectives or successes. Invariably, some information did reach the public. Male servicemen occasionally discussed the program with the media. Servicemen at Camp Davis freely discussed their initial resistance to the program, as well as the complete transformation of many men into firm supporters of the WASP.¹⁸

¹⁸ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 149; Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 35-39; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 18, 29, 45. Plosser-Prince Air Academy ran the flight school for male cadets. Plosser-Prince also conducted the first training classes for women at Avenger Field. However, the Air Force elected not to renew the Plosser-Prince contract due to allegations of fraud. Subsequently, Aviation Enterprises conducted all

The women followed a strict routine as ordered by Cochran. At dawn, recruits marched to breakfast before heading to training classes, either in the classroom or on the flight line. As stipulated by Cochran, women followed a strict schedule based on the standard Army course. The only difference between the training of male and female pilots resulted from the omission of extensive gunnery and formation flying. When their 16-hour day ended, WASP gratefully marched back to their barracks to the sound of taps playing over the loud-speaker. "Light's Out" sounded at 9:00 p.m. and random bed checks insured against late-night trips to town.¹⁹

Cochran's insistence that female pilots adhere to military standards stood in stark contrast to their status as civilians. This contradiction resulted in many difficult obstacles in the day-to-day operation of the program. Regulations prohibited leaving the base without a pass. Infractions against regulations resulted in demerits. WASP received no health insurance and no death benefits. When a female pilot died, her coworkers collected donations in order to return the body to relatives. On the other hand, as volunteers, women could leave the service virtually at will. Additionally, the Army remained limited in doling out discipline to civilian employees, despite their military demeanor. Nevertheless, female

WASP classes at Avenger Field. Headquarters 318th Army Air Force Flying Training Detachment Army Air Forces Contact Flying School (Women), Avenger Field, Sweetwater, General Military Regulations, 14 July 1943, Texas Woman's University, http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/gen_mil_regs.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); "The Girls Make Good: Women Pilots Overcome Both Masculine Tradition and a Tough Flying Chore," MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; John Stuart, "The WASP," *Flying*, January, 1944, 73-74, 148, 163, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – January, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; General Arnold's son, Col. Wm. Bruce Arnold, later described his admiration for WASP serving with his unit at Camp Davis. "WASP Win 33 Year Battle For Vet Status," *Stars and Stripes*, 10 November 1977, No. 45, Wings Across America at http://www.westexas.tstc.edu/wasp/press_archives/stars77.pdf, (accessed 10 March 2008); Cole, *Women Pilots of World War II*, 24.

¹⁹ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 149; Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 35-37; Douglas Hinton, "The Right Stuff," *General Aviation News*, 6 December 2002, MSS 250, Box: BioFiles: A-BA, Folder: Leonora "Nonie" Anderson, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart's Daughters*, 78-79; Cole, *Women Pilots of World War II*, 2, 24, 25; Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 38, 41, 44.

volunteers demonstrated dedication to the program. The rate of attrition for the program held at approximately thirty-five percent, rates commiserate with that of male cadets in training.²⁰

After the move to Avenger Field, Cochran began to lobby for the integration of the WAFS pilots with her own trainees in the WFTD program. Combining the programs allowed for standardization of training and qualifications for female pilots serving with the Air Force. In addition, consolidation would facilitate the administration of ferrying assignments. As a result, the WAFS and the WFTD merged in August of 1943. Soon thereafter, the War Department announced that the new organization, serving with the Army Air Forces, would be known as the Women Airforce Service Pilots - the WASP. The Air Force organized the program without Congressional approval. Instead, Arnold utilized the War Department's authorization to use civilian pilots for domestic missions. Some accounts claimed that Love and Cochran competed bitterly over aspects of the merger. According to historian Molly Merryman, accounts of a fierce rivalry between Love and Cochran are exaggerated and lack substantial documentation. Both women initiated proposals through official channels before the war. Both women boasted significant experience as pilots. Significantly, both also represented strong, powerful women determined to advance their cause and aid their country during a period of conflict. Cochran received an appointment as Director of Women Pilots. Harkness Love subsequently served as the WASP executive assigned to the Air Transport Command's ferrying division.²¹

²⁰ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 149-150; Cole, *Women Pilots of World War II*, 1; Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 50.

²¹ Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart's Daughters*, 90; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 6-7, 14; Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 7, 34; Douglas Hinton, "The Right Stuff," *General Aviation News*, 6 December 2002, MSS 250, Box: BioFiles: A-BA, Folder: Leonora "Nonie" Anderson, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

Creation of the WASP program centered around three primary objectives. First, the WASP would allow deployment of male pilots to combat positions. Of course, this objective failed to please all male pilots, some of whom hoped to remain stateside, safe from the dangers of combat. A second objective aimed at forming the nucleus of a women's organization easily expandable in case of emergency. This second objective hinged on the women's ability to prove their proficiency and versatility as pilots. Finally, by taking the place of male pilots in non-combat positions, Arnold hoped to reduce the Air Forces' overall demand for the "cream of the manpower pool" in the United States.²²

The WASP never needed a recruitment campaign to attract volunteers. Personal calls and word-of-mouth, as well as media accounts of the program, attracted thousands of women. More than 25,000 women, with or without pilots licenses, volunteered for service with the WASP. Cochran and her staff of three assistants traveled across the country. They interviewed candidates, verified qualifications, and selected the final group of pilots for training. Many WASP candidates received personal telephone calls from Cochran, requesting their participation in the program. Katherine Landry later claimed that the thrill of flying military aircraft overcame her reservations. According to Landry, she "figured never again would this opportunity come along. I was in." WASP leaders accepted 1,830 women into the program, with 1,074 graduating from WASP training school.²³

²² Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 6-7, 11; Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 151; Letter from H.S. Arnold to members of the WASP, 1 October 1944, MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files Ba-Fi, File: Deactivation, 20 December 1944, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas.

²³ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 6-7, 11, 14, 31, 56-57; Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 151, 153; Douglas Hinton, "The Right Stuff," *General Aviation News*, 6 December 2002, MSS 250, Box: BioFiles: A-BA, Folder: Leonora "Nonie" Anderson, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Charlotte Knight, "Women As Service Pilots: Gal pilots of the AAF ferry hot fighters, heavy bombers, training and cargo planes," *Skyways*, Feb. 1944, 74, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – February, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; "Women in the Army Air Force: U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet," National Museum of the USAF, http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet_print.asp?fsID=1476&page=1 (accessed 5 March 2008).

Requirements for WASP cadets, similar to that of WFTD regulations, initially stipulated that volunteers possess pilot's licenses and a minimum of seventy-five hours of flight time. Women needed a high school diploma or equivalent education. WASP requirements stipulated that women prove American citizenship and submit to a personal interview by WASP personnel. Only women between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five were accepted in 1942. In 1943, WASP regulations adjusted to allow recruits as young as eighteen. Flight hours required of WASP candidates also decreased in April of 1943, from seventy-five hours to thirty-five. In contrast, the Air Force accepted male cadets for flight training without pilot's licenses or any previous flight experience. Finally, the Handbook for Women Student Pilot Trainees warned women chosen for training school that civilians would form their opinion about the program based on their observations of and associations with individual WASP. The handbook urged WASP to behave accordingly. WASP leadership warned that intoxication, as well as conspicuous or unbecoming conduct, served as grounds for immediate dismissal.²⁴

The interview process for WASP pilots reflected Cochran's concern that the organization project a professional and respectable image. Cochran's personal judgment dominated the selection process. Her interviews seemed focused on the applicant's background and on her ability to perform well in stressful situations. As other historians have noted, it is difficult to determine the extent to which social class impacted a candidate's

²⁴ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 17; "STATS: WASP Entrance Requirements," Texas Woman's University, <http://www.twu.edu/wasp/statspage.htm> (accessed 30 July 2007); Richard N. Cowell, "St. Louis WASP – They've a Sting All Their Own," Texas Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February; A Handbook for Women Student Pilots Trainees, Headquarters, Army Air Forces, Director of Women Pilots, Texas Woman's University, http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/hdbk_print.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); Personnel, Civilian, Wearing of the WASP Uniform, AAF Regulation No. 40-9, Headquarters, Army Air Forces, Washington, 14 February 1944, Texas Women University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/uniform.pdf> (30 July 2007).

eligibility. Nevertheless, we can draw some conclusions regarding the educational and professional backgrounds of many WASP. As a group, educational requirements for WASP members remained similar to those for women enlisting in the WAVES, Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard.²⁵

Racial discrimination existed in the WASP as it did in all aspects of American society. Cochran and Air Force leadership denied African-American applicants, partially on the grounds that separate facilities were not available, as required by Army regulations. Cochran later claimed that only one African-American applicant met the strict standards she required. In her personal account, Cochran admitted that she met with the young woman at Cochran's New York apartment. According to Cochran, she appealed to the woman by stating that she had no prejudice against other races. Nevertheless, she expressed concern that the controversy inherent in the enlistment of African-American women might prove too much for the WASP organization to endure. Her first priority remained setting the WASP organization on firm footing before tackling any more controversial issues. According to Cochran, this "fine young Negro girl recognized the force and honesty of my arguments." Subsequently, the applicant withdrew her application. Other African-American applicants received rejection notices because, according to Cochran, no other applicants met all the specifications.²⁶

Official accounts of the WASP program and personal memoirs rarely mention sexual harassment. WASP pilots escaped any widespread attempt to portray the women as deviants or morally questionable. Although many WASP reported an initially negative response from many male Air Force personnel, few found it a major hindrance to their job. Instead,

²⁵ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 15; Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 15.

²⁶ Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 40-41; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 16.

discussion of the WASP often focused on the glamorous image of pilots in 1940s America. Even proponents of the WASP hardly resisted mentioning the “pretty WASP” and their glamorous leader. Hollywood attempted to popularize the glamorous image of female pilots with a feature film that fell flat. In *Ladies Courageous*, the audience encountered women engaging in frivolous and dangerous lifestyles real WASP hardly recognized. *Time* magazine, never a friend of the WASP program, noted that the women portrayed in the film could hardly be trusted with military aircraft. Nevertheless, media outlets overwhelmingly avoided any negative references to the integrity of female pilots. This inevitably leads to the question of why the WASP were spared the onslaught of slander that befell other women’s organizations.²⁷

Demographic information for the WASP is difficult to ascertain. A fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis destroyed the official personnel records and applications for WASP personnel in 1973. Dedie Deaton, Jackie Cochran’s personal assistant, compiled a card file with information regarding WASP members, including backgrounds and service information. Unfortunately, a Red Cross employee inadvertently disposed of Deaton’s records while she convalescing from an illness. Efforts to locate duplicate records by numerous researchers have yet to yield significant results. Therefore, data regarding educational backgrounds, employment information, aviation experience and other personal background information is virtually impossible to obtain for the WASP as a unit. Some female pilots hailed from socially elite backgrounds. Many emerged from the middle class. WASP Ann Carl later noted that WASP hailed from a wide variety of

²⁷ “The New Pictures,” *Time*, 3 April 1944, Vol. XLIII, No. 14, 92, 94; Marlowe Churchill, “Pilots flew heroically, unheralded,” *Beacon*, 13 March 1987, MSS 250, Box: Biofiles A-BA, Folder: Dorothy J. Allen, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Cole, *Women Pilots of World War II*, 15.

backgrounds. Nevertheless, socioeconomic status alone obviously plays a supporting role at best. Cochran rose to the pinnacle of aviation acclaim from humble beginnings. WASP Leona Golbinec later recalled that Jackie Cochran thought an education important for WASP candidates. According to Golbinec, Cochran postponed her enlistment until a later date in order to allow Golbinec time to finish her degree. A survey of obituaries from the thirty-eight female pilots who lost their lives during World War II reveals some interesting, if inconclusive, data regarding the education levels among the WASP. These casualties of the war effort represented a wide range of ages and aviation skill levels. The first WASP casualty, Cornelia Fort, died on 21 March 1943. Fort's skill level as a pilot far exceeded that of most pilots before she entered the service. Mary Webster, the last WASP to lose her life while serving the Air Force, died on 9 December 1944, less than two months after graduating from flight school at Avenger Field. Subsequently, these women represent a relatively random survey pool for comparing the educational backgrounds of WASP members. Over 81.57% of the thirty-eight women entered the WASP with high-school educations. College and trade school graduates accounted for over 55.26% of the deceased pilots, while 78.94% boasted at least some college or trade school education. Comparatively, the Census Bureau reports that 24.5% of the population of the United States had a high school diploma or higher education in 1940, increasing to 34.3% by 1950. Breaking the data down still further, 22.7% of men and 26.3% of women had a high school diploma or higher education in 1940. The statistics increased to 32.6% for men and 36% for women in 1950. These statistics raise some interesting questions. Is it possible that the WASP avoided the salacious gossip regarding their moral character that the WAC endured because of a general assumption that WASP members hailed overwhelmingly from the educated middle and upper classes? Were

WASP personnel considered “exceptional” and therefore issues of moral character irrelevant? Unfortunately, these questions remain open to speculation. Nevertheless, it seems clear that these women were at least more educated as a group than the rest of the American population – civilian or otherwise. Without demographic data to reveal socioeconomic standings, no definitive answer can be obtained regarding the role education and socioeconomic status played in perceptions of the WASP.²⁸

Unlike media coverage of the WACs, critical accounts of the WASP in the contemporary media refrained from alluding to the sexual proclivities of the female pilots. A few writers made comments regarding assumed feminine habits – jesting about lipstick in the cockpit and errant hairbrushes, etc. Many writers alluded to the “pretty” or “glamorous” female pilots flying for the Air Force. None accused the WASP of catering to the sexual needs of male servicemen. Virtually no accusations arose alleging that the WASP were too masculine or tried to subvert gender constructs. No letters from male servicemen “exposed” alleged licentious behavior by WASP personnel. This fact stands in stark contrast to the other services, especially the WAC, which endured the most virulent media onslaught of all women’s organizations. Logic suggests that some factor, be it education or perceived social standing, prevented the public from attacking the WASP in a manner similar to the other

²⁸ Actual figures for educational experience may be higher than presented in this paper based on the sample of thirty-eight WASP. Five obituaries gave no educational information. As a result, percentages listed for WASP assume that these five WASP lacked a high school diploma. Such assumptions may be incorrect, based on WASP requirements that stipulated a high school education. “The Thirty Eight: Above and Beyond” MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files Ba-Fifi, Folder: Fatalities, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Fact Sheet: Facts About the 1973 St. Louis Fire and Lost Records,” U.S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs, <http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/stlouis.asp> (accessed 7 March 2008); Data given reflecting percentages of the population with a high school diploma or higher education are limited to citizens over 25 years of age. WASP figures would necessarily reflect a population including individuals younger than 25 years of age. “Percent of the Population 25 Years and Older with a High School Diploma or Higher by Sex and Age, for the United States: 1940 to 2000,” U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/deccennial/documents/21983999v2p1ch1.pdf> (accessed 7 March 2008).

services. Critics of the WASP attacked the program as unnecessary, but refrained from personally attacking the morals of WASP personnel.

The WASP training course underwent several changes during the course of its existence. Initially twenty-two weeks long, the program consisted of 115 flight hours, twenty hours of Link training, 180 hours of classroom instruction, and 110 hours of physical training. Later, the school divided training into three phases consisting of primary, basic and advanced training. Classroom instruction and physical training increased. Physical training was considered essential in order to control aircraft utilizing manual controls. Ultimately, WASP training spanned twenty-seven weeks, divided into three nine-week courses. Classroom instruction included such topics as mathematics, physics, maps and charts, navigation, engines and propellers, weather, Morse code, instrument training, and communications. Cadets began lessons using PT-13 Stearman and PT-19 Cornell aircraft, bi-planes outdated by World War II. During basic training, students often flew the BT-13 Valiant, a plane WASP nicknamed the “Vultee Vibrator.” Finally, most WASP completed advanced training in the AT-6 Texan. Women received more navigational training than male cadets, but less training in formation or aerobatics. WASP training omitted gunnery training, despite the fact that WASP flew the planes that towed targets for gunnery students.²⁹

After graduation, WASP often received assignments to one of four Air Transport Command bases located at Long Beach, California; Dallas, Texas; Romulus, Michigan; and

²⁹ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 19-20; Barbara Selby, “The Fifinellas,” *Flying*, Vol. XXXIV, N. 1, July, 1943, 77, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Women Learning to Be Army Pilots To Relieve Men in Ferry Command,” MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Douglas Hinton, “The Right Stuff,” *General Aviation News*, 6 December 2002, MSS 250, Box: BioFiles: A-BA, Folder: Leonora “Nonie” Anderson, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Women Learning to Be Army Pilots To Relieve Men in Ferry Command,” MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Army Trains Women Flier for War Duty,” MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas.

Wilmington, Delaware. Others received assignments to bases in such diverse locales as Camp Davis, North Carolina; El Paso, Texas; and Sacramento, California. WASP flew everything from primary trainers to the hottest fighter planes and bombers the Army owned.³⁰

Once the organization proved operational, WASP flew every type of aircraft available to American combat pilots, including large bombers, fighters, jet aircraft, and cargo planes. Arnold later boasted that “we haven’t been able to build an airplane you can’t handle.” They flew a wide variety of missions, with the exceptions of combat and overseas ferrying assignments. Most WASP spent the war ferrying planes from factories to Army bases. Ferrying remained the primary function of the organization. Since most contemporary aircraft lacked radios or navigational equipment, WASP pilots navigated by “flying the beam” or comparing landmarks to aerial maps. “Flying the beam” referred to the practice of navigating via a grid system of beams spread across the United States. Transmitting Morse code, the beams allowed pilots to navigate by listening for “blips” over their headphones. Others female pilots transported military personnel across the nation. WASP flew planes while trainers instructed male gunners, navigators, and bombardiers. A dangerous assignment under the best of flying conditions, many WASP piloted planes towing targets for gunnery practice. Often the planes used for target practice were old and unreliable, leading

³⁰ Douglas Hinton, “The Right Stuff,” *General Aviation News*, 6 December 2002, MSS 250, Box: BioFiles: A-BA, Folder: Leonora “Nonie” Anderson, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Biggs Field Male Personnel(sic) Perks Up When Expert WASP Arrive on Scene,” MSS 250, Box: BioFiles: A-BA, Folder: Leonora “Nonie” Anderson, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Girl Pilots Train Like Cadets,” MSS 250, Box: BioFiles: A-BA, Folder: Leonora “Nonie” Anderson, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Charlotte Knight, “Women As Service Pilots: Gal pilots of the AAF ferry hot fighters, heavy bombers, training and cargo planes,” *Skyways*, Feb. 1944, 29, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – February, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Publicity Notice for General Arnold’s Report to the Secretary of War, 18 October 1943, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderJJJ.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008).

to accidents and even death. WASP Mabel Rawlinson lost her life when her plane inexplicably burst into flames, plummeting to earth. Rescuers reported they could hear the pilots' screams as they struggled to reach the engulfed plane. Standard procedure called for the pilot to fly towing a long, muslin target at the end of a nylon tow rope 2,500 feet long. Male gunnery students on the ground, usually ignorant of the fact that female pilots flew above them, proceeded to fire guns of various sizes and calibers at the target. Students frequently missed the targets entirely, bracketing planes with flak. Some pilots returned with holes in the tail sections of their aircraft. Pilot Moya Anonson, stationed in Dodge City, Kansas, later joked that students "usually hit my plane instead of the target."³¹

Expansion of the WASP program allowed WASP to engage in more diverse assignments, including night and day missions training soldiers in the use of radar and searchlight tracking. Others simulated gas attacks, engineered test flights, or laid smoke for training exercises. Winifred Wood fondly remembered assignments in which pilots simulated low-level strafing, "It was legalized buzzing and we loved it." Sometimes WASP received transfers to installations where pilots performed "slow time flying" (essentially breaking in new engines by flying the planes for extended periods). The most experienced WASP tested experimental aircraft or piloted heavy bombers. Twenty-one year-old Ann

³¹ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 6, 23-24; Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 151-152; Letter from H.S. Arnold to members of the WASP, 1 October 1944, MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files Ba-Fi, File: Deactivation, 20 December 1944, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; "Woman pilot recalls World War II duty towing glider planes," *Time-Standard*, Eureka, California, 20 December 1983, MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files A-Ba, Folder: Moya Mitchell (Esslinger) Anonson, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; "The Girls Make Good: Women Pilots Overcome Both Masculine Tradition and a Tough Flying Chore," MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; John Stuart, "The WASP," *Flying*, January, 1944, 74, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – January, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; Charlotte Knight, "She Wears a Pair of Silver Wings," *Air Force: The Official Journal of the U.S. Army Air Forces*, Jan. 1944, 49-50, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – January, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; Alice Rogers Hager, "Women As Service Pilots: WASP's on the wing lug the targets to sharpen shooting of Anti-Aircraft Command," *Skyways*, Feb. 1944, 28, 67, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – February, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas.

Baumgartner became the first American woman to fly a jet aircraft when she flew Bell Aircraft's new, top-secret, twin-turbine jet fighter, the YP-59A at the experimental flight center in Dayton, Ohio.³²

As the first anniversary of the WASP approached, Cochran could point to the WASP record as proof of success. Newspapers applauded the WASP safety record. A few newspapers proudly ran articles detailing the enlistment of individual female pilots. According to the War Department, WASP flew the equivalent of three million miles for each fatal accident. At the end of their first year, the fatality rate among WASP rested at .05 fatal accidents per 1,000 hours of flight time. The overall fatality rate among Air Force pilots stationed in the United States stood at .07 accidents per 1,000 hours of flight time. Those statistics effectively prevented any accusations of ineptitude on the part of female pilots.³³

In 1943, the Air Force approved uniforms for WASP personnel. WASP leadership chose a blue beret complete with the insignia of an Army officer and pilot's wings of silver with a diamond shape in the center as official headgear. WASP dress uniforms consisted of a blue jacket and skirt made of blue wool gabardine, finished with a white cotton shirt and black tie. Working uniforms included blue slacks, a waist length battle-jacket made of the same blue wool gabardine as the pants, and a blue shirt (flannel for winter and cotton for summer). The Army also ordered blue cotton coveralls for WASP members. A putty-colored trench-coat with removable blue lining, a raincoat, and a waterproof beret cover completed the ensemble. Accessories included black calf-skin utility bags, shoes, and

³² Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 6, 20, 24; Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 151-152; Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 8; "WASP Are Flying B-26 'Marauders,'" MSS 250, Box: Newsclippings 1939-1971 Files: Not Dated, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas.

³³ "Army WASP Pilots Set Safety Record," MSS 250, Box: Newsclippings 1939-1971 Files: Not Dated, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; "New Safety Record Claimed for Women," MSS 250, Box: Newsclippings 1939-1971 Files: Not Dated, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; "Portuguese Girl Pilot Flies Big Aircraft for U.S. Army," MSS 250, Folder: 1944-no date, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas.

gloves. WASP wore gold-lettered “W.A.S.P.” insignia on their collars. In addition, pilots wore Air Corps lapel wings, the A.A.F. sleeve patch, and shoulder insignia identifying the unit to which they were assigned. When properly attired, WASP presented a dignified image to the American public.³⁴

The reactions of male pilots and Air Force leadership varied widely. Some officers, such as Arnold, welcomed the involvement of the WASP. Many officers observed that female pilots served more enthusiastically than male pilots and often delivered planes more quickly. Nevertheless, male pilots sometimes resented the presence of women in the cockpit and on Air Force bases. As an elite group serving in the military, male combat pilots frequently resented the image of a petite woman emerging from a P-38. Lt. Col. Lovick L. Stevenson, commander of an Air Force squadron at Camp Davis in North Carolina, admitted that the appearance of female pilots on the base brought objections from male servicemen, particularly enlisted men, who expressed no desire to be “powder puff mechanics.” Many WASP complained about a reluctance by mechanics to perform maintenance on WASP planes. Stevenson noted that the women simply proved themselves as pilots. Some commanders even used male resentment to their advantage. WASP Betty Giles remembered male pilots boasting about the difficulties of piloting combat aircraft. The subsequent vision of a WASP pilot flying such aircraft seemed to diminish the popular image of a robust, ultra masculine pilot. As a result, complaints by male pilots regarding the difficulties of piloting aircraft diminished. Other WASP pilots landing at bases or airports across the country

³⁴ “WASP Work Clothes,” MSS 250, Box: Newsclippings 1939-1971 Files: Not Dated, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Charlotte Knight, “She Wears a Pair of Silver Wings,” *Air Force: The Official Journal of the U.S. Army Air Forces*, Jan. 1944, 49, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – January, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Personnel, Civilian, Wearing of the WASP Uniform, AAF Regulation No. 40-9, Headquarters, Army Air Forces, Washington, 14 February 1944, Texas Woman’s University at <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/uniform.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007).

encountered hostility or disbelief. Male servicemen occasionally refused initial requests for landing clearance or plane maintenance from WASP. Nevertheless, the reaction to WASP pilots varied from airfield to airfield. Often male servicemen accepted WASP pilots based on a sense of camaraderie. Most WASP received positive treatment from male servicemen. When commanding officers submitted their final evaluations of WASP performance, most expressed satisfaction with the program and noted that the women worked well with male personnel.³⁵

Because the WASP avoided the media, coverage of the WASP from 1942 through 1943 was sparse. Most reliable information emanated from the Army public affairs division. The few newspaper and magazine articles that mentioned the program often praised the program and the dedication of WASP members. Newspapers in areas in which WASP operated occasionally printed articles concerning the arrival of female pilots. A few, such as the *El Paso Times*, attempted to clarify the role WASP filled in the war effort. Others seemed to reinforce gendered stereotypes. An article published in April of 1943 reported that women received “gentler treatment” than men. The article noted that Cochran disapproved

³⁵ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 151; Douglas Hinton, “The Right Stuff,” *General Aviation News*, 6 December 2002, MSS 250, Box: BioFiles: A-BA, Folder: Leonora “Nonie” Anderson, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 21-22 Merryman claims that some Air Force commanders used WASP to shame male pilots into piloting aircraft they previously deemed unsafe – such was the case with the B-29 bomber; “The Girls Make Good: Women Pilots Overcome Both Masculine Tradition and a Tough Flying Chore,” MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Our Women Pilots,” *Air Force: The Official Journal of the U.S. Army Air Forces*, Sept. 1943, 10, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – September, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; John Stuart, “The WASP,” *Flying*, January, 1944, 73-74, 148, 163, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – January, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Charlotte Knight, “She Wears a Pair of Silver Wings,” *Air Force: The Official Journal of the U.S. Army Air Forces*, Jan. 1944, 49-51, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – January, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Alice Rogers Hager, “Women As Service Pilots: WASP’s on the wing lug the targets to sharpen shooting of Anti-Aircraft Command,” *Skyways*, Feb. 1944, 68, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – February, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Charlotte Knight, “Women As Service Pilots: Gal pilots of the AAF ferry hot fighters, heavy bombers, training and cargo planes,” *Skyways*, Feb. 1944, 70, 74, MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – February, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart’s Daughters*, 106-107; Former WASP Ann Carl recalled an accident in which a WASP accident was later attributed to sabotage – her fuel tank had been laced with sugar. Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 51-52.

of the idea that women might one day serve as fighter pilots, despite the fact that she believed they would make the “nastiest fighters.” Stories reporting on the Air Force or technological advancements rarely mentioned the role WASP played in testing and transporting aircraft. *Life* magazine spotlighted the program in its publication on 19 July 1943. Although the publication referred to these accomplished women as “girls,” “girl pilots,” or “girl flyers,” the article noted that the pilots maintained an enthusiastic and serious attitude towards their mission. *Life* reported that WASP “learned everything that regular Army pilots master except gunnery and formation flying.” In addition, *Life* reported that the WASP maintained a grueling routine from 6:15 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Nevertheless, several times *Life* mentioned the glamour, or lack thereof, involved in WASP life. The article referred to Jackie Cochran as a “glamorous speed flyer.” Women appeared in a variety of photos: studying for class, memorizing Morse code, sunbathing, exercising, sleeping, and writing letters home. Other photos depicted pretty female pilots posing in the cockpits of military aircraft. No mention of the dangers inherent in their jobs made the pages of *Life*.³⁶

The issue of arming women in the women’s reserves remained a controversial issue throughout the war. WASP circumvented this debate by virtue of their civilian status. Forbidden from ferrying planes at night, the Army allotted the responsibility of guarding advanced aircraft or aircraft equipped with classified munitions to WASP landing at small, understaffed airfields. As a result, WASP assigned to these planes on long-distance flights carried .45 caliber handguns for protection. In the event of a forced landing, the Army directed the WASP to fire at a designated location packed with explosives on the fuselage of

³⁶ “Girl Pilots,” *Life*, 19 July 1943, 73-81; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 44-52, 61; “Women Learning to Be Army Pilots To Relieve Men in Ferry Command,” MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas.

the plane. In addition, WASP might receive training on machine guns to protect the aircraft.³⁷

Many government and military leaders questioned whether the Army should incorporate the women's pilot programs into the Women's Army Corps. This proposal carried several potential benefits to female pilots. As militarized members of the Army, they would enjoy military benefits, including veteran's benefits, health coverage, and death benefits. Unfortunately, WAC legislation limited the number of officers in the WAC. Since pilots traditionally enjoyed officer status, the entry of the WASP into the WAC program held the potential of overtaxing the WAC quota of officers. Existing regulations also prohibited WACs from enrolling in flight schools. WAC legislation also failed to address the issue of flight pay. Finally, WAC regulations prohibited women with dependent children from enlisting. Twenty-percent of WASP were mothers of dependent children. An amendment to WAC legislation or the establishment of the WASP as a separate women's branch seemed the only possible answers to the dilemma. General Arnold ultimately decided against the idea of integration with the WAC, believing that such a move would result in too much "confusion, conflict and inefficiency." Arnold and Cochran concluded that the only sensible alternative rested with proposing legislation to militarize the WASP as a separate reserve.³⁸

³⁷ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 153; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 24; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart's Daughters*, 114-115.

³⁸ Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 14. The issue of attaching WAAS pilots to WAAC units surfaced in 1942. However, Nancy Harkness Love and military leaders believed it unlikely that such changes to WAAC legislation were practical. Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 30, 39-41. Rumors circulated that the WASP did not join with the WAC because of feuds between Cochran and Oveta Culp Hobby. However, despite an admitted dislike for Hobby, Cochran maintained a professional relationship with the WAC director throughout the war.; Memorandum Regarding Incorporation of Women Civilian Pilots and Trainees into Army Air Force, 14 June 1943, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderH.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008).

Many women joined the WASP anticipating militarization of the organization. The Air Force explored several different options other than merging with the WAC, including direct commissions into the Ferrying Division and use of Public Law 38. Finally, an investigation into the matter by Deputy Air Inspector Colonel T.C. Odum concluded that legislative action appeared the most viable option. Arnold, Cochran and Air Force leaders understood that militarization of the WASP would allow the organization to operate more effectively. In fact, WASP protocols focused on military discipline throughout the existence of the organization, from flight school to assignments at bases throughout the nation. Eighty-five WASP received assignments to officer's training school in Orlando, Florida in preparation for militarization of the WASP. The Army Air Force, the War Department, and the Secretary of State rallied around militarization of the WASP. Supporter's expectations appeared entirely realistic. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard's female units already enjoyed the benefits of militarization. WASP members served subject to military discipline, lived on military bases and worked side-by-side with Air Force servicemen. Nevertheless, the fact that they could resign at will hampered efforts to enforce strict discipline and allowed WASP to simply resign from unwanted assignments. Militarization seemed not only preferable, but imminently logical.³⁹

The movement to militarize the WASP began with high expectations. On 30 September 1943, Representative John Costello of California submitted House Resolution

³⁹ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 20, 28, 31, 33, 44. Public Law 38 passed in April 1943, authorized the military to commission female physicians and nurses into the Medical Corps of the Army and Navy with the same pay grade and length of service as men. Air Force leadership determined that efforts to militarize WASP in this manner would not be successful; "WASP in the Army? The Pros and Cons of a Moot Question," MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; "WASP, to Be 600 Strong This Month, Hope Soon to Be Members of the Army Air Forces," MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – January, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; "Words from a WASP," Folder: 1944 – April, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas.

3358, calling for militarization of the WASP. The proposed bill articulated the case for WASP militarization succinctly. A mere paragraph in length, Costello petitioned,

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That hereafter during the present war and six months thereafter there shall be included in the Air Forces of the Army such licensed female pilots as the Secretary of War may consider necessary, whose qualifications, duties, and assignments shall be in accordance with regulations to be prescribed by the Secretary, and who shall be appointed and at his discretion removed by the Commanding General of the Air Forces of the Army, subject to approval of the Secretary of War. Those appointed shall be commissioned in the Army of the United States, and shall receive the same pay and allowances and be entitled to the same rights, privileges and benefits as members of the Officers' Reserve Corps of the Army with the same grade and length of service.⁴⁰

The proposed bill languished in Congress, awaiting review before the Committee of Military Affairs, for six months. In the meantime, Costello urged Cochran to procure a favorable endorsement from the War Department. With War Department approval, Costello believed securing the Committee's approval would be assured. Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, submitted a recommendation to the Committee for militarization of the WASP, detailing the advantages to such legislation. Ultimately, Costello submitted a replacement bill, H.R. 4219, providing greater detail regarding the organization of the WASP program. H.R. 4219 addressed many of the same issues that plagued military leaders when they attempted to secure legislation for the women's organizations of other military branches.⁴¹

⁴⁰ U.S. Congress, House, House Committee on Military Affairs, Proposed Bill for Appointment of Female Pilots and Aviation Cadets in the Air Forces of the United States, H.R. 3358, Congress, House, 78th Cong., 1st sess., House Journal, 30 September 1943, Texas Woman's University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/HR3358.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007); Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 75.

⁴¹ Henry L. Stimson Letter to Andrew J. May, Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, 16 February 1944, MSS 250, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 76-77, 80; Congress, House, House Committee on Military Affairs, *Proposed Bill for Appointment of female pilots and aviation cadets in the Air Forces of the United States*, 78th Cong., 2nd sess., House Journal, (17 February 1944); "WASP Militarization Favored by Stimson," *New York Times*, 4 May

H.R. 4219 attempted to assuage the fears of Americans concerned about allowing women too much power in the military establishment. Costello's replacement bill placed a ceiling on the level of rank obtained by WASP members. As in the Marine Corps, WAC, WAVES and SPARS, the highest rank obtainable was that of Colonel, with only one officer of that grade. Upon completion of training, WASP would receive commissions as Second Lieutenants in the Army of the United States, a rank commiserate with male pilots. As with the other services, WASP officers would exercise command only over personnel placed under their command. In other words, WASP commanded only other women, not men. Costello's bill also stipulated that at least 97% of WASP personnel enlist as qualified pilots. Finally, Costello's bill addressed the issues most critical to WASP members. WASP would be "entitled to the same rights, privileges, and benefits as are accorded to said members of the same rank, grade and length of service." WASP would finally receive the benefits male pilots enjoyed. When the Committee on Military Affairs held its hearing on the bill, General Arnold testified that he anticipated the WASP aiding the war effort by replacing all men piloting domestic flying missions, enabling those men to receive assignments in overseas positions. Arnold, with the endorsement of Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, revealed that 36,000 men from Air Force services could expect transfer to the Army Ground Forces based on acute shortages of ground forces in that service. Male pilots released from the CAA also became eligible for drafting under the Selective Service Act. In fact, Arnold reported that the Army Ground Forces needed 200,000 more ground troops. According to Arnold, sustained Air Force combat casualties had been lower than anticipated, allowing men to be transferred to areas where the need was greater. Arnold testified that the military

1944, MSS 250, Folder: 1944-May, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University Archives, Denton, Texas.

planned to use qualified male pilots for non-domestic flights. As a result, Arnold requested not only approval of WASP legislation, but expansion of the organization to 2,000-2,500 female pilots in order to transfer “every man qualified for overseas service whose permanent duty is flying in the United States and get them overseas.” On 22 March 1944 the Committee recommended passage of H.R. 4219 and submitted the bill for a House vote. Subsequent to the Committee’s recommendation of H.R. 4219, Senator Joseph Hill of Alabama and Senator Harold Burton of Ohio submitted S. 1810, the Senate version of H.R. 4219.⁴²

As Cochran and Arnold pushed for militarization of the WASP, Army Air Force pilots returning from duty overseas and male civilian pilots hoping to avoid overseas assignments as soldiers began lobbying to replace the WASP. Allied forces seemed close to achieving air superiority in the European and Pacific Theaters in late 1943. The pressing need for more combat pilots diminished. However, the need for more combat soldiers on the ground increased. Combat pilots returning to the United States coveted WASP jobs in order to continue to receive flight pay. Civilian pilots working in the United States released from their previous assignments found themselves eligible for the draft. Many men worried that they would be drafted into the Army and assigned to ground combat in the Pacific. Other men resented the transfer from a prestigious position as an instructor for the CAA to that of a low ranking serviceman. These pilots previously avoided being drafted into the Army or Air

⁴² Committee on Military Affairs. *Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs*, 20 January 1942, The WASP Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas, 1-2, 6; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 76-78, 80-81; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Military Affairs, *Proposed Bill for Appointment of female pilots and aviation cadets in the Air Forces of the Army*. H.R. 4219, Congress, House, 78th Cong., 2nd sess., House Journal, 17 February 1944, Texas Woman’s University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/HR3358.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007); “The Female Has the Sting,” *Flying*, April, 1944, 78, Folder: 1944-April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Winged Gunners,” *New York Times*, 16 June 1944, Folder: 1944-June, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Military Affairs, Proposed bill for Appointment of female pilots and aviation cadets in the Air Forces of the Army., S. 1810, 78th Cong., 2nd sess., Senate Journal, Texas Woman’s University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/s1810.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007); Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 81; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart’s Daughters*, 120-121.

Force by serving as civilian trainers for the military. Now, they faced the draft unless they could secure piloting jobs in the United States. As a result, they targeted the WASP, insisting that the Air Force unfairly rejected male pilots in favor of “girls.” Male civilian pilots joined together and formed an effective lobby, targeting the WASP as a frivolous program and charging the Air Force with exercising preferential treatment for the WASP. Their efforts, more than any other single factor, led to the Congressional refusal to militarize the WASP and termination of the project by the Air Force.⁴³

General Arnold attempted to counter charges that WASP pilots unfairly occupied positions more efficiently filled by male Air Force pilots and CAA pilots during his testimony before the Committee for Military Affairs. Arnold meticulously detailed the status of 13,000 male CAA pilots and 899 former instructors from the Army Air Force schools. He demonstrated that the pilots in question previously received consideration for Air Force positions. Qualified applicants had been approved as cadets, while those who failed to meet the standards for Air Force flight school received transfers to flight crew or ground crew positions. Applicants with health issues received medical discharges from the armed forces. Arnold argued that WASP allowed male pilots to be used more effectively. Furthermore,

⁴³ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 153-154; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 44-45, 82; “A Sting for the WASP,” Folder: 1944 – April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “AAF Chief Urges Legislation to Commission Women Pilots: General Arnold Wants to Make the WASP Part of the Army-His Comment on Idle Men Pilots Seems Evasive,” *Contact*, Vol. VIII, No. 3, 4, Folder: 1944-April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas. *Contact* magazine printed an article ridiculing Arnold’s comments as misleading, deceptive and “unadulterated hogwash.” The publication, catering to the Aviation industry, dismissed WASP pilots as “glamour girls” whose time should be spent nursing war wounded. “Wanted-Female Impersonators,” *Contact*, Vol. VIII, No. 3, p. 5, Folder: 1944-April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “The Female Has the Sting,” *Flying*, April, 1944, 78, Folder: 1944-April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas.; Robert H. Wood, “The WASP Problem,” *Aviation News*, 10 April 1944, Folder: 1944-April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Bill to Commission WASP as Army Officers Hits Plenty Snags,” *Contact*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, May, 1944, Folder: 1944-May, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Wasted Flying Experience,” MSS 250, Box: Newsclippings 1939-1971, File: Not dated, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 103.

most of the male pilots demanding WASP positions failed to meet the necessary standards. Although many men met or exceeded the flight time requirements, they lacked the requirement stipulating a 200-horsepower rating. Arnold pointed out that the CAA maintained lower standards than the Army Air Force. He testified that in order to meet the demands of former CAA pilots for WASP positions, the Air Force would be forced to lower its standards. WASP met the qualifications necessary, while many male pilots did not. Arnold insisted that “we cannot lower our standards because a man has a few hours in the air. They must meet our standards.” Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, confirmed Arnold’s assertions, stating that militarization of the WASP in no way impacted the status of male pilots capable of meeting Air Force standards. When asked if the Air Force could help individuals turned down because they did not serve in the reserves, Arnold replied that such pilots previously declined the opportunity to join the reserves. Arnold concluded that “now when they see they are likely to be drafted they want to come in and it is too late.”⁴⁴

Despite Arnold’s counterarguments against the claims of male pilots demanding WASP positions, the CAA lobby found support from conservative American organizations, many civilian aviation groups, and veterans organizations. The lobby found its strongest supporter in Representative Robert Ramspect, Chairman of the Committee on the Civil Service. Responding to the claims of the disaffected pilots, Ramspect began an investigation

⁴⁴ Committee on Military Affairs. *Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs*, 20 January 1942. The WASP Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas, 4-6; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 79; “AAF chief Urges Legislation to Commission Women Pilots: General Arnold Wants to Make the WASP Part of the Army-His Comment on Idle Men Pilots Seems Evasive,” *Contact*, Vol. VIII, No. 3, 4, Folder: 1944-April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Robert H. Wood, “The WASP Problem,” *Aviation News*, 10 April 1944, Folder: 1944-April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “WASP Training Won’t Keep Male Pilots out of AAF: Secretary of War Favors Commissions for Women Flyers,” *The Avenger*, 19 May 1944, Folder: 1944-May, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “Stimson Backs Plan to Place WASP in Army,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 May 1944, Folder: 1944-May, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “Some Back Door Breaks for WTS Instructors; WASP Still Fly,” *Contact*, September 1944, Folder: 1944-September, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas.

of the WASP organization. The resulting report contained numerous misrepresentations and errors. Furthermore, the investigation never involved inspections of Avenger Field or its flight school, nor conducted any investigations at bases where WASP were assigned to duty. Nancy Harkness Love claimed that questions posed to her by the Committee's representative focused primarily on possible incompetency and failures of the WASP program. In addition, the investigators questioned Harkness Love about her relationship, and purported disagreements, with Cochran. She denied all such claims. Nevertheless, the resulting thirteen-page Ramspect Report supported the claims of the male civilian pilots, regardless of conflicting data.⁴⁵

The Ramspect Report came before the House of Representatives on 5 June 1944. The report denied that its purpose focused on the utilization of male or female personnel but "is a question of the utilization of experience and capabilities before resorting to the use of inexperience and costly training." The Ramspect Report alleged that the WASP legislation contemplated the recruiting of inexperienced personnel. In actuality, WASP enlisted with more experience than most male cadets. While acknowledging that the Committee on the Civil Service held no jurisdiction over military matters, the report accused the military of assigning many men to trivial and demoralizing duties. Although the War Department claimed authority to hire WASP under Public Law 108, the report alleged that "The necessity for this training program has not been demonstrated." The report argued that the WASP recruited from the same sources as other women's organizations and that the potential supply of female pilots in the United States "has long since been exhausted." Once again, these

⁴⁵ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 82-83; Ramspect Report, Texas Woman's University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/ramspect.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007); "WTS Pilots Also Vote," *Contact*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, May, 1944, Folder: 1944-May, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; "Would Halt Rise of Women Pilots," *New York Times*, 6 June 1944, 10:4, Folder: 1944-June, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

charges misled readers. In fact, no organized recruiting campaign ever existed to gain WASP recruits. In addition, Cochran never suffered from a lack of applicants. These allegations were only the beginning of the Ramspect Report's misrepresentation of the WASP.⁴⁶

The Ramspect Report devoted considerable attention to the financial requirements of the WASP. Once again the report misled readers. The report failed to mention that the Air Force paid very few expenses for WASP. WASP policy deducted room and board expenses from WASP paychecks. As civilian employees of the Air Force, WASP received no health or death benefits. In addition, the Air Force required women to provide their own flight gear until 1943, when uniforms became available to WASP. Instead of reporting these facts, the Ramspect Report criticized the cost of the uniforms. Whereas the War Department estimated the cost of WASP training at \$6,540.90, the committee included an estimate that factored in such elements as "plane depreciation" into the equation. These additions almost doubled the cost of WASP training to \$12,150.70. Finally, the Ramspect Report alleged that training for WASP totaled \$20,000 per individual candidate, although no cost breakdown for this inflated figure was provided. According to the report, further expansion of the program to accommodate the 2,500 WASP Arnold requested, weighed in at \$50,000,000.00. The document made no mention of the fact that male cadets also required similar funds for training and operational expenses. In addition, male cadets received military benefits denied to members of the WASP.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ramspect Report, 2-5, Texas Woman's University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/ramspect.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007); Ann Cottrell, "House Report Against Putting WASP in Army," *New York Times*, Folder: 1944-June, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

⁴⁷ Ramspect Report, 6-7, 13, Texas Woman's University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/ramspect.pdf> (30 July 2007); "House Probes Millions Spent Training WASP," Folder: 1944 – April, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

Favorable comparisons between female and male pilots received swift dismissals from the Ramspect Report. While not mentioning the actual error and fatality rates for WASP, the report argued that accurate comparisons for male and female fatality rates were impossible because WASP flew under conditions incompatible with CAA training. Demeaningly, the report argued that although WASP flew over difficult and mountainous terrain, the flight paths selected covered select and well-marked routes. As a result, “the miles-flown basis usually utilized for comparisons cannot apply.” As presented by the Ramspect Report, any comparison favorable to WASP seemed invalid.⁴⁸

The Ramspect Report muddied the waters further by charging that the Air Force lowered standards for WASP volunteers while continuing to insist on high qualifications as prerequisites for male civilian-pilot instructors. An article in the *New York Times* quoted Representative James Morrison of Louisiana warning that male pilots with 2,000 flight hours might soon find themselves servicing the aircraft of female pilots with only 35 flight hours. Such an allegation proved highly misleading. Although the WASP did lower the prerequisite flight hours for WASP to 35 hours and a pilot’s license for acceptance into the training program, the Air Force allowed male pilot recruits to enlist without a pilot’s license or flight hours. When the report maligned the WASP for lowering age requirements to eighteen years and six months, it failed to mention that the subject change took place in order to bring WASP age requirements more in line with those of male pilots. Allegations that few WASP pilots could obtain Class 5 ratings, necessary for piloting four-engine bombers, neglected to mention that the Air Force previously prohibited WASP from obtaining Class 5 ratings. By the time the investigators reviewed the data, three WASP held Class 5 ratings – not because

⁴⁸ Ramspect Report, 7-8, Texas Woman’s University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/ramspect.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007).

other WASP lacked the skills, but because the establishment previously prohibited them from doing so. The Ramspect Report also alleged that the WASP program evolved to train young women unfit for duty in the WAFS. This statement overlooked the nature and objectives of the two organizations. The WAFS served as civilian contractors ferrying planes for the Army Air Force. The WASP not only ferried planes across the United States, they also handled a multitude of other domestic flight duties for the Army. Once again, the report twisted information to suit the needs of the petitioning male pilots. Finally, the report failed to mention that male cadets, whether in possession of pilot's licenses or not, would require the same transitional training that WASP cadets underwent.⁴⁹

A negative media campaign against the WASP joined the CAA lobby's complaints to Congress. Orchestrated by the CAA pilots, it found fertile ground in 1944. Previous media accounts, even skeptical reports, acknowledged the necessity of aiding the war effort through female involvement. In September of 1943, an Army Air Force publication noted that "Today, a woman's place is where she is needed. And until this war is won, that place is in the cockpit of ships women can fly from factory to field and, by doing so, release men pilots for combat duty."⁵⁰ By 1944, many Americans believed that victory seemed imminent. With victory would come a return to conservative gender roles in American society. Many media sources and Congressmen now eagerly joined the negative campaign, touting male

⁴⁹ Ramspect Report, 8-13, Texas Woman's University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/ramspect.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007); Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 84-85; "Pictures Male Fliers Doing WASP' Chores," *New York Times*, 20 June 1944, Texas, Folder: 1944-June, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

⁵⁰ Charlotte Knight, "Our Women Pilots," *Air Force: The Official Journal of the U.S. Army Air Forces*, Sept. 1943, 10, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – September, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

superiority and privilege while denigrating the work WASP had performed for months and questioning their skills as pilots.⁵¹

Publications such as *Time* contributed to the campaign against militarization of the WASP. On 8 May 1944, *Time* reported that the Army had “surreptitiously” begun officer training for female civilians. Those civilian women served as WASP pilots. *Time* implied that while Congressmen still debated militarization for WASP, the service tried to circumvent the system or had “jumped the legislative gun.” The article went on to imply that Arnold misled Washington leaders regarding the allocation of male servicemen. *Time* then repeated exaggerated claims made by CAA pilots in the Ramspect Report. Incredibly, *Time* stated that WASP pilots “are usually grounded several days out of every month.” The ludicrous allusion to women’s menstrual cycles seemed obvious – inherently weak women served as a poor substitute for men. On 29 May 1944, *Time* again reported on the controversy over WASP militarization. *Time* depicted Congressman Ramspect as a “sober, studious” man deeply angered by Hap Arnold’s request to expand and militarize the WASP. After “ferreting” out information about the WASP, Ramspect and his committee allegedly discovered that the WASP amounted to little more than an expensive experiment. According to *Time*, of 1,313 women accepted for WASP training, only 541 graduated. Two hundred eighty-one failed to complete training, according to *Time*’s reporting of the Ramspect Report, while the remainder were enrolled in WASP training schools. Nineteen WASP had lost their lives, eleven of which reportedly died in operational flights. Nothing in the *Time* article attempted to question the Ramspect Report or employ impartial reporting of the issues. No

⁵¹ “House Probes Millions Spent Training WASP,” MSS 250, Folder: 1944 – April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 63-65; “Wanted-Female Impersonators,” *Contact*, Vol. VIII, No. 3, 5, Folder: 1944-April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas.

details of WASP entrance requirements appeared in the article. No mention that women received training virtually identical to that of males in every respect except combat graced *Time's* pages. The claims of the CAA pilots went unquestioned and the periodical repeated assertions that the CAA pilots could be trained in half the time and at half the cost of WASP members. No hint that many CAA pilots might be avoiding deployment to dangerous military positions overseas attempted to present a balanced argument. Finally, *Time* quoted the report as insisting that the need "to recruit teen-aged schoolgirls, stenographers, clerks, beauticians, housewives and factory workers to pilot the military planes of this Government is as startling as it is invalid." *Time* summarized the report by stating that the "militarization of Cochran's WASP is not necessary or desirable; the present program should be immediately and sharply curtailed." Apparently, *Time* supported the Ramspect Report above the recommendations of the commanding General of the Army Air Force and the War Department. *Time's* reporting, like the Ramspect Report itself, represented a shameful example of male chauvinism at its worst.⁵²

Paul Hunter, publisher of *Liberty*, represented one of the few media champions of the WASP during the controversial Congressional debate. In his 23 September 1944 article, "It's Not the Women Who Are Hysterical," Hunter argued that the debates in Congress demonstrated the legislative body's proclivity to "legislate by hysteria." Hunter insisted that the WASP program represented a resounding success story. Inexplicably, according to Hunter, Congress suddenly seemed appalled by the idea of female pilots. As a result, the entire program seemed on the verge of dissolution without any discernable attempt at thoughtful debate. Hunter echoed the sentiments of many WASP supporters, who wondered

⁵² "Battle of the Sexes," *Time*, Vol. XLIII, No. 19, 8 May 1944, 68, 71; "Unnecessary and Undesireable?," *Time*, Vol. XVIII, No. 22, 29 May 1944, 66; "Recognition for the WASP," *New York Times*, 16 June 1944, Folder: 1944-June, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

at the refusal to at least militarize the WASP already trained for the sake of war-time expediency.⁵³

Officials in the War Department, Army Air Force officers, General Arnold, Chief of Staff Marshall, Jackie Cochran, and a myriad of WASP supporters struggled to educate Americans regarding the factual data supporting militarization and expansion of the WASP. Their expertise largely fell on deaf ears. Five representatives on the investigating committee for the Committee on Civil Service issued a minority report outlining their disagreement with the Ramspect Report, arguing instead that the decision regarding the status of the WASP should rest with Air Force officials. The minority report stated that the dissenting members believed that the Ramspect Report misrepresented the facts. The House Committee on Appropriations issued a report of its investigations, refuting many of the Ramspect Report's claims. Unlike the investigators for the Ramspect Report, the Appropriations Committee agreed unanimously to support General Arnold's recommendations regarding militarization of the WASP. Indeed, the Appropriations Committee approved \$6.4 million in funding for the WASP program. Unfortunately, the Appropriations Committee Report received no media attention. Instead, Representative James Morrison of Louisiana joined in the smear campaign, praising the Ramspect Report as accurate and citing editorials criticizing the WASP. In fact, Morrison entered public letters, editorials and "expert opinions" with little factual basis into the Congressional Record. One editorial selected by Morrison for the public record insinuated that General Arnold was smitten with Jackie Cochran like a "knight of olde." The article represented one of many suggesting that Cochran exercised undue

⁵³ Paul Hunter, "It's Not the Women Who Are Hysterical," *Liberty*, 23 September 1944, Folder: 1944-September, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

influence with the commanding General of the Air Force. Rational debate had ended and reason fled while hysteria seemed to rule the day.⁵⁴

The House of Representatives began official debates for consideration of H.R. 4219 on 21 June 1944. The cards were stacked against the WASP bill from the beginning. Representative Ramspect personally chaired the debate and the gallery filled with male CAA pilots. Few representatives seemed well versed in the facts, instead relying overwhelmingly on the Ramspect Report. Unsubstantiated accusations filled the chamber, as members lamented the plight of male pilots allegedly cast aside by the WASP. To be certain, some Representatives defended the WASP program. Representative Costello, Representative John Vorys of Ohio, Representative Karl Stefan of Nebraska, and Representative William Miller of Connecticut all urged members to judge the bills fairly and resist the urge to accept inflated figures and emotional diatribes as hardened facts. Ultimately, the campaign against the WASP achieved its goals: tarnishing the reputation of the WASP in order to avoid dangerous assignments overseas. Ramspect called for votes on a motion to strike the enacting clause of the WASP bill, effectively killing the bill. The final roll call on 22 June 1944 resulted in 188 yeas, 169 nays, and 73 abstentions. The fight for militarization of the WASP came to an end. Media reports hailed the defeat of the WASP bill as a victory. Congressional denial of militarization for the WASP program made the WASP the only

⁵⁴ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 86-90; Suggested Report to be Released in Response to Unfavorable Reports to Proposed Militarization of the WASP, 1943, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/Binder1.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008); Rose McKee, "Bill to Commission WASP as Army Officers Killed in House," *Contact*, June 1944, 6, Folder: 1944-June, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

women's branch serving with the military that failed to receive congressional approval for militarization.⁵⁵

On 26 June 1944, Arnold returned to the United States following the D-Day invasions and confronted the issue of the WASP program. Several options presented themselves. Senate Bill 1810 still awaited debate. If it passed the Senate, it was possible, if improbable, to resubmit the bill to the House. The WASP could also continue as a civilian organization. Instead, per recommendations in the Ramspect Report, Arnold ordered that WASP training classes be discontinued as soon as the current classes finished training. Cadets chosen for future training classes received notices of the termination of their enrollment into the WASP program. To avoid more controversy, WASP on active duty received orders prohibiting contacts with the media.⁵⁶

WASP already serving with the Army Air Force continued to perform their duties at bases throughout the nation. The air field in Grand Island, Nebraska, like other bases across the United States, welcomed WASP arriving to join established units. *Strictly GI*, the Grand Island newspaper, noted that the four new WASP assigned to the base boasted considerable flying experience before joining the WASP. Journalist Gill Robb Wilson, former president of the National Aeronautic Association, writing for the *New York Tribune*, urged retention of WASP personnel in highly specialized fields. Wilson pointed out that WASP with

⁵⁵ Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 92-101. Congressional Debate; "House Defeats Bill to Put WASP in Army," *New York Times*, June 22, 1944, Folder: 1944-June, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; "CONTACT Led in the Fight to Defeat the WASP Bill – But the CPT-WTS Men Still Need Help," *Contact*, June 1944, Folder: 1944-June, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Representative Stefan rises to speak on behalf of the WASP and all American Women, 21 June 1944, Wings Across America, http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/press_archive/Stefan.pdf (accessed 10 March 2008).

⁵⁶ "WASP Shut-Down Begun by the Army," *New York Times*, 28 June 1944, 24:3, Folder: 1944-June, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

specialized skills would prove difficult to replace without a significant expenditure in funding and training of male pilots.⁵⁷

With the future of the WASP uncertain, Cochran submitted an eleven-page report outlining the organization and success of the WASP on 1 August 1944. The document reviewed the history of the WASP and evaluated the success of the program. Cochran's narrative outlining the impetus for militarization and the process followed by supporters to achieve that goal proved comprehensive. She briefly stated that the debate over the militarization of the WASP "dealt largely with the male instructor problem." The report corrected several misrepresentations circulated in the Ramspect Report regarding the WASP organization. The director began by addressing the issue of WASP funding and expenditures. Her totals demonstrated that although WASP received slightly higher salaries than male cadets, their personal expenditures for lodging, food, clothing, and transportation expenses to and from Sweetwater, Texas meant that they frequently did well to break even. In addition, the military denied WASP health care, dental care and other benefits granted to male cadets. After graduation, WASP received \$176.82 in uniform equipment at government expense, in lieu of the \$250 uniform allowance given to each male officer. Each WASP personally spent approximately \$100 to purchase additional items to complete the required uniform. Despite allegations to the contrary, WASP serving with the Air Force hardly flew for economic gain.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "New WASP Arrive for Duty With 17th Wing," *Strictly GI*, Vol. 1, No. 16, 26 August 1944, 1, Folder: 1944-August, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Gill Robb Wilson, "WASP to Be Demobilized Dec. 20," *New York Tribune*, Folder: 1944-October, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; "Keep 'Em Flying," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, 20 December 1944, Folder: 1944-December, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

⁵⁸ Status Report from Jacqueline Cochran to Commanding General, Army Air Forces, 2-5, 1 August 1944, Wings Across America at http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/DOCUMENTS/final_report.htm#merged (accessed 30 July 2007).

Cochran's report outlined the training program at Avenger Field. Adjustments to the program resulted in a thirty-week program that included training to proficiency rating for primary, basic, and advanced training aircraft – virtually identical to training programs for male cadets. Approximately sixty female pilots graduated each month, with an elimination rate that compared favorably to male cadets. Cochran insisted that WASP graduated with a Class 1 flight rating and that all Air Force pilots, male or female, followed a progressive advancement of on-the-job training and school attendance. Just as funding for WASP training proved equivalent to that of male cadets, equipment and courses administered remained virtually identical.⁵⁹

When evaluating the usefulness of WASP to the Air Force, Cochran argued that most WASP performed the routine, “dishwashing flying jobs of the AAF, that will release men for higher grades of duty.” At the time Cochran submitted the report, three hundred women served in the Training Command towing targets, engineering flying, and assisting with instruction. The Air Transport Command utilized 299 WASP for ferrying duties. Twelve women served with the AAF Weather Wing. The Continental Air Forces enlisted the aid of eighty-one female pilots for target-towing and related flying duties. The Material Command Division employed two women who served as test pilots. Ann Carl served as a test pilot at the Fighter Flight Test Branch at Wright Field, evaluating new aircraft for possible acceptance into the Air Force. Finally, five WASP worked for the Proving Ground Command towing targets. A total of 699 women served with the Air Force in the continental

⁵⁹ Status Report from Jacqueline Cochran to Commanding General, Army Air Forces, 6-7, 1 August 1944, Wings Across America, http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/DOCUMENTS/final_report.htm#merged.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007).

United States as of 1 August 1944. Cochran projected that the number would increase to 1,000 by 28 December 1944.⁶⁰

Cochran's report ended with the following recommendations:

1. WASP should be militarized through absorption of present members and other qualified women pilots into the Air Corps as officers in the lower commissioned grades.
2. No action should be initiated by the AAF to revise WASP personnel requirements upwards pending a complete evaluation of the exiting and foreseeable pilot situation.
3. The civilian WASP program, including completion of training of students now in school, should be maintained until such time as decision is reached relative to obtaining militarization.
4. Under a civilian status, so many elements of the experimental project are lost or weakened, and there is such a lack of control over permanency of work by individual WASP after they are trained, that serious consideration should be given to inactivation of the WASP program if militarization is not soon authorized. If such action should be taken, an effort should be made to obtain military status, if only for one day, and resulting veterans recognition for all who have served commendably.⁶¹

The Press Branch of the War Department, perhaps in an effort to curb criticism of the program, released the report to the press in its entirety. The media overwhelmingly focused on her fourth recommendation, implying that Cochran's statement regarding the future of the WASP seemed an ultimatum designed to force militarization. The resulting political maelstrom signaled the end of the WASP program. Sensationalized reports denigrated the WASP and questioned their patriotism. In this political and social climate, even continuation of the WASP on a civilian basis seemed unlikely.⁶²

⁶⁰ Status Report from Jacqueline Cochran to Commanding General, Army Air Forces, 6-7, 1 August 1944, Wings Across America, http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/DOCUMENTS/final_report.htm#merged.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); Carl, *A WASP Among Eagles*, 61-66.

⁶¹ Status Report from Jacqueline Cochran to Commanding General, Army Air Forces, 6-7, 1 August 1944, Wings Across America, http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/DOCUMENTS/final_report.htm#merged.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007).

⁶² Status Report from Jacqueline Cochran to Commanding General, Army Air Forces, 6-7, 1 August 1944, Wings Across America, http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/DOCUMENTS/final_report.htm#merged.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 113; "Cochran Asks Militarization or Abolition of

Not content to allow the WASP program to continue as a civilian organization utilizing pilots already trained for duty with the Air Force, WASP critics continued to assail Congress and the Air Force with complaints. Media reports often accused Arnold and Cochran of attempting to circumvent Congress by continuing to train WASP. Although the Ramspect Report recommended a cessation of WASP training, it stopped short of directing dissolution of the civilian program. Nevertheless, media accounts continued to search for violations of Congressional directives. Some articles suggested that Cochran attempted to utilize a “back-door strategy” aimed at incorporating the WASP into the WAC, resulting in the assignment of former WASP to Air Force services. *Contact* magazine continued its virulent campaign against the WASP, spreading false information regarding the program and transforming CAA pilots into tragic martyrs.⁶³

On 1 October 1944 in a memorandum to Cochran, General Arnold notified the director that he considered the WASP program a success. Their mission complete, Arnold nevertheless ordered the deactivation of the WASP, noting that the “changing war situation” rendered WASP participation unnecessary. The general requested a plan for deactivation and stipulated that implementation take place no later than 20 December 1944. Cochran replied later that day with five recommendations designed to facilitate deactivation of the WASP. First, Cochran recommended a deactivation date of December 20th, in order to allow base

Women Airforce Service Pilots,” Folder: 1944 – April, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “WASP Seek Army Status,” *Tulsa World*, August 1944, Folder: MSS 540C, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “Women: Home by Christmas,” *Time*, 16 October 1944, 68-69; Folder: 1944-October, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas.
⁶³ “WASP Keep Wings; Get Army Training,” *New York Times*, 5 August 1944, 8:2, Folder: 1944-August, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Drew Pearson, “Washington Merry-Go-Round,” *Dallas Morning News*, 6 August 1944, 6, Folder: 1944-August, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “Deny Report WASP To Become Air WACs,” *Aviation News*, 7 August 1944, Folder: 1944-August, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “Voices from on High,” *Contact*, October 1944, 16, Folder: 1944-October, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas.

commanders the opportunity to find replacements for WASP. Second, she requested that the Air Force allow WASP resigning after November 20th to leave in good standing. Third, Cochran requested that all WASP be allowed to continue in their present assignments until deactivation. Fourth, the director requested certificates equivalent to honorable discharges from the Air Force for all WASP released from service. Finally, Cochran requested that all WASP receive documentation confirming their pilot rating. This last request optimistically assumed that WASP might use the ratings to obtain positions in the commercial sector of the airline industry.⁶⁴

Despite the termination of the program and criticism by CAA pilots, the WASP compiled a commendable record during the war. In his farewell letter to WASP members, Arnold noted that their successful record of accomplishment “proved that in any future total effort the nation can count on thousands of its young women to fly any of its aircraft.” He insisted that the success of the WASP program proved that women could fly “wingtip to wingtip with your brothers.” In addition, Arnold stated that he considered the WASP a pioneering venture, not an experiment. They filled a “vital and necessary place in the jigsaw pattern of victory.” The WASP delivered over 12,650 planes of 77 different types before disbandment. In all, the WASP ferried fifty percent of all high-speed pursuit planes in the continental United States, for a total of over sixty million miles. The final assessment of WASP performance issued by Army Air Force Headquarters in 1944 revealed that WASP

⁶⁴ Memorandum from General H.H. Arnold Regarding Disbandment, 12 October 1944, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, [www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderM, pdf](http://www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderM.pdf) (accessed 11 February 2008); Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 115; “WASP to Disband on December 20, Says Arnold; Praises Work of Women Pilots,” *Contact*, October 1944, 11, Folder: 1944-October, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “WASP: Army’s women pilots return to private life on December 20,” *National Aeronautics*, December 1944, 32, Folder: 1944-December, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Memorandum from Headquarters, Army Air Forces, Washington to Commanding Generals, All Air Forces Regarding Disbandment of WASP, MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files BA-FI, Folder: Deactivation, Dec. 20, 1944, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas.

maintained an error rating slightly lower than their male counterparts flying non-combat missions in the United States. Error percentages for WASP pilots rested at .001%, while male pilots maintained an error rate of .007%. The fatality rate for WASP personnel was .060 per 1,000 flight hours, compared with .062 per 1,000 hours for male pilots in the United States. In a press release, dated 19 December 1944, Cochran stated that the Air Force terminated the WASP program because the pilots had successfully executed and completed the objectives originally stated by Air Force leadership.⁶⁵

Evaluations of the WASP program among Air Force units revealed that the women flying for the Air Force overwhelmingly earned the respect of their superiors. Most commanders commended the WASP as capable pilots dedicated to their assigned stations. Brigadier General Nowland, Commander of the ATC Ferrying Division, wrote in a memorandum dated 1 November 1944 that the disbandment of the WASP would profoundly impact the ability of the Ferrying Division to meet its commitments. Nowland insisted that the action represented a definite hardship upon his units operations, resulting in a slowing of operations for at least five months. The AAF Weather Service compiled a lengthy history of its experience with WASP pilots. Many commanders reported that the female pilots compared favorably with the “better grade” of male cadets. A memorandum attached to the history revealed that Colonel W.S. Stone, of Headquarters AAF Weather Wing, reported that

⁶⁵ Moolman, *The Epic of Flight*, 153; Letter from H.S. Arnold to members of the WASP, 1 October 1944, MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files Ba-Fi, File: Deactivation, 20 December 1944, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 23, 26; Statement by Miss Jacqueline Cochran on Accomplishments of WASP Program, War Department, Bureau of Public Relations, Press Branch, 19 December 1944, Texas Woman’s University, http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/jackie_speech.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); Address By General H.S. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Before WASP Ceremony, Sweetwater, Texas, Thursday, December 7, 1944, War Department, Bureau of Public Relations, Press Branch, Texas Woman’s University, http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/General_hap.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); “WASP: final report rates women pilots equal to men, except in combat,” *National Aeronautics*, December 1944, 30, Folder: 1944-December, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; “Farewell to the WASP,” *Air Force: The Official Journal of the Army Air Forces*, December 1944, 26, Folder: 1944-December, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas.

not only were WASP performing well at headquarters, but that headquarters intended to requisition five additional WASP to fly with the Weather Wing at domestic stations in the United States. When the Army Air Force notified the Weather Wing of the inactivation of the WASP in November of 1944, each unit submitted reports and commendations for the WASP serving within respective units. Although most commanders believed that the civilian status of the women failed to hinder their performance, they overwhelmingly stated that if the utilization of female pilots by military establishments occurred in future conflicts, their militarization would facilitate the successful utilization of forces. Colonel Heinlein of the 3rd Weather Region in Texas stated that “WASP have displayed untiring energy, sound professional judgment and a keen devotion to duty. They have willingly, cheerfully dispatched their duties without regard for personal convenience or the difficulty of the assignment.” In addition, Heinlein noted that WASP in his unit “being required to meet physical standards higher than those set for aviation cadets, the WASP possessed the physical stamina necessary for the performance of the flying to which they are assigned. The thirty weeks training course they received at Avenger Field, Sweetwater, Texas made the WASP as well qualified as any male pilot to fly primary, basic and advanced type training planes in the United States.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ History of the AAF Weather Service: Utilization of WASP in AAF Weather Service, Special Study No. 2, February 1945, 4, Appendix 4, 9, 11, Texas Woman’s University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/weather.pdf> (30 July 2007); “Farewell to the WASP,” *Air Force: The Official Journal of the Army Air Forces*, December 1944, p. 26, Folder: 1944-December, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 27, 121-122; Phyllis Battelle, “Veteran Pilot Says Women Make Better Fliers Than Men,” MSS 250, Box: Newsclippings 1939-1971, File: Not dated, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Final Report on Women Pilot Program to Commanding General, Army Air Forces, MSS 250, Box: Government Reports and Histories, Folder: Final Report on Women Pilot Program by Jackie Cochran, August 1944, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Secret Memorandum from Brigadier General Nowland to Commanding General, Air Transport Command, 1 November 1944, *Wings Across America*, http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/press_archive/nowland.pdf (accessed 10 March 2008).

Many WASP received letters of commendation from the Air Force before disbandment. In her 1 August 1944 Status Report, Cochran referenced the commendation of the Commanding General of an anti-aircraft artillery brigade who claimed to be a “convert.” He noted that while male pilots shunned target towing as sheer boredom, WASP accepted the duty enthusiastically. Nancy Harkness Love and Barbara Erickson received the Air Medal. Jackie Cochran received the Distinguished Service Medal for her work with the WASP.⁶⁷

Disbanded WASP returned to their homes without the assistance of the Army. Although many WASP hitched rides on military planes to bases in the general vicinity of their homes, most shouldered the financial burden of returning to civilian life. Jean Hascall Cole noted in her 1992 memoir that the circumstances of the disbandment often resulted in tensions between male and female pilots after the war. Former WASP Barbara Poole’s remarks undoubtedly mirrored those of other WASP when she vented her frustrations in an article for *Flying* magazine in December of 1944. Poole blasted critics of the program and CAA pilots for campaigning against the WASP. She unabashedly insisted that when the shortage of pilots in 1943 was acute, the CAA pilots clung to their higher-paying salaried positions. With over 2,000 flight hours to her credit, Poole systematically refuted the arguments of critics charging that the Air Force required more qualifications for enrollment of men than of women. Poole attributed the entire debacle to an egotistical “battle of the sexes,” insisting that planes knew no sex – only good pilots.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Status Report from Jacqueline Cochran to Commanding General, Army Air Forces, 6-7, 1 August 1944, Wings Across America, http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/DOCUMENTS/final_report.htm#merged.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 27; An editorial written by Maj. Al Williams suggested that one WASP received the Air Medal as a publicity stunt after flying 8,000 miles in one week. Maj. A. Williams, “The WASP Bill,” Folder: 1944-no date, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas.

⁶⁸ Barbara E. Poole, “Requiem for the WASP,” *Flying*, December 1944, 55-56, 146-147, Folder: 1944-December, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Marlowe Churchill, “Pilots flew heroically, unheralded,” *Beacon*, 13 March 1987, MSS 250, Box: Biofiles A-BA, Folder: Dorothy J. Allen,

Jackie Cochran continued to set flying records after the war. In 1950, Cochran won the Harmon Trophy as the Aviatrix of the Decade. She became the first woman to break the sound barrier in 1953. In 1962, she established sixty-nine new distance records for Lockheed in a Jet Star. In that same year, she became the first woman to fly a jet across the Atlantic Ocean. Finally, in 1964, Cochran set records for a 100 kilometer flight with a top speed of 2,095 km/hr. However, Cochran's public statements regarding women in the military proved inexplicably inconsistent with her support for the WASP. Although she continued to contribute to the development of commercial and military aviation, she maintained a public opposition to the enlistment of women in military aviation involving combat. In 1974, Cochran testified in Senate hearings concerning the admission of women into military academies that "a woman's primary function is to get married, maintain a home, and raise a family." Cochran consistently maintained that women should serve only in emergencies and never in combat. Cochran's statements appear stunningly inconsistent with her former involvement with the WASP, her struggle for militarization of the WASP, and with her service as a test pilot. No explanation for this contradiction exists. Perhaps Cochran's experience with conservative American leaders curbed her desire to champion "radical" causes.⁶⁹

Many WASP continued working in aviation fields, fulfilling Cochran's prediction that former WASP would continue to contribute to the development of aviation. Former WASP Ola Rexroat later worked as a civilian air traffic controller. Many former WASP,

The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; "Women War Fliers Gripe on Inactivity," *Pennsylvania Ledger*, 1 Jan 1945, MSS 250, Box: Newsclippings 1939-1971, File: Not dated, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Cole, *Women's Pilots of World War II*, 135.

⁶⁹ Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 44. Converted from kilometers to miles, Cochran's 1964 flight was for a sixty-three mile course with a top speed of 1,302 mph. Lance Janda, "'A Simple Matter of Equality': The Admission of Women to West Point." In *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*, edited by Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird, (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 307.

such as Mary Retick Wells, worked as flight instructors. Catherine Murphy later joined the Civil Air Patrol. Several former WASP, such as Rexroat, Wells, and Leonora Anderson, joined the Air Reserves. In January of 1949, the Air Force offered commissions in the Reserves to former WASP. Commissioned as 2nd lieutenants, three hundred women answered the call, with over one hundred of them serving in non-combat roles during the Korean conflict. Nine women remained on active duty until retirement, while five served in Vietnam. Nevertheless, most WASP found it difficult to find jobs as pilots in post-war America. As male pilots inundated the industry after the war, few airlines savored the prospect of hiring female pilots in a society returning to more conservative gender roles.⁷⁰

Over three decades passed before the WASP gained the recognition they deserved. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed H.R. 3321 granting veteran status to WASP pilots of World War II. The vote took place after debates in which some representatives expressed opposition to the measure, arguing that the WASP simply functioned in the same capacity as any other civilian employee of the military. Others argued against the bill as an unnecessary expenditure. Supporters and former WASP insisted that the government owed the WASP recognition for their contribution to the war effort. The Department of Defense (DOD) weighed in on the issue, arguing that the passage of H.R. 3321 would correct “past

⁷⁰Kate Bennett, “WASP: World War II Got Women Off the Ground,” MSS 250, Box: Biofiles Re-Rex, Folder: Rexroat, Ola Mildred McDonald, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas. Ola Rexroat, a member of the Oglala-Sioux tribe, later served as president of the American Indian Woman’s Association. Rexroat is the only recorded Native American to join the WASP program; Douglas Hinton, “The Right Stuff,” *General Aviation News*, 6 December 2002, MSS 250, Box: BioFiles: A-BA, Folder: Leonora “Nonie” Anderson, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas. Anderson continued to serve in the Air Reserves for twenty-eight years, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 123; “Future Predicted for Women Fliers,” *New York Times*, 2 November 1944, 16:1, Folder: 1944-November, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Marlowe Churchill, “Pilots flew heroically, unheralded,” *Beacon*, 13 March 1987, MSS 250, Box: Biofiles A-BA, Folder: Dorothy J. Allen, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Press Release, 16 November 1944, Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Digital Documents Project, Jacqueline Cochran and the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) Papers, www.eisenhower.gov/dl/Jacqueline_Cochran/BinderL.pdf (accessed 11 February 2008); Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 121; Churchill, *On Wings of War*, 164; Haynesworth, *Amelia Earhart’s Daughters*, 151.

inequities.” James McIntyre, Jr., Acting Director of Management for the DOD included a summary of the department’s endorsement of the pending legislation, stating that WASP faced unique hazards not encountered by other civilian pilots. In addition, the DOD provided evidence that WASP volunteered with the understanding that the organization would eventually be granted military status. Finally, the DOD argued that militarization would allow the military and the Carter Administration to maintain its symbolic commitment to equality within the military. The passage of H.R. 3321 and corresponding legislation in the Senate, appended to the G I Bill Improvement Act of 1977, ended a thirty-three year battle to win recognition for the WASP.⁷¹

The WASP served with distinction during World War II in a field dominated, but not limited to, men. These women challenged themselves in the rapidly evolving field of flight while establishing a laudable record of accomplishment. By all rights, contemporary Americans should have supported these intrepid pilots. For a time, it seemed the WASP might gain the support of Americans. In the early years of the war, little criticism emerged to worry supporters. Critics only emerged when American men decided they wanted WASP jobs rather than serve in the Pacific Theater. As a result, the WASP disintegrated like Icarus’ wings. The WASP disbanded and its members rejoined American society. Not content to

⁷¹ Donnelly, *American Women Pilots of World War II*, 8; Letter from Katherine Menges Brick (43-3) WASP to Congress Regarding H.R. Bill 3321, 7 August 1977, MSS 250, Box: Biofiles BE-BN, Folder: Brick, Katherine Menges, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Marlowe Churchill, “Pilots flew heroically, unheralded,” *Beacon*, 13 March 1987, MSS 250, Box: Biofiles A-BA, Folder: Dorothy J. Allen, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Press Release from Charles W. Duncan, Jr., Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C. to James T. McIntyre, Jr., Acting Director of Management and Budget, with attachments, Wings Across America, http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/press_archive/Sns2.pdf (11 February 2008); “WASP Win 33 Year Battle For Vet Status,” *Stars and Stripes*, 10 November 1977, No. 45, Wings Across America, http://www.westtexas.tstc.edu/wasp/press_archives/stars77.pdf (accessed 10 March 2008); Congressional Bill Giving WASP Veteran Status, public Law 95-202 – Nov. 23, 1977, Title IV – Women’s Air Forces Service Pilots, Wings Across America, http://wingsacrossamerica.us/records_all/DOCUMENTS/bill.htm (accessed 10 March 2008); Letter from B-29 Pilot Harry McKeown to Dr. Dorothy Dougherty Struthers, 2 April 1995, Wings Across America, http://www.wingsacrossamerica.us/wasp/b29_letter.htm (accessed 10 March 2008).

simply fade into the night, WASP veterans continued to lobby for recognition, finally prevailing in 1977. Trailblazers in World War II, WASP remain vibrant inspirations for women today. They continue to reflect upon their experiences with pride and surviving WASP maintain an active dedication to each other and the memory of their service. The story of the WASP, paradoxically inspirational and tragic, demonstrated the best and worst in American society.

CHAPTER 3
FOLLOWING THE WAVES TO COLLEGE:
THE CRAFTING OF THE NAVY WAVES

In 1935, Congress, responding to increasing tensions across the globe, voted to increase the size of the American military. Increases in defense spending followed. The President and Congress authorized the construction of additional ships, while naval aviation grew increasingly important to war-plans developed by military strategists. In 1938, Congress established the Naval and Marine Corps Reserves, clearly stipulating that such a force should be composed of American *males*. Congress approved funding of a two-ocean Navy in 1940 by appropriating four million dollars to the service.¹

Despite the Navy's success with female yeomen during World War I, few men within the Navy entertained the notion of enlisting women into the service prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In an effort to discourage radical experiments, such as Josephus Daniels' enlistment of women into the Navy, Congress enacted legislation in the post-World War I period to definitively bar women from serving in the military unless they filled the ranks of nursing corps. Ignoring Daniel's arguments to the contrary, many believed that Civil Service personnel could fill any future manpower shortages. This decision proved short-sighted when the United States found itself involved in a two-front war. Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs, in a letter to David I. Walsh, Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee of the U.S. Senate, argued that Civil Service personnel failed to meet the requirements necessary to successfully replace male naval personnel. In addition to security issues and

¹ Susan H. Godson, *Serving Proudly: A History of Women in the U.S. Navy* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 103.

complications regarding transfers and assignment of personnel to naval installations, Jacobs noted that Civil Service personnel might resign at any time. Jacobs and other leaders within Naval Operations and the Bureau of Aeronautics argued that enlisting women solved these issues. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the debates subsided as the nation met the demands of war. As the summer of 1942 dawned, the United States hummed with activity, the nation striving to meet the needs of a nation at war. The threat of a potential manpower shortage now became a grim reality. As General Marshall and the Army argued with Congress over the roles of women in American society and the military, the Navy prepared for the inevitable, ultimately identifying over 1,000 jobs that enlisted women could fill. Naval planners also anticipated 150 positions for female officers in the Navy. Advocates of women in the Navy feverishly pushed Congress to reverse its earlier decision and allow women to enlist in the Navy Reserve.²

When naval planners issued official inquiries to Navy bureaus and districts regarding the number of positions women might fill, most returned with negative comments. G. B. Wilson of the Bureau of Navigation in Washington, D.C. responded to the official inquiry by insisting that Civil Service personnel filled any positions commissioned or enlisted women might fill. While acknowledging that the Bureau could replace two officers handling classified correspondence with female personnel, he nevertheless conveyed his conclusions that female naval personnel would find no place in the Bureau of Navigation. Ultimately, twenty activities within the First Naval District responded that they failed to identify any jobs in which women might serve. Eight activities responded that they could make use of female

² Holm, *Defense of a Nation*, 57-58; Jean Ebbert and Marie-Beth Hall, *Crossed Currents: Navy Women in a Century of Change* (Washington, D.C.: Batsford Brassey, Inc., 1999), 30-34; Letter from Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs to David I. Walsh, Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee, 11 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

personnel. Some responses demonstrated only a token effort to include women – often less than a dozen – in traditional gendered roles. A few responses reflected serious consideration of the proposal. The Commandant of the Third Naval District, E. J. Marquart, responded to the request with a detailed set of proposals for the enrollment of women as radiomen, as well as coding and communications officers within his command. Marquart recommended that preparations for the training of such officers and enlisted personnel begin at once.³

Meanwhile, Navy planners observed the development of the WAAC with concern. Determined to avoid the pitfalls and criticisms leveled against the WAAC, they resolved to establish the WAVES as an organization working as a component of the Navy, rather than as

³ The Chief of the Bureau of Navigation to All Bureaus and Offices of the Navy Department, 20 April 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum to Central Division, 28 April 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum to the Assistant Chief of Bureau, 25 April 1942; The Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks to the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, 1 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Commandant, Third Naval District to The Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, 1 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of Naval Personnel to the Head of Postgraduate School, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, 15 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of Naval Personnel to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, 18 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Commanding Officer to the Commandant, Fifth Naval District, Naval Operations Base, Norfolk, Virginia, 19 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Commandant, Third Naval District to The Chief of Naval Operations, 21 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Commandant, First Naval District to The Bureau of Naval Personnel, 28 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Charles Maxwell McConn, Dean of Washington Square College of Arts and Science to Commander William J. Lee, Bureau of Personnel, 17 June 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs, USN to Mr. Charles Maxwell McConn, Dean, Washington Square College of Arts and Science, 22 June 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 3 August 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Vice Chief of Naval Operations to The Chief of Naval Operations, 5 September 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 110, Joy Bright Hancock, *Lady in the Navy: A Personal Remembrance* (Annapolis, Maryland: The Naval Institute Press, 1972), 51.

an auxiliary of the Navy. This decision ultimately allowed the WAVES to avoid many of the problems regarding discipline, security and deployment encountered by the Army. Building a Women's Reserve within the Navy allowed the service to mold the new organization in a manner acceptable to naval leaders, enabling the Navy to keep this "radical" experiment within bounds. In addition, it resolved many of the questions regarding veteran's benefits that drew criticism from supporters of women working in the military. The development of the WAVES also benefited from the establishment of the Women's Advisory Council, a group composed of distinguished female educators from across the nation. Dr. Virginia Gildersleeve, Dean of Barnard College, Columbia University, served as Chairman of the council. The council included the following leaders in contemporary American academia.

Meta Glass, Ph.D., President, Sweet Briar College;
Lillian Gilbreth, Ph.D., noted authority on workplace efficiency;
Ada Comstock, Ph.D., President of Radcliff College;
Harriet Elliot, Ph.D., Dean of Women at the University of North Carolina;
Alice Lloyd, Ph.D., Dean of the University of Michigan;
Mary Yost, Ph.D., Dean at Stanford University;
Alice Baldwin, Ph.D., Dean of Women at Duke University.

These women not only brought their expertise to the organization, but also lent an air of respectability to the WAVES before the first recruit signed enlistment papers. Realizing that many admirals preferred enlisting "dogs, ducks, or monkeys" rather than women, the council trod carefully through the minefield of chauvinism prevalent in American society and the military. After extensive vetting of candidates, the Advisory Council chose Mildred McAfee, President of Wellesley College, to head the program.⁴

⁴ Gildersleeve later became one of the first eight delegates to represent the United States at the first United Nations conference drafting plans for world security. Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 58; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 34-37; *WAVES News Letter*, March 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 3; Memorandum for Dr. Joseph W. Barker, Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy. 20 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College

At forty-two years of age, McAfee enjoyed a reputation that celebrated her professional accomplishments while applauding her adherence to traditional gendered cultural mores. She enjoyed an unblemished reputation in her personal and professional life. McAfee graduated from Vassar College in 1920 before earning a Master's Degree from the University of Chicago. She then pursued a teaching career before becoming Dean of Oberlin College in 1934. Two years later she became President of Wellesley College. Her position at Wellesley demonstrated that she also possessed the administrative skills necessary for the job of Director of the WAVES. The council's choice undoubtedly influenced the public's perception of the Navy's new women's reserve. A history of the recruitment program produced in 1944 noted that "To the Main Streets of America, Wellesley had "class," and the WAVES enjoyed a certain amount of transferred prestige."⁵ Whereas tabloids published trivial accounts of Oveta Culp Hobby's stylish hats or Jackie Cochran's impeccable make-up, the Navy could point to the somewhat understated Mildred McAfee as a shining example for conservative American women. Known for her energetic work ethic, as well as her sense of humor, the new director hailed from a family of clergymen and educators – her father worked as a Presbyterian minister, one sister served as President of Hanover College, and her other sister married the Secretary of the American Bible Society. Few critics could accuse McAfee of fomenting radical shifts in gender roles, despite her outspoken ideas regarding the responsibilities and rights of women. In summation, Mildred McAfee embodied exactly what the Navy wanted – a respectable woman capable of leading a women's reserve in a

Park, Maryland; Memorandum for Captain F. U. Lake, USN from Elizabeth Reynard, 30 May 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 110; Hancock, *Lady in the Navy*, 60.

⁵ "History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion," 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 1.

manner that conformed to conventional gender roles for women and contemporary Christian values.⁶

Congress signed legislation establishing the Women's Reserve on 30 July 1942. Although many accounts overlook the deep divides within the Navy over the enlistment of women, there existed significant resistance among Navy leaders regarding the role and status of women. Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, and the Bureau of Aeronautics supported recommendations to make the Women's Reserve a part of the Navy. The Director of the Bureau of the Budget and the Bureau of Naval Personnel disagreed with the plan, preferring instead to establish the Women's Reserve as an auxiliary that worked *with* the Navy. Government leaders broke the deadlock on the issue on 18 March 1942. With encouragement from proponents of women in the Navy, including Margaret Chung of San Francisco – a long-term supporter of naval aviation - Representative Melvin Maas of Minnesota and Representative Margaret Chase Smith of Maine introduced legislation to the House of Representatives, designated H.R. 6807, calling for the creation of a Women's Reserve serving in the Navy. Following Maas' lead, Senator Raymond Willis of Indiana introduced identical legislation to the Senate. After a review by the House Naval Affairs Committee, the House of Representatives, despite reservations by several members, passed H. R. 6807 on April 16th. The Senate proved more resistant to Willis' plan, designated S. 2388. Members of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee argued in favor of legislation similar to that of the WAAC bill, establishing the Navy Women's Reserve as an auxiliary. Finally, after months of debate regarding the proper roles of women in American society, Congress

⁶Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 58; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 34-37, Elizabeth Allen Butler, *Navy Waves*. (Charlottesville, Virginia: Wayside Press, Inc., 1988), 9; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 111; Hancock, *Lady in the Navy*, 60.

passed Public Law 689 on 21 July 1942. The president signed the bill on July 30th. The Women's Reserve would serve as a component of the Navy, not as an auxiliary.⁷

Public Law 689 reflected many of the conflicting ideologies surrounding the enlistment of women in the Navy. Hoping to attract experienced professionals to the service, Congress ordered the Navy to commission or enlist women with rank and pay corresponding to those of male personnel. However, they strictly limited the number of officers permitted in the Women's Reserve in order to limit their effect on the Navy as a whole and prevent women from holding positions of authority over male service personnel. Congress expressed a pervasive fear of women in authority by granting women power over fellow women reservists only. One woman could attain the rank of Lieutenant Commander – a position subsequently held by McAfee. The legislation limited lieutenants to thirty-five and also restricted the number of lower-ranking officers. In reality, this limitation prevented many professional women from enlisting in the Navy because commissioned positions filled quickly. Successful businesswomen unable to obtain commissions as officers simply decided to remain in the civilian sector. In addition, the law granted women benefits similar to those of male sailors but restricted women from receiving death benefits or health benefits as veterans. Finally, Congress restricted the Women's Reserve to the duration of the war plus six months.⁸

Congressional legislation for the Women's Reserve differed significantly from WAAC legislation in several aspects. Regulations stipulated that only women at least twenty

⁷ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 32-34, 38-39; Butler, *Navy Waves*, 3; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 59; Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt from James Forrestal, 10 June 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 112.

⁸ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 38-41; Memorandum for Mr. Vinson from H.G. Hopwood, Commander, USN, 18 July 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 121.

years old could enlist in the Navy, compared with eighteen years old for women working with the Army. McAfee and her staff believed that this provision resulted in fewer disciplinary problems among Navy personnel. In addition, Congress restricted Navy women from serving overseas, on ships, or in combat aircraft. A subsequent amendment to the WAVES legislation clarified that while the Navy restricted women from flying in an aircraft engaged in a combat mission, women might undergo training in or train male pilots in combat aircraft. WAACs, in contrast, served in Army stations across the globe. In fact, WAACs served on American transport ships where Navy women were prohibited. Although Congress presumably believed these changes protected Navy women from the dangers of combat and the advances of lonely sailors at sea, the Congressional Record provides no explanation.⁹

In an effort to acquire the most qualified women America had to offer, McAfee and the Advisory Council began contacting women from professional and academic fields to enlist in the Navy. Their efforts yielded at least four Deans from the academic community, as well as lawyers, draftsmen, and business executives from across the nation. Experienced, respected in their chosen field, and well-educated, these women formed the core of McAfee's

⁹ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 39-40; "How to serve your country in the WAVES or SPARS." Navy Recruiting Brochure, 7; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 59; Butler, *Navy Waves*, 3; Memorandum for Mr. Vinson from H.G. Hopwood, Commander, USN, 18 July 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 30 July 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Commander, Western Sea Frontier to Chief of Naval Personnel, 13 November 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2331, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 30 June 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Chief of Naval Aeronautics to Commandants of Naval Districts, River Commands and Air Training Commands and all shore stations within the continental United States, 18 August 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Chief of Naval Personnel to All Naval Activities in Continental United States, 29 September 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

officer corps. As the first women to join the Navy, they received their commissions directly from civilian life. No training program yet existed to familiarize these first female reservists with naval history, military protocols, or the correct path to navigate through the labyrinthine mountain of naval bureaucracy. Nevertheless, their orders charged them with recruiting America's women to "replace a man for duty" and developing a training program that ensured future commissioned officers and enlisted personnel assumed their duties within the Navy as competent servicewomen.¹⁰

The Women's Reserve acquired their moniker from newly commissioned Lieutenant Elizabeth Reynard. Previously a Professor of English at Barnard College of Columbia University, the Navy charged Reynard with developing a suitable name for the new Reserve. Reynard looked for a name that conveyed the organization's mission while remaining true to the nautical tradition of the Navy. Newspapers already referred to the organization's future members as "goblettes," "sailorettes," or "swans." Reynard's solution, "Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service," evolved into the acronym "WAVES." The Lieutenant later explained that she chose to include the word "emergency" in order to reassure older officers that the Navy planned to limit the inclusion of women into the Navy to the immediate emergency and no further. When the war ended, the WAVES would disband – or so they believed in 1942. Unfortunately, a small but vocal number of male seamen later circulated lewd ditties concerning the desires of many seamen to "ride the WAVES." As a result, Navy recruiters received suggestions recommending that the phrases "Navy women," "Women of the Navy," and "Women Reservists" might reflect more positively upon the

¹⁰ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 44-45, 48-49; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 60; Memorandum for Mr. Vinson from H.G. Hopwood, Commander, USN, 18 July 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

WAVES. Henceforth, the Navy referred to women in the Navy as “WAVES” or as the “Women’s Reserve.”¹¹

Mildred McAfee accepted her commission as Lieutenant Commander immediately after the president signed Public Law 689, making her the first woman ever commissioned into the United States Navy. Approximately 150 other women soon received commissions and dispersed throughout the Navy. Among this first group of officers was Louise K. Wilde, Dean at Rockford College and Dorothy Stratton, Dean of Women at Purdue University. Stratton later became Director of the Coast Guard’s SPARS. Working in the Bureau of Naval Personnel and the Bureau of Naval Aeronautics, as well as in naval installations across the nation, these women began the process of planning for the recruitment and training of future WAVES.¹²

Recruitment efforts for the WAVES implored American women to “replace a man for duty.” Using radio, newspapers, posters, brochures and a personal invitation from Admiral Jacobs, the Navy appealed to the patriotism of American women to join the WAVES. Meanwhile, McAfee decreed that recruiting efforts project an image of the WAVES as conservative young women. She forbade “glamorous” or provocative images of WAVES, insisting that the advertising campaign gain no criticism from parents and church leaders. In fact, the WAVES earned endorsements from the pulpits of many American churches. Thousands of American women responded.

¹¹ Lt. Elizabeth Reynard became the first member of the WAVES to receive a Letter of Commendation from the Navy. The award recognized Reynard’s contribution to the development of the WAVES. Her academic accomplishments notwithstanding, Reynard served with the Red Cross in Belgium during World War I. Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 41; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 59; Butler, *Navy Waves*, 5-6; *WAVES News Letter*, June 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; Secretary of the Navy to Commandants of All Naval Districts within the Continental United States, 2 June 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, 2, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 111; Hancock, *Lady in the Navy*, 61.

¹² Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 45; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 60; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 113.

When the first anniversary of the WAVES occurred in June of 1943, the Navy launched a massive three-week publicity campaign, complete with recruiting information in newspapers, magazines, and on the radio. The Navy's publicity campaign advised recruiters to stress the important and unusual jobs women filled in the Navy. Quotas established for recruiting in the summer of 1943 rested at 800. In 1943, the National Women's Council of the Navy League of the United States conducted an exhibit to aid in the recruitment efforts of the WAVES. In cooperation with the Navy, the Women's Council held their exhibit in the International Building at Rockefeller Plaza in New York, with publicity handled by the Navy's Public Relations Department. Leading Navy officials participated, as well as government officials and church leaders. Exhibits were manned by WAVES already enlisted as Link Trainers, parachute riggers, control tower operators, hospital workers, gunnery instructors, storekeepers, and aviation machinist's mates. Finally, a film detailing the WAVES in action played at scheduled times throughout the day. Navy recruiting efforts continued until the Japanese surrender. Although recruiters sometimes encountered difficulty meeting quotas, the Navy never relaxed standards to attract more volunteers. As Navy planners knew from observing the WAC, such a move might damage the image of the WAVES. Cumulatively, the Navy recruited 104,339 women as candidates for the Women's Reserve. As late as May of 1945, Vice-Admiral Randall Jacobs continued to push Navy recruiters to enlist women for the WAVES.¹³

¹³ Mrs. Leota Willis to Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, 25 July 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Randall Jacobs, Chief of Naval Personnel to Mrs. Leota Willis, 30 July 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum to Lieutenant Commander Paul B. Hartenstein, USNR, Bureau of Naval Personnel, 1 December 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/P14-4, Box 2331A, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Navy Department Office of Public Relations, Washington, D.C. Memorandum from Secretary of the Navy, Director of Public Relations to Commandants of All Naval Districts within the Continental United States, 2 June 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General

Hollywood promoted the WAVES with a feature film and a famous director filmed a promotional piece for the Navy during the war. Paramount Pictures, in cooperation with the United States Navy, produced a fictionalized film based on the lives of WAVES. Titled, *Here Come the WAVES*, the movie featured Bing Crosby, Betty Hutton, and Sonny Tufts. In similar fashion, Commander John Ford, a renowned Hollywood director, filmed *That Men May Fight*, showing the life and work of WAVES stationed in San Diego. Although the Navy initially intended the film for local use on the West Coast, it played nationally as one of the most effective promotional tools of the war. Other entertainers joined in supporting the WAVES. Betty Jean Oliver O'Dell recalled that while recuperating in sick bay, Frank Sinatra wheeled in a piano and sang for sick WAVES. Promotional efforts apparently paid off. Such stories always drew positive media attention.¹⁴

The Navy's decision to limit the number of officers in the WAVES resulted in many difficulties for women serving in the Navy. WAVES assigned to senior positions in training centers and at naval districts across the nation, including Washington, overwhelmingly filled the quota for WAVES officers. This situation left little room for advancement for enlisted WAVES or officers commissioned after the initial group of officers. Morale suffered among

Correspondence, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943 Vol. 4 to QR-8-1943 Vol. 2, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Plan for the Acceleration of Recruiting of WAVES, 28 September 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, Box 233 1B, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Mrs. Bradford, Jr., Chairman, Public Relations, League of the United States National Women's Council, 2 October 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, Box 233 1B, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Randall Jacobs, Vice Admiral, USN, Chief of Naval Personnel to Mr. Elmer Davis, Director, Office of War Information, 10 May 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, Box 233 1B, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 115; "History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion," 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; "History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion," 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 3-5.

¹⁴ *WAVES News Letter*, January 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 8; "History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion," Exhibit A, 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 2; O'Dell, Betty Jean Oliver. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

WAVES stifled from promotion because of the terms imposed by Congressional legislation. The Navy attempted to alleviate the situation by allowing enlisted WAVES to apply for officer's training with a recommendation from a commanding officer. Waivers for educational requirements might be allowed in compensation for specialized skills for dedicated enlisted personnel. Nevertheless, as long as the quota system limited advancement, such measures remained largely symbolic. On 8 November 1943 Congress responded to the Navy's dilemma by passing Public Law 183. This legislation allowed the Secretary of the Navy to promote McAfee to the rank of captain. In addition, it removed restrictions on advancements in the lower ranks, thus alleviating some of the frustrations enlisted WAVES experienced. Thirty-five WAVES officers received promotions to Lieutenant Commander.¹⁵

McAfee and her initial staff of officers encountered mixed reactions from Navy men when they assumed their new posts. Many men resented their mission to replace men for service overseas. A sailor based in Norfolk wrote a letter to WAVES headquarters demanding that the organization cease attempts to convince his wife to enlist. He insisted that if the Navy needed women, "why not get the girls that walk the streets and always getting into trouble?"¹⁶ Fortunately, his response seemed extreme, even for opponents of women in the military. Others appeared dumbfounded at the prospect of women in the Navy. To make matters more challenging, the first WAVES often received no instruction and simply negotiated their way through the Navy bureaucracy through trial and error. One

¹⁵ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 89-90; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 63, 71; Memorandum for Mr. Vinson from H.G. Hopwood, Commander, USN, 18 July 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Bureau of Naval Personnel Circular Letter No. 59-45, 12 March 1945, RG 24, QR-8-MM(N)B, Box 2331, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 123.

¹⁶ Letter from A Sailor to the WAVES, undated, National Archives College Park, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, Box 233 1B, College Park, Maryland.

officer early in the evolution of the WAVES confided in his new assistant that he made himself “vulnerable” with the other male officers by requesting a WAVES assistant. Even McAfee often felt as if she functioned as a figurehead. In 1946, McAfee insisted that women in the military “had to be better than the ordinary man to prove her capability. When she had done so, she was often commended as though she had preformed a miracle.”¹⁷ Voicing her frustrations and demonstrating her renowned wit, she once imaged Navy officers’ reaction to WAVES by citing “scripture”: “He cried unto the Lord saying, ‘Thy wrath lieth hard upon me. Thou hast afflicted me with all thy WAVES.’”¹⁸

Unlike the WAAC, the WAVES found that the service supported their efforts to secure a stylish uniform for its members. Again, the Navy learned from the Army’s mistakes. An attractive uniform would draw recruits and photograph well in press reports. Thanks to the efforts of a noted American fashion designer known as Mainbocher, McAfee and her staff reviewed the proposed uniforms within nine days of accepting her commission. Although she wanted the uniforms to reflect the professionalism of the WAVES, McAfee remained adamant that “there will be no effort to dress the women like men.”¹⁹ Mainbocher’s designs, with some minor revisions, met with McAfee’s approval. Many women later admitted that they chose to serve in the Navy because they preferred the uniform to the drab khaki worn by the WAAC. In fact, the current uniform for female naval officers closely resembles this early design. For winter service, the Navy chose a tailored Navy-blue uniform, complete with a white shirt and Navy tie. Plain black pumps or serviceable black oxfords served as regulation footwear, while a brimmed hat and black

¹⁷ Mildred McAfee Horton, “Women in the United States Navy,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 51, No. 5, Human Behavior in Military Society. (March 1946), 449.

¹⁸ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 46-47; Lt. Helen Clifford Gunter, USNR, (Ret.), *Navy WAVE: Memories of World War II*. (Fort Bragg, California: Cypress House Press, 1992), 56; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 124.

¹⁹ Butler, *Navy Waves*, 9.

gloves completed the ensemble. In case of rain, the Navy issued women a raincoat and havelock. Virtually identical in design, designers constructed the summer uniform of a light-weight material in white. In summer, white pumps completed the uniform. Later additions to the regulation attire included a light-weight seersucker dress and a “play set” for physical training. In addition, the Navy issued WAVES working in more physical jobs a blue work smock. Despite early challenges with procurement and tailoring, the Navy provided its female recruits with an attractive, serviceable uniform that WAVES wore with pride.²⁰

McAfee and her staff executed a brilliant plan for training WAVES officers and enlisted personnel. Instead of training women at military installations, such as those the WAAC utilized for training, WAVES would be trained at respected college institutions across the nation. Besides, traditional naval training stations were already filled to capacity with male recruits training for service at sea. Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts and Mount Holyoke College, a mere eight miles away from Smith College, served as officer training facilities for the WAVES for the duration of the war. Retired Captain Herbert W. Underwood, decorated naval veteran, became the initial commander of what WAVES chose to call the “U.S.S. Northampton.” This move allowed the Navy to carefully craft the image of the WAVES as one of intelligent, serious-minded American women. Recruiters and Navy brochures assured women and their families that new recruits began their training on a college campus in New York City. Evelyn Barbara Urich Einfeldt recalled that the lure of

²⁰ A havelock covered the hat and was secured below the neck. As a result, the regulation raincoat and havelock shielded the WAVES uniform from inclement weather. WAVES in Washington, D.C. named their monthly newsletter after this odd headgear – arguing that, like the havelock, the publication covered everything. Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 48-49; “The Story of You in Navy Blue,” Navy Recruiting Brochure, 18-19; “How to serve your country in the WAVES or SPARS,” Navy Recruiting Brochures, 8; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 60; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 124; “History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion,” 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 1-2; Mohns, Mona Jane. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

training on a college campus contributed significantly to her decision to join. Former reservists Mona Mohns and Dorothy Rogers later recalled that they chose the WAVES because they believed it a more “elite group.” Former dorm rooms became Navy Residence Halls. “Mess” took place in former college dining halls. The Navy also administered aptitude tests to WAVES in basic training in an effort to place them in duty stations that effectively utilized their talents. By emphasizing the collegiate atmosphere of the WAVES, the Navy managed to circumvent much of the criticism leveled against the WAAC. Although some critics believed that American women might rebel against the regimentation of military life, McAfee later insisted that the experience allowed women to practice aspects of individualism free from traditional gender constructs. WAVES appeared feminine in their crisply tailored blue and white uniforms with pristine white gloves. They marched across college campuses during basic training, not military parade grounds. Once deployed to their new assignments, WAVES overwhelmingly billeted in segregated residence halls or in private residences, rather than in military barracks. These efforts to distinguish the WAVES as education-minded patriots paid off for the Navy. Photographs and media accounts rarely delved into unflattering aspects of Navy life or speculated about the “true” purpose of the WAVES. Unlike the articles they wrote about the WAC, reporters avoided questions concerning what color underwear WAVES wore or what dating policies the Navy dictated to WAVES.²¹

²¹ Smith College continued to operate as a civilian college throughout the war. Smith students made adjustments to accommodate the WAVES. The alumni association donated a portion of its building for the use of the WAVES and the Navy agreed to fund an annex to the school’s infirmary to accommodate WAVES and students alike. “The Story of You in Navy Blue,” Navy Recruiting Brochure, 15, 36; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 50-53; “How to serve your country in the WAVES or SPARS,” Navy Recruiting Brochures, 4-5, 17; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 61; “Schools and Rates for Navy Women,” Navy Booklet, 2; WAVES News Letter, April 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 5-7; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 117; “History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion,” 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 2; Einfeldt, Evelyn

Requirements for officer recruits reflected the Navy's desire to obtain quality leadership for the new reserve. The Navy made a conscious choice to encourage the perception that the Navy remained "selective" in choosing new recruits. Navy regulations required that commissioned officers in the WAVES be between twenty and forty-nine years old, inclusive. In addition, they needed a college degree from an accredited college. In some cases, the Navy accepted women with two years of college and at least two years of acceptable professional experience. The Navy administered an Officer's Qualification Test and required candidates to provide at least three letters of recommendation. Finally, the Navy required officer candidates to meet the same requirements as enlisted recruits. Once accepted, officer candidates began reporting for training at Smith College on 28 August 1942. Approximately 120 women formed the first officer class. The curriculum mirrored that of male servicemen, including physical fitness, drill, communications, naval organization, identification of ships and aircraft, and Navy protocol. The first three classes of officers passing through Northampton stayed for approximately one month. Subsequent classes completed a full two months of training before receiving their commissions. Officers requiring specialized training after their stay at Northampton might find themselves stationed at a number of prestigious facilities across the nation, including M.I.T. or UCLA for Aeronautical Engineering classes or Harvard University for Radio and Electronic Engineering. In November of 1942, a second training unit opened at Mount Holyoke College.²²

Barbara Urich. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Horton, 448; Rogers, Dorothy Louis Smith Horn. Written survey conducted by author. June 2005.

²² The Mount Holyoke facility later altered its training courses to focus solely on specialized training. "The Story of You in Navy Blue," Navy Recruiting Brochure, 38-41; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 51-55; "How to serve your country in the WAVES or SPARS." Navy Recruiting Brochures, 14-15; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 61-62; "WAVES in Naval Aviation Activities." Training Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, U.S. Navy, 16 March 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4,

The Navy placed restrictions on marriages between WAVES and military personnel. Initially, the Navy barred women married to personnel from any military service to join the WAVES. While in basic training, the Navy forbade women from marrying. After basic training, WAVES might marry anyone except members of the Navy, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines, or Marine Corps. Within three months of the program's inception, the Navy revised its policies. Women received permission to marry anyone in any service, with the exception of the Navy itself. Finally, in March of 1943 the Navy forsook all attempts to regulate the marriages of its personnel. In November of 1943, the Navy made one final change, restricting the enlistment of women already married to a commissioned officer of the Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard. With this final stipulation, the Navy attempted to prevent such women from receiving special treatment due to the position of their spouse.²³

Public Law 183 also made provisions allowing WAVES to receive allowances for dependents. Male Navy personnel already received such benefits. Congress prevented WAVES from applying for these benefits in its initial legislation. This exception invoked considerable objections from WAVES with parents or other family members to support. Public Law 183, while granting WAVES dependency benefits, stopped short of allowing WAVES to claim husbands as dependents. Such a stipulation, while discriminatory, reflected contemporary ideals regarding the status of men and women in American society.

Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 116, 118; "History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion," 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 2.

²³ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 90-91; Chief of Naval Personnel to Commanding Officers, U.S.N.R. Training Schools (Women's Reserve, Class V-10), 3 September 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8 – P19, Box 2335, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 121; ; "WAVES in Naval Aviation Activities." Training Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, U.S. Navy, 16 March 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

American leaders resisted any move that might indicate that a man “depended” upon a women for his livelihood.²⁴

Selected WAVES received their orders and began the journey to basic training. Some women traveled by car or bus. Others travelled by train. Dr. Helen Clifford Gunter later recalled her trip from the Los Angeles Railway Station to Midshipman’s Training School. According to Gunter, the female officer recruits traveling on the train enjoyed the luxury of a Pullman car to themselves. Military police stationed on the train guarded both entrances into the car and warned the women about the three hundred “wolves” also traveling on the train. The “wolves” in questioned were male servicemen. The officer instructed the women to focus straight ahead and ignore any comments from the servicemen as they passed through other railway cars. According to Gunter, comments and wisecracks did ensue. Nevertheless, she felt them rough but harmless. Gunter’s experience seems typical of other servicewomen who traveled on public transportation.²⁵

Despite the Navy’s desire to mold the image of the WAVES as serious, educated women focused on the job at hand, rather than emphasize the “militarization” of American women, it nevertheless adhered to a rigorous curriculum of military training. Women training at Northampton or at Mount Holyoke received instruction similar to that of their sisters in the Army. Reveille woke recruits at 06:30 and officers expected women to muster in ranks by 07:00 for the march to breakfast - rain or shine. At 08:00 half of the regiment attended classes, while the other half participated in physical conditioning or drill. At noon, after the march to lunch, the two groups switched places. At 17:00 hours the Navy granted women forty-five minutes to attend to personal issues, before mandatory periods of study and

²⁴ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 91.

²⁵ Gunter, *Navy WAVE*, 19-20.

instruction lasting until 22:00 hours. On Saturday morning officer recruits stood for inspection and thereafter enjoyed relative freedom until 19:30 hours on Sunday night. Exceptions to this policy included women serving weekend duty, such as watch duty.²⁶

Exceptions regularly occur in periods of national distress. The Navy altered its training policies for a select group of women with specialized talents to meet the needs of the Navy's intelligence community. In 1943, the Navy began searching for female applicants proficient in translating written and spoken Japanese. The Navy previously tried to fill its need for translators from its existing pool of male servicemen, but few met the qualifications necessary to gain admittance into the Navy's fourteen-month course in Japanese. In the summer of 1943, the Navy admitted eighty-eight women into the course. These select women met the same qualifications demanded of men. However, the Navy waived strict adherence to the requirements set up for WAVES' officers, nor did the women attend Northampton for training. They reported directly for training in the Navy's Japanese language course, receiving their commissions after completing three months of instruction, and reporting directly for duty after finishing the course. Successful graduates from the course received duty assignments in naval communications units. Serving primarily in Washington, these women provided essential service in the war against the Japanese.²⁷

Recruitment centers and Navy brochures informed potential recruits of the qualifications for enlisted personnel. While not unduly strict, the Navy believed that these requirements facilitated the development of a competent and professional workforce. First

²⁶ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 55-56; *WAVES News Letter*, April 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 5-7; The Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School (WR) Northampton and The Naval Training School (Communications-W) South Hadley, Massachusetts, Photographic Review, 1-17.

²⁷ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 58; The Vice Chief of Naval Operations to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 8 February 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

and foremost, women needed proof of U.S. citizenship. Age requirements stipulated that only women between twenty and thirty-five years old, inclusive, need apply. Recruits younger than twenty-one years of age needed written consent from their parents or guardians. The Navy denied admittance to women with children less than eighteen years of age. Only women with two years of high school or business school received acceptance into the Navy as enlisted personnel. In practice, virtually all WAVES entered the service with a high-school diploma. Additionally, the Navy required a resume of prior employment experience. As with officer candidates, enlisted women needed three references to verify that they maintained a respectable reputation. Finally, the Navy required women to undergo complete physical examinations before joining the ranks of the WAVES. Thousands of women applied, including the Bates and the Gasparotto twins, providing the Navy with a solid base to begin operations.²⁸

The Navy accepted its first group of 1,050 enlisted WAVES on 11 September 1942 and they reported for basic training on 4 October 1942 at one of three training centers. All of these women boasted a high-school education and ranged from twenty to thirty-six years of age. Oklahoma A&M College in Stillwater accepted the first group of recruits slated to become yeomen. The University of Wisconsin in Madison enrolled the first group of women destined to become radiomen for the Navy. Indiana University in Bloomington began training the Navy's first group of female storekeepers. Thousands of subsequent recruits repeated the process. The Navy later reorganized training into a single basic training center for women. At the same time, the Navy's leadership decided to expand its original projections and called for a WAVES force of 75,000 enlisted women. As a result, McAfee

²⁸ "The Story of You in Navy Blue," Navy Recruiting Brochure, 36-37; "How to serve your country in the WAVES or SPARS." Navy Recruiting Brochure, 13; Bates, Ruth Converse. Written survey conducted by author. June 2005; Milo, Theresa Gasparotto. Written survey conducted by author. June 2005.

and her staff designated Iowa State Teachers College at Cedar Falls as the new basic training unit for all enlisted women. WAVES Lieutenant Margaret Dissert, former dean of Wilson College, became the first officer-in-charge of the Cedar Falls unit, managing a staff of male and female officers. The Navy chose Captain Randall Davis as the unit's first commanding officer. Women began arriving in mid-December, forming the first class of enlisted WAVES to train at Cedar Falls. Training resembled that of WAVES officers, with a few notable exceptions. Enlisted recruits rose for reveille on Sunday morning at 07:00 hours, ate breakfast at 07:30, and attended mandatory church services. Recruits enjoyed Sunday afternoons free until 17:30 hours, when study hours began. This routine facilitated the projection of an image of WAVES recruits as intelligent, conservative American women serving their nation in a time of crisis.²⁹

After a six-week basic training course, WAVES graduated and either received orders to a duty station or continued to another Naval Training School for advanced training in a specialized field. WAVES often trained alongside male servicemen in these schools. However, living quarters and mess halls remained strictly segregated. Advanced training for the following specialties took place at the locations listed:

Radio training	-	Miami University, Oxford, Ohio
Storekeeper	-	Georgia State College for Women, Milledgeville, GA
Storekeeper	-	Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
Yeoman	-	Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls, IA
Yeoman	-	Oklahoma A & M, Stillwater, OK
Aerographer	-	Naval Air Station, Lakehurst, NJ
Mail Clerk	-	Naval Training School, Sampson, NY
Aviation Free		
Gunnery Instruction	-	Naval Air Training Center, Pensacola, FL
Cook or Baker	-	Naval Training School, The Bronx, New York, NY
Key Punch Operator	-	International Business Machines Corp, New York, NY
Control Tower		
Operator	-	Naval Air Station, Atlanta, GA

²⁹ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 66, 68-69; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 63-64.

Aviation Machinist	-	Naval Air Training Center, Norman, OK
Parachute Rigger	-	Naval Air Station, Lakehurst, NJ
Link Trainer		
Instructor	-	Naval Air Station, Atlanta, GA
Aircraft Instrument		
Maintenance	-	Chicago School of Aircraft Instruments, Chicago, IL
Pharmacist's Mate		
& Hospital Apprentice-		National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, MD
Pharmacist's Mate		
& Hospital Apprentice-		Naval Hospitals in San Diego, CA or St. Albans, NY. ³⁰

Women serving with the WAVES filled an ever-increasing number of occupations. The Navy initially hoped that women could replace servicemen in areas of administration and communications – primarily as clerks and technicians - fields open to women in American society in the pre-war period. Even before the first class of enlisted WAVES graduated from Cedar Falls in 1943, the Navy expanded its list of jobs deemed suitable for women. Graduating WAVES learned that they might assume such occupations as aviation machinist's mates, metal smiths, or pigeon trainers. Lieutenant Mary McAllister became a gas defense instructor at the New York Navy Yard in Brooklyn after attending the Navy's chemical warfare school. Such a position seemed unimaginable in pre-war America. Areas previously resistant to the employment of WAVES began to request women to fill positions vacated by male servicemen. WAVES ultimately served at over nine hundred shore stations

³⁰ "The Story of You in Navy Blue." Navy Recruiting Brochure, 17; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 77; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 63; Charles Maxwell McConn, Dean of Washington Square College of Arts and Science to Commander William J. Lee, Bureau of Personnel, 17 June 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of Bureau of Aeronautics to Commanding Officers of All Naval Aviation Shore Activities Outside the Continental United States, 6 April 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of the Bureau of Ordinance to The Chief of Naval Personnel, 10 August 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8/P16-3, Vol. 6 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of Bureau of Aeronautics to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 8 March 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Officer-in-Charge, Naval Training School, Atlanta, Georgia to Chief of Naval Personnel, 29 May 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 72, QR-8/P16-3, Vol. 6 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 118.

in the continental United States. By 1945, WAVES constituted 55% of uniformed naval personnel in Washington, D.C. and processed 80% of the Navy's mail for the fleet and naval installations outside the continental United States. In the process, they maintained updated records documenting the locations of all naval personnel across the globe. WAVES also executed 75% of the positions in Radio Washington, the Navy's communications center, working around the clock processing messages for the Navy. At the Bureau of Naval Personnel, WAVES filled 70% of billets.³¹

Many WAVES filled positions as communications officers. By 1945, the Navy trained approximately 1,750 women in the communications field, accounting for 80% of all personnel assigned to the Navy's Washington Communications offices. In fact, WAVES eventually assumed all encoding and decoding work for the Navy. Working with code breaking machines in absolute secrecy, WAVES performed the vital task of deciphering the messages intercepted from Japanese and German transmissions. Former WAVES code breaker Evelyn Barbara Urich (Einsfeldt) was among 400 other WAVES serving in Dayton,

³¹ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 64, 70, 99; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 73-74; "Schools and Rates for Navy Women," Navy Booklet, 6-21; *WAVES News Letter*, February 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2; *WAVES News Letter*, April 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2; *WAVES News Letter*, June 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 3; *WAVES News Letter*, September 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; *WAVES News Letter*, May 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; *WAVES News Letter*, June 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; *WAVES News Letter*, August 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 7; "The Navy's Ladies," *Time*, Vol. XLIII, No. 20, 72, 74; Memorandum for Mr. Vinson from H.G. Hopwood, Commander, USN, 18 July 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Commandant, Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. to Commandant, Potomac River Naval Command, 20 September 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Listing of Billets To Be Filled With WAVES, 22 December 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum for Admiral Randall Jacobs, Distribution Plans for WAVES, 30 December 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Director of Engineering Division to Office of Assistant Chief of Bureau, 6 September 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8/P16-3, Vol. 6 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; L.E. Bratton, Acting Judge Advocate General of the Navy to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, 3 July 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; "Eighty-Six Thousand WAVES in Navy on Third Anniversary." Press Release, 21 July 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 125.

Ohio, assembling the “bombe” machines, a job she later recalled with pride. These early versions of the modern computer decoded intercepted messages from the German Enigma transmissions. At the Los Angeles Zone Communications Office, WAVES formed the entire crew of the busy office, with eight officers and twenty-four enlisted women handling all administrative message traffic for seventy naval activities located in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Nevada.³²

The Bureau of Medicine and Surgery utilized WAVES extensively at seventeen naval hospitals across the nation. Almost 13,000 women completed the Bureau’s training course, laboriously learning the “ins and outs” of medical care from the Navy’s *Handbook of the Hospital Corps*. Graduates of the Bureau’s training course served in occupations ranging from physical therapists, pharmacists mates and bacteriologists. The Naval Hospital located in Jacksonville, Florida utilized the services of one hundred and forty WAVES. By 1945, more than 150 WAVES served at the Naval Hospital in Bainbridge, Maryland. As scores of Navy personnel returned wounded to the United States in 1945, the Navy experienced a shortage of medical personnel for its rehabilitation hospitals. As a result, the Bureau sponsored a sixteen week course in rehabilitation at the Rehabilitation School at the Naval Training School for 132 WAVES already working in the Navy’s hospitals. Instructors conducted practical instruction at educational institutions and hospitals for the handicapped in New York City. These women not only received valuable training for post-war careers in the medical field, they also earned sixteen hours of college credit after completion of the course. While some critics might argue that women serving in Naval Hospitals simply

³² Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 58-59, 83-84; *WAVES News Letter*, March 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5; The Vice Chief of Naval Operations to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 22 April 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Einsfeldt, Evelyn Barbara Urich. Written survey and interview conducted by author, August 2005.

performed traditional gendered roles as caretakers, it must be noted that as non-nursing staff, these women performed in jobs traditionally held by men in the Navy.³³

Leaders at the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics began and ended the war as strong supporters for the enlistment of women into the services. Just as Hap Arnold enthusiastically enlisted the services of WAACs/WACs and WASPS into the Army's Air Force, so too the Navy's aviation leaders led the way in training WAVES for service. Ultimately, about 30% of WAVES received assignments to naval aviation. Women worked in every aspect of aeronautics except piloting of combat aircraft, from operations at blimp facilities to flight training. Positions as aviation instructors and gunnery instructors were particularly coveted. Navy officers screened candidates for jobs as aviation instructors meticulously. Only 1% of all WAVES met the screener's standards. WAVES serving as Aviation Gunnery Instructors sometimes encountered difficulty in carrying out their assignments. Officers reported that all but the most robust WAVES lacked the physical strength required to pull back the driving springs in BAM guns and machine guns. The physical demands of transporting boxes of ammunition and clay targets also posed problems. As a result, the Navy created a new rating for women filling these jobs, designating them as Specialists GW instead of Specialist G. This change quieted complaints among male specialists that the Navy lowered the standards for women while requiring that men live up to them. In the fall of 1943, WAVES began courses in aerological engineering at the University of Chicago. These women trained alongside male service personnel. After receiving instruction in aviation at naval schools,

³³ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 66; "Schools and Rates for Navy Women," Navy Booklet, 18; *WAVES News Letter*, February 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 3-4, 8; *WAVES News Letter*, April 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 9; *WAVES News Letter*, May 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 8-10; *WAVES News Letter*, January 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; *WAVES News Letter*, February 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; *WAVES News Letter*, May 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4, 7; *WAVES News Letter*, June 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; *WAVES News Letter*, September 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 7; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 125; Hancock, *Lady in the Navy*, 108-109.

such as those in Florida and Texas, women began teaching future combat pilots the “ins and outs” of naval aviation. The job entailed concentration and patience. Betty June Brooks, an experienced Link Trainer stationed in Pensacola, recalled one cadet who reported for training already seasoned as a skilled pilot. Forgetting to check his altimeter during his training session, the pilot failed to realize that his instrument panel placed his position five hundred feet below ground. Brooks calmly informed the cadet that, “You’re digging a tunnel,” proving that instrument flying required more skill than many pilots imagined. By 1945, WAVES almost exclusively trained naval pilots, as 1,000 women worked as Link instructors, teaching individual pilots in the use of instruments and radio signals necessary to pilot an aircraft “blind.” Once working in naval aviation, women could rest assured that they formed an integral part of the war effort.³⁴

³⁴ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 59, 99; “How to serve your country in the WAVES or SPARS.” Navy Recruiting Brochure, 2; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 65-66, 73-74; “Schools and Rates for Navy Women,” Navy Booklet, 3, 8, 10, 14; Marguerite Johnston, “I Saw the WAVES at Work.” *The Birmingham News*, Reprinted by Courtesy of *The Birmingham News*, Record Group 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, Box 2329, 15-16, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland; *WAVES News Letter*, October 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; *WAVES News Letter*, November 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 5; *WAVES News Letter*, January 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 3-4; *WAVES News Letter*, February 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5-6; *WAVES News Letter*, March 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; *WAVES News Letter*, April 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; *WAVES News Letter*, June 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5-6; *WAVES News Letter*, August 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; “WAVES in Naval Aviation Activities.” Training Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, U.S. Navy, 16 March 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Women’s Reserve Section, Training Division to Director of Aviation Training, 29 July 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8/P16-3, Vol. 6 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of the Bureau of Ordinance to The Chief of Naval Personnel, 10 August 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8/P16-3, Vol. 6 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of Naval Personnel to The Commanding Officer, Naval Reserve Midshipman’s School, Northampton, Massachusetts, 17 August 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8/P16-3, Vol. 6 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 19 January 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 20 August 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 233 1B, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; ; “Eighty-Six Thousand WAVES in Navy on Third Anniversary.” Press Release, 21 July 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Chief of Naval Operations to Chief of Naval Personnel, 3 May 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/P17, Box 2334, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland;

WAVES working in aviation fields performed well in other occupations as well. Military histories often overlook the importance of logistical services and administrative personnel. WAVES worked throughout the Bureau of Aeronautics, overseeing the planning and scheduling of flights, loading of cargo, and the myriad of other details necessary for a successful flight. In 1944, the Navy enrolled WAVES in courses at the Air Combat Information Training School at the Naval Air Station in Quonset Point, Rhode Island. After successful completion of the program, the Navy assigned women to one of seven Air Combat Information Centers in the United States. Assigned as Air Combat Information Officers, these WAVES briefed pilots, prepared and analyzed action reports, and provided information necessary to effective air operations. Before 1942 ended, the Navy requested that select officer's graduating from Northampton enroll in meteorological courses at M.I.T. and UCLA. Many women, such as Aerographer's Mate Mary Francis Carey (Segler King), learned to produce weather maps and develop weather forecasts.³⁵

The Supply Corps utilized WAVES extensively, replacing many male officers with WAVES, several of which received training alongside male officers at Harvard University.

Memorandum for Admiral Jacobs, 10 November 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8/P16-3, Box 2333, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

³⁵ Aerographers served as the Navy's "weathermen," making hourly reports on weather conditions. Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 59, 99; "Schools and Rates for Navy Women," Navy Booklet, 12, 16; *WAVES News Letter*, April 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2-3, 12; *WAVES News Letter*, May 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 6-7; *WAVES News Letter*, July/August 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; *WAVES News Letter*, October 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; *WAVES News Letter*, March 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; *WAVES News Letter*, April 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; *WAVES News Letter*, June 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5-6; *WAVES News Letter*, July 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; *WAVES News Letter*, August 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4; "WAVES in Naval Aviation Activities." Training Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, U.S. Navy, 16 March 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; "Eighty-Six Thousand WAVES in Navy on Third Anniversary." Press Release, 21 July 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; King, Mary Francis Carey Segler. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Marguerite Johnston, "I Saw the WAVES at Work," *The Birmingham News*, publication data unknown, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

As of 14 May 1943, the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts estimated that it maintained one thousand billets for WAVES officers. Once again, women assumed logistical duties, such as procurement, processing, and distribution of supplies, all tasks essential to sailors at sea. One example of the escalation in the transportation of war material emerged on the west coast. Nine days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Navy Operations Freight Terminal in San Francisco operated with only four officers. By 1945, personnel at the terminal numbered over one thousand, including five WAVES officers and forty enlisted WAVES serving as storekeepers, yeomen, and seamen. The mandate of the terminal focused on the shipping of all cargo, repair parts, ship's stores, and personal effects destined for overseas through the Twelfth Naval District. Eight hundred WAVES officers and enlisted women also served on Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island in California at the Navy's training and distribution center.³⁶

The Bureau of Ordinance typified the attitude of many naval districts when confronted with the incorporation of women into its organization. Initially, it stated unequivocally that women could fill no positions within the ordinance department. After all, this area of expertise seemed the unquestioned domain of men. Nevertheless, as the war effort claimed increasing numbers of servicemen, the department began to consider the advantages of enlisting women. As many other military branches and defense industries learned, the incorporation of women into the workforce came with clear advantages. Enlisted women remained free from the threat of reassignment to combat duty. In addition, issues of control and security remained under the control of the Navy – something clearly

³⁶ *WAVES News Letter*, November 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 59-60; *WAVES News Letter*, January 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5; *WAVES News Letter*, April 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5; Chief of Supplies and Accounts to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 14 May 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

lacking in employment of Civil Service personnel. Navy ordinance schools began accepting women in September of 1943. Many women received orders to ammunition production facilities. When the war ended in 1945, 225 WAVES performed approximately 50% of ballistic calculations at the Indian Head rocket power plant. Its laboratory was manned entirely by WAVES. WAVES at Indian Head tested approximately 70% of the ballistic grains that powered rockets for the United States. Although reports indicate that many women encountered difficulty operating some physical aspects connected with large weaponry, they nonetheless contributed significantly to the development of weapons used by Allied forces across the globe.³⁷

In September of 1944, the first group of WAVES Anti-Aircraft Gunnery Instructors graduated from the Mark 3 and 4 Trainer Operators School at the Naval Training Center at Great Lakes, Illinois. The course familiarized women with different types of anti-aircraft guns, fire control, and the use and operation of the gunnery trainers Mark 3 and 4. WAVES students learned through actual practice with weapons, aiming and firing the equipment. WAVES also learned to disassemble and reassemble the weapons. WAVES received instruction in the operation of .50 caliber machines guns, as well as .20 and .40 millimeter heavy machine guns. During one week, WAVES took turns at battle stations as trunion operators, loaders, and gunners on anti-aircraft weapons. Such training gave WAVES the opportunity to experience actual operating conditions in order to more effectively teach Navy personnel. As with women in General Marshall's classified experiment with WACs in anti-

³⁷ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 60, 100; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 73-74; *WAVES News Letter*, March 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 7; *WAVES News Letter*, July 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5; ; "Eighty-Six Thousand WAVES in Navy on Third Anniversary." Press Release, 21 July 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 126; Greene, Ellen Ellwein. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

aircraft batteries, the WAVES successfully executed their duties. At the Navy Armed Guard School in Shelton, Virginia, twenty-three WAVES served as instructors in anti-aircraft gunnery. Nevertheless, the Navy prohibited female instructors from firing weapons in the field. WAVES, as with WACs, might train with weapons and instruct men in the operation of weapons, but the Navy officially refused to authorize American women to fire a live weapon, even as an instructor in a training facility. American society deemed such actions as unbecoming a respectable woman. Nevertheless, this policy seemed at odds with the experiences of a select few WAVES whose jobs required a higher level of security.³⁸

Exceptions to the rule barring women from carrying firearms included women who carried large sums of cash during the course of their duties. Lieutenant Helen Clifford Gunter recalled one female officer on the west coast whose duties as a paymaster required the possession of a firearm. According to Gunter, the Navy sent Ensign Wilma Bangert to pay the crews of ships returning from war zones. The Navy paid returning sailors in cash. With an armed sailor at her side, Bangert ascended the gangplank of ships with thousands of dollars in cash. The petite blond Ensign claimed she never feared being robbed, even though she found the men coarse, because, “I have a gun.” According to a few women, the Navy occasionally issued WAVES serving at naval stations in Florida weapons due to fears of invasion. Aviation Machinist Mate Otho Pearle Cooley (Crisler) recalled weapons training at the firing range. Once, while learning to use a rifle, one female reservist “went nuts,” with her finger on the trigger, shooting wildly and alarming everyone at the range. Nevertheless,

³⁸ *WAVES News Letter*, October 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2; *WAVES News Letter*, March 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 6.

the practice of arming women remained unusual and the Navy refrained from publicizing such instances.³⁹

The proposed expansion of the WAVES to a potential workforce of 75,000 strained the Cedar Falls training facility beyond its capacity. McAfee and Navy planners soon focused on Hunter College in the Bronx as the answer to their dilemma. As an educational facility, Hunter could accommodate up to 6,000 recruits. Although Hunter lacked the facilities to house the women on campus, numerous housing options existed in the neighboring area. In addition, the armory of the New York National Guard and other local facilities could provide any additional venues the WAVES might need. Informational booklets printed for incoming recruits provided data on local attractions, recommendations for communications with relatives, a list of the facilities available to WAVES, and a map of the college and its facilities. Finally, the state and local government provided enthusiastic support for the plan to use Hunter College as a training facility for WAVES. On 9 February 1943 the Navy formally commissioned Hunter College as a training facility for WAVES. Less than two weeks later, the first recruits arrived. From 1943 to October of 1945, on average, 5,040 female recruits and 1,000 staff members served at Hunter College at any given time. Ultimately, 80,936 WAVES graduated from “USS Hunter.”⁴⁰

The WAVES program proved so successful that the French Navy requested training for its Services Feminins de la Flotte (S.F.F.) in schools established by the WAVES. Under an agreement between the United States and France, a small group of French female officers

³⁹ Gunter, *Navy WAVE*, 78; Crisler, Otho Pearle Cooley. Written survey conducted by author. August 2005; Hammett, Violet Marie Van Cura. Written survey conducted by author. September 2005.

⁴⁰ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 70-71; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 64-65; “U.S. Naval Training School (Women’s Reserve), Bronx, N.Y.,” Navy Pamphlet, (No date or publishing data), 2-7, 10; “History: United States Naval Training School, Women’s Reserve, The Bronx, New York, New York.” Undated document, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 22.

and enlisted personnel received training at the Naval Training School, the Bronx, New York, or the Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School, Northampton, Massachusetts. Chief Petty Officer, Second Class, Angele Mounier, Chief Petty Officer Nathalie Vouksanovitch, and Officier de Troisieme Class Denise Fenard became the first French female officers to train in the United States. The French women participated in all regular training activities for six weeks, including military drill and instruction in administrative procedures. Plans called for the recruitment of small groups of French women for training in the United States. The S.F.F. served primarily in North Africa at major training facilities where over 2,000 women assumed a wide variety of duties to release French men for duty at sea.⁴¹

Predictably, male naval personnel often responded negatively to the WAVES. Understandably apprehensive about transfers to war zones, many men and their families deeply resented the integration of women into the Navy. Adjustments in housing and public facilities made for servicewomen at naval installations frequently exacerbated the tensions between male and female personnel. Servicemen not subject to transfers often resented the presence of women in a previously male-dominated institution. Betty Jane Monfils (Lee) believed that many servicemen resented her advancement within the Navy every time she earned a new rating. Some WAVES reported for duty and encountered open hostility. Many men required a great deal of convincing to allow women to assume important positions within the Navy. Deputy Chief of Naval Operations J.S. McCain argued that women lacked the operations experience to become Aviation Radar Operator Instructors. According to McCain, no four-week training program could prepare women to replace men in this activity. Lieutenant J. H. Swope reported that although on first observation it appeared that WAVES recently reporting for duty seemed adequately trained, he believed it "somewhat doubtful"

⁴¹ *WAVES News Letter*, June 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 3.

that they would ever fully replace male personnel. Other women encountered men determined to *prove* that women simply lacked the ability or strength to accomplish the tasks required. Other men worried about assigning women to stations in which African-American servicemen worked. Lieutenant Helen Clifford Gunter recalled that higher ranking officers seemed to adjust to the presence of WAVES easier than junior officers or enlisted men. In response to continued questions regarding the authority WAVES officers wielded, the Navy released Circular Letter No. 2-44 on 29 April 1944, clarifying that although legislation limited female officers to command of female personnel, “it is entirely proper to place officers of the Women’s Reserve in a job that would logically require her to give administrative directions to male officers and men of the Navy.”⁴² Ultimately, most WAVES proved their worth to their male counterparts, demonstrating that they possessed the skills necessary to contribute to the war-time Navy. Despite the reluctance of many men to accept women into the Navy, most servicemen eventually acknowledged their contributions to the war effort. Many male officers began the war opposed to the WAVES, only to change their minds once the women began their assignments. A lieutenant commander from the Pensacola Naval Station acknowledged that “Just as in the case of men, some are about average, some pretty good, and some really valuable. But the average of Waves runs just as high as the average of men in the same positions.”⁴³

⁴² *WAVES News Letter*, May 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 4.

⁴³ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 76, 82-85, Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 70; Marguerite Johnston, “I Saw the WAVES at Work.” *The Birmingham News*, Reprinted by Courtesy of *The Birmingham News*, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, Box 2329, 7; Gunter, 78-79; The Chief of Naval Operations to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 22 November 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2331, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; The Chief of the Women’s Bureau of Yards and Docks to The Chief of Naval Personnel, 15 May 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Lieutenant J. H. Swope to Bureau of Aeronautics, 1 February 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 72, QR-8/P16-3 Vol. 6 to QR-8/1943 Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; J. G.

Just as male members of the Navy exhibited mixed reactions when encountering WAVES, the public also demonstrated diverse attitudes toward the women. Inevitably, some women encountered condemnation from conservative Americans. The slander campaign that damaged the image of the WAC transferred to other women's groups, albeit to a significantly lesser extent. WAVES leadership largely succeeded in crafting an image of its members as respectable, even admirable, women. Most WAVES later recalled that some civilians seemed genuinely interested and appreciative of the Women's Reserve. Former Lieutenant Helen Paul Cleaver (Barr) believed that the war unified Americans, resulting in a high level of support for the services in general. Ensign Ruth Converse (Bates), a Navy cryptographer, recalled that her mother, a physician, supported her decision. Demoie Irene Burgess (Worton) never recalled anyone expressing disapproval of her enlistment. Civilians, she recalled, seemed merely curious about the lives of WAVES. Ida Francis Friddle (Sorenson) recalled that her father, a member of the Air Force, encouraged her to "go for it."⁴⁴

Some civilians remained resolutely convinced that no respectable woman joined the military in any capacity. Marcella Dermick Weigelt recalled that civilians once threw trash at WAVES on parade. Otho Pearle Cooley Crisler remembered that "they all disapproved."⁴⁵ Earline McBride Mendenhall believed that although many people lacked respect for women in the military, WAVES encountered less hostility than women in other branches of the

Winn, District Personnel Officer to CNO, 26 May 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/P17, Box 2334, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Lee, Betty Jane Monfils. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

⁴⁴ Barr, Helen Paul. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Bates, Ruth Converse. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Dunnam, Myrtle Ruth Kopecky. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Einsfeldt, Evelyn Barbara Urich. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Gordon, Evelyn Pearl Starn. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Greene, Rose Ellen Ellwein. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Martin, Helen Pavlik. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Worton, Demoie Irene Burgess. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Gormley, Irene E. Ribbeck. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Hammett, Violet Marie Van Cura. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

⁴⁵ Crisler, Otho Pearle Cooley. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

military. Many WAVES encountered resistance from their families. According to Mildred Alice Minikel Scherotter, although her family later “came around,” her mother cried all day and her brother refused to speak to her. Theresa Gasparetto (Milo) recalled that her family, although not enthusiastic about her enlistment, signed their approval on her enlistment papers. Milo’s parents apparently drew some comfort in the fact that Theresa enlisted along with her twin sister. Mona Jane Mohns recalled that her brother objected to her enlisting after graduating from college. As a result, Mohns taught for two years before finally joining the WAVES. Dorothy Louis Smith (Horn Rogers) recalled her enlistment experience and provides a glimpse of popular images of the WAVES. According to Rogers, her mother asked the recruiter if the girls in the service really were “bad.” The recruiter replied, “Ma’am, She will find her kind. If she good or bad she will find her kind.”⁴⁶

Once stationed at their new assignments, WAVES encountered varying degrees of personal freedom. The Bureau of Aeronautics explicitly outlined its approach to liberty for WAVES, stating that women should observe the same regulations while on liberty as their male counterparts. By meeting the educational requirements and character qualifications of the service, the Navy assumed that WAVES possessed the good judgment to police themselves while off duty. WAVES could date anyone they chose as long as they conducted themselves respectfully and met outside the premises of military bases. Nevertheless, proper behavior for WAVES varied depending on the particular area in which women found themselves stationed. Behavior tolerated in a large city could ruin the reputation of the

⁴⁶ Barr, Helen Paul. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Sorenson, Ida Frances Friddle. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Weigelt, Marcella Dermick. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Crisler, Otho Pearle Cooley. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Mendenhall, Earline S. McBride. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Milo, Theresa Gasparetto, Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Mohns, Mona Jane, Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Rogers, Dorothy Louis Smith Horn, Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

WAVES in a small town. As a result, standards of conduct depended on the discretion of the commanding officer. Despite these conditions, WAVES stationed at naval bases or near large cities often wrote letters home detailing their exciting experiences. Many WAVES attended parties, frequented night clubs and took in the sights around them. Women stationed in New York or in Washington, D.C. frequently attended Broadway plays and the presence of WAVES became a common fixture around the nation's capital.⁴⁷

The carefully crafted image of the WAVES and the requirements for female recruits resulted in very few disciplinary problems. This not only perpetuated a positive reputation for the WAVES, but facilitated their incorporation into the Navy. Only four WAVES officers out of 10,000 received discharges for disciplinary reasons. Commanding officers overwhelmingly disciplined women for minor infractions by confining them to quarters. Formal policies for disciplining WAVES stipulated that commanding officers should delegate disciplinary matters pertaining to WAVES to the senior female officer. With the exception of the commanding officer, executive officer, and such additional officers as necessary to constitute a court, the Navy prohibited men from participating directly in the disciplining of women. If necessary, regulations stipulated that any physical restraint of a woman required a female officer. Regulations prohibited female offenders from sentencing

⁴⁷ Marguerite Johnston, "I Saw the WAVES at Work." *The Birmingham News*, Reprinted by Courtesy of *The Birmingham News*, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, Box 2329, 13; Restricted Memo, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, Box 2329; Letter from Ensign Sophie L. Husman to William G. McNeel, 29 February 1944, Western Historical Manuscript Collection – Columbia, University of Missouri/State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, Collection #C0068, Folder 1412; Letters from Cleo Sweat to Mrs. H.E. Rowland, 6 September 1944 and 6 October 1944, Western Historical Manuscript Collection – Columbia, University of Missouri/State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, Collection #C0068, Folder 2938; Jane Moss to Mrs. H.E. Rowland, 1 May 1945, Western Historical Manuscript Collection – Columbia, University of Missouri/State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, Collection #C0068, Folder 2042; "WAVES in Naval Aviation Activities." Training Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, U.S. Navy, 16 March 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

to “the brig.” In addition, discipline for men and women varied due to different standards prevailing in “non-military circles.” As a result, some behavior, such as drunkenness and disturbance of the peace, resulted in more severe discipline for women than men. Women resistant to disciplinary measures found themselves with a quick discharge, usually for maladjustment. When the war ended, statistics indicated that male officers proved ten times more likely to be discharged for disciplinary reasons than WAVES officers. Nevertheless, correlations between these statistics are difficult due to variations in localities, behavior, and gender.⁴⁸

On 1 July 1944, Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel, L. E. Denfeld, reported that the Navy discharged approximately 4,500 members of the WAVES during a period of twenty-two months. This figure represented an attrition rate of 7%. Separations from the service for disciplinary reasons totaled 125 women, representing less than 1% of the total membership of the WAVES. Twenty-two WAVES died while on duty. However, the bulk of discharges from the Navy for members of the WAVES resulted from issues such as dependency, marriage, and family issues. As of 30 June 1944, 268 women received discharges on grounds of marriage to naval personnel. Medical discharges, including pregnancy, represented less than 2% of total WAVES strength. Denfeld feared that the public and

⁴⁸ Restricted Memo, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, Box 2329; “WAVES in Naval Aviation Activities.” Training Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, U.S. Navy, 16 March 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 87; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 71; Women’s Reserve Circular Letter No. 5-43, 11 December 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Women’s Reserve Circular Letter No. 1-43; 30 April 1943, The Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 19 January 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-85 to QR-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Women’s Reserve Circular Letter No. 1-44, 4 April 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 72, QR-8/P16.3 Vol. 6 to QR-8/1943 Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Captain W. W. Smith to Chief of Naval Personnel, 22 April 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/P19, Box 2335, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 122.

Congress might interpret this information negatively, perhaps resulting in an adverse image of the WAVES. With the WAVES reputation in mind, the Captain recommended that the Navy keep these figures classified.⁴⁹

As previously noted, pregnant women received discharges from the Navy. In August of 1945, the Navy announced that women discharged or separated from the service due to pregnancy became eligible for maternity care during that pregnancy and delivery at any naval hospital or naval facilities where suitable facilities existed. In addition, the Navy provided new mothers with post-natal care for such time as the medical officer in command considered necessary. Officially, the Navy advocated a discharge for women who obtained an illegal abortion. In practice, evidence usually proved difficult to obtain and the Navy rarely attempted to pursue such charges. The Office of Public Relations worked diligently to keep these issues hidden from the public in order to maintain a positive image of the WAVES.⁵⁰

The Navy treated issues relating to sexually transmitted diseases and WAVES with discretion. Any publicity regarding WAVES with venereal disease threatened the image of the organization. Women with their first confirmed case of venereal disease received treatment for their condition and usually returned to duty. If “local conditions” deemed reassignment to another location desirable, women received transfers. Because reinfection seemed indicative of a woman engaging in habitually questionable conduct, women treated

⁴⁹ Memorandum for the Director of Public Relations, 1 July 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/P19, Box 2335, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum for the Director of Public Relations, 21 June 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/P19, Box 2335, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

⁵⁰ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 87; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 71; *WAVES News Letter*, August 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; *WAVES News Letter*, October 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; Women’s Reserve Circular Letter No. 3-45, 7 June 1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Bureau of Naval Personnel to the Medical Officer in Command, Naval Hospital, Corpus Christi, Texas, 12 August 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/P19, Box 2335, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; “History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion,” 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 2.

for the disease a second time usually received discharges due to “unfitness.” Any discharge for such conduct required a recommendation by the Commanding Officer and a statement from the woman concerned, as well as approval from the Bureau of Naval Personnel.⁵¹

Controversies surrounding the integration of the races into the military establishment plagued Navy leaders. Just as Oveta Culp Hobby and Army leadership confronted the issue, so too the Navy found itself compelled to allow African-American women the opportunity to serve the nation. Ultimately, the Navy’s response proved disappointing. Despite calls from activists across the United States, the Navy resisted efforts at integration for the first two years of WAVES operations. African-American groups exerted significant pressure on naval leaders through civil and political interest groups. As early as May of 1942, activists appealed to the Senate Naval Affairs Committee to enact legislation forbidding discrimination based on race or color. Activist groups also began their own recruiting efforts aimed at African-American women. Groups such as the National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs urged African-American women to apply for service in any one of the service branches. According to the leaders of these groups, no law existed that prohibited minority women from applying for service. Although the initial WAVES legislation said nothing about prohibiting African-American women, in practice no black women gained acceptance into the Navy before December of 1944. According to Navy reasoning, since the mission of the WAVES focused on replacing men for duty at sea and few African-American men served in positions open to WAVES, the Navy had no need for African-American women. In addition, the Navy barely managed to provide housing for men and women, without the need

⁵¹ Women’s Reserve Circular Letter No. 1-44, 4 April 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 72, QR-8/P16.3 Vol. 6 to QR-8/1943 Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

to provide separate facilities for African-Americans. Since 1940s America overwhelmingly observed policies of segregation, such facilities seemed an unnecessary burden.⁵²

McAfee sympathized with African-American activists seeking acceptance of black women into the Navy. In July of 1943, McAfee announced that she supported the enlistment of American women without regard to race. The following August, the Women's Advisory Council announced its full support for integration of the WAVES. Nevertheless, the Navy recommended that the service postpone integration as long as possible. McAfee continued to meet with African-American leaders and discuss the matter. However, their patience wore thin as African-American men died on the battlefield for a nation unwilling to acknowledge them as equals. Politics entered the fray in 1944. Secretary of the Navy Knox, long an opponent of integration, died. His replacement, James Forrestal, recommended the

⁵² In fact, racial discrimination existed throughout the Navy. No black naval officers served in the Navy and few achieved the rank of chief petty officer. Although black men traditionally served in the American Navy, few in the early 1940s Navy served in positions other than cooks and stewards. Public pressure resulted in the admission of black men into construction battalions. Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 93-94; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 72; Thomasina W. Johnson, Legislative Representative, National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, 7 September 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Dr. Emily Hickman, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee of the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America to Mildred McAfee, Commanding Officer WAVES, 14 October 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs to Dr. Emily Hickman, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee of the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, 21 October 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; "WAVES Ban Negro Women," 1 September 1942, Unknown publication, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Thomasina W. Johnson to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, 27 May 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 233-1B, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs, USN to Thomasina W. Johnson, 2 June 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 233-1B, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 116; Thomasina W. Johnson, Legislative Representative of the National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs to The Honorable Frank Knox, 27 May 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, Box 233-1B, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Recruiting Announcement, National Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs, 31 May 1943 through 7 June 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, Box 233-1B, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "The Wartime History of the WAVES, SPARS, Women Marines, Army and Navy Nurses, and WASPs," *A Woman's War Too: U.S. Women in the Military in World War II*, Paula Nassen Poulos, ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1996), 56.

enlistment of African-American women to President Roosevelt. Roosevelt also received pleas from civic organizations, as well as individual Americans, to allow African-American women to serve their country as WAVES. Campaigning for reelection in 1944, Roosevelt approved the proposal on October 14th. The WAVES News Letter of December 1944 announced that “Negro Women” would join the WAVES.⁵³

On 22 December 1944, two African-American women received commissions as WAVES officers in the final graduating officer’s class. Harriet Ida Pickens and Francis Wills became the first two African-American women commissioned into the Navy. Pickens graduated third in her class. Despite the publicity that accompanied the acceptance of African-American women into the Navy, few actually succeeded in gaining admission. Only seventy-two African-American women reported for training as enlisted personnel at Hunter College. Although reports of their attendance for basic training indicate no adverse incidents, they nevertheless, found themselves marginalized in assignments after graduation. Some highly educated and qualified African-American women applied to the WAVES program, but few gained acceptance. Those who succeeded overwhelmingly received assignments to administrative and clerical positions at the Bureau of Personnel. Due to their

⁵³ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 95; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 72; *WAVES News Letter*, December 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; Dr. Emily Hickman, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee of the National Board of the Young Women’s Christian Associations of the United States of America to Mildred McAfee, Commanding Officer WAVES, 14 October 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs to Dr. Emily Hickman, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee of the National Board of the Young Women’s Christian Associations of the United States of America, 21 October 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; A. Philip Randolph, International President, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 6 October 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Miriam Asnin to President Roosevelt, 1 September 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Petition Submitted by Miss Agnes Buchaman, 18 September 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2331, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 116; Litoff and Smith, *We’re in This War, Too*, 56.

small numbers and late entry into the service, evidence suggests that racial integration of the WAVES barely impacted the Navy community at large during the war. Nevertheless, some historians argue that the integration of black women into the WAVES paved the way for greater integration of black men into the Navy.⁵⁴

WACs served in every theater of World War II, but Public Law 689 prohibited WAVES from serving outside the continental United States. A Navy survey revealed that the service might benefit from the assignment of WAVES in Hawaii – just as they had in World War I. As the focus of the war turned from the conflict in Europe to the Pacific Theater, Navy advisers argued that assignment of WAVES to Hawaii would allow the transfer of additional male service personnel to the Pacific. The Navy responded by petitioning Congress for an amendment to the enacted legislation allowing for the assignment of women overseas. As a result, Congress passed Public Law 441 on 27 September 1944. The legislation allowed WAVES to volunteer for assignments in Hawaii, Alaska, the Caribbean, and Panama. Many WAVES expressed a clear desire to serve overseas, while others feared a posting so far from the continental United States, especially when the war seemed near an end.⁵⁵

Three weeks after the passage of Public Law 441, WAVES officers, together with officers of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard, conducted an inspection tour of the

⁵⁴ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 96; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 72; DePauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 256; Miss Marian J. Gardiner to Captain Mildred McAfee, 2 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2331, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 116; Litoff and Smith, *We're in This War, Too*, 56.

⁵⁵ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 97; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 72-73; *WAVES News Letter*, July/August 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2; *WAVES News Letter*, October 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2; *WAVES News Letter*, November 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2-3; *WAVES News Letter*, December 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2-3; Memorandum from Head of Public Works Branch to Senior Member, NCNO (Air) and BuAer WAVE Enlisted Selection Board, 11 December 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 72, QR-8/P16.3 Vol. 6 to QR-8/1943 Vol. 5, Box 4206, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Chief of Naval Personnel to All Naval Activities in Continental United States, 29 September 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 127.

Fourteenth Naval District of Hawaii. Navy planners identified over 6,000 positions capable of being filled by women in Hawaii. As a result, the WAVES established the parameters necessary for overseas service. The Navy accepted only volunteers for service in Hawaii. WAVES volunteering for service overseas needed a record of at least six months prior satisfactory service. The Navy prohibited women serving in overseas positions from having dependents. They accepted assignments for at least eighteen months, with little possibility of a return to the continental United States during that time. Finally, in December of 1944, 10 WAVES officers and 203 enlisted WAVES boarded a transport ship bound for Hawaii. On 6 January 1945 they arrived in Honolulu, Hawaii. Sailors and civilians crowded the pier as WAVES descended the gangplank to the music of a Navy band playing “Aloha.” They then mustered onto buses for the journey to the Naval Air Station, Honolulu, where they began processing to carry out their assignments. Former WAVE Helen Pavlik Martin remembered the experience of serving in Hawaii as wonderful, despite the long working hours. Ultimately, the WAVES proved so beneficial to the Navy in Hawaii that the service encountered difficulty transporting WAVES quickly enough to satisfy commanders in the Fourteenth Naval District. Of course, as one woman stationed in Maui observed, wartime Hawaii still served as the “paradise of the Pacific.” WAVES assigned to Hawaii enjoyed every leisure hour granted on the islands of Hawaii.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 97-99; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 72-73; *WAVES News Letter*, October 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2; *WAVES News Letter*, November 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 2-3; *WAVES News Letter*, January 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 7; *WAVES News Letter*, February 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 2; *WAVES News Letter*, March 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 2-5; *WAVES News Letter*, September 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5; Letter from Cleo Sweat to Ms. H. E. Rowland, 29 October 1944, Western Historical Manuscript Collection – Columbia, University of Missouri/State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, Collection #C0068, Folder 2938; Chief of Naval Personnel to All Naval Activities in Continental United States, 29 September 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum from L.E. Denfeld, Acting Chief of Naval Personnel, undated document, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, Box 2332, National Archives

WAVES found themselves the recipients of special assignments when the United Nations Conference for International Organization met in San Francisco in 1945. One focal point for WAVES at the conference rested with the Army-Navy Coordination Group, which handled transportation, security, medical, and stenographic facilities. Besides WAVES assigned to temporary duty at the conference, Navy women participated in some of the proceedings. Kathleen Fox represented the Navy as an honor guard for the conference. Eight WAVES stationed in San Francisco participated in a pageant in honor of foreign correspondents. The WAVES also sponsored two social events during the conference. The Navy honored Lieutenant Commander Elizabeth Reynard at a dinner meeting of Women's Reserve Representatives held at WAVES facilities in San Francisco. Reynard served as temporary consultant to Dean Virginia Gildersleeve, the only female representative in the United States delegation. Dean Gildersleeve, Mrs. Malbone Graham, a conference consultant, and Reynard attended a commissioned officer's mess at Treasure Island as guests of honor.⁵⁷

Like most American's, WAVES greeted the surrender of Japan with relief and elation. At naval bases around the United States, military personnel joined with civilians to celebrate the end of the war. As Lieutenant Mary Ruth Robbins in Hawaii related in her letter home, officers and enlisted men joined together in celebration. When hostilities ceased in the summer of 1945, the WAVES constituted approximately 18% of naval personnel assigned to shore duty and 55% of naval personnel in the Washington area. Of the nearly three million enlisted naval personnel in 1945, over 86,000 identified themselves as WAVES. The Navy listed almost 8,400 women among its officer corps. As the

College Park, College Park, Maryland; Martin, Helen Pavlik. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

⁵⁷ *WAVES News Letter*, July 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 3.

decommissioning process began, Navy newsletters began running articles preparing women for a return to civilian lives.⁵⁸

Demobilization following the surrender of Japan proved a massive undertaking for the Navy. Even before the Japanese surrendered, the Navy appointed a team of four naval officers, including Commander Mary Jo Shelly, to establish procedures for demobilization when the war ended. They needed a plan designed to allow separation from the Navy of millions of men and women. As with the demobilization of male personnel, the release of WAVES required a plan that transitioned members back into civilian society while respecting their status as veterans of the United States military. The timetable for demobilization of men and women relied on a points system. For men, the system relied on factors such as age, length of service, overseas and combat service, and status of dependents. The Navy adjusted the quota system for women to account for the limitations of their service. The WAVES began in 1942 and the Navy prohibited women from serving overseas until 1945. As a result, the Navy lowered its point system for women. Without this adjustment, almost all servicemen's discharge would have occurred before that of WAVES. Navy planners feared this situation might provoke protests from the American public. In addition, WAVES legislation stipulated the demobilization of all WAVES six months after the war ended. Legally, the Navy needed to release women as soon as reasonably possible. As a result, the Navy began demobilization efforts before the Japanese surrendered. After 20 June 1945, women with spouses returning from the war could apply for discharge or transfers

⁵⁸ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 99; *WAVES News Letter*, August 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5; *WAVES News Letter*, September 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 3; *WAVES News Letter*, October 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 6; "Mustering Crews at Quarters, *The Havelock*, Vol. 3, Nos. 4-5, Final Issue, November-December, 1945, 12-13, 15, 17; Letter from Lt. Mary Ruth Robbins to Parents, 10 August 1945, Western Historical Manuscript Collection – Columbia, University of Missouri/State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, Collection #C0068, Folder 2496.

close to home. Men and women over forty-two years of age could request a discharge from their commanding officer after 1 May 1945. The Navy set a goal for releasing approximately 3,000,000 personnel by 1 September 1946.⁵⁹

On 25 August 1945, the Navy announced a change in the death gratuity for WAVES. Beneficiaries of a deceased member of the WAVES became eligible to receive payment of six month's gratuity upon the death of a member of the Women's Reserve, as long as the death resulted from a cause other than her own misconduct. Although WAVES could name husbands as beneficiaries, the Navy recognized children of the deceased as preferred beneficiaries. In contrast, the Navy required that men name their wives as preferred beneficiaries. If no husband or children lived to claim death benefits, women might designate other dependent relatives as beneficiaries.⁶⁰

Many Navy commanders requested retention of their WAVES to facilitate demobilization. They argued that they required at least 9,500 enlisted personnel and 1,300 WAVES officers to transition the Navy from a war footing to a peacetime stance. The Navy required a significant force to operate separation centers slated to handle the process. Although male personnel might eventually take over administrative positions in the United States, WAVES filled those positions in 1945. A sudden evacuation of WAVES might bring the entire system tumbling down. Nevertheless, by 1 October 1945, the first WAVES began the arduous process of separation at one of the original five separation centers designated for female personnel. The Navy eventually added additional separation centers for women in

⁵⁹ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 101-103; *WAVES News Letter*, July 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 1-2; *WAVES News Letter*, September 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 2-3; *WAVES News Letter*, October 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 8; *WAVES News Letter*, November 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 2-3; Memorandum, 27 December 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR-8/P19, Box 2335, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

⁶⁰ Women's Reserve Circular Letter No. 7-45, 25 August 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

order to handle the volume of women returning to civilian life. On average, the process of individual separation took three days of paperwork, physical exams, reviews of veteran's benefits, and a settling of accounts. After a final meeting with the officer in charge, women left with their final pay, notice of separation, a ratings description, a referral sheet, a discharge certificate, a certificate of satisfactory service, and a discharge pin. Most women then took a train home, courtesy of the United States Navy. By January of 1946, the Navy returned approximately 21,000 women to their civilian lives. Demobilization of the WAVES ended the following September, with only a small voluntary force remaining.⁶¹

The Navy's experience with women in its workforce led to a request that Congress authorize a small peacetime contingent of WAVES in 1947. On 5 January 1946, the Navy ordered commanding officers to encourage WAVES filling essential jobs to volunteer to extend their service to 1 September 1946. In the meantime, naval leaders began lobbying Congress to grant its request for legislation incorporating WAVES into the Navy's peacetime structure. The Bureau of Aeronautics alone reported that it wanted to retain approximately 5,000 WAVES. Communications officials requested hundreds of female reservists for continued work in classified sectors of the Navy. Many other bureau chiefs submitted similar pleas. Vice-Admiral Louis E. Denfeld, Chief of Naval Personnel addressed the issue of retaining WAVES in the Reserve and peacetime Navy before a press conference in September of 1946. Denfeld noted that, "Our plan is to keep a WAVE component in the Naval Reserve. Further, if Congress approves, we will seek to retain on active duty reasonable numbers of WAVES ...The Navy is proud of the job done by its women during

⁶¹ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 102-104, Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 75; *WAVES News Letter*, October 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 4.

the war.”⁶² Congress agreed and many women chose to pursue a naval career. Vera Lee Brown is one such example, remaining in the reserves for over twenty years and retiring as a Lieutenant Commander.⁶³

Many WAVES received commendations from the Navy, as well as from France. France considered the contributions of WAVES training their pilots in instrument flying so exceptional that they awarded three women the Cross of Lorraine. The awards, presented by Lieutenant Boris Rabineau, senior officer of French forces stationed in Pensacola, Florida, recognized Lieutenant Marie Dapples, liaison officer for the French students; Ensign Catherine Shalucka, navigation and aerology instructor; and Mary McNeil, specialist second class and Link Trainer instructor of Squadron 3 at Whiting Field.⁶⁴

WAVES overwhelmingly expressed pride in their service to their country. In a letter to a friend, Bette R. Badgley, a WAVES Sergeant based in Alameda, California, expressed the sentiments of many women when she ended her letter by stating that, “In closing, I want my mother and father to know how proud I am to be serving my country.”⁶⁵ Finally, any history of the WAVES must acknowledge the women who lost their lives while in service to their country. Seven officers and sixty-two enlisted women lost their lives while serving with the WAVES. Seaman Second Class Elizabeth Kerensky stands as one such casualty, losing her life in an ordinance accident at the Naval Air Station in Norfolk, Virginia.⁶⁶

Captain McAfee announced in August of 1945 her engagement to Reverend Dr. Douglas Horton of New York City. Horton served as Minister of the General Council of

⁶² *WAVES News Letter*, October 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 3.

⁶³ *WAVES News Letter*, October 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 3; Brown, Vera Lee. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

⁶⁴ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 74; *WAVES News Letter*, November 1944, NAVPERS 15,002, 7.

⁶⁵ “Sara’s Homecoming Cause for Untold Joy, Writes WAVE.” Publication unknown, Western Historical Manuscript Collection – Columbia, University of Missouri/State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, Collection #C0068, Folder 113.

⁶⁶ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 74; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 128-129.

Congregational Christian Churches and Chairman of the American Committee for the World Council of Churches. The pair exchanged vows on August 10th. McAfee continued as Director of the Women's Reserve until the war ended and as President of Wellesley College.⁶⁷

The Navy successfully portrayed the WAVES as “eager young women from better-than-average homes, pretty, intelligent, alert. WAVES’ jobs were in keeping with feminine capabilities...”⁶⁸ Evelyn Barbara Urich Einsfeldt believed that she and her husband owed the rest of their lives to the Navy. She and her husband gained an education through use of the G.I. Bill. Ellen Louise Coar Nix also joined the WAVES to serve her country and to utilize the G.I. bill for college. Betty Jean Oliver O’Dell recalled that her service in the Navy seemed an “eye-opening experience” for a small town girl.⁶⁹ Today, surviving WAVES veterans overwhelmingly look back with pride at their service. Many remain active in veteran’s groups and public service programs. With little prodding, a few will proudly pull out their old WAVES uniform. Unlike the WAC, their reputations emerged from the war intact, and they enthusiastically share their experiences. Their enthusiasm demonstrates the Navy’s success with crafting a positive image of the WAVES. By utilizing college campuses for training, adopting an attractive uniform, and projecting an image of WAVES as conservative American women serving their nation in a period of crisis, the Navy achieved their objective.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *WAVES News Letter*, August 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 7; *WAVES News Letter*, September 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 3.

⁶⁸ “History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion,” 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 3.

⁶⁹ O’Dell, Betty Jean Oliver. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

⁷⁰ “History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion,” 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park,

Maryland, 3; Einsfeldt, Evelyn Barbara Urich. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Nix, Ellen Louise Coar. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005.

CHAPTER 4

“THEY ARE MARINES:”

THE MARINE CORPS EXPERIENCE FOR AMERICAN WOMEN IN WORLD WAR II

Despite the successful integration of WAVES into the U.S. Navy, the Marine Corps proved reluctant to enlist women into its ranks. Although over three hundred women served as Marine Reservists (F), or “Marinettes,” during World War I, most of the corps’ rank and file opposed allowing women to once again invade this last bastion of masculinity. As historian Allan R. Millett observed, most Marine Corps officers viewed the move as a political agenda thrust upon the Corps by liberal Americans. Nevertheless, the demands of America’s war-time military, with its desperate quest to fill the needs of a two-front war, overwhelmed even the staunchest opponents of female service. The war raging in the Pacific, particularly the battle of Guadalcanal, convinced Marine Corps Commandant Thomas Holcomb of the need for additional Marines in the Pacific Theater. A women’s reserve could provide sufficient manpower to allow more men to transfer to the Pacific. Women already served in the Army, Navy, and Coast Guard. The last service branch to admit women, the Corps grudgingly welcomed women into the ranks in 1943. Plans called for the training of 500 officers and 6,000 enlisted women within four months. Ultimately, the Marine Corps enlisted almost 19,000 women by June of 1944. Refusing to adopt the custom of assigning female military personnel cute acronyms, Holcomb insisted that women simply served as “Marines.” *Life* magazine reported in its 27 March 1944 issue that the Commander insisted that “They are Marines. They don’t have a nickname and they don’t

need one. They get their basic training in a Marine atmosphere at a Marine post. They inherit the traditions of Marines. They are Marines.”¹ In practice, male marines and the public frequently referred to the female Marines as “WRs.” Holcomb’s decision implied that the Marine Corps allowed women a level of equality and respect unequalled in other branches of the military. Unfortunately, his optimism proved unfounded.²

Holcomb’s decision to allow women to join the Marine Corps was no less astonishing because of his long-standing opposition to women in the military. The proposal to enlist women in the Marine Corps in support positions arose in early 1942. The Commandant’s refusal to support such a move effectively stalled any further movement on the issue. The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Holcomb to enlist 164,273 Marines for the war effort. Holcomb initially responded by lowering recruiting standards and raising the maximum age for enlistment to thirty-six. At the same time, word reached Holcomb that the President planned to institute a draft in order to meet personnel quotas. Holcomb and his staff worried that such a move might threaten the elite image of the Corps. By October 1942, Holcomb conceded that, despite his doubts, the Marine Corps needed women to fill Marine Corps domestic posts and allow men to transfer to the Pacific Theater. Public Law 689, 77th Congress, amended the Naval Reserve Act of 1938 with a section titled “Women’s Reserve,” authorizing the enlistment of women into Reserve units. Holcomb recommended the move

¹ “Women Marines,” *Life*, 27 March 1944, Vol. 16, No. 13, 81; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 77-78; Emily Yellin, *Our Mother’s War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II*, (New York: Free Press, 2004), 145; Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 2.

² Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 77-78; Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Allan R. Millet, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980) 374; Litoff and Smith, “The Wartime History of the WAVES, SPARS, Women Marines, Army and Navy Nurses, and WASPs,” 51; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 1-2, 10, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. After final approval in October 1942, President Roosevelt authorized a Women's Reserve as part of the Marine Corps Reserve on 7 November 1942.³

Two days before the President authorized the Women's Reserve, Holcomb directed all the commanding officers of Marine Corps installations to survey positions under their command. After conducting a comprehensive survey, the Commandant directed officers to submit the number of jobs in which women could replace men in their commands. Officers responded by requesting a total of 4,431 women to fill identified posts immediately. Commanding Officer T. J. Cushman, in his reply, requested 2,152 women, noting that while he would not immediately release a corresponding number of men for duty overseas, his station was significantly understaffed. As Corps officers adjusted to the radical notion of women in their midst, the number of positions available for female personnel increased exponentially.⁴

On 13 February 1943, General Holcomb announced the formation of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR). He also announced the appointment of Mrs. Ruth Streeter, trained as a WAVES officer, as the first director of the Women's Reserve. Assuming her position with the rank of major, Streeter accepted the position during a swearing-in ceremony officiated by Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox. Later revisions to

³ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 3, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 1.

⁴ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 4-5, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Memorandum from Commanding Officer, U.S. Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina to The Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., 11 May 1943, General Correspondence, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR8-1943 Vol. 2 to QR8-1943 Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 2.

the legislation dictated her advancement to lieutenant colonel and finally colonel. Streeter served until December of 1945. As a leader, Streeter steadfastly supported the WRs under her command. She often traveled to installations utilizing WRs in order to gauge the success of the program and stress the vital role women played in the Corps.⁵

The selection of Streeter as Director of the Women's Reserve reflected the Corps desire to maintain an honorable reputation. The mother of four projected a conservative, matronly demeanor beneficial to ensuring American families that their daughters reputations would remain secure. The new director's three sons served in the military – two in the Navy and one in the Army. Streeter's background included more than twenty years of community service work in public health and welfare. In addition to serving on the boards of several agencies, she served as the President of the Welfare Board of Morris County, New Jersey and as a member of the New Jersey Relief Council before joining the military. Streeter also flew as a member of the Civil Air Patrol after earning her private and commercial pilot's licenses. She initially hoped to serve in the WASP. Although she applied to the WASP five times, her age prevented her from joining the WASP. Streeter's appointment as director of the Women's Reserve stemmed from the recommendation of Dean Virginia Gildersleeve of Barnard College, Columbia University and the same advisory council that selected Mildred McAfee to head the WAVES. The council submitted twelve candidates, including Streeter, to Holcomb. Holcomb and his staff interviewed all twelve women before selecting Streeter

⁵ Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland ; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 2-8, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 2.

for the position. Streeter received her commission as a major in the Marine Corps on 29 January 1943, before the Commandant's official announcement of the Women's Reserve.⁶

Despite her encouragement of WRs, Streeter grew acutely aware of the limits of her own position and that of the women's reserve. More than any other women's reserve, the position of the Corps WRs remained symbolic at best. Primarily a figurehead, Colonel Streeter maintained limited influence and exercised no real authority inside or outside the women's organization. She signed no official letters or interfered with policy. She once complained of her lack of authority to Colonel Littleton Waller, Jr., stating "it's hard on me. I've got so much responsibility and no authority."⁷ The Colonel replied that in reality she had no responsibility either. The same lack of agency applied to female officers as well. They exercised control solely over WRs, while male servicemen supervised women on the job.⁸

Following a generous offer by the Navy Department, Streeter recruited nineteen officers from the WAVES to form her core staff. This allowed the new director to begin operations with a staff experienced in navigating military bureaucracy. Each of the former WAVES received assignments to one of nineteen Corps procurement offices throughout the country. They immediately began preparations for the recruitment of women.⁹

⁶ "Colonel Ruth Cheney Streeter USMCWR" Marine Corps Legacy Museum, MSMC History and Museums Division, Online Archive, Marine Corps Legacy Museum, www.mclm.com/tohonor/rcstreeter.html (18 November 2008); Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 146; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 5-6, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

⁷ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 87.

⁸ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 86-88; Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 25.

⁹ Capt. Lilly S. Hutcheon, one of the nineteen WRs recruited from the WAVES, became the first female Judge Advocate in the history of the Marine Corps in May 1944. Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 9, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 5.

Streeter also benefitted from the contributions of Helen O'Neill, a woman long accustomed to Naval administration. O'Neill began her Naval career as a civilian employee before World War I, working in an office with two male Chief Yeomen. When the United States joined World War I and Josephus Daniels enlisted women as yeomen, O'Neill joined the Navy as a Chief Yeomen. After the war, she resumed her career as a civilian employee of the Navy. She worked for Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. When the United States joined World War II, O'Neill had over twenty years of experience with the Navy. O'Neill continued her work for the Secretary until 1943, when she agreed to enlist in the Marine Corps. Due to her experience, she received a commission as captain and began working as Streeter's assistant. O'Neill's career continued after the Japanese surrendered. She remained in the reserves and retired as a lieutenant colonel.¹⁰

The Marine Corps commissioned five other women directly from civilian life to serve in the Marine Corps. These women skipped formal training, and utilized skills acquired in civilian life to put the reserve on solid footing. First Lieutenant E. Louise Stewart served as the Women's Reserve public relations officer. Captain Charlotte D. Gower began working on a training program for new recruits as the Women's Reserve representative for training. Gower experienced the war first-hand before joining the Corps. The former Dean of Women at Lingnan University in Hong Kong, she spent five months in a Japanese internment camp after the city fell to the Japanese. She was later repatriated in a prisoner exchange. The Marine Corps commissioned Captain Cornelia D. T. Williams as representative for classification and detail. Captain Lillian O'Malley Daly, a daredevil who, along with Stewart

¹⁰ Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 19-20, 52, 57; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 43, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

and Streeter, tested their skills at the rifle range at Camp Pendleton and Camp Elliott, assumed responsibilities as representative for West Coast activities. Recruiting efforts began under the leadership of Captain Katherine A. Towle as representative for the Recruit Depot.¹¹

Controversy over female officers commanding men in the course of duty plagued Streeter and female officers. Regulations stated that women officers exercised control only over WRs. The Corps settled the matter in 1944 by clarifying that women might give orders to male personnel as long as such orders pertained to the performance of the subject duty. Male officers administered any disciplinary action necessary regarding male personnel. Male officers might assign women to duties in which they commanded men with the understanding that they issued orders on behalf of the commanding officer.¹²

As with other services, the Marine Corps afforded women rank designations similar to those of male personnel, with limitations. The Marine Corps aimed at limiting the impact of women in the service by curtailing the levels of rank women might achieve and limiting the number of officers allowed. Female officers in the Marine Corps initially included one major and thirty-five captains, while thirty-five percent of commissioned officers served as first lieutenant. The remainder of officers received the rank of second lieutenant. Later

¹¹ Daly, Stewart, and Streeter also jumped from parachute towers, accompanied paratroopers making their first jump, and rode in tanks while at Camps Pendleton and Elliott. Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 7, 43-44, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

¹² Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 88; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 40, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 28-29.

revisions to Public Law 689 promoted the director of the Marine Corps to the rank of Colonel.¹³

The Marine Corps avoided many of the pitfalls experienced by the other women's services by virtue of being the last service to incorporate women into the ranks. The other services willingly shared their experience with Streeter and the Marine Corps. In addition, the Navy and the WAVES played an invaluable role in establishing the Marine Corps on firm footing. In an effort to start the WRs on solid ground, the WAVES requested volunteers from among its officer candidates for transfer to the Marine Corps. Nineteen responded, ensuring that the Corps began with a nucleus of experienced staff. These women immediately set about the task of imploring American women to do their patriotic duty and "Be a Marine...Free a Marine to fight."¹⁴

The Marine Corps recognized that a positive public relations campaign might prevent the virulent slander campaign plaguing the WAC. The Division of Public Information consistently updated the media on positive developments within the WR. Recruiting campaigns stressed the hard work recruits could expect as WRs, rather than placing any emphasis on glamour or adventure. As a result, the public was assured that women who joined the Corps did so from patriotism.¹⁵

¹³ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 4, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

¹⁴ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 78; Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 4, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 5.

¹⁵ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United

Recruitment of female officer candidates began on Monday, 15 February 1943. The Marine Corps instructed women volunteering for service to apply at Navy recruiting offices across the nation. Recruiters quickly found themselves swamped with volunteers, as women scrambled to join the Corps. In Washington alone, over one hundred women overloaded the Navy recruiting office with applications. Although officially the Navy accepted applications on Monday the 15th, some women inexplicably succeeded in enlisting before the office opened on Monday.¹⁶

As with the Navy WAVES, women applying for officer training needed a college degree or a combination of college education and work experience. Officer candidates brought the mandatory statement from their physicians verifying their fitness for service. Upon submitting their applications, the Corps required potential candidates to undergo an aptitude test and meet with the Officer-in-Charge for an interview. The Corps required that all its members possess U.S. citizenship. Regulations also required that officer recruits ranged in age from 20 to 49 years. Physical standards for women stipulated that recruits weigh at least 95 pounds, reached at least 60 inches in height, and possessed good eyesight, as well as hearing. In addition, regulations initially prohibited women married to Marines from service, as well as those with children under the age of 18. Subsequent legislative revisions eliminated the restriction against wives of enlisted Marines. The Corps followed the procedures of other branches of the military in prohibiting women from marrying during

States Marine Corps, 1964), 61-62, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

¹⁶ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 8, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 79.

their basic training period. Violators received discharges due to “unsuitability” or “indifferent character.”¹⁷

Many American women clamored to join the Marines. Recruitment of female officers and enlisted personnel for the Corps represented a resounding success. The Corps goals remained significantly more conservative than those of the other services. As a result, the corps consistently met its recruiting quotas. Streeter’s personal efforts at encouraging the nation’s women to enlist undoubtedly aided recruitment. Streeter traveled extensively during the first weeks of the reserve’s existence, speaking before women’s organizations, college groups, and community gatherings. Within the first two months of its existence, the Corps gained more than one-quarter of its total officer staff and one-seventh of its enlisted personnel. The Marine Corps enlisted over 11,000 by November 1st, just short of the 12,000 quota set for the end of the year. When the Corps celebrated its first anniversary in February of 1944, the reserve totaled nearly 15,000 recruits. By the end of May 1944, over three months ahead of schedule, the Reserve reached its total authorized strength. It is worth noting that the Marine Corps targeted a much smaller force than either the Army or the Navy, limiting its impact on the Corps and American society at large.¹⁸

¹⁷ Enlistment apparently began before the official recruitment program began. Lucille E. McClarren, became the first volunteer for the Women’s Reserve, volunteering on 13 February 1943. Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 79; Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum from the Chief of Naval Personnel to Commanding Officers, U.S.N.R. Training Schools (Women’s Reserve, Class V-10), 3 September 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR8 to P19, Box 2335, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 8, 40-41, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 5.

¹⁸ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 11-12, Maxwell-Gunter AFB,

Training of officer recruits began on 13 March 1943, within one month of the creation of the WR. The Corps accomplished this impressive feat of efficiency via the assistance of the WAVES. WAVES initially shared training facilities with the Corps, saving time and valuable resources. Significantly, the generosity of the WAVES allowed Marine Corps recruiters to claim that recruits received their training on prestigious college campus', rather than at military posts. This allowed the Corps to co-opt a degree of respectability and perceived exclusivity enjoyed by the WAVES. Corps officers received their training at the Navy's Smith College in Northampton and Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. At least 3,190 Marine Corps recruits received their training alongside WAVES at the Hunter College, Naval Training School at the Bronx, New York. Hoping to instill a distinct identity, the Corps billeted WRs in separate barracks and insured that the new recruits received instruction from Marine Corps officers. Some naval administrators even questioned the efficacy of sharing training facilities, and the Corps later moved their training program to Camp Lejuene.¹⁹

www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); StremLOW, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 7.

¹⁹ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 79-80; Memorandum for the Chief of Naval Personnel from H. G. Hopwood, U.S.N., Navy Department, Bureau of Naval Personnel, 9 February 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Joint Letter from The Chief of Naval Personnel, The Commandant, United States Marine Corps, and The Commandant, United States Coast Guard to The Secretary of the Navy, 20 November 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; History of the United States Naval Training School, Women's Reserve, The Bronx, New York, New York, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 75; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 146; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 6, 11, 13, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); StremLOW, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 7-8.

When the first group of seventy-one female Corp officer candidates arrived for training on 13 March 1943, curriculum mirrored that of WAVES officers in almost all aspects. Drill training proved the only exception, with male marines instructing women in proper formation and drill. Women studied Naval Administration, Naval Organization, History, Strategy, Law, Justice, Ships, Aircraft recognition, map reading, and security procedures. The initial officer class graduated on 4 May 1943. Six classes of commissioned officers, recruited directly from the civilian population, subsequently graduated. The eighth officer class included women promoted from within the ranks of enlisted personnel. Corps leaders believed that they might increase morale by allowing enlisted personnel to train as officers. Enlisted personnel demonstrating excellent service needed a recommendation from their commanding officer and the acquiescence of a seven-member board of review to undergo officer training. In December of 1943, the first officer candidates hailing from the enlisted ranks began training. Others would follow, providing the Corps with a small but efficient officer contingent.²⁰

Among the officer corps, two women boasted experience in wartime service during World War I. During World War I, Frances W. Pepper served with the Young Women's Christian Association at General Pershing's headquarters in France. Pepper joined the Adjutant and Inspector Department of the Marine Corps in 1923 as a civilian employee. Her duties included processing appointments, discharge papers, and facilitating the promotion of officers. While working with the Marine Corps, Pepper earned a Bachelor of Law degree and passed the bar in the District of Columbia in 1931. Her post-graduate studies focused on

²⁰ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 79-80; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps. (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 21-22. [Online archival source] [cited 18 November 2008]. Report found at Maxwell-Gunter AFB website at www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt.

international law. When she graduated from officers training in 1943, she graduated at the top of her class. When the Corps began accepting women into its reserve, Pepper quickly joined, rising to the rank of Captain before her retirement.²¹

Major Helen Craen organized a canteen during World War I for the Fifth Regiment of the Marine Corps at Naix-au-Forge and the Verdun sector. While serving at a Red Cross dressing station at Glorieux, France, she performed admirably when the enemy bombed and machine-gunned her station. For her courage under fire, the French government later awarded her the Croix de Guerre. After graduating from officers training, the Corps stationed Craen as Commanding Officer of the Women's Reserve at the Marine Corps Air Station in Santa Barbara, California, before promoting her to a new position as Commanding Officer of the Women's Reserve at Ewa, Hawaii.²²

Recruitment of enlisted women proceeded along lines similar to that of officer candidates. Also required to hold U.S. citizenship, enlisted WRs ranged in age from 20 to 35 years old. Physical requirements for enlisted and officer candidates remained identical, as did requirements regarding marriage to Marines and dependent children. The Corps educational requirements for enlisted personnel required women to possess at least two years of high school or business school.²³

²¹ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 43, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

²² Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 43, 50, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

²³ Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 79; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States

A survey conducted of WRs after the war revealed that out of 21,051 women who enlisted in the Corps, 13,824 held at least a high school diploma. At least 4,478 attended or graduated from college, while 141 performed post-graduate work. Only 2,608 did not complete high school, while educational qualifications for 2,094 remain unavailable. Exempting the 2,904 for which no data is available, the percentage of WRs with at least a high school education rested at approximately 88% of female personnel. Even when factoring the 2,608 women definitely lacking high school diplomas with the 2,904 women of indeterminate education into the equation, the MCMR maintained a percentage of at least 80% with a minimum of a high school education. These numbers reveal that WRs represented a far more educated group than their fellow servicemen.²⁴

Enlisted recruits received orders to report to Hunter College two weeks after the first female Corps officers began training. Enlisted personnel received orders instructing them to join approximately 722 other women comprising the first class of enlisted female Marines at Hunter College. They began training on 26 March 1943. Training resembled that of the officer classes. In addition, WRs received rudimentary weapons training and demonstrations. Thanks to a suggestion made by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, women underwent field exercises and instruction in the use of mortars, guns, bazookas, and flame-throwers. Although male marines carried out demonstrations in the use of weapons such as bazookas and flame-throwers, women received hands-on instruction in the use of small arms. For example, WRs at Quantico learned to fire Springfield Rifles. In addition, women learned to

Marine Corps, 1964), 8, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 5.

²⁴ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 59-60, 88, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

operate amtracs and other vehicles used in Marine Corps operations. The *New York Times Magazine* reported on the arms instruction for female Marines on 30 June 1943. The magazine published photos of women practicing with weaponry and learning the basics of combat training. Although the article noted that the training allowed women a better understanding of the tasks servicemen performed, the magazine depicted women pushing the boundaries of contemporary society – an action Chief of Staff George Marshall avoided with WACs. The Marine Corps thereafter sought to avoid depictions of female Marines with weapons, as these images offended conservative American society.²⁵

Some members of the officer corps had first-hand knowledge of what dangers confronted the United States. Private First Class Peggy Urzendowski was on Corregidor when the Japanese began bombing raids against the island. She eventually evacuated on a troop ship bound for New Zealand. After traveling to Australia and Hawaii, Urzendowski finally arrived in the United States, intent on doing her part to defeat the Japanese. After her enlistment in the Marine Corps, she received orders for duty at the Marine Corps Base in San Diego, California.²⁶

Despite the prestige associated with training at well-known college campuses, the Marine Corps made the decision to transfer training facilities for all WR training to the most prominent Marine training base in the United States, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Marine

²⁵ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 80-81; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 146-147; Karas Yianilos, *Woman Marine: A Memoir of a Woman Who Joined the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II to "Free A Marine to Fight."* (LaJolla, California: LaJolla Book Publishing Company, 1994), 102, 105-106; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 15, 17, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 11.

²⁶ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 44, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

Corps planners believed that the decision not only relieved the overcrowding at WAVES training centers, but also instilled a sense of esprit de corps. Women and men would train in the same location. Beginning in July of 1943, women undertook basic and advanced training at Camp Lejeune. Janie Sheppard later recalled attending electronics instruction at the base. WAVES continued to provide support for the fledgling WRs in the initial stages of transition to Camp Lejeune. The Navy assigned WAVES to work at the dispensaries and at the hospital at Camp Lejeune. WAVES assigned to Camp Lejeune lived in the barracks with WRs and participated in Corps activities while assigned to the base. However, the transfer of training to Camp Lejeune robbed the Women's Reserve of the "collegiate image" so carefully crafted by the Navy. Hence, subsequent recruiting efforts lacked the enticement of training at a college campus.²⁷

Women arriving for training at Camp Lejeune encountered a far different training experience than those lucky few trained on college campuses. The Corps made few adjustments for WRs. Women lived in standard barracks with common showers, open-stalled toilets and urinals on the walls, perhaps to remind them of their audacity in invading a man's world or of their eventual dismissal from the corps. Janie Sheppard later recalled laughingly that she tried to wait until the other women finished showering before she took her turn in the communal shower. Women quickly processed through a series of medical examinations, written tests and interviews designed to determine the best posting for each woman. After basic training, many women received orders to duty stations that waited to

²⁷ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 81; Sheppard, Janie M. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Frank Perkins, "She Remains a Marine at Heart," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, Publication date unknown; "WAVES Work at Dispensaries and Hospital at Camp Lejeune," *WAVES Newsletter*, April 1945, 6; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 146; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 15, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 10.

employ their skills in the service of the Corps immediately, while other women received assignments to specialist training.²⁸

Almost 9,000 WRs received specialist training while serving in the Corps during the war. Varying in length from four to twenty-two weeks, the specialist training courses included instruction for cooks and bakers, motor transport and quartermaster. Ultimately, over thirty specialist schools trained women in a wide range of fields. Many women became Aviation Machinist Mates after attending the Naval Training School in Memphis, Tennessee. Others became Link Training Instructors after completion of specialist courses at the Naval Air Station in Atlanta, Georgia. As with other branches of the armed forces, the Marine Corps continuously expanded its training facilities to meet the needs of the service.²⁹

The standards of 1940s society frowned on women living independently. In order to prevent negative publicity, the Corps stipulated that at least two WRs be assigned to Corps installations, with at least one WAVES officer nearby to oversee operations. Ordinarily, the Corps assigned women to units of at least twenty-five WAVES. A comparative few women stationed in cities received allowance for living expenses. In Washington, D.C., the Corps built Henderson Hall to house the 2,400 women stationed in the nation's capital.³⁰

²⁸ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 81-82; Frank Perkins, "She Remains a Marine at Heart," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, Publication date unknown; Yianilos, *Woman Marine*, 72-74; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 19-20, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

²⁹ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 20, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 14-15.

³⁰ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 88-89; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 38-39, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 29.

The Corps pursued a more aggressive approach to promiscuity among its female members than other service branches. WR officers fought rumors about sexual promiscuity among Corps women by consistently reminding women that they would receive discharges – often referred to as a “four-ninety-nine” - if they became pregnant. Theresa Karas Yianilos recalled a detailed lecture on personal hygiene and venereal disease. According to Yianilos, 165 “boots” in her unit received instructions regarding everything from how to identify the signs of venereal disease on male genitalia to proper hygiene during menstruation. The Corps also investigated charges of homosexual activity and swiftly released lesbians with dishonorable discharges. Yianilos recalled that even women suspected of such activity were ostracized by their fellow WRs. It is hardly difficult to imagine the scandal if these efforts to root out promiscuous women reached the media. Fortunately, it seems that reports of these policies, particularly the instruction on identifying signs of venereal disease, failed to reach the media.³¹

Women serving with the Corps adhered to behavioral guidelines similar to those of male personnel. WR officers received training in the counseling of women in an effort to prevent infractions. Of course, this failed to prevent all disciplinary problems. Women found guilty of violating military protocols received punishments administered according to Corps regulations with a few revisions. The most common infractions included unauthorized absences, uniform violations, and unauthorized fraternization. The Corps typically confined women to quarters, rather than sending them to prison, as with male personnel. Other punishments included a loss of pay, demotion, or extra duties. A WR officer reviewed disciplinary cases and consulted the Director for recommendations. Court martials rarely

³¹ “Four-ninety-nine” referred to the regulation governing pregnant Marines. Yianilos, *Woman Marine*, 113-114, 269-274.

occurred and consisted of Marine Corps officers, both male and female. Records indicate that only thirty-six women received discharges “under other than honorable conditions.”³²

Uniforms for the Women’s Reserve resembled those of the male Marines. Anne Lentz, a former WAAC, joined the Marine Corps as a captain before Knox commissioned Streeter as director of the MCWR. As a result, Lentz served as the first female Marine on active duty during World War II. Her duties required her to help design the uniform for female Marines. Following suggestions by the Commandant, she designed a forest green uniform adhering to the traditions of the Corps. As with uniforms for male personnel, red chevrons also completed the jacket of the winter uniform, along with a green skirt. Khaki shirt, necktie, brown shoes and gloves completed the ensemble. WRs wore a green visored hat, trimmed with red cord. Finally, outerwear included a green coat worn with a red muffler. In the summer, women wore a short-sleeved green and white seersucker dress or a white short-sleeved dress uniform with gold buttons and white pumps. When working, women might wear a green utility uniform with trousers and matching shirt. Women wore a tan bloomer-type outfit when participating in physical exercise. When not actually in the process of exercising, WRs wore skirts over the bloomers. Regulations also stipulated that women wear bras and girdles, as well as white slips when wearing skirts. Required to wear stockings, women wore seamed stockings with skirts. The Corps required women to wear their uniforms during waking hours, even while on liberty. Lentz encountered significant obstacles to acquiring an adequate supply of uniforms for personnel in the first months of the WR. In fact, the photograph of the first enlisted class to graduate in April of 1943 cleverly

³² Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 41-42, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 28-30.

hides the fact that only the women in the front row – and a few in the second– were wearing skirts.³³

Despite the commandant's insistence that WRs served simply as "Marines," women received encouragement to maintain a feminine appearance. Feminine hairstyles and moderate makeup were encouraged. WRs often chose Montezuma Red when choosing lipstick or nail polish. Elizabeth Arden's cosmetic company developed Montezuma Red to match the red cord that trimmed the hats of WRs.³⁴

Racial integration of the Women's Reserve failed to meet even the standards of the period. While no language in Corps legislation specifically prohibited enlistment of African-American women, recruiters turned them away. According to Colonel Mary V. Stremlow, rumors circulated that some African-American women entered the Marine Corps by "passing" as white women. However, no official records exist to corroborate such claims. Officially, the Marine Corps enlisted its first African-American woman in 1949, long after the war ended and President Harry Truman desegregated the military.³⁵

Some minorities joined the Women's Reserve, albeit to a lesser degree than their Caucasian sisters. Native American reservist Private Minnie Spotted-Wolf of Heart Butte, Montana enlisted in the summer of 1943. Her deceptively petite frame masked her years of experience performing hard labor on her father's ranch. Privates Celia Mix of Benton

³³ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 78, 81, 83-84; Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 146; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 6, 23-26, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 3, 15-20.

³⁴ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 84; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 146; Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 19-20.

³⁵ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 79; Litoff and Smith, "The Wartime History of the WAVES, SPARS, Women Marines, Army and Navy Nurses, and WASPs," 56; Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 5.

Harbor, Michigan and Viola Eastman, from Pipestone, Minnesota also served as representatives of the Native American community. Puerto Rican WR Private Norma Frances Aran left her position as a civilian employee of the Army to serve in the Marines. Nevertheless, minorities represented a comparatively small contingent in the Women's Reserve during the war.³⁶

Initially, women encountered stiff resistance to their presence in the Marine Corps. Commander Holcomb later confessed that he initially doubted that “women could serve any useful purpose in the Marine Corps.”³⁷ Heedless of the manpower shortage impacting every branch of the military, male officers and servicemen mercilessly ridiculed WRs. Some women ignored the insults, while others complained bitterly about the hostility. Former WR Janie M. Sheppard later recalled that during the war many servicemen referred to women in the Corps as “BAMS” for “Broad Ass Marines.” According to Sheppard, WRs often retaliated by referring to these servicemen as “HAMS” – “Half Ass Marines.” Sheppard's sense of humor undoubtedly served her well during her thirty-seven years with the Marine Corps. Fearing that the widespread hostility toward women might impact recruiting efforts and morale, Marine Corps headquarters issued an official statement in August of 1943 ordering an end to all such harassment and informing officers of their responsibility for the conduct of Marines below them. Slowly, many male personnel adjusted to the presence of women in the Corps and ceased openly ridiculing WRs. Many Marines learned to appreciate the contributions of the women, later defending their service. Still, hostile and disrespectful

³⁶ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 45-46, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

³⁷ Holcomb noted that he later changed his mind about the usefulness of female Marines. Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 95.

behavior by male personnel continued to plague WRs. As a result, morale suffered among WRs. Streeter and Marine Corps leaders continued throughout the war to remind male officers and enlisted men of the restrictions against disparaging the WRs.³⁸

Once deployed for service, women filled a variety of posts. Colonel Streeter remarked that she supported women filling unconventional roles, as long as they refrained from heavy lifting or combat duties. Ultimately, women filled over two hundred kinds of jobs within the Marine Corps, far more than the thirty-four advertized in recruiting brochures. As with the WACs and WAVES, WRs typically filled jobs traditionally accepting of women. Overwhelmingly, they worked as clerical staff, cooks and bakers, nursing aids, laundresses, and clerks in post exchanges. A few WRs did fill less traditional roles in the Corps. Marine Corps officers learned quickly what other branches in the military already knew: women often performed exceptionally well as Link trainers, radio operations, ordinance technicians, parachute riggers, control tower operators, mechanics, cryptographers, metal smiths, and other positions traditionally limited to male personnel. Lt. Colonel Pat Meid, in her brief history of the Marine Corps Reserve, breaks down the primary military specialties for the 17, 672 women on duty when the war ended. The breakdown of job specialties is listed in the following categories:

Clerical and sales:	62.4%
General Duty:	9.3%
Mechanical:	7.7%

³⁸ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 82-83; Sheppard, Janie M. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Memorandum for the Director of Personnel, Marine Corps, 2 January 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 147; Litoff and Smith, "The Wartime History of the WACES, SPARS, Women Marines, Army and Navy Nurses, and WASPS," 51; Yianilos, *Woman Marine*, 145; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 45-46, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 11-12.

Professional and managerial:	7.6%
Semi-skilled jobs:	7.4%
Agriculture and service:	3.3%
Student:	0.2%
Unskilled:	0.08%. ³⁹

Many women worked on classified projects for the Marine Corps. Janey Sheppard later recalled spending untold hours screening 16mm combat film chronicling the war in the Pacific. Sent daily to headquarters from the front lines, the films revealed the somber face of war in the Pacific Theater. Some film remained classified, while WR technicians edited others for commercial viewing – often for distribution to movie theaters across America. Sheppard and her co-workers first “had to wipe away beach sand, crusted dried blood and other stuff before the films could be developed. It was terrible.”⁴⁰ Then the women screened the films with Naval Intelligence officers. When images depicting dead, tortured or mutilated Americans flashed across the screen, the officers instructed Sheppard to cut out the scenes. After handing the offending footage to the officer, the WR repaired the film and continued with the screening. According to Sheppard, Naval Intelligence usually elected to leave images of dead Japanese soldiers in the film.⁴¹

Of all the departments within the Corps, Marine Corps Air Stations encouraged the assignment of women to positions with the air corps. Initially requesting 9,100 WRs, Marine Corps Air Stations ultimately employed almost one-third of WRs. Women serving with the

³⁹ Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland ; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 84, 86; Millet, *Semper Fidelis*, 374; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 28-30, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

⁴⁰ Perkins, “She Remains a Marine at Heart.”

⁴¹ Perkins, “She Remains a Marine at Heart,”; Cindy Weigand, *Texas Women in World War II*. (Lanham, MD: Republic of Texas Press, 2003), 166-168; Sheppard, Janie M. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Yianilos, *Woman Marine*, 239.

air corps formed squadrons due to their large numbers. As a result, women served in squadrons at Santa Barbara, El Centro, Miramar, El Toro, Parris Island, Ewa, Cherry Point and Quantico. Most historians attribute the relatively easy acceptance of women into the air corps to the pioneering spirit of aviators. As with the Army Air Force, Corps aviators recognized aviation as a field in which women participated in the civilian sector.⁴²

Women in the Marine Corps measuring 5'7" joined other servicewomen in April of 1945 in honoring the memory of the late President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Meeting in Washington, the group practiced their marching skills for three days before meeting the caisson at Union Station. The group then escorted the body to the White House for the funeral. Those serving in this special contingent later recalled the occasion with pride, remembering what an honor such an assignment seemed.⁴³

Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, believed that women could fill at least 5,000 postings in Hawaii. He and Marine Corps General Holland Smith lobbied Congress for approval to send women to Hawaii. On 27 September 1944, the President signed legislation allowing WRs to service in Hawaii. At that time, Congress only authorized women to transfer to the Territory of Hawaii. In October of 1944, amended legislation permitted WRs to volunteer for service in Alaska. As with overseas personnel serving with the WACs and WAVES, legislation required that women serving in Hawaii be volunteers. Just as women in the other services serving overseas accepted strict limits on their mobility, women volunteering for transfer to Hawaii agreed to stay for a minimum of two years. The Corps

⁴² Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 86; Litoff and Smith, "The Wartime History of the WAVES, SPARS, Women Marines, Army and Navy Nurses, and WASPs," 53; Memorandum from Commanding Officer, U.S. Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina to The Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., 11 May 1943, General Correspondence, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR8-1943 Vol. 2 to QR8-1943 Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 24.

⁴³ Perkins, "She Remains a Marine at Heart,"; Weigand, *Texas Women in World War II*, 168-169.

would issue no furloughs back to the continental United States during the two year tour of duty, except under the same conditions as those pertaining to male personnel. Women received a psychiatric examination (testing not required of male personnel) and a physical examination before departing for overseas service. The Corps also required potential candidates to demonstrate an aptitude for military service, motivation, stability, adaptability, and maturity. Women needed to possess a service record clear of any disciplinary actions. Finally, the Corps once again verified that volunteers had no dependents. The Secretary's estimates proved higher than later projections. On 16 September 1944, G. C. Thomas of the Division of Plans and Policies issued a memorandum stating that the ultimate requirements for Hawaiian postings rested at 1,500. He noted that while legislation authorized the MCWR with a total of 18,000 enlisted personnel, existing numbers totaled only 17,138. The addition of 1,500 postings in Hawaii would lead to a reduction in personnel available within the continental United States. Nevertheless, Colonel Streeter flew to Hawaii in October of 1944 to make arrangements for the transfer of WRs to Hawaii. Her 3 November 1944 Memorandum to the Director of Personnel, Marine Corps, detailed the logistics of stationing women in Hawaii. At least half of all female Marines stationed in Hawaii served at the Marine Corps Air Station at Ewa. Streeter estimated that between five and six hundred women would serve in aviation in Hawaii, while eight to nine hundred would serve at Pearl Harbor in various positions.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Memorandum for the Commandant from G. C. Thomas, Division of Plans and Policies, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 90-91; Memorandum from Colonel Ruth Streeter, approved by A. H. Turnage, Major General, USMC, Director of Personnel, 13 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum from The Director, Division of Plans and Policies to Commandant of the Marine Corps, 20 October 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum for the

Colonel Streeter's memorandum outlining conditions of service in Hawaii reveals interesting contradictions within 1940s American culture. Although supporters of women in the military exhibited concern for the reputation of female personnel, officers sometimes made references to improvements in "morale" women might impart upon male personnel. Streeter informed volunteers to Hawaii that the Corps would arrange several parties, which women would attend with chaperones. The Colonel noted that these parties would aid women in getting acquainted and, "considering the shortage of women, Marine Corps Women Reserves can be a great morale factor if they are reasonably generous in attending these parties."⁴⁵ In addition to the continued 22:00 curfew effective for the population of Hawaii and military personnel, Streeter advised women not to be out after dark unescorted. According to a lengthy memorandum dated 2 November 1944, Streeter considered requiring WR personnel to submit for physical examinations every ninety days. Specifically, female physicians would check for venereal disease and pregnancy. Although Streeter admitted that

Director of Personnel, Marine Corps from Helen G. O'Neill, 14 September 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum for the Acting Director of Personnel, Marine Corps from Ruth Cheney Streeter, 13 September 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum for the Director of Personnel, Marine Corps from Ruth Cheney Streeter, 3 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum for the Commandant of the Marine Corps from Ruth Cheney Streeter, 19 September 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland. Memorandum for the Director of Personnel, Marine Corps, 14 September 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum for the Director of Personnel, Marine Corps from Ruth Cheney Streeter, 29 September 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 48, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 31.

⁴⁵ Memorandum for Duty Overseas for Marine Corps Women's Reserve, 13 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

this policy seemed undesirable in the continental United States, such exams might prove “helpful” overseas. The Director provided no explanation for the geographic differentiation in this recommendation. In addition to explanations of life in Hawaii, Streeter finished her memorandum with a condescending admonition to WRs. She advised women that “everyone is much too busy to make a fuss over them (WRs), and they are expected to take their places as additional Marines with a minimum of bother to men who are busy planning and executing battle operations. If they complain, they will get no sympathy; nor will they be entitled to any, for they will be better off than most of the military personnel in Hawaii.”⁴⁶

Before departing for Hawaii, WRs received intense training for the trip across the Pacific Ocean. They learned to climb rope ladders wearing a pack and practiced jumping from the ship’s deck into the water. They also received instructions on procedures aboard ship and what to expect once stationed in Hawaii. After successfully completing their training, five officers and 160 enlisted WRs boarded a ship bound for Hawaii in San Diego, California on 25 January 1945. As they made their way across the Pacific, women remained within restricted areas of the ship so as to avoid prolonged contact with male personnel. They docked in Hawaii on 28 January 1945.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Memorandum for Duty Overseas for Marine Corps Women’s Reserve, 13 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum for the Director of Personnel, Marine Corps from Ruth Cheney Streeter, 3 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁷ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 90-91; Memorandum for the Director of Personnel, Marine Corps from Colonel Ruth Streeter, 26 March 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Commandant of the Marine Corps to The Commanding Officer, Women’s Reserve Staging Area, Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California, 13 June 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 50-51, Maxwell-Gunter AFB,

Once in Hawaii, WRs received an enthusiastic reception by the Marine Corps Band. Women settled into their barracks after processing and receiving assignments. One officer wrote, "I have never seen a place where so much thought and effort were being given to plans for the care and recreation of enlisted women."⁴⁸ Most WRs in Hawaii worked as clerical personnel, while many others worked as mechanics at the airfield. The motor transport unit at Pearl Harbor ran efficiently with an all female staff. With a perfect service record, WRs in the unit not only served as drivers, but also worked as mechanics. The Corps hoped that these productive and seemingly competent women would encourage other women to volunteer for service in Hawaii.⁴⁹

Despite the warm reception women received in Hawaii and the superlative service record they earned, the Corps fell far short of the desired quota of women transferred to Hawaii. Colonel Streeter detailed the apparent challenges in acquiring volunteers for overseas service in Hawaii in a Memorandum dated 26 March 1945. She noted that the sufficient numbers of WR officers met the requested numbers. However, Streeter noted that enthusiasm for duty in Hawaii among enlisted personnel seemed exhausted and that the Marine Corps only garnered half the required volunteers. The Colonel recommended that requirements for overseas service be lowered in order to fill essential jobs in Hawaii. She conceded that such reductions would hardly facilitate efforts to meet the June quota. The

www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 32-33.

⁴⁸ Commandant of the Marine Corps to The Assistants for Women's Reserve, 30 January 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁹ Commandant of the Marine Corps to The Assistants for Women's Reserve, 30 January 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 91; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 52, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 33.

Marine Corps continued to suffer from a dearth of enlisted personnel throughout the remainder of the war.⁵⁰

In August of 1945, Japan surrendered to U.S. Navy officers aboard the U.S. battleship *Missouri*. Women serving with the Marine Corps joined other Americans in celebrating the end of hostilities. The Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band played for three straight hours in a celebratory parade. Sgt. Hazel Ann Burchard wrote home to her mother, detailing the celebrations that took place in Hawaii. Burchard wrote in detail of the celebration in the streets of Hawaii, the celebrations on the ships in Pearl Harbor, and the constant noise of celebration from August 13th through the 14th. She wondered if Americans in the states realized what it meant to people in Hawaii, where the war began for the United States.⁵¹

When the war ended, WRs filled 225 different types of jobs within the Marine Corps. WR strength stood at 17,640 enlisted women and 820 officers. Women accounted for eighty-five percent of the permanent personnel at Marine Corps Headquarters. The monumental task of processing the paperwork and maneuvering the mountain of red tape required for demobilization began immediately. The Marine Corps announced that WRs would receive discharges by 1 September 1946. On 14 September 1945, Corps leaders in Hawaii requested that thirty-nine WRs, including three officers, be retained in order to complete the substantial clerical duties incumbent in demobilization. According to James T. Moore, these women

⁵⁰ Memorandum for the Director of Personnel, Marine Corps from Colonel Ruth Streeter, 26 March 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

⁵¹ Letter from Sgt. Hazel Ann Bruchard to Mrs. W.S. Bruchard, 13 August 1945, Western Historical Manuscript Collection – Columbia, University of Missouri/State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, Collection #C0068, Folder 373; Letter from Sgt. Hazel Ann Bruchard to Mrs. W.S. Bruchard, 14 August 1945, Western Historical Manuscript Collection – Columbia, University of Missouri/State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, Collection #C0068, Folder 374; C. Kay Larson, *Till I come Marching Home: A Brief History of American Women in World War II*, (Pasadena, Maryland: The Minerva Center, 1995), 117.

previously demonstrated a superiority to male personnel in their work, displaying an outstanding accuracy rate in statistics and accounting.⁵²

WRs followed a discharge policy similar to that used by the WAVES. Married women with discharged husbands received immediate release from the Corps. Women with twenty-five points received the first discharges, with the required points steadily decreasing as separation procedures continued. The Corps set 1 September 1946 as the projected separation date for all WRs. WRs received information regarding their rights and benefits. Letters of Recommendation assured prospective employers that individuals served their country with distinction. Colonel Streeter resigned on 6 December 1946, leaving her former assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Towle, as Director of the WRs. Streeter received the Legion of Merit award for her service and many officers received letters of commendation. The wartime MCWR ceased operations on 15 June 1945. Colonel Towle also took “terminal leave” at that time.⁵³

Despite the separation of the majority of female Marines, three hundred women agreed to remain in the Marine Corps, forming a permanent unit within Headquarters Marine Corps. Despite continued opposition to women in the Marine Corps from male personnel,

⁵² Memorandum from The Commanding General, USMC Headquarters, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific to The Commandant of the Marine Force, 14 September 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, January 1939-June 1950, RG 127, 151-35-25 to 1515-35, Box 467, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 93; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 55, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 36-37

⁵³ Under an “Adjusted Service Rating System,” the Marine Corps adjusted the required points system to accommodate the Women’s Reserve. If the Corps required women to adhere to the same points system as servicemen, all men would receive discharges before women, since women could not earn points for combat service. Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 93; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 53-54, 58, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 37-38.

the Marine Corps joined other branches of the military in incorporating women into the permanent military establishment. In 1948, Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, authorizing the enlistment of women in the Marine Corps as regular or reserve personnel. Like it or not, women would stay on as contributing members of the Marine Corps.⁵⁴

When the war ended, several WRs received awards for their service to the Corps. Streeter and Colonel Katherine Towle received the Legion of Merit for their service. Major Helen N. Craen and Major Marion Wing received the Bronze Star. Thirty enlisted women and officers received Letters of Commendation and Commendation Medals. WRs serving honorably throughout the war received the Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal.⁵⁵

The Women's Reserve performed exactly as expected. They maintained the Corps' famed esprit de corps while replacing men in administrative, clerical, and non-combat jobs, allowing men to assume combat assignments in the Pacific. In many ways, it could be argued that the Corps provided women with a more equitable military experience than that of other reserves, with their accommodations to "feminine" needs. The Corps rejected cute acronyms for female recruits and refused to make superficial accommodations for women. They provided weapons training, even though regulations prohibited American women from using them. Nevertheless, the Women's Reserve and the Corps often seemed to be working at odds. Although the Navy had proven that cultivation of an image of educated and

⁵⁴ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 93-95; Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 37, 39.

⁵⁵ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 47-48, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 9.

feminine reservists resonated more readily with the American public than images of militarized women, the Marine Corps made fewer allowances for women over time. After the first year and the transfer of WR training to Camp Lejuene, recruitment lagged. Fortunately, Corps leadership targeted a much smaller force of female reservists than the Army or Navy, allowing it to come close to its quota.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Millet, *Semper Fidelis*, 374.

CHAPTER 5

STRATTON'S "COASTIES:"

THE COAST GUARD WELCOMES THE SPARS

The role of the Coast Guard in the war against the Axis powers predates the entry of the United States into World War II. After President Roosevelt declared a state of emergency in 1939, the Coast Guard conducted patrols along the North American coastline, extending their duties to patrol as far as Greenland. Coast Guard vessels escorted convoys in Atlantic waters and reported sightings of German U-boats. In so doing, the Coast Guard accepted additional volunteers, expanding its forces from 17,022 to 29,978 before the first bomb exploded at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. On 1 November 1941, the President ordered the Coast Guard transferred from the Treasury Department to the Department of the Navy. The Coast Guard received authorization to enlist additional manpower after America declared war on Germany and Japan when Congress passed the Auxiliary and Reserve Act in the summer of 1942. The president signed the legislation into law on 23 November 1942. Frequently overlooked in historical accounts of the war, the Coast Guard accepted additional responsibilities and utilized new sources of labor to win the war.¹

Just as the Coast Guard led the services in participating in the war effort, it also maintained a long history of hiring women to guard the American coast, albeit in a civilian capacity. The long history of the American government's employment of women into its lighthouse service dated to early American history, when the government allowed Hannah

¹ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 97; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 142; Neverdon-Morton, "Securing the Double V," 345; Ostrom, *USCG*, 57; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 112; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 56; John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 4.

Thomas to assume her husband's duties while he fought in the Revolutionary War. In the 1830s, Coast Guard records indicate that the government hired female lighthouse keepers, as part of the Lighthouse Service, to warn ships against peril near the shoreline. The Coast Guard continued this practice after its official creation in 1915 and continued to hire women for work as lighthouse keepers until 1947. In 1918, the Coast Guard provided uniforms for these pioneering women as members of the Naval Coastal Defense Reserve. Although the Coast Guard lagged behind the Army and the Navy in enlisting the aid of the nation's women in a reserve unit in World War II, both in time and numbers, the Coast Guard rather quietly accepted the assistance of America's women. As Commodore J. A. Hirshfield later insisted "it would have been pure folly not to recognize the need for women in service."² Public Law 773 established the Women's Reserve of the Coast Guard on 23 November 1942. The legislation authorized the Coast Guard to enlist women to replace male servicemen for duty at sea. Women would fulfill duties on the domestic front – manning light houses, performing administrative services, and facilitating the myriad logistical functions necessary to the efficient functioning of the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard distributed surveys, asking officers for estimates on the number of SPARs they could utilize in their on-shore operations. The first director, Dr. Dorothy Stratton, discarded the preliminary name attached to the new women's reserve, the WORCOGS, and named the new reserve the "SPARs", utilizing the first letters of the Coast Guard motto: **Semper Paratus – Always Ready.**³

² Mary C. Lyne and Kay Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast: The Story of the United States Coast Guard SPARS*. No publication data available, 13; John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 1-3.

³ Robin J. Thomson, PA2, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, (Coast Guard Historians Office: Washington, D.C., 1992), 4; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 97-98; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 142; Dorothy Jeanne Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," *A Woman's War Too: U.S. Women in the Military During World War II*. Paula Nassen Poulos, ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1996), 115; Neverdon-Morton, "Securing the Double V," 345; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 65; Ostrom, *USCG*, 58; Larson, *Till I Come Marching Home*, 28; "Women in

Dorothy Stratton served as a Lieutenant in the WAVES before transferring to the Coast Guard in November of 1942. Her background before the war made Stratton a prime candidate for the position of Director of the SPARs. Born on 24 March 1898, Stratton hailed from Brookfield, Missouri. In 1920, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Ottawa University in Kansas. While working as a teacher, Stratton pursued a master's degree in psychology from the University of Chicago and a doctorate in philosophy from Columbia University. In 1933, the future director of the SPARs joined the staff of Purdue University as Dean of Women. On leave from her position at Purdue University, she became the first Director of the Women's Reserve of the Coast Guard, with the rank of lieutenant commander. Amendments to the legislation in 1944 resulted in her promotion to captain. Stratton later recalled that her decision to take a leave of absence to serve in the military sparked criticism from colleagues, one of whom warned her that she could not "afford to do this." Stratton retorted that she felt compelled to accept the challenge, regardless of the consequences.⁴

The legislation enabling the creation of the Coast Guard SPARs allowed for only one lieutenant commander, a position held by the Director of the program. Due to the limited size of the SPAR organization, regulations limited the officer staff to eighteen lieutenants. In 1943, Congress revised the legislation, allowing for greater numbers of officers in various

the Coast Guard: Moments in History," U.S. Coast Guard, <http://www.uscg.mil/history/faqs/Women%20Chronology.html> (accessed 10 August 2007); John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 5; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 2; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 56-57.

⁴Thomson, 1, 4; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 97; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 143; Gleason, 115; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 115; Larson, *Till I Come Marching Home*, 37; John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 2; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007); Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 56-57.

ranks and promoting the director to the rank of captain. Stratton filled that position until September 1944. Upon her retirement, Captain Helen Schleman assumed her position as director.⁵

Issues of command authority plagued Stratton and SPAR officers, just as they frustrated female officers in other branches of the military. Stratton later wrote that while serving in the SPARs she had no command authority, only the “power of persuasion.” Female officers exercised authority only over other SPARs. Regulations specifically stated that SPAR officers exercised “no authority over any man in the Coast Guard, officer or enlisted.” In 1943, the Judge Advocate General’s office issued its opinion that as long as the SPAR officer issued orders as a representative of a male officer, she could issue commands to male personnel.⁶

Recruiting efforts began immediately, with the initial efforts carried out via Navy recruiting offices. Fortunately, the Coast Guard aimed for the enlistment of a much smaller female workforce than other branches. Because all branches of the military competed for the enlistment of American women, the odds of recruiting a large force for the Coast Guard seemed unlikely. As a result, Coast Guard recruiters received orders to actively search out recruits. They went out into the community, participated in community functions, made speeches, appealed to potential recruits during radio broadcasts, and set up information booths around towns to attract young recruits. One history of the SPARs produced soon after the war referred to the recruiters as “Hunters” or “peddlers of patriotism.” Recruiters fanned out across cities, targeting potential recruits and meeting with their families to alleviate any

⁵ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 98; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 112.

⁶ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women’s Reserve in World War II*, 1; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 98; John Tilley, “A History of Women in the Coast Guard,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 4-5.

reservations they might harbor. In order to meet the recruiting quotas set forth by the service, the Coast Guard also employed the assistance of local public relations firms to encourage volunteers. Recruiting brochures touted the benefits of service in the Coast Guard, assuring potential recruits that they would experience great pride when they wore the uniform.⁷

The subject of living quarters received special attention in recruiting brochures. The Coast Guard assured prospective recruits that they would live either in barracks set aside for female personnel or in group, dormitory-style housing. In rare cases, women living in cities received allowances to pay for their own quarters.⁸

Women considering service in any branch of the military needed to demonstrate that they possessed an exemplary character. Coast Guard applicants needed to produce at least three letters of recommendation from prominent citizens in their community before joining the service. Even after enlistment, SPARs recalled feeling obligated to maintain an aura of professionalism, regardless of circumstances or fatigue. Constantly under scrutiny from a public that seemed at best curious and at worst critical, normal expressions of fatigue could lead to allegations that SPARs suffered from overwork, could not handle their jobs, or hated the service. Any behavior seemingly less than exemplary might prompt charges of drunkenness or a lack of morals. Charges of lax morals proved particularly popular with

⁷ “Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women’s Coast Guard,” Publication #25A-43, United States Coast Guard publication, date unknown, 8; Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women’s Reserve in World War II*, 4-5; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 99; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 18; Memorandum from The Director of Women’s Reserve to The Chief of Naval Personnel, 5 February 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; John Tilley, “A History of Women in the Coast Guard,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 5; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, “SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women’s Reserve in World War II,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 2.

⁸ “Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women’s Coast Guard,” 7; Gleason, “My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II,” 116-117.

many male servicemen, who took out their frustration at the invasion of women into their traditional domain by writing unflattering letters to the newspapers and magazines.⁹

Brochures assured women considering service in the Coast Guard that many women earned pay equivalent to that of civilian professions. Given the high wages offered in war industries, these assurances exaggerated the monetary benefits of the service. However, SPARs received free room and board, medical and dental care, and \$200 worth of clothing. In addition, the Coast Guard provided allowances for dependents. The Coast Guard also provided life insurance at government rates. SPARs received all the benefits servicemen enjoyed, such as reduced rates in transportation and reduced tickets for entertainment venues. Such benefits undoubtedly seemed attractive to women raised in the austerity of the Great Depression. Enlisted women began their military careers as Apprentice Seaman earning \$50 per month. The highest enlisted rating of Chief Petty Officer received \$126 per month. Officers began service as Ensigns, earning \$150 per month. Lieutenants (Senior Grade) earned \$200.00 per month. In addition, officers received \$250 for uniforms.¹⁰

Women chose to join the Coast Guard for a number of reasons. Most reported patriotic motives. Alice Jefferson represented only one of the young women who joined the SPARs because she felt that the smaller organization might offer greater opportunities than the WAC or the WAVES. Others longed to escape their everyday lives and do something “important” for their country. Florence Ebersole (Smith) claimed one of the most unusual motives for joining the Coast Guard. Working in the Philippines prior to the war, Smith helped smuggle food, medicine and supplies to Americans in prisoner-of-war camps after the Japanese captured Manila. The Japanese later captured and tortured Smith, sentencing her to

⁹ “Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women’s Coast Guard,” 3, 16; Yellin, *Our Mother’s War*, 143; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 78-79, 81-82.

¹⁰ “Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women’s Coast Guard,” 10, 13.

three years imprisonment. American forces liberated her after five months and she made her way back to the United States. Upon her return to New York, she joined the Coast Guard to avenge her husband's death at Corregidor.¹¹

Most women reported scant resistance from family and friends to their joining the Coast Guard. Others faced stiff opposition. One former SPAR recalled that her mother disowned her for a time, believing her daughter would emerge from the experience as a prostitute. Former SPAR Dorothy Jeanne Gleason remembered that the most common question asked of her after her enlistment concerned the Coast Guard itself. Apparently, many Americans remained uninformed about the role of the Coast Guard in the defense of America. Civilians displayed seemingly genuine curiosity concerning the activities of SPARs and what possible reason a woman would have for joining the Coast Guard. According to one former SPAR, "Nothing short of a job in an opium den, a wicked stepmother in our home, or an unhappy affair with Charles Boyer could satisfy" the questions of a few inquisitive civilians.¹² Perhaps such curiosity explains why SPAR recruits performing calectinics on the Florida beaches did so under the watchful eye of an audience of curious bystanders, despite requests from guards to leave. Some civilians were supportive. Bus drivers often refused to accept fares from service women. Shopkeepers sometimes donated merchandize to SPARs in gratitude for their service. Former SPARS that trained in Stillwell, Oklahoma recalled that many residents maintained a cheerful attitude and lent a hand to SPARS. Many SPARS remembered receiving letters from friends and family

¹¹ The Coast Guard later awarded Smith the Pacific Campaign Ribbon for her service in the Phillippines. After the war, the United States awarded Smith the Medal of Freedom. The Coast Guard awarded a further honor to Smith in 1995, when it named Base Honolulu's new administration and operations building the Smith Building. Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 102-103; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 144; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 115-116, 125; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 111; Stephenson, Marian L. Written survey conducted by author, June 2005.

¹² Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 77.

questioning just exactly how SPARs occupied their time. Others received support and encouragement from their families at home.¹³

Coxwain Frank Bartlett hailed the introduction of the SPARs as an opportunity for male Coast Guardsmen to realize their dreams of going to sea. Despite his enthusiasm, Bartlett represented a relatively small percentage of men in the service. The response to women in the Coast Guard from male servicemen often reflected the reluctance of men in other service branches. As with other branches of the military, they often viewed the women with patronizing humor or outright hostility, particularly if they lacked a desire for sea duty. Others believed that the SPAR program represented a massive waste of resources. Former SPAR Dorothy Gleason remembered a particularly strict drill sergeant who could not conceal his disdain for women in uniform. Gleason recalled that the sergeant vented his frustration by insisting on frequent drills. Although few expressed outright hostility, most remained doubtful that the women could fill jobs held by men. Coast Guard servicemen nevertheless displayed significantly less hostility than members of other service branches. Perhaps due to their sparse numbers, the fact that SPARs often found themselves stationed away from male servicemen and Coast Guard vessels, or their demonstrable skill, SPARS rarely encountered the withering condemnation frequently accorded women in other services. As SPARs began to fill their new positions, servicemen often gained confidence in their abilities and submitted requests for increasing numbers of SPARs.¹⁴

¹³ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 99-100; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 117; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 18, 24, 33, 41, 77; Stephenson, Marian L. Written survey conducted by author, June 2005.

¹⁴ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 106-107; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 11, 70-71, 74; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 143; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 120; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 1.

The Coast Guard required women applying for officer's duty to meet standards similar to those of WAVES officers. Only women between the ages of twenty and forty-nine could apply for officers training. Prospective applicants needed a college degree or two years of college coursework and at least two years of business or professional experience. "Processing" required submission of pertinent documents and the passage of examinations, including the notorious mental aptitude test. The aptitude test proved the bane of many female recruits, who laughingly wondered at the convoluted questions posed in their aptitude tests. Regulations stipulated that applicants pass a vision test, with corrected vision of 20/20. Dental requirements dictated that applicants possess eighteen teeth. In addition, brochures assured readers that the service needed women who possessed alertness, energy, integrity, leadership qualities, and the desire to serve the nation. The average applicant was twenty-nine years of age, single and held a college degree. A Coast Guard survey revealed in late 1943 that 90% of SPAR officers held college degrees. Thirty-three percent completed some post-graduate work before joining the Coast Guard, while 20% held master's degrees. Most prospective officers also boasted experience in the civilian work force. On average, female candidates worked in professional or managerial positions before joining the SPARs. Over half of the SPARs officers previously worked in academia as teachers or administrators. By the summer of 1943, the Coast Guard could boast that at least 94% of its officer corps held college degrees and 20% held graduate degrees.¹⁵

¹⁵ "Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women's Coast Guard," 10-12; Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 6; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 100-102; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 19, 103; Larson, *Till I Come Marching Home*, 42; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 3; "How to Serve Your Country in the WAVES or SPARS," Department of the Navy Recruiting Brochure, NRB-34488-12-18-42-500M, 14-15.

Enlisted women followed a path similar to officer's candidates. Applicants for the SPARs completed physical exams, interviews with Coast Guard officers, and underwent psychological testing. Regulations required that recruits be U.S. citizens between the ages of twenty and thirty-six years. They needed at least two years of high school or business school, while qualifications for some jobs required a high school diploma or a business degree. Physical requirements stipulated that enlisted personnel reach at least five feet in height and weigh at least ninety-five pounds. Regulations required that eyesight be correctable to 20/20 and volunteers needed a healthy set of teeth. Requirements for hearing somewhat ambiguously stated that applicants needed to distinguish a whisper at fifteen feet. A survey conducted of 1,210 enlisted SPARs in 1943 revealed that the average SPAR enlisted at 22 years of age. She was a high school graduate who worked more than three years in a clerical or sales job before joining the service. Of the 1,210 surveyed, over 65% finished high school prior to enlistment. One quarter of the women attended at least one year of college, while 5% held college degrees. Over 70% of enlisted SPARs worked as clerical or stenographic clerks before joining the Coast Guard.¹⁶

The Coast Guard allowed married women to join the service as enlisted personnel or officers unless a recruit's husband served in the Coast Guard. In addition, regulations prohibited women from marrying while in training, after which time a SPAR might marry any man of her choosing, even a fellow serviceman. However, women with children under the age of eighteen could not apply to the Coast Guard.¹⁷

¹⁶ "Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women's Coast Guard," 3-4; Thomson, 5-6; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 100-101; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 67, 103; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 3; "How to Serve Your Country in the WAVES or SPARS," 13-14.

¹⁷ "Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women's Coast Guard," 3, 12; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard,

The entertainment industry aided the Coast Guard's recruitment efforts by producing a musical titled, *Tars and Spars*. The show toured the Eastern United States in 1944 and opened for a three-week run on Broadway in May 1944. Starring Victor Mature as the production's resident "beautiful hunk of junk," the musical's impact remains subjective, although SPAR recruiters noted that the musical raised awareness of the Coast Guard's effort to attract women. Screen actress Marlene Deitrich actively promoted the Coast Guard and the SPARs, traveling with a USO tour for the Coast Guard in Greenland. In addition, some independent advertisers promoted the SPAR program along with their products. Fisk tire company utilized the image of a SPAR in their 1943 ads, insisting that just as SPARs stood for "alert precision-trained women," Fisk tire company stood "always ready" to attend to their customers needs.¹⁸

The Coast Guard's record regarding racial integration, as with the other branches of the military, reflected the segregated society from which it emerged. The Coast Guard failed to enlist African-American women until late 1944, despite the efforts of civil rights groups. Nor did the Coast Guard expressly authorize such enlistments until October of 1944. With the war in Europe winding down, the directive arrived too late to allow new African-American recruits to enroll in officer's training. However, the Coast Guard accepted four African-American women for training as enlisted personnel. The Coast Guard fully

http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007); Memorandum from Chief of Naval Personnel to Commanding Officers, U.S.N.R., Training Schools, 3 September 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR8-P19, Box 2335, National Archives College Park, College Park; "How to Serve Your Country in the WAVES or SPARS," 13.

¹⁸ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 5; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 100; "In the Service," (Fisk Advertisement), *Life*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 26 July 1943, 84; Photo and caption of Marlene Deitrich 1944, U.S. Coast Guard, <http://www.uscg.mil/history/faqs/marlenedeitrich.html> (accessed 30 July 2007); John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 5; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 2; "Navy's 'Tars and Spars' Opens Run on Broadway," *The Stars and Stripes*, Vol. 4, No. 159, 8 May 1944, 3.

integrated these four women into the organization due to their limited numbers. One of the four African-American women to enlist in the SPARS, Olivia Hooker, joined the SPARS after being rejected by the WAVES four times due to her race. The Coast Guard also denied Hooker the first time she volunteered. Her tenacity was rewarded when she finally gained acceptance into the SPARS, serving the organization from 9 March 1945 to 26 June 1946. Although Hooker and her fellow African-American SPARS encountered racism in the service, she remembered her time in the Coast Guard as an overwhelmingly positive experience.¹⁹

Women attended officers training at one of two locations established by the Coast Guard. The first group of officers transferred from the WAVES and attended a three week course at the Naval Reserve Midshipman School in Northampton, Massachusetts. All told, approximately 212 former WAVES transferred to the Coast Guard. Housed in dormitories at Hotel Northampton, women marched to training courses and physical conditioning, including drill. The first group of SPAR officers underwent three additional weeks of training at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. Subsequent officer recruits trained for six weeks at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, becoming the first American women to train as officer cadets at a military academy. By the end of the war, the Coast Guard trained 955 SPAR officers, of which 299 hailed from the enlisted ranks after earning a recommendation from their commanding officers. Enlisted women applying for officers training needed at least a 3.5 rating in proficiency and a good conduct rating of 4.0

¹⁹ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 5; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 116; Litoff and Smith, "The Wartime History of the WAVES, SPARs, Women Marines, Army and Navy Nurses, and WASPS," 56; Neverdon-Morton, "Securing the Double V," 345; John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 9; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 2.

during the proceeding six months. In addition, the enlisted candidate needed to have served at least six months and scored satisfactorily on the officers entrance exam. Unlike other branches of the military, the Coast Guard sent relatively few female officers to specialty schools after their initial training. Recruiting efforts attempted to acquire SPAR officer candidates that already possessed the experience and skills necessary for their service to the Coast Guard. As a result of their efforts, only 33% of officers received specialist training.²⁰

Training for new Coast Guard recruits took place at some unexpected locations. The first group of WAVES to transfer to the Coast Guard underwent training in the Midwestern United States, far from Coast Guard vessels patrolling the American coastline. A&M University in Stillwater, Oklahoma served as the initial training facility for SPARs. Sleepy recruits mustered for their 0530 drill against the backdrop of the rising Oklahoma sun. Many women remembered their days at Stillwater, with its dances and rodeos, as some of their most carefree days in the service. A&M later became a specialist school for yeomen. At Stillwater, women underwent additional medical exams and aptitude tests before they began the process of learning Coast Guard protocols and duties.²¹

The first batch of enlisted SPARs to undergo training reported to Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Former Chief Storekeeper Mary Jane Klein later recalled that

²⁰ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 11-15; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 97, 105-106; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 143; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 122, 127; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 37-39, 105, 107; Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*. (Edison, New Jersey: Castle Books, 2008) 54; Memorandum from The Director of Women's Reserve to The Chief of Naval Personnel, 5 February 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 2-3; "How to Serve Your Country in the WAVES or SPARS," 15; John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 5-6.

²¹ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 6-8; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 103; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 143; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 119; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 23-24; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007).

she guarded “the coast in the corn state of Iowa” during her training. “Not a drop of salt water, nor a sailor in sight.”²² What they had in the winter months was snow – lots of snow. Inevitably, fire drills woke recruits in the dead of night to stand in the snow until the “all clear” sounded. One former SPAR later recalled that “...we drilled with our coats on when it was 125 degrees in the shade. We drilled minus topcoats when it was so cold we would have had pneumonia if our shots hadn’t already given us typhoid fever. We griped like mad, but they couldn’t have pried us loose with a crowbar.”²³ Although the initial group of 150 recruits received their training from naval officers in Iowa, Coast Guard officers assumed command of subsequent classes. Approximately, 1,914 women underwent their initial training alongside WAVES at Hunter College, New York, of which 1,844 graduated as SPARs. New boots received instruction in military courses similar to those of SPAR officers, including Coast Guard history from the “Bluejacket’s Manuel,” nautical terms and customs, as well as Coast Guard rates and ranks. Many women spent late nights studying under the “admirals blanket” with a flashlight or took advantage of any spare moment to study. As with the WAVES, the training of women at college campuses added an aura of respectability to SPAR recruits. A 1942 recruiting brochure assured women that they could “look forward to spending as much as four months of “college life” on a beautiful campus...”²⁴ The brochure assured prospective candidates that they would stay in living quarters situated in college dormitories. In the spring of 1943, the Coast Guard broke this pattern by establishing a training facility at a renowned beach-front hotel in Florida.²⁵

²² Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women’s Reserve in World War II*, 8; Yellin, *Our Mother’s War*, 143.

²³ Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 37.

²⁴ “How to Serve Your Country in the WAVES or SPARS,” Department of the Navy Recruiting Brochure, 4.

²⁵ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women’s Reserve in World War II*, 6-9; “Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women’s Coast Guard,” 5; Yellin, *Our Mother’s War*, 143; Gleason, “My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II,” 116-119; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 25-26, 31, 38; John Tilley, “A History of Women in the Coast Guard,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html

In June of 1943, SPARs began training at the Palm Beach Biltmore Hotel in Florida. The service transformed the once glamorous hotel, popularly dubbed “the pink palace,” into a utilitarian facility for the duration of the war. Recruiters were warned not to “play up” the glamour of the Pink Palace, especially since it hardly resembled its former glory. Extensive renovations removed walls and replaced them with unadorned partitions. Luxurious furnishings found new homes in storage facilities and the service moved interior walls to facilitate training. Physical training in Florida meant crawling under barbed wire, traversing floating logs, and climbing cargo nets. More than 7,000 women passed through the Biltmore facility during the eighteen months of its operation. The Coast Guard expanded its training program from four weeks to six weeks in order to accommodate additional classes. In addition, the Coast Guard established specialty courses in Florida. Yeomen, cooks and bakers, and storekeepers received their training at the Biltmore facility. Ultimately, 70% of SPARs received some form of specialist training.²⁶

After the Allied victory in Europe, the Coast Guard consolidated their training course in Manhattan Beach, New York. General recruiting ended for SPARs, except for those needed as replacements or women possessing special skills. Men also trained at Manhattan Beach. However, the 1,900 SPAR boots that passed through Manhattan Beach trained and drilled separately from the men. The Manhattan Beach facility also provided specialty courses for the training of yeomen, storekeepers, clerical personnel, cooks and bakers. Some

(accessed 10 August 2007) 6-7; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, “SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women’s Reserve in World War II,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 3-4; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 75; History, United States Naval Training School, Women’s Reserve, The Bronx, New York, New York, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR85-QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, 24; “How to Serve Your Country in the WAVES or SPARS,” 5.

²⁶ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women’s Reserve in World War II*, 9-10; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 103-104; Yellin, *Our Mother’s War*, 143-144; Gleason, “My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II,” 122-123; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 26-27, 105; John Tilley, “A History of Women in the Coast Guard,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 6.

women reported that their training at Manhattan Beach instilled a strong sense of esprit de corps.²⁷

The Coast Guard fashioned a navy blue uniform for SPARS, complete with a navy skirt and jacket, paired with a white blouse. Brochures assured women they would be outfitted with “everything that shows,” except shoes and gloves. Modeled after WAVES uniforms, the service supplemented the uniform with a number of variations for everyday use. Silk shirts served well on formal occasions, while SPARs wore cotton shirts for less formal wear. Formal summer uniforms included a white suit similar in style to the blue winter wear. SPARs covered the regulation black handbags with a white cover in summer. Also in summer, the Coast Guard authorized women to wear a gray and white striped seersucker uniform with a matching jacket while working. The seersucker ensemble included headgear, although SPARs could continue to wear the garrison hats. Hats varied depending on the individuals rank and occupation. Officers wore a hat similar to that of male officers, with the Coast Guard eagle and a brim. Enlisted personnel wore a hat with a white crown and wide blue brim with “U.S. Coast Guard” embroidered across the hat band. While on the job, SPARs often wore the garrison caps supplied by the service.²⁸

After graduation from basic training, women served in a variety of occupations, filling every Coast Guard district in the continental United States. Many served in Washington, D.C. at Coast Guard Headquarters. Most served in district offices, on bases

²⁷ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 10-11; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 35, 105; John Tilley, “A History of Women in the Coast Guard,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 6; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, “SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 5-6.

²⁸ SPARS often complained that civilians often confused SPARS with WAVES due to the similarities between their uniforms. “Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women's Coast Guard,” 8-9; Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 15-16; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 103; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 142-143; Gleason, “My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II,” 117; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 103-105.

bordering the American coastline, at the Navy Yard in Boston, or at air bases in Corpus Christi or Jacksonville. In 1944, SPARs joined women serving in other service branches by deploying to Alaska and Hawaii. Many SPARs, at least 37%, worked in clerical and administrative positions. Others worked in specialized fields, such as pharmacist mates, parachute riggers, and air-traffic controllers. A comparatively small percentage of SPARs worked in unconventional professions, such as gunner's mate. Twenty-two women worked as Link trainer instructors, while a select few worked as radioman technicians. As with the other service branches, women found the aviation field more accepting of female workers. SPARs filled important positions in the Coast Guard's aviation section. Approximately eighteen women packed parachutes for the Coast Guard, while twenty-two worked as Link Trainers and twelve performed duties as air traffic controllers. SPARs also worked with Coast Guard units conducting search and rescue missions for downed plane crews and assisted in salvage efforts.²⁹

Just as the WAC and the WAVES employed women in secret projects for the military, the Coast Guard utilized a female workforce to operate one of its most classified projects. LORAN, a new system of long range aid for navigation at sea, debuted in 1942. Its existence remained classified throughout the war. In 1943, the Coast Guard decided to use SPARs to man its LORAN monitoring stations along the coastal United States. Initially stationed along the eastern coast of the United States, the military later expanded the system to the Pacific theater, Canada, Greenland, and the British Isles. The job required 24-hour

²⁹ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 17-18; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 104; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 144; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 121-122; Larson, *Till I Come Marching Home*, 53; John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 7; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 9-11; Stephenson, Marian L. Written survey conducted by author, June 2005; "How to Serve Your Country in the WAVES or SPARS," 2-3, 7, 10-11.

monitoring of the equipment. LORAN operators took measurements every two minutes based on radio signals transmitted from two shore-based monitoring stations. American ships and planes, equipped with receiving equipment, picked up the signals and triangulated their exact position. The Coast Guard stationed the first group of SPARs for LORAN duty in Chatham, Massachusetts. After completing a two-month course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lieutenant Vera Hamerschlag became the first female commanding officer of the Chatham station. The Coast Guard also stationed eleven other SPARs at Chatham. The Chatham station became the first all-female military station in the world. SPARs assigned to LORAN stations learned to fill many different positions, as their small units operated the entire base. The work often proved tedious and demanding, but SPARs working at LORAN stations realized that they performed a vital service for sailors at sea.³⁰

The arming of a small percentage of women in the Coast Guard remains a little known aspect of SPAR history. Due to the public outcry against women performing combat-type duties, the military trod a sensitive path between military necessity and public appearances. In fact, few SPARs received weapons training or carried weapons as part of their duties. The fact that a few women discreetly carried weapons received little fanfare. Nevertheless, SPARs working as guards for classified projects, such as LORAN, those carrying secret intelligence documents; or SPARs transporting payroll carried sidearms as part of their everyday jobs.³¹

³⁰ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 19-20; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 107-108; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 144-145; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 125; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 115; Larson, *Till I Come Marching Home*, 57; John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 8; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 10-11.

³¹ Larson, *Till I Come Marching Home*, 63-64.

Just as women serving in other military branches eventually left the confines of the continental United States, SPARs eventually expanded operations to Alaska and Hawaii. Congress approved such legislation in September 1944. SPARs volunteering for service in Hawaii or Alaska agreed to remain at their assigned posts for eighteen months. As with the other service branches, women transferred overseas met exacting standards. A qualifying volunteer needed a good service record, excellent health, one year's service with the SPARs, any specialized training required for specific assignments, and a strong constitution. Ultimately, approximately two hundred SPARs served in Hawaii. Selected volunteers received instruction regarding the history, geography, political and social conditions encountered at their new post.³²

Upon arrival, the first group of forty SPARs disembarked at the 14th Naval District in Hawaii to the cheers of Coast Guard personnel. Following their grand reception and processing, SPARs received assignments to billets in the pastel quonset huts that would be their new home. Most SPARs loved their assignments in Hawaii, reveling in the lush surroundings of a Pacific Island. The relaxed lifestyle and the mild climate earned the gratitude of many hard-working SPARs. The final group of SPARs transferred from the continental United States arrived on 2 August 1945, barely arriving before the Japanese surrendered to the Allied powers.³³

The stationing of SPARs in Alaska presented a starkly different geographical setting than that of Hawaii. Furthermore, the Coast Guard historically maintained a significant

³² Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 16-17; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 98; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 145; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 124; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 90-91; Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 80; John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 9; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARs: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 9.

³³ Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 91-93; Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 80.

presence on the coast of Alaska. The service was charged with protecting the territory of Alaska immediately after the United States acquired the area from Russia in 1867. The Coast Guard maintained weather stations and ice patrols along the Alaskan coast. Approximately two hundred SPARs transferred to Alaska. The SPARs that arrived in Alaska also encountered a welcoming party composed of local civilians and servicemen. Although duty in such an extreme environment presented challenges, women found a wealth of opportunities to explore the local culture. A few SPARs spent their spare time panning for gold in local streams. Others visited local Native American villages or fished for salmon. SPARs also appreciated the responsible positions they were assigned in payroll, personnel, and communications departments in Alaska. When their service in Alaska came to an end, they confessed to a close sense of camaraderie with their fellow “coasties.”³⁴

By war’s end, SPARs proved in high demand by on-shore stations. Over half of all male Coast Guard personnel received reassignment to duty at sea after relinquishing their positions to SPARs. This percentage compared favorably to all other branches of the military. At peak strength, SPARs represented one out of every sixteen Coast Guard enlisted personnel, and one out of every twelve Coast Guard officers served as a SPAR. SPARs served at every Coast Guard station except Puerto Rico before the Japanese surrendered in 1945.³⁵

After the Japanese surrender in August of 1945, the demobilization of the SPARs began. Almost all SPARs received demobilization orders by 30 June 1946. Others remained

³⁴ Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 93-97; John Tilley, “A History of Women in the Coast Guard,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 9; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, “SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women’s Reserve in World War II,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 9.

³⁵ Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 65, 67; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, “SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women’s Reserve in World War II,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 8; Witt, Merlyn Cady. Written survey conducted by author, June 2005; Stephenson, Marian L. Written survey conducted by author, June 2005.

in the service to complete demobilization until July 1947. Most SPARs eagerly anticipated the return to civilian life and an end to wartime exigencies. Others regretted the termination of their wartime service. Some SPARs made plans to marry, return to pre-war employment, or take advantage of the G.I. Bill of Rights. Others seemed at a loss regarding their post-war plans, simply stating that they dreaded a return to their pre-war “rut.” Nevertheless, SPARs overwhelmingly left with a satisfying feeling of pride in their service to the Coast Guard.³⁶

Although Congress passed the Women’s Armed Forces integration Act in 1948, allowing women to serve as regular and reserve forces in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, the legislation failed to allow for the enlistment of women in the Coast Guard. This omission resulted from the transfer of the Coast Guard to its original jurisdiction as a part of the Department of the Treasury. Separate legislation later resolved the discrepancy. The 1949 re-establishment of the Women’s Reserve of the Coast Guard allowed women to join the reserves. Many former SPARs took the opportunity to reenlist with the service.³⁷

When the United States joined the conflict in Korea, the Coast Guard recalled forty SPAR officers and enlisted personnel to duty. Of those forty women, twenty-four elected to remain on active duty. Later, two hundred women volunteered to return to active duty, many of them continuing to serve until their retirement. Former SPAR Eleanor C. L’Ecuyer rejoined the Coast Guard after earning her law degree, retiring after twenty years as a captain

³⁶ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women’s Reserve in World War II*, 20; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 102, 108-109; Gleason, “My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II,” 125; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 100-101; John Tilley, “A History of Women in the Coast Guard,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 9.

³⁷ Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 109; Yellin, *Our Mother’s War*, 145; Gleason, “My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II,” 126; John Tilley, “A History of Women in the Coast Guard,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007) 10.

in the Coast Guard Reserve. In 1972, Congress finally enacted legislation granting women the same opportunities in the Coast Guard that other servicewomen enjoyed.³⁸

The little-known history of the SPARs program demonstrates that women made significant contributions to Coast Guard operations. A relatively small contingent when compared to the WAC or the WAVES, SPARs served without significant fanfare or great criticism. Comparatively, SPARs released a greater percentage of fellow servicemen to serve in combat zones than any other women's reserve. Regrettably, relatively few records documenting the SPAR program survive. Nevertheless, SPARs served as a vital link in America's defense as they guarded American coasts, aided in navigation at sea, and fulfilled many logistical duties, both in the continental United States and at Coast Guard stations in Hawaii and Alaska.

³⁸ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 20; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 100-102, 109; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 126.

CONCLUSION

AMERICAN MILITARY WOMEN IN WORLD WAR II:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SERVICE BRANCHES

The notion that women first entered into military service in the 1940s depends on the definition of military service. If combat readiness serves as the criteria for classifying “military personnel,” then women have yet to contribute on an equal basis with men. Of course, this narrow definition would exclude the thousands of male servicemen who perform vital logistical services far from the front lines every day. Only the professionalization of logistical services in early modern armies succeeded in excluding women from participation in military endeavors. Men subsequently assumed logistical jobs as cooks or medics. Male servicemen procured and distributed supplies to the soldiers in the field. But as General George Patton discovered during his drive to Germany in 1944, the officer in charge of requisitioning fuel, and the transportation system charged with delivering it, is every bit as important as the tank driver. Faced with a world war in the 1940s, Allied nations, including the United States, suddenly seemed to experience an epiphany – women might prove valuable as support personnel. The United States and the United Kingdom recruited women as administrative and logistical support, while the Soviet Union enlisted the aid of at least 800,000 women in all areas of military service, including combat. In reality, the “radical experiments” of the 1940s merely returned women to participatory roles in military establishments. This study focuses on the experiences of American women during World

War II, who not only contributed to the Allied victory, but challenged their perceptions of themselves while exposing the constraints of 1940s America on women's roles in society.¹

Most political leaders and supporters of women in the military during the 1940s envisioned women serving in traditionally gendered roles. Nurses already served with distinction, comfortably filling the traditional female role of nurturer. Women not trained as nurses, so officials assumed, might fill positions as cooks, cleaners, laundresses, or perhaps as typists and telephone operators. The military hardly disappointed traditionalists. As demonstrated in the previous chapters detailing the development of women's reserves in each branch of the military, women overwhelmingly performed jobs traditionally accepting of women in American society. With the exception of the WASP, the majority worked as clerical and administrative personnel. Their contributions served the military admirably. An administrative history written after the war by the Navy Bureau of Personnel explicitly stated that "in the end they saved the situation; it is difficult to imagine how the division could have operated had there been no Women's Reserve."² As the war progressed, the military expanded the roles women could assume in the service. As a result, some women pushed conventional boundaries by working in new occupations as mechanics, drivers, technicians, air traffic controllers, parachute riggers, and Link trainers. A select few worked in top secret projects such as LORAN, deciphered intercepted enemy transmissions, or worked on the

¹ Supply problems posed frequent challenges for Allied forces pushing towards Germany in 1944. Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet, *A War To Be Won: Fighting the Second World War*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 444; Penny Summerfield, "She Wants a Gun not a Dishcloth!": Gender, Service and Citizenship in Britain in the Second World War" In *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird. (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 119; Reina Pennington, "Do Not Speak of the Services You Rendered": Women Veterans of Aviation in the Soviet Union," In *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird. Harlow, (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 152, 166, 169, 171.

² "BuPers Administrative History: Officer Performance thru Naval Officer Procurement," Bureau of Naval Personnel, Training Division, Historical Records of Navy Training Activities, 1940-1945, RG 24, HM/FY/1994, Box 14, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

Manhattan Project. Female pilots flying for the WASP openly challenged gendered stereotypes, especially women that towed gunnery targets for soldiers in training or tested experimental aircraft for the Army Air Corps. As demonstrated, although most women maintained traditional gendered roles while serving with the military, others pursued new avenues of service, paving the way for subsequent generations of female service personnel.³

After the war, most American women returned to the domestic sphere, happy to assume quiet, traditional roles as wives and mothers after the turmoil of the Great Depression and the rigors of war. Most married, raised children, supported husbands, and attempted to create the idyllic image of American womanhood typified by 1950s television. They also became more involved in their communities, joined civic organizations, supported veterans groups, and in many cases took advantage of the GI Bill to further their education. Former Lieutenant Rose Ellen Ellwein (Greene), like many veterans, claimed that the military instilled a sense of organization, discipline, honor and respect that served her well in her post-war career. A tenacious few remained in service. For example, the Navy released WAVES officers to inactive duty after the war, unless they specifically resigned their

³ Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 19-20; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 107-108; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 144-145; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 125; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 115; Larson, *"Till I Come Marching Home"*, 57; John Tilley, "A History of Women in the Coast Guard," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007); Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007); "Distribution, Versatility, and Excellence of WACs Serving with Army Service Forces," CMH Publication 2-2.1 BC, U.S. Army Center of Military History, www.army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/WWII/distw.html (accessed 28 May 2003); "The Corps Engages: WACs and the Bomb," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Office of History, <http://www.army.mil/soldiers/oct2002/pdfs/corp/pdf> (accessed 28 May 2003); Judith Bellafaire, "The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service," CMH Publication 72-15, U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); "Manhattan District WAC Detachment: The Role of Women in the Development of the Atomic Bomb," U.S. Army Center of Military History, <http://www.army.mil/cmb-pg/topics/women/manwac.html> (accessed 28 May 2003); Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 326-329; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 58-59, 83-84; *WAVES News Letter*, March 1945, NAVPERS 15,002, 5; The Vice Chief of Naval Operations to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 22 April 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Einsfeldt, Evelyn Barbara Urich. Written survey and interview conducted by author, August 2005.

commissions. Enlisted women in every branch received automatic discharges from the service in the same manner afforded enlisted men. In July 1946, Congress authorized the reenlistment of women who had served in World War II. As a result, thousands of former WAVES enrolled as reserve personnel. Brenda L. Moore continued to serve in the WAC for six years as a representative of the African-American community. Helen Pavlik (Martin) left the Navy in 1954 following a stint at Pearl Harbor during the Korean War. Lieutenant Commander, USN, Ret., Vera Lee Brown, sought a career in the Navy Reserves until her retirement in June of 1980. Janie Sheppard served with the Marines until her retirement in - 1982 as a Master Sergeant in the Reserves. After her retirement, Sheppard volunteered at the American Legion, Post 569, as commander. Former WAVES Director Mildred McAfee believed women asked to “stretch themselves beyond their abilities” gained a marked sense of self-assurance that would carry over into post-war America.⁴ Evidence based on memoirs and interviews with veterans supports her supposition. Brenda Moore earned a doctorate from the University of Chicago and served on the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. In the case of the WASP, veterans worked for decades to gain recognition from the government and continue to meet annually. They are a spirited group of women continuing to promote the work of women in aviation. Virtually all female veterans of World War II interviewed for this dissertation responded that their time in the military proved an overwhelmingly positive experience that prepared them for their post-war lives. Of course, women disenchanted with military service hardly participate in veterans organizations or publicize their wartime activities. Nevertheless, the women interviewed for this project

⁴ Horton, “Women in the United States Navy, “ 450.

expressed pride in their service. Interviews revealed many vibrant and active octogenarians continuing to contribute positively as active members of their communities.⁵

No military branch collected the socio-economic information of women joining military reserves during World War II, making comparisons between the services based on social class impossible. In addition, many enlistment records for the WASP and the WAVES burned in the notorious St. Louis fire. Nevertheless, education levels substantially impact the public's perception of social status and influence the reputation of military branches. For example, currently the United States Army, in an effort to maintain its recruitment quotas, accepts a higher level of applicants holding "Tier II" education status than other service branches. "Tier II" classification identifies recruits that do not hold traditional high school diplomas or an equivalent degree. As a result, the other service branches seem more prestigious. The Air Force maintains an elite status based on strict enlistment requirements, promises of technical training, the largest "community college" system in the United States, opportunities for additional education, and the romance of aviation. The Marine Corps enjoys a reputation as an elite fighting force maintaining training requirements so demanding that successful graduates from Marine boot camp are considered prime physical specimens among American forces. "Jarheads" may not enjoy an image as intellectual giants, but they revel in their elite image. Coast Guardsmen, with one of the most dangerous jobs in the world, also boast a reputation as a small but highly trained force. The Navy, while perhaps

⁵ Brenda L. Moore, *To Serve My Country, To Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACs Serving Overseas During World War II*, (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Green, Rose Ellen Elwein. Written survey conducted by author, July 2005; Brown, Vera Lee. Written survey conducted by author, July 2005; Martin, Helen Pavlik. Written survey conducted by author, July 2005; Sheppard, Janie. Written survey conducted by author, July 2005; Perkins, "She Remains a Marine at Heart;" Weigand, *Texas Women in World War II*, 166-170; Horton, "Women in the United States Navy," 450; "Narrative of the Bureau of Naval Personnel: 1 April 1947-1 July 1947," Bureau of Naval Personnel, Training Division, Historical Records of Navy Training, RG 24, Box 21, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

not as elitist as the Air Force, maintains higher standards for recruitment than the Army. As a result, army promoters have attempted to promote the service as a panacea for American youth, promising to train and build confidence in enlistees. Television commercials depict working class American families crediting the Army for making their children stronger individuals. The Army also continues to revise enlistment standards to attract additional recruits, including lowering educational requirements and in some cases granting exemptions to former felons. As a result, many Americans view Army service as somewhat less prestigious than that of other services. These stereotypes, whether real or imagined, reflect those confronted by the women's reserves in World War II.⁶

The efforts of the Army to enlist large numbers of women in the 1940s resulted in a more democratic corps. The Army invited women from all walks of life to apply for entry into the service, as long as they possessed a respectable reputation. Army recruiters accepted officers without college degrees, and enlisted personnel could theoretically rise up the ranks to positions as officers without a high school diploma. Unfortunately, this hardly changed the centuries-old association of women working for the military with members of the lower class. Slanderous rumors circulated, and WAACs found themselves forced to defend their honor and counter unsubstantiated rumors. Recognizing this dilemma, Navy planners sought ways to avoid the criticism leveled against Army women. The Navy enlisted the aid of a

⁶ Department of Defense statistics indicate that out of 51,075 new recruits in 2006, only 73.22% held high school diplomas. This compares with 95.28% for the Navy, 96.35% for the Marine Corps, and 99.38% for the Air Force. As evidenced by these figures, the Army fell far short of its goal of enlisting only 10% of its forces from Tier II candidates. Currently, the Army offers a program offering to pay potential recruits to acquire a GED. While this may improve overall recruitment figures, it will not improve the quality of recruits attained. "Table D-7. NPS Active Component Enlisted Accessions with High School Diplomas by Service with Civilian Comparison Group, FYs 1973-2006," Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, Population Representation in the Military Services, www.defenselink.mil/prhome/PopRep_FY06/appendixd/d_07.html (accessed 28 January 2009); "Army Pays Recruits to Get GED," United States Army, www.army.com/articles/1105/army-pays-recruits-to-get-ged.html (accessed 28 January 2009).

committee of well-known female educators, led by Virginia Gildersleeve, to form the Navy's Women's Reserve. As a result, the Navy co-opted the committee's sterling reputation. The committee harnessed candidates from the significant pool of educated women available for service in the United States. A substantial number of American women held college degrees in the 1940s. In 1940, women comprised 40.2% of college students. By 1944, with many men serving in the war effort, that percentage increased to 65%. Hoping to attract educated women and create a positive image of Navy women, the Navy required that officers hold a college degree or two years of college combined with two years of business experience. The Navy also barred enlisted WAVES without the required college education from officers training. Such a conclusion does not rest merely on supposition. As explicitly stated in Navy recruitment memoranda, McAfee and Navy planners deliberately cultivated a collegiate atmosphere in order to establish an elite image in direct response to criticism of the WAC. *They* believed that by creating a reputation as an educated collective, they could avoid the pitfalls encountered by the WAC. In pursuit of this goal, the Navy trained women on college campuses, rather than at military bases. Recruiting brochures assured prospective recruits that after enlistment the Navy would send them to a leading college, where they would spend the majority of their days in classes or studying. In an article for the *Birmingham News*, journalist Marguerite Johnston noted that WAVES "talk and look like Stephens College graduates."⁷ Interservice memoranda and public documents frequently reminded readers that the Navy recruited women of "high caliber" based upon their educational experience. The

⁷ Marguerite Johnston, "I Saw the WAVES at Work," *The Birmingham News*, publication data unknown, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

conclusion seemed obvious – WAVES as a group hailed from a better class of American society.⁸

The success of the Navy in avoiding much of the criticism leveled against the WAAC led the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard to follow the Navy's lead. Historical documents reveal that both sister naval services made a conscious decision to co-opt the Navy's reputation. Both services initially accepted the Navy's offer to train women at the same college campuses utilized by the WAVES. Coast Guard planners later trained female officers at the Coast Guard Academy, becoming the first service branch to allow women into its academy. Fortunately, the move resonated positively with the public and failed to damage the reputation of the SPARs. In addition, the service opened a training facility in Palm Beach and later, in Manhattan Beach. These facilities attracted curious onlookers, but rarely made headlines. Coast Guard brochures also continued to assure potential applicants that the service would issue recruits billets in "dormitory-style" housing. The Marine Corps ultimately risked their collegiate reputation by moving training facilities for women to the Marine Corps base at Quantico. Women trained in the same facility as male personnel. As a result, promotional efforts for Women Marines focused more on the hard work that WR's accomplished, rather than on their intellectual achievements. Although no definitive data exists to gauge the effect this move had on the public's opinion of the WR's, veterans of the

⁸ According to historian Susan Godson, educated women continued to dominate in traditional gendered professions, such as that of teacher or nurse. However, a significant number of American women became scientists and mathematicians, such as those that contributed to the Manhattan Project. Godson, 5; "History of WAVE Procurement Promotion," 1-2, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; "How to serve your country in the WAVES," 5, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland. "Handbook for Procurement Personnel," 15, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; "WAVES in Naval Aviation Activities," 16 March 1943, National Archives College Park, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, College Park, Maryland.

Marine Corps frequently recalled instances of hostility by servicemen. Perhaps this accounts for the prevalence of male Marines who felt comfortable referring to female Marines as “B.A.M.’s.” Nevertheless, despite the movement away from training at accredited college campuses in later years, neither the SPARs, nor the Marine Corps, garnered the scathing criticism heaped upon the reputations of women working in the Army.⁹

The following table illustrates the educational standards required of female officer candidates among the various service branches. As noted, the Army required women to have completed two years of high school, but did not require women to have a diploma. The WASP also made allowances for experienced pilots without traditional diplomas, instead stipulating that women needed a high school diploma or its equivalent. The naval services,

⁹ “Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women’s Coast Guard,” 7, 10-12; Yellin, *Our Mother’s War*, 143-144, 146; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 75; Gleason, “My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II,” 116-117, 122-123, 127; Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women’s Reserve in World War II*, 6, 9-15; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 78, 81, 97, 101-106; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 19, 35, 37-39, 103, 105, 107; Larson, “*Till I Come Marching Home*,” 42; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, “SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women’s Reserve in World War II,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007); “How to Serve Your Country in the WAVES or SPARS,” Department of the Navy Recruiting Brochure, NRB-34488-12-18-42-500M, 14-15;; Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 54; Memorandum from The Director of Women’s Reserve to The Chief of Naval Personnel, 5 February 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR-R85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; John Tilley, “A History of Women in the Coast Guard,” U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007); Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, “Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in World War II,” Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps. (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 4, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 5; Memorandum for the Chief of Naval Personnel from H. G. Hopwood, U.S.N., Navy Department, Bureau of Naval Personnel, 9 February 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Joint Letter from The Chief of Naval Personnel, The Commandant, United States Marine Corps, and The Commandant, United States Coast Guard to The Secretary of the Navy, 20 November 1942, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; History of the United States Naval Training School, Women’s Reserve, The Bronx, New York, New York, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Sheppard, Janie M. Written survey conducted by author, August 2005; Frank Perkins, “She Remains a Marine at Heart,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, Publication date unknown; “WAVES Work at Dispensaries and Hospital at Camp Lejeune,” *WAVES Newsletter*, April 1945, 6.

although appealing overwhelmingly to college graduates, made allowances for officers without college degrees, accepting two years of college, combined with two years of business or professional experience, in lieu of a conferred degree. As a result, the Navy canvassed college campuses across the nation in an effort to attract educated young women to the Navy.¹⁰

Educational Requirements for Female Officers

	High School Diploma	College Diploma	Post-Graduate Education
WAAC/WAC	Not required	Not Required	Not Required
WASP	Required ^a	Not required.	Not Required
WAVES	Required	Required ^b	Not Required

¹⁰ Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 58; "WAACs First Muster," 39; Shea, *The Waacs*, 88; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 61-62, 79, 106-107; Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Memorandum from the Chief of Naval Personnel to Commanding Officers, U.S.N.R. Training Schools (Women's Reserve, Class V-10), 3 September 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, RG 24, QR8 to P19, Box 2335, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps. (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 8, 40-41, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (18 November 2008); Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 5; Merryman, *Clipped Wings*, 17; "STATS: WASP Entrance Requirements," Texas Woman's University, <http://www.twu.edu/wasp/statspage.htm> (accessed 30 July 2007); Richard N. Cowell, "St. Louis WASP – They've a Sting All Their Own," Texas Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February; A Handbook for Women Student Pilots Trainees, Headquarters, Army Air forces, Director of Women Pilots, Texas Woman's University at http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/hdbk_print.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); Personnel, Civilian, Wearing of the WASP Uniform, AAF Regulation No. 40-9, Headquarters, Army Air forces, Washington, 14 February 1944, Texas Women University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/uniform.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007); "The Story of You in Navy Blue," Navy Recruiting Brochure, 38-41; Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 51-55; "How to serve your country in the WAVES or SPARS." Navy Recruiting Brochures, 14-15; "WAVES in Naval Aviation Activities." Training Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, U.S. Navy, 16 March 1943, Bureau of Aeronautics, 1943-1945, RG 72, QR-8-1943, Vol. 2 to QR-8-1943, Vol. 4, Box 4207, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Godson, *Serving Proudly*, 116, 118; "History of the WAVES Procurement Promotion," 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8-5 to QR-8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland, 2; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 11, 70-71, 74; Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 143; Gleason, "My Experiences as a SPAR During World War II," 120; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007).

Marine Corps.	Required	Required ^b	Not Required
SPARS	Required	Required ^b	Not Required

^a Experienced pilots needed a high school diploma or equivalent education. WASP planners considered flight experience more important than a college education. See table below for information regarding educational experience among the WASP.

^b Two years of college education, combined with two years of professional experience accepted in lieu of college degree in special cases.

The WASP experience remains unique among women’s services during World War II. Unfortunately, a fire destroyed WASP personnel records, making exact educational data difficult to obtain. As a result, the educational data contained in the following table derives from a sample of thirty-eight WASP obituaries. Since this sample stems from an unbiased, common event – death – it seems reasonable to assume that the demographic data gleaned from the obituaries is representative. If accepted as representative of the WASP organization at large, the table below demonstrates that members of the WASP held educational accomplishments far greater than the general population of the United States and almost twice that of the WAC. This fact marked the WASP as an “elite” force. Despite this accomplishment, the adjectives “daring,” “intrepid,” and “adventurous” more commonly graced media accounts describing the WASP. More than “elite,” the public viewed the WASP as “exceptional,” thereby exempting female pilots from many of the cultural norms attached to conservative American women. The Army Air Corps perpetuated this image by allowing WASP to assume rank and status comparable to that of male pilots. In keeping with Army Air Corps policy, all WASPs served as officers due to their status as pilots. The aura of exceptionalism that surrounded the WASP resulted in overwhelmingly positive media

coverage. Negative reports regarding the WASP only occurred after male civil service pilots, fearing being drafted into service in the Pacific Theater as ground forces, banded together to force WASP from their jobs. Even then, biased news accounts focused on the “frivolous” enlistment of female pilots by the Army, rather than on the moral character of the WASP themselves.¹¹

Levels of Education Among WASP

	Percentage
High School Diploma	81.57%
Some College or Trade School Experience	78.94%
College or Trade School Degree	55.26%

NOTE: Based on sample of thirty-eight WASP.

The educational achievements of enlisted female personnel in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard remained substantially higher than that of the general population, as well as that of male enlisted personnel. Only 24.5% of the population of the United States held a high school diploma or boasted higher levels of education in 1940. By 1950, that percentage grew to 34.4%. Virtually all memoranda and official histories of the WAVES state that the educational levels of enlisted WAVES stood higher than that of other

¹¹Actual figures for educational experience may be higher than presented in this paper based on the sample of thirty-eight WASP. Five obituaries gave no educational information. As a result, percentages listed for WASP assume that these five WASP lacked a high school diploma. Such assumptions may be incorrect, based on WASP requirements that stipulated a high school education or its equivalent. Merryman, 17; “STATS: WASP Entrance Requirements,” Texas Woman’s University, <http://www.twu.edu/wasp/statspage.htm> (accessed 30 July 2007); Richard N. Cowell, “St. Louis WASP – They’ve a Sting All Their Own,” Texas Woman’s Collection, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas, MSS 250, Folder: 1943 – February; A Handbook for Women Student Pilots Trainees, Headquarters, Army Air forces, Director of Women Pilots, Texas Woman’s University, http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/hdbk_print.pdf (accessed 30 July 2007); Personnel, Civilian, Wearing of the WASP Uniform, AAF Regulation No. 40-9, Headquarters, Army Air Forces, Washington, 14 February 1944, Texas Women University, <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp/pdfs/virtual/uniform.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2007); “The Thirty Eight: Above and Beyond” MSS 250, Box: Historical Subject Files Ba-Fifi, Folder: Fatalities, The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University Archives, Denton, Texas; “Fact Sheet: Facts About the 1973 St. Louis Fire and Lost Records,” U.S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs at <http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/stlouis.asp> (accessed 7 March 2008).

service branches, although actual percentages regarding education levels among WAVES, as with the WASP, remains difficult to ascertain due to the devastating St. Louis fire that destroyed enlistment records of many WASP and WAVES. A report titled, "The Women's Reserve, United States Naval Reserve," noted that "educational requirements for enlisted personnel were graduation from a high school or business school, or the possession of technical training or experience appropriate to the rating. This was generally regarded as stating a desirable minimum."¹² The WAAC, maintaining what all sources insist was the lowest percentage of high school graduates among the women's reserves, sustained a force in which 41.9% held high school diplomas. In contrast, only 28% of enlisted male personnel in the Army entered service with a high school education. All military branches required two years of high school education for enlisted female personnel. Nevertheless, the prevalence of enlisted personnel without a high school diploma remained substantially higher among women in the Army than among the other service branches. This factor undoubtedly reflected poorly upon the Army, just as it does in today's army.¹³

¹² "The Women's Reserve, United States Naval Reserve," 1945, Bureau of Naval Personnel, Administrative History, WWII, Training Activities to Women's Reserve, RG 24, Box 3, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland.

¹³ Military officials recognized that the low percentages of enlisted men with high school educations negatively impacted the performance of its force. As a result, the naval services conducted studies into possible resolutions to this issue, including programs in which male Navy personnel participated in an educational experiment at the U.S. base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba in the fall of 1942. Program directors found that off-duty educational programs proved popular among Navy personnel. A similar program instituted by the Army provided enlisted personnel access to correspondence courses. The Army's experiment proved less effective than the Navy program. Subsequently, the Army established classroom instruction for personnel at bases where facilities permitted. "BuPers Training Volume I: Standards and Curriculum Division, Educational Services Section," Bureau of Naval Personnel, Training Division, Historical Records of Navy Training, RG 24, Box 21, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; "Percent of the Population 25 Years and Older with a High School Diploma or Higher by Sex and Age, for the United States: 1940 to 2000," U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/deccennial/documents/21983999v2p1ch1.pdf> (accessed 7 March 2008); "Serving with the Fighting Coast Guard SPARS: Women's Coast Guard," 10-12; Thomson, *The Coast Guard Women's Reserve in World War II*, 6; Holm, *In Defense of a Nation*, 79, 101-102; Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast*, 19, 103; Larson, *Till I Come Marching Home*, 42; Robin J. Thomson, USCG, "SPARS: The Coast Guard & the Women's Reserve in World War II," U.S. Coast Guard, http://www.uscg.mil/history/h_womn.html (accessed 10 August 2007); "How to Serve Your Country in the WAVES or SPARS," Department of the Navy Recruiting Brochure, NRB-34488-12-18-42-500M, 14-15;

Education Levels Among Enlisted Personnel

	WAAC/WAC	WAVES	MARINES	SPARS
High School Diploma	41.9%	N/A	88%	65%
Some College or Trade School	16.1%	N/A	21% ^a	25%
College or Trade School Degree	8.8%	N/A		5%

^aMarine Corps estimates note 1-4 years of college, rather than differentiating between college experience and college degree.¹⁴

The experiences of women who served in the military during World War II challenged their perception of themselves and women's roles in American society. They not only worked in jobs traditionally accepting of women in American society, but also learned the skills necessary to engage in non-traditional roles. Historians might debate the change in women's roles as a result of the war and skeptics might point to the return of many women to domestic life as proof that the impact of women's military service was minimal. Veteran's rarely voice such skepticism. Most veterans interviewed for this project remember their service with pride and led socially active lives after the war. The response of the American public to their service varied depending on the conditions of service and superficial perceptions regarding the character and social class of the women in each branch. Service

Ebbert and Hall, *Crossed Currents*, 58; The Vice Chief of Naval Operations to the Chief of Naval Personnel, 8 February 1943, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, RG 24, QR-8/MM(N)B, Box 2332, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland; Information Bulletin to All Departments, Divisions and Sections, Headquarters, Marine Corps, undated, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park, Maryland ; Stremlow, *Free a Marine to Fight*, 5; Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps. (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 8, 59-60, 88, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008); Campbell, *Women at War With America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, 23-24; "WAAC/WAC World War II Statistics," Army Women's Museum, Fort Lee, Virginia, www.awm.lee.army.mil/WAC_strength.html (accessed 28 May 2008).
¹⁴ Lt. Col. Pat Meid, USMCR, "Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II," Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps. (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1964), 88, Maxwell-Gunter AFB, www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmchist/women.txt (accessed 18 November 2008).

branches with liberal requirements for enlistment or training facilities located on military bases garnered greater criticism than those that tightened restrictions on enlistment and trained volunteers on college campuses. While the Army struggled with its image, photographers snapped pictures of smartly-uniformed WAVES and SPARs working as clerks in Washington, D.C. – some even wore pristine white uniforms. To be sure, some sailors made jokes about the WAVES, but the overall image of Navy women portrayed in newspapers and magazines remained overwhelmingly positive. In the case of the WASP, the participant's exclusive skill-sets undoubtedly marked them as exceptional individuals unfettered by traditional gender roles from the outset. The public perceived them as adventurous and glamorous regardless of the dirt and oil under their fingernails. Although the evidence remains circumstantial, it overwhelmingly suggests that the public's support for women in the military during World War II depended heavily upon perceptions of social class and associated assumptions regarding moral character. Women in the military performed similar jobs, regardless of individual service branch. Differences in uniforms and restrictions against overseas service impacted the public image of women's reserves within the naval establishment to a slight degree. For example, in Mattie Treadwell's synthesis of the WAC, published in 1953, the author noted that Hobby drew criticism from members of the advertising agency handling WAC promotions for her failure to improve the appearance of the WAC uniform and for allowing the Corps to fall far below the WAVES in terms of public esteem. However, the most glaring difference between the Army and its sister services rested with the focus on education and the establishment of a collegiate image for its recruits in training. As the evidence demonstrates, the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard

not only required more educational experience from their officers, they attracted a greater percentage of educated women than the Army.¹⁵

¹⁵ According to a report generated by the advertising firm handling advertisement of the WAC, public opinion held that the WAVES recruited more college women. The report also stated that 3 out of 4 women would choose the WAVES over the WAC. It should be noted that the WAC objected to the report, titled the "Meek Report" because its survey overwhelmingly consisted of college educated women and prominent members of society. Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 272-273. "History of WAVE Procurement Promotion," 6 November 1944, Bureau of Naval Personnel, General Correspondence, 1941-1945, RG 24, QR 85 to QR8-315, Box 2329, National Archives College Park, College Park.

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Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations
Southern Association for Women Historians

ABSTRACT

DAUGHTERS OF ATHENA: AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE MILITARY DURING WWII.

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The integration of women into the military establishment during World War II evoked a multitude of reactions from the American public. As over 500,000 women joined the military, they were met with support, skepticism, and condemnation. The attitudes of the civilian populace and the military establishment challenged women to expand social constructs of acceptable female behavior. As women gained a foothold in the military establishment, they proved to be a valuable asset to the war effort. Military planners initially envisioned women working in traditionally gendered occupations. As American males deployed to the European or Pacific Theaters, women frequently assumed unorthodox roles. Their experiences changed their perception of themselves and their environment. This study will explore the roles women assumed within the military establishment. In addition, this study will examine the impact of the military experience upon the lives of female veterans.

Women entering the military enlisted in the WAAC/WAC, SPARS, WASP, WAVES, or the Marine Corps. Each branch of the military approached integration of females into the service in different ways and adopted varied requirements for enlistees. As a result, the choice of organization often reflected the educational and social background of the recruit. This study will explore the role of social class within the branches of the military.

Finally, this study will include a brief synthesis of female enlistment in each branch of the service. Each branch of the military has published an official synthesis of female participation in the war effort. Collections of autobiographical histories have been published. Nevertheless, the historiographical record lacks an academic synthesis of women in the military during World War II.

The research conducted for this study includes primary and secondary source materials. In addition, interviews with female veterans and collection of oral histories shed valuable insight into the subsequent impact of the military experience in the lives of American veterans.