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"Vietnam WACs: An Exploration of Women's Military Service During the Sociopolitical Upheaval of the Vietnam War Era"

A Dissertation Submitted

by

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Abstract

Women's military service has often been relegated to the footnotes of history in the larger discussion of war and military service. Despite this, women have served the United States through every major conflict since the Revolutionary War with no expectation of recognition or reward. Such service raises questions regarding patriotism, gender roles, and citizenship. This research explores those questions during the Vietnam War era, one of the most defining moments in American society and culture and argues that women's military service was shaped during those turbulent years through persistent quiet integration, defining political intervention, and military necessity. An investigation of available sources revealed a considerable gap of literature on first-hand experiences of women in the Vietnam War despite evidence of a Women's Army Corps detachment sent to Vietnam. Recorded oral histories, official histories of the corps, archival sources, and volumes published by the women veterans helped to explore the evolution of women's service after the massive reduction in military women following World War II and how women capitalized on the opportunity of service during the socio-political upheaval of the counterculture generation. Social movements such as the anti-war, Civil Rights, and women's movements affected women in the military both positively and negatively, indicating this era expanded women's roles in the military offering new avenues for career longevity, independence, and status among male peers while highlighting such areas as prohibitive public policy, chauvinism, and sexual harassment as growing problems military women continue to face.

Dedication

Tim, Faith, and Caleb, all my love.

Ephesians 3: 14-19

Acknowledgements

This has been a labor of love, frustration, progress, failure, and success. I have chased leads in person and online, sent countless emails, read numerous books and articles in my quest to learn what I can about the Women's Army Corps in Vietnam and beyond. I will forever be grateful to the staff at the Army Women's Museum, especially Ms. Tracy Bradford, Director, and Ms. Vicki Archuleti who graciously allowed me to spend several days researching their archives. I appreciate their kindness and willingness to pull out records for me to peruse and allow me the use of their conference room during my research. I appreciate your time and hospitality; I will be forever grateful to you for your assistance.

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My fascination with the WAC started with a tasking to help with the Air Force Ball in 2005 and seeing the history of women in the military as I researched Women in the Air Force. My academic career led to curiosity over women's military service and the discovery of the WAC detachment in Vietnam. Those women would become the precursor to the future and my ability to serve in aircraft maintenance. Listening to their oral histories and hearing their stories of relationships with one another have made me so thankful for my years in the Air Force. I will always be grateful for the friendships I forged there with my fellow Tankerchicks, Amy Jo, Suzie, Cynthia, Diana, Noelle, Cherry, and Monica. In listening to the women who came before

us, I could see the bonds of sisterhood that are only understood by women serving in what is still, to some degree, a man's military and I appreciate even more how you have all impacted my life for the better.

Kari, thank you for your encouragement and feedback. Everyone should have a cheerleader like you, I appreciate your prayers and friendship.

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Contents

Illustrations

Abbreviations

1SG	First Sergeant
AG	Adjutant General
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
AVF	All Volunteer Force
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BOQ	Bachelor Officer Quarters
CMH	Center for Military History
CONTIC	Continental Army Command Tactical Intelligence Center
CONUS	Continental United States
CSM	Command Sergeant Major
CWO3	Chief Warrant Officer Three
DACOWITS	Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services
DET	Detachment
DMZ	De-militarized Zone
DOD	Department of Defense
DOPMA	Defense Officer Personnel Management Act
DVIDS	Defense Visual Information Distribution Service
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
ERA	Equal Rights Amendment
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FGA	Fort Gregg-Adams
FTA	Free the Army/ Fu*k the Army
GAO	General Accounting Office
GI	General Infantry
HQ	Headquarters
LBJ	Lyndon B. Johnson
M1	Model 1
M14	Model 14
M16	Model 16
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MAJ	Major
MOS	Military Occupation Specialty
MP	Military Police
NACP	Major
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NLF	National Liberation Front
NOW	National Organization for Women

NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OC	Officer Candidate Course
OER	Officer Evaluation Report
OPMS	Officer Personnel Management System
POW	Prisoner of War
PROVIDE	Project Volunteer in the Defense of the Nation
PROVN	Program for the Pacification and Long-term Development of South Vietnam
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
PX	Post Exchange
REFORGER	Return of Forces to Germany
RG	Record Group
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
RSM	Robert S. McNamara
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SEAL	Sea Air and Land
SFC	Sergeant First Class
STOP ERA	Stop Equal Rights Amendment
TV	Television
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice
UE	United Electrical
USA	United States Army
USARV	United States Army, Vietnam
USAWM	United States Army Women's Museum
USO	United Service Organization
VA	Veterans Affairs
VC	Viet Cong
VHP	Veterans History Project
VIP	Very Important Person
VVAW	Vietnam Veterans Against the War
WAC	Women's Army Corps
WAF	Women in the Air Force
WAFC	Women's Armed Forces Corps
WAVES	Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service
WIU	Weekly Intelligence Update
WOBC	WAC Officer Basic Course
WWII	World War II

Chapter One

Introduction

The Vietnam War remains a controversial topic in American history. The causes of war, the victories, and losses, as well as unit and personal memoirs have been written about the combat soldiers and heroic nurses. Research studies on the lasting effects of exposure to hazardous chemicals during this war have also been covered extensively. Numerous research studies have been conducted on post-traumatic stress disorder of the combat soldiers, nurses, red cross volunteers, and women in other civilian volunteer positions. Yet there is a demographic of women that has been largely ignored. They are the other military women who served in Vietnam such as clerks, linguists, signal analysts, and intelligence personnel. Memories have faded as time marched on and some of these women have been lost, their place in history all but forgotten.

There are few resources which focus on the experiences of these women. One reason is because they are a relatively small group whose official records are apparently tucked away in archives so well that most of them cannot be found. Their contributions in Vietnam, especially in non-medical positions, deserve to be added to the historical record since their tours of duty in Vietnam are the precursor for women's service to come. Vietnam coverage has been written mostly about the men's perspective of those who fought in the war such as their successes and their failures. Likewise, the nurses who devoted their service to caring for the wounded have been written about extensively. However, the historiography of the Vietnam War is incomplete without the inclusion of this demographic of non-medical servicewomen. Just as the women who served in all previous conflicts, the Vietnam War's women veterans left a legacy of service. Theirs was unique because it also came amid legislative and social change in the United States.

The number of women who served outside the medical field is relatively small, according to *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories,* there were approximately 1,200 military women who served in country in non-nursing roles.[1] This is the total of women across the branches, the total number of Army women, the Women's Army Corps (WAC) is less than 800. By focusing on the years 1965-1982 this dissertation keeps the concentration on a very specific window for research.

Preliminary research in this area uncovered several women whose Vietnam experiences put them in unique situations. There were several interviews available online through the West Point Center for Oral History as well as the Veterans History Project (VHP). This inevitably led to questions of how they found themselves first in the military and second in Vietnam. Men either enlisted or were drafted to serve, but every military woman served of her own volition. During the early days of the Vietnam conflict women who volunteered to go to Vietnam were denied, later in the conflict necessity dictated that women were sent. Substantial changes occurred during this era which increased the presence of women in the military. Their motivation to serve was less contingent on social movements than on opportunities for independence and family legacies of military service. Adherence to the status quo and stereotypical expectations which limited women's service in hostile areas were two barriers which Army women had to overcome to serve in Vietnam. This was accomplished through necessity in Vietnam for men to fill combat positions and women's availability to fill clerical openings. Service in Vietnam had a varied effect on women, almost half remained for full careers while others left the military due to their time in Vietnam. Official records do not share the challenges they faced from other military members while their personal accounts do indicate the women dealt with bias regarding race and

[1] Donna A. Lowery. *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories*. (AuthorHouse, 2015), pg. xv, 1.

gender. Despite these challenges, the women were motivated to serve for personal reasons including traditional American ideals, loyalty to themselves and the women they served with, and the desire to leave a lasting legacy. These are some answers culled from available interviews. When used in combination with other interviews and archival collections, the information provided a fuller comprehension of women's wartime service. This information was studied in consideration of the political and cultural changes that swept through the nation from 1965-1980. The conclusions reached add comprehension to the history of women's military service and the Vietnam War filling an area previously understudied. A preliminary examination of available sources concluded that purely academic research into secondary sources or records would not provide all the desired information since most available records of these women are largely still in paper form. To accomplish the objective at least two research methodologies were necessary. Those include traditional research using archival and secondary source material and qualitative research data collection through previously recorded oral history interviews.

This research utilized traditional research methods as well as the qualitative research through the use of oral history interviews and surveys. Traditional research was conducted at archival repositories such as the VHP database, the West Point Center for Oral History, the Sam Johnson Vietnam archive, and The Betty H. Carter Women Veterans Historical Project. The archives at the United States Army Women's Museum contain many records on the women who served in Vietnam. They also have a binder of disc based oral history interviews from the early 1980s. The use of this repository and records held at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland also added information to form a more complete picture of the military women in Vietnam.

Oral histories provided the vehicle to review first-hand narratives from the women who served because Vietnam was their military experience. Their stories cannot be told by anyone else. Their voices offered perspectives not found solely in paper archives or through secondary sources which typically speak to combat or nursing experiences. In combination with archival and secondary sources, recorded interviews are a logical format to compile, record, share, and preserve necessary information. These interviews provide a lasting record to ensure the legacy of past women's military service is remembered and, most importantly, shared.

Archival records and interviews were examined and placed chronologically to explore the role women played in the military during Vietnam to uncover and document less recognized contributions made by military women outside the nursing and medical fields. How did changes in society after World War II lead women to pursue the military rather than other traditional careers? In addition to answering questions, this research fills a potential gap in the archival record of women's military experience. It also explores how women's performance in the field continued to shape military service for future generations. Preliminary research identified women who served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) were involved in the establishment of a South Vietnamese Women's Armed Forces Corps (WAFC), an intelligence officer who recognized the potential for a Tet Offensive before it occurred in 1968, and other significant historical moments that have not been as widely shared in works covering the Vietnam War. In addition to identifying and researching the impact of their service, research examined social attitudes towards women veterans after the war to identify how this population of women veterans struggled after their service ended. Until recently, most Vietnam veterans were not vocal about their service due to the political climate in the United States upon their return. This was equally true for women veterans. The context of policies and legislation which affected women's

military service were analyzed for its impact on women and the question of women in combat. The impact of gender roles during an upheaval in traditional society because of the feminist and Civil Rights movements was examined regarding these women as well. How did their experiences in Vietnam and coming home shape them moving forward? Did these women consider themselves feminists, why or why not? No veteran's experience was the same as another and their individual contributions to the record of Vietnam are vital contributions to the whole. The different experiences of women veterans are just as crucial to the history of this nation's conflicts. Most look at the war experience of the combat soldier or medic with no regard for the ones who served in the non-combat support roles like the clerks, intelligence analysts, and morse code operators. There is an assumption that non-combat roles are less dangerous, however the Vietnam War presented a new battlefield with no definite front line. The intent of this research was identifying and documenting women who served in Vietnam who willingly shared their experiences to explore the significance of their service. It was anticipated that this research would demonstrate how their service played a role in shaping legislation and policy in the years to come for military women.

In previous courses taken at Liberty University prior to beginning this research, various papers and projects explored how women have long played a role in the conflicts of this country from its colonial beginning and have been relied on to play their part albeit usually on the home front. Popular history has also recognized the accomplishments of women like Deborah Sampson, Agent 355, Francis Clayton, Sybil Ludington, and Harriet Tubman because they stepped outside traditional feminine roles. More recently, best-selling books about extraordinary women like Liza Mundy's *Code Girls,* Eliza Cobbs's *Hello Girls*, and Sarah Rose's *D-Day Girls*

have captured the exploits, experiences, and accomplishments of women in both world wars.[2] The publication of those works ensured that the service and sacrifice of those women will never be forgotten. The works also expose an imperfect system which has long disregarded women's military contributions and demonstrate how the memory of women's service has been ignored as memories of war fade. The service of those women served as a gateway for precedent and policy which affected the women of the Vietnam generation and subsequent generations of military women.

After World War II the study of women's military service is largely blank. From 1945-1965 most of the changes which affected military women revolved around the establishment of individual corps. According to several sources at least 350,000 American women served in the women's auxiliaries during World War II.[3] However, the general expectation was they would disband once the war was over. Yet, there were influential military leaders who felt that women should have a permanent presence during peacetime in the event of another national emergency. This led to the creation of branch specific women's corps in 1948. While several books cover the creation of these women specific units, those histories are largely organizational.[4] Other

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[2] Elizabeth Cobbs, *The Hello Girls: America's First Women Soldiers*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2017)., Liza Mundy, *Code Girls: the Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II*, First trade edition. (New York: Hachette Books, 2018)., Sarah Rose, *D-Day Girls: The Spies Who Armed the Resistance, Sabotaged the Nazis, and Helped Win World War II*, (New York: The Crown Publishing Group, 2019).

[3] Julia Brock, Dickey, Jennifer W., Harker, Richard, and Lewis, Catherine, *Beyond Rosie: A Documentary History of Women and World War II*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 89. Accessed November 28, 2023. ProQuest Ebook Central., Siobhan Miller, "Women in the Military During World War II: Family Listening Activities," Library of Congress Blogs, April 19, 2023. https://blogs.loc.gov/families/2023/04/women-in-the-military-during-world-war-ii/, and "Women's World War II Achievements Remembered Ahead of Anniversary," (Defense Logistics Agency: Columbus, OH, April 6, 2020). https://www.dla.mil/About-DLA/News/News-Article-View/Article/2136298/womens-world-war-ii-achievements-remembered-ahead-of-anniversary/

[4] For example, Mattie E. Treadwell, *United States Army in World War II: Special Studies*, (Center of Military History, Washington, D.C., 1991), and Bettie J. Morden, *Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978*, (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990).

women's histories focus on gender roles and how American women were utilized during the war years in the military and in stateside resource production.[5] The field of women's military history itself seems divided into two distinct subsections, history of military nursing and nurses, and non-nursing women's military service. There are dissertations and books on the evolution of military nursing from the female perspective starting from the Civil War through Vietnam and more current conflicts. Most of the readily available sources similarly focus on military nurses simply because they were more prevalent, and it was an acceptable form of service that fit within typical gender roles for women. It was acceptable because it did not place women in masculine fields. The roles they assumed during the great war they were forced to give up when men returned from fighting. Men returned expecting women to resume appropriately feminine labor and their place within the home. Several probable reasons suggest the cause for the lack of sources on women's service, such as a lack of official records, ignorance of women's contributions, silence of women veterans on their service, and time. Those veterans who served in the rank and file during the military conflicts of the 1900s are aging or deceased. In many cases the stigma of military service kept them silent about their contributions. Additionally, official military biographies generally focus on the careers of the officer echelon and the service of the enlisted is relegated to footnotes and anecdotes. Despite this, a fundamental lesson learned through World War II proved women were mentally and physically capable of manual labor, critical thinking, piloting aircraft, and other work normally categorized as masculine. The United States had utilized women in jobs performed by men out of necessity only to discover a

[5] See Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations and the Status of Women During World War II*, (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic, 1981)., and Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2009).

previously untapped source of womanpower. Women, to their credit, excelled in their job performance. The military contributions of women in the labor force have often been overshadowed by more extreme social and cultural changes. Women have repeatedly chosen to demonstrate their loyalty and patriotism through volunteering for military service despite the expectation they revert to a subjugated role after men return at wars end. It did not just occur during the World Wars or only in the United States, the historic record shows that women have repeatedly risen to the occasion during times of conflict to keep social and economic wheels turning.

European and United States history repeat a cyclical pattern of warfare by which women gain a temporary measure of independence only to relinquish most of it at the end of the conflict. This pattern coincides with the buildup and drawdown of military strength seen during major worldwide conflicts.[6] The rise of conflict required men to leave their homes and serve in war zones. In their absence, women maintained as much normalcy as possible, farms had to be managed, trades needed to be performed, and money still moved. Families had to continue life and maintain trade production and later factory services to keep economic society functioning. Necessity placed the burden for this on women until men returned and resumed their roles as dictated by gender. Each conflict cycle has progressively increased a measure of autonomy for women, this is evident in European history as well as American. It is also evident by the 1800s that women were not content being considered second class citizens which resulted in the birth of the suffrage movement. The suffragists propelled women forward in their quest for equal status as citizens. Equal status for women was based on a desire for individual rights as citizens;

[6] Carmen Latvis, "Women's Societal Gains Through Warfare Cycles," Essay, HIEU914, Liberty University, 2021. This essay discusses societal changes experienced by women during the warfare cycles in Europe during World War I and II.

the right to vote, the right to own property, and to work for their own wages. Women had secured the right to vote, and some remained in the labor force. Their work was still less valued than men as was reflected in pay inequality between the sexes. The battle for equal pay and representation continued after the success of the suffrage movement and was reignited nationally with the birth of the second wave of feminism when women like Betty Friedan entered the role of activist during the height of the Equal Rights movement.

Similarly, women also have fought for the right to serve the country in the military as full, independent citizens and patriots. The evolution of Army women's military service was chronicled in two volumes of *The Women's Army Corps*.[7] The struggle for recognition as women veterans is chronicled not only in official Army history, but also in books about women who served in World War I and World War II in unique ways. The women known as "Hello Girls" lobbied and petitioned for recognition as veterans until sixty years after their service ended, finally succeeding in their endeavor though few remained alive to benefit from that status.[8] More opportunities for women opened in subsequent years through service affiliated women's auxiliary corps, the Red Cross, and nursing always provided opportunities for women to contribute. Books written about women's involvement in war and conflict have begun bringing awareness to the military contributions of women.

Kara Dixon Vuic is the Lance Corporal Benjamin W. Schmidt Professor of War, Conflict, and Society in Twentieth Century America at Texas Christian University. She has written extensively on women and gender issues in the military. The focus of Vuic's *Officer*,

[7] Those volumes were written by Mattie E. Treadwell and Bettie J. Morden. Treadwell covered the Women's Army Corps through World War II, and Morden covered from 1945-1978.

[8] Elizabeth Cobbs, *The Hello Girls: America's First Women Soldiers*. (Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press, 2017), 273-303.

Nurse, Woman is about the Army Nursing Corps.[9] Vuic traces the history of service in the Army Nursing Corps during the Vietnam War. She explored the gendered role of nursing, as well as the differences in Vietnam versus stateside nursing. She discussed the complicated role women played in Vietnam, where they were expected to boost morale as well as provide triage and on the spot emergency care. They worked with autonomy at field hospitals where they served in fast paced environments that relied on quick thinking and immediate action only to return to the United States and lose that authority. Another of Vuic's books, *The Girl Next Door* focuses on the women working as morale boosters in the recreation volunteer programs of major conflicts since World War I.[10] The women, referred to as "Donut Dollies," spent their time socializing with soldiers and helping organize recreation and entertainment. Ironically, they did not deliver any donuts in Vietnam as they had in past wars. Vuic explored the various roles women have played in providing entertainment and socialization to military men. This provides insight to one aspect of women who served in the Vietnam era, both military and civilian. It also identified a hole in the historic record. The women who served in non-medical military roles were the precursor to modern military women who serve in maintenance, aviation, law enforcement, engineering, and other essential fields of today's military. The subfield of women's military history is lacking in research and literature exploring the service of women who took on roles other than nursing. This is especially true during the Vietnam era; this gap is one which exists because women's military history is a relatively new and growing field as women continue to leave their mark in the military through service in different conflicts.

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[9] Kara Dixon Vuic, *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

[10] Kara Dixon Vuic, *The Girls Next Door: Bringing the Home Front to the Front Lines,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

An authoritative text on women's military service, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution,* was penned by Major General (Retired) Jeanne Holm.[11] Holm's qualifications came from over thirty years of military service, service as director of the Women's Air Force (WAF), and her appointment as Special Assistant for Women to the President where she continued her efforts in changing legislation and policy to benefit military women. Holm suggested women have continuously proven their ability and commitment to serve. She emphasized that policy makers needed to reconsider the idea that women were only necessary during times of military crisis. The organization of Holm's work focused on the era after World War II and through the Persian Gulf conflict because it coincided with the changes brought as a result of the civil rights movement and equal rights legislation. Her point was that policymakers needed to weigh the role of women in the military not with gender roles and expectations, but on the best course of action for the nation. Women, as equal citizens, should share the burden of responsibility for national defense with men. The move towards equal citizenship was started with the passage of the 1948 Women's Armed Services Act also known as Public Law 625. Particularly relevant to this is part II of her book which covered the integration of women in the military through the Tet Offensive in Vietnam and the continued evolution of women's service. She provided necessary context concerning the significance of this endeavor. Prior to Vietnam, women saw the drawback of their military responsibilities despite their record of capable and necessary service in World Wars I and II and the Korean War. Holm paraphrased journalist Jack Anderson when she referred to the military women of the sixties as typewriter soldiers.[12] In essence, women's military service had

[11] Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*, rev. ed., (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992).

[12] Holm, *Women in the Military*, 175. Holm referenced a 1966 *Washington Post* article in which Anderson called women Marines typewriter soldiers more concerned with makeup than war.

reached a place "wedded to the dead-ended, outmoded philosophies of women's roles devised in the fifties."[13] How did women escape from superficial roles in the military which were forced on them through military bureaucracy with no regard for their capability? The exploration of this escape coupled with the experience of women who served during this time provided the significance of this study. It also revealed the cyclical nature of women's military service in the United States. A rise in conflict called the nation's men to battle followed by a summons for women to keep the home fires burning. In World War II that summons called them to step in to decidedly masculine career fields to further the war effort. Likewise, every rise is subject to a drawdown when conflict ends. Yet women hollowed out a better foothold with each conflict in the struggle for status as equal citizens. This was especially so during the Vietnam War even though fewer women were utilized. Instead of veterans returning from war expecting to resume normalcy, the country was in a state of upheaval. This upheaval was unsettling, but allowed military women to capitalize on attention drawn to women's issues. This allowed them to push for advantages in the military, essentially a quiet integration achieved through legislation without the need for protests. For clarification, quiet integration refers to the tactics military women used to gain ground within the military. The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) regulated appropriate behavior for military members including their ability to participate in protests, et cetera. Military women did not stage public protests to force integration, instead they worked within the military system to effect change with legislation and policies.

In the United States the battle of civil rights and the feminist movement advocated for equal recognition and representation in the United States for minorities and women. Alexandra Rutherford, a historian of psychology at York University in Toronto, penned an article which

[13] Ibid., 175.

focused on the era after World War II. In "'Making Better Use of U.S. Women' Psychology, Sex Roles, and Womanpower in Post-WWII America," Rutherford explored the negative impact of expectations that career women leave their positions.[14] She suggested this was detrimental psychologically to women and men as it reinforced the ideology of patriarchal roles. The idea of men as breadwinners and women as caregivers, in her conclusion, contributed to undue stress on both sexes. Rutherford cited a 1946 study from Georgene Seward, *Sex and the Social Order*, which explored the idea of economic sex equality to understand this complicated issue.[15] She also examined how feminism and education were affected and changed in the era of the Cold War. Rutherford cites conflict, which stemmed from society's inability to accept change, as a reason for a period of stagnation in feminism during the 1950's. She also attributed it to a desire to maintain normal family roles due to the ongoing threat of communism during the McCarthy era, even while there were women working and advocating for women's equality. Moving forward to the sixties the attitudes and ideas about traditional family roles and women's roles started to change with the advent of the civil rights era. During the social and cultural upheaval of increased Vietnam involvement the military's reliance on the draft to fill the ranks ended leaving them dependent on volunteers and an increasing number of women

While the feminist and civil rights movements advocated for legislative changes in the United States, military women waged a quieter revolution of their own. Their mission was the redefinition of women's reputations and proving women service as a military necessity. They shaped changes in women's military history as a result. In contrast to the women's liberation

[14] Alexandra Rutherford, "'Making Better Use of U.S. Women' Psychology, Sex Roles, and Womanpower in Post-WWII America." *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 53, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 228–45.

[15] Georgene Seward, *Sex and the Social Order*, (New York and London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1946).

movement, military women assumed more of a quiet integration. They pushed for change from within the military system over the course of thirty years. The women's movement focused on organized protests and attention gathering stunts as a method to increase awareness of the movement and propel their ideology forward. There were televised debates between those in support and opposition to the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Military women were absent from that publicity. There is also no evidence that military women participated in the same tactics to push change through regarding their service. Instead, change for military women was spearheaded through in house conversations between female military leadership and supportive males within the military and legislative spheres. The challenges which military women faced were explored, compared, and contrasted with the feminist movement and struggle to ratify the ERA to identify similarities and differences. The identified methods facilitated the process in this research. It provided essential understanding of how the Women's Army Corps ended up in Vietnam and why the situations they faced were important to women in the military. Even before the start of a detachment in Vietnam, many women volunteered but were denied overseas orders despite the inability of leadership to explain why their service could not be used in Vietnam. Simply put, there was no reason they could not serve except long held institutional bias against women in hostile areas. Yet, the women's detachment that was eventually established demonstrated that these biases against women were completely unfounded. They also exposed the danger of these biases and gender based policies which sent military women to a warzone unarmed and untrained.

These women provide historic context to the Vietnam War due to the difficulty they had in volunteering to serve overseas. They were responsible for pushing the envelope and opening the door for women to serve in country in non-combat roles. The history of military women is

incomplete, or unfinished as Holm stated, without the role they played in shaping military service being brought into the light and shared. It remains an unfinished revolution without the narrative and context provided by the women who served through it. Qualitative research allows for proper examination and analysis of primary and secondary source material, including collected oral histories.

Qualitative research focuses on understanding why and how something occurred rather than what. A method of conducting qualitative research in history is through oral history. According to the Oral History Association it is defined as gathering and preserving voices of the past. Additionally, oral history predates the written record making it one of the oldest methods of data collection.[16] It has also taken a leap into the digital age using modern methods of recording. Recorded data helps preserve first-hand accounts which lead to a more complete perspective on historical issues. It has also previously been used as a vehicle to provide insight and representation. Vietnam combat soldiers in Wallace Terry's *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History* identified and followed several black service men from Vietnam through their lives post-Vietnam.[17] Terry's oral histories show that the transition from military to civilian often left the veterans in a state of uncertainty. He also showed the mental health issues that faced combat veterans and exemplified the ways each of these men sought to find meaning after Vietnam. Some men were able to successfully pursue other careers after the military, some stayed in the military, some found meaning in the Black Panther party, and others found themselves in trouble with the law. The discourse of this book is sociological and presents the viewpoints of a few black male Vietnam veterans and their experiences while in the military and

[16] Oral history defined according to the Oral History Association website.

[17] Wallace Terry, Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History, (New York, NY: Presidio Press, 2006).

upon their return to civilian life through their individual points of view. Collected oral histories of female veterans provide a similar study through a distinctly feminine lens.

In December 1978, Dr. Margaret Vieth Grevatt, a professor of women's studies at Case Western Reserve University, penned the article "Oral History as a Resource in Teaching Women's Studies."[18] In it she suggests that regardless of the method, to record a successful interview an important factor is in connecting with the informant.[19] It is evident this is true when watching recorded interviews as some interviewers have better skill than others, resulting in more complete interviews because the informant seems willing to openly share. It is also evident that a lack of skill can cause interviews to be stiff or awkward which results in less complete information coming from the informant. There have been objections to the interviewer forming a connection with the informant suggesting it causes a compromise in objectivity. Grevatt counters that argument by theorizing that instead of stunting objectivity it allows for increased communication with the informant therefore leading to clarity, or "articulating consciousness."[20] She likewise invoked the methods of Studs Terkel when she suggested that oral history offers a means of data collection that increases comprehension of historic events through memory.[21] Likewise, Jean M. Humez, professor emerita of women's studies at University of Massachusetts, Boston, and author of *Harriet Tubman: The Life and the Life Stories,* also tackled the topic of oral histories. She wrote "Oral History in Teaching Women's Studies," which explored the

[18] Marge Grevatt, "Oral History as a Resource in Teaching Women's Studies." *The Radical Teacher*, no. 10 (1978): 22–25.

[19] For this research informant refers to the person being interviewed.

[20] Margaret Grevatt here is paraphrasing the words of Staughton Lynd who suggested that oral history should be viewed as history and not a recorded memory.

[21] Studs Terkel was a historian and writer well known for his style of collecting oral histories of common people.

method as viable for curriculum development and teaching for several reasons. "Oral history is particularly well-suited for inclusion in women's history curricula because it attempts to articulate a past for those people who may not have been articulate themselves."[22] In her article she also discussed the methodology of conducting interviews through the development of questionnaires which focus on the topic of research. These often occurred in opposition to Erik Erikson's life-cycle schema which Humez described as "wholly dependent on male models,"[23] leading students to wonder how women's experience differed. Writing questionnaires as a guide for conducting interviews on the topic of military history is a similar method to hers. Successful interviews rely on the personal skill of the interviewer as well as the technical proficiency to record and transcribe the narrative. This is evident when recorded interviews are used by researchers. Humez's work suggests it is important to understand both male and female perspective as it relates to specific experiences, such as the Vietnam War, otherwise the record is incomplete.

Interviews and surveys are only one method to collect qualitative data within the military history field. Several articles discussed topics in military history and pointed to reliance on the questionnaire method of qualitative data collection through interviews and surveys (Tichenor, 1996; Scannell-Desch, 2000; and Rosales, 2013).[24] In truth, most of them focused on the experience of the male combat soldier. Whereas the work of Tichenor and Scannell-Desch

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[22] Jean M. Humez, and Laurie Crumpacker. "Oral History in Teaching Women's Studies." *The Oral History Review* 7 (1979): 53.

[23] Humez & Crumpacker, "Oral History," 65.

[24] Victoria Tichenor, "The Relationship of Peritraumatic Dissociation and Posttraumatic Stress: Findings in Female Vietnam Theater Veterans," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology.* 64, no. 5 (1996): 1054–1059., Elizabeth Scannell-Desch, "The Culture of War: A Study of Women Military Nurses in Vietnam," *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 11, no. 2 (April 2000): 87–95., Steven Rosales, "Macho Nation? Chicano Soldiering, Sexuality, and Manhood during the Vietnam War Era," *The Oral History Review* 40, no. 2 (2013): 299–324.

focused on the nurses of Vietnam. The purpose of these studies was identifying how combat soldiers and nurses dealt with their Vietnam experience and post-traumatic stress disorder issues that resulted from their service. In a similar study, Rosales explored the culture of machismo in Chicano service members' culture. The questions presented by Steven Rosales, history professor at the University of Arkansas Fulbright College and author of *Soldados Razos at War: Chicano Politics, Identity, and Masculinity in the U.S. Military from World War II to Vietnam,* come closer to the topic of this research.[25] In his book, Rosales explored the reasons for Chicano service in Vietnam and how it changed as the war progressed. He posited that at first Chicano service was tied to the desire to claim full citizenship as well as prove patriotism or loyalty to the United States and achieve liberty and equality in that manner. This desire changed as the war dragged on and public opinion changed which led to more Chicanos being pulled toward the anti-war movement to achieve the same liberty and equality. Women, like the Chicanos, have long desired to be considered as equal citizens in the United States and accomplished some of their goals through the suffrage movement. However, this begs the question, does this same desire for citizenship and acceptance motivate the military service of women? Has anyone ever explored that motivation for women as they have for men? The simple answer is yes, but only to a small degree.

There have been several studies done which collected data on women veterans. Generally, these have fallen under the subject of psychology. Some studies desired to understand mental health issues which were caused by challenges in military service (Tichenor, 1996; Park, 2015) as well as reasons why women ended their military service (Dichter & True,

[25] Steven Rosales. Soldados Razos at War: Chicano Politics, Identity, and Masculinity in the U. S. Military from World War II to Vietnam, (University of Arizona Press, 2017).

2015) but did not study reasons for enlistment or retention.[26] Other studies have been conducted to understand how male and female veteran identities are formed (Suter, 2006; Rosales, 2013).[27] While this information served its purpose within those fields, it also highlighted a hole in the overall comprehension and picture of women's military service. This is particularly true for women Vietnam veterans. Unless women served in the nursing field, very little has been done to chronicle the years they spent in Vietnam, their purpose, or catalog and share their stories and experiences. It has left a valuable chunk of military history during the Vietnam War unknown.

Qualitative research combined with analyzing interviews provide the overall method for collecting relevant data on women Vietnam veterans. Chapter Two examines the early role of the United States in Vietnam and how the entanglement there began on the heels of World War II. It explores how the end of the war led to a diminished role for military women and the opportunity that Vietnam presented for them. It also discusses challenges faced in establishing a detachment in Vietnam and issues the women faced once they arrived. Chapter Three examines the oral history narratives in chronological order. It emphasizes daily life in Vietnam for the women which provides context for their experience. Chapter Four presents a discussion of the anti-war movement's relevance to the timeline of the war and its impact on the women's lives during and after their tour. It includes an examination of prominent female entertainers and journalists who held different beliefs regarding the war. Chapter Five offers discussion on the year 1968 and its

[26] Melissa E. Dichter and Gala True "This Is the Story of Why My Military Career Ended Before It Should Have": Premature Separation From Military Service Among U.S. Women Veterans. *Affilia*, 30(2), 2015, 187–199., Crystal L. Park, Jennifer Schuster Wachen, Anica Pless Kaiser & Jeanne Mager Stellman. "Cumulative Trauma and Midlife Well-being in American Women who Served in Vietnam: Fffects of Combat Exposure and Postdeployment Social Support", *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, 28:2 (2015): 144-161.

[27] Elizabeth A. Suter, Emily N. Lamb, Marko Meredith, and Stacy Tye-Williams. "Female Veterans' Identity Construction, Maintenance, and Reproduction: WL." *Women and Language* 29, no. 1 (Spring, 2006): 10-5

significance to the United States regarding Vietnam and the changing socio-political atmosphere. Chapter Six provides a discussion of the changes made to the military after 1968. It examines the end of the draft, the expansion of women in the military, legislation changes, and the Equal Rights Amendment. Finally, Chapter Seven summarizes the information presented and provides an analysis of the information. It validates the thesis of military women's quiet integration and how the Vietnam era provided the perfect storm to secure a lasting foothold for women in the military. The historical record was analyzed using primary sources and additional scholarly works that focused on legislative obstacles to women's military service. These legislative changes regarding barriers to women's service and women's service evolved after Vietnam are discussed. The scope of this research project fits within the individual fields of military history and women's history, but would fit better in a combined subfield specific to women's military history.

The field of military history has begun to explore different experiences of veterans who served in Vietnam, though its focused mainly on combat soldiers and nurses. Memoirs and narratives offer an open-minded look at a controversial war while challenging the misconceptions and stereotypes of Vietnam era veterans. While this era is commonly associated with controversy, counterculture, and revolution it also ushered in opportunity. In the realm of women's military history, the conflict in Vietnam provided the opportunity to regain ground lost after World War II and expand women's roles in the military and in society. 1965 to 1980 represented an era of change in the United States not just from a civilian standpoint, but also from a women's military perspective. Women were afforded more career opportunities as previously career ending policies were amended or ended providing women a measure of independence and career security.

In the United States change for women in the military was evident from 1965 to 1980. Female military leadership as well as supportive military and political leaders worked to eliminate discriminatory practices. Policies which limited the number of women who could serve, what capacity they served in, barriers to female retention, and opening more career specialties were revised to provide more equal service opportunity for all women. These Vietnam War women veterans were in the middle of it all whether they realized the impact of their service or not. Military women pushed for and won legislative and policy changes further validating their service and citizenship in the United States. This paper intended to provide historical context on the women who served in the shadow of the combat soldier or nurse and demonstrate their service was equally as important to the history of the Vietnam War. It likewise aimed to fill a gap in knowledge of the Vietnam War's women veterans while offering insight into the evolution of women's military service.

Chapter Two

Sending Women to Vietnam

The threat of communism inspired years of skilled maneuvering as political leaders expanded the role of the American military in Vietnam's upheaval culminating in the Vietnam War. As a result, millions of Americans served in the region including a women's WAC detachment whose service helped influence expansion and change for women in the military. American involvement in Vietnam did not begin with President John F. Kennedy or even with President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Long before they were in office, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was aware of colonies under French and British rule. According to James S. Olson, author of *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam 1945 – 2010,* this worked in the favor of Ho Chi Minh. He thought it was possible that America could step in and help Vietnam claim its independence without creating their own empires as the Chinese and French had done. Olson suggested, "Roosevelt was tinkering, over the vehement protests of Charles de Gaulle and Winston Churchill, with the idea of backing independence for India, Pakistan, Burma, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, British Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies, just as he had done for the Philippines."[1] President Roosevelt's death in 1945 ushered President Harry S. Truman into office whose focus was not on liberating colonies. Rather, his focus was ending World War II and curbing the threat of communism from the Soviet Union.

Senate hearings held in 1973 asked several men to submit statements on two subjects, how the United States became involved in Vietnam and what lessons were learned. Dr. Leslie H. Gelb was one of those who testified at the hearing and submitted a statement. He was "an

[1] James S. Olson, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam 1945 - 2010,* (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013, ProQuest Ebook Central), 16.

iconoclastic former American diplomat, journalist and prodigious commentator on world affairs."[2] Gelb also helped compile the Pentagon Papers which had been ordered by former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. According to Dr. Gelb there were eight reasons for U.S. involvement in Vietnam: arrogance of power, bureaucratic politics, domestic politics, imperialism, pragmatic hard choices, balance of power politics, the slippery slope, and anti-communism.[3] Though he does attribute anti-communism as the principal motivator for American involvement. Dr. Gelb also posits three expectations the U.S. had for their involvement. First, defeating communism in Vietnam was vital domestically and internationally. Second, military victory was never the goal and the U.S. provided minimal support while pursuing political compromise. Third, involvement continued in an effort to cause the communists to surrender due to American perseverance.[4] He concluded that none of the administrations pursued victory in Vietnam in his analysis. Despite this, several presidential administrations continued involvement in Vietnam believing they might have a winning strategy despite evidence to the contrary. Another of those called to testify was Dr. James C. Thomson, Jr. who began his career as a congressional aide and continued in the State Department under both President Kennedy and President Johnson's administrations before his resignation over Vietnam in 1966.[5] Dr. Thomson suggested that the death of President Roosevelt created an anomaly in U.S. policy towards Vietnam. President Roosevelt's plan urged U.S. allies to release colonial holdings and establish

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[2] Sam Roberts, "Leslie H. Gelb, 82, Former Diplomat and New York Times Journalist, Dies," *The New York Times,* August 31, 2019.

[3] "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 92nd Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1973), 8-10.

[4] "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 10-12.

[5] James Reed, "In Memorium: James C. Thomson, Jr.," *Perspectives on History,* American Historical Association, February 1, 2003.

an international trusteeship for Indochina, which was also supported by the Far East Division. Dr. Thomson suggested that the president's death instead shifted power within the Department of State to the European Bureau. This bureau supported United States and French relations and advised President Truman to support France's colonial advances.[6] In February 1946, Ho Chi Minh sent a telegram to President Truman who most likely never saw the message. In it he asked for American assistance in gaining independence for their country.[7] Ho Chi Minh's own independence speech in 1945 indicated that was the goal of the Vietnamese people, to have their independence from all foreign influence. Thomson further suggested that the U.S. acted under the premise that Vietnam had never been one country. This was an important distinction because it moved the conflict out of the realm of civil war to one which aligned with a developing new military strategy of counterinsurgency.[8] However, after World War II and a succession of presidential administrations, foreign policy shifted. Amid growing concern over the communist threat, the politics of President Roosevelt were soon forgotten. After the First Indochina War and the end of the Truman Doctrine, President Eisenhower sent advisors to aid the newly formed

[6] "Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War," 50.

[7] Letter from Ho Chi Minh to President Harry S. Truman, February 28, 1946, Washington and Pacific Coast Field Station Files, 1942-1945, Records of the Office of the Strategic Services, 1919-2002, NACP. According to NACP staff commentary on the document members of the Truman Library verify that the telegram is not in the library's holdings which suggests the validity of Ken Burns' claim that the president never received the telegram.

[8] The discussion regarding development of military counterinsurgency policy and its effect on Vietnam is out of the scope of this research but the following sources cover the subject in detail. Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976*, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 2006)., *Operations Against Guerilla Forces*, FM31-20, Department of the Army Field Manual, February 1951., and *The U.S. Army and Irregular Warfare, 1775-2007: Selected Papers from the 2007 Conference of Army Historians*, ed. Richard G. Davis, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 2008).

South Vietnamese government under President Ngô Dình Diêm and used diplomacy to avoid direct conflict.

Nevertheless, when President Kennedy was elected he inherited an issue that had been brewing for almost two decades. Direct involvement of the United States in Vietnam began escalating under President Kennedy with his de-escalation of nuclear defense and focus on counterinsurgency. It continued into the subsequent President Lyndon B. Johnson and President Richard M. Nixon administrations. While men sent to Vietnam were there initially in an advisory capacity, this mission changed with President Johnson's administration. The necessity for more men to fulfill combat and support roles increased significantly as the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) was reorganized to the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). Men in the United States had the option to enlist on their own or be drafted through the selective service as demand grew to increase the military. Women were not subject to the draft and their enlistment, or commission, was voluntary. Men were involuntarily sent to Vietnam as a result, but what about the women? It has been established that there were upwards of 350,000 women who had served in World War II. The remnant that remained after the drawdown became the foundation for modern women's military service. Gone were the days of women serving in manual labor positions. Rather, their presence had been downgraded to a fraction and their numbers in 1962 were just 11,113.[9]

American women have a long history of involvement in military conflicts from the colonial days through both world wars and the Korean War. It was no different in Vietnam although it took several years for military leadership to get on board and send women to fulfill

[9] Bettie J. Morden, *Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990), 179.

support roles as they had previously done with much so success. Women served in Vietnam in many nursing roles but that has not been the focus of this research. Instead, this research focused on the women of the United States Army Republic of Vietnam (USARV) Special Troops Women's Army Corps (WAC) Detachment.[10] They were stationed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base and Long Binh Post and billeted in Saigon hotels from 1966 through 1973 when the detachment officially stood down. There are small snippets of their history interspersed in the overall record of women's military service. The only significant record of their time in Vietnam was compiled and published by the women themselves. The explanation of how women ended up in Vietnam can be chalked up to tenacity and necessity. The first woman sent in 1962 was born in Vietnam.

The first documented woman to go to Vietnam was WAC Major Anne Marie Doering. Major Doering was born in Vietnam in 1908. Her mother married an American after the death of Doering's father and she emigrated to the United States in 1924. She graduated from Southwestern University in 1931 and joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1943.[11] She left the service briefly after World War II but was recalled to active duty. By 1962 Doering had achieved the rank of Major and was given orders for a thirteen-month tour in Vietnam.[12] She was assigned to Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) as an intelligence officer. She and the team of men were tasked with researching and writing a strategy for success in Vietnam. It was known as the Program for the Pacification and Long-term Development of

[10] Throughout this document USARV will refer to the United States Army stationed in Vietnam; WAC will refer to the Women's Army Corps, a further list of abbreviations and acronyms will be added at the beginning of the document.

[11] "Dayton Graduate Joins the WAAC," *The Liberty Vindicator*, (Liberty, Texas, March 4, 1943).

[12] Doering Orders from Vietnam to McClellan, File Folder 1, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978"; RG 319; NACP.

South Vietnam (PROVN) report.[13] The study was published in 1966 and declassified entirely in 1988. Major Doering retired in 1967 as a Lieutenant Colonel. Though she was the first, she would not be the last woman to serve in Vietnam.

The first WAC officer to be assigned to U.S. Army, Vietnam after Doering was Major Audrey Ann Fisher. Her own curiosity about the lack of women in Vietnam resulted in her assignment. In her own words, "I can remember saying to a WAC officer that was stationed there, and she had the role called WAC staff advisor for 4th Army, and I said, "Why in the world aren't they sending women to Vietnam?" She said, "That's a good question, Ann. I'll ask them." She said, "Do you want to go?" I said, "Yes." And they sent me."[14] She was assigned as Chief of the Morale Branch.[15] The first women sent to Vietnam were officers assigned to different areas of MACV in administrative roles. American women were not the only women involved militarily in Vietnam. Vietnamese history points to two women as legendary figures in their society.

The Trung Sisters, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi, have been elevated to near mythical status in Vietnamese folklore. The legend recounts a revolt they led against three hundred years of Chinese oppression around A.D. 40. The selfless nature of the sisters and their desire for a liberated Vietnam helped them to amass an army in this venture. Ultimately they were able to

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[13] The report was the Program for the Pacification and Long-term Development of South Vietnam (PROVN) both volumes can be accessed through the Defense Technical Information Center website.

[14] WV0153.001 Interview with Audrey Ann Fisher, Audrey Ann Fisher Papers, Women Veterans Historical Project Oral History Collection, Interview by Eric Elliott, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, December 18, 2000, 30.

[15] Audrey Ann Fisher, Box 490, FIC. 2008.46, United States Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams. The Morale branch was a division within the Adjutant General Corps which was later realigned in 1962 to be part of U.S. Army Soldier Support Center. They were responsible for personnel issues in the Army. See Stephen E. Bower, *A Short History of the U.S. Army Adjutant General 's Corp 1773-2013*, (Fort Jackson, SC: U.S. Army Soldier Support Institute, 2013).

win victories in many towns and repelled the Chinese. Their success elevated Trung Trac to Trung Vuong, or Queen Trung.[16] Three years later, they were unsuccessful in fending off the Chinese who retaliated with "an army greater in number, better organized, better equipped, and commanded by a veteran warrior."[17] Their defeat led the sisters to commit suicide. Though defeated, the Vietnamese people have deified the Trung sisters and celebrate Hai Ba Trung Day yearly to commemorate the sisters. They are often depicted riding elephants and represent the "indomitable spirit" of the people. This spirit was continued by the Vietnamese women both in the North and the South.

The women in the North have the benefit of victory on their side for remembrance. There have been several works dedicated to the women who fought with the North and the Viet Cong. Sherry Buchanan, a *Wall Street Journal* editor and columnist who has written several pieces covering different aspects of the Vietnam War, covered the topic of the North Vietnamese women who fought. She wrote, "The Vietnam War is remembered in the United States as a macho war fought mainly by men. It was anything but. Women fighters in North Vietnam played a key role in stopping the most intense bombing in modern times."[18] They operated in both North and South Vietnam, although the latter was mostly subversive. This was directly witnessed by American WACs at Long Binh Post where "The work of these women is decisive and very dangerous. It involves carrying out political propaganda work in cities under the noses of the enemy. It means going onto enemy bases disguised as a laundress or fish monger, carefully

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[16] Van Tan, "The Insurrection of the Two Trung Sisters," *Vietnam Advances*, Hanoi, 1960, University of Massachusetts, Boston. http://vietnamwar.lib.umb.edu/country/docs/TrungSisters.html

[17] Ibid.

[18] Sherry Buchanan, "The Women Who Won the Vietnam War," *History News Network*, Columbian College of Arts & Sciences, The George Washington University, October 24, 2021.

calculating the layout, strengths and weaknesses of the post. Then, at night, blowing it up."[19] Northern women were involved in guerilla warfare and direct combat unlike the Vietnamese women of the South.

In South Vietnam, women had opportunities to serve in the military. The sparse information available comes from Natalie Huynh Chau Nguyen, a research fellow at the University of Melbourne. She cites an article written in the *RVNAF Servicewomen's Magazine* which indicated women served from around 1950 to 1975, when Saigon fell.[20] In the 1950s the Viet Binh Doan Trung Viet served in a similar fashion to American WACs by filling clerical, nursing, and support roles. They also faced reorganization and integration as the needs of South Vietnam changed. South Vietnam had a Women's Army Corps as well which "consisted of five specialized branches: Staff, Medical Corps, Communications, Military Supplies and Social Work."[21] These five were reduced to two branches in 1959. Unlike the American WAC, the South Vietnamese women were not promoted. A significant change in structure and organization occurred when their WAC transitioned again becoming the Women's Armed Forces Corps (WAFC). This iteration modeled themselves after the American WACs and not the French military model.[22] This provided women with a means to resist the North, elevate women's status, and provide women financial stability. There also existed a different group which had been organized before the WAFC were created.

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[19] "Vietnamese Women Lead Military Resistance," *Ann Arbor Sun,* September 27, 1974, Ann Arbor District Library.

[20] Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen, "South Vietnamese Women in Uniform: Narratives of Wartime and Post War Lives," *Minerva Journal of Women and War,* Vol 3, No 2, Fall 2009, 8-33.

[21] Ibid., 10.

[22] Ibid., 10-11.

A paramilitary group, the Women's Solidarity Movement, was created by Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu, sister-in-law of President Ngô Dình Diêm, to involve women in the defense of their country. It was alleged that this group's "members were paid twice the wages of conscripted men, drained money from the army and rarely did more than parade for the cameras while Madame Nhu took the salute."[23] Regardless of her intent, the program did not seem to be as successful as other programs that were part of President Diem's regime. He attributed this lackluster performance to Madame Nhu's inability to travel as far as necessary.[24] She served as the first lady since President Diêm was unmarried. Madame Nhu earned an interesting reputation. She was featured in *Time* and *Life* magazines in the 1960s. Time wrote, "A puritan as well as a feminist, Madame Nhu is the founder and president of the 1,000,000 Women's Solidarity Movement, a sort of Asian Junior League that has set up nurseries, maternity clinics, social welfare centers, kindergartens and night schools."[25] After it was disbanded, the WAFC was the principal means which President Nguyên Van Thiêu's used in his attempt to thwart the Viet Cong and continue involving the South Vietnamese people in their own defense.[26]

[23] Robert Templer, "Madame Nhu Obituary," *The Guardian*, Guardian News & Media Limited, April 26, 2011.

[24] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961–1963, Volume III, Vietnam, January–August 1963, eds. Edward C. Keefer and Louis J. Smith, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), Document 192.

[25] "South Viet Nam: Joan or Lucrezia," *Time* Magazine, March 23, 1962.

[26] Donna Lowery, *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories* (Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2015), 538.

In 1964 the South Vietnamese military stated their intent to start a women's military school and requested both officer and enlisted WAC advisors to assist them. Major Kathleen Wilkes and Sergeant First Class (SFC) Betty Adams were sent to fulfill that request in January 1965. They worked with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to establish a women's military corps which was organized in a similar fashion as the WAC. In addition to the education and training, they were responsible for the initial start-up of the training center just outside of Saigon. They worked with engineers to build their facility. Women volunteers trained in basic military conduct such as customs and courtesies, drill and ceremony, first aid and field operations. Unlike the WAC, the WAFC received weapons familiarization training, though

Figure 1 Major Kathleen Wilkes and Major Huong enroute to weapons training at Quang Trung March 26, 1965, WAC.2011.311, Betty Adams Collection, Box 515A, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams. Photo by Betty Adams.

unlike their northern counterparts they did not participate in combat.[27] Another difference to their American counterparts were women's assignments. Instead of joining individual service branches, the women of WAFC were assigned as needed to any available service. A 1966 El Paso newspaper featured Major Wilkes after she returned from her assignment to Vietnam. She recounted the willingness of the Vietnamese women to enlist and stated she and Sergeant Adams trained over 1300 women the first year. Her memories included 70–90-hour work weeks, very little sleep, and quick showers as she and Adams established the center's routines. The work was

Figure 2 General Thieu with Major Vui and two WAFC, May 11, 1965. WAC.2011.311, Betty Adams Collection, Box 515A, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams. Photo by Betty Adams.

[27] J.T. Frye, "A Helping Hand From The Girls," *Pacific Stars & Stripes*, May 18, 1968.

not confined to the training center either. Field duty sent them into the Mekong Delta where they ate delicacies such as rat stew.[28] The initiative to train WAFC was not confined to Saigon. Approximately fifty-one women traveled from Saigon to Fort McClellan, Alabama to attend the WAC Officer Advanced Course.[29] Over the course of the war six officers were sent as WAC advisers to the WAFC. An enlisted WAC was assigned as her noncommissioned officer (NCO). In 1968 a junior officer tasking was established, and three women filled this position until 1971.[30] In addition to these women who operated in Saigon, there was a push to establish a WAC

Figure 3 General Dinh addresses a graduating class, November 27, 1965. WAC.2011.311, Betty Adams Collection, Box 515A, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams. Photo by Betty Adams.

[28] Joy Miller, "WAC Trains South Viet Women," *El Paso Times*, April 24, 1966.

[29] Inez Robb, "Little Bundle of Courage: Women's Army Corps Trains Viet Nam Gal," *San Angelo Standard-Times*, May 5, 1965. Lowery, *Women*, 538-539.

[30] Lowery, *Women*, 540-553.

detachment in Vietnam to provide clerical and administrative support to units within USARV and MACV. It would be the first deployed WAC unit in a combat zone since World War II as well as the last WAC detachment ever to deploy to a combat zone.

Getting women to Vietnam was not easy, then again, neither was keeping women in the military. Public Law 78-110 signed by President Franklin Roosevelt established the Women's Army Corps as the successor to the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1943 thwarting the intent for them to disband after World War II. It was not until June 1948 that Public Law 625, the Women's Armed Forces Integration Act signed by President Harry Truman made the WAC officially part of the Army. This granted women equal pay, benefits, and privileges as their male counterparts.[31] A subsequent executive order desegregated the military in July though integration took two more years of administrative action before it was implemented. Women's units were integrated once quotas on blacks were lifted, they integrated in April 1950 before the regular Army.[32] The WAC directors fought to keep the WAC as a distinctly separate, but equal, part of the Army from that point forward. After the WAC advisers were sent to Saigon sources state that General William C. Westmoreland requisitioned WAC officers to support MACV in administrative roles.[33] The fact that WACs were already serving in Vietnam and working with the South Vietnamese military never seemed to reach Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.

A phone call on January 17, 1966, between President Johnson and Secretary McNamara discussed various aspects of Vietnam, including military women:

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[31] Bettie J. Morden, *Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990), 12.

[32] It was Executive Order 9981 which President Truman signed July 26, 1948, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/executive-orders/9981/executive-order-9981

[33] Lowery, *Women*, 7 & 610. and Morden, *Women's*, 243-245.

LBJ: Tell me about the women out there, Bob. I'm getting some—The Post is starting nagging at me.

RSM: The lack of women?

LBJ: Yeah. In the services. There ain't nothing but nurses. Say that you won't let any of the WACs go, or any of the WAVEs go, or any of the rest of them. You reckon' we can sprinkle any of them out there?

RSM: Frankly, the question of WAVEs and WACs hasn't been brought to me, Mr. President. I would oppose it. I think it would just cause a tremendous amount of unrest and trouble. We won't let the wives go out there, of officers or enlisted men or diplomatic personnel. And to introduce WAVEs and WACS, in the first place, they don't add anything in the way of efficiency to the operation. In the second place, they require a lot of special quarters and special handling. In the third place, it causes morale problems because of apparent discrimination. The wives in Bangkok are just sore as hell that there are wives of civilian employees and female employees out there. And beyond that, the wives of foreign diplomats allied with us, for example, the Australian diplomats, are allowed in Saigon and they take pictures of young American women in the area and they wonder what their husbands are doing. It seems to me that to send WAVEs and WACs will simply accentuate that problem. And I haven't felt any pressure for it. As a matter of fact, none of the services have even raised the question with me, but I'll look into it.

LBJ: No. No, I wouldn't stir it up. But, they're raising hell with me and I assume that it's coming from, they say, some Major Bonnie somebody at the Air Force, whatever they are, I guess WACs, Air Force, whatever you call 'em. I asked [indecipherable] told me they didn't want them unless they were a nurse; say they got about 250–300 nurses.

RSM: Well, I noticed an article or two a week or so ago about it. I didn't follow it up then because I just wanted to let sleeping dogs lie on this thing. But I can do so anytime.

LBJ: No, I think we'll just let it go. I'll tell them. I got a question in a press conference about it, and said they were very distressed, from a lady at The Washington Post. So I just anticipated I'd get that. Do you think we ought to have a meeting? When's Dean coming back? Do you know?[34]

[34] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-1968, Volume IV, Vietnam, 1966, ed. David C. Humphrey (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1998) Document 26. The audio file of this conversation is available at https://www.discoverlbj.org/item/tel-09502 at minute mark 12:71.

Secretary McNamara's sentiments reflected the attitude of most men towards women in the military. The possible article in reference, written by syndicated journalist Jack Anderson, "Should We Send Our Women Soldiers to Vietnam?" was featured in papers across the country, including *The Washington Post*. His article featured the opinions of servicewomen on their exclusion from Vietnam duty, decried the lack of training which the World War II corps had received, and criticized the intense focus on fitness for beauty standards rather than military readiness.[35] Anderson surmised that a sense of fatherly protection was the main reason women were not being sent to Vietnam. The women he quoted were indignant that their service was overlooked for Vietnam. He questioned why military recruiting was not pushing to fill the

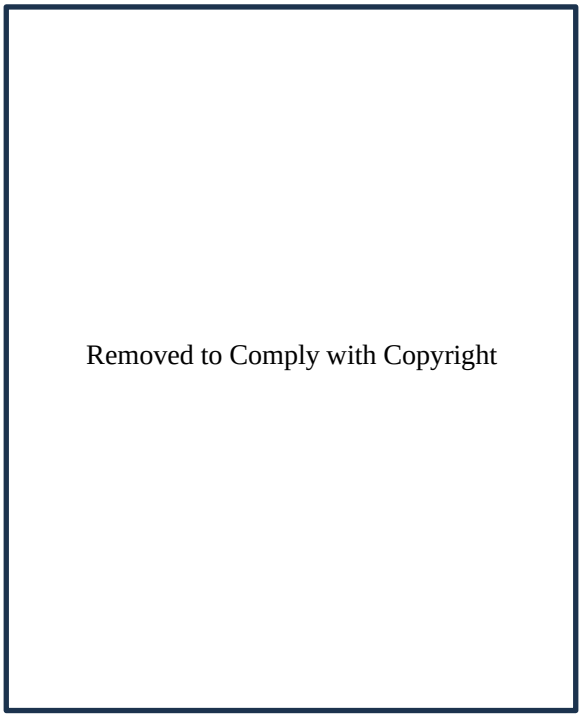

Figure 4 Jack Anderson Article, January 2, 1966, page 2, Daily Press, Newport News, VA, https://www.newspapers.com/article/daily-press/143012008/

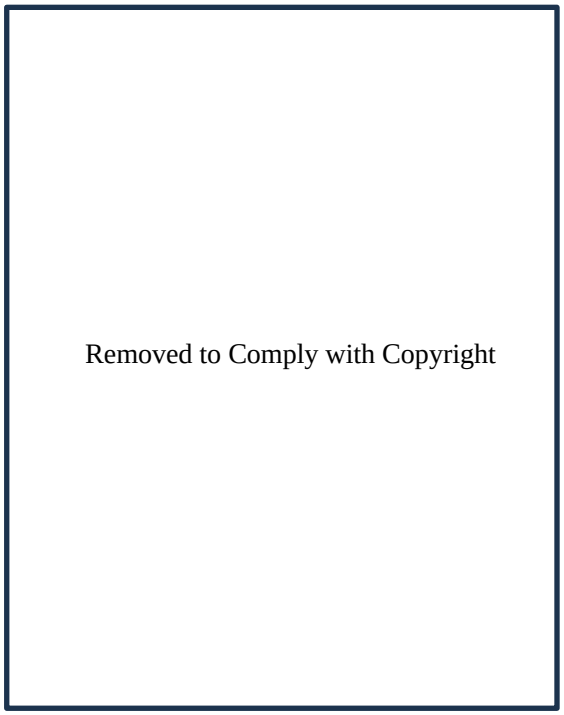

Figure 5 Jack Anderson Article, January 2, 1966, page 1, Daily Press, Newport News, VA, https://www.newspapers.com/article/daily-press/143011981/

[35] Jack Anderson, "Should We Send our Woman Soldiers to Vietnam?" *Daily Press*, Newport News, Virginia, January 2, 1966.

authorized two percent of female service members and why women were not being sent to fill support roles. Further, he pointed out that doing so would free males to serve in other areas and lessen the military's use of Vietnamese locals in these positions. Despite the availability and willingness of women to serve, Secretary McNamara made several ludicrous assumptions in his conversation with the President. His three reasons for opposing military women in Vietnam; no added mission value, difficulty in housing requirements, and perceived morale problems with stateside military wives. Each of his reasons were old arguments which women in previous conflicts had already overcome but would again disprove in Vietnam. In fact, they already were. The first women officers arrived with little fanfare or notice on the national level. While there were articles written and published, there was no intense media scrutiny or spousal fallout. A December 1966 query from Major Steinbach to the office of the WAC director inquired when WACs were sent, how many there were, what they were doing, and if more were going. Lieutenant Colonel Mary E. Kelly, Deputy Director of the WAC, responded:

> There was one WAC officer assigned as a Liaison Officer with the MSAG in Vietnam from 1962-1963. The first two advisers (1 officer and 1enlisted woman) went over in January 1965. In the Fall of 1965 some enlisted stenographers and staff officers were assigned to major unit headquarters in Saigon. 2. There are about 14 or 15 enlisted women in Vietnam now. One is an adviser to the RVN Women's Armed Forces Corps; three are unit cadre; the remainder are stenographers assigned to major unit headquarters in Saigon. 3. Personnel requisitions are filled as they are received. We do not discuss shipments to Vietnam.[36]

The women stationed in Vietnam at that time were living in Saigon hotels and had transitioned well. By October 1966 Lieutenant General Jean Engler's April requisition to stand

[36] Query from Major Steinbach. December 5, 1966. File Folder 3, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978" 1973 – 1989; RG 319; NACP., Lieutenant Colonel Kelly was Lieutenant Colonel Mary E. Kelly, appointed by Colonel Emily Gorman, WAC Director until 1966, Kelly continued in this position under Colonel Hoisington.

up an official WAC detachment had been approved.[37] Colonel Elizabeth Hoisington, WAC Director, hand selected and assigned the first cadre members to set up and prepare the detachment for activation. All women assigned to Vietnam would serve a twelve-month tour. They would earn hostile fire pay, enlisted women would earn tax exempt status their whole tour, and officers would receive a $500.00 tax exemption for service in a combat area. These parameters were equivalent with their male counterparts.[38]

First Sergeant Marion Crawford and Sergeant First Class Betty Benson arrived in October 1966. Sergeant Crawford described the arrival as harrowing since the plane landed at a steep descent due to ground fire. The only two women on the plane, they were unprepared for the

Figure 7 Construction of a Quonset hut, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, FIC.2011.317, Box 634D, Betty Benson, Mag No 4, Nov 1966- Dec 1967, Photos 1-7, Photo by Betty Benson, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

Figure 6 More Construction of WAC Quonset huts, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, FIC.2011.317, Box 634D, Betty Benson, Mag No 4, Nov 1966- Dec 1967, Photos 1-7, Photo by Betty Benson, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[37] Morden, *Women's*, 245., "Fact Sheet," File Folder 3, Container 51, "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978" 1973 – 1989, RG319, NACP.

[38] 25 August 1967 Memo for WACs, RG 319, Container 51, Folder 3, NACP., For specifics on the history of Hostile Fire Pay see Brandon R. Gould & Stanley A. Horowitz, *History of Combat Pay*, (Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, VA, 2011).

sight of armed soldiers all around them. It was a surreal beginning to their Vietnam tour. The next few weeks were spent preparing for Captain Peggy Ready, Staff Sergeant Effie Efferson, and Specialist Five Rhynell "Ren" Stoabs to arrive. Meanwhile plans for the WAC detachment located on Tan Son Nhut Air Base were reviewed.[39] In contrast to one of the issues raised by Secretary McNamara, USARV planned and built a women's compound in three months that was separated from the men on Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Lieutenant General Engler, Brigadier General Thomas Cole, and First Sergeant Crawford discussed the layout of the detachment. Sergeant Crawford mentioned one change she suggested to General Cole's plans because General Engler asked for her input. She indicated the latrine needed to be moved from the far side of the cantonment to the middle.[40] General Cole did not appreciate Sergeant Crawford's

Figure 9 The WAC Detachment at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, FIC.2011.317, Box 634D, Betty Benson, Mag No 4, Nov 1966- Dec 1967, Photos 1-7, Photo by Betty Benson, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

Figure 8 Completed Huts, WAC Detachment at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, FIC.2011.317, Box 634D, Betty Benson, Mag No 4, Nov 1966- Dec 1967, Photos 1-7, Photo by Betty Benson, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[39] Lowery, *Women*, 48, 94.

[40] A latrine is the military term for bathroom, in this case bathrooms and showers.

answer and made sure she was aware of his displeasure. In jest, the women placed General Cole's picture on a dart board which Sergeant First Class Benson would block from view when he came to visit the detachment.[41] For safety their cantonment was surrounded by a twelve-foot-tall fence that had a single entry located in an existing two-story house. This house also functioned as quarters for the WAC commanding officer, Captain Peggy Ready, as well as the orderly room for the detachment. The rest of the women were housed in ten Quonset huts that held ten women each and were named after Las Vegas casinos. Officially the detachment opened in January 1967. The first women arrived shortly after that and throughout the year women began to arrive monthly for twelve-month rotations with the possibility for tour extensions.

Another of Secretary McNamara's reasons for excluding women was the notion that the presence of women would upset the wives who remained stateside. The uproar he predicted never arrived and it was unlikely that the small detachment of women deployed to Vietnam would have caused widespread morale issues with stateside wives of soldiers either. First, the women served in almost a fishbowl, a novelty among the men and welcome reminder of femininity from home. Second, there were never as many women in Vietnam as had been deployed to Europe in the forties. If anything, the women faced more scrutiny than the men because there were so few of them and they were scattered in different duty sections often working as the only woman in their office. They also dealt with positive and negative attention at their presence. When they began arriving in Vietnam, the women recalled excited reactions from their fellow soldiers. Gloria Grenfell Leigh, one of the first 1967 arrivals, recounted the reactions of the men when the bus transporting them from the airport to the WAC cantonment. "There

[41] Marion C. Crawford, "'Don't Ever Let Yourself be Average': Running the First WAC Detachment in Vietnam," Interview by David Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, April 27, 2018).

were men everywhere and they came running. ‘Cause there were about a hundred of us on the first landing when we got there. They were all very nice to us,” she shared.[42] Crawford recalled that suddenly, the WAC detachment became the shortcut to everywhere on Tan Son Nhut. She also noted that once when the women first arrived a bunch of men walked to the showers with

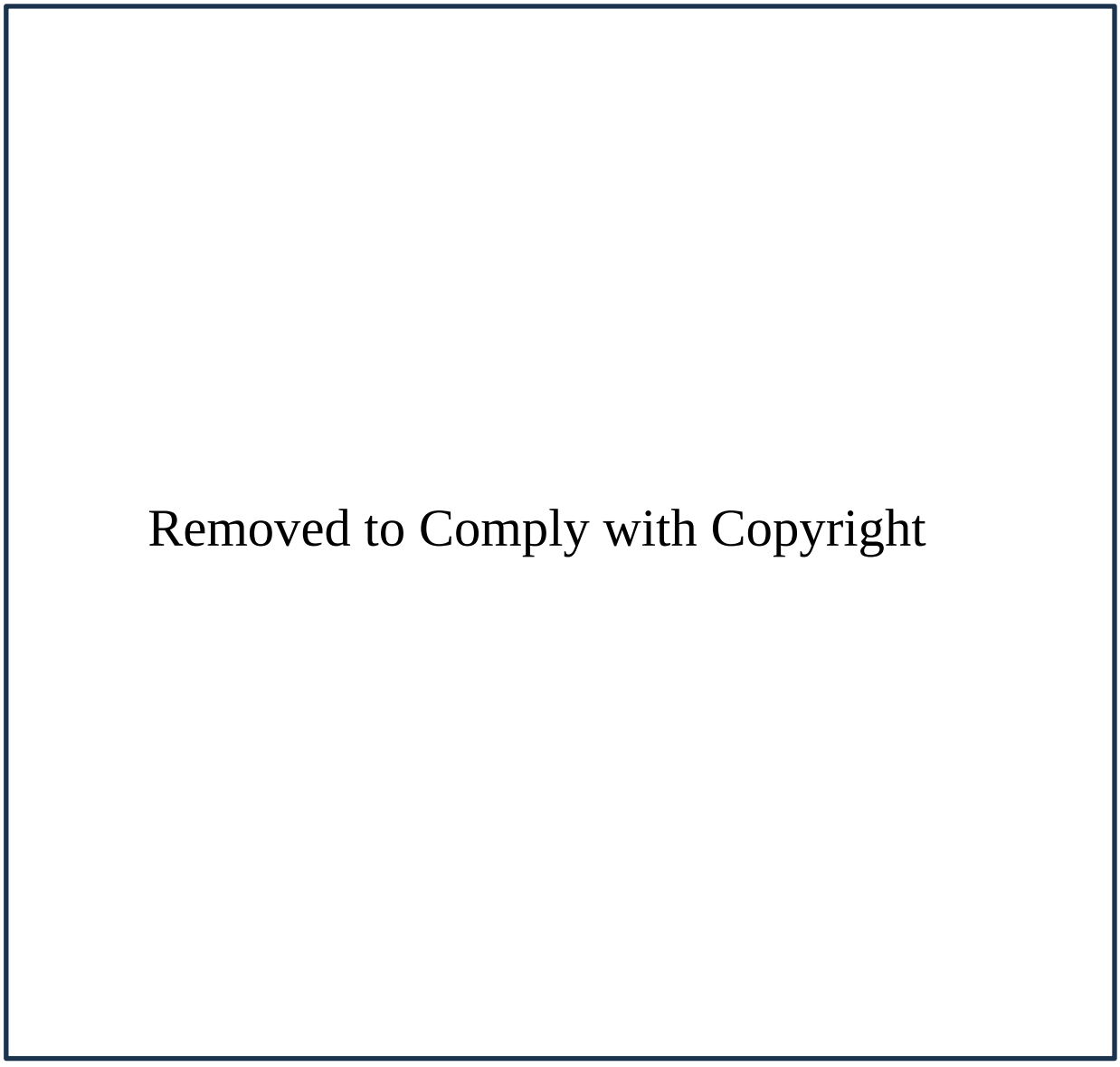

Figure 10 January 25, 1967, full page Petoskey News-Messenger, Michigan and inset of WAC article, via https://www.newspapers.com/article/petoskey-news-review-wacs-boost-gi/143011078/

[42] Gloria J. Grenfell Leigh. “Serving With Dignity and Compassion: A WAC’s Tour in Vietnam,” Interview by Mark Franklin, (West Point Center for Oral History, August 25, 2016).

only towels around their necks. She put a stop to that quickly with a phone call. Their arrival also inspired some men to suddenly shave and clean up their appearance and behavior.[43] Some local newspapers around the United States covered the women being sent to Vietnam but it sparked no national outcry of despondent military spouses. None of the articles made the front page and

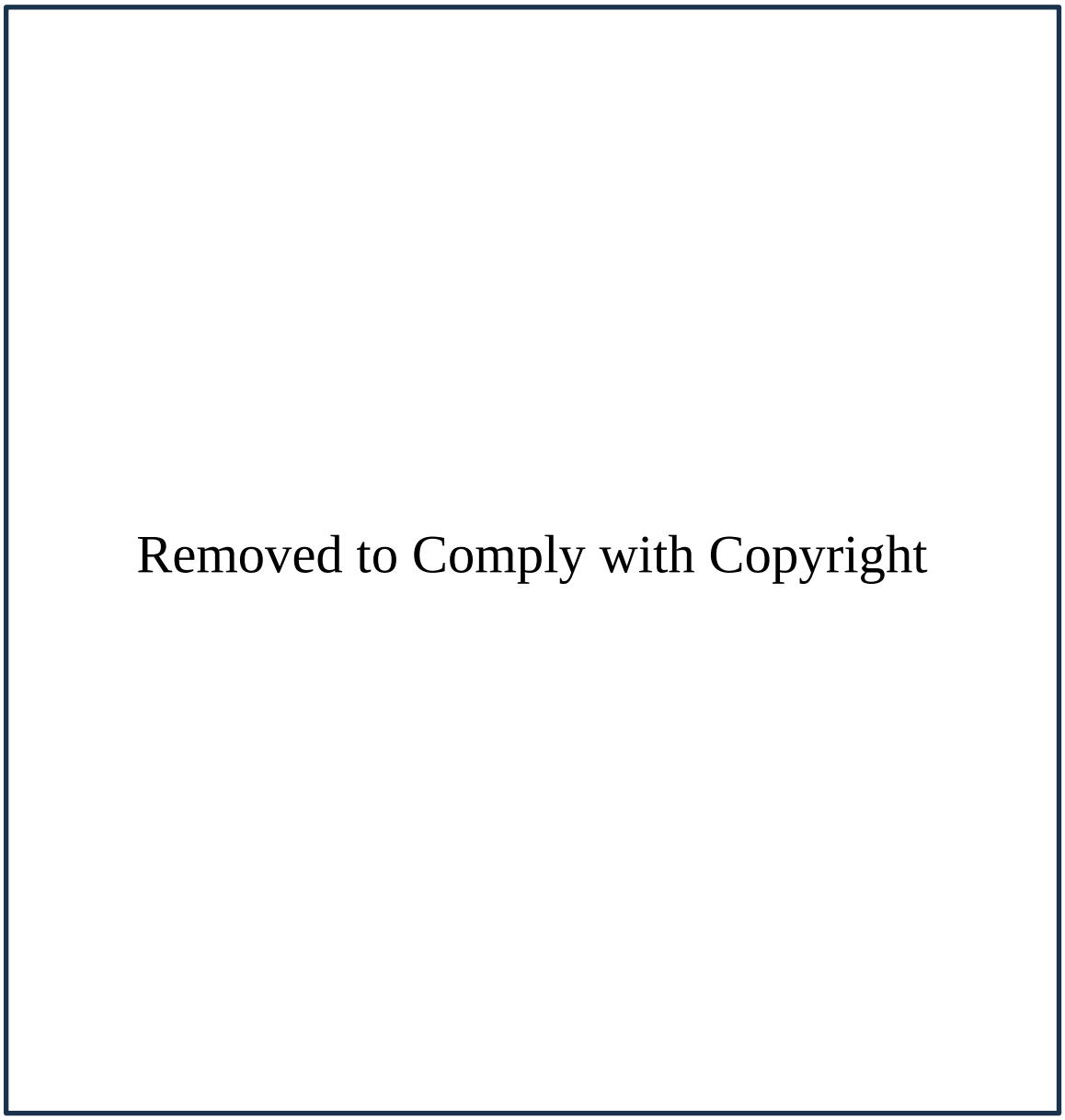

Figure 11 January 23, 1967, full page Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Texas with inset article, via https://www.newspapers.com/article/fort-worth-star-telegram-wacs-to-vietnam/122443799/

[43] Crawford, "Don't," 2016.

were generally buried within the women's section of the newspaper. They debunked another of Secretary McNamara's allegations as well. The women would spend the next six years adding mission value and demonstrating the adaptability of women to a war zone while earning commendations for outstanding service. In their off-duty time they volunteered with the wounded American soldiers and the many orphans of Vietnam. There were many similarities between the male military members and the WACs in Vietnam. They were on duty for twelve to thirteen hours per day generally six and a half days a week. They faced threat of sniper or rocket attacks and took shelter frequently in bunkers. They braved the weather in Vietnam, heat, humidity, monsoon rains, bugs, and mud. However, there were obvious differences as well. Men wore fatigues and boots. WACs wore a skirted uniform. More commonly called green cords, it was complete with nylons and heels, well styled hair, and neatly applied makeup. While the men ranged in ages from eighteen and up, women under the age of twenty-one needed parental permission before she could even enlist. Men carried rifles. WACs were generally unarmed. There was a clear lack of operational understanding between WAC leadership in the United States and boots, or rather heels, on the ground in Vietnam.

When she assumed command in 1966, Colonel Elizabeth Hoisington had clear expectations for the women under her command. A high priority was placed on presenting the right message the parents of WACs. Colonel Hoisington was a 1943 WAAC Officer Candidate School graduate. She was also one of the first WAACs in Paris in August 1944. She provided telephone support during the Potsdam Conference in 1945.[44] She also served through the slander

[44] WAAC-WAC, 1942-1944 European Theater of Operations, War Department Special Staff Historical Section, 8-3.1 AH, 1945, 38. also https://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/ephoisington.htm

campaign spread to discredit the reputations of the women during World War II.[45] Perhaps the memory of that was the catalyst for her campaign to maintain a societally proper image for the WAC of the sixties. In a 1974 article written in *Army* by Carol Woster, a retired Hoisington explained the past scandal issue proved current WACs needed to achieve high standards to maintain an acceptable public image. Colonel Hoisington indicated that she and other directors were the "guardians" of the standards, a responsibility they did not assume lightly. Her goal of WAC recruiting and training was producing women to work with soldiers, not act like them. So ingrained was this idea of reaching and maintaining the highest of standards that it overshadowed the military part of training. Numerous articles verified that while Colonel Hoisington was a staunch advocate for recruiting the nation's women, she was opposed to women assuming duties other than clerical. Likewise, she was opposed to any portrayal of the WAC as anything but a conservatively dressed, well-mannered, societally acceptable young lady. Letters requesting authorization for the fatigue uniform and the subsequent battle to keep women in skirts showcase her stubborn adherence to tradition in the face of common sense.

When women were deployed to Vietnam, they flew in the green cord uniform and were expected to maintain that uniform in a neatly pressed, well-groomed manner. Vietnam never got that memo. The post exchange (PX) was rarely stocked with necessary hosiery or feminine products. The weather was uncooperative for the maintenance of uniforms. The country made it difficult to keep clean despite the assistance of locally employed "mamasans" who had to be

[45] Mattie E. Treadwell, Chapter XI "The 'Slander Campaign'" in *United States Army in World War II: Special Studies*, (Center of Military History, Washington, D.C., 1991), 191-218.

shown how to clean and press a uniform without destroying it.[46] The women were quickly aware that diving for cover in skirts, nylons, and heels was not practical. After her arrival in 1966, Sergeant Crawford wrote a letter to Colonel Hoisington requesting permission to change the uniforms to fatigues to be better suited to the environment. She insisted women should wear the same uniform as men, especially since circumstances required them to dive for cover.[47] It was not until a general order was issued by MACV following the 1968 Tet Offensive that women were authorized to wear the fatigues.[48] However, this victory for the women was not well received by Colonel Hoisington. In November of 1968, Major Clark informed Colonel Hoisington that, "I am meeting resistance from the women. You'll be interested and perhaps unhappy to know that the resistance stems from the feeling that the WACs are in Vietnam to do a job and not to improve the morale of the male troops. The enlisted women feel their morale will suffer if forced to wear the green cord."[49] Their resistance did not deter the WAC Director.

Rather, it began her campaign to get women out of fatigues and back into their cords to maintain the image that the women were professional and polished, even in a war zone. The women had been wearing the fatigues to a degree since 1967, and it continued to be a thorn in Colonel Hoisington's side. In one letter, Colonel Hoisington wrote of parents, "They do not like to envision their daughter in terms of the rough, tough environment conveyed by the field

[46] Mamasan is a term used by the women veterans to describe Vietnamese local women who were hired to perform cleaning chores and laundry services for the military women.

[47] Crawford, "Don't."

[48] Letter 21 April 1968, To MAJ Ann B. Smith from LTC Frances V. Chaffin WAFC Director, File Folder 2, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; Publications, Unpublished Manuscripts, and Background Papers Relating to the Publication "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978" 1973 – 1989; Record Group 319 Records of the Army Staff 1903 – 2009; National Archives at College Park.

[49] Major Charlotte Clark to Colonel Hoisington. November 9, 1968. File Folder 2, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978" 1973 – 1989; RG 319, NACP.

uniform. It lowers, not enhances, the overall desirability of military service for women…," suggesting that women in field uniforms lowered the corps' prestige when compared to their sister services. Major Gloria Olson wrote suggesting a slacks and blouse alternative to the green cord, but the director's response was unknown.[50] Letters exchanged between Colonel Hoisington and Brigadier General Winant Sidle argued over women being photographed in the fatigues. In response to Colonel Hoisington, General Sidle essentially told the director that since the women were authorized to wear the field uniform, it was likely they would be photographed wearing it.[51] The battle continued into 1969 when she wrote to Major Clark stating, "You must know that I am still waging war to get out women out of those awful field uniforms and into the Army Green Cords. I fail to see a need for wearing them, as conditions presently exist, and especially so, when the civilian women at Long Binh wear dresses. I continue to urge a return to the Army Green Cords."[52] Despite her efforts, women continued to wear and be photographed in the fatigues as well as the green cord uniform for the duration of the war. Colonel Hoisington was photographed with the women, who were in fatigues, in October 1967 during her visit after the move to Long Binh, she was not in fatigues.[53]

The WAC detachment at Tan Son Nhut was moved to Long Binh Post in July 1967 when USARV moved there due to growing safety concerns. In one incident, a red alert caused

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[50] Major Gloria Olson to Colonel Hoisington. January 15, 1969. File Folder 1, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978" 1973 – 1989; RG 319, NACP.; No response to Olson's letter was filed.

[51] Brigadier General Sidle was the Chief of Information, Headquarters, MACV.; Brigadier General Winant Sidle to Colonel Hoisington. January 16, 1969. File Folder 1, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978" 1973 – 1989; RG 319; NACP

[52] Colonel Hoisington to Major Clark. June 3, 1969. File Folder 1, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978" 1973 – 1989; RG 319, NACP.

[53] Morden, *Women's*, 251.

sleepless nights when the Viet Cong (VC) were able to breach the perimeter of the base. After six months of exploring downtown Saigon in a limited fashion, the move to Long Binh Post restricted the women to the confines of a U.S. controlled area. The detachment moved from Quonset hut style housing to temporary windowless wooden barracks while new permanent barracks were under construction. The new barracks were completed in December 1968 and officially opened in January 1969. Women were then housed securely in four two-story buildings. There were generally four to five women assigned per room which provided more privacy than the open bay style temporary buildings they had previously occupied. Their compound had a recreation area which included a donated swimming pool and a movie screen. Some of the women volunteered to run the projectors. The women had cooking and laundry facilities at their disposal. The detachment hosted several social events and its share of distinguished visitors. During the height of women's deployment to Vietnam in 1970, 136 women were assigned to the detachment. Thereafter it paralleled the gradual military drawdown until the unit stand down in 1972.[54] In oral history interviews, many of these women recorded their Vietnam experiences and shared what it was like to be in Vietnam.

[54] Ibid., 253.

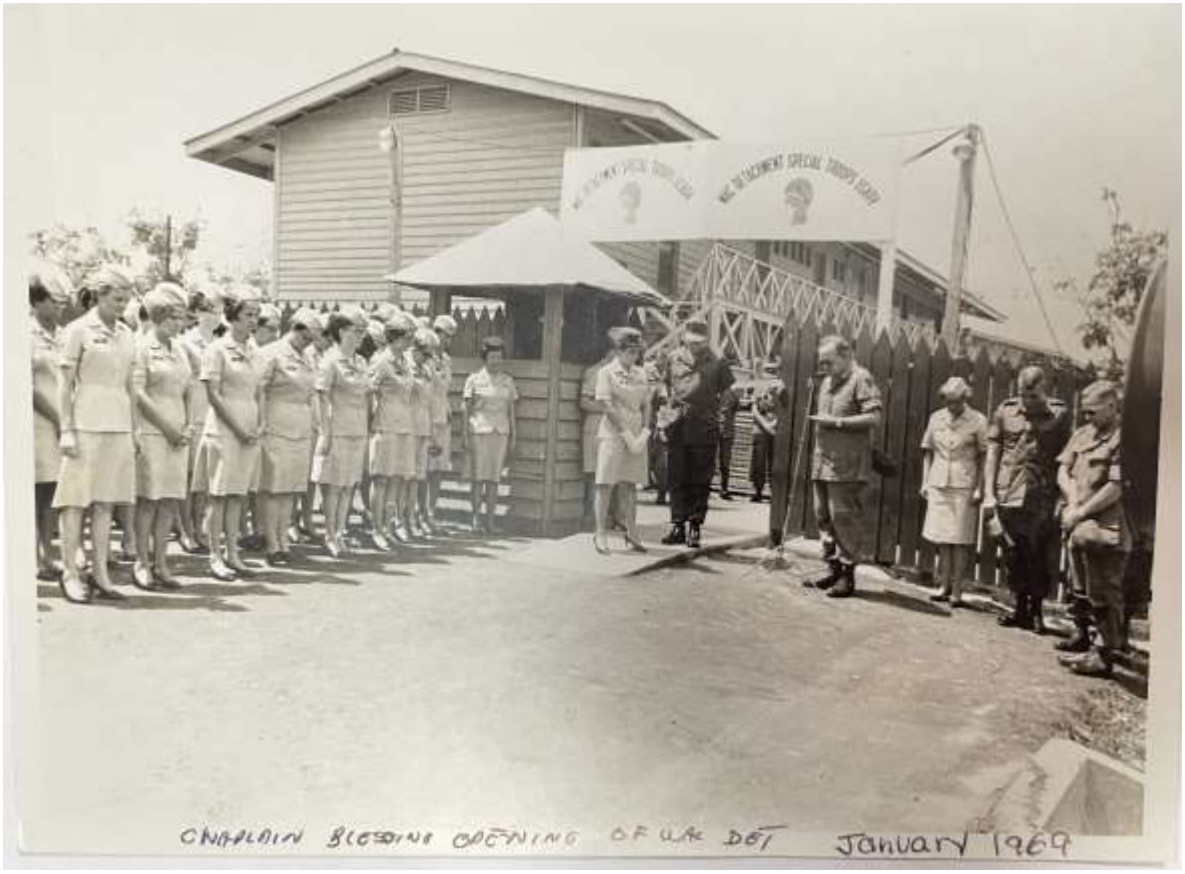

Figure 12 The chaplain blessing the WAC Detachment's official opening at Long Binh Post January 1969, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, 657A, Folder 9 WAC Det USARV, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

Retired Sergeant Major Donna Lowery was an E-4 when she arrived in Vietnam. Lowery was born in Long Island, New York. After her widowed father remarried, she and her family moved to Oregon, and she graduated there in 1964. She joined the WAC in 1965 partly because of her father's service in World War II, but also because there were limited career options for women. In her interview with David Spiry she recalled, with evident frustration, the lack of understanding, training, and preparation for being sent to a war zone. She was incredulous that the detachment included the employment of a beautician, Pierre, in the WAC compound but no weapons or exit strategy. She began working on her project for Sergeant Major School, which would eventually become *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories*. Colonel Bettie Morden shared meeting minutes with Lowery that she found helpful. It has become one of the only books

that recounts the non-medical women in Vietnam in their own words. The minutes Morden gave her included discussion of the defense plan for the WAC detachment. Essentially, there was no evacuation plan in place for the women, they would be left behind. While trying to recall the defense strategy in case of an attack by "Charlie," she was reminded by Mary Stedman that they were meant to use their hairspray against armed attack.[55] The women were considered non-combatants and as such were unarmed with few exceptions. When Lieutenant General Engler requestioned the WACs for Vietnam there was no requirement or request for the women to have firearms training either, but Morden noted he did privately recommend it.[56] Interview questions posed to General Engler asked if he would have provided weapons training for the women in Vietnam if he had overseen their training. He answered yes, he would have and further stated, "I would like the women to be trained in small arms regardless."[57] Colonel Hoisington was adamantly opposed to women being issued weapons. She believed it would increase the likelihood of a negative perception for the corps. Lowery expressed frustration with this but lamented that it was due to societal expectations in a different era.

Meanwhile, Hoisington's focus was on the growth of the WAC through recruitment programs targeted at the professional opportunities that service in the corps presented young women. She saw military service as preparation for women's future, but emphasized professional and personal skills they gained would present well-rounded and structured ladies to society.

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[55] Donna Lowery, "'I Found my Heart in the Army': From WAC to Sergeant Major," Interview by David Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, August 25, 2016).; "Charlie" was military slang for the Viet Cong, possibly due to the phonetic alphabet designation of victor charlie.

[56] Morden, *Women's,* 14. Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby, first WAC Director, established the exception that women assigned in certain positions could receive small weapons training on pistols.

[57] Questions "WACs in Vietnam" (1966-1967), From Colonel Morden to General Engler, Container 85, Interviews, "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978"; RG 319; NACP.

Various methods were used to increase the ranks of the WAC in the sixties and seventies especially as opposition to the war increased. One method, started in 1963, was part of a traveling exhibit which provided a visual representation of how the Army could use women. According to Morden, the WAC exhibit toured the country for six years while other typical exhibits lasted six months to one year. Lieutenant Colonel Mildred I.C. Bailey started a women's military history fashion show while this exhibit toured the country. She found uniforms from 1942 to the present that had been part of WAC history and showed the evolution of women's military service. The program expanded to include other branches of service though the highlight remained Army women's service.[58] Another method employed in recruiting were targeted advertisements in popular women's magazines. The November 1967 issue of *Mademoiselle* carried a full-page advertisement depicting a woman dancing with the caption, "Carol's an intelligence analyst" superimposed over it. Below the photograph was a small blurb which showcased how the WAC benefited women and suggested they could be like Carol.[59] Similar ads were run in popular women's magazines depicting different women and careers. The number of WAC enlistments rose due to these efforts.

As director, Colonel Hoisington was interviewed many times and shared how service in the WAC provided "unlimited opportunity" not only for education and travel but touted

[58] Ibid., 191.; Mildred C. Bailey. Interview by Eric Elliott. Women Veterans Historical Project Oral History Collection, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. May 26, 1999.

[59] WAC Advertisement, *Mademoiselle,* (New York, NY: Conde Nast Publications, November 1967).

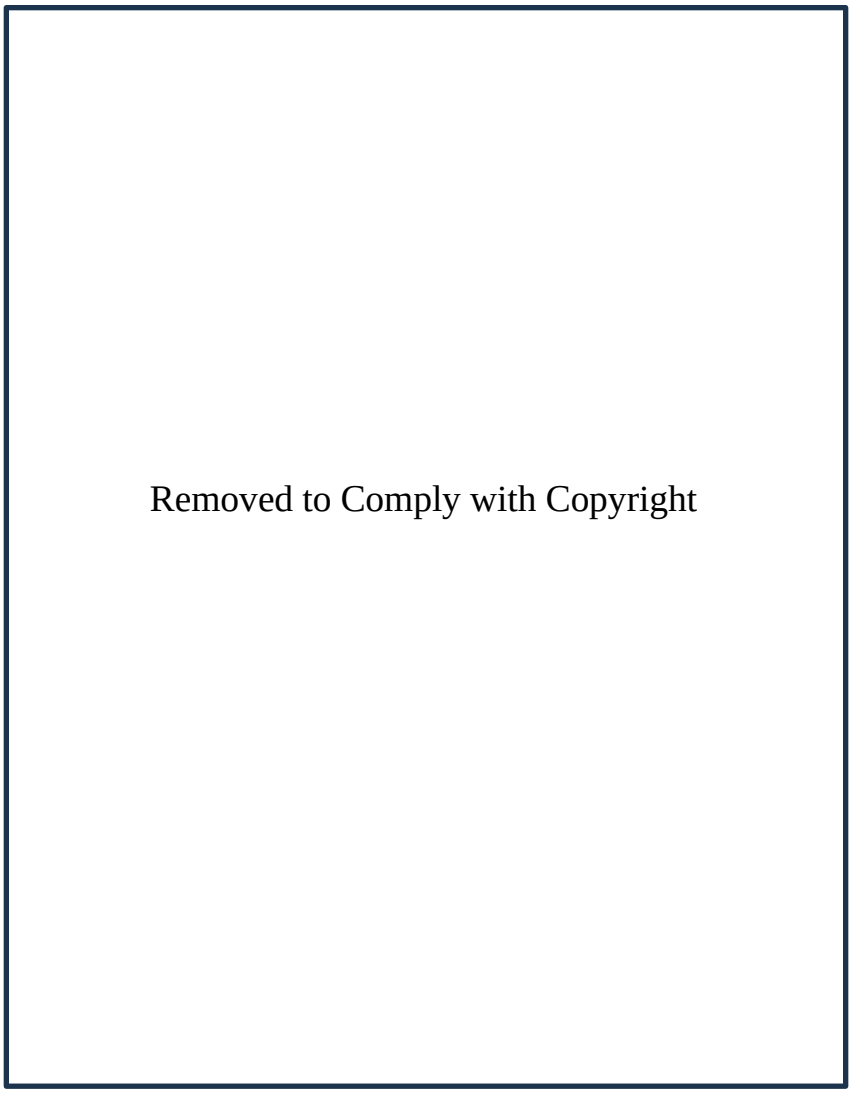

Figure 13 WAC ad from November 1967 Mademoiselle Magazine, New York, NY: Conde Nast Publications, https://archive.org/details/mademoiselle6566julnewy/page/n927/mode/2up, August 2012.

leadership possibilities for women. Yet, the media chose headlines which reinforced the temporary call for women's military service. An example of this is Mary Neth's "Today's Wac: 'She'll Be the Best Wife in Her Block.'"[60] The Anderson article in 1966 focused on how the service of America's women had been reduced to polished perfection from their previous

[60] Mary Neth, "Today's Wac: 'She'll Be the Best Wife in Her Block,'" *The Stars & Stripes*, September 23, 1968, 16.

accomplishments. Newer articles were in the same vein as Neth's promoting the promise of polished young woman ready for society. *The Stars & Stripes* featured several articles on the WACs in Vietnam. They used headlines such as "Lipstick Branch Keeps Pitching," which drew focus on the women's looks. Instead of drawing attention to their ability competently perform their duties, the articles talked about their dating prospects with a 300 to 1 ratio. They suggested the women came over to find men, and inquired if the women were looking for romance or dating while in Vietnam.[61] It is true that the women did date in Vietnam, some even found husbands. Most women stated that was not their primary goal. They volunteered for Vietnam because they wanted to do their part, support the combat soldiers, see what Vietnam was all about, and travel. The phenomenon in advertising and reporting made it seem as though service in the corps was a glamorous, travel filled romantic adventure for women.

According to Jessica Ghilani in "Glamour-izing Military Service: Army Recruitment for Women in Vietnam-Era Advertisements," the advertisements projected the desirability of military service to women while alleviating the notion of "gender panic" over an increase of women's involvement in the war.[62] They also reiterated one of Hoisington's main positions regarding the women whether intentionally or not. The advertisements reinforced her image of femininity within the corps. This further emphasized that women's service was a professional organization of well-groomed ladies who served her country safely. This was not an accurate reflection of actual service in Vietnam. The women may not have joined as enthusiastically if a realistic picture had been used for advertising. Living in Quonset hut or wooden barracks

[61] Jurate Kazickas, "Lipstick Branch Keeps Pitching," *The Stars & Stripes*, July 21, 1968

[62] Jessica Ghilani, "Glamour-izing Military Service: Army Recruitment for Women in Vietnam-Era Advertisements," *American Journalism*, 34:2, (American Journalism Historians Association, 2017), 201-228.

buildings, dust or mud covering everything as well as showering with lizards, not to mention the sights and sounds of Vietnam were less than a feminine ideal.

In contrast, male advertisements were heavy on masculine conquest. One advertisement showed male soldiers wading through chest deep water, rifles over their heads. The words "Man's Work" take up the top third of the page.[63] It creates a stark contrast to the soft, innocuous ad run for the women, where military is not the first thought that comes to mind, but intimacy. Another male advertisement uses the phrase "We'll make you expert at whatever turns you on," as its tagline.[64] The suggestive dialogue leads into what career skills the Army offered. It boasted the number of jobs available as well as hinted at advancing technological fields. Neither of the male ads mentioned or alluded to dating prospects. Overall, they were well created ads. Their message was relevant to accepted gender roles and intended to appeal to their target audience, but the same themes were repeated in reporting as well. The bravery of the young men, heroic deeds, and a focus on machismo were reported in local and military newspapers. This was true at least at the beginning of the war before the height of protests. The draft required men to serve regardless of their desire.

Tours in Vietnam came to the willing and unwilling. Several women who volunteered went to support brothers. Some felt called to do their part and make their own decisions about American involvement in Vietnam after firsthand experience. Many joined because there was no money for college. Marriage seemed all their future held, and they did not want that right after

[63] U.S. Government Printing Office, November 1969, Samuel G. Michini advertising archive. On deposit in the Connelly Library courtesy of the Michini and DiDio Families, (LaSalle University Digital Commons).

[64] Poster circa 1971, Samuel G. Michini advertising archive. On deposit in the Connelly Library courtesy of the Michini and DiDio Families, (LaSalle University Digital Commons).

high school. Most of their decisions were influenced by economic or educational circumstances rather than societal. They sought an improvement in career opportunities. Those who could not afford a college education enlisted to receive education benefits. For some women there was a sense of patriotism and pride, or a family legacy of service. Regardless of the motivating factor, the women joined of their own volition and many needed parental approvals because of their age. In some cases, parents had to be convinced to allow their daughter to join. Outside pressure to marry was not necessarily cited as a reason for military service though a few did acknowledge that their marriage prospects were slim, especially those who came from less densely populated areas. The motivating reasons for military service were as different as each woman who took the oath. Despite their naivete about being sent to a war zone, many of the women volunteered enthusiastically. Nothing prepared them for service in Vietnam. As young women eager to travel and experience life, it seemed to be a way to expand their horizons, travel and serve their country. Military service also offered them a semblance of financial independence and freedom. While some women were certainly not thrilled about their orders, they had few options to decline them. The options to avoid Vietnam were to go absent without leave (AWOL) or get pregnant since pregnancy was a definitive end to military service for women. For all the women, their arrival was an eye-opening exposure to the war in Vietnam and one they have never forgotten.

The era after the World Wars saw a rapid decline in military women despite. Growing involvement in Vietnamese affairs through foreign policies of various presidential administrations provided the impetus of the cyclical nature of war. This served to expand the role of women in the nation's military as the draft demanded more of America's men allowing women to once again step into the gap and demonstrate their necessity in the world of national defense.

Chapter Three

USARV Special Troops, WAC Detachment, Long Binh

Ground fire below caused the incoming aircraft to circle the airfield. The aircraft was silent despite being filled with soldiers, aircrew, and occasionally a lone WAC. Nervous passengers held hands as low fuel forced the plane's landing. The landing more accurately was a controlled steep, diving, descent in total darkness which minimized the aircraft's visibility to the enemy. The visual described was culminated from the various perspectives of the women's oral history interviews. The interviews provide a nuanced assessment that differs from the ordinary combat soldier revealing a day-to-day female point of view of those under constant observation from leadership but whose service is largely unrecognized.

Once out of the plane they were slammed with damp, heavy heat, and thick air. The sickly-sweet stench of rotting vegetation and stale cinnamon greeted them as they ran for cover in the dark. The sounds of explosions and gunfire all around them. This was the welcome new WACs received upon arrival in Vietnam. Countless interviews describe a similar landing scenario into Saigon, each WAC an anomaly in her skirt and heels. Unexpected arrivals often bunked overnight at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in a dusty room with a single soldier stationed outside as a guard.[1] Daylight greeted them with a view of red dirt or mud depending on the season. After in-processing they began the day-to-day routine for their tour in Vietnam. The

[1] Donna A. Lowery, *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories.* (AuthorHouse, 2015), 103, 105, 118, 135, 147, 210., Marion C. Crawford, "'Don't Ever Let Yourself be Average': Running the First WAC Detachment in Vietnam," Interview by David Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, April 27, 2018)., Earls, Linda. "'There's Combat Going on and I'm in the Army': A WAC Volunteers for Vietnam," Interview by David Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, August 26, 2016)., Description compiled from the personal accounts of Marion Crawford, Jo Ann Hoyer, Carol Williams, Juliette Anita Dortch, Phylis Wahwastuck, Susie Mae Stephens, Priscilla Landry.

women were assigned to specific jobs based on availability for their Military Occupation Specialties (MOS), and agreements between WAC leadership and duty sections. Most women worked ten to twelve-hour shifts six to seven days a week with very few days off. In a word, repetitious. Specialist Four D. Ann Sims described the days in Vietnam as "a few hours of sleep at night, waking early to dress and go to the mess hall to eat breakfast before work. Long hours meant coming back from working, showering, and then usually too worn out physically to even go to dinner in the mess hall, so spending an hour or two in conversation with my roommates before we shut our eyes to sleep."[2] The reality of Vietnam was no real front line existed. The area around Saigon was assumed to be safer, but they were still susceptible to guerilla warfare, snipers, mortars, and other attacks. Everyone was in danger from the time they landed. They served while under gunfire, huddled in bunkers during mortar attacks, took cover under desks or lay in roadside ditches. The danger was real until they were safely airborne when their tour was complete.

According to the available interviews and records they primarily filled clerk-typist MOS positions. There were others who worked in intelligence, journalism, as morse code operators and in the legal field. Many of the women found themselves as the sole female in an office. Occasionally there would be civilian females or Vietnamese local women who worked beside them. Either situation placed women in male dominated offices. In very rare occasions a WAC would find herself in charge of a section. This was out of the norm and generally not well received, at least at first. The male soldiers' initial response leaned towards one of disrespect, blatant disobedience, or petty attitudes. In almost all cases, the women reported they eventually earned not only the respect of their section but formed good working relationships. The

[2] Lowery, *Women*, 327.

consensus for most WACs concerning their time in Vietnam was pride in their service. They felt they had gone to support the Army by doing their jobs and they did so successfully. They formed lasting relationships with their fellow WACs. Some met husbands, and others found a love for military service which they developed into satisfying careers.

Despite most of the women's reports that they had favorable working conditions this did not stop instances where male prejudice caused problems. Several women shared the contempt they faced from the men. Comments such as them being sent to put a man in the jungle were common. A couple of women expressed frustration at being told this, they felt they kept someone else's brother, son, uncle, or loved one from being drafted and sent to Vietnam.[3] Other women dealt with open hostility from the officers in charge who felt women had no business in Vietnam.

Chief Warrant Officer Two Phyllis Egermeier was in Vietnam from August 1969 to August 1970. She worked as a counterintelligence technician with the 1st Logistical Command, 524th Military Intelligence Detachment. She recalled her time as the only female in her unit as lonely. "I found very little to smile about while there. I was the only female in my outfit and the men did not want a woman there to spoil their fun."[4] She did not describe their fun but the historical record points to sexual misconduct, drug use, and other destructive behavior as an example of what some considered "fun." For most women, the positives outweighed the negative. Several women extended their tours beyond the initial twelve months. Most of their time was spent on the job. Time off was a treasured break whether it was a half day of down time

[3] Halsey, Cheranne. "'I was Raised with Red, White, and Blue Blood': A WAC Volunteers for Service in Vietnam." Interview by Dave Siry. West Point Center for Oral History, August 25, 2016.; Norma Jean Thelen account, Lowery, *Women*, 325.

[4] Phyllis Egermeier account, Ibid., 351.

or rest and recouperation (R&R) which allowed them to travel outside of Vietnam. Bob Hope made several trips to Vietnam bringing various celebrities and artists to entertain the men and women. Some women were able to not only see the show but escort the acts that arrived.[5]

Often women joined the Army because of travel and education opportunities. While in Vietnam they had the opportunity for both. Classes were available via distance learning at the

Figure 14 WACs pose with their helmets, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657 D, Gloria J. Grenfell Fowler Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[5] Faye S. Conaway account, Lowery, *Women*, 125-126.

University of Maryland. Staff Sergeant Audrey M. Bergstresser used her time in Vietnam to earn credits towards a degree taking speech and psychology classes.[6] She also stated she was not a fan of beer, so education was a better use of her time. Travel opportunities to places such as Japan, Australia, Thailand, China, and Hawaii gave WACs on R&R the ability to see the world and escape Vietnam for a short time. They often traveled in small groups and had adventures to remember. Sometimes these experiences made it back to their detachment and were shared while they spent sleepless hours in bunkers to help pass the time.

In the WAC cantonment area, the women had an outdoor area for recreation. A donated pool provided a way to cool off in the heat and relax. They also had a screen for watching movies and a covered patio that offered refrigerated drinks they could purchase. Many of the women interviewed talked about how they spent their time socializing. While the patio provided a place to visit, play cards, drink, and blow off steam it was not the only place. They spent countless hours in the middle of the night stuck in a bunker where they would "play cards, polish their nails, or drink beer."[7] They wrote letters home, some even recording theirs so family back home could hear Vietnam. Staff Sergeant Catherine Oatman was one who recorded letters. Her recordings captured the night sounds of crickets chirping while she described what she could see from her room in the barracks. She tried to capture the sounds of incoming rockets and in between incoming rounds described visits to the orphanage, what duty she wanted after Vietnam, and how she wanted to spend her money. She shared that they watched the Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin moon landing on television. A few days later while recording she caught a noisy night. Over the sounds of her narration whistling can be heard followed by explosions. Small

[6] Audrey Bergstresser account, Ibid., 380.

[7] Rhynell M. Stoabs account, Lowery, *Women*, 96.

arms fire steadily tap a staccato rhythm in the background as helicopters can be heard loudly passing over the detachment. She told her family that they will end up in the bunkers and signed off to grab her gear. The recording continued until the following morning when her alarm started going off and an enthusiastic "GOOD MORNING VIETNAM," called out from her radio. She ended the recording as the bars of a folk melody began to play.[8]

Occasionally women found creative outlets for showcasing their talents. Several women played in bands or toured with the United Service Organizations (USO). Specialist Five Faye S. Conway worked as a clerk-typist by day most of the time. Other times she escorted high profile guests on their arrival to Vietnam. She toured with a USO rock band and shared that she

Figure 15 First Sergeant Crawford and the WAC Drill Team, FIC.2011.317, Box 634A, Betty Benson, ,U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams, Photo by Betty Benson.

[8] Cathy Oatman, OH.2011.190 #312 Letter from Long Binh, Recorded letters home, 1967-1970. USAWM, FGA.

performed in two groups, “Black Patches” and “Faye and the Rogues.”[9] First Sergeant Crawford was extremely fond of drill teams and organized a WAC drill team. They performed not only at USO shows, but also at the WAC 25th Anniversary celebration in Vietnam.[10] Specialist Five Precilla (Landry) Wilkewitz said that the women would go to the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) club and unit clubs in their off time as well. She remembered that the clubs often had bands and said a WAC should not go if she was tired. Since the women were so outnumbered by men, they often found themselves dancing until they returned to the detachment. Women did date in Vietnam, as various articles pointed out there was no shortage of available men. Wilkewitz recalled that women would bring their dates to the detachment patio which offered a quieter place to talk. Consequently, she met her husband in Vietnam at a fourth of July barbeque the detachment held.[11] There was plenty of opportunity for drinking and partying, but the women used their off time for volunteer projects as well.

There were many orphanages in Vietnam with children who had been abandoned. Some of these were Vietnamese American children. All of them lived in poor conditions despite the efforts of the nuns who ran the orphanages. Several women in Lowery’s book describe their time with the children. They were able to get military doctors and nurses to offer medical care to the children. They organized clothing and supply drives and received donations from the U.S. which they gave to the orphanages. The WACs also spent time bathing and feeding babies spending their time offering comfort and care as they could. Wilkewitz recalled with sadness the metal cribs the children slept in and noted there did not seem to be any children older than eleven. Her

[9] Faye Conaway account, Ibid., 125-126.

[10] Ibid., 51-52; Crawford, “Don’t.”

[11] Precilla Ann Wilkewitz Collection (AFC/2001/001/122696), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

inquiry about that revealed older children were sent off to school but often they ended up serving in the war.[12] At least two women from the WAC detachment ended up adopting children from Vietnam due to a loophole when regulations changed concerning motherhood. In addition to caring for orphans in their off time, the women visited the wounded in the hospital. They provided a listening ear, familiar American faces, and comfort for young men wounded far from home. They wrote letters for the men to send to their families when they visited. Wilkewitz put it best, stating the WACs were not just serving their country, they served the people, too. The detachment served in a unique situation. They were surrounded by men on all sides but lived in an isolated bubble. As a group the women shared the experience of life in a female only detachment and the complications associated with close living quarters. They learned to make do with fewer luxuries than they were used to stateside and experienced daily life in a combat zone which most of the corps would never know. Individually the women had both good and bad experiences on and off-duty.

Individual experiences varied for the women of the WAC detachment. Many of the clerk-typists worked in offices of commanders. They were privy to troop movements, took incoming casualty reports, and a host of other clerical duties. They worked side by side with men in the same occupation. An estimated 22% of men were tasked with direct combat roles during Vietnam, leaving 78% of men to fill non-combatant roles.[13] Many of those roles were off-limits for women because they were considered combat support roles even though they were not engaged in combat. The social climate of the Army placed fewer women in non-traditional

[12] Wilkewitz, VHP, AFC, Library of Congress.

[13] Mady Wechsler Segal, "Women's Military Roles Cross-Nationally: Past, Present, and Future," *Gender and Society* 9, no. 6, 1995, 764. http://www.jstor.org/stable/189540.

positions which would have offered them chances to experience other aspects of the Army. This limited the chance to serve in roles atypical for females. These fortunate enough to attain those roles established precedent for further utilization of women by performing their duties in a war zone. Despite more specialties open to women as of 1961, it was a challenge for recruiters to fill those openings. Although definitive figures are inaccurate on how many women served in Vietnam at the WAC detachment, it is estimated that there were 644 women who were assigned there from 1967-1973.[14] The number of total WACs in the entire corps grew from 11,100 in 1962 to 12,767 in 1971, meaning that approximately only 5% of WACs served in Vietnam.[15] That small percentage of women accounts for why so little is known of their service during the war. It can also be attributed to cultural amnesia. That phenomenon is especially relevant to women's military service. Mady Wechsler Segal wrote:

> Women's military roles are socially constructed: Public policy, norms, and women's behavior are shaped, at least in part, by public discourse. What has happened in the past in many nations is that when the armed forces need women, their prior military history is recalled to demonstrate that they can perform effectively in various positions. There is, however, a process of cultural amnesia of the contributions women made during emergency situations.[16]

She suggested this amnesia exists because the nation is comfortable forgetting women's contributions when at peace until that history is necessary to remember. The escalation of events in Vietnam fit the bill and again, women stepped into a wartime role.

First Sergeant Marion Crawford always knew she wanted to join the WAC. She had idolized the WAACs in Michigan during World War II. As a child she became their junior

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[14] The roster has a total count of 644 women, 94 officers, and 446 enlisted. Vietnam Rosters and Stats, Container 88 "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978" 1973 – 1989; RG 319, NACP.

[15] Morden, *Women's,* 186 & 228.

[16] Segal, "Women's Military Roles," 761.

mascot and had her own uniform. In her interview with West Point Center for Oral History she shared that she wrote a letter to the Department of Defense and told them she wanted to enlist. She was told to report to recruiting September 15, 1948. When that day arrived, she was told women could not join the Army. She responded that she certainly could and went to basic training in 1949. Her company commander was Jeanne Holm.[17] Crawford was hand-picked to be the first sergeant in Vietnam and was informed by a Sergeant Major at the Pentagon. She was

Figure 16 Efferson, Crawford, and Benson at Long Binh, FIC.2011.317, Box 634A, Betty Benson, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[17] Major General (Ret.) Jeanne Holm served as the Director of the Women in the Air Force but began her service in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps before the formation of the Air Force.

Figure 17 First WACs arrive at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, FIC.2011.317, Box 634D, Betty Benson, Mag No 4, July 1967-July 1968, Photos 1-7, Photo by Betty Benson, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

asked if she wanted to be the first First Sergeant to organize a WAC detachment in a combat zone. Despite her own hesitancy, she took the assignment. Crawford facilitated the startup of the WAC detachment at Ton San Nhut Air Base. She and the rest of the cadre extended to support the move to Long Binh Post. She remained in Vietnam from October 1966 to June 1968. As first sergeant she took her role seriously and shared that she did not tolerate morally bad behavior between the WACs and men in Vietnam. She used honest talk and tough love to ensure their safety. As first sergeant she personally visited the work centers where the women were assigned

for feedback and ensured the women were being treated well.[18] Men who had previously snubbed assistance from the WACs often changed their minds, she chuckled as she said their requests

Figure 18 First Sergeant Crawford (in fatigues) with first arrivals, FIC.2011.317, Box 634D, Betty Benson, Mag No 4, July 1967-July 1968, Photos 1-7, Photo by Betty Benson, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[18] Crawford, "Don't."

Figure 19 Doris "Lucki" Allen deploys to Vietnam, 14 Oct 1967 (Lori Stewart, DVIDS), The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

were usually filled last.[19] Prior to Vietnam she spent several years in recruiting because she wanted to share the opportunity the WAC could offer women. She was always enthusiastic about the Army.

Chief Warrant Officer Three (CWO3) Doris I. "Lucki" Allen was born in 1927 in Texas. She graduated from Tuskegee University in 1944, worked as a schoolteacher, then enlisted in the WAC in 1950. She was inspired to join the military after her brother returned from World War II and was struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), called shell shock at the time.

[19] Ibid., "Don't."

She arrived in Vietnam as a Specialist Seven in October 1967 at the age of 40. She became a Warrant Officer in 1970. She had previously served as a Newspaper Editor in Japan because of her college degree. Prior to her arrival in Vietnam, she was assigned to Fort Holabird in Maryland to attend the Prisoner of War (POW) interrogation course in 1963. It was a first for military women and her first experience in the military intelligence field. From Fort Holabird she was assigned to Fort Bragg in the Continental Army Command Tactical Intelligence Command (CONTIC) as the Latin America desk officer. She tracked every move made by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. When she learned women were going to Vietnam, she volunteered and eventually was selected. She was initially assigned as an interrogator, but moved to an analyst position. In December of 1967, Allen submitted a report she compiled called "Fifty Thousand Chinese," which predicted the Tet Offensive of 1968. She learned later that it was not Chinese, but Viet Cong (VC) and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) who had attacked. Though her report was forwarded to MACV headquarters in Saigon, no action was taken to heed it. She expressed that guilt over all the lives lost during Tet still weighs heavily on her and she regretted not pushing harder for leadership to listen. Later another of her reports indicated that the enemy had placed 122-millimeter rockets around the perimeter of Long Binh Post. She took the report to Second Field Force Headquarters and again her report was ignored. This time she persisted in stating the accuracy of her report, being frustrated to the point of tears because her intel was being pushed aside. She not only feared for her own safety but also for the safety of everyone assigned to Long Binh. Her tenacity resulted in exploratory artillery fired in the areas she had indicated. This resulted in four secondary explosions and proved her intelligence was sound. The following day more artillery was fired where she had indicated and resulted in 117 more secondary explosions. She recalled the relief she felt that leadership had listened to her intel and prevented an attack.

Another incident where credible intel came across her desk indicated a modified chemical round, how it worked and its destructive results if successfully exploded. She forwarded it to the weekly intelligence update (WIU). Subsequently the 3rd Marines were warned and avoided the mortars. This intelligence saved many Marines, and their commanding officer sent a memorandum that whoever sent the report deserved a Legion of Merit. Instead, she received a Bronze Star. Allen was no stranger to discrimination in the Army whether veiled or not. In fact, her experiences were both race and gender specific where she was thought "not capable because she's a woman, black, WAC." In 1970 it was discovered that her name had been found on VC hit lists. This happened two separate times in captured enemy documents. This prompted her decision to end her tour in Vietnam. Despite this, she served in the Army until she retired in 1980. In another first, she became the first female POW interrogator course instructor at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. In 2009, she was inducted into the Military Intelligence Hall of Fame, the second black woman to ever receive that honor.[20] Allen is not alone in having unique experiences in Vietnam.

Major Evelyn Pat Foote volunteered several times to go to Vietnam. She lamented that the Director denied her requests in 1965 and 1966 to be sent. Rather, she was offered a choice of attending either the Women's Army Corps Advanced Course or the Adjutant General Advanced Course. Major Foote chose the Adjutant's course believing it would give her the best chance at a

[20] Interview with Doris (Lucki) I. Allen, OH0408. 11 May 2004, Doris (Lucki) I. Allen Collection, Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University., Doris I. Allen "Lucki." "'Too Blessed to be Stressed': A Women's Army Corps Intelligence Analyst Puts the Pieces Together." Interview by David Siry. West Point Center for Oral History, August 25, 2016., Doris I. Allen Collection (AFC/2001/001/109035), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress., The Legion of Merit was typically awarded to officers although any military member can receive the award, further regulation on this award can be found in *Legion of Merit: award, U.S. Code 10* (2010), § 1121 and *Bronze Star: award, U.S. Code 10* (2010), § 1133, which anyone receiving special pay within specific geographical areas is authorized to receive. Neither award has a gender requirement.

Figure 20 Major Foote outside of a hooch, 1st Cavalry Division Forward Base Bing Son, June 1967, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657 D, Evelyn P. Foote Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

Vietnam tour.[21] She attended the course with another WAC trailblazer, and both eventually served in Vietnam, "There were two of us who did that, Sherian Cadoria, who went on to become one of our early brigadier generals, and me. We both went AG Corps and we both volunteered for Vietnam and we both went at the same time."[22] Major Foote arrived in January 1967 and was assigned as a public information officer. Her position afforded her the chance to experience Vietnam unlike most women did. She said:

> But my biggest pleasure in that job was going out working with the divisions and separate corps and the brigades, all the people who had to deal with the press when they came to report on the war. Because of that, I was one of the few women over there who got to travel from one end of the country to the other. I spent most of my time hanging

[21] Evelyn P. Foote account, Lowery, *Women*, 104.

[22] WV0360.001, Oral history interview with Pat Foote, Interviewed by Beth Carmichael, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Evelyn Patricia Foote Papers, August 8, 2006.

out of a door of a Huey helicopter, hooked in with web seating, sitting beside the gunner, looking at the land below. We would be going from some point to some point, and the thing is, if you saw a target below, you engaged. So we would break off our trip long enough to take care of whatever's down there and continue on our way.

I was out with every division, every separate brigade, every field artillery brigade in both corps areas. I got to see the war from one end of the country to the other. I did not get to Da Nang. I got thirty-five miles south of Da Nang, with the Americal Division right up on the South China Sea, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. It's the Riviera of Southeast Asia, and I kept thinking, what a wonderful place in this country, beautiful place to be. You name it, mountains, ocean, you got it over there.[23]

Figure 21 Major Foote with village children of Phuoc Thien June 17, 1967, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657 D, Evelyn P. Foote Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[23] WV0360.001, Oral history interview with Pat Foote. Interviewed by Beth Carmichael. University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Evelyn Patricia Foote Papers, August 8, 2006.

After her year in Vietnam, Major Foote returned to the United States to attend a graduate school program. She was offered a second opportunity as Executive Officer of the WAC Branch which she accepted.[24] Major Foote remained with the Army until her age mandated her retirement as Brigadier General in 1989. She was later recalled to duty in 1996 until she returned to retired status in 1997.[25]

Staff Sergeant Donna J. Dear also went to Vietnam in January 1967. She and her brother served together to their mother's distress. Understandably, their mother was less than thrilled having two of her children in Vietnam at the same time. Sergeant Dear served twenty months in Vietnam. One morning she woke up and found a rifle round on her pillow. She wrote, "It didn't dawn on me until much later that day that the round could have hit me!"[26] Sergeant Dear retired as a Sergeant Major after twenty seven years of service.

Like First Sergeant Crawford, Staff Sergeant Linda S. Earls always knew she wanted to join the WAC. She enlisted in 1964 right after high school graduation. She compiled a book of the letters she wrote to her mother while she was stationed in Vietnam titled, *Vietnam I'm Going!: Letters From a Young WAC in Vietnam to Her Mother*. She wrote, "My teachers were very surprised when I joined the Army because they saw me as a quiet shy stay-at-home girl. None of them knew what was inside; the determination to be someone special, to do exciting and new things."[27] She knew she wanted to go to Vietnam as well and re-enlisted for an assignment

[24] Foote, Evelyn P., Box 657D, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery Collection, USAWM, FGA.

[25] Foote, Evelyn P., Box 657D, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery Collection, USAWM, FGA. More on General Foote will be discussed regarding the transition of the WAC to regular Army.

[26] Donna J. Dear account, Lowery, *Women*, 120.

[27] Linda S. Earls, Vietnam I'm Going!: Letters From a Young WAC in Vietnam to Her Mother, Xlibris Corporation, 2012, 11.

in California because it was closer to Vietnam. After the required three months on station, she applied to go to Vietnam and finally got orders to go in May 1968. She ended up working in the budget division of the USARV Comptroller office though she was not excited about the work. Her almost daily letters home to her mother provided a day to day look at the monotony and excitement she faced. She was promoted in December 1968 and chronicled her excitement for her mother. She recounted her experiences with dating and expressed annoyance when dates expected her to drop everything and have immediate availability. Despite not always enjoying her assigned work section because she was stuck inside, she did well at her job. She proudly told her mother about a large report she had worked on. She shared she was proud to be serving and expressed excitement that she was selected as a barracks sergeant at the detachment. This made her to realize she enjoyed leadership roles and prompted her to pursue them after she left Vietnam. She finished a career in the Army in 1988 and retired as a First Sergeant.[28]

Staff Sergeant Claire Brisebois Starnes did not have a lifelong ambition to join the military. She was born in Maine in a textile town. Instead, she joked that she joined to avoid getting married or working in a factory. As the daughter of a single mother, Starnes explained there was no money for college, so her options were limited. She chose the Army because they only required three years of service. She arrived in Vietnam in 1969 as a volunteer so she could leave Fort Sill. She grew up speaking French, an ability which found her translating government documents between the United States and Vietnam from English to French. When an opportunity arose, she applied for a job to train the Vietnamese on computer equipment. Her French ability helped her get that job. She trained the Vietnamese on using computers for the layout production

[28] Earls, *Vietnam*., Linda Earls. "'There's Combat Going on and I'm in the Army': A WAC Volunteers for Vietnam," Interview by David Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, August 26, 2016)., Linda S. Earls account, Lowery, *Women*, 253-254.

of newspapers and unit magazines. This eventually led to an assignment at the MACV *Observer* when she asked for a camera and an assignment. She received both. One of her stories covered the Saigon orphanages. Her other assignments for the *Observer* allowed her to travel to fire bases, medical caps, and most areas of Vietnam for her stories. She covered a Vietnamese Police Academy graduation, the WAFC training and other human-interest stories. Several events have remained with her in the years after her service. Once she was providing escort for civilian journalists into Cambodia. She shared that instead of taking advantage of the opportunity to go to the forward base, a bad feeling kept her from joining them on the chopper and instead she returned via C-130 to Saigon. There she was informed by a chaplain that her mother had died. While she was in the United States for her mother's funeral a newspaper headline shocked her. The helicopter that the civilian journalists had taken had been shot down and the journalists were killed.[29] Despite this, she returned to Vietnam and finished her tour in 1971. She left the Army in 1973 to work at the civilian equivalent of her military job. She credited her final years in the military after Vietnam for helping her cope with her experience. Starnes settled in Maryland where she raised a family and later would work to help Vietnam women veterans.

These women offer a look at the different experiences from their time in Vietnam. They served in different career areas, but shared similar experiences. Many of the women shared they probably drank an excessive amount of alcohol during their tours. They indicated it was due to a need for socialization, relaxation after long hours, and a means to ignore the war around them. This could also be attributed to the location of the WAC detachment on Long Binh. It was not far

[29] The February 19, 1971, issue of *LIFE* Magazine covers the loss of photojournalist Larry Burrows whose helicopter was shot down February 10, 1971. It named Keisaburo Shimamoto of *Newsweek,* Henri Huet of *AP,* and Kent Potter of *UPI* as those killed. Their remains were recovered in 1998 and are now at Offutt Air Force base in storage. Steve Liewer, "Remains of 5 Vietnam War photojournalists killed in copter crash wait at Offutt for permanent burial," Omaha World-Herald, February 16, 2021.

from the 24th Evacuation Hospital which is also where their mess hall was located.[30] The helipad was on the path the women took to the mess hall and they were constantly exposed to incoming helicopters delivering the wounded and killed. Many of the women shared vivid recollection of the smell of burning clothes and body parts which filled the air. At the mess hall the women ate side by side with the wounded. It was not uncommon for them to be surrounded by the young men who wanted to be in the presence of the round eyes.[31] Some men went so far as to touch women's hair. This was especially the case for Wilkewitz because her hair was red. There was no lack of attention for the women and to a degree appropriate attention was welcome. Their popularity provided plenty of dance partners, the chance to reconnect with friends from home, and even connected them with family members also serving tours. Despite the upsides, there were downsides as well.

While their popularity was a positive, it was also a negative aspect because there were far fewer women among the servicemen. The sheer number of men versus women provided numerous opportunities for dating and socialization. There were drawbacks to such popularity and attention. Specialist Five Linda Pritchard recalled the downside to her service was, "military men treating us like we were sent to Vietnam to service them. Whenever we would leave the WAC compound, they would yell obscene things to us and treat us as though we were their property."[32] Another shared, "I had several horrible experiences from some of the Army Reserve dental officers who were assigned to the 38th to get their 'combat tour.' As a result I have years

[30] See map of Long Binh Appendix A, *Long Bình Post: Vietnam*. [S.l.: s.n., ?, 1972] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/86694410/.

[31] "Round eyes" was a term used to describe American women as opposed to Vietnamese women, there are numerous references to this term in the oral history interviews as well as Lowery's book.

[32] Lowery, *Women*, 123, account of Linda S. Pritchard.

of anger, shame that has haunted me all my life."[33] There are several accounts of women who were approached and asked to be "Bunker Bunnies" by journalists with the MACV *Observer*. Specialist Five Karen Offutt was one of them. She relayed that they "wanted me to pose for a pinup picture. I did not want to do it but they kept telling me how much it meant to the troops, to keep up their morale, etc."[34] She went on to describe how uncomfortable she was after an initial photo was taken of her in a dress at a zoo. Another picture was taken at a television station. She "put on a large camo top, with just my panties and I was to hug a huge TV camera. I was so embarrassed!"[35] Another WAC, Specialist Five Gloria Jean Labadie posed for the *Army Times* in hot pants, but it was not recorded if she felt pressured into it as Offutt had.[36] It was a common idea that the women were expected to be morale boosters for the male troops. This expectation often coerced the women into attending parties, posing for bunny photos, or going on dates felt obligated. The women never believed they were there just to boost morale and many of them decried this stereotype. They faced sexual harassment often and while there are no official reports or statistics from the era, sexual assaults happened as well. The assaults were not reported for various reasons that were typically detrimental to the victims. Most have never been discussed since. Often the women kept these incidents to themselves even years later because of the shame and stigma which surrounded assaults.

Several women suffered severely traumatic attacks. One woman has continued sharing the incidents which profoundly affected her life. Sergeant Linda "Sergeant Mac" McClenahan

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[33] Ibid., 500, account of SP5 Sherri A. Tipton.

[34] Ibid., 349, account of SP5 Karen Offutt.

[35] Ibid., 349.

[36] Ibid., 522-523.

arrived at Long Binh in November 1969. Originally, she had planned to join the Catholic church as a nun after graduation. Anti-war protests in her hometown of Berkeley, California convinced her to join the Army in 1967 instead. Before she went to Vietnam, she served at a secure communications facility called Site R in Fort Ritchie, Maryland. There she earned a place as the first woman to be inducted into the Loyal Order of the Moles.[37] Her first year at Long Binh was relatively routine. Work, eat, sleep, enjoy off-duty time, and repeat. She had a close call when going to sick call one morning. Instead, she returned to the detachment to sleep. The medical clinic was hit by incoming rockets minutes later, where she would have been had she had not decided to sleep instead. Every account she has shared regarding her military service covers her darkest moments while in Vietnam. She shared three specific traumatic events. One affected her so badly that her faith in God was severely shaken. Like many of the WACs, McClenahan had many male friends. Most of the men she knew behaved honorably she says, but her trust in one was misplaced. She was violated in summer 1970. She experienced a brutal sexual assault from three male soldiers of the 212th Military Police Company. Her "friend" had been the one to convince her to attend a stand down party, a common occurrence. This party was used a ruse. After the assault, he then dumped her out of the jeep "like garbage discarded on the roadside" so he would not be late for curfew.[38] In her oral history interview with Kate Rowell, she shared her attackers kept some of her personal items as souvenirs. After that she had to walk back to the detachment after curfew battered and reeling from what she had endured. Once there, she told the duty NCO that she wanted to speak to the commander, Captain Shirley Ohta. McClenahan recalled that Captain Ohta wanted her to go to the hospital, but fear and shame kept her from

[37] The Loyal Order of the Moles is an award specific to service at Fort Ritchie, Maryland.

[38] Linda McClenahan account, Lowery, *Women*, 378-380.

going. She shared that had she been able to secure a weapon, suicide crossed her mind. However, Captain Ohta assigned women to stay with McClenahan around the clock without informing them as to what happened. They may not have known the details, but her friends knew something traumatic had happened. McClenahan was not the same. The attack changed her perspective on God and resulted in feelings of abandonment and anger. Captain Ohta spoke to the commanding officer of the 212th but the men had given him a different version of events. They placed responsibility for the party on McClenahan claiming they had paid her for her services. He asked Captain Ohta what women serving in a men's war expected and stated he would ruin McClenahan's career if they pursued the matter. McClenahan became a different person. To her, the before was upbeat naïve Linda who had been replaced by a heavy drinking, take no crap Lin.[39] Unfortunately, she was not the only WAC to experience sexual assault or harassment while in Vietnam. Unlike McClenahan, those women never shared their stories publicly, ever. At least two more had similar experiences as McClenahan.

Lowery recounted speaking to another woman who remained anonymous. She shared, "I talked to one woman who cried the entire forty minutes. She said her story was like Sister Linda McClenahan's. She said her experience in Vietnam was so painful that she did not want to relive it."[40] Sexual assaults were not generally reported during this era because men who took advantage of women in this way were not penalized.[41] There was a system in place for handling

[39] OH 02267 Linda McClenahan. Interview by Kate Rowell for the I am Not Invisible Project, (Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program. December 12, 2022).

[40] Ibid., 693.

[41] For a legal discussion on the topic of sexual assault and the UCMJ see Julie K. Carson & Brad R. Carson, "The historical roots and future directions for military law and policies on rape and sexual assault," *Military Psychology*, 30:3, 2018, 181-192, DOI: 10.1037/mil0000180

Became 1st Black Female General 1985

January 1, 1969 The OBSERVER Page 3

WACs Keep Open Line

LONG BINH (USA) — The 1st Signal Brigade, which provides communications support in Vietnam and Thailand, has an authorized strength of around 13,936. That round figure has become a little more curvaceous in recent months.

The brigade now has three female communicators, a ratio of one signalwoman to more than 3,000 signalmen.

CW3 Joan M. Blakeley, of Orlewin, Iowa, is the most recent addition to the Brigade. Miss Blakeley, the higher ranking of only two WAC cryptographic warrant officers in the Army, serves as crypto custodian for the U.S. Army Vietnam Communications Center on Long Binh Post.

Working in the same location is PFC Donna M. Loring, of Bangor, Maine, a communications center specialist. She keeps the keys of a teletypewriter clicking.

Keeping good connections is a full-time job for Sergeant Linda Jones of Detroit. She is off supervisor of dial telephone exchanges in the Saigon-Long Binh area. She is also traffic analysis NCO responsible for the collection, analysis and evaluation of dial central office and switchboard traffic data for the 160th Signal Group's Telephone Management office. It's the one with the baby-pink telephone.

One of the Signal Group's three WACs is Sgt. Glenda Jones.

WOMAN OF THE NORTH—Qui Nhon Support Command's Major Sherian G. Cadoria, protocol officer, uses a spare moment to catch up on paper work. The major was the first woman Army officer to be stationed in the northern sector of Vietnam when she undertook her present assignment in Feb. 1968. (PHOTO BY: SP4 FRANCIS JONES)

It's A Family Affair

SAIGON (MACV) — "My husband showed me around town," said Air Force Sergeant Diane Mathews, recalling the day she arrived in Saigon last July.

"My husband comes down to Da Nang about once a month and the three of us usually dine out together."

Another set of circumstances typist in MACV Headquarters.

"When I first got here it took me about a month to get used to Army correspondence," she said. "I still find myself having to check procedures now and then."

Working in a Joint headquarters "gives you a good look at

Figure 22 Top Right, Sherian Cadoria, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657C, Cadoria Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

criminal complaints within the military. The UCMJ had been in effect since 1951 when Congress reworked the military justice system. Instead of each branch handling discipline individually, the UCMJ was established to centralize law and order. The Manual for Courts-Martial was used for the procedures and punishment to enforce the UCMJ. According to the Manual for Courts Martial, Article 120, charges could be brought for rape or carnal knowledge. Not only could charges be brought for rape, but also for intent to commit rape, assault and battery, and assault. Those charges carried heavy penalties for conviction. The maximum penalty for intent to commit rape was a dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and 20 years

confinement under Article 134.[42] It was not until the second wave of feminism began to grow in the early seventies, stateside, that rape became a more widely recognized crime against women in the public eye. States enacted rape laws "…amid rising feminist consciousness and demands for the protections of rape victims' privacy rights."[43] The military would not begin to take a serious look at sexual misconduct until after incidents like the Tailhook Scandal, but they did not produce any tangible strategy until the early 2000s.[44] There are likely even more women who had similar traumatic experiences in Vietnam, but their experiences remain unknown. Time and unfortunately death have erased those voices from the historic record. Regardless, these events did not stop the WACs from continuing to serve with honor, courage, and distinction.

Awards and decorations are part of military tradition which recognize specific goals attained in service as well as incidents of valor. Many of the women earned Bronze Stars while in Vietnam. Two women earned Air Medals for combat flight hours. One earned a Purple Heart. One earned a certificate of achievement despite her heroic actions which saved several lives. The two recipients of Air Medals were Major Gloria Olson and Major Sherian Cadoria. Major Cadoria received a direct commission in 1961. After her assignments to Fort McClellan, Fort Bragg, and a stint in France, she arrived at Long Binh Post in January 1967. She served in Cam Ranh Bay as a protocol officer from February 1968 to October 1969 with various duties. Her

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[42] United States Department Of Defense, *Manual for courts-martial, United States, effective 31 May*, (Washington: U.S. G.P.O, 1951), 223-225, 355-356. Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525324/.

[43] Julie K. Carson & Brad R. Carson, "The historical roots and future directions for military law and policies on rape and sexual assault," *Military Psychology*, 30:3, 2018, 184, DOI: 10.1037/mil0000180

[44] Memorandum for Record from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to the Undersecretary of Defense, David S. Chu. February 4, 2004. https://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/laws/d20040213satf.pdf

16 THE MARYLAND GAZETTE Thurs., Feb. 19, 1970

Glen Burnie woman is first to receive Army Air Medal

Combat photographer and journalist, Maj. Gloria Olson of Glen Burnie, is the first Women's Army Corps member to receive the U.S. Army Air Medal for service in Vietnam.

She also has received seven other awards, making her one of the most decorated women in the 29-year history of the Corps.

Assigned to the WAC branch at headquarters, Army first recruiting district, Ft. Meade, Maj. Olson was presented the Air Medal; the Joint Services Commendation Medal Second Oak Leaf Cluster; and the Bronze Star at a recent ceremony conducted by Col. Edgar F. Mills, commanding officer.

Maj. Olson's impressive aerial record includes participation in the equivalent of 127 combat air missions, totaling 198 hours. The Second Oak Leaf Cluster and the Bronze Star represent meritorious service as deputy chief of command information with the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam.

A native of Rome, N.Y., Maj. Olson was graduated from Oswego Teachers College, Oswego, N.Y., in 1951, and then earned a Master's Degree from Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. She enlisted in the Women's Army Corps in September 1953, and received a direct commission in 1954.

Her first meritorious achievement award was the Army Commendation Medal for services as Information Officer with the 41st Artillery Group, Milwaukee, Wis., from 1956 to 1959. Next, she earned the Oak Leaf Cluster for serving as public information officer with the North Area Command in Frankfurt, Germany. In 1965, Maj. Olson was presented the Second Oak Leaf Cluster for outstanding achievement as information officer at Ft. Gordon, Ga.

Two years as chief of the TV department at the Defense Information School, Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Ind., followed. Here she received the Joint Services Commendation Medal for meritorious performance of duty.

The Pentagon was Maj. Olson's last assignment before Vietnam. As deputy chief of radio-TV news for the Department of Defense, Public Affairs, from 1967 to 1968, she earned the Oak Leaf Cluster.

At the end of February, Maj. Olson will assume the duties of the Women's Army Corps Coordinator for the 12 state Army First Recruiting District. She also will become chief of the WAC branch at district headquarters, Ft. Meade.

Maj. Olson is a member of Alpha Psi Omega, an honorary dramatic fraternity, and the American Women in Radio and Television.

FIRST WOMAN RECIPIENT — Maj. Gloria Olson of Glen Burnie, one of the most decorated women ever of the WACs, became the first woman ever to receive the Army's Air Medal for her service with the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam. Presenting the award is Col. Edgar F. Mills, commanding officer.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 913013

Figure 23 Major Olson Air Medal Article, File Folder 1, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978"; RG 319; National Archives College Park.

duties included reconnaissance in areas where Very Important Persons (VIP) would travel to ensure their safety and necessary security was in place. She also shared that she rode shotgun after having been trained in the use of firearms by the Military Police (MP) on escort duty for the VIPs. It was during her service in Cam Ranh Bay that she earned the Air Medal, but the details of the award are unknown.[45] Major Cadoria went on to become the first black female Brigadier

[45] Lowery, *Women*, 106-107. Account by BG Sherian Cadoria., Air Medal awarded to Sherian G. Cadoria, Maj WAC, HQ & HQ DET, US Army Support Command, Qui Nhon. 8 August 1969. File Folder 1, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978" RG319, NACP.

General in the Army. She was not the first to receive the medal though, credit for that belongs to Major Gloria Olson.

Major Gloria Olson earned her medal with 127 combat air missions and over 198 flight hours. She was assigned to the MACV *Observer* as a public information officer but found herself doing "shoot and write" stories after her twelve-hour duty day. This was partially because women were officially not permitted in combat zones, but also because she had a boss uninterested in her off-duty activities. This same boss demanded relevant stories to publish. In correspondence with Colonel Bettie Morden, she shared;

> During one of my combat missions and Air Force commander of the C-130 flight asked me why I had not applied for the Air Medal, particularly when I showed him my detailed log of all flights and flight records. I was unaware that I was already qualified (100 hours or 100 missions). I told of the unwritten policy. He told me he would help me fill out the paperwork and encouraged me to Go For It.[46]

Her medal was awarded in October of 1969 for her action from May to October 1969, but was not presented to her until she was stateside in 1970 in an intentional move to avoid negative press attention. A subsequent newspaper clipping from the Maryland *Gazette* featured Major Olson receiving the award for her actions in Vietnam. It was not an easy award to earn and her MACV *Observer* boss, a Marine Colonel, did not approve of her nomination for the award. He threatened her with a negative Officer Evaluation Report (OER) but since the paperwork was already in the system, it was up to Brigadier General Eugene Smith to approve or deny the award. He awarded it because she met the required qualifications of the award the same as all other recipients, though he was the one who suggested it be awarded stateside.[47] Another interesting medal was the award of the Purple Heart to Specialist Five Sheron Green.

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[46] Correspondence between LTC Morden and COL Olson, File Folder 1, Container 51; Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978"; RG319, NACP.

[47] Correspondence, Folder 1, Container 51, RG319, NACP.

Correspondence between Lieutenant Colonel Lorraine Rossi and Lieutenant Colonel Bettie Morden showed confusion over the award. A July 17, 1969, letter from Colonel Morden to Colonel Rossi asked why Specialist Green was wearing a Purple Heart. Colonel Rossi's response stated it had been awarded at Long Binh.[48] Later letters from Colonel Morden to Sheron Green, shared how Green was awarded the Purple Heart. Green was tasked with delivering orders from Long Binh to Nha Trang for her General. On the return trip their aircraft took enemy fire. She wrote that bullets and fragments came through the underside of the aircraft. They entered her left arm, shoulder, and the side of her head resulting in a bloody injury. They stopped at Phan Thiet to clean her wounds and she received a tetanus shot. Upon her return to Long Binh, she was seen at the hospital and more shrapnel was removed from her wounds. She declined to stay overnight at the hospital despite the doctor's wishes. She received the award in July 1968 and is the only Vietnam WAC to have received the Purple Heart.[49] Despite Specialist Five Karen Offutt's heroism, she did not receive a medal. Instead, she was awarded a certificate of achievement.

[48] LTC Rossi served as a WAFC advisor and was not part of the WAC Detachment directly.

[49] Letter Morden to Green, Folder 1, Container 51, RG319, NACP. Copy of Green's Purple Heart in Appendix B.

Specialist Five Offutt was off-duty and resting in her hotel billet because she was sick. She smelled smoke and was concerned that her hotel was on fire. She yelled for people to get out and realized it was not the hotel on fire but the small civilian hamlet next to it. Barefoot, Offutt ran into the hamlet and started pulling people out to the street. According to Offutt, the hamlet chief found out who she was and wanted her to be rewarded for the lives she saved. The Soldier's Medal was brought up, but the Army declined to put her up for it because they said policy dictated it was not a medal for women. On the contrary though, there is record of an Army nurse who did receive the Soldier's Medal.[50] According to the citation's requirements listed in

Figure 24 Specialist Offutt receives Certificate of Achievement, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657 H, Karen Offutt Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[50] News Article- The Fort Bragg Paraglide, Thursday May 11, 1967, Vol XXVII No. 20. (Dickson Press, Inc., Raeford, NC), Folder 1 Tierney, Marian A. (Army Nurse) Awarded Soldier's Medal, FIC.2011.317 Box 595, USAWM, FGA.

Womack Nurse's Heroism Earns Soldier's Medal

Lt. Col. Tierney

Capt. Williams, Sp6 Joel To Go To White House

Figure 25 Army Nurse received Soldier's Medal which Specialist Offutt was not considered for. FIC.2011.317, Box 595, Folder 1-Tierney, Marian A (Army Nurse), The Fort Bragg Paraglide, Thursday May 11, 1967, Vol XXVII No20, (Raeford, NC: Dickson Press, Inc.), U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

the article which are an act of heroism not related to actual conflict with an armed enemy, nothing specified gender had any bearing on the award. Offutt should have qualified the same as Lieutenant Colonel Marian Tierney had. Instead, Offutt received a Certificate of Achievement for Heroic Action which illustrated the lack of a standard policy regarding women's awards and decorations. Recognition seemed to be at the whim of leadership and medals were often downgraded or flatly turned down based on gender. Thirty years after Vietnam, Offutt was

awarded the Soldier's Medal. She was the tenth woman to have received such an honor.[51] Offutt never spoke of her military service until after her divorce. In an article written about her medal, she shared her ex-husband had not permitted her to talk about her service.[52]

Many of the women who served in Vietnam shared the same sentiment as Offutt for years. They buried their military memories or were told not to speak of their experiences. Some quietly began to share and slowly others have begun to share publicly as well. Women, like men, returned to a country that did not welcome them home. Specialist Five Gloria Grenfell was greeted in America with derogatory comments and felt angry at how she was treated. Her friends did not understand what she had been through and were uninterested in her service. The disinterest and hostility caused her to keep her Vietnam history quiet for years.[53] Though they did not face direct combat, WACs were certainly exposed to it and its consequences firsthand. Many of the women Vietnam veterans have health issues stemming from agent orange exposure, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and a myriad of other health issues. Most of the women do not regret their service. They felt they went to Vietnam for a purpose. They served their country, gained the benefits of travel and education, and desired to be part of the war against communism by supporting the Army. They also provided a reason for not only the Army, but the rest of the government to rethink the limitations placed on military women. None of the predictions McNamara made proved to be true. The women went to war and provided support in

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[51] Karen Offutt account, Lowery, *Women*, 349-350, Brady Dennis, "Honoring a Hero, 31 years Later," *Pasco Times,* May 7, 2001.

[52] Kerrie Hillman, John White, Sarah Lilley, and James Doubek, "She Served in Vietnam, But 'Nobody Had Ever Welcomed Me Home,'" *Weekend Edition Saturday*, National Public Radio, November 11, 2017.

[53] Gloria Grenfell Leigh, "Serving With Dignity And Compassion: A WAC's Tour In Vietnam," Interview by Mark Franklin, (West Point Center for Oral History. August 25, 2016).

much the same way as the women in World War II had. They managed to live in rough conditions and adapt to the uncertainty of Vietnam. They served with honor, dedication, and forged lifelong bonds as sisters in arms. Most of the women recalled that their return to the United States brought about difficulties they had not expected to face. Stateside, the country was fighting a cultural war of its own. A war that came with the battle for the Equal Rights Amendment amid the rise of the second wave of feminism and women's liberation. This controversy affected the future of the WAC.

Chapter Four

Controversy

Probably the most pervasive memory of the Vietnam War remains the controversy which spawned in the United States over its involvement in the war. The nation divided as anti-war movements spread and labels such as hawks and doves or warmongers and peaceniks identified a person's view of the war. It was no different within the military. Some military members expressed their opposition to U.S. involvement in the war through the G.I. Underground Press. These included many publications including *WHACK!* and *Left Face*, which were published in the 1970s at Fort McClellan.[1] Some WACs published articles in other underground papers which decried gender bias and the presumptions of why women joined the military. Those ideas harkened back to the vitriol directed towards women in the military. This presumption suggested their purpose was to meet the sexual desires of male soldiers or form lesbian relationships. *WHACK!* was written by and for the women of the Women's Army Corps, though most of its reach was stateside. None of the available oral histories of women who served in Vietnam mentioned the publication. Opposition to the war impacted how these women viewed their service and themselves. Many of them recalled their return to the United States with sadness, anger, frustration, and often a combination of all three. The controversy over the Vietnam War caused conflict and confusion for the women who served there causing them to conceal their military affiliation to avoid vitriolic attitudes.

[1] A more thorough discussion of the G.I. Underground Press can be found in Heather Marie Stur's, *Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era* as well as Richard R. Moser's, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era*.

Battle lines were drawn in every facet of American life, including Hollywood. There were many famous names on either side of the conflict. Two women who specifically epitomize the views of support for the troops or the anti-war opposition are Martha Raye and Jane Fonda, respectively. Both women were committed to their ideals, and each earned nicknames, but only one woman is remembered for her unwavering support of "her boys."[2] The other still has a decidedly negative stigma attached to her name. Long after the end of the conflict, their reputations remain for the work they did and position they championed. Both used their platforms to further an agenda and influence opinions on both sides of the war, but they were stark opposites even before their involvement in Vietnam.

"Hanoi Jane"

Jane Fonda did not burst onto the world stage as an activist. She was born December 21, 1937, the daughter of Henry Fonda, popular actor, and Navy veteran of World War II. In 1962 she was named Miss Army Recruiting an odd juxtaposition for a woman whose later actions led to resentment in the military community which continues in the present day. Her involvement in activism started in the sixties, but during the 1970s her focus shifted to anti-war movements. She and Howard Levy, a former Army doctor, formed the Free the Army Tour (FTA). Essentially, their goal was to be the antithesis to Bob Hope's USO tours. Actor Donald Sutherland and a host of other celebrities were involved in the performances which included poetry, music, and theatrical pieces. Their name was a riff of the Army's recruitment slogan but also was used to represent the controversial anti-war GI attitude of "F" the Army. According to Sarah King in "The FTA Show: Jane Fonda, the GI Movement, and Celebrity Activism in the Late Vietnam

[2] Many sources reference this name that Raye bestowed on the soldiers of Vietnam.

War," the show had a ten-month run both stateside and overseas. The article documented the evolving political and social messages of the FTA during its peak. King noted they were not permitted into South Vietnam. However, their reach in the Asia- Pacific area was enough to be reported on in the *Stars & Stripes*.[3] She also noted that "At a base in Long Binh, Vietnam, GIs staged a hillside protest above Hope's outdoor show, holding signs that read 'Peace…not Hope' and 'Where is Jane Fonda?'"[4] The overall impact of the FTA and subsequent theatrical release of their recorded tour footage was overshadowed by Fonda's 1972 visit to Hanoi which earned her the "Hanoi Jane" moniker. It was this visit which caused long lasting ramifications to Fonda's reputation, especially among the military community. Fonda made her infamous trip to Hanoi under the pretense of seeing the reality of war for herself. There is much myth and speculation as to what occurred between Fonda and the American prisoners of war (POWs) she met. Some facts are not debatable. She met with seven prisoners. She went on record doubting the American POWs statements on the mistreatment and torture they faced at the hands of their captors. She called American pilots "professional killers."[5] She recorded several broadcasts for Radio Hanoi and posed for a now infamous photograph where she is perched on an anti-aircraft gun with a giant smile on her face.[6] Several returned POW were interviewed and asked about their knowledge of Fonda in Vietnam. One interviewer asked, "There was some talk by some

[3] Sarah King, "The FTA Show: Jane Fonda, the GI Movement, and Celebrity Activism in the Late Vietnam War," *Peace Change*, 2021; 46, 132.

[4] King, "FTA," 133., This protest was not mentioned in available women's interviews from women in Vietnam during the 1971 tour.

[5] *"Prove It, Jane Fonda Says of Pow Torture,"* Library of Congress, Manuscript/Mixed Material, 1973. https://www.loc.gov/item/powmia/pwmaster_107160/.

[6] The infamous photo can be seen on Getty Images https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/jane-fonda-vietnam and video footage of Fonda's visit with the North Vietnamese can be seen at https://youtu.be/ilw_siMKlgg on the Independent Television News video archive channel.

celebrities to the effect that some of the POWs have fabricated these tales to become heroes, Jane Fonda, for instance."[7] Army Major Artice Weldon Elliott became a prisoner in 1970 and was released in 1973. His answer negated this sentiment and cast doubt on the validity of that claim saying, "I don't think, at least in my own knowledge, that any of the POWs would fabricate any lies for any reasons. I think the ones that have said they were tortured, were tortured."[8] Further in the interview, which is noted as off the record, the men stated there were many negative expressions about Fonda from the men in the camp. They were forced to listen to her tapes and watch her propaganda footage which led to resentment and derogatory comments about the actress. For those not involved in the veterans' anti-war movement, her criticism of the involvement of military members in the war was viewed as unpatriotic and treasonous. For many veterans of Vietnam and their families, this sentiment has remained, despite several apologies from Fonda. She wrote on her blog in July 2011, that the entire series of photographs of her sitting on the anti-aircraft gun was a mistake. She stated she genuinely had no idea it would be used or interpreted as propaganda against American troops. Her visit to the "enemy" and subsequent propaganda recordings suggested American troops were turning to the anti-war movement to avoid being turned into robots by the American government.[9] She expressed regret for being photographed and used as propaganda stating she had not brought along anyone with

[7] *Letters/Returnee Press Conference*, Library of Congress, Manuscript/Mixed Material, 1973, 3. Released prisoners, Elliott, Artice W., Chirichigno, Luis G., Macquez, Juan L., Allwine, David E. Answer questions on conditions in prisons and on the activities of Jane Fonda. https://www.loc.gov/item/powmia/pwmaster_84104/.

[8] *Letters*, Library of Congress, 3.

[9] "Jane Fonda on Radio Hanoi," The NYPR Archive Collections, July 30, 1972, https://www.wnyc.org/story/jane-fonda-on-radio-hanoi/.

better political experience.[10] In contrast, Martha Raye was known for her unwavering support of the men and women fighting in Vietnam. It was her opinion that military men and women deserved the support of the American people regardless of their opinions on involvement in the actual war.

"Colonel Maggie"

Margaret Yvonne Theresa Reed was born August 27, 1916, in Butte, MT and entered show business at a young age. She was more commonly known as Martha Raye. Martha Raye may not have been educated past the fifth grade, but this lack of formal education never held her back. She rose to fame in the 1930s and was an entertainment veteran of three wars. She toured with the United Service Organization (USO) during World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam War. The soldiers in Vietnam captured Martha Raye's heart and fascination. She held no official military position or rank, but was given several honorary ranks by military units. Raye maintained an almost legendary reputation among Vietnam veterans. During the Vietnam War she was best known as Colonel Maggie, a rank given to her by the Green Berets. She was presented with one of their signature berets which she wore frequently. She was known to travel to distant locations well beyond typical USO tour areas. She began touring in Vietnam in 1965 and continued to return until 1971 for several months each year. She was not formally trained as a nurse but still pitched in helping the wounded when she was off in remote locations. It has been

[10] Jane Fonda, "The Truth About my Trip to Hanoi," July 22, 2011. https://www.janefonda.com/2011/07/the-truth-about-my-trip-to-hanoi/; see also video footage of this incident in the Associated Press Archive at https://youtu.be/eBViVboG0Mk

Figure 26 Martha Raye with WACs, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657 D, Penelope Hill Radebaugh Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

widely rumored she was formally bestowed with the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson.[11] In Raye's bibliography, Jane Madden Pitrone outlined the different trips Raye made to Vietnam each year. Raye was fond of remaining in Vietnam long after the USO had left to visit outposts of special forces troops who she considered family.

[11] It should be noted that an official citation with this information has not been found, but it is a story that has been often repeated among military members. The only official recognition of this is an introduction by President Johnson at a luncheon for General Westmoreland in 1967. Lyndon B. Johnson, The President's Introduction of Martha Raye at the Luncheon for General Westmoreland. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/237472. See also: "Remembering Martha Raye WWII, Korea, Vietnam by Richard A. Eckertt on legion.org, and "1st Special Forces Command celebrates Col. Maggie Raye Volunteer Award recipients," by Sgt. 1st Class Victor Aguirre, 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) on army.mil which both reference the rank of honorary Lieutenant Colonel being given to Raye by President Johnson.

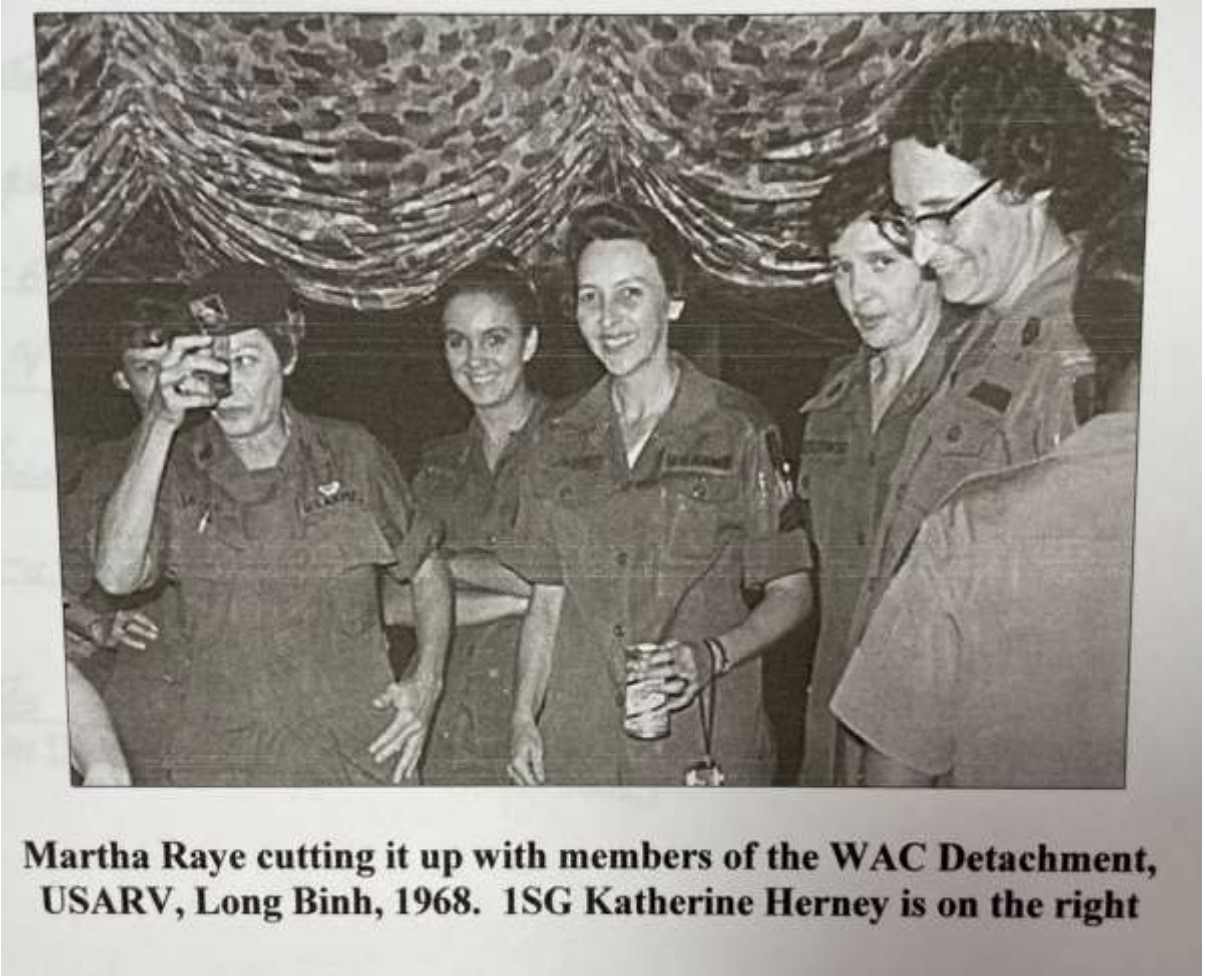

Figure 27 Martha Raye with WACs, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657 D, Linda Earls Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

Pitrone described how Raye wore jungle fatigues and combat boots along with her beret when she would spend time entertaining the troops. She spent time with the men joking, drinking, talking, and offering medical aid if necessary. Upon her return to the United States, she actively tried to bolster support for the military. Audiences watched her in jungle attire speaking out on behalf of those in Vietnam spreading the message that they deserved America's support.[12] Raye was known to collect the names and phone numbers of soldiers' families while in the field. She

[12] John Wayne, Vietnam War, No Substitute for Victory, 1970, Martha Raye segment starts at 35:18-37:09 and 1:04:39-1:05:20.

promised to call and share reports of their sons in the jungle. She was also known to hand out her home address to troops. She made space available for men traveling stateside if they found themselves in need of a place to stay. Colonel Maggie received harsh criticism for her support of the soldiers which stunted her professional career, "part of the problem, she realized, was the 'warmonger' image that ultra-liberal Hollywood had of her."[13] She was not known to hide her opinion of anti-war protestors either, suggesting that even if they hated the war, they should still support the soldiers being sent to fight.[14] She was aware of Jane Fonda's activities with the anti-war movement and called her a "lousy American."[15] The fighting men loved her. A devotion shared they adopted Raye and treated her like family. "But her strong attachment to the boys in

Figure 28 Martha Raye Vietnam Protest Button, Craig Bell, Photo of Martha Raye Protest Button, Item from personal collection, used with permission, May 26, 2023.

[13] Jean Madden Pitrone, *The Life of Martha Raye: Take it from the Big Mouth*, (Lexington; University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 170.

[14] Pitrone, *The Life*, 152.

[15] Ibid., 158.

Vietnam had still another facet to it, a protective loyalty rising from her resentment of the treatment thrust upon veterans returning to their own country and being reviled and spat upon by protestors."[16] Colonel Maggie died in 1994 a year after receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President William Clinton.[17] She is the only civilian and only woman to be buried with her boys on Fort Bragg, North Carolina in the Special Forces cemetery.[18]

These women came from vastly different backgrounds although both ended up in the entertainment business. Fonda was afforded luxuries and education because of her father's success in Hollywood. Raye was born in a charity hospital and was barely educated. Despite their differences they were popular entertainers turned activists. Both were well known within the military community for their attitudes and opinions on the war and those sent to fight it. Their celebrity status gave them access to a wider audience and provided a platform for them to garner support. This also made their messages more visible to the men and women serving in Vietnam because their status gave them access to the troops. While Fonda was not able to bring the FTA tour into Vietnam, she was able to interact with troops in Japan which housed military bases and was a rest and recuperation destination for those on tours in Vietnam. Raye used her influence and access through Bob Hope's tour to remain in Vietnam putting herself in relatively remote areas to reach troops and provide entertainment, a sympathetic ear, and reassurance that they were not forgotten by people at home. Colonel Maggie was mentioned as the highlight of

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[16] Ibid., 160.

[17] "The White House announced that the President awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to entertainer and humanitarian Martha Raye," from the Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton, Book III, Appendix A/ Administration of William J. Clinton, 1993, (United States Government Printing Office, November 2, 1993).; Congress.gov, "Text - S.Con.Res.62 - 102nd Congress (1991-1992): A concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that the President should award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Martha Raye," September 18, 1991.

[18] Associated Press. "Martha Raye to be Buried at Fort Bragg." *The Virginian-Pilot*, North Carolina. October 22, 1994.

Specialist Five Emily Ellen Embree's tour from January 1968 to February 1969.[19] The personal stories of the time Colonel Maggie spent with the WACs are still unknown. Though they had conflicting messages, both tapped into needs of those who served. This acted as both benefit and detriment to Raye and Fonda, personally and professionally.

While the protests surrounding the war were not unknown to the women of the WAC detachment, the reality was it did not directly affect them until they returned home from Vietnam. Several of them had negative encounters with protestors. One WAC, Susan Haack-Huskey, shared that the worst treatment she received was from fellow WACs in California, the ones who had not gone to Vietnam.[20] She recalled being flipped off and cursed at. In her opinion, they were jealous that she was a Vietnam veteran, and they were not. She recalled poor treatment from a bus driver who did not want to let her on his bus and hostility from a businessman who tried to take her cab because she had served in the military.

Sergeant McClenahan returned to Berkely after her tour in Vietnam. Her arrival was uneventful, but she soon found that home was not the same as she left it. McClenahan threw a party for her return and invited friends from high school. She recounted that those in attendance discussed a protest they planned to attend the next day. She began sharing her experiences but was interrupted by her best friend, who told her, "Listen, I don't want to hear any of your glory stories, anything that happened to you, you deserved. You wanted to go."[21] She had no idea what McClenahan had faced which made her remark even more cruel and unsympathetic.

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[19] Emily Ellen Embree's account, Donna A. Lowery, *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories*, (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2015), 203.

[20] OH 508, Susan Haack-Huskey, Interview by Mark Van Ellis, (Wisconsin Veterans Museum, 1994).

[21] OH 02267 Linda McClenahan, Interview by Kate Rowell for the I am Not Invisible Project, (Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program, December 12, 2022.

Another woman, Specialist Five Gloria (Grenfell) Leigh recalled her journey from Vietnam to Oakland, California in January 1968. She was shocked by how nasty protestors treated her. She was spit on and called derogatory names. She thought she had left the war and feeling unsafe behind. The treatment she faced from anti-war demonstrators reignited that fear and left her in disbelief that this was how she felt in the United States. Due to this she never spoke about her time in Vietnam. Since her friends were uninterested in her service she buried that part of her life. It took her many years to talk about her time in the military.[22]

Similarly, Staff Sergeant Claire Brisebois Starnes recalled almost coming to blows with protestors in San Francisco. She was headed home on emergency leave after the death of her mother in 1970. She left without time to change from her fatigues, and she arrived at the airport in San Francisco in uniform. She was chased and heckled by protestors through the airport being asked how many babies she had killed. She recalled stopping to turn and stand up to them but the flight attendant calling for her to board the plane. In that moment when she chose to stop and face the protestors, it was because a friend home on leave in Washington, D.C., was attacked by protestors who overturned her taxicab. She was angry at being heckled and by her friend's incident. When she finally completed her tour in Vietnam, she felt like she was in a dream. Coming home was tough. She credited her continued service in the military with allowing her to process some of her experience. Nevertheless, she too buried her service in Vietnam under family life and moving ahead in her career until many years later when she finally started to talk about her experiences.[23]

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[22] Gloria J. (Grenfell) Leigh. "Serving With Dignity and Compassion: A WAC's Tour in Vietnam," Interview by Mark Franklin, (West Point Center for Oral History, August 25, 2016).

[23] Claire Brisebois Starnes, "'Some Good Days, Some Bad Days': A WAC Serving in Vietnam," Interview by David Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, April 04, 2016).

McClenahan shared that after her return from Vietnam her opinion on involvement in the war had completely changed. She said:

> You know, I went down to an antiwar protest and they were waving the Viet Cong flag and I couldn't stand that either cause people I knew and loved were being killed by people who were on that flag. So it was like I didn't belong anywhere. I didn't fit anywhere and of course by, I didn't know anything about Veterans Against the War or Veterans for Peace or any of those organizations at that point, so So I just kind of--and as I said, you know, I still had people back and I wasn't sure. I didn't fit anywhere.[24]

Instead of finding involvement in anti-war groups, McClenahan sought solace in the bottle and let the rage at her Vietnam experience simmer until she found help at a veterans' center. That was just the beginning for McClenahan who spent several years fighting to regain her sense of self.

Some veterans channeled their efforts into anti-war organizations like the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). They estimated that at their height they had a membership of at least 30,000.[25] The Department of Veterans Affairs reported that from February 1961 through May 1975, "approximately 2.7 million American men and women served in Vietnam."[26] This suggests about 1.11% of all Vietnam veterans were involved with the organization and protested the war by marching, speaking publicly at rallies, and tossing their medals. The number involved seems higher if it is calculated from 1967-1972 when the average amount of troops in Vietnam was about 335,417.[27] Then the 30,000 estimated VVAW members are approximately 9% of the veteran population during the most active protest years. There is no record that any of the Vietnam detachment WACs were involved in the organization. In fact, while some of the

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[24] OH 01326, Linda McClenahan, Interview by Mik Derks, WPT Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories, (Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program, 2008).

[25] Information found on the Vietnam Veterans Against the War website, http://www.vvaw.org/about/

[26] Office of Research & Development, Department of Veterans Affairs, https://www.research.va.gov/topics/vietnam.cfm#intro

[27] Mintz, S., & McNeil, S. "The Vietnam War." *Digital History*, 2018. Retrieved May 20, 2023 from http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu; Average calculated using the figures from 1967-1972.

women may have changed their opinions on the war, they remained loyal supporters of the WAC and the Army. They have not expressed regret at their service. Doris Allen is one of those. After her time in Vietnam, she considered herself a conscientious objector, but still believed the work she did in Vietnam saved lives and she was glad she served her tours.[28] It was a shock for the women returning from Vietnam to see the country in turmoil when they expected to come back to the same America they had left. They were disheartened at having their service belittled, mocked, or treated with outright disdain. Cheri Halsey recalled a commercial airline pilot saying to her, "You should be having babies, not killing them."[29] Many of the women kept the details of their military service to themselves, especially those who finished their enlistments and left the service.[30] Women who remained in the military had to ignore it and continue to their next assignments. Returning from Vietnam was an adjustment and often a difficult one as they coped with changes in America and in how they viewed their own service. The controversy over military service was similar for men and women. Military women though were not alone in crossing gender barriers. There were voices in journalism and other social spheres who offered different perspectives from a feminine point of view. While Raye and Fonda offered the face of their positions, the likes of Susan Sontag and Francis Fitzgerald offered the intellect. They, along with journalists like Dickey Chapelle and Jurate Kazickas provided a female perspective in journalism.

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[28] Doris I. "Lucki" Allen, "'Too Blessed to be Stressed': A Women's Army Corps Intelligence Analyst Puts the Pieces Together," Interview by David Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, August 25, 2016).

[29] Cheranne Halsey, "'I was Raised with Red, White, and Blue Blood': A WAC Volunteers for Service in Vietnam," Interview by Dave Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, August 25, 2016).

[30] Women's enlistments were a three-year contract.

Like Fonda, Susan Sontag visited Hanoi at the invitation of the North Vietnamese. She actually went twice, once in 1968 and again in 1973. Unlike Fonda, her visit was less an opportunity for a photo op. Instead, it resulted in Sontag penning her thoughts and theories on the war in Vietnam and published support of the northern forces. She penned a memoir, *Trip to Hanoi*, about her experience. She shared journal entries and the shift in what she understood to be her perception of the Vietnamese people. Her journal entries reflected how her American attitude initially kept her distanced from her hosts. Then she realized she viewed the differences in their cultures negatively because of her own prejudice and not through fault of the Vietnamese. She wrote, "The Vietnamese operate by another notion of civility than the one we're accustomed to, and that implies a shift in the meaning of honesty and sincerity. Honesty as it is understood in Vietnam bears little resemblance to the sense of honesty that has been elevated by secular Western culture virtually above all other values."[31] This was made even more evident to her when the people she spoke to expressed admiration for Norman Morrison's immolation.[32] They viewed him as a hero to their cause whose act of self-transcendence earned their respect. She was highly critical of American involvement in the war placing blame on American "consumerism as the root of U.S. expansionism as Americans consume foreign culture."[33] Additionally, "Sontag protested against the U.S. war in Vietnam by signing public letters, speaking at teach-ins and town halls, and participating in antiwar demonstrations."[34] She also

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[31] Susan Sontag, *Trip to Hanoi*, (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 45.

[32] Sontag, *Trip*, 41-43. Norman Morrison was an American Quaker and anti-war activist who lit himself on fire in front of the Pentagon to protest the war. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/oct/16/norman-morrison-vietnam-war-protest

[33] Franny Nudelman, "Against Photography: Susan Sontag's Vietnam," *Photography and Culture*, 7:1, 2014, 10, DOI: 10.2752/175145214X61001139322246

[34] Nudelman, "Against," 8.

believed, as Fonda did, "The North Vietnamese genuinely care about the welfare of the hundreds of captured American pilots."[35] Her memoir was absent of any mention of visits to American prisoners of war and the information she shared was given to her from a Vietnamese army officer. Sher had a unique writing style which:

> …gave voice to delicate musings about ethics, morality, style, and tone for which U.S. antiwar activists at that time had no satisfying frame or lexicon. The value of Sontag's Hanoi essay in 1968 was its capacity to surface and validate the complex and contradictory interior political experience that was associated with her external stance of international solidarity.[36]

Sontag was not the only writer who used her craft to influence the anti-war movement.

Frances Fitzgerald approached her anti-war activism through in-depth writing on the history and culture of Vietnam. In *Fire in the Lake*, she eloquently describes the history of Vietnamese culture and how the American perception is such a stark antithesis to their slow, steady pace which focused on the ancestral and not progress. She wrote, "Americans live in a society of replaceable parts—in theory anyone can become President or sanitary inspector—but the Vietnamese lived in a society of particular people, all of whom knew each other by their place in the landscape."[37] Virginia Elwood- Akers wrote *Women War Correspondents in the Vietnam War, 1961-1975*, where she discussed the women who covered the war and the complications they faced as women journalists. Elwood- Akers wrote:

> Fitzgerald sounded the warning that the American failure to understand the Confucian-based politics and psychology of the Vietnamese would prove disastrous. When she returned to the United States after a year in Vietnam she immersed herself in the study of Vietnamese history and culture. She was contacted by Paul Mus, a French anthropologist

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[35] Sontag, *Trip*, 71.

[36] Karín Aguilar-San Juan, "What Vietnam Did for Susan Sontag in 1968," *World History Bulletin* 34, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall2018 2018), 14.

[37] Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake*, (New York, NY: Back Bay Books, 1972), 10.

> who in 1952 had written a book on Vietnam, Sociologe d'une Guerre. Mus' theory that Ho Chi Minh's revolution would eventually prevail because it was harmonious with the essentially Confucian nature of the Vietnamese society had influenced Fitzgerald.[38]

In *Fire in the Lake*, Fitzgerald suggested both the French and the Americans mistakenly overestimated China's importance and treated Vietnam as a pawn in the attempt to control communism's expansion. She concluded through her examination of the war that "By involving the United States in a fruitless and immoral war, they had also corrupted themselves."[39] She made several trips to Vietnam from 1966 on and found herself dismayed at the destruction of Vietnam. Her book was generally well received regardless of the readers' position on the war because of how well-researched and clearly written it was. She won a Pulitzer for the book.

One of the journalists that Elwood-Akers covered was Dickey Chapelle. She was a freelance journalist who was one of the few who was adamantly opposed to communism and enthusiastically supported the American mission in Vietnam. "To Dickey Chappelle the war in South Vietnam was a simple matter. Communists were attempting to take over South Vietnam. Anti-Communists, assisted by the Americans, were attempting to stop the invasion. Chapelle's opposition to Communism was total; her patriotism was unquestioning."[40] Chapelle would be one of the few female journalist voices in support of Vietnam. She first went to Vietnam in 1961 and spent five weeks with the Sea Swallows, an anticommunist militia led by Father Nguyễn Lạc Hoá who actively opposed the Viet Cong.[41] She made several trips to and from Vietnam. In 1964 after one of her trips she began lecturing in support of the war and debating anti-war protestors

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[38] Virginia Elwood-Akers, *Women War Correspondents in the Vietnam War, 1961-1975*, (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1988), 73.

[39] Fitzgerald, *Fire*, 424.

[40] Elwood-Akers, *Women*, 10.

[41] Ibid, 10-17.

despite being aware that the war was not progressing well for the U.S. and South Vietnamese. Elwood-Akers indicated Chapelle's success as a journalist was minimal because her articles lacked objectivity. Chapelle returned to Vietnam in 1965 and accompanied her first American unit on a mission. "The mission was called Operation Black Ferret. The unit was the 1st platoon of the F company of the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Marine Regiment. As she and several Marines moved through the low brush, someone's foot brushed a concealed wire, triggering a booby trap made of a grenade wired to an 81mm mortar round."[42] Unfortunately, the world would never know if she would retain her mindset as the war progressed. Dickey Chapelle died from a shrapnel wound to her throat, becoming the first female journalist to die in the Vietnam war.

Jurate Kazickas, like Dickey Chapelle, had a positive outlook on the war when she first made her way to Vietnam. Unlike Chappelle, her views changed as her time on the ground progressed. Kazickas was a Lithuanian immigrant to the United States whose family narrowly escaped communism at the end of World War II.[43] She was asked by a young Marine if she was a peacenik, "With a confidence that would soon change, I said I believed we were right to help the South Vietnamese fight the aggression of the North."[44] She was in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968 where she covered battles in Khe Sanh, Con Thien, Duc Pho, Quang Ni, Dak To, among others getting to know the men she covered. She covered not only the war as a correspondent but also did human interest pieces which brought glimpses of humanity from the war front. "It occurred to me that women had no comparable world of experience to prove their mettle, to give

[42] Ibid., 42-43.

[43] Jurate Kazickas, "These Hills Called Khe Sanh," *War Torn: Stories of War from the Women Reporters Who Covered Vietnam*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2002), 2274-2296.

[44] Kazickas, "These Hills," 2318.

themselves for one another to the death."[45] This revelation came in the wake of several battles as men she shared meals with were killed or injured and cared for their wounded as she watched. The deaths of men she had come to see as brave and vulnerable who were not fighting for a political view, but for one another disturbed her. She wrote, "Despite my loathing of communism and my belief that we could not walk away from the South Vietnamese who had asked for our help, I too began to feel the war was a terrible mistake, a sacrifice too great for any country, including my own, to bear."[46] In March 1968 she was once again in Khe Sanh, this time assigned to cover men from New York for WOR Radio. She found the men from New York and began interviewing them with a tape recorder. She captured the next moments on that tape. Shouts of "incoming" alerted them to an attack and she and the men ran for bunkers. She recalled the explosions around her, and she also describes "a clang—as if someone were throwing horseshoes that hit the target."[47] She was knocked to the ground and knew she had been hit. She wrote, "Years later, I would sometimes replay the tape and listen to those startled cries."[48] She had been wounded and had to be evacuated for medical care. She was unsure how bad it was but at the Charlie Med bunker she learned it was "A jagged piece of shrapnel about the size of a peach pit from a 152mm artillery shell…had lodged just a fraction of an inch from my spine."[49] Kazickas counted herself lucky that the injury was not worse. The after effects stuck with her for much longer. When she eventually returned to the field, Khe Sanh for Operation Pegasus, she realized the mental impact was more than she was prepared to face. She left Vietnam in November 1968.

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[45] Ibid., 2506.

[46] Ibid., 2513.

[47] Ibid., 2664.

[48] Ibid., 2664.

[49] Ibid., 2685.

"Although passionate about seeing an end to the war, I could never bring myself to join the protest movement. I was deeply offended by the chants of demonstrators cursing American servicemen. My feeling of patriotism was simply too strong to march against my own country."[50]

These women made a name for themselves through non-traditional means. Like the WACs, they faced discrimination from the men in their field as well as criticism from military leaders. Some came away from Vietnam convinced that the war was unjust and immoral which reinforced their anti-war beliefs and they actively protested U.S involvement. Those who joined men on the battle field may have agreed that a victory would be near impossible, but also understood the dangers of communism—often from personal experience. Many of these women were also considered feminists, certainly they were not typecast in the mold of Suzy Homemaker. Yet, according to Virginia Elwood-Akers:

> …none of the women war correspondents credited the women's movement with their success—in fact quite the opposite. While most of the women correspondents did not mention the women's movement at all in their Vietnam war reporting or in subsequent writing, those who have written about the movement were decidedly unfriendly to it.[51]

The female perspective gained and raised its voice during the social upheaval of the sixties and seventies. From the journalists who covered the war, to the dissenting coverage by the women who opposed U.S. involvement. Women writers published influential works that had an impact on American society and culture. Their voices pushed for change through activism and highlighted issues from a changing new perspective.

Change would be the one consistent theme as the seventies marched on. Social and legislative changes rapidly redefined the course of women's military service both stateside and

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[50] Ibid., 2766.

[51] Elwood-Akers, *Women*, 7.

for the WACs who remained in Vietnam. The women's liberation movement became as fervent as the civil rights and anti-war movements as people pushed for radical changes to American society. Women began to speak out for the rights they felt they deserved much like civil rights activists had been advocating for racial equality.

One of the most influential books published in 1963 was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. She was a journalist in New York where she married Carl Friedan in 1947, had three children, and divorced in 1969.[52] Her dissatisfaction in the role of mother and housewife after she had been in a successful career inspired the project which became a major voice of the women's movement and has influenced more than one generation of feminists. It was Friedan's supposition that after World War II women were content to allow men back into the role of leader and protector while rebuilding their lives after the war. She wrote, "Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands."[53] It was true to an extent that after the war the explosion of women in the workforce came to an end and a new age of the modern housewife was ushered in. In *America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines,* journalist Gail Collins said as much. "Until World War II, only a relatively small slice of the population actually had any options except toiling endlessly on a farm or factory. Then suddenly, 60 percent of American families managed to become home-owning members of the middle class."[54] To Friedan, this was the cause of women's discontent. If a woman was discontent in her

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[52] Manon Parry, "Betty Friedan: Feminist Icon and Founder of the National Organization for Women," *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(9), September 2010, 1584–1585.

[53] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique,* (New York, NY; W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 5.

[54] Gail Collins, America's Women: 400 Years of dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines, (New York, NY; Harper Perennial, 2003), 399.

life, she was the problem. What was the problem though? She called it "the problem that has no name"[55] She described it as an emptiness, a feeling of being incomplete, a desperation. Friedan disagreed that the reason for this unhappiness was too much education as media suggested.[56] She believed she knew what caused it.

Time Magazine wrote, "The key figure in all Suburbia, the thread that weaves between family and community—the keeper of the suburban dream—is the suburban housewife."[57] It goes on to describe a housewife's day and how little time she has for herself with all the responsibilities of maintaining suburban perfection. Friedan recognized this frenzied sense of busyness described in the *Time* article as part of her dissatisfaction—of all women's dissatisfaction. She reflected on the women who had come before, they had been thinkers, educated women who chased adventure and led fulfilling lives. She wanted to know how women had moved from those who have deep intellectual conversations with independent goals. They had morphed into Stepford wives only concerned about their image and figure, having well behaved children, and keeping their husbands happy. The facade of suburban perfection hid a wealth of women's problems. Friedan believed women's struggle with depression and a host of psychological issues resulted from lives which lacked purpose. She suggested the root of the issue was an identity crisis which poked holes in the American Dream. The dream meant fulfillment was a house in the suburbs, a successful career driven husband, several children, and the happy housewife. Her thesis was rooted in the idea that "…our culture does not permit

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[55] Friedan, *Feminine*,7. All of chapter one is dedicated to explaining what the no-name problem is for women.

[56] Ibid., 10-11, Freidan recalls several articles which suggest the reasons for women's unhappiness.

[57] "Americana: The Roots of Home." *Time* Magazine. New York, NY: Time, Inc., Vol LXXV, No. 25, June 20, 1960, 16.

women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potential as human beings," an idea which held sway for close to twenty years.[58] Friedan acknowledged that all women did not fit in cookie cutter molds, no matter how much societal pressure tried to insist on compliance. Those ideas helped birth the second wave of feminism.

Despite Friedan's claims that women were being pigeonholed into this unfulfilling role, statistics show that women in the workforce were on the rise. In 1950, 33.9% of all women were in the labor force, by 1970 that number rose to 43% which shows that women's participation in the labor force was steadily increasing.[59] The 1954 "Changes in Women's Occupations 1940-1950" report showed that not only were women increasing in the labor force, but their choice of labor was changing as well. The statistics showed that employment of married women was on the rise.[60] Married women were still the minority of employed women after single and widowed women but had increased from 15% in 1940 to 23% in 1950. The Department of Labor decennial graph showed that the number of women in the labor force in 1950 was 16,663,485 and in 1970 had reached 30,688,800.[61] So were women really limited to a life of domesticity where their work was considered anything but actual work?[62] The statistics indicated women were increasing their presence in the workforce with consistency not stagnating.

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[58] Friedan, *Feminine,* 77.

[59] Mitra Toosi. "A Century of Change: the U.S. Labor Force, 1950–2050." *Monthly Labor Review*. Table 4, Bureau of Labor and Statistics, May 2002, 22.

[60] "Changes," *Bulletin 253,* 7-8.

[61] "Occupations of Women in the Labor Force Since 1920," Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/data/occupations-decades-100

[62] The 1960 Census form specifically stated in instructions for filling out the work question, "Include part-time work such as a Saturday job, delivering papers, or helping without pay in a family business or farm. Do **not** count own housework." *1960 Census of Population and Housing Questionnaire,* United States Census Bureau.

The Report on Womanpower Conference of 1956 met to discuss the scope and stance of the council regarding policy on women in the labor force. Among the topics discussed were college, marriage, and women in the military. Many of the problems which Friedan had raised had already been considered by the attendees of this conference. The conference included women "each of whom has a wide background and knowledge of many aspects of the subject, as well as personal experience in the world of paid or volunteer employment."[63] They believed women needed to be educated in new areas of technology and science to remain relatively literate to the world as it changed and advanced.[64] They also noted that young collegiate women were more aware that they did not have to choose between a career or marriage. They had the option of both. The downside was that women had relegated themselves to skills for temporary jobs rather than career skills which had potential for advancement. On the topic of women in the military, the council recognized it was a unique issue. They reached two conclusions, first that a separate extensive study on the topic should be held and second that recruitment for women in the military had been a difficult issue for several reasons. They held the major reason for this related to the perception of women in the military. It was noted "The biggest problem…is the prejudice on the part of parents, clergy, teachers, and community leaders against the use of women in the services."[65] Again, stigma from women's military service in the second world war had lingering effects on the future of women in the military as previously discussed. However, if

[63] "Information Memorandum No.103," *Report on Womanpower Conference,* National Manpower Council, New York, January 16-17, 1956, 2. Eisenhower Library. Katherine G. Howard Papers, Box 17, Womanpower Conference.

[64] "Information," *Report,* 15.

[65] Ibid., 27.

women's roles in the workforce had steadily been on the rise since the 1950s, what then was the impetus for the women's movement during the 1960s?

An interesting theory has emerged from Daniel Horowitz, author of *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism.* His examination of Friedan's life and her role in the women's movement as well as her inspiration for her book found she was not entirely forthright. Horowitz shared that Friedan had a long history with political activism starting in 1952 when she wrote a pamphlet for the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE) titled *UE Fights for Women Workers*.[66] He also posits she was less than truthful when revealing her activist activity. Rather he claimed she had a much larger role in left-wing radicalism than was consciously revealed in the moment. Horowitz can offer insight for several compelling reasons. He interviewed Friedan in 1987, regularly assigned her book in his classes. Additionally, his wife was Freidan's colleague at the University of Southern California and to a small degree he knew her socially.[67] Horowitz has been a historian and professor of American consumer and social history since he received his Ph.D. in 1967 from Harvard University. He has spent his career writing many books and articles on American consumerism. It was this work which led to his search for more information on the hidden aspects of Betty Friedan's life before her best-selling work. He discovered her political ideations were far from having been formed just before she wrote *The Feminine Mystique*. Rather, her roots in liberal left activism started at Smith College and continued through the formation of the National Organization of Women (NOW) and the upswing of the women's movement. He wrote, "Friedan's years on UE News, which made her

[66] Daniel Horowitz, Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 1.

[67] Horowitz, *Betty*, 5-6.

familiar with radicalism in the 1940s and early 1950s, provided a seed bed of her feminism."[68] Her experience at Smith College and working with the union solidified her liberal ideas and shaped her ability to convey her message with the written word. Thus, Horowitz concluded that Friedan's involvement in the resurgence of the women's movement began in her days at Smith and continued growing until the publication of her book. Then she took on the mantle of repressed housewife and used it to forge women's activism in the 1960s. The era of the sixties was ripe for activism in part because of Friedan's book but also because of a 1962 book which encouraged, "…single female readers to start demanding the same kind of rewards single males can get, including a satisfying career, a healthy savings account, and lots of lovers."[69] That book was *Sex and the Single Girl* by Helen Gurley Brown published a year before Friedan's manifesto. According to Collins this led to sexual liberation being lumped in with all forms of activism during the late sixties and seventies. This movement was ahead of the women's liberation movement. The sixties began the era of cultural change and radically changed the youth of America. Their political involvement spanned Civil Rights, Women's Rights, and the Anti-war movements or often all three. One reason was the ease of access to information. Unlike the days of the world wars when radio, mail, and telegram were the standard for information, television changed the speed of information transmission. "Television was the single greatest cultural influence of the postwar era, and it invaded the country almost overnight."[70] From 1946 to 1950 televisions in the United States grew from around 7,000 to 4.6 million.[71] Television had

[68] Daniel Horowitz, "Rethinking Betty Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique*: Labor Union Radicalism and Feminism in Cold War America," *American Quarterly* 48, no. 1 1996, 12.

[69] Collins, *America's Women,* 426.

[70] Ibid., 410.

[71] Ibid., 410.

an impact on the youth especially with televised coverage of the Civil Rights movement. This increased awareness of inequal treatment as a national concern.

The Civil Rights movement focused on equal rights regardless of race which supported President Johnson's Great Society domestic programs. Those programs were enacted to eradicate poverty in the United States which would have benefitted the black and minority communities. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a key figure in the Civil Rights movement who initially did not speak on the Vietnam War though he was personally opposed to it. When he did take a stand against it he faced severe backlash from the media and members within the Civil Rights movement who believed that linking civil rights with anti-war activities would diminish their impact.[72] In a speech on April 15, 1967, at a protest march in New York City, King said, "One of the greatest casualties of the war in Vietnam is the Great Society."[73] Dr. King understood that opposition to the war was inherently linked to racial inequality in the United States especially because of the draft. He spoke of two Americas, "Many people of various backgrounds live in this other America. Some are Mexican Americans, some are Puerto Ricans, some are Indians, some happen to be from other groups. Millions of them are Appalachian whites. But probably the largest group in this other America in proportion to its size in the Population is the American Negro."[74] Black society was divided on the approach to civil rights and Vietnam. In *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s,* University of Leeds professor

[72] Lerone Martin, "Vietnam War," The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/vietnam-war

[73] Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam," Speech given at protest in New York City, Saturday, April 15, 1967. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/mlkviet2.htm

[74] Dr. Martin Luther King, "The Other America," Speech given at Stanford University April 14, 1967. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/otheram.htm

Simon Hall discusses the route taken from civil rights to anti-war activism. He states, "Although every major civil rights group would come to oppose the war in Vietnam, they did so at different times and for different reasons."[75] His assessment of the path from civil rights to anti-war activism offered an exceptional discussion of racial issues during this era. His work suggests that the end of major civil rights activism was partly due to the rise in anti-war activity. The conclusion he reached was insightful. He determined, "On the surface there were good reasons why they should have cooperated closely: many early opponents of the war were veterans of the civil rights movement; African Americans had powerful reasons to oppose the war in Vietnam; and the two movements shared a similar critique of American society."[76] Likewise, women's involvement in social movements revived.

For women, the journey towards equality restarted with the passage of the 1963 Equal Pay Act. Public Law 88-38, signed by President Kennedy was a victory for working women. Many women who attended the Third National Conference of Commissions on the Status of Women in June 1966 felt there was not enough done to implement the requirements of Title VII that the 1964 Civil Rights Act mandated. The founders of NOW met together during that conference and came up with an action plan for the group which was meant to function much like other civil rights groups had.[77] NOW stated their formation was the result of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) failure to end sex segregation in job advertising and displeasure at the failure of the EEOC to enforce Title VII protections for women

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[75] Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 187. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fh9dx.

[76] Hall, *Peace*, 193.

[77] One that is frequently mentioned as a model for NOW is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

in the workplace. It was implied that formation of the group was "privately suggested" by the EEOC commissioners Aileen Hernandez, Richard Graham, and attorney Sonia Pressman Fuentes.[78] NOW was established in June 1966 by Betty Friedan, Pauli Murray, and Mary Eastwood among others in attendance.[79] Their statement indicated "In the interest of the human dignity of women, we will protest, and endeavor to change, the false image of women now prevalent in the mass media, and in the texts, ceremonies, laws, and practices of our major social institutions."[80] As such, early in their activism the major focus of their efforts were passage of an Equal Rights Amendment, publicly funded child care, and the legalization of abortion. Throughout the rest of the 1960s and into the 1970s the core group of NOW continued advocating for these issues. These issues were especially significant to women in the military due to outdated policies on marriage and families.

Until 1965 it had been WAC policy to discharge women upon marriage or pregnancy. However, a General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation into retention issues within the corps led to changes in this policy. Under Colonel Gorman, the discharge on marriage policy was amended. Two criteria had to be met before discharge, one year of service and an assignment denied near enough to her spouse to maintain a joint household.[81] The policy was revised again when Colonel Gorman "announced that discharge on marriage was eliminated for women who enlisted or reenlisted on or after 20 June 1966."[82]

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[78] "Setting the Stage," NOW website, July 2006.

[79] National Organization of Women's 1966 Statement of Purpose, https://now.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Statement-of-Purpose.pdf (NOW 1966 SOP)

[80] NOW 1966 SOP.

[81] Bettie J. Morden, *Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978*, (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990), 205.

[82] Morden, *Women*, 205.

Discharge on pregnancy remained an active policy throughout the remainder of the WAC existence. The policy on pregnancy was so strictly enforced that even the termination of a pregnancy would not allow a woman to remain in the service. Women who married and acquired children via marriage were also separated from the military under Executive Order 10240 from President Truman. According to Morden, the branches adopted this discharge policy and there were few rare exceptions for hardship.[83] Subsequently some women who were non-volunteer selected for a tour in Vietnam used pregnancy as a loophole to obtain an immediate discharge. There were a few women who found out they were pregnant in Vietnam and were summarily sent home and discharged.[84] These policies were restrictive especially when male servicemembers could marry and have families. Women continued to serve despite the glaring inequity in policy.

The benefits to service far outweighed the negative. The Army had been desegregated since Truman's Executive Order 9981 in July 1948. It did not integrate fully until the Army dropped its restriction on the number of blacks who could enlist in April 1950. WAC basic training units were fully integrated well before integration happened in the regular Army.[85] In addition to racial integration, the WAC women had received pay equal to men since 1943 when the auxiliary became part of the Army. The women sent to Vietnam also received a tax benefit and hostile fire pay, both of which made saving money during their tour highly beneficial. Staff Sergeant Linda Earls provided the best insight into this in letters she wrote to her mother. She explained how pay day worked, the difficulty in wiring money home, the limited availability of

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[83] Ibid., 140.

[84] Mary E. Rutledge account, Lowery, *Women*, 101.

[85] Morden, *Women*, 85-86.

items to buy, and her desire to save up for a car on her return to the United States. Her letters to Ruby discussed her car purchase, described the features she wanted, outlined how she planned to pay for her car, and the color she wanted.[86] Another woman, Cathy Oatman, recorded a series of letters home where she captured small snippets of life at Long Binh. Amidst the sounds of crickets and small arms fire in the background, Oatman pondered the purchase of either a fully loaded Volkswagen camper bus or a double wide mobile home for her next assignment. She also talked to her family about the possibility of extending to make rank and try for her preferred assignment once her tour was over.[87] Many women opted to serve extended tours, this financial benefit and possibility of career advancement were an upside to their service. Strict standards of appearance and comportment were expected of the women, as well as curfews and additional duties. The financial and career benefits of their tours in Vietnam were evident and outweighed the negative. In general, military service provided the independence most civilian women desired and events of the seventies created even more.

Stateside, the 1970s ushered in social change that altered the military. General Hoisington retired in August 1971, partially because she disagreed with the rapid changes imposed on the WAC and the disregard for her advice and experience. She was succeeded by Brigadier General Mildred I.C. Bailey.[88] The drawdown in Vietnam, the start of the Nixon administration, and rumors of an all-volunteer force were all indicative of the next decade's changes. Change swept

[86] Linda Earls, *Vietnam, I'm Going!: Letters from a Young WAC in Vietnam to her Mother*, (Xlibris Publishing, 2012). Earls explained that she called her mother Ruby, and she went by her nickname, Susie.

[87] OH.2011.190 #312, Cathy Oatman, Letter from Long Binh, Recorded letters home, 1967-1970, United States Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[88] Brigadier General Hoisington was promoted June 11, 1970, along with Brigadier General Anna Marie Hayes of the Army Nurse Corps, they were the first two women to achieve the rank.

through the United States and in the WAC as policies and culture shifted in support of women. Anticipation for women's advancement grew with passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Chapter Five

1968, The Tet Offensive, and Beyond

Smithsonian Magazine called 1968 the year that shattered America, their timeline of events demonstrated that unrest was the theme of the year.[1] January 1968 started with a women's protest led by Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin. February brought civil unrest after the death of two Memphis sanitation workers. The anti-war movement adopted a new catchphrase after the village of Ben Tre was burnt.[2] People protested segregation in South Carolina. Walter Cronkite believed success in Vietnam was near impossible. The Kerner Commission determined "Our Nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal."[3] March brought more unrest as California Latino students walked out to demand better education, New York University students picketed the Dow Chemical Company, and Robert F. Kennedy joined the presidential race. These were just some of the stateside events in the first three months of 1968. This unrest served as a catalyst that led to major social changes, many which profoundly altered women's military service granting them an even stronger foothold for full military service and careers.

Meanwhile in Vietnam, the WAC detachment had only been active for a year when the 1968 Tet Offensive occurred, kicking off a year which brought many changes. In many analyses, Tet is considered the turning point of the war. Different perspectives view this campaign from a

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[1] Matthew Twobly and Kendrick McDonald, "A Timeline of 1968: The Year that Shattered America," *Smithsonian Magazine*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, January 2018).

[2] That phrase was, "It became necessary to destroy the town in order to save it," Twobly and McDonald, *Smithsonian Magazine*.

[3] *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, Otto Kerner, Chairman, 1967, 1. https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/FHEO/documents/kerner_commission_full_report.pdf

military standpoint analyzing the decisions made by leadership on the ground but also analyzing the waning support on a political level. The Tet Offensive visibly demonstrated through television coverage in America that the war in Vietnam was not a traditional war. Instead, the media brought the violence and chaos right into everyone's homes which gave a psychological advantage to the NVF and VC. According to James J. Wirtz, "The Tet offensive was the decisive battle of the Vietnam War because of its profound impact on American attitudes about involvement in Southeast Asia."[4] The coverage of the war helped spark outrage among the war's opponents and widened the chasm between generations.

Tet is a Vietnamese holiday called Tết Nguyên Đán which commemorates the start of spring and the beginning of the lunar new year.[5] Until 1968 this period of celebration meant a cease fire period in Vietnam as the holiday was observed. General Westmoreland suggested in his memoir that intelligence had indicated that an attack was probable during the Tet holiday, but nothing indicated Saigon was the target.[6] Most of the military focus was monitoring bases along the de-militarized zone (DMZ) where it seemed attacks were more probable. It was a tactic that worked especially well to the North's advantage because it created a chaotic environment in Saigon which was viewed on television in American homes. The ability of the media to get footage on television so quickly was detrimental for American support of the military in Vietnam. The broadcasts did little to garner support for General Westmoreland or President Johnson. However, the military success that the communist forces were expecting did not come.

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[4] James J. Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1. Wirtz is a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School and has forty-three years of experience in the field of intelligence, strategy, and security studies with numerous publishing credits.

[5] Lian Songqing. "A Study of Vietnamese Festival Tết Nguyên Đán from Perspectives of Anthropology." *International Journal of Business Anthropology* 11, no. 2 (2021): 72-9.

[6] William Westmoreland. *A Soldier Reports*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 310-334.

Wirtz called it a "dismal military failure and brilliant political success."[7] The expected uprising of the South Vietnamese people failed. The communists were pushed back albeit, not before they were able to breach several targets in Saigon including the U.S. Embassy, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, and Long Binh Post.

During the offensive Tan Son Nhut Air Base was breached. USARV had moved most of its operation to Long Binh Post, including the WAC detachment. They were spared any female casualties. The original compound of Quonset huts which had housed the women in 1967 were completely destroyed according to Sergeant Crawford.[8] Not every WAC was housed at the WAC detachment. Officers were billeted at Saigon hotels which were used for civilian, officer, and enlisted quarters. While the VC attempted to overthrow the Embassy, Presidential Palace, and other key targets in Saigon, they also assaulted the hotels. This put many military and civilian personnel lives in danger. Chief Mary Van Ette Bender was one of the women living in the Basic Officer's Quarters (BOQ). As the only military female, she became responsible for defending the third floor of the Meyerkord Hotel where she lived with female civilian personnel.

In February, smaller attacks were still occurring though not on the same scale the communists had attempted at the beginning of the year. At Long Binh Post, the ammunition dump was hit on February 18, 1968. The explosion sent shrapnel into the WAC detachment shredding their outdoor canopy. Specialist Five Marsha "Cricket" Holder recalled the "big shock came just over two weeks later when the ammo dump blew up in the middle of the night. Dust in the cheesecloth went everywhere; the doors at both ends of the upstairs barracks blew off, and

[7] Wirtz, *Tet*, 17.

[8] Lowery, *Women*, 27.

mirrors hanging on wall lockers hit the floor."[9] Captain Murphy recalled phone calls during the night to the Office of the Day. She checked on the alert status and was notified they were still in yellow, not red. She shared that she felt the women needed to be evacuated due to the fireballs she perceived as heading in their direction. The officer in charge did not agree and told her he would let her know if the alert status changed. Meanwhile First Sergeant Crawford, Sergeant First Class Benson, and Staff Sergeant Efferson assisted the women in arranging mattresses around the women for protection and ensured they were behind sandbags. Crawford stated "I never felt my responsibility for the safety of the women more acutely than that night. Though the explosions lasted until about 0600 hours, the women stood Reveille at 0530 hours, had breakfast, and then boarded the buses for their duty sections." The women at the WAC detachment spent many long nights under the first floor bunks, under mattresses and behind sandbags taking shelter.[10]

In March, the Tet Offensive abated with the conclusion of the Battle of Hue. In the middle of that same month the My Lai massacre occurred killing hundreds of Vietnamese villagers. Despite the incident being reported at the time it happened, it took a now famous letter to Congress by Ron Ridenhour for an official investigation to occur in 1969.[11] Shockingly, March 31, 1968, President Johnson announced he would not run for re-election that year. The first quarter of 1968 had been eventful. The rest of the year would prove equally as tumultuous. 1968's second quarter of the year brought the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and

[9] Marsha Holder account, Ibid., 220.

[10] Joanne Murphy account, Ibid., 29-30.

[11] *Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations Into the My Lai Incident Volume 1*, Infantry - Americal Division Papers; Box 6, Folder 1, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Robert F. Kennedy. Protests continued on the nation's campuses. The social movements which shaped post-Vietnam America gained influence especially among the younger generation.

At the end of May, General Westmoreland became the Army Chief of Staff and was succeeded by General Creighton W. Abrams in Saigon.[12] General Abrams had been the Deputy Commander since May 1967, but the official change of command had been delayed. Specialist Six Mavis D. Schmidt of the WAC detachment was his secretary and served two non-concurrent tours in Vietnam. She shared that she had previously served as clerk for Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson, noting the timing in her assignment to Vietnam had just been lucky. She recounted a harrowing trip from a downtown Saigon hotel during the night of the Tet Offensive. In an article for *The Globe Gazette,* Schmidt shared that she and two soldiers made their way back to MACV headquarters with the sounds of machine guns and explosions all around them. It was a night that she has not forgotten.[13] In presidential politics, Richard M. Nixon was nominated by the Republican National Convention in August over political newcomer Ronald W. Reagan.[14] In September, the New York Radical Women protested the Miss America Pageant in what some called the birth of the women's movement using a symbolic trash can for women to throw away objects of women's oppression.[15]

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[12] Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973*, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2006), 107.

[13] Mary Pieper, "They Served With Honor: Mavis Schmidt, Northwood," *The Globe Gazette*, Mason City, IA, March 16, 2006.

[14] Ken Hughes, Richard Nixon: Campaigns and Elections, Miller Center, University of Virginia.

[15] Robin Morgan with Allison McNearny, "I Was There: The 1968 Miss America Pageant Protest," History.com, September 7, 2018., Olivia B. Waxman, "'I was Terrified': Inside a History-Making Protest With the Women Who Took on the Miss America Competition," *Time* Magazine, (New York, NY: Time Inc., September 7, 2018).

That November in Vietnam, Operation Rolling Thunder which began March 2, 1965, ended. General Abrams ushered in a new phase of the Vietnam War. Rather than search and destroy, the mission changed to clear and hold. General Abrams remained in command until June of 1972 when he was nominated for the position of Chief of Staff of the Army. Then, America voted for her next president. When Richard M. Nixon won the presidential election in November 1968, his victory was due partly to division within the Democratic party. It was also because of his Vietnamization campaign platform. He campaigned on a gradual withdrawal bringing everyone home and turn over responsibility of the war to South Vietnam's government. In theory it was a good idea, the drawdown of American forces would appeal to the opposition while reducing the impact of the war on America's infrastructure. The reality was far more complex. Not only would the war end, but so would the draft. America's reliance on conscription would shift to a volunteer manned military. Nixon's administration proved to have a major impact on women in the military through the development of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) and end of the draft.

Concurrently, in Vietnam, President Nixon's administration led to on the ground changes for the WAC detachment. It reached its highest count in 1970 of 136 women assigned. The number of women began shrinking with the military drawdown. The detachment commander at that time was Captain Constance D. Seidemann, her first segreant was First Sergeant Mildred E. Duncan, they arrived in November of 1971. Unlike the women previously assigned to the detachment, the women who arrived in the seventies were aware of the rising tensions from the various social movements. Women's liberation had been stepping up their movement but was not as prevalent in the military. Though it definitely caused ripples even as far away as Vietnam. In February 1971 Bien Hoa Air Base held a rap session on several topics from equal rights,

women's liberation, and drugs. The topic of women's lib took coaxing from the moderator. After finally engaging the audience in back and forth discussion, the consensus was that despite physical differences between men and women, everyone should be allowed to perform whatever

An Experiment in Rapping at Bien Hoa

BIEN HOA AB, Vietnam (Special)—"The first topic today will be the women's liberation movement. I thought we were all liberated but apparently some of us are not."

So began the first mass rap session in the history of this base. Organized and run by the base human relations council, it was an experiment in communications.

The event was held in the base gym and more than 150 people attended — even American girls, a rarity for this base. More than a dozen girls from service clubs, the Red Cross and the Women's Army Corps detachment at Long Binh were there as guests of the human relations council. Hence, the women's lib topic.

"I'm not a women's lib advocate," said Corine Jordy, a service club worker. She was a member of a panel of four people set up to keep the ball rolling. Others on the panel were S.Sgt. Scott Steely, Bien Hoa AB, Spec. 4 Mary Harrington, a WAC from Long Binh, and Airman 1. C. Darryle Bass, also from Bien Hoa. Sgt. Joel Hatch, member of the human relations council, was the panel moderator.

For a while, Corine could not get an answer or an argument from the audience. They were cold, waiting for something to happen. She countered, "This is a very controversial subject. I can't believe no one has anything to say. Does everyone agree that that women have legitimate gripes or does everyone agree that women get an equal break ... when they have the same credentials and share the same aptitudes as men?"

Then the session came alive a bit. One airman said, "When women go to apply for a job, they take intelligence here."

"Wrong," said Corine. "That's the point, they take no into consideration first."

"Wrong??? How can I be wrong?! Typing and so forth, that's a women's job."

The arguments went back and forth on women's lib. Job equality, the sex role, money; all the subjects were covered. Did everyone agree that if women have doing the same job as a [illegible] be paid the [illegible] equal? [illegible] logical, does the [illegible] woman have a place in the women's [illegible] issue? To the latter question, raised by the panel, came a quick answer, NO.

"The black woman doesn't really have a place in women's lib because she is still being held back along with her race, and the women's liberation movement cannot help her until her race is liberated too," said a WAC from Long Binh. "The movement doesn't affect me at all." Another WAC agreed that the liberation movement didn't affect her either, but for a different reason. Because she was in the Army she felt liberated already.

That brought up another point and Bass jumped in. "We've got to have equal rights before we can have job rights. I mean equal racial rights. As black people we're trying to get our rights. Once we have that then we can worry about women's rights, or go on to something else."

Women's lib was forgotten for the moment. The issue became one [illegible] and white.

[illegible] when men realized we [illegible] equal to him," said a black airman dressed in civilian clothes, "then we will be accepted on the same level."

Mary Harrington had a comment on that. "Most rational people will accept that and agree with it. Most of us do not en[illegible] a problem. But too [illegible] brought up to think all[illegible] and we won't change that overnight. You have to face the problem realistically. How are you going to change the bigots? Violence is not the solution."

The argument for equal rights was over for the moment. No one was willing to carry it on, so, women's lib again became the issue.

Another airman seemed to sum up what a lot of the audience felt, he said, "Women might have opportunity under the law of the United States and equal opportunity under the laws of society and the government and still not be a man. There's a difference, physically, in a man and a woman, but there shouldn't be laws that say what a woman and what a man should do or can do. They know what they can do and what they cannot do. I know what I can do and these women here know what they can do. Let them do it. That doesn't make them any less a woman than it does make me any less a man."

That seemed to end the rapping on women's lib, but the session wasn't over. The issue of black and white was raised again and Bass said, "Nobody can answer when the final solution to the racial problem will be found. I can't and I don't think you can. It might be this generation or it might be the next one. As long as there are bigots and racists, the problem will be with us. Who's to say?"

Nobody could say. So the subject died again.

Hatch, playing his role of moderator, brought up the issue of drugs. Immediately one soldier [illegible] said, "If you think we're going to talk about that subject you're out of your mind." He was booed — and they talked about that subject.

"If you've never tried it, then you don't know anything about smoking marijuana," said Mary. "I never even heard of drug users until I came into the Army. I guess I led a sheltered life. I still don't know anything about it because I don't allow myself to be around it."

This comment had an effect on one man who said, "I think that the low income groups are getting the most publicity about how they use drugs, but I think that all groups probably have the same incidence of using drugs."

"The point is," said a WAC, "this is a war zone and any mind-altering substance can not only harm you but also other people. This is the battle to win or lose. We're not separating drugs and alcohol."

A few people all at once tried to speak about the effects of drugs versus the ability to do a job. An airman said, "I know some people who live on pearl grains and function twice as effectively because they are enjoying themselves." That raised a few eyebrows.

A soldier from the Army base at Bien Hoa claimed he has seen the results of marijuana to combat. That many of his buddies died because of their carelessness after using the drugs. Finally, someone mentioned the law. "And the law says that it is illegal to use drugs. Now, if we don't want to comply with these laws then we should go somewhere else. As long as we are here then we must act in accordance with the law." Now we had come full circle. The majority of the audience applauded the airman.

The audience proved they weren't adverse to talking about the sensitive subject of drugs, and when it was Hatch's turn, he brought up the subject of campus unrest.

He said: "Do the students have a right to protest and challenge school authority?" Bass fired back: "A lot of student unrest is due to the curriculum and the instructors and the administrators," Corine said. "The young people in school have to live their own lives. They are the ones that determine their own future and the rules of a school should be set for the students and not the administration or the instructors."

A couple of people in the audience said, in effect, that the legislative changes brought about not only on campus but elsewhere had been accomplished as a direct result of violence on the campuses and in the streets.

"In fact," said a WAC, "it's a shame this has to be. Most of our legislative bodies are aware of now because of the violence and will probably start acting before the demonstrations go to the extreme."

There were no four-letter words, although the discussion was heated at times. The amazing thing about this experiment in communications was that it worked. More than 150 persons — the young, male, female, black and white, airmen and officers — all woke up the audience. They certainly had something to think about. If that was the goal of the benefits, then the experiment was a tremendous success.

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Osan Lawyer Judged the Best

OSAN AB, Korea (Special) — Capt. James L. Hatcher Jr. has been nominated by Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) for the Albert M. Kuyper Award as the Air Force's outstanding young judge advocate of the year for 1970.

Nominating Hatcher for the award, Maj. Gen. Robert W. Maloy, 314th Air Div. commander, praised the base lawyer had for a two-month period "accomplished the work normally assigned to three judge advocates, and did so in an exceptional manner."

Following the racial troubles and unrest of last spring, Hatcher was given the task of traveling to the various bases and lecturing on the true feelings of those involved.

Arriving at Kwang Ju AB on one such trip, he learned that gangs of blacks and whites had prepared themselves for a pitched battle after sundown. Hatcher took immediate action.

He talked to the participants with sincerity and calmed them. He then pointed out that there were other means to resolve their legal and social grievances without resorting to demonstrations or violence.

His courage, leadership and calm command of the situation defused a potentially volatile situation." It is what Maloy said of the incident in discussing Hatcher's role.

Hatcher initiated the establishment of an effective human relations program at Kwang Ju with an open line of communication to the commander.

Hatcher, now entering his third year on active duty, received his bachelor of arts degree in government from Howard University in 1965 and his Juris Doctor (law) degree from the Duke University Law School in 1968.

Pacific Stars & Stripes 23
Wednesday, Feb. 17, 1971

Figure 29 February 17, 1971, Pacific Stars & Stripes via starsandstripes.newspaperarchive.com

job they are capable of performing. WACs from Long Binh attended, Specialist Four Mary Harrington sat on the panel.[16]

After 1972 the number of women assigned to the detachment was forty-one. Those women had a choice, remain in Vietnam, or return to the United States. Twelve reportedly remained after the unit's deactivation.[17] The last WACs departed Vietnam in March 1973. Unlike the work accomplished by previous WACs, those who were there while the United States was prepared to leave faced different challenges. Instead of helping run an active operation they were responsible for the shut down and eventual turnover of the war effort to the South Vietnamese. There are few records that detail what life was like for the last WACs in Vietnam. What is available painted an interesting end to the unit's five-and-a-half-year run. According to Lowery, there were six WAC arrivals from March 1972 until March 1973. Specialist Four Darlene E. Ondesko recalled being sent on sealed orders.[18] It was especially funny to the infantry Colonel who was her immediate supervisor. She had been sent to destroy "top secret" files in the finance offices. She wrote, "He actually fell out of his chair laughing because, like me, he didn't know there were any top secret documents in all of Finance."[19]

Like Ondesko, Staff Sergeant Judith McCurdy arrived in Vietnam in February 1972. Her account detailed some of her duties as the administration NCO for the 39th Signal Brigade at Camp Gerry. She was also the drug counselor. Part of her responsibilities included frisking "taxi girls" who provided prostitution services to the men as well as trafficking drugs. Sergeant

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[16] "An Experiment in Rapping at Bien Hoa," *Pacific Stars & Stripes*, February 17, 1971.

[17] Lowery, *Women*, 628-629.

[18] As a note, Ondesko was not officially assigned to the WAC Detachment, she was assigned to MACV Finance and Accounting Office, but the available information does not reflect where she was housed.

[19] Account of Darlene E. Ondesko, Lowery, *Women*, 532.

McCurdy recalled her first experience with these women and her expectation of finding a vial or two of heroin. Rather, she discovered numerous vials taped around the length of the women's legs. Her commander informed her the women offered free samples of both drugs and sex to entice the men to try heroin. Once they developed a habit the women charged for their wares. As part of her duties as drug counselor, Sergeant McCurdy was responsible for getting men to one of the Vietnam based drug rehab facilities. There soldiers completed a rehabilitation program before being was sent back to the United States. No records were kept of the men's addictions or rehabilitation, but they had to ask for help. According to McCurdy they could not be coerced or forced.[20]

Reports of the drug problem in Vietnam are conflicting, some suggested it was a rampant issue affecting soldier performance in the field. Others suggested it was more localized and had less of an impact than what was widely pronounced in the media.[21] Regardless of which portrayal is accurate, the reality is that heroin use among the soldiers was a problem. The rehabilitation centers served as a necessary stop for any addicted personnel before they could rotate home.[22] McCurdy also described that in some cases this led to poor decision making and attempts to smuggle drugs out of Vietnam generally concealed inside hollow statues. Her experience in this

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[20] Account of Judith L. McCurdy, Ibid., 659-662.

[21] Discussion regarding the heroin use of Vietnam soldiers can be found in the following articles: Jeremy Kuzmarov, "'The Myth of the 'Addicted Army': Drug Use in Vietnam in Historical Perspective," *War & Society*, 26:2, 2007, 121-141, DOI: 10.1179/072924707791591640 and Zinberg NE. "Heroin Use in Vietnam and the United States: A Contrast and a Critique." *Arch Gen Psychiatry.*1972; 26(5):486–488. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.1972.01750230096019 as well as the initial report, Robins, Lee N. The Vietnam Drug User Returns. Final Report. Special Action Office Monograph, Series A, Number 2, May 1974. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office.

[22] Another of these rehabilitation centers was in Cam Ranh Bay, an award decoration package recounts the challenges they faced before implementation of a strict program was started. Prior to that drugs were even rampant in the rehabilitation center and patients were resentful and caused issues at the center. See account in: Meritorious Unit Commendations—United States Army Drug Treatment Center, Cam Ranh Bay—1971-1972. Page 11, Record Group 472, National Archives College Park.

unit led to mixed emotions, she recollected bitterness towards the women who helped create the problem but also towards the military system that allowed it to happen.[23]

The final year of the WAC detachment has the least amount of information available via oral history or archival record. The stand down was shared from the perspective of Staff Sergeant McCurdy. She said, "The deactivation of the WAC Detachment, USARV Special Troops, on September 21, 1972, turned out to be a non-event, unlike when the WACs arrived in country in 1967. There was no fanfare no retirement of the unit guidon, a formal protocol of closing a unit--."[24] The few women that chose to stay worked in various units around Saigon and moved their belongings to the Iowa Basic Enlisted Quarters. However, a different account is referenced in Colonel Morden's history which indicated the stand down did adhere to normal Army tradition.[25] The war was considered officially over according to the Paris Peace Accords of January 1973. The last remaining Americans left March 29, 1973, the final ten WACs left that date or shortly before.

Their time in Vietnam was over, but the impact Vietnam had on the lives of the women of the WAC detachment is significant. In 1980 for the first time in American history, women were asked for their veteran status on the census.[26] The rise of the feminist movement in the United States largely ignored women in the military. According to Margaret Ellen Perri's 1998 doctoral dissertation, "Feminist scholarship concerning women veterans is shamefully scarce.

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[23] Account of McCurdy, Lowery, *Women*, 661.

[24] Ibid., 630.

[25] Colonel Morden's account shares that the stand down was well attended by many guests and included a band, Morden, *Women's*, 254.

[26] The Census Bureau states that the 1980 Decennial Census was the first year information on female veterans had been collected, "About the Veteran Population," www.census.gov, the 1980 long form, page 5 https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/1980_long_questionnaire.pdf

Perhaps one explanation for this is that much of the feminist movement was closely aligned with the anti-war movement of the sixties. Women who served in the military, like male veterans, were seen as "the enemy" by some feminists."[27] Prior to earning her doctorate in Education, Perri served a tour in Vietnam as a nurse at the 24th Evacuation Hospital at Long Binh. Her experience as nurse and veteran lends credence to her findings. Another aspect to this should be considered. As previously mentioned, many of the women who returned from Vietnam chose not to talk about their military service. This was particularly true for the women who served a single three year enlistment and left the military after Vietnam. Since so many women remained silent about their service and the feminist movement was divided in its approach to military women, what catalyst brought about changes in the status of military women? Believe it or not, the foresight of the United States Army brought about the largest changes in women's military service. As early as 1968 the Army looked ahead to what military service would entail after Vietnam. According to Robert K. Griffith, Jr., a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel who also served at the Center for Military History, the transition to a volunteer Army was a three phased approach. This included studies, experimental, and implementation phases. The Army, Department of Defense and The President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, more commonly referred to as the Gates Commission, were concerned with the feasibility of transition to a modern volunteer military. Talk of abandoning the draft for a volunteer military had been building since 1964 and became a major part of 1968 Presidential campaign platforms. The Army had already conducted their Career Force Study at the request of General Westmoreland in September 1968 and utilized information from the 1966 Defense Manpower Study to make recommendations. Among those

[27] Margaret Ellen Perri, "Witnesses to War: The War Stories of Women Vietnam Veterans." University of Massachusetts Amherst, Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014. 5342, January 1, 1998. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/5342

were suggestions that the Army increase reliance on civilian employees and increase the size of the WAC.[28] Subsequent studies, Project Volunteer in the Defense of the Nation (PROVIDE) and Army 75 Personnel Concept (Army 75) also suggested an increase in WAC recruitment. Secretary of the Army Robert F. Froehlke planned to increase the WAC by 1973 making the Army less dependent on males. Another study concluded women could do 434 of the 482 Army occupations and made the recommendation to open and fill them with women.[29] Only combat designated occupations remained off-limits, and the WAC found itself quickly expanding.

A small minority of women established careers in the military during the early fifties and sixties serving until retirement. Their influence and example inspired the career service of the young women they served with. This was the case for many in the WAC detachment in Vietnam. Captain Peggy E. Ready, the first commander of the detachment, served nine years on active duty before switching to the Reserves. She retired in 1993 as a Colonel. She credited her time in Vietnam as beneficial to her careers, both military and civilian. She achieved many firsts for women. Her 2015 obituary shared she was the "first woman commandant of an Army Reserve School, the first woman assistant public defender in St. Johns County, and the county's first woman judge."[30]

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[28] Robert K. Griffith, Jr., *The U.S. Army's Transition to The All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974*, CMH Pub 30-18, Center of Military History, United States Army; Washington D.C., 1997, 17-18.

[29] Griffith, Jr., *Army's Transition*, 193.

[30] Margo C. Pope, "St. Johns Judge Peggy E. Ready: 1938-2015," *The Florida Times-Union*, Jacksonville, FL., November 19, 2015., Account of Peggy E. Ready, Lowery, *Women*, 89-90.

Figure 30 Sergeant First Class Betty Benson and First Sergeant Marion Crawford in the WAC Detachment, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657C, Marion Crawford Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

First Sergeant Marion Crawford served until 1970 when she retired.[31] She had joined the WAC to travel and experience life, which she did. She spent several years in military recruiting before her assignment to Vietnam. Sergeant Crawford's final assignment was in Fort Sheridan, Illinois where she served as first sergeant of a large female unit. She retired in 1969 six months before she would have been promoted as the seventh Sergeant Major in the WAC. She went on to be the first female Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Instructor in the nation.[32]

[31] Marion Crawford file, Box 657C, Donna Lowery Collection, WAC.2017.75, United States Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[32] Crawford, Marion C. "'Don't Ever Let Yourself be Average': Running the First WAC Detachment in Vietnam." Interview by David Siry. West Point Center for Oral History, April 27, 2018., Account of Marion Crawford, Lowery, *Women*, 88.

Sergeant First Class Betty Benson remained in the Army until she was forced to retire in 1980, she and Crawford both enlisted in 1949.[33] Like Crawford, Benson had a stint in recruiting before she was sent to Vietnam. However, Sergeant Benson remained in the military through the eventual integration of women into the regular Army. She indicated she would have remained in

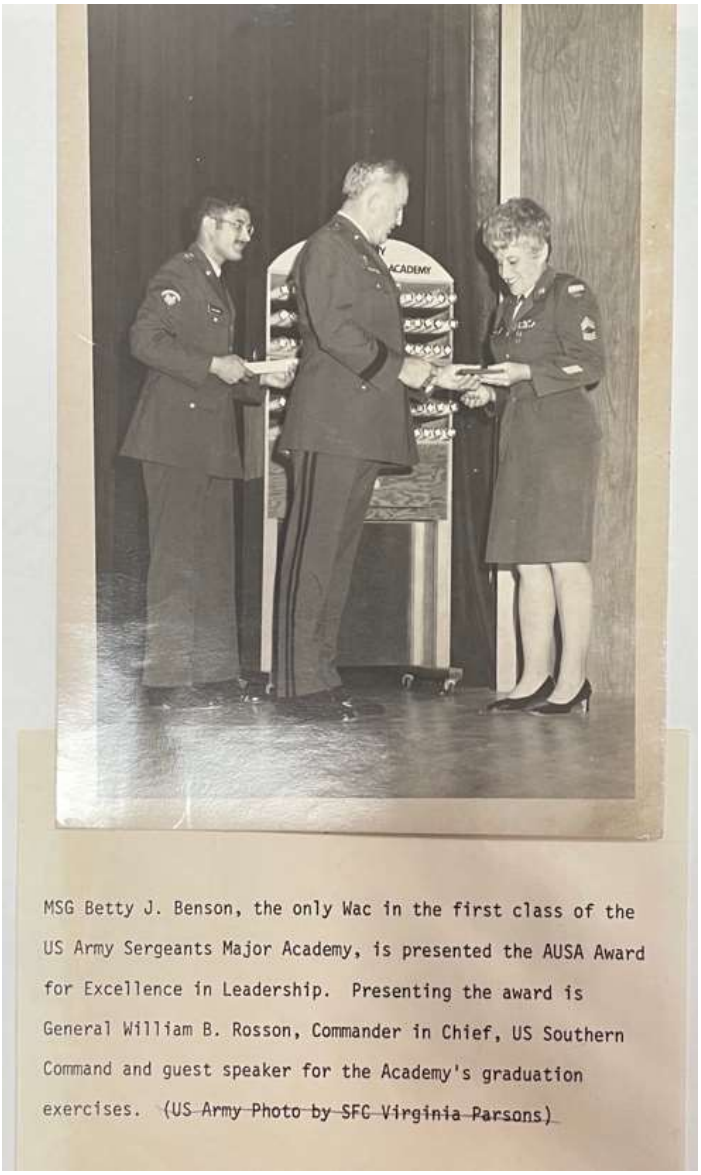

Figure 31 Master Sergeant Betty Benson receiving leadership award at United States Army Sergeants Major Academy 1973, Photo by SFC Virginia Parsons, FIC.2011.317, Box 595, Folder 4 Betty Benson, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[33] Betty Benson file, Box 595, FIC.2011.317, USAWM, FGA.

the Army indefinitely if she had not been forced to retire. In 1981 the Army Women's Museum videotaped an interview of Command Sergeant Major Betty Benson and First Sergeant Molly Edwards. They discussed challenges faced while serving as WACs. Sergeant Benson shared that any job primarily performed by men required women to prove themselves, "…you prove yourselves and they accepted you."[34] She was the only WAC in the first class of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy in 1973 where her classmates nominated her for the award for excellence in leadership which she received.

Donna Lowery enlisted in 1965 and retired after twenty-six years of service as a Sergeant Major in 1991. She credited both Crawford and Benson's leadership style for influencing her own career. Serving with them in Vietnam exemplified how she wanted to serve as a leader. In

Figure 32 Then Captain Sherian Cadoria and First Sergeant Marion Crawford, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657C, Cadoria Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[34] OH.2011.145 #86 CSM Benson, 1SG Molly Edwards, May 15, 1981, USAWM, FGA

her West Point interview, she credits both women for changing her life. She admired their caring nature and professionalism. Instead of getting married and leaving the Army, she made it a career. She went on to serve as a drill instructor at Fort McClellan and later as a first sergeant. She attended the Sergeants Major Academy in the 27th class.[35]

Doris Allen retired as a Chief Warrant Officer Three in 1980 after thirty years of service. After Vietnam she was assigned to Fort Holabird teaching the Prisoner of War Interrogator Course. In 1971 she moved with the unit to Fort Huachuca in Arizona. She later served in military intelligence units in Germany and California. After retirement she pursued her education and received her Ph.D. in Psychology at Wright Institute.[36]

Sherian Cadoria retired as the first black female Brigadier General in the Army. She received a direct commission in 1961 to the Women's Army Corps and served for twenty-two years. In Vietnam she served as the administrative officer for the Provost Marshal's Office for Brigadier General Moore then as the Protocol Officer of Qhi Nhon Support Command. She served as the first female commander of the Military Police Battalion, and achieved several other firsts for female officers. A December 1985 article in *Ebony* magazine stated, "Gen. Cadoria was responsible for knocking many of those doors down. And she won't slack up until a few more tumble."[37]

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[35] Lowery, Donna A.. *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories*, (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2015), 127-128 and "'I Found my Heart in the Army': From WAC to Sergeant Major." Interview by David Siry. West Point Center for Oral History, August 25, 2016.

[36] Doris I. Allen Collection (AFC/2001/001/109035), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress., "'Too Blessed to be Stressed': A Women's Army Corps Intelligence Analyst Puts the Pieces Together," Interview by David Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, August 25, 2016.)

[37] "The General is a Lady," *Ebony* Magazine, December 1985, Sherian Cadoria File, Box 657C, Donna Lowery WAC.2017.75, USAWM, FGA.

Evelyn "Pat" Foote was in the same Adjutant General course as General Cadoria and volunteered to serve in Vietnam. She was commissioned in December 1959 after working as clerk for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for about a year.[38] She spent her Vietnam tour traveling to many remote locations in support of her duty as Public Information Officer. Her later career focused on emerging issues women faced and helped establish many of the policies regarding sexual assault and harassment in the military. She retired in 1989 after thirty years, but was recalled to active duty in 1996 following a scandal at Aberdeen Proving Grounds before returning to retirement in 1997.[39]

In total there were approximately 281 women retirees that served in Vietnam; 179 enlisted and 102 commissioned and warrant officers.[40] Those who stayed in the military saw massive changes to policies that previously hindered female career progression. In the 1970s, several court cases, implications of the women's movement as well as the resurgence of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), caused legislative and military leadership to recognize policies regarding women needed to change for a successful all volunteer military. Many of these changes occurred under the command of the newest WAC director.

In August 1971, two major events occurred for Lieutenant Colonel Mildred I. C. Bailey. She was promoted to Brigadier General, and she assumed command of the Women's Army Corps succeeding Brigadier General Elizabeth Hoisington. Her tenure as WAC Director would usher in the period of change within the WAC influenced by the growth of the women's

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[38] WV0360.001, Oral history interview with Pat Foote, Interviewed by Beth Carmichael, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Evelyn Patricia Foote Papers, August 8, 2006.

[39] Ibid.

[40] WAC women only not in any medical MOS, from the accounts recorded in Lowery's *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories*.

movement. An August 4, 1971, European *Stars & Stripes* article titled, "Military Duty Still Proves Attractive to Young Gals," mentioned several of the changes that started making their way into the military. First, restrictions were lifted on officer rank promotions. Second, recent court cases challenged the constitutionality of pregnancy and motherhood policies which ended women's military careers. The question of women in combat was barely mentioned before one woman noted that military women already had equality, at least as far as pay was concerned. The article expressed that despite trivial restrictions, such as curfews, bed checks, and prohibitions on certain clothing worn off duty, women still eagerly served in the military because it offered them a chance to travel, skill training, and excellent pay and benefits including retirement.[41] The women's rights movement was not solely responsible for change that impacted women in the military. According to General Bailey, the relationship was symbiotic. She said:

> Women in industry envied us because if we were a major in the Army we drew the same salary that a major, male major, in the army drew. We were limited as to how high we could go until 1968, but at least we drew the same pay as our male counterpart. In civilian life this was not true then.
> All of these things were beginning. The people were going into court challenging rules in civilian life, and they were using the army as an example.[42]

This perception was not an individual idea held by General Bailey. Colonel Betty Morden wrote something similar regarding WAC expansion, "The women's liberation movement had created an avalanche of public and congressional sympathy for women and their right to the same benefits, opportunities, and responsibilities as men."[43] As such, the end of the Vietnam War and

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[41] "Military Duty Still Proves Attractive to Young Gals," European *Stars & Stripes,* August 4, 1971.

[42] WV0084.001, Oral history interview with M. Inez Caroon Bailey transcript, page 43, Mildred Caroon Bailey Papers, Interviewed by Eric Elliott. University of North Carolina at Greensboro, May 26, 1999. General Bailey was referencing court cases on women's equality in the work force where the Army was ahead of the civilian sector.

[43] Morden, Bettie J. *Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978*, (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990), 257.

draft demonstrated to the military that recruiting to fill peacetime ranks could be an issue. If enough men would not enlist, could women be used to fill the ranks and not risk military strength and integrity? Bailey purported that the WAC had been proved this theory all along. As the eighth director she was continuing the goals of her predecessors, quiet integration made over many years. In her words:

> We were trailblazers—and I picked up where the other director stopped. At that particular time in history, in those years, with attitudes that we had this person could do only what she was permitted to do by the American public. Then the next person that came along built on what she had done and managed to go a little further. I happened to be there at a time when everything got into my ballpark, so I was able to see things happen during my tenure that took fifty years to make it possible to happen.[44]

Indeed, the 1970s saw many changes to several obstacles of women's military service. One of the most discussed topics of the Vietnam oral histories mentioned the required parental signatures granting women under the age of twenty-one permission to enlist. The men who voluntarily enlisted or were drafted had no such requirement. Young men could enlist at seventeen with parental consent or at eighteen without.[45] Until 1966, marriage was one way to end military service for women. The marriage policy was briefly rescinded and revised in 1965 and then permanently eliminated for women who enlisted after 1966.[46]

Pregnancy, whether terminated or carried to term, was a guaranteed discharge, not always under honorable conditions. The pregnancy policy had been in place since the 1951 Executive Order 10240 signed by President Truman. The military had the right to discharge any woman

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[44] Bailey transcript, Bailey Papers, page 47.

[45] Public Law 90-235 to amend 10 U.S.C. §505, Regular Components: qualifications, term, grade, January 2, 1968.

[46] Previously discussed in chapter four, the policy was eliminated under Colonel Gorman because of retention issues.

who became pregnant or acquired stepchildren.[47] These policies were only applicable to women in the military, regardless of branch.[48] According to House Resolution 5447 of the 107th Congress, the military was supposed to allow women the opportunity to make retention requests. Most women were not aware of this when being discharged.[49] As a result fully trained women were separated from the service. Their replacements had to be trained from the ground up which was costly.

A prime example of this is the case of Chief Warrant Officer Two Mary Van Ette Bender. Chief Bender discovered she was pregnant in 1971. She was involuntarily discharged from the WAC and gave birth to a son, Joshua. Chief Bender served in Vietnam on two separate tours.[50] She served from October 1967 to May 1969 and then from September 1970 to August 1971. She was a counter intelligence technician with the 525th Military Intelligence Brigade.[51] Chief Bender died alone and homeless in California in January 2002. Her life after her involuntary discharge was tumultuous at best. Her son shared the end of her story in his quest to have her laid to rest at Arlington. Patterson wrote:

> There were the years after Mary Bender's discharge, when she toiled as a single mother running her own private investigations firm in Alexandria, Virginia. The Bender family, which consisted only of Joshua and his mother, had a house then, and cars, too. Those

[47] Executive Order 10240—Regulations Governing the Separation from the Service of Certain Women Serving in the Regular Army, Navy, Marine Corps, or Air Force, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/279184

[48] Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992), 124-126.

[49] Congress.gov. "Text - H.R.5447 - 107th Congress (2001-2002): Women Discharged from the Military Due to Pregnancy Relief Act of 2002." November 25, 2002. https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-bill/5447/text. HR 5477 introduced by Representative Cynthia McKinney planned to provide compensation or benefits to women who had been involuntarily discharged from 1948-1976, but the bill failed.

[50] Michael Robert Patterson, "Mary V. Bender—Chief Warrant Officer, United States Army," Arlington National Cemetery, February 2, 2002. This article indicates Bender served three tours in Vietnam, not two.

[51] Lowery, *Women*, 178. Chief Warrant Officer Three Dave Mann contributed information about Chief Bender, more will be discussed about Chief Bender in a later chapter.

> were the sober years, when Mary Bender's depression and alcoholism would go into a kind of remission. Those were the years Mary Bender coached Little League and had a new joke to tell nearly every day.[52]

Chief Bender was discharged and not notified of the waiver opportunity for retention. It was possible her discharge was classified as dishonorable which would have made her ineligible for VA benefits.[53] This also precluded her from burial at Arlington National Cemetery. Her son, along with members of the Fifth Amendment WACs, worked to have her ashes inurned and were successful.[54] The grassroots activism of the Fifth Amendment WACs resulted in legislation called The Tyler-Bender Mandatory Discharge Relief Act, H.R. 5447. It was introduced in the 107th Congress in 2002. According to the findings of H.R. 5447, "It is documented that as many as 7,000 service women were involuntarily discharged from the Armed Forces as a result of pregnancy."[55]

The fight for women's equality raged on stateside in the United States but military women remained subject to discriminatory policies. Marriage was allowed for both men and women but only men were allowed to have dependents unless it was proven that a woman's husband relied on her for more than half their income.[56] Dependents increased pay allowances for subsistence and housing which women could not receive. Many women still chose not only to

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[52] Patterson, "Bender," np.

[53] Chief Bender's discharge status was said to be dishonorable by Donna Lowery in a November 10, 2017, presentation on C-Span, starting from minute 31:40 to 33:04.

[54] Chief Bender is in the Columbarium Section 6-X Row 5 Site 1 which is located east of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. The Fifth Amendment WACs were a group of women who had all been discharged because of pregnancy and began a grassroots organization that has since gone defunct.

[55] Congress.gov, Text - H.R.5447 - 107th Congress (2001-2002): Women Discharged from the Military Due to Pregnancy Relief Act of 2002." November 25, 2002.

[56] This was according to Title 37 §401 of the United States Code which was amended in 1973, "Closing text. Pub. L. 93–64, §103(2), struck out second sentence, following cl. (3) of first sentence, stating that a person is not a dependent of a female member unless he is in fact dependent on her for over one-half of his support."

serve, but remain for twenty to thirty years despite the inequity. This meant they chose to forego marriage as well as children under the established policies. This was in stark contrast to the restrictive ideal that Friedan suggested was expected for women in society. Choosing domesticity may have been normal for most. Military women were the exception because they chose career over family. This was remarkably progressive since most WACs served an initial enlistment of three years. They would return to civilian life presumably well prepared to enter domesticity. In many cases, women who left the military did so to pursue marriage and children, though not all did. It was a stereotypical myth that women joined the military in search of a man. Most joined for career opportunities or because college was too expensive. The women who stayed did so with the understanding that parenthood was out of their grasp, at least for the time being.

In 1971 a legal case was brought by Susan Struck, an Air Force nurse who had served at the 24th Evacuation hospital on Long Binh. Struck sued the Secretary of Defense when she was set to be discharged from the Air Force because she was pregnant.[57] Struck found out she was pregnant while in Vietnam. Her case argued the involuntary separation of a pregnant military member was a violation of a woman's First and Fifth Amendment rights. Kara Dixon Vuic wrote, "future Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg prepared to argue the case before the court. Ginsburg's argument rested on three points: Air Force policies violated Struck's rights to equal protection, privacy, and religious freedom."[58] Though the Supreme Court did not hear Struck's case because it was rendered moot, Vuic argued that this case among a few others were

[57] 460 F.2d 1372 (9th Cir. 1972) Struck vs. The Secretary of Defense

[58] Kara Dixon Vuic, "The Better Roe: The Case of Struck vs. The Secretary of Defense," *Perspectives on History*, Vol 60 Iss 6, September 2022.

indicative of changes inspired by the growth of the feminist movement.[59] Ultimately, in 1976 the Department of Defense overturned its longstanding pregnancy policies with Crawford vs. Cushman.[60] Before that ruling a policy change within the WAC initially opened the door for women to be mothers. On April 9, 1971, the Army announced that waivers for parenthood could be obtained despite many objections from General Hoisington. She believed that such waivers for pregnancy, abortions, etc., would denigrate the moral high standards expected of WAC personnel.[61] Despite her beliefs and arguments against it, the policy changed. As a result, Sergeants Edith Efferson, Grendel Howard, and Cathy Oatman were able to adopt children as single women.

Staff Sergeant Edith Efferson, the supply sergeant for the WAC detachment in 1967, was the first recorded Vietnam WAC to take advantage of this. Donna Lowery intimated she may have been the first ever. While she was stationed at Fort Meade, Maryland she put in the request for a waiver to remain on active duty. Her request was routed through legal and approved. The *Seattle Times* reported in January 1973 that Efferson adopted two children. Marion Crawford recalled that the two girls were named Angela and Michele.[62] Another Vietnam WAC, Sergeant First Class Grendel Howard, also stationed at Fort Meade, followed suit. She was soon approved and adopted a boy, named Jason. Adoption approval and retention waiver requests were decided

[59] Vuic noted that Struck's case was moot because she received a waiver that allowed her to remain on active duty after she gave birth. Struck's daughter was adopted.

[60] 531 F.2d 1114 (2d Cir. 1976), Crawford vs. Cushman which successfully argued that the military could not lawfully discharge women based on pregnancy.

[61] Morden, *Women's*, 232-240.

[62] Marion Crawford on Edith Efferson, Lowery, *Women*, 92., "WACs Buck Tradition and Adopt Children," *The Seattle Times*, January 28, 1973, Edith Efferson File, Box 657C, Lowery, Donna WAC.2017.75, USAWM, FGA. There was no mention of the children's nationalities, but local Baltimore, Maryland social workers did offer assistance and advice to the women as they adjusted to parenthood.

on an individual basis. Each woman had to route their requests and wait for a decision to be made.[63] A third WAC, Staff Sergeant Catherine Oatman, adopted two children from Vietnam. As previously discussed, many of the women spent time volunteering at the local orphanages. Oatman was no exception. She became attached to a young Vietnamese boy who was approximately three years old and began the process of adoption; she called him Kevin. She decided she should adopt a second child so that Kevin would not be raised alone. She found a two year old Vietnamese girl, who she called Kimmy. Her adoption had to cross several legal hurdles. She needed to acquire all their paperwork, get permission to adopt the children, and then get the American consulate to issue visas. What makes Oatman's account unique is that Kevin lived in the WAC detachment for about a month. According to Oatman he had a whole village of mothers who offered her plenty of advice. She shared that having a baby in the detachment was a challenge, stating:

> The orderly room would babysit while I went to work -- the rest of the time he was in my room. I always laugh about it because when I had him at Long Binh and I would take him out at night, the other [women] in the barracks would say, "Get him out of the night air." And if I didn't take him out, they would say to me, "Take him out. Quit keeping that baby locked up." He had so many mothers it wasn't funny.[64]

He was under a doctor's care for persistent medical issues, but apparently his presence caused a stir at Long Binh. A WAC officer assigned to the real estate division, Lieutenant Colonel Margaret Jebb, heard about a baby being kept at the detachment. She contacted the WAC Staff advisor, Lieutenant Colonel Judith Bennett, to apprise her of the situation apparently after her

[63] Ibid., 208. Lowery notes, "The permission to approve an adoption for a single WAC was granted by individual court-martial authorities. There were no centralized records on this issue."

[64] Austin Bunn, "Unarmed and Under Fire: An Oral History of Female Vietnam Vets," *Salon*, Salon.com, LLC November 11, 1999. Age was estimated based on Oatman's statement that Kevin was 30 in 1999 and Kimmy was 29.

questions were not sufficiently answered in Vietnam.[65] She wrote, "You might want to take some action at your level, but I'd sure hate to see a human interest story about the Vietnamese child raised in a WAC detachment off of scrounged food get into the newspapers."[66] This caused Colonel Bennett to contact the detachment commander, Captain Shirley Ohta for clarification and correction of this perceived impropriety. Captain Ohta responded that the baby had been cleared to stay at the detachment by the commander of USARV Special Troops. He was there for medical treatment and was placed in an orphanage to wait for clearance to leave. The letters indicated Kevin was being adopted by Oatman's sister. However, it was Catherine Oatman who adopted both children.[67] Oatman left Vietnam in May 1972 after extending her tour six months to ensure all paperwork was handled for Kevin and Kimmy to come to the United States.

They faced many challenges as a detachment in Vietnam, but no WACs were killed in Vietnam or taken prisoner. None had returned unchanged. In the late 1970s veterans began having health issues which they attributed to Agent Orange exposure. The women were no exception. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs moved with the usual sense of urgency, taking years to establish a study on the effects of Agent Orange on the female veteran population. John C. Hansen wrote, "Since 1977, the emotionally charged Agent Orange issue has grown into a national controversy. Thousands of Vietnam veterans claim that exposure to Agent Orange has made them sick and deformed their children, and they are frustrated at the slow pace

[65] See Letters in Appendix C

[66] Letter from Jebb to Bennett, Re: Baby, Folder 1, Container 101, File Unit #2, "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978," RG319, NACP.

[67] Correspondence RE: Baby, Folder 1, Container 101, File Unit Vietnam #2, "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978," RG319, NACP.; Lowery, *Women,* 311-312.

of Government efforts to find answers to their questions."[68] Hansen was a senior evaluator for the Government Accounting Office (GAO) assigned to look at the issues of Agent Orange, veterans' health issues, and the obligation of the United States government to veterans. He went on to describe problems many veterans brought to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); such as skin issues, cancer, birth defects in their children, fertility problems, digestive issues, etc., which they believed were caused by exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. Though Agent Orange had been touted as a safe and non-toxic weed killer, further research determined it was in fact far more toxic than previously believed. Hansen's overview looked at the steps the GAO took to study the issue and the resulting reports. He discussed the Vietnam veteran registry established in 1979 as well as the work groups and research studies that were a result of all the health complaints the VA received. Meanwhile, the veterans, or rather, male veterans, did not believe the government and the VA were doing enough to take their complaints seriously or provide the medical care they needed. Hansen shared, "Veterans are also critical of [the] VA for denying most disability compensation claims related to Agent Orange. [the] VA has denied most claims because it believes there is insufficient evidence that the claimed disabilities were incurred during the veterans' service as a result of exposure to Agent Orange."[69] He concluded the complex issue of responsibility for exposure and care of exposed veterans would likely result in social policy that would take years of study and ultimately rest upon lawmakers to decide. Meanwhile, women were still not necessarily considered veterans by their peers nor were their concerns over Agent Orange exposure being addressed. A June 1983 article by Denise Kulp of *Off Our Backs: A Women's Newsjournal,* reported that the VA declined to include women

[68] John C. Hansen, "The Vietnam Veteran vs. Agent Orange: The War that Lingers," *Government Accounting Office Review*, Spring 1981, 29-36. https://www.gao.gov/assets/Agent_Orange.pdf

[69] Hansen, "Vietnam Veteran," 36.

veterans in studies on Agent Orange's effects.[70] Kulp wrote, "While the VA has said that women were not in the areas which had been sprayed with Agent Orange, VVA [Vietnam Veterans of America] refutes this, saying that sprayings were often conducted around compounds where medical facilities were set up; most women in Vietnam were in medical positions."[71] There was no mention of impact on women veterans in initial studies done on Agent Orange. It would take Public Law 99-272 which passed in 1986 for Congress to mandate women be included in the epidemiological study.[72] This study included the WAC detachment given its proximity to the 24th Evacuation Hospital on Long Binh. The women of the detachment reported incidents of health issues including cancers and birth defects, among others.

Carol Reynolds, Judith Nickloy, and Karen Offutt have shared that their children have suffered birth defects from exposure to Agent Orange. Offutt had twins in 1971. One was born with kidney cancer and the other with bone and teeth deformities and neurological issues. She later had a daughter who suffered from seizures as well as learning disabilities, all which Offutt attributed to her exposure while in Vietnam.[73] Nickloy and her ex-husband were both exposed in Vietnam and their son was born blind in one eye. He and his mother have suffered from recurring boils. Nickloy stated it took her fifteen years to get enrolled with the VA and twenty to

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[70] *Off Our Backs: A Women's Newsjournal* was a feminist periodical that was published from 1970 through 2008.

[71] Denise Kulp, "women vets' health problems ignored," *Off Our Backs*, Vol 13, No.6, June 1983, 16.

[72] See studies on Agent Orange and women veterans: Dalager NA, Kang HK, Thomas TL. 1995a. "Cancer Mortality Patterns Among Women Who Served in the Military: The Vietnam experience." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 37(3):298–305., Kang HK, Cypel Y, Kilbourne AM, Magruder KM, Serpi T, Collins JF, Frayne SM. Furey J, Huang GD, Kimerling R, Reinhard MJ, Schumacher K, Spiro A. 2014. "HealthViEWS: Mortality study of female US Vietnam Era Veterans, 1965–2010." *American Journal of Epidemiology* 179(6):721–730., Spoonster-Schwartz L., "Women and the Vietnam experience." *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 19(4), 1987, 168–173., and Thomas TL, Kang H, Dalager N. 1991. "Mortality Among Women Vietnam Veterans, 1973–1987." *American Journal of Epidemiology* 134, 1991, 973–980.

[73] Lowery, *Women*, 662.

get tested for exposure.[74] Reynolds also reported that her two children have suffered as a result of her service with "debilitating abnormalities" though she did not specify what they were.[75] Those are just the women who shared their stories. The oral histories mention health issues the women of the detachment continued to battle such as cancer and respiratory issues. These women have reported more than physical health issues because of their service.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been mentioned either directly through their interviews or hinted at in most of the recorded women's accounts. Many shared they have recurrent nightmares and flashbacks often triggered by loud noises and specific smells. Two women, who remained anonymous, shared their lives have been so impacted by PTSD that they barely function. The first spoke of her repeating nightmare, she is being attacked and has no means of protection. She said she fears sleeping because she knows the nightmare is coming. The other indicated she worked "at the General Officer level" but her experiences leave her crying daily. She shared that her experiences were like Linda McClenahan's, but she has never spoken about her time in Vietnam to anyone.[76] These two women have lived like recluses since their return. One has sought help at the VA while the other has not.

The VA has offered aid to female veterans since 1923, but there were few women who took advantage of their services. In many cases women were not aware they were considered veterans, nor did they believe they were eligible for care. In some cases, their treatment at a VA facility resulted in humiliation and anger. McClenahan recounted her first attempt in getting care at her local VA. She shared:

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[74] Ibid., 666.

[75] Ibid., 275.

[76] Ibid., 668.

> So I went to the new VA out in Martinez, which was brand new at that point. And of course, I get there and it's like, what's your husband's service number? No, I'm the veteran. And, you know, going through that, heaven knows, I never thought we'd still be at, you know, 30 years later. Still be struggling with that a little bit. Not struggling, but still have that problem occasionally. But anyway, so I get in to see the doctor and he walks in and he's looking at my chart and he says, "You just got back from Vietnam, huh?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "You make some good money over?" I said, "Well, yeah, with hazardous duty pay and, and the proficiency pay, because I was really good at my job and that with no place to send it, you know, I did. And he says, "No, I meant whoring around." The doctor said that. And I just looked at him and got up and left and I swore I would never set foot in a VA again the rest of my life.[77]

Claire Brisebois Starnes spoke about her experience at one of the vet centers that she went to. She told West Point's interviewer, David Siry:

> I remember going there because I was having a hard time. And it was a group session. And I remember sitting there and you know, guys like oh, you had it made you know, you were in Saigon, you know, oh that's cushion. And you know what, I walked out of there and I just said, never again, I'm not going back. And then you know just not talking about it period because it was easier to not talk about it.[78]

Vet Centers were counseling centers the VA ran to offer mental health support to Vietnam veterans who had issues readjusting to life after serving in Vietnam. They were primarily male run and attended but eventually female Vet Centers were created. McClenahan found counseling through one of these centers, though her first experience was less than stellar simply because she was not ready. She went back and the man who ran that center put her in touch with Roseanne Decky who ran a female center.[79] According to the VA, the 1980 census data was used to ensure the population of female veterans knew they were eligible for VA services. Senator Daniel

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[77] OH 02267 Linda McClenahan. Interview by Kate Rowell for the I am Not Invisible Project. Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program. December 12, 2022.

[78] Claire Brisebois Starnes, "'Some Good Days, Some Bad Days': A WAC Serving in Vietnam," Interview by David Siry, (West Point Center for Oral History, April 04, 2016).

[79] OH 01326, Linda McClenahan, Interview by Mik Derks WPT Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories. Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program, 2008.

Inouye of the GAO called for a study and report in 1982. It found that women did not have the same VA access as men, there were incomplete examinations of female veterans, there was no gynecological care, and female veterans were uninformed of lawful benefits.[80] The study resulted in the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Women Veterans in 1983. Since then, the VA has continued working on improving access to care for the female veteran population. The committee is comprised of no more than twelve members. They must meet specific requirements relating to women's needs and must include women, veterans, and veterans with service-connected disabilities.[81] They have made recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs through bi-annual meetings and reports which assess availability of VA services to women veterans on compensation, education, rehabilitation, and outreach programs since then.

The *Smithsonian Magazine* may have been partially correct in their assessment. 1968 was the start of upheaval in the United States, a shattering of sorts. It also identified deep seated discrimination within the organizations that were meant to serve veterans especially regarding women veterans and their access to care. Despite the turmoil and issues women faced all was not lost. The next social transition ushered in a period that allowed for immense growth and change in policies which affected women and their ability to serve. It started with the end of the draft and passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

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[80] *Women Veterans: A Historical Perspective*. United States Department of Veterans. 2014.

[81] Department of Veterans Affairs Charter of the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough, October 14, 2021.

Chapter Six

The Draft Ends, The Fight for an Amendment

The shattering which started in 1968 continued to have far reaching effects on social movements. Women's rights activists increased their push for visibility and demonstrated growing support for an amendment to solidify women's equality in the nation. Along with this, the military institution faced the end of the draft and found itself concerned over recruiting acquisitions. The forward progression of social and cultural changes spurred many positive changes for women in uniform though not without consequences.

The equal rights movement has a long history in the United States and within the overall women's movement. The surge in activism in the 1960s was rooted in the suffrage movement of the late 1800s. Then women successfully lobbied for passage of the nineteenth amendment in 1920. Following this, Alice Paul drafted and introduced the Lucretia Mott Amendment in 1923 which essentially said men and women will have equal rights under the Constitution. This was the first iteration of the ERA. In 1943 it was revised and reintroduced and has been commonly called the Alice Paul Amendment since. The one major change was wording which changed from "men and women" to "citizens regardless of sex" will have equal rights. It was reintroduced in Congress annually until it passed in 1972 and was sent to the states for ratification. The amendment sailed towards ratification in the beginning, garnering twenty two votes for ratification in 1972.[1] Ratification seemed certain until a campaign called Stop Taking Our Privileges ERA (STOP ERA), coordinated and championed by Phyllis Schlafly, gained momentum. STOP ERA effectively managed to stagnate support for ERA over several issues

[1] Gilbert Steiner, Constitutional Inequality: The Political Fortunes of the Equal Rights Amendment, (United States: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 55.

including abortion and women in the military. The argument over women in combat and eligibility for the draft gave them an excellent platform to increase opposition to the amendment. The last votes cast for ratification were in 1977 which brought the total to thirty-five. Originally the deadline for ratification was in 1979. Congress extended that deadline to 1982 but it still failed to gain additional votes for ratification during the deadline extension.[2] The amendment which had seemed poised for ratification was stagnant. The ERA's stated purpose was brining equal legal citizenship status to women and said:

> SECTION 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
> SEC. 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.
> SEC. 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.[3]

The second section of the amendment was the focus of the opposition who believed it would be detrimental to women. It allowed an area of ammunition for opponents who said it granted too much control to the federal government. The push for the ERA created turbulence between conservative and liberal women who argued vehemently in support or opposition to the amendment. It also stirred controversy among liberal women who supported the amendment.

The women's movement had grown beyond Friedan and NOW throughout the sixties and seventies. The growth of the movement had sparked radicalism and offshoots of women's liberation with different end goals. While the conflict in Vietnam was winding down, social conflict in the United States had turned its sights toward equal rights for women. Specifically, women's groups focused on abortion and reproductive rights as well as passage of the ERA. In

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[2] Steiner, *Constitutional*, 55.

[3] Proposed Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, Second Session, Ninety-Second Congress, H.J. Resolution 208, March 23, 1972, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-86/pdf/STATUTE-86-Pg1523.pdf

1973 the Supreme Court Ruling on *Roe v. Wade* was a victory for the women's movement. The different factions of the women's movement debated the correct course of action and who their struggle was against, the system, the patriarchy, or conservative women. Friedan, Steinem, and Martha Griffiths trained their efforts on the passage of the amendment and facing Schlafly head on in debates across the nation. The debate over abortion and other rights for women had become synonymous with the resurrected desire for equal rights. While the passage of Roe vs. Wade was a victory for the feminist movement, it was not enough. Women on the side of the ERA claimed passage of the amendment would solidify citizenship for all women once and for all. They also argued that the amendment would not give too much authority to the federal government, as opponents had implied. The movement argued vehemently that conditions for women in society had relegated them to a subservient role as second class citizens regarding wages, children, and employment. They advocated for passage of the ERA to protect women from unequal treatment in the home and workplace. It was their stance that women were victimized by being forced to be homemakers and mothers. In a 1982 debate Catharine A. McKinnon charged:

> This is a society that turns away from the beating of women in the home, calls it a haven, and affirms the family to which it is endemic. It resists paying women for housework, the work most of us do, saying our reward is commendation and appreciation. We would like to be able to eat that. It resists equal jobs for us, and equal pay when we do the same or comparable work, yet refuses to see the connections between our options: work for nothing at home, little in the marketplace, a little more (at least for a while) in the street. We resent having motherhood forced on us by unwanted sex, being deprived or discouraged from using contraception, guilt or poverty keeping us from abortions, and then being saddled with the entire care of children-alone. We want to be able to *want* our children.[4]

[4] Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Excerpts from MacKinnon/Schlafly Debate," *Minnesota Journal of Law & Inequality*, vol. 1 iss. 2, 1983, 348. This is a compilation of the arguments presented in two debates with Phyllis Schlafly in January and March 1982.

Her argument also rather succinctly summarized the whole of the women's movement, at least the pro-ERA contingent. Friedan had expressed a similar idea stating, "…childbearing and rearing—which continues to be a most important part of most women's lives—is still used to justify barring women from equal professional and economic participation and advance."[5] Supporters of the amendment vehemently denied that women who enjoyed being homemakers would be negatively impacted by the amendment. Rather, they said it would provide equal treatment under the law for men and women, especially in the areas of divorce and child custody.[6]

Opponents of the amendment suggested it would lead to the breakdown of the American family. It would unfairly affect women who chose to be homemakers by rewarding men who chose to leave their families. Further it would ignore precedents in alimony and child support which ensured that even in divorce, men would be financially responsible for their offspring. Schlafly's contended the ERA would negatively affect divorced women.[7] Likewise, it would lead to more abortion and subject women to the draft even if that was not as pressing of an issue after the end of the draft and the Vietnam drawdown. Until 1974 it seemed as though ratification was on course, until STOP ERA and Phyllis Schlafly succeeded in stalling ratification support. She had been actively opposing the ERA since 1972. Her plentiful publications argued that American women were already more privileged than most women in the world. Her platform was based on the traditional family roles set forth by Judeo-Christian values.[8] She published *The Phyllis*

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[5] Betty Friedan, *It Changed My Life*, (United Kingdom: Harvard University Press, 1998), 110.

[6] Noel Myricks, "The Equal Rights Amendment: Its Potential Impact on Family Life." *The Family Coordinator* 26, no. 4 (1977): 321–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/581751. This article discusses what the impact of the ERA would be on issues regarding the family.

[7] Phyllis Schlafly, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, vol 7 no. 10 sec 2, May 1974.

[8] Phyllis Schlafly, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, vol. 5 no. 7, February 1972, 1.

Schlafly Report which discussed the adverse effects that would result from the passage of the ERA. She also argued "…the American woman is the most privileged. We have the most rights and rewards, and the fewest duties. Our unique status is the result of a fortunate combination of circumstances."[9] Schlafly maintained that established law provided protection and support for women as homemakers. These women, thanks to progress and modern invention, had less responsibility in the home and more time to pursue jobs or interests in her free time.

Both sides of the ERA argument faced off on women and the military. Schlafly wrote:

> This Amendment will absolutely and positively make women subject to the draft. Why any woman would support such a ridiculous and un-American proposal as this is beyond comprehension. Why any Congressman who had any regard for his wife, sister or daughter would support such a proposition is just as hard to understand. Foxholes are bad enough for men, but they certainly are not the place for women—and we should reject any proposal which would put them there in the name of 'equal rights.'[10]

Her opponents agreed that the ERA would absolutely put women on equal footing with men regarding selective service registration. Representative Shirley Chisholm argued this would provide better military opportunities for women because they would no longer be subject to higher standards than men.[11] These polar stances provided fuel for both sides of the debate but ultimately helped Schlafly's opposition in the long run.

The ERA had thirty-five of the required thirty-eight votes for ratification until 2017 when a resurgence of support led to two more ratification votes. As of 2020, thirty-eight states had finally ratified the amendment when Virginia's legislature voted to ratify in January.[12]

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[9] Schlafly, *Report* v5 n7, 1.

[10] Ibid., 2.

[11] Representative Shirley Chisholm, *Congressional Record*, August 10, 1970, 28029.

[12] Alice Paul Institute, Equal Rights Amendment Frequently Asked Questions, 2018, https://www.congress.gov/116/meeting/house/109330/documents/HHRG-116-JU10-20190430-SD013.pdf

Interestingly, although the deadline for ratification passed by over forty years, some lawmakers believe the ratification should still be valid. There are two questions regarding ratification, can Congress able to waive the deadline, and can states rescind their ratification as some have indicated? Rather than wait for the courts to decide, Senators Ben Cardin and Lisa Murkowski, the former a Democrat from Maryland and the latter a Republican from Alaska, introduced a resolution in January 2023. They wanted to remove the deadline and ratify the amendment citing the deadline as arbitrary but the resolution was unsuccessful.[13] Meanwhile, five states have indicated they wanted to rescind their ratification, an idea that was attempted twice with the 14th and 15th amendments, but ultimately failed as the amendments were considered ratified once the votes were cast.[14] In a February 2020 interview with Georgetown Law, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg stated, "I would like to see a new beginning. I'd like it to start over. There is too much controversy about late comers, Virginia, long after the deadline passed. Plus, a number of states have withdrawn their ratification. So, if you count a late comer on the plus side, how can you disregard states that said we've changed our minds?"[15] Justice Ginsburg raised a valid concern, one which has not been decided either way. Despite this controversy thirty two states have passed equal rights legislation in lieu of the constitutional amendment. The only certainty about

[13] Congress.gov, "Congressional Record," June 28, 2023, https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-169/issue-71/senate-section/article/S1403-7.

[14] The 14th and 15th amendments both had states that wanted to rescind their original ratification, but they were counted as having been ratified. More on this subject of justification for ratification, rescinded votes, et cetera can be found here: Robert Black, "Could the Equal Rights Amendment Become a Reality?" National Constitution Center, January 15, 2020. https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/could-the-equal-rights-amendment-become-a-reality; Alex Cohen and William U. Codrington III. "The Equal Rights Amendment Explained." Brennan Center for Justice, January 23, 2020. https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/equal-rights-amendment-explained; Thomas Jipping, "The Equal Rights Amendment is Still Dead." *The Hill*, February 6, 2023. https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/3845407-the-equal-rights-amendment-is-still-dead/

[15] Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "Searching for Equality: The 19th Amendment & Beyond," Georgetown Law, February 10, 2020, 43:55-44:22. https://fb.watch/lEnuz4WRR0/

the ratification process is that the ERA has been controversial since its introduction. The final decision on the validity of the amendment may be up to the Supreme Court or the Archivist of the United States.[16] It seems though, for military women at least, the amendment's ratification was not as necessary as it seemed in 1972. One WAC, Staff Sergeant Donna Dear who served in Vietnam from January 1967 to August 1968, weighed in on the ERA. She was interviewed in March 1989 for *Torii*, the Army's Japanese command newspaper about how far women have come in the Army. The article says:

> Dear spent 18 months in Vietnam then returned to the states and to the increasing pressures of the Equal Rights Amendment. But Dear said, "I was a follower of the ERA, I always felt I was my own person and I was able to distinguish what was right and what was wrong. But I wasn't necessarily a supporter of ERA, but I always believed in equal pay for equal work."[17]

Since President Nixon had announced the end of the draft and implementation of a volunteer military, the services had been conducting studies and planning. This change meant military manning needed to lean on women to bolster the overall military population. The Department of the Army had been conducting studies in anticipation of the transition and saw the ERA movement as further writing on the wall. Most people expected quick ratification of the ERA, the Army was no exception and they proceeded to study the treatment of women in the Army. In Army fashion, they called for a study to anticipate what passage would look like for the Army. The December 1972 ERA Impact Study, chaired by Lieutenant Colonel Bettie J. Morden, looked at Army practices in policies across the department. It also considered the impact of the ERA on those practices and offered suggestions on how to bring the Army into compliance with

[16] This would be like the 1992 certification of the 27th Amendment by Archivist of the United States Don W. Wilson, where an amendment proposed in 1789 was finally ratified in 1992 and officially certified therefore adding it to the Constitution.

[17] Paul M. Daniels, "From WACs to sergeants major: Zama's top enlisted women share memories," *Torii*, March 16, 1989, Donna Dear file, box 657D, Donna Lowery Collection WAC.2017.75, WAMSA, FGA.

ERA provisions. The committee "…was directed to evaluate the impact of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment on current laws, regulations, policies, and procedures and to make recommendations to change these documents to conform to the intent of the amendment."[18] To accomplish this, the committee evaluated eight different areas; the utilization of women in combat MOS and support areas, enlistment standards and induction, deferments for women, retention and separation policies, United States Military Academy enrollment, command authority for women, role and content of women in the Army, and the structure of the WAC. After a thorough assessment on how to bring the Army into compliance with the amendment and the best practice for the Army, the committee presented its findings. They recommended the retention of WAC as a separate branch of the Army; this would retain the leadership structure that General Hoisington and her predecessors had worked hard to establish and maintain a semblance of control over women's issues in the Army. They also recommended that women continue to be excluded from combat and combat MOS other than in support roles. Another suggestion was that promotion lists remain separate between men and women to mitigate the idea that men were competing with women for promotions. They suggested that basic training continue to be conducted separately but concluded that modified weapons and defensive combat training should be added to WAC basic training so they would be trained to the same standards as men. Interestingly, they did suggest keeping existing separation policies for marriage, pregnancy, and parenthood. At the time it meant no initial enlistments for women in those categories, and separation upon pregnancy. The committee recommended that women be included in the draft with the caveat that waivers for pregnancy or parenthood would exclude a

[18] "Impact of Passage of ERA on Women in the Army"; Container 62, Papers Relating to the Publication "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978"; RG319, NACP, i.

woman from a draft call up.[19] Many of the committee's suggestions were considered even if they were not all adopted. The idea of women in combat or their inclusion in the draft remained a controversial issue throughout the transition to a volunteer force with many of the highest ranking military women on opposite sides of the issue.

The draft and women in combat were two central issues which ultimately helped STOP ERA turn the tide of support to their position. General Hoisington had already made her stance on armed women clear when she sent the detachment to Vietnam unarmed and had rebuffed suggestions to provide weapons and training for them.[20] She was interviewed in 1978 about the idea of drafting and arming women. The article, "Should Women Fight in War?; NO -- Women aren't 'physically, mentally, and emotionally qualified' for combat," ran in *U.S. News & World Report*. In the article she was asked if women should be assigned to combat units. She answered no because to her that meant that inevitably women would eventually join in battle. She said, "Studies cannot duplicate the realism of a battle in a Vietnam jungle or the cold Korean hills, the trauma from killing, witnessing death and terrible wounds."[21] The obvious issue with this answer was the WACs in Vietnam spent a year or more living next to the 24th Evacuation Hospital at Long Binh. They watched helicopters land daily with the dead and wounded on board. They also spent time with those injured providing a small measure of morale. They were subject to the same danger as every man at Long Binh without the benefit of being armed. She furthered this

[19] "Impact," RG319, NACP.

[20] Letter from Colonel Hoisington to Lieutenant Colonel Leta Frank, March 20, 1967, Folder 3, Container 51; File Unit Vietnam Correspondence, 1965-1970; Background Papers Relating to the Publication "The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978," RG319, NACP. In the letter concerning weapons being issued to WAC in Vietnam, Hoisington was under the influence that they would be subject to unfavorable publicity if WACS were seen or perceived to have weapons, she objected to women being given weapons.

[21] Interview with Elizabeth Hoisington, Brigadier General, U.S. Army (Ret.), "Should Women Fight in War?; NO – Women aren't 'physically, mentally, and emotionally qualified' for combat," *U.S. News & World Report*, February 13, 1978, 53.

position saying the mental and physical wounds from combat would be too devastating for women. Her point was valid considering how many men returned and needed mental and physical treatment after their tours, but overlooked that many women returned with the same needs. She maintained her stance that women should not be used for combat. It was still her position that the Army, even a volunteer one, should not rely on womanpower to fight the nation's battles because of "a small, nonrepresentative group of rather noisy women," who had been pushing that agenda.[22] She touted the often used argument that the nation would not and should not depend on their daughters to fight battles because it was not ready for the consequences of that decision. She further stated:

> We know some women have the brains, ability and courage to be fighter pilots and part of a missile or ship's crew. But how are the mothers, fathers, husbands and brothers of these women going to feel when the planes and ships go down, the women are killed or taken prisoner? Who then will want to admit it was their idea to change the policy and put women in combat units?[23]

She believed it would radically alter traditional roles for women. That it would be in opposition to the division of responsibility between the sexes with men as protectors and women as the bearers of children. General Hoisington concluded her interview stating that women in combat would be harmful in many ways. She opined that women could not imagine the difficulties of combat and the peripheral dangers that accompanied it. Those included "being raped by stronger or temporarily crazed comrades." The possibility of capture and torture and the inability to do their job, causing other people's deaths.[24] Except this idea trivialized several instances of women in the Vietnam detachment, who were raped. Those were not crazed men in a combat situation.

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[22] Interview, *U.S. News*, 53.

[23] Ibid., 53.

[24] Ibid., 53.

Saigon was generally considered "safe" in comparison to the jungle which suggested rape danger was not confined solely to those circumstances.

Conversely, the Air Force's General Holm, was also interviewed but had a different opinion. It was her stance that women could capably serve on air crews and aboard ships. General Hoisington's insisted Congress should continue the prohibition on women in combat. General Holm suggested that decision should be left to the Service Secretaries. She agreed that actual combat should be approached with caution, but countered that with the fact that "only 8 per cent of the people in the armed forces are infantrymen."[25] She deemed it possible for women to serve in that capacity with the stipulation that the limitations of women be explored. She stated if it was proven that women in combat lowered the standards then they should not be utilized. "The No. 1 criterion must be the ability of the unit to perform its combat mission. Everything else has to be secondary to that."[26] Unlike General Hoisington, General Holm was generally more progressive in her approach to women's military service. Both women had years of military service on which they based their opinions and had valid reasons and concerns over the combat issue. In fact, it seemed most of the military population agreed with the Generals on the issue of combat as well.

In August 1979 the Army Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Sciences released "Technical Paper 352: Male and Female Soldiers' Beliefs About the 'Appropriateness' of Various Jobs for Women in the Army." The study's requirement was "…to learn, in 1974, the extent to which soldiers believed certain jobs were 'appropriate' for women and the extent to which these soldiers' beliefs were related to such factors as their sex, military rank, length of

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[25] Interview with Jeanne Holm, Major General, U.S. Air Force (Ret.). "Should Women Fight in War?; YES – 'Get over the notions that we have about women in combat." *U.S. News & World Report*, February 13, 1978, 53.

[26] Interview, *U.S. News*, 53.

service, and career plans."[27] It looked at twenty-four preselected jobs on a questionnaire which contained almost two-hundred questions. "The sample included 540 men (75%) and 181 women (25%), of which 401 were officers (56%) and 320 were enlisted (44%). The sample design was constructed to include both white and nonwhite respondents and to include installations that varied in type and that were geographically dispersed."[28]

The significance of the study was based on the rise in military women from December 1973 to December 1975.

> The data in Table 1 show that during this 24-month period, when the total number of enlisted women increased by 131% (from 13,397 to 30,965), the number of women who were in traditional jobs increased by only 100%, while the number of women who were in nontraditional jobs increased by nearly 2,000% (from 176 to 3,688). This means that the distribution of enlisted women shifted during this period in the direction of greater relative representation in the nontraditional job areas.[29]

After reviewing the data as well as any anomalies that could have influenced or skewed the data, the findings reached an interesting conclusion. "Perhaps the most striking thing about the table as a whole is the fact that of all the jobs listed, only one (rifle-carrying infantry foot soldier) was consistently judged by the majority of respondents to be inappropriate for women."[30] Other jobs such as helicopter pilot and bomb disposal received approval as female appropriate duties in contrast to the finding on infantry.

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[27] Joel M. Savell, John C. Woelfel, Barry E. Collins and Peter M. Bentler, "Technical Paper 352: Male and Female Soldiers' Beliefs About the 'Appropriateness' of Various Jobs for Women in the Army," Army Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Science, August 1979.

[28] Ibid., 4.

[29] Ibid., 2., see table on following page.

[30] Ibid., 5.

Table 1

Percentage and Number of Enlisted Women in Traditional and Nontraditional MOS Categories by Year

MOS category	Year 1973		1974		1975	
Traditional						
Administration	36.0	(4,830)	33.6	(7,650)	30.1	(9,327)
Medical	32.7	(4,377)	26.5	(6,035)	21.8	(6,739)
Telecommunications and audiovisual	12.0	(1,603)	11.9	(2,703)	12.2	(3,785)
Supply	4.6	(616)	5.9	(1,335)	9.0	(2,790)
Automatic data processing	3.0	(401)	2.9	(671)	1.2	(382)
Total	88.3	(11,827)	80.0	(18,394)	74.3	(23,023)
Nontraditional						
Ammunition	*	(0)	.1	(27)	.6	(181)
Ballistic missile repair	*	(0)	*	(4)	*	(11)
Chemical	*	(0)	.1	(20)	.2	(79)
Combat surveillance and target acquisition	*	(0)	*	(8)	.1	(23)
Field services	*	(0)	.2	(40)	.2	(73)
Power production	*	(1)	.3	(63)	.7	(219)
Wire antenna and central office	*	(1)	.1	(29)	.4	(124)
General engineering	*	(3)	.2	(56)	.6	(200)
Topographic engineering and map production	.2	(28)	.5	(123)	.6	(188)
Air defense artillery	.3	(37)	.5	(118)	.4	(112)
Maintenance[a]	.3	(40)	1.4	(316)	4.2	(1,294)
Law enforcement	.5	(67)	3.7	(848)	4.1	(1,263)
Total	1.3	(177)	7.3	(1,652)	12.1	(3,767)

Note. The percentage for the MOS categories is based on the total number of enlisted women in the Army not in Basic Training as of 31 December for that particular year and who were listed as having a primary MOS. The actual number of women on which these percentages are derived is 13,397 (1973), 22,749 (1974), and 30,965 (1975). The figures in parentheses are the actual number of women in that classification.

[a]Maintenance includes all the MOS within each of the following classifications: air-defense missile maintenance, aviation maintenance, combat missile maintenance, electrical/electronic equipment maintenance, field and area communication maintenance, fixed plant communication maintenance, intercept equipment maintenance, mechanical maintenance, and nonintegrated radar maintenance.

*Less than .1%.

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Figure 33 Table 1 from Technical Paper 352, Savell, Joel M., John C. Woelfel, Barry E. Collins, and Peter M. Bentler, "Technical Paper 352: Male and Female Soldiers' Beliefs About the 'Appropriateness' of Various Jobs for Women in the Army," Army Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Science, August 1979.

Still, the idea of armed women in combat remained difficult for people to understand or accept, especially those in command positions. This was even true for some of the women who had served in Vietnam. In a 1981 interview for the Army Women's Museum, Sergeant First

Class Betty Benson the former field first in Vietnam stated of women in combat, "we may think we can, I would want to, but my male counterpart might be worried about me."[31] This seemed to suggest she did not believe women could perform well in combat. Considering women had little to no formal weapons familiarization or training, it would be a correct theory that women were untested and unprepared for such a role.[32] Yet, there were several accounts of armed WACs in Vietnam. Either their duty section issued a weapon because they saw it as a necessity and provided a weapon and training, or women found themselves in a situation where they were handed a weapon and expected to use it with very brief field training. In this instance gender was irrelevant, what was necessary was use of all available resources.

It has already been established that there was no defined front line in Vietnam. The WACs were subject to danger at any time. This included sniper attacks, the Tet Offensives of 1968 and 1969, daily mortar fire, and the general risk of being at war. First Sergeant Marion Crawford was given a pistol when she arrived in Vietnam. She stated she slept with it under her pillow, just in case.[33] It was noted that there was a weapons cabinet in the office at the detachment, but no details on how many weapons were in it or who was trained on their usage is known.[34] Chief Warrant Officer Three Mary Lou Hootman, recalled that MACV WAC staff had called to tell her local command that it was against policy for a WAC to be armed. She recalled, "I carried a .45 caliber pistol and a .30 caliber rifle. We all had a good laugh, and I continued to

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[31] OH.2011.145 #86, Interview with CSM Betty Benson and 1SG Molly Edwards, United States Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams, May 15, 1981.

[32] There were exceptions to this policy. Morden noted that women's commanders could make exceptions based on location of service and their duty, especially if they were in intelligence fields. See Bettie J. Morden, *Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978*. Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990, 14.

[33] Marion Crawford File, Box 657C, Donna Lowery WAC.2017.75, USAWM, FGA.

[34] Donna A. Lowery, *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories*, (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2015), 102-103. This was at Tan Son Nhut, it was not mentioned at Long Binh.

comply with command policy. I am rated marksman in both weapons."[35] Captain Sherian Cadoria served with a military police unit and learned to use weapons as well. She stated,

> Having learned to fire weapons with the (military police) MPs, I rode shotgun when we picked up the (very important person) VIPs, and my commanding general said I was the best secret weapon he had because visitors were more afraid of me than the VCs (Viet Cong, South Vietnamese who sympathized with and fought with the North Vietnamese Army).[36]

Another woman, Specialist Five Glenda Storni, was on her way to the club in Bien Hoa when she and her male companion were caught in crossfire. She was handed an M-16 and fired back, unsure if she hit anything.[37] Likewise, Chief Doris I. Allen carried a .45 caliber pistol with her in Vietnam as an issued weapon. "Doris I. Allen carried her weapon. Make no mistake I carried a .45. A Couple others of us, friends of mine, carried weapons. That .45 was mine and I loved it, and I'm going to say it now: I still have it."[38] Sergeant McClenahan also found herself under fire. She and a woman named Julie were invited to a unit stand down party and decided to go:

> And as we were driving out, one of the guys got hit by a sniper in the neck and dropped his M-16. I had seen the flash. I pick it up and I'm firing out there. The guys in the Jeep behind us were firing out there. Our truck went immediately to the hospital. He survived. And I remember thinking afterwards-- see, killing somebody-- one of us killed a guy. They went back and found the sniper. He was dead. We don't know who. Was it me? Maybe. Maybe not. But the truth was, I was so angry at that point, and so I didn't give a damn at that point.[39]

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[35] Account of Mary Lou Hootman, Lowery, *Women*, 280.

[36] Account of Sherian Cadoria, Lowery, *Women*, 107. Abbreviations explained in parentheses within the quote.

[37] Account of Glenda E. Storni, Lowery, *Women*, 140.

[38] Keith Walker, A Piece of My Heart: The Stories of 26 American Women Who Served in Vietnam, Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1997, 317.

[39] OH 02267 Linda McClenahan. Interview by Kate Rowell for the I am Not Invisible Project. Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program, December 12, 2022.

In a significant event of the 1968 Tet Offensive, Chief Mary Bender, found herself in a life or death situation. She lived at one of the Bachelor Officer's Quarters (BOQ) in Saigon which came under attack. She and other women, civilians, lived on the third floor of Meyerkord Hotel. Chief Warrant Officer Three Dave Mann, a friend of Bender's, recalled that she said she was armed with a .38 snub nose pistol and an M-1 carbine. Chief Bender stated:

> There was small-arms fighting around the hotel perimeter, and the enemy was making an effort to capture the hotel, needed as a strategic position to launch an attack on the Presidential Palace. I left my room with flak jacket, helmet and carbine. A male officer asked me to get the women out of their rooms so they would not be fired upon through their windows. The male residents were defending the hotel from the roof and balconies. The MPs (military policemen) guarding the hotel had been killed almost immediately. I was then asked by another male officer to guard the stairwell to the third floor. He then gave me grenades and instructed me to blow up the stairwell in the event that the Viet Cong were able to take the bottom two floors. I laid on the floor at the top of the stairwell. I could hear bullets ricocheting off the walls from the floor below.[40]

Chief Bender defended the stairwell for three days. Chief Mann and another intelligence agent who had served with Chief Bender discussed this event; the other agent stated she had eliminated several Viet Cong in the stairwell.[41] Chief Bender was put in for a silver star, but it was denied as most medals of this nature were for the WACs. Lieutenant Colonel Frances Chaffin, one of the WAFC advisors, recounted that General Abrams used to consult with her on WAC issues. They had discussed arming the women during the Tet Offensive of 1968, but it was decided to keep women unarmed. Colonel Chaffin and Master Sergeant Mary Phillips were both armed to perform their duties as WAFC advisors since they traveled to different areas of Vietnam. She stated she was "thankful they had qualified with the .45 pistol and M-1 rifle."[42] Their experiences

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[40] Account of Mary Van Ette Bender, Lowery, *Women*, 179-180.

[41] The other agent was not named in Chief Mann's account.

[42] Lieutenant Colonel Chaffin interview, Lowery, *Women*, 544.

with handling weapons may not have been customary, but it demonstrated the idea that traditional warfare was changing. In turn, this suggested women's roles needed to adapt to a new playing field once again. Women's military service remained flexible throughout history regarding roles in and out of the home. War brought a surge in women's service during conflict and drawdown when it ended. This also led to the military women's fight to maintain its place within the military and ultimately gain a better permanent presence. Vietnam, as well as Nixon's end of the draft, and the transition to a volunteer military provided the needed foothold for American military women. It helped them build on the foundation established by Colonel Oveta Hobby's legacy that was refined by each subsequent WAC director. However, the rapidly changing social landscape of the United States would result in unintended consequences for the Women's Army Corps. As the volunteer Army continued its course of evolution after Vietnam, the WACs were under discussion in Senate hearings and among Army leadership.

In 1971 the Army released a master plan for the volunteer Army which outlined how they planned to successfully move toward a more professional organization. It was stated, "For the Army and for the men within it, this will be no easy task."[43] The plan detailed the objectives of building a better Army with reduced reliance on the draft by strengthening professionalism and improving Army life off-duty. The goal for the transition was July 1, 1973, a mere three months after the full withdrawal from Vietnam. It was an ambitious goal that on the surface was supported by the secretaries of the services and their military leaders. The goal of the plan was to improving Army life so volunteer recruits would find the idea of military service a desirable method of professional development. It suggested, "…the American soldier is, and must be

[43] The Army's Master Program for the Modern Volunteer Army: A Program for Professionals, United States Army, (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 4.

regarded as, an important participant in a collective effort, a citizen devoting several years of his life to active participation in the work of maintaining the Nation's defense."[44] They moved toward this goal by offering more paths to education, lessened extra duties, and made improvements in the living situations of their soldiers. Additionally, they worked the enhance the quality of family life for dependents on post. This was accomplished through better family housing, access to healthcare, recreation, retail, and child care facilities.[45] General Westmoreland was interviewed by *U.S. News & World Report* in 1972 about the changes.[46] Most of the changes increased the privacy of soldiers during their off-duty time through reduction of extra duties, allowing more self-expression in barracks rooms, raising enlistment standards (for males), beer vending machines, and more putting emphasis on trusting soldiers. This was achieved by eliminating the need to sign out and in when leaving posts, reducing the required number of mandatory formations, and relaxing some grooming standards.[47] Additionally, plans were in place to increase the size of the WAC to offset the lower numbers of men being recruited. As Robert K. Griffith, Jr., noted, previous studies concluded it was possible to utilize women to supplement the total force. Analyzing the 1969 Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation (PROVIDE) study conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Jack Butler, Griffith noted a predicted gradual growth over the course of five years. This would increase the WAC to 22,400 enlisted

[44] The Army's Master Plan, 20-21.

[45] Ibid, 42-46.

[46] These were more thoroughly outlined in *The Army's Master Program for the Modern Volunteer Army: A Program for Professionals*. United States Army, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971.

[47] "Big Changes in the Army: Interview with Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Chief of Staff," *U.S. News & World Report*, June 29, 1972.

women by 1974.[48] Griffith also noted the plan to gradually increase the WAC over five years abruptly ended in 1972.[49] This was due to the Army's realization that at the current recruiting levels they would not be able to maintain their current thirteen divisions. Instead, the decision was made to procure 5,000 WACs by the end of fiscal year 1973, but that was further complicated by the need for appropriate housing and funding approval from Congress. Their end goal was to increase the size of the WAC to almost 24,000 a one-hundred percent increase.[50] When they were not able to secure the budget they requested, they chose an alternative route to find the necessary funding. Normally for advanced training WACs had their own courses, these were discontinued. Women were redirected to comparable regular Army courses.[51] In August 1972, General Bailey announced the WAC expansion program, strategically doing so ahead of the Air Force's announcement of a similar program. This came on the heels of the February 1972 "Plan to Improve WAC Recruiting and Retention," that General Bailey had formed at General Westmoreland's direction. As Director she was tasked with creating a new image for the WACs. To achieve this, General Bailey redesigned the WAC uniform. According to Colonel Morden this also included the addition of a black beret, clutch, umbrella, and patent leather pumps.[52] Morden noted the only item that caused a stir was the umbrella.[53] There were other changes made regarding weight standards, future construction of barracks able to provide interchangeable

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[48] Robert K. Griffith, Jr., *The U.S. Army's Transition to The All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974*, CMH Pub 30-18, Center of Military History, (United States Army; Washington D.C., 1997), 189.

[49] Griffith, Jr., *Army's Transition*, 192.

[50] Bettie J. Morden, *Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978*, (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990), 264.

[51] Ibid., 192.

[52] Morden, *Women's*, 260.

[53] According to Morden, umbrellas were a taboo item in the Army, but no reason was given as to why they were taboo.

housing between male and female soldiers, and allowing women to command men other than those in combat units. The recruiting goal to increase the WAC were met through January 1973 when they achieved 95.6% of their total objective. That goal was not met in the following six months when they only recruited 71%.[54] There were fears that the AVF would be a failure.

In Congress it was understood that involvement in Vietnam was at least partially responsible for the move to a volunteer military as a "weary nation" wanted a break from the turmoil of the last decade.[55] There was also a pervasive belief that the move to a volunteer force would not appeal to educated and skilled recruits, but rather, as Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia said, a "…collection of malcontents."[56] The recruiting numbers were not as abundant as had been hoped for, as the year progressed, some in Congress believed the Army was trying to sabotage it in favor or returning to the draft.[57] This was due to the deficit in male recruitment especially when the "Induction authority under the 1971 Selective Service Act expired at midnight on 30 June 1973, the last day of the fiscal year. The Army ended the period almost 14,000 men understrength."[58] There were several methods implemented to increase the desirability of military service for men such as enlistment bonuses for specific careers. "In August 1972, a WAC Choice of Training/ Station Enlistment Option was implemented, offering qualified Women's Army Corps applicants a choice of ultimate assignment to a continental U.S. (CONUS) installation or activity, or an oversea area, and a choice of short-duration training courses," as a method to

[54] Griffith, Jr., *Army's Transition*, 199.

[55] Ibid., 202.

[56] Ibid., 202.

[57] Ibid., 205-214 This section covers the alleged sabotage in depth.

[58] Ibid., 213.

attract more women.[59] Likewise, advertisements had changed from the previous decade. Instead of an intense focus on feminine beauty and remaining a lady, they were more career forward. A 1972 ad in *Seventeen* magazine touted ambition and careers in advancing technology while they also highlighted the benefit of women's equality in the WAC.[60] These ads aligned with General Bailey's quest to create a new image for the WAC and outlined all the opportunities for women that were different than traditional women's roles. Considering the shrinking military, it seemed the time was right for women to gain a better foothold in the Army. According to economists at the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the military had shrunk between 1973 and 1982 by ten

Figure 34 WAC ad in Seventeen Magazine, February 1972, https://archive.org/details/sim_seventeen_1972-02_31_2/page/n81/mode/2up

[59] *Department of the Army Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1973*, Compiled and edited by Willian Gardner Bell and Karl E. Cocke, (Washington, D.C.; Center of Military History, 1977), 65.

[60] WAC ad, *Seventeen* Magazine volume 31 issue 2, February 1972, a previous ad which ran in *Mademoiselle* magazine in June 1967 focused on the ability of a WAC to maintain herself as a lady.

percent to around two million.[61] While there were significant changes to the race structure of the military with the increase in non-whites, there was also an increase in females. "In 1972, slightly more than 43,000 women were in the Armed Forces, making up less than 2 percent of the total personnel. In 1982, 190,000 women were in the military, accounting for about 9 percent of the total."[62] Statistics showed that growth in the military was not just women. The number of blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and other non-whites had tripled from 1963 to 1982.[63] This suggested that the transition to the AVF had succeeded at increasing opportunities for women and minorities. According to Morden there were 1,183 black WACs in 1960. In 1978 there were 14,688. Her data does not cite statistics for Hispanic, Asian, or other minorities.[64] However, the growth of black women in the WAC correlates with the rising trend of minorities who joined the military reported by Cider and Cole.

The idea of sabotage has been previously mentioned, but how it affected women in the military is convoluted. As Griffith had pointed out there were rumors that the Army was trying to sabotage the AVF to return to the draft to fill their ranks. This was perpetuated by a series of missteps on the part of the Army, such as relocating their recruiting command from Virginia to Illinois in April 1973.[65] This resulted in a disruption of not only recruit processing, but the loss of civilian personnel willing to relocate. It was another blow when the Army was already struggling to meet their quotas. This, coupled with allegations of recruiter unprofessional practices,

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[61] Hal Cider and Cheryl Cole, "The Changing Composition of the Military and the Effect on Labor Force Data," Office of Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, 1984, 10-11. They stated that the size of the military had decreased to 2.1 million from a high of 3.5 million in 1968-69.

[62] Cider & Cole, "Changing Composition," 11.

[63] Ibid. 11. There was no specific information on the racial composition of the WAC.

[64] Morden, *Women's*, 415.

[65] Griffith, Jr., *Army's Transition*, 206

launched an internal Army investigation which crippled the Army's recruiting capabilities. According to Griffith, Jr.:

> The Recruiting Command could not isolate the cause for the sudden spate of malpractice incidents but concluded that a combination of factors contributed to the problem. The paramount condition leading to the rash of malpractice reports in 1972 and 1973 appeared to be pressure on the recruiter to meet qualitative and quantitative goals in a period when the entire recruiting business was in a rapid state of flux.[66]

The decision to remove the "Modern Volunteer Army Program" as a separate program was also used as evidence that the Army wanted the AVF to fail. Instead, Griffith Jr., concluded the decision was intended to recognize the volunteer military was in effect and a separate program was no longer necessary. News agencies furthered the idea that the Army was against the volunteer transition. *The Atlantic* published an article in July 1974, "The Volunteer Army," by Donald Smith. In it he wrote, "For the first nine months of the year, the Army consistently missed its enlistment goals, falling as low as 49 percent in April. During the same period the Navy hit above 90 percent five times and 100 percent twice. The Marines made their monthly goals all but twice, and the Air Force hit every month."[67] Smith also outlined the same evidence of sabotage as Griffith, Jr., but reached an opposite conclusion. His conclusion reinforced the idea that many in Washington believed, the Army had deliberately impaired efforts through poor decision making at the very least. Despite continued allegations of sabotage and the apparent inability to meet recruiting goals, the Army continued recruiting women. Incentives were offered in, "...1974, faced with shortages in some nontraditional MOSs. Congress offered bonuses to men and women who enlisted in critical MOSs- fixed plant equipment repairman, radio relay and

[66] Ibid., 208.

[67] Donald Smith, "The Volunteer Army," *The Atlantic*, July 1974, 7.

carrier attendant, dial central office repairman, power generator and equipment mechanic, and others."[68] Morden noted that in fiscal years 1974 and 1975 the WAC surpassed their recruiting goal. She attributed the success in women's accessions to an appropriations bill. That bill stipulated over half of new recruits needed to be high school graduates qualify in the higher mental capacities. Women had always needed to be high school graduates, previously men had no school requirement, just the ability to pass the mental and physical expectations.[69] Of course, the bonuses helped, as did a slight decrease in the availability of traditionally female roles.[70] More changes were made as a result of additional women being added to the ranks.

Morden noted that weapons training for women had been eliminated in 1963 when the Army switched from the M1 to the M14 because they reasoned it was too heavy for women to handle.[71] Interestingly enough, the M1 was replaced in 1960 by the M14 which was subsequently replaced in 1963 by the M16. Both weapons were lighter than the M1.[72] [73]As women filled openings in traditionally male occupations weapons training was again addressed. Men were trained in basic weapons familiarization and operation, yet this was not part of women's basic training rendering them inadequately prepared when they were assigned to combat support units. In turn, this led to hesitation from commanders to increase available manning for women because it would leave units vulnerable and men responsible for extra duty. As a result, they

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[68] Morden, *Women's*, 281.

[69] Morden, *Women's*, 281.

[70] Ibid., 280.

[71] Ibid., 282.

[72] The M1 weighed 9.5 pounds in comparison to the M14 and M16 which were about 8.5 pounds according to Troy J. Sacquety, Ph.D. and former CIA. Troy J. Sacquety, "Form Follows Function: A Brief Look at U.S. Army Standard Service Rifles and Squad Automatic Weapons since WWII," *Veritas,* Vol. 15, No.1, 2019.

[73] Donald A. Carter, *The U.S. Army Before Vietnam1953-1965*, (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 2015), 40-41.

added sixteen hours of weapons familiarization as part of women's basic training in July 1974. Firing the weapon was still optional. Both familiarization and firing became a mandatory part of training in July 1975.[74] Manning documents were overhauled, changing male designated spaces to interchangeable, and ensuring women were eligible for all but direct combat jobs. Housing had always been a concern. The Army tried to ensure barracks could be utilized for either sex through new construction or modifications to existing barracks. Modifications were also made to overseas assignment criteria to equalize those assigned overseas by increasing the female presence to around the same as males.[75] The changes also affected WAC officers as well, though Morden noted officer accessions were not as goal oriented as those for enlisted females. In fact, the Army was unsure how many WAC officers they should commission. Several ideas and methods were used to determine accession numbers. In 1972 General Westmoreland opened the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) to females and included them in the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS).[76] This changed the direct commissioning the WAC had been using along with the WAC Officer Basic Course/ Officer Candidate Course (WOBC/OC). Women could still be commissioned with those programs, but now they had an added pathway towards commission. Another shakeup came in 1972. Senator Jacob Javits appointed a woman to the Naval Academy, but her admission was denied. Senator Javits then introduced legislation to change the admissions policies to include women, but it went nowhere. The issue continued being addressed and subsequently ignored until May 1974. Supporters of gender equality pointed to changes in tradition, expanding opportunities in most military career fields, the Civil Rights

[74] Ibid., 282.

[75] Ibid., 285.

[76] Ibid., 287.

Act, and the ERA legislation as reason enough to end masculine tradition and open academic slots for women. The Armed Service Committee then held hearings to decide on a course of action. Deputy Secretary of Defense William P. Clements, Jr., each service secretary, and President Nixon believed that women should not be admitted. They believed academies were meant to prepare combat leaders. Therefore, it was a waste of money to train a woman. Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder countered that the men's argument was based on bureaucratic knee-jerk reactions and the inability to change outdated policies:

> Mr. Chairman, the eventuality of the admission of women to the service academies is clear. My question is, why, then, is the Department of Defense so vehemently fighting the inevitable? I think one of the major reasons could be that maybe some of the important people in high positions are roadblocks, but, I think, one of the other things I have learned as a freshman here is that bureaucracies—and I think probably the service academies are also bureaucracies—often aren't too responsive to changing circumstances.
>
> Some of the responses we often find are— the bureaucracy's first reaction is "We can't do that." Second is, "We've never done it that way before." And the third reaction is, "That's not our responsibility anyway." Bureaucracies seldom take a leadership role in changing policies which affect them, no matter how outdated the policies are.[77]

The entire argument of the DOD and military academies was not that women were incapable of serving in these positions. It was not that they were incapable of succeeding at the academies--academically or physically either. Rather it seemed to them that the will of the people was against it, that women had never served in combat because that was policy. They neglected to realize, remember, or chose to ignore those men admitted to the academy who were not slated for combat or combat support positions. Being in a noncombatant position did not preclude men, or

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[77] Remarks made by Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, Hearings on H.R. 9832, to Eliminate Discrimination Based on Sex with Respect to the Appointment and Admission of Persons to the Service Academies and H.R. 10705, H.R. 11267, H.R. 11268, H.R. 11711, and H.R. 13729, to Insure that Each Admission to the Service Academies Shall be Made Without Regard to a Candidate's Sex, Race, Color, Or Religious Beliefs Before Subcommittee No. 2 of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Ninety-third Congress, Second Session ..... (United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 21.

women like those who served in Vietnam, from serving in combat zones. However, the hearings ended with no resolution on August 8, 1974. Despite this, the Merchant Marine Academy admitted women to the July 1974 class. The Coast Guard Academy made a similar announcement in 1975, women would enter their academy. In April 1975, Congressman Samuel S. Stratton issued a press release revealing information from the Government Accounting Office which reported the number of academy graduates that not assigned to combat assignments. Consequently, those numbers were mentioned in the hearings. Stratton's numbers were lower than what the academies had previously indicated which invalidating their claim that academies exclusively trained for combat. In turn, an amendment to the House appropriations bill was put through. In the end, women were granted admission through addition in an amendment to a Department of Defense appropriations bill. That bill was signed October 7, 1975, as Public Law 94-106.[78] The first class of women were accepted in 1976 and graduated from the academies in 1980, securing yet another path for women to earn a commission.[79] There were many women in the class of 1980 who succeeded. Overwhelmingly though, the largest obstacle they faced were the negative attitudes of men they served with and leadership who saw their entrance into the academies as an intrusion which defied the status quo.[80] Many men, civilian and military, were not ready to accept the placement of women on a parallel playing field. From 1972 on there were many changes foisted on the military; the end of the draft, transition to AVF, women earning the same dependent benefits as men, women's admission to service academies, the list was long.

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[78] Title VIII, Section 803, amended Title 10 USC language to be inclusive to women and made appointment and admission to military academies open for women beginning in 1976.

[79] Karen DeYoung, "800 Women Named to Academies," *The Washington Post (1974-Current File)*, Feb 02, 1976.

[80] See Chapter 11, Changing the Rules of Engagement: Inspiring Stories of Courage and Leadership from Women in the Military by Martha LaGuardia-Kotite.

This change was not easy and often the military leadership found themselves giving testimony before committees. Such was the case in 1977 when the service secretaries went before Senator William Proxmire and the Subcommittee on Priorities and Economy in Government. The reason? Senator Proxmire stated in his opening, "It is most appropriate that we study women in the military because the military is the biggest single employer in our society. Far bigger than any company; far bigger than any agency of the Federal Government; and if all opportunities are not available on an equal basis, it obviously represents a very severe discrimination against women."[81] He also summarized the main reason the services were so unwilling to change old policies regarding women's roles in the military was the argument that the will of the people was against it. He challenged that supposition and stated that in his home state of Wisconsin he had conducted a survey of approximately 10,000 people who represented a "cross-section" of both urban and industrial areas. The senator shared:

> I sent a questionnaire to these constituents including the question of role of women in the military, and I asked two question in this letter. The first question was whether all noncombat jobs should be available to women in the military; 67 percent of all the answers said "Yes." Only 31 percent said no, while the remaining 2 percent didn't answer.
> What is more interesting, however, is the second question. I asked whether women should be allowed to volunteer for combat duty. The response to this was 67 percent, again, who said yes, and only 3 percent said no, far better than a 2-to-1 response. The people in my State have indicated they favor this. I believe the American public has made up its mind on the issue and we in the Government must now catch up with the public. We have been catching up but the question is are we moving fast enough?[82]

His comments echoed a sentiment similar to Representative Schroeder's during the hearings on women's admission to the academies. The policies were not changing because of the

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[81] The Role of Women in the Military, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Priorities and Economy in the Government of the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, 95th Congress, July 22, and September 1, 1977, (Washington, D.C.; United States Government Printing Office), 1.

[82] The Role, Hearings, 2.

unwillingness of military leadership, not because the policies could not be changed. During the hearings each service representative gave a status update on the role of women in their department. According to Assistant Secretary of the Army, the Honorable Robert L. Nelson, ground combat was the mission of the Army, therefore the addition of women must not be inhibitive to national security. He stated:

> As you know, we have more than 200 years of experience with millions of men, but little experience with large numbers of women. With national security at stake, the Army had to know how many women would enlist in what skills, their effect on the force, what policies have to be changed. what reenlistment rates and loss rates we could expect and a myriad of other pieces of information. Moving too slowly was unfair to the women who desire to serve; moving too fast could result in decreased readiness.[83]

Additionally, he reported that the Army had increased the number of women by 300% of their 1972 numbers which seemed like an achievement. According to the Army fiscal reports, there was significant growth within the WAC ranks. In 1973 the WACs recruited 8,696 women, then in 1974 they recruited 15,446.[84] Total strength had grown from 27,596 to 39,171 in 1975. The fiscal report also disclosed:

> A three-fold increase in participation in the law enforcement career field—1,115 enlisted and 150 officers—indicated how opening military occupational specialties to women can enhance the attractiveness of military service. The Judge Advocate General's Corps increased its complement of women attorneys from twenty-one to forty-one during the year, and commissioned its first black female attorney, Capt. Savella Jackson. The first woman Army Chaplain, Capt. Alice Mae Henderson, also a black, received her appointment on 8 July 1974.[85]

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[83] The Role, Hearings, 4.

[84] William Gardner Bell and Karl E. Cocke. *Department of the Army Historical Summary: Fiscal Year 1973,* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1977), 64. Karl E.Cocke, *Department of the Army Historical Summary: Fiscal Year 1974,* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1977), 51.

[85] Karl E.Cocke, *Department of the Army Historical Summary: Fiscal Year 1975,* ed. Rae T. Panella, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 2000), 47.

Growth of women in the Army continued each year and "on 30 September 1976, the active Army had over 5,100 women officers and more than 44,400 enlisted women."[86] By 1977 they had quadruped their total numbers to 51,796 women, 5,696 officers and 46,094 enlisted.[87] Despite this significant increase in female numbers from 1973, they remained less than 7% of the total force. Senator Proxmire had questions for the Army in which he alleged that those numbers were representative of a stagnation, not growth. He suggested the growth of women's presence in the Army had plateaued for several years and offered Assistant Secretary Nelson the chance to explain. The Army responded that studies were being conducted and due to their efforts they had reached their previous goal. This led to the decision to pull back on recruiting efforts until the studies were finished. Senator Proxmire questioned leaving the recruitment projection at 50,000 women for 1979-1982.[88] In fact, the senator went on to question each branch on their reluctance to open more positions to women. Essentially, he wanted to know what held them back from the utilization of women. He acknowledged current law which prohibited women from service on ships and aircraft with combat designations but alluded to the fact that there was no such limitation on the Army. After much testimony the senator then asked the service secretaries to answer the following:

> Do you agree that for the 1972-76 period the average woman recruit surpassed the average male recruit in terms of educational attainment and the standardized test and females more likely to have a high school diploma had a much lower attrition rate than

[86] Karl E. Cocke, William Gardner Bell, John B. Corr, Romana M. Danish, Walter G. Hermes, James E. Hewes, Jr., Thomas E. Kelly III, and B.C. Mossman. *Department of the Army Historical Summary: Fiscal Year 1976*, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1977), 46.

[87] Karl E. Cocke, William Gardner Bell, John B. Corr, Romana M. Danesh, Detmar H. Finke, Walter G. Hermes, James E. Hewes, Jr., and B.C. Mossman. *Department of the Army Historical Summary: Fiscal Year 1977*, ed. Rae T. Panella, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1979), 57.

[88] Ibid., 15.

> men and that in general the 1972-76 recruits raised the average quality of the military services and served longer than their male counterparts?[89]

The Army provided an answer that the senator considered unclear, and the following conversation occurred:

> Mr. NELSON. The women compare better than men.
> Senator PROXMIRE. Because that is the requirement for women?
> Mr. NELSON. That is a requirement for women.
> Senator PROXMIRE. In the standardized tests?
> Mr. NELSON. They also fare better than the men generally.
> Senator PROXMIRE. Better than men in the standardized test. How about length of service?
> Mr. NELSON. In length of service in terms of retention, the women are reenlisting, if I can put it that way, at a higher rate than the men.
> Senator PROXMIRE. Then in every category it seems the women im-prove the quality of the Army. Every one of these categories, at least, there may be other elements, but these are important objective criteria and you are saying their educational attainment is higher, because of the requirements, but it is higher?
> Mr. NELSON. That's right.
> Senator PROXMIRE. You are saying their performance in the standardized test is better.
> Mr. NELSON. That's right.
> Senator PROXMIRE. And their retention rate is better?
> Mr. NELSON. That's correct.
> Senator PROXMIRE. So in all these categories, the more women you get, the higher quality Army you got?[90]

The answer from Assistant Secretary Nelson was not a straightforward yes or no. Nelson spoke of issues filling combat arms positions because the Army required men to fill such positions. Senator Proxmire pointed out that was an Army policy, not law. He was not suggesting that women fill actual combat positions, but rather roles that traditionally support combat. He also asked why women were unable to volunteer to fill necessary roles within Army vacancies. Senator Proxmire referred to the WACs who had been stationed in Vietnam when he asked

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[89] Ibid., 22.

[90] Ibid., 27.

General Kingston, "As women were assigned to Vietnam during the war, what is the rationale for the present restriction? Why shouldn't those jobs be opened up to women?"[91] General Kingston indicated there were studies to answer those questions, but they were not finished evaluating the results. The results of an Army study, called REFORGER 77, indicated the Army was looking at the feasibility of women in the field. REFORGER 77 was a yearly exercise in Germany which, in 1977, was used to measure male and female performance on approximately ninety military specialties. The study attempted to match similar men and women according to rank and specialty to determine if women had a negative impact on mission capability. It recognized that the determination of positive or negative results were skewed based on several factors such as rank and gender of the rater.[92] REFORGER 77 found male officers tended to rate women higher than enlisted males. In general, the study also recognized that enlisted males tended to have a negative bias towards females. They often did not assign them details in the field or found some of the women were unwilling to perform specific duties. The conclusion of the study found women did not negatively impact the mission. In some cases, men and women were able to work well together despite the significant differences in male and female training. The study also emphasized the lack of female training for the field. As General Kingston had testified, women had not been trained to use weapons nor were they conditioned physically the same manner as the men. This indicated an issue in the different basic training standards between the Army and the WAC. He mentioned the Army was developing a new training standard which

[91] Ibid., 38., General Kingston was Major General Joseph P. Kingston who served as the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff of Personnel after he was the commander of Fort McClellan.

[92] Johnson, Cecil D., Bertha H. Cory, Roberta W. Day, and Laurel W. Oliver, *Women Content in the Army-REFORGER 77*, (Alexandria, VA; US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, May 1978), IV-9.

would apply to both men and women. The progress towards integrated basic training was a success for the future of women in the Army. However, it signaled the end was near for the WAC which had already been struggling to maintain its status as a separate entity of the Army.

According to Morden the growing presence of women forced the mixed integration of male and female units in the active Army. This served as a double-edged sword for the WAC. It demonstrated that men and women could work well in the same unit. The women in Vietnam had proven this as well, but it took away the capability of the WAC to maintain its unique command structure. There were not enough personnel to man WAC detachments in the way that historically the WAC had demanded. In 1973 General Bailey had successfully defended the mission of the WAC to General Abrams. That fight had been over the repeal of specific sections of Title 10, United States Code. This established the WAC as a separate branch and repeal would have changed not only pregnancy discharge stipulations but the positions of the WAC Director and command authority for WAC officer personnel.[93] General Bailey's success lasted until October 1974 when "… the WAC lost one of its strongest supporters with the death of General Abrams."[94] Three days after his passing the Secretary of the Army Howard "Bo" Callaway reviewed a research study which led to his exploration on eliminating the WAC. General Bailey recommended retaining some legacy of the WAC during women's integration to the Army. Ultimately they decided upon passage of several pieces of legislation, the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), the ERA, as well as the Plateau Plan, the WAC would be phased out. The slow turning wheels of bureaucracy bought the WAC four more years. It was barely the same organization that General Bailey had inherited. In 1975, she retired, and Colonel

[93] Morden, *Women's*, 312-315.

[94] Ibid., 315.

Mary E. Clarke was nominated as her replacement. Clark was promoted to Brigadier General in August and became the final WAC Director. In all, it took five years from the end of Vietnam to transition the Army to a volunteer force, open new career fields to women, expand training opportunities, integrate women into the Army, and dissolve the WAC.

Not all women were pleased with the progress despite several benefits to integration. The most common issue women had was how quickly the changes had come. Command Sergeant Major Betty Benson and First Sergeant Molly Edwards were interviewed in 1981. Edwards stated she retired because she felt they changed too fast, progress was too fast, and she could not get on board. It was her opinion that the influx of women after the draft ended had less rigorous standards for enlistment. She stated it used to be much harder to get in the Army. She added that pregnant women should be discharged immediately as pregnancy causes resentment due to appointments and workload issues. However, Command Sergeant Major Benson disagreed. She did not think the standards had dropped though she did agree pregnant women should not remain in service.[95] Sergeant Major Donna Dear expressed a similar sentiment in the Camp Zama newspaper interview from 1989. She had mixed feelings about the end of the WAC. She noted that the bond she and her fellow WACs felt would be gone when the old generation of WACs retired.[96] The integration of women into the Army essentially erased the legacy of the WAC. Many veteran WACs felt it erased their proud history. Similar sentiment was felt throughout the corps as indicated in a 1978 interview with General Bailey. She stated, “I think it's very interesting that, in recent months as I have dealt with women in uniform, they have been saying

[95] OH.2011.145 #86 CSM Benson, 1SG Molly Edwards, May 15, 1981, United States Army Women’s Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

[96] Daniels, Paul M.. “From WACs to sergeants major: Zama’s top enlisted women share memories,” *Torii*, March 16, 1989, Donna Dear file, box 657D, Donna Lowery Collection WAC.2017.75, USAWM, FGA.

to me, ‘General Bailey, we are losing our identification as women. We don't have anything to cling to, we don't have anything to identify with.’”[97] While she was also proud of the progress that had been made for women in the military, she was equally as concerned with how the WAC had been dismantled. She told her interviewer:

> Also, I'm concerned at what I perceive, at any rate, and I could hope that I'm wrong but that is the way I perceive it, what appears to me to be an attempt on the part of many men, if not most men, to wipe out all reference to the Women's Army Corps, to the term WAC, to our history. Now, it may be a short history but it’s our history—it’s what we accomplished with a great deal of help from a few and, as I indicated before, with a great deal of opposition from many. And I think we have a right to be proud of it. And that we must be given the opportunity to preserve this pride. I recommended and pleaded that, "all right, so we integrate, but instead of saying female soldiers, can't we continue to use the term Wac simply to keep this term alive?" It's something for us to be proud of. I can't identify with the Infantry and it certainly doesn't appear at this time in history that any woman is going to be able to identify with the Infantry and the Artillery or the Horse Cavalry or the past history of the Army. But, as a woman, I can identify with what women have done for the Army and I have a right to take pride in this. We have made a contribution and I would like to think that the men could understand this need that we would have.[98]

However, integration continued without regard for the preservation of WAC history and their legacy was gone. The rapidly changing climate of the Army provided more opportunities for women’s military careers but at a high cost to the legacy of the WAC.

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[97] Transcript of Interview of Brigadier General Mildred C. Bailey by Lieutenant Colonel Rhoda M. Messer, Box 1, Folder 1, Interview By Rhoda M. Messer, Volume II, Circa 1978, Mildred C. Bailey Papers, (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, October 4, 1978), 32.

[98] Ibid., 31-32.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

The premise for this research was originally to seek out female veterans and interview them about their Vietnam experience to collect and preserve their voices for the historic record. Several complications arose from this idea, namely there was not a simple way to look for a list of female Vietnam veterans. Additionally, once veterans were identified it was soon clear that finding current contact information would be extremely difficult. The use of social media, while initially helpful in looking for female veteran groups, proved to be less than helpful. Many of the identified accounts were inactive for various reasons. The women themselves were unresponsive to messages or posts in identified groups. Rather than give up on learning about the non-medical female experience in Vietnam, a pivot was required. Instead of conducting original interviews the focus shifted to repositories which had existing collections of oral history interviews. Those were used in conjunction with archival records and other sources to compile an accurate portrayal of the WAC Detachment in Vietnam. Additionally, records chronicled the rapidly changing military climate brought on by societal changes in the era of the Vietnam War. Two works provided the basis for research because they offered the clearest history of the WAC and a compilation of selected remembrances from the Vietnam WACs. Those works were Colonel Bettie J. Morden's *Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978,* and Donna A. Lowery's *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories.* This was due to another complication during the research process. Records held at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland have thus far not revealed the logbooks for the WAC Detachment's years of operation. Other records of the detachment within the Records of Army Staff or Records of the U.S. Forces in Southeast Asia groups could not be found. Additionally, holdings at the U.S. Army Women's Museum at Fort Gregg-Adams did not

contain the original records of submissions from Vietnam WACs which were used for Lowery's compilation. Instead, each file contained the proofed page for publication and occasional notes or edit suggestions. Their repository contained many other helpful records and interviews which were utilized. This included videotaped interviews from the 1980s and collections left to the museum by former WACs. The West Point Center for Oral History had the largest collection of female Vietnam Veteran interviews, the Library of Congress Veterans History Project, and several other smaller repositories held additional interviews. Interviews and archival data contained at the Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive of Texas Tech University were also used for research to convey the proper context as it pertained to the war in Vietnam, issues in the United States, and the women in the Army. When all the sources were used in conjunction they provided evidence of ordinary women performing their duty in a warzone to the best of their ability. The WACs performed admirably and served as honorably, or more so in many cases, than the men they served with. When the circumstances of their service are weighed against the many limiting factors meant to inhibit their service, it is extraordinary that they thrived and secured a permanent place within the military at all. Historically, women have been involved in warfare albeit not directly, throughout all major conflicts. They have used these experiences to change unfavorable opinions towards women and advance their position in society. This was evidenced after both world wars when women secured the right to vote and advocated for equal rights. In a similar fashion, women during the Vietnam era made significant gains towards equal citizenship, this was even more true for the WAC.

The women sent to Vietnam were trailblazers. In the thirty year history of the WAC, they were the only female detachment to be activated after World War II.[1] During the era of social

[1] This refers to the WAC created with the 1948 legislation, and not the WAAC which was its predecessor.

unrest and push for dramatic change to American society, women in the military had one more chance to prove their necessity to the military as a whole. Every previous conflict relied on women when demand for able bodied males placed a need for women to provide a temporary supply of workers. The Vietnam War did not place the same level of demand on American women as the first and second world wars, but it did usher in a new era. The rising threat of communism dominated the previous two decades. War weariness and desire for a return to American ideals and normalcy had caused a domestic era unlike any before. The American dream was less carving out a homestead with families dependent on their own hard work and grit to survive. Rather, Americans after World War II created a cookie cutter depiction of the American dream. Suburban neighborhoods provided refuge for war weary veterans and the families they were building. Men and women filled suburbia with children and modern convenience. Family activities centered around the nurturing mother and supportive housewife. The hard working father provided financial stability and parental support. Society trained women to crave domesticity through advertising and educational influence from primary to collegiate levels. These stereotypes permeated American society until the social movements of the 1960s escalating into the activism of the 1970s. This pushed the status quo in an effort to force changes which society believed were overdue.

Women who joined the military were not necessarily of the same ilk, research revealed most of them joined out of patriotism, a desire for education or a career, and some because of family tradition. These women were subjected to assumptions about their character or sexuality because they chose to serve in the military. This same issue had plagued the women who served during the 1940s while men who chose military service over other career avenues were not subjected to the same innuendo. When American involvement in Vietnam increased, the military

was less than inclined to rely on women to fill positions they were qualified for. Instead, the military used the draft to fill their ranks.

At best the attitude towards women in the military was fickle. President Johnson had discussed the pressure he felt he received to send women to Vietnam. His secretary of defense argued it was an unnecessary complication. This attitude seems contradictory to the President's earlier sentiments he gave to the 1964 DACOWITS. There he stated:

> Secretary McNamara and I are counting on you to help us find these women and to recruit them. We want you to go out on the highways and the byways and tell the young women of America that this is no longer a stag Government, this is no longer a stag administration, and no longer is there anything like a one-man's army. Tell them it is their Government, it belongs to them, and it is their army, too. We want and we need them, and we urge them to come in.
> It has taken us nearly 150 years to accept the truth of what Susan Anthony used to preach when she said, "It was we the people, not we the white people, or the male citizens, nor we the male citizens, nor we just the male citizens, but we the whole people who form this Union." Today women have become a greater force in the quality of American life. Military life is no exception, and all of us are in your debt for making this possible.[2]

Previously in that same address he had remarked that military service was becoming an attractive career option for women and stated clerical jobs should not be the only avenue. He said, "…women are making important professional and technical contributions to the military as scientists, as engineers, as mathematicians, as administrators, as managers, as accountants, as teachers, as lawyers, as linguists. I think we need more women to play even more important roles."[3] Yet two years later, he and Secretary McNamara had returned to the mindset that women's service was more or less a distraction to legitimate military service. Secretary McNamara stated the presence of military women would cause problems in Vietnam and in the

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[2] Lyndon B. Johnson, Remarks to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/239063

[3] Johnson, Remarks.

United States, but he was wrong. Rather than women causing a negative stir with their presence, they demonstrated bravery, flexibility, adaptability, and dogged determination to succeed. The proof of their success is in the establishment and growth of the WAFC. Over the course of the war the advisors and their South Vietnamese counterparts provided an avenue of women's military service for ARVN forces modeled after the WAC. The scope of that undertaking, from organizing the administration to establishing and training personnel was massive. It was accomplished within months of their arrival, produced many graduates, and sent WAFC officers for further education in the United States.[4] It is also seen in how efficiently the establishment of the WAC detachment was staffed, built, and organized in preparation for women to arrive in country. Later it was packed up and moved to an entirely different location where the women repeated the process a third time when their permanent barracks at Long Binh Post was completed. The women acclimated to the same living conditions as the rest of the Army, the only difference being the fence around their cantonment designed to segregate them from the rest of the installation.

Seeing how women learned to work within the military system demonstrated their ability to influence change through proven success. In several instances the argument had been that women could not or should not fill specific roles. The reasoning was based on policy precedent. Policy dictated limitations for women regarding when they could serve, what skills they were capable of, and other gender based prohibitions on their service. None of the limitations were based on experience, rather women had repeatedly proven their ability to perform any duty they

[4] Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen, "South Vietnamese Women in Uniform," *Minerva Journal of Women and War*, Vol 3, No 2, Fall 2009, 8-33. This article is part of a larger work which Nguyen wrote in her 2009 book, *Memory Is Another Country: Women of the Vietnamese Diaspora* and offers insight into Vietnamese women's perspectives during the Vietnam War.

had been adequately trained for. The women who served in both world wars were prime examples of this. WAC leadership advocated and argued for equality as they maintained gender specific high standards and expectations Each successive director varied in their specific agenda, but overall, they ensured the corps maintained a female military presence. When Colonel Oveta Hobby took the reins, she may not have envisioned the full integration of women into the Army. Integration is a testament to the capabilities of women in the military. Every woman who served demonstrated gender was not indicative of their capability to perform their duty. It also reiterated gender should not be a mitigating factor in full citizenship either. Men and women were both capable of meeting physical and mental demands of military service, performing an occupation with proper training, obeying orders, and following established guidelines. The timing of the civil and equal rights movements as well as controversy surrounding the Vietnam War provided the perfect storm to influence and push major societal changes, especially within military culture. It is doubtful that the military would have increased the presence of women in the service as quickly without such a push from within and outside of the military. Judith Hicks Stiehm wrote the best explanation of this. She wrote that women, "…seem to be absolutely essential to the military. Their essentialness, though, lies in their absence."[5] She reasoned there were three myths that perpetuated military culture; war is manly, warriors protect, and soldiers are substitutable.[6] The introduction of women to this equation disrupted the myth because they were the opposite to manly. The presumption was that women needed protecting, and by male standards they were not substitutable especially as general infantry. She suggests this is why there was so much resistance to not only allowing women into the military, but fully integrating them into military

[5] Judith Hicks Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1989), 224.

[6] Stiehm, *Arms*, 224.

culture. Much of the male leadership at the top echelon were content with the status quo. Several recognized the nation had disregarded a long untapped valuable resource with a lengthy record of success. Unfortunately, male attitudes towards women in the military, much less towards an integrated Army, created complicated work environments for women especially as quickly as changes were made. The exit from Vietnam in 1973 quickly followed in 1974 with women being directly assigned to different Army branches rather than being an attached WAC. By the end of 1978 the WAC was nonexistent.[7]

The awareness of prejudice against women reached a crescendo in the seventies because of the questions raised over women's rights. American women were still considered second class citizens. There was no acceptable reason for this attitude. Congress looked at military leadership's stubborn adherence to outdated policy when they pushed for legislative changes for women in the military. Additionally, the assumption that the ERA would pass convinced skeptics to rethink what used to be the standard and push for change. Military women had received equal pay since 1948. The rest of the country took until 1963 to realize appropriate payment for labor should not rely on gender. Without the necessary changes made to the Army, the country would have missed the experience of the WAC and their influence on the modern Army. Several of the women who served in Vietnam stayed for careers in the Army. They withstood the dissolution of the WAC and integration to the Army. Their legacy created change which impacted all facets of military service for women. They opened doors for women in science, technology, aviation, and politics.

[7] WV0360.001, Oral history interview with Pat Foote, Interviewed by Beth Carmichael, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Evelyn Patricia Foote Papers, August 8, 2006, 20.

The WAC produced several leaders who served the Army and the United States for years to come as the volunteer military became reality and the WAC was disestablished. There were several officers who have left their mark on the military. First is Brigadier General Elizabeth Hoisington. She did not serve a tour in Vietnam, but she did make several visits as the director. She was one of the first females to ever attain a general rank in 1970 and demonstrated her ability to manage the WAC organization and advocate for the women in her corps. She served from 1942-1971 ushering in many positive changes for WACs.[8]

Brigadier General Evelyn P. Foote was another trailblazer. She began her career in the WAC in 1959 and retired from the Army in 1989.[9] Over the course of her career she accomplished many firsts for women. She was the first woman as a Public Relations Officer in Vietnam, Inspector General for the Army, Brigade Commander in Europe, and was the first female Commander of Fort Belvoir. This also carried the distinction of serving as Deputy Commander of the Military District of Washington, another first for military women.[10] General Foote earned such an outstanding reputation that she was recalled after retirement. She was asked to return to active duty after scandal erupted at Aberdeen Proving Grounds. The Aberdeen Scandal exposed rampant sexual misconduct among male instructors and their female trainees.[11] General Foote spent the next year working as the vice chair of the Secretary of the Army's

[8] Hoisington, Elizabeth, Kansas Historical Society, June 2016., Brigadier General Elizabeth P. Hoisington, Biographical citation for Hall of Fame inductee, Brigadier General Elizabeth P. Hoisington, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Digital Library, 2021.

[9] Biographical and Historical Note, MS517, Evelyn P. Foote Papers, Z. Smith Reynolds Library Special Collections and Archives, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC, USA.

[10] Ibid., WV0360.001, Oral history interview with Pat Foote, Interviewed by Beth Carmichael, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Evelyn Patricia Foote Papers, August 8, 2006.

[11] Jackie Spinner, "In Wake of Sex Scandal, Caution is the Rule at Aberdeen," *The Washington Post,* November 7, 1997, B01.

Senior Review Panel. She and a team of behavioral scientists traveled to fifty-five installations conducting surveys to collect and analyze data on the climate of the Army.[12] Their findings severely criticized leadership at all levels in the Army for creating an Equal Opportunity Program that read well on paper. In reality it did nothing to protect soldiers. The report identified major issues within the Army regarding discrimination, harassment, and assault finding that, "Over 22 percent of the women and about 7 percent of the men said they had experienced serious sexual harassment in their career."[13] Once the report was finished, General Foote returned to retirement in 1997.

Brigadier General Sherian Cadoria was another Vietnam veteran who made headlines in the Army. She received a direct commission in 1961. Though she experienced overt racism in Alabama as a young lieutenant, she was undeterred.[14] She was another woman who accomplished several firsts. One of those was commanding the male battalion of military police, another was Brigade Commander of the 1st Regional Criminal Investigation Command, and the Office of Army Law Enforcement chief.[15] She was the second black woman to receive a star and was eventually the highest-ranking black woman in the Army when she served as the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff director of manpower.[16] She retired in 1990 after twenty-nine years of service. The officers who served in Vietnam were not the only ones who

[12] WV0360.001, Interview, 30-32.

[13] Ibid., 30.

[14] James Dooley, "From Louisiana to Washington D.C.: Cadoria Discovers Success, Herself," *Pentagram*, March 16, 1989, 12, Box 657C, Folder 3 Sherian Cadoria, Lowery, Donna WAC.2017.75 Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, FGA, USAWM.

[15] "The General is a Lady," *Ebony* Magazine, December 1985, 140-146, Box 657C, Folder 3 Sherian Cadoria, Lowery, Donna WAC.2017.75 Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, FGA, USAWM.

[16] Ibid., 140.

remained for full careers and broke new ground for women in the Army. Many enlisted women remained through the integration period.

Command Sergeant Major Betty J. Benson was among the first women sent to Vietnam to set up and lead the WAC detachment as a member of the cadre. She enlisted in the WAC in 1949 and served until her age mandated her retirement after thirty years of service in 1980. She was part of the pilot program of the newly created Sergeants Major Academy and spent six months in residence at the course.[17] In 2017 she was posthumously inducted into the Army Women's Foundation Hall of Fame.[18] She served as the Post Sergeant Major in Camp Darby, Italy and as the senior enlisted soldier for the Army's Military Police School's Second Basic Training Battalion at Fort McClellan before she retired. All these positions had been previously unavailable to women.

Chief Warrant Officer Three Doris I. Allen joined the WAC in 1950. As a Private First Class she was sent to Japan where she served as newspaper editor because she had a college degree, the assignment was unusual because of her low rank. She was the first female to attend the POW Interrogator Course at Fort Holabird, Maryland which was her entry into the world of military intelligence. As a Specialist Seven, one of only twenty two in the military, she went to Vietnam where she worked in the Army Operations Center as an analyst.[19] After her three tours in Vietnam she was assigned as a course instructor for the POW interrogator course. She retired

[17] [Report] History of The United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, 1 July 1972 - 31 December 1974, Volume One, 1-19, Annual Historical Summaries Papers; Box 98A, Folder 3, U. S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, July 1972 - December1974, Circa 1975, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[18] Army Women's Foundation, https://www.awfdn.org/hall-of-fame-and-special-recognition-awards/us-army-womens-hall-of-fame-inductees/

[19] Doris Allen Oral History, Vietnam 50th Commemorative Commission Oral History Project, Interview by Debbie Cox, May 1, 2014.

in 1980 after thirty years and pursued her education earning a doctorate in psychology. In 2009 she was inducted into the military intelligence hall of fame, the first military woman to achieve that honor.[20] She was the second black woman in the hall of fame.[21] She broke many barriers for her race and gender. These women are just a few of those who served long careers in the military. They stayed through the transition from WAC to regular Army and worked to demonstrate the ability of women to serve alongside men in almost any capacity.

They changed the perspective of women in the military from loose, immoral women, to one of patriots and soldiers, a positive change from World War II's rumors and slander. Unfortunately, they also revealed there were still negative attitudes towards women's value. Scandal demonstrated that more education and change continued to be necessary since there was such a predilection to protecting sexual offenders in the military. The military microcosm demonstrated legitimate zero tolerance is not enforced from every level of leadership. Meaning crimes such as military sexual assault continue being a detrimental hazard to women's service. Yet, women like Linda McClenahan also proved the resilience of women and men who survive and overcome such trauma. Additionally, WACs demonstrated resiliency throughout the integration. General Foote noted it took about four years of phasing out separate training and assigning women directly to Army units before the WAC was deactivated. There were growing pains through the process. Men had to adjust attitudes and learn to accept the permanence of women in the military. Necessary changes in women's military service were achieved through a symbiotic relationship shared by the women's movement and female military leadership who

[20] She was the only military woman to be inducted up to that point.

[21] The first black woman to achieve that was Mary Elizabeth Bowser who was inducted in 1993, she was a spy in the home of Jefferson Davis.
https://www.ikn.army.mil/apps/MIHOF/biographies/Bowser,%20Mary%20Elizabeth.pdf

may not have necessarily worked together, but together were able to institute changes during an upheaval in American society. Other endeavors to cover this area of military history focused on the officers and legislative changes that they produced. This is true of both Bettie J. Morden and Jeanne M. Holm's works. They traced change through policy with a decided bend toward the officers. This research purposely sought information from the enlisted perspective through the use of oral history and archival information. This offers an everyman perspective uncommon in the historical record. While officers helped shape policies which affected military service, the decisions being made were experienced by enlisted personnel. For instance, General Hoisington doggedly pursued having the WACs in Vietnam return to wearing their green cord uniform even though it was impractical in a war zone. Likewise, the decision to eliminate weapons training in 1963 seems ridiculous in hindsight. It left hundreds of women unarmed while serving in a hostile area rife with sniper attacks and guerilla warfare tactics. The decisions made in offices at headquarters are explained logically in tomes which recount the official history of an organization. The oral history of those affected by the decisions offer a very different but necessary perspective. Though relatively few women served in Vietnam in comparison to the corps as a whole, their unique perspective is crucial to the history of women in the American military. Women may not have been critical front line contributors to the war effort but their presence in Vietnam was often referred to when lawmakers questioned the lack of progress on increasing female military numbers. The WAC detachment, as well as the studies conducted on women's inclusion, provided current evidence that the military machine would not collapse if women were given a broader place within the military.

Women's integration did not occur just because of women's involvement in Vietnam. Rather, women played a role in the military from the early days of the nation's beginnings. Their

role only expanded through American involvement in the world wars, Korea, and Vietnam. Women continued to demonstrate their willingness and ability to serve as equal members of the armed forces. It would be inaccurate to assume the women's movement was responsible for the plethora of changes in the military. The women's movement and military integration had walked in tandem during the overhaul of the military in the seventies. The loss of the draft for manpower was far more responsible for women's expansion because the military faced budget cuts, reorganization, and downsizing after Vietnam. Disillusionment made recruiting a difficult objective and the overhaul of military culture was necessary to make service more attractive for men and women. Women who chose to serve in the late seventies found a wide range of new career options as fields opened outside of administrative positions. Faced with a shrinking budget and the expansion of women in new specialties proved to be a blessing and a curse for the WAC. Reorganizing the structure of how and where women were assigned led to realignment of training and consolidation of gender separate training into co-ed courses. After 1980 the election of President Ronald Reagan and the rise of the conservative movement, the forward progress of women in the military stalled to a degree. According to General Foote that also the ended co-ed basic training for a time despite its successful production of soldiers. Despite this, women continued making slow progress. This progress would be an excellent starting point for future research.

The eventual inclusion of women in combat offers an interesting area of research for several reasons. There have been many women in the military who have provided real life examples of the consequences of war from a female perspective such as Private First Class Jessica Lynch, Private First Class Lori Piestewa, and Airman First Class Elizabeth Jacobson.[22] A

[22] These three are just an example of the many women whose military service was publicized. Jessica Lynch and Lori Piestewa were soldiers in the Army who were ambushed in Iraq in 2003. While Piestewa was killed,

comparison of myth versus reality regarding how combat duty has changed from the Vietnam War to recent military involvements in Afghanistan and Iraq would be a great exploration of more recent changes in the military.

Additionally, there are women who have continued to challenge the status quo even pushing for inclusion into the still gender limited special forces like the Navy Sea Air and Land Teams (SEAL). A film that released in 1997, *G.I. Jane*, starred Demi Moore as a Navy Lieutenant as a test candidate in the SEAL program. The film depicts the journey she took to overcome obstacles to passing her training as well as male prejudice and political subversion. She eventually succeeds in being accepted, albeit through extraordinary circumstances. Women in the military have been depicted in other films, some comedy, others exploring the darker side of the female military experience. How has American female military depiction in movies since the 1980s has changed considering American involvement overseas and the steady growth of women in the military? It would be interesting to see how movies have evolved from *Private Benjamin* to *Megan Leavey* for example and if the themes are similar to those which star male protagonists or explore how they differ.[23] This is not the only area which should be studied regarding women's military service.

In recent years there has been an uptick in violence against military women. Crimes ranging from assault—sexual and physical, domestic violence, to murder have become far too

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Lynch was taken as a POW and later rescued. Articles at https://thefallen.militarytimes.com/army-pfc-lori-ann-piestewa/256538 and https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2003/06/23/jessica-lynch/ share their accounts. Elizabeth Jacobson was killed in 2005, the first female security forces member of the Air Force to die in combat, she was killed by an improvised explosive device in Iraq. https://thefallen.militarytimes.com/air-force-airman-1st-class-elizabeth-n-jacobson/2618900

[23] *Private Benjamin* was a 1980 comedy movie starring Goldie Hawn which follows the impulsive decision of Hawn's character to join the Army whereas *Megan Leavey* is a 2017 movie which is based on real Marine Corporal Megan Leavey's experience as a dog handler and her relationship with her working dog, Rex.

common in the news. Most often women are victims of men they work with. Violence against women in the military is not a new phenomenon. Assaults on WACs in Vietnam are evidence of that. Yet, the problem seems to be growing rather than shrinking and it demands an answer. Why are military women still in danger from the men they serve with and why are these men still protected from prosecution in many cases? Men and women raise their right hands and take the exact same oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic. Yet the military, despite having copious programs in place to prevent sexual assault, harassment, and domestic violence, continually fail to fix an escalating problem. Research into the statistics of violence against military women and if any of the established programs are effective could provide insight which the military could use to revise its programs. Women, like Linda McClenahan, LaVena Johnson, Denisha Montgomery, and Vanessa Guillen, deserved better from their fellow servicemen.[24]

Just as volunteer and drafted men served in their units accomplishing daily tasks with little fanfare, so served the women. There are documented feats of extraordinary accomplishments from male soldiers and in a much smaller capacity, a few women also demonstrated bravery in hostile situations. Those opportunities were rare during this era because of the limitations on women's service and their lack of training. Weapons familiarization was not taught during WAC basic training from 1963 to 1973 and then was introduced as an option at first.[25] Women adapted to the integration of the WAC into the regular Army even with mixed emotions over the loss of their beloved corps and their own customs and traditions. Many went

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[24] Mella Bettag, Jose Medina, Lauren Smith, "Vanguard Analysis: Suspicious Deaths of Women in the U.S. Military," *The People's Vanguard of Davis*, July 24, 2020. https://www.davisvanguard.org/2020/07/vanguard-analysis-suspicious-deaths-of-women-in-the-u-s-military/ with a link to a google spreadsheet https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fBQk7KIV0SHxuryTcud2mSUqKRD5zXwvRAamA1LIH_Q/edit#gid=0

[25] Morden, *Women's*, 282.

Figure 35 Welcome sign for Captain Murphy at the WAC Detachment, Long Binh, WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery, Women Vietnam Veterans Our Untold Stories, Box 657 D, Gloria J. Grenfell Fowler Folder, U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

on to create new precedent for women's service. They exemplified their ability to meet many of the same challenges as men, forcing revision of restrictive policies. More than anything, this research demonstrated the women of the USARV WAC detachment were extraordinary in their ordinariness. They were soldiers during an extraordinary time in history. In the end, the women in Vietnam helped lay the foundation for women to serve in increased capacities stateside and in

deployed locations. They were adaptable and demonstrated valor is not determined by gender. The non-nursing Vietnam WACs proved citizenship and values like duty, honor, and country, should be shared by all.

Figure 36 The Pilot Class, Sergeants Major Academy, [Report] History of The United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, 1 July 1972 - 31 December 1974, Volume One, 1-19, Annual Historical Summaries Papers; Box 98A, Folder 3, U. S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, July 1972 - December1974, Circa 1975, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

Figure 37 Statue of Pallas Athene the insignia of the Women's Army Corps outside the U.S. Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams, Virginia, photo by Carmen M. Latvis.

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Picture 1 of Martha Raye with WACs. Linda Earls Folder. Box 657D. WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery Collection. United States Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

Picture 2 of Martha Raye with WACs. Penelope Hill Radebaugh Folder. Box 657E. WAC.2017.75, Donna Lowery Collection. United States Army Women's Museum, Fort Gregg-Adams.

Photograph, Master Sergeant Betty Benson receiving leadership award at Sergeants Major Academy 1973, Betty Benson Folder 4, Box 595, FIC.2011.317, USAWM, FGA.

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Appendix A


LONG BINH POST
GUIDE TO IMPORTANT BUILDINGS AND FEATURES
GUIDE TO IMPORTANT BUILDINGS AND FEATURES
LEGEND

Appendix B

HEADQUARTERS
1ST AVIATION BRIGADE
APO San Francisco 96384

"NGUY HIEM" 3 July 1968

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 4325

AWARD OF THE PURPLE HEART

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

GREEN, SHARON L. WA8618040 SSAN: NVAL SPECIALIST FIVE E5 USA
USARV Aviation Section, APO 96375
Awarded: Purple Heart
Date action: 9 June 1968
Theater: Republic of Vietnam
Reason: For wounds received in connection with military operations against a hostile force.
Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of AR 672-5-1 and United States Army Vietnam Message 16695 dated 1 July 1966.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:

LEE S. PETERSON
1LT, AGC
Asst Adjutant General

EUGENE F. CROOKS
LTC, Infantry
Acting Chief of Staff

DISTRIBUTION:
25 AVBI-AG-AD
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1 USARV ATTN: AVHAG-PD
2 CINCUSARPAC ATTN: GPOP-MH
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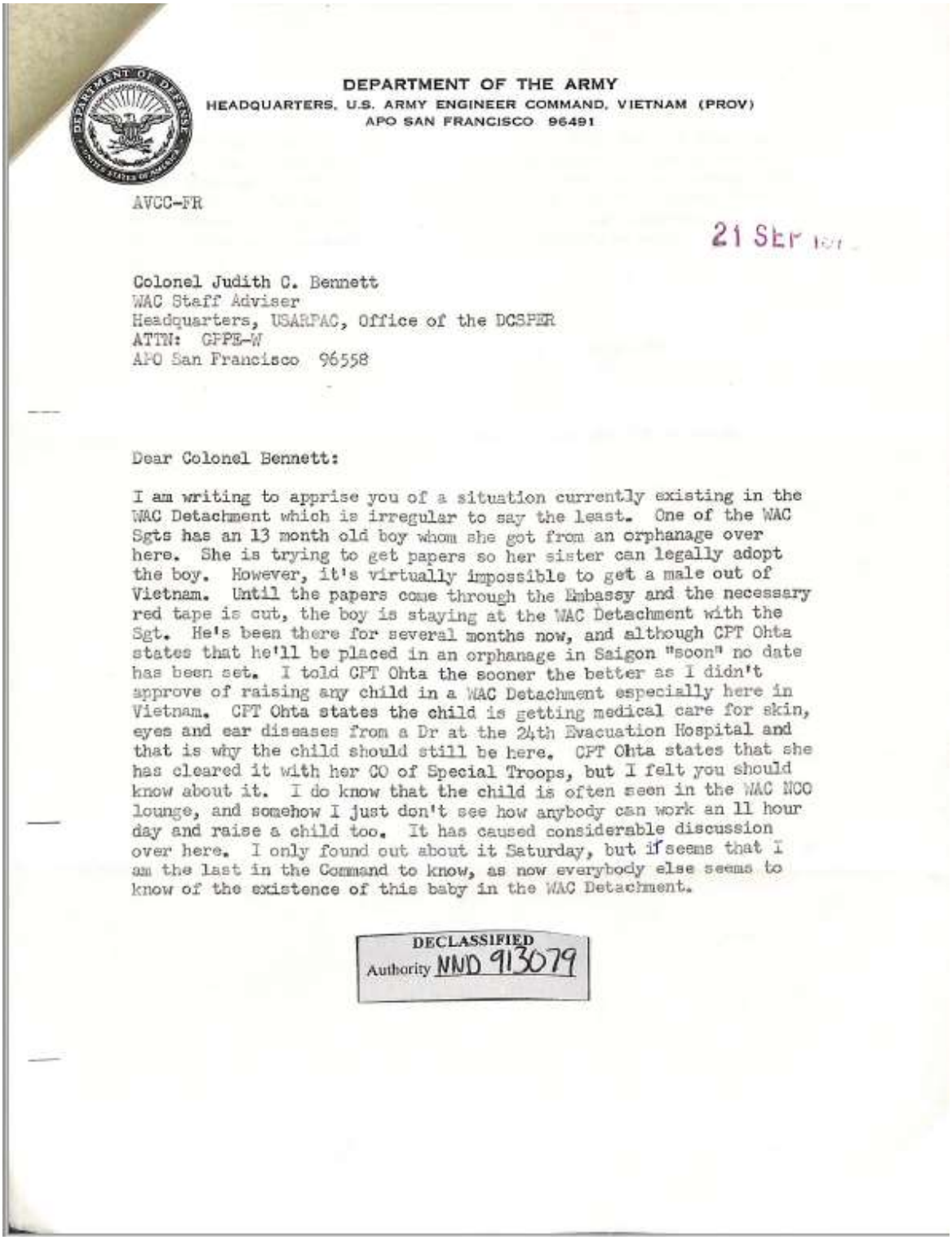
DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND913013

Appendix C



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. ARMY ENGINEER COMMAND, VIETNAM (PROV)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96491

AVCC-FR

21 Sep 67

Colonel Judith C. Bennett
WAC Staff Adviser
Headquarters, USARPAC, Office of the DCSPER
ATTN: GPPE-W
APO San Francisco 96558

Dear Colonel Bennett:

I am writing to apprise you of a situation currently existing in the WAC Detachment which is irregular to say the least. One of the WAC Sgts has an 13 month old boy whom she got from an orphanage over here. She is trying to get papers so her sister can legally adopt the boy. However, it's virtually impossible to get a male out of Vietnam. Until the papers come through the Embassy and the necessary red tape is cut, the boy is staying at the WAC Detachment with the Sgt. He's been there for several months now, and although CPT Ohta states that he'll be placed in an orphanage in Saigon "soon" no date has been set. I told CPT Ohta the sooner the better as I didn't approve of raising any child in a WAC Detachment especially here in Vietnam. CPT Ohta states the child is getting medical care for skin, eyes and ear diseases from a Dr at the 24th Evacuation Hospital and that is why the child should still be here. CPT Ohta states that she has cleared it with her CO of Special Troops, but I felt you should know about it. I do know that the child is often seen in the WAC NCO lounge, and somehow I just don't see how anybody can work an 11 hour day and raise a child too. It has caused considerable discussion over here. I only found out about it Saturday, but it seems that I am the last in the Command to know, as now everybody else seems to know of the existence of this baby in the WAC Detachment.

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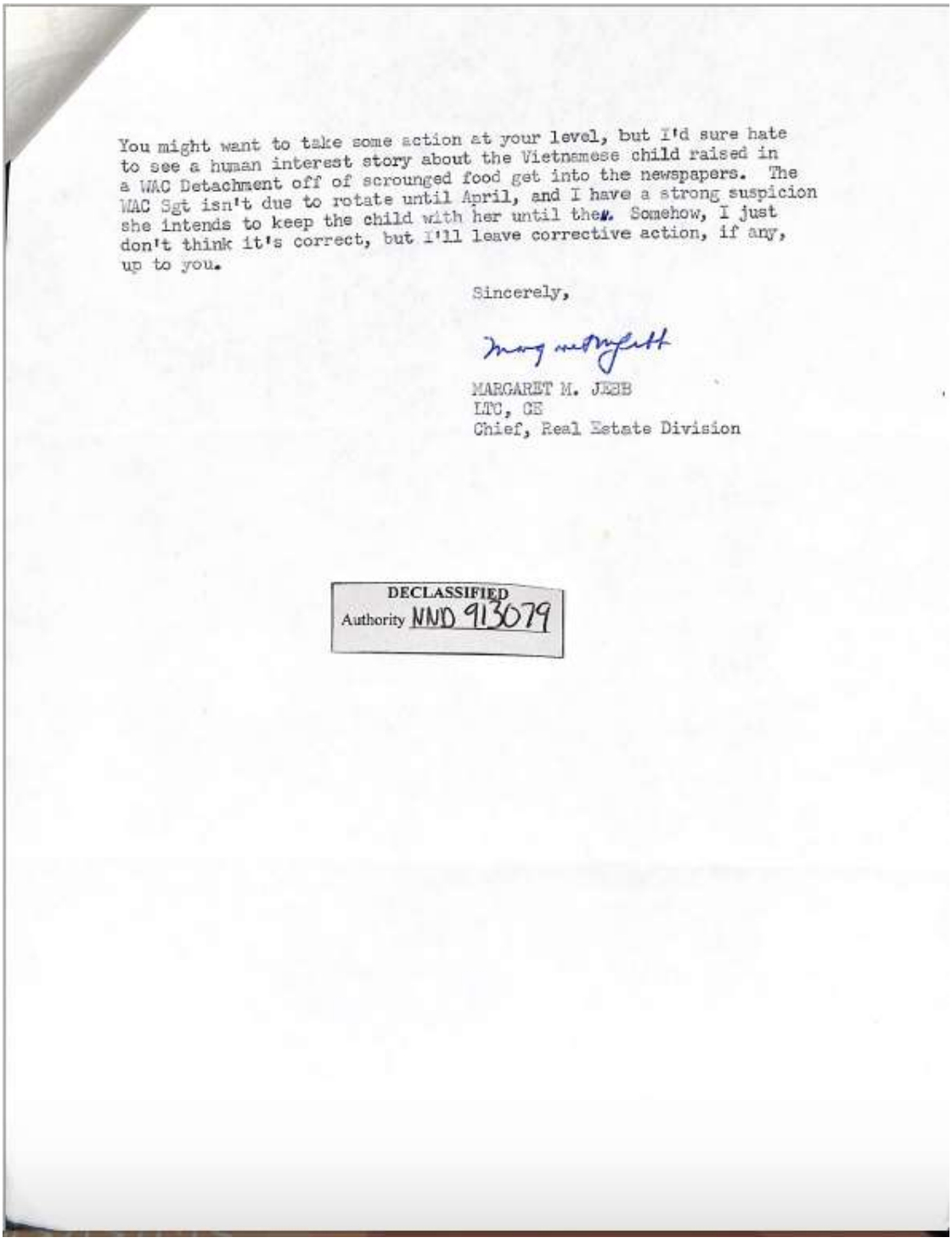
Appendix C-1



You might want to take some action at your level, but I'd sure hate to see a human interest story about the Vietnamese child raised in a WAC Detachment off of scrounged food get into the newspapers. The WAC Sgt isn't due to rotate until April, and I have a strong suspicion she intends to keep the child with her until then. Somehow, I just don't think it's correct, but I'll leave corrective action, if any, up to you.

Sincerely,

MARGARET M. JEEB
LTC, CE
Chief, Real Estate Division

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Authority NND 913079

Appendix C-2

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Authority NND 913079

PARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ARMY ENGINEER COMMAND, VIETNAM (PROV)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96491

GPPE-W

24 September 1970

Dear Captain Ohta:

It has come to my attention that one of the members of your detachment is keeping a baby in the WAC Detachment pending her sister's adoption of the child.

If this is true, I am frankly alarmed at the implications. A child cannot, under any circumstances, fall in the same category as a mascot. In the first place, bad publicity in Vietnam is not something we need. Although I can appreciate the fact that the WACs feel no doubt that they are taking as good as or better care of the child than an orphanage could, that would never stand up if it came to a show-down with the press or the legal people. For instance - - I shudder to think what reaction there might be from both Vietnamese and Americans if the child should happen to get sick and died of pneumonia or any other of the multitude of diseases common in Vietnam. All the goodwill and compassion of the WACs would very likely be pushed to the background and only the "poor judgment" of the WAC in condoning the situation would be brought out. The WACs could be crucified for, for example, keeping a child in an unauthorized place, cared for by "unqualified" people, fed on scrounged food. I am sure we could expect publicity that may take a generation to live down.

I have consulted our legal people on this matter; they agree with me.

I strongly urge you to take immediate steps to put the child in an orphanage pending finalization of adoption proceedings which, I assume, have been initiated. If they have not, the JA at USARV has kits available to list the requirements by the Vietnamese for exit authority and the Americans for entry authority. I am told the average time required is about nine months and plenty of money to expedite processing in Vietnam.

The Civil Affairs Officer at USARV has lists of orphanages, some of them excellent, sponsored by American organizations. I suggest you assist your EW any way you can to get the baby into a suitable orphanage immediately and to help make arrangements for the baby to continue to receive medical care.

I would appreciate a return reply concerning this situation and any action taken or contemplated by you, to include dates as appropriate.

JUDITH C. BENNETT
Colonel, GS
WAC Staff Adviser

GPPE-W

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 913079

28 September 1970

Dear Colonel Jebb,

I wrote Captain Ohta as soon as I got your letter re the baby. Of course, I have no command jurisdiction, but I strongly advised her to get the baby into an orphanage ASAP and to assist the EW any way she can in getting the adoption taken care of. Apparently it can be done (boys included). It takes time, persistence, and money to grease the wheels on the Vietnamese side. I asked her to let me know what she would do and when.

Now, would you please look into something for me and let me know what you find out as soon as you can? The problem is from Bettie Morden (in the Director's Office) and is stated on the attached extract on her letter to me.

Thanks, very much.

JUDITH C. BENNETT
Colonel, GS
WAC Staff Adviser

Lieutenant Colonel Margaret Jebb
USAECV, Chief/Real Estate Division
APO 96491

Appendix C-3

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WAC DETACHMENT, SPECIAL TROOPS
APO SAN FRANCISCO ~~xxxxx~~96384

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 913079

AVIA-WA

1 October 1960

Dear Colonel Bennett:

Reference your letter of 25 September 1970 and our keeping a baby in the WAC Detachment.

There seems to be slight misunderstanding concerning the reasoning behind keeping the child in our unit area. It is true that the baby was in the unit for appoximately 2½ weeks but no longer and he was not here in the sense of a company mascot. Adoption papers were initiated on the child in July; however, before anything official could be done, the child had to be physically released from the orphange. The child was in the Tam Mai Orphange located in Tan Hiep, the same orphange we have supported for the past year. The Catholic Church runs the orphange but refused to release the child unless we paid them for him. We then contacted the Civil Affairs Officer and with his help along with the aid of the American Embassy, the child was released 5 September 1970. He was in the unit area while the Civil Affairs Officer and Miss Odesso of the American Embassy located a suitable orphange to keep the child while the adoption papers are processed. The child was put in a home in Saigon 24 September 1970 and will remain there until his return to CONUS.

The child was kept in the WAC Detachment for two reasons. One, he received medical care from Dr. Leavitt, the same doctor who treated the child at the orphange for approximately six months and during that period of time, he could not cure an ear infection or body rash. He asked if we would keep the child for a while and use the medicine. After two weeks, the ear infection and body rash cleared up. Dr. Leavitt then contacted the Civil Affairs office in Bein Hoa and after an investigation it was discovered that the medicine he left was never given to the children. Another reason for keeping the child was that time was needed to locate a suitable orphange. The Civil Affairs office is in the process of investigating all orphanges in the area.

I was fully aware of the dangers involved with keeping the child in the unit but decided it would be the best decision for all concerned. I did discuss the matter with my immediate headquarters before a final decision was made.

I hope I have provided you with adequate information and I assure you that the situation no longer exists.

Shirley M Ohta

SHIRLEY M. OHTA
CPT, WAC
Commanding

Appendix D

The discussion of women in the Army would not have been possible without the work of the WAC directors. Colonel Morden's comprehensive history of the WAC from 1945-1978 covers every legislative and policy move that the directors were responsible for. Her work shows the professionalism of the women who were the embodiment of the WAC. Two of the final directors, Brigadier General Elizabeth Hoisington and Brigadier General Mildred Bailey, led long military careers and helped usher in most of the beneficial changes to women in the Army. They both initially enlisted in the WAAC during World War II and earned their commissions. General Bailey was commissioned in September 1942, General Hoisington in May 1943. These women served through the slander campaign of the second world war which was intended to hurt the reputation of military women. Instead, it pushed the women to maintain higher standards and impeccable reputations. While an interview with General Hoisington could not be found, there are several with General Bailey. Perhaps the most informative is the official interview conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Rhoda M. Messer. This multi-volume interview offers personal insight into the inner workings of the WAC and Bailey's relationships with many she served alongside. She offers the best representation of herself and her fellow directors in their mission to bring women into the Army. That interview is found at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center's online repository.[26]

[26] Transcript of Interview of Brigadier General Mildred C. Bailey by Lieutenant Colonel Rhoda M. Messer. Box 1. Folder 3. Interview By Rhoda M. Messer. Volume I, Circa 1978. Mildred C. Bailey Papers. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, September 24, 1978.