

CHAPTER 4

The Korean War Years

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Organized Reserve Gets Underway

Of equal importance to the integration of women into the regular service was the development of a strong women's Reserve. During the early phases of planning, in 1946-47, Colonel Pate, Director, Division of Reserve, was a strong advocate of Organized Reserve units for women. He frequently found himself defending this relatively unpopular idea—an idea unique to the Marine Corps.¹ Senior Marines at Headquarters recognized the need for a women's Reserve, but Marines, by and large, shuddered at the thought of this female intrusion. Little by little, the concept gained wider acceptance especially when it was considered as an alternative to women Regulars. It effectively solved the problem of maintaining the affiliation of the WRs and of training a group who would eventually take their place.

Until February 1949, the Division of Reserve still thought in terms of 30 women's companies with a total strength of 60 officers and 1,500 enlisted women, but in reviewing the Marine Corps budget for fiscal year 1950, the Bureau of the Budget reduced the estimate and eliminated the provisions for drill pay for organized women's companies. The Division of Plans and Policies reexamined the location of existing organized units with the purpose of determining those in which women's detachments could readily be justified. Based upon the premise that any locality in which 500 or more enlisted personnel were administered would justify a women's Reserve detachment, the study recommended the activation of 30 women's platoons.² By March, the plans were finally approved for 15 platoons of two officers and 50 enlisted women each. Major Hamblet and Lieutenant Hale studied the case files of former WRs and made projected plans based on the size of existing male Reserve units, the geographic concentration of WR veterans, and upon available training facilities. In the end, they settled on the seven most promising locations in which to begin: Kansas City; Boston; Los Angeles; New York; Philadelphia; San Francisco; and Seattle.³

A mix of Regular and Reserve officers on continuous active duty would administer the program. Women

were needed to serve as Inspector-Instructor for each planned unit and for duty in the various Reserve District offices to give overall supervision to women's matters. Accordingly, a board was convened in March and the following selections were made for Inspector-Instructors: Captain Shirley J. Fuetsch, Los Angeles; Captain Helen A. Wilson, Philadelphia; First Lieutenant Frances M. Exum, Seattle; First Lieutenant Mary C. MacDonald, New York; and First Lieutenant Kathryn E. Snyder, San Francisco. For duty in Reserve District offices, the following officers: Captain Constance Risegari-Gai, Boston; Captain Barbara Somers, New York; First Lieutenant Dolores L. Dubinsky, Philadelphia; First Lieutenant Lucille M. Olsen, Washington, D.C.; First Lieutenant Annie V. Bean, New Orleans; First Lieutenant Mary E. Roddy, Chicago; First Lieutenant Elva B. Chaffer, Los Angeles; First Lieutenant Beatrice R. Strong, San Francisco; First Lieutenant Mildred N. Cooke, Seattle; and First Lieutenant Mary W. Frazer, Atlanta.⁴

Mission and Administration

Reserve Memorandum 15-49 of 14 March 1949 published the specifics of administration and training of the women's portion of the Organized Reserve.⁵ The mission of these units was to provide individual women trained to meet mobilization needs of the Marine Corps. They were not classified by specialty as the male Reserve units were or as post-Korea women Reserve platoons would be. Designated women's Reserve platoons (WR platoons), they were attached directly to the major parent male unit as an organic element (e.g., WR Platoon, 11th Infantry Battalion) and not to any subunit. Inasmuch as the women were neither assigned to, nor trained for, combat duties, they were grouped into five subdivisions under Reserve Class VI in order to permit immediate distinction between men and women in case of mobilization.⁶

The male Inspector-Instructor staff was augmented by one woman officer, designated an assistant I&I, and one or two enlisted women who administered the WR platoon. The platoon was under the direct command of the commanding officer, a platoon leader, and a platoon officer. In many ways the platoon was

autonomous since the platoon leader was responsible for recruiting, administration, training, rank distribution, and the mobilization state of readiness of her platoon. Furthermore, she was directed to render administrative assistance to the male unit to compensate for the increased workload caused by the existence of the WR platoon. Very often, however, the women actually took over much of the parent unit's administration.

The WR platoons held weekly two-hour training periods during which their time was divided between formal classes, basic military indoctrination courses for the nonveterans, and specialist training classes in subjects like administration, disbursing, or training aids depending upon the background of the members, and giving clerical assistance to the male unit. It was expected that the basic course, closely resembling recruit training, and consisting of classes in drill, military customs and courtesies, history of the Marine Corps, naval law, interior guard duty, first aid, defense against chemical attack, uniform regulations, and current events would take about two years to complete.

Officers were procured only from among former WR officers and successful graduates of the WOTC at Quantico. Enlisted members were recruited from among WRs, women veterans of the Armed Forces, and nonveterans who met the qualifications. For veterans, the age limits specified that all previous active military service plus all inactive service in the Reserve must, when deducted from their actual age, equal 32 or less. Aspiring Reservists with no prior service had somewhat less stringent requirements than women being recruited for active duty: age, 18-31; and education, high school graduate, or high school student and pass the equivalency test. Regular recruits, on the other hand, had to be 20 years old and high school graduates.

To complete the organization, the Division of Reserve requested that WAVE pharmacist mates be included in the naval personnel allowance for those units which had a WR platoon. The decision was approved in the interest of public opinion, as well as health and accident security.⁷

The First Seven WR Platoons

The first WR platoon was activated on 14 April 1949 at Kansas City, Missouri. A Regular officer, First Lieutenant Ben Alice Day, was appointed Assistant I&I of the 5th 105mm Howitzer Battalion, USMCR, and Major Helen T. Chambers was assigned platoon lead-

er. In a very short time the platoon was up to its authorized strength.⁸

First Lieutenant Pauline "Polly" F. Riley, Irish and from Maine, was sent to Boston to activate the second WR platoon. Lieutenant Riley, formerly enlisted, was a member of the last WR officer candidate class in 1945. The class was made up entirely of enlisted WRs, and when World War II was declared over about a week before commissioning, the students were given three options: return to enlisted status, take a discharge if they had the required points, or accept the commission and remain on active duty for one year. Most of the candidates took the discharge or returned to enlisted status, but Lieutenant Riley was commissioned in August 1945 and served at Headquarters until 1947 on the Postwar Personnel Reorganization Board. She was released to inactive duty when the board was terminated and later was among the first 20 Regular women officers.⁹

With her New England background, it was logical to send Lieutenant Riley to Boston, where the WR Platoon, 2d Infantry Battalion, USMCR, was established on 22 April 1949 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James Dugan and with Lieutenant Carolyn Tenteris as the platoon officer.¹⁰

Former WRs Staff Sergeant Frances A. Curwen, Staff Sergeant Katherine Keefe, Corporal Hazel A. Lindahl, and Corporal Dorothy M. Munroe were early members of the Boston unit. Among the nonveterans was Private Eleanor L. Judge, who originally enlisted in the Reserve because she happened to be free on Wednesday evenings, the women's scheduled drill night. But that was only the beginning; in 1977 with 27 years active service as a Regular, she reenlisted for three more years.¹¹

Sergeant Major Judge remembered that the women were "put through a pace." There were classes to attend as well as battalion administrative work to be done. The non-veterans were not issued regulation shoes and they drilled in their own civilian shoes which proved impractical and uncomfortable. The classes in naval law, taught by Sergeant Mary L. Attaya, a lawyer, were complete with mock trials in which the women played active roles, and there were Hollywood-made movies featuring the Marine Corps.¹² For all of this, a private was paid \$2.50 per drill and a captain received \$7.67.¹³

Captain Risegari-Gai, formerly the commanding officer of VTU 1-1(WR), Boston, was not a member since she had been selected for a continuous active



Capt Rosalie B. Johnson, assistant inspector-instructor of the 5th Infantry Battalion, Washington, D.C., discusses the formation of the local Organized Women's Reserve Platoon with Rachel Freeman, Charlotte De Garmo, and Sgt Theresa "Sue" M. Sousa.

duty billet in the office of the First Reserve District, which in those days was located in the Fargo Building in Boston. When Captain Risegari-Gai reported for duty, Colonel George O. Van Orden, District Director, and a Virginia gentleman, was quoted in the Boston newspaper as saying that his first sergeant needed a week off to recuperate because he was, ". . . the finest cussin gent yo'all ever did hear. Had to pretty up his language, though, with all these lady Marines around. He's a beaten man." The colonel, himself, had never seen a woman Marine until he arrived in Boston, saw Captain Risegari-Gai, and described himself as "thunderstruck."¹⁴

The next five platoons were organized by Reserve officers on continuous active duty, and it was necessary for them to go to Washington for a briefing before taking up their new duties. Captain Helen A.

Wilson was then sent to Philadelphia where recruiting was simplified when the entire VTU under the command of Captain Dorothy M. Knox transferred to the Organized Reserve. The unit became the WR platoon, 6th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, with Captain Knox as platoon leader and First Lieutenant Emily Horner as platoon officer.

From Philadelphia, Captain Wilson kept Colonel Towle informed of the platoon's progress and activities. By Christmas of 1949, recruiting was so successful that the unit was permitted to exceed its authorized strength by 10 percent. When the male commanding officers of other battalions heard of this, they were very much interested in receiving a similar authorization. The women in Philadelphia formed a rifle team, and a bowling team, and even fielded a team for a swim meet.

In response to one of Captain Wilson's informal reports, Colonel Towle, always conscious of the service woman's image, wrote:

I think you were wise to put a stop to post drill activities such as drinking in bars while in uniform. There is nothing intrinsically wrong, of course, but the very fact that a woman is in uniform makes her liable to criticism even though she is behaving herself in every respect. As you say, Women Marines have established a fine reputation and it would be most unfortunate to have any criticism leveled at them, especially when we ourselves can do much to prevent it. I think you have shown excellent judgement in your decision.¹⁵

First Lieutenant Kathryn E. Snyder, who had served at the Department of the Pacific during World War II, was assigned as Assistant I&I, 12th Infantry Battalion, Treasure Island, and together with the Reserve officers Lieutenants Katherine W. Love and Marjorie J. Woolman, started San Francisco's WR platoon, whose roster included Sergeant Alameda Blessing; Corporal Rosita A. Martinez, who eventually integrated and retired as a master gunnery sergeant; and Corporal Ouida Craddock, who also went Regular, and later became the Sergeant Major of the Women Marines.¹⁶

Captain Shirley J. Fuetsch and First Lieutenant Frances M. Exum drove west together and parted at Denver—Fuetsch to go to the 13th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, in Los Angeles and Exum to go to the 11th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, at Seattle. In Los Angeles, two Reserve First Lieutenants, Esther N. Gaffney and Christine S. Strain, took the reins of the WR platoon while the Seattle unit was headed by Captain Nancy M. Roberts and First Lieutenant Fern D. Anderson.¹⁷

First Lieutenant Mary C. MacDonald, who before the war had been personal secretary to Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh, was sent to New York to activate the WR platoon, 1st Infantry Battalion, USMCR, at Fort Schuyler. Captain Mildred Gannon and First Lieutenant Elizabeth Noble filled the two Reserve officer billets. Like Philadelphia, the Fort Schuyler platoon also increased its strength to 55, but eventually the authorization was rescinded, and the women had to "keep on their toes" to stay in. Those with poor attendance records were transferred involuntarily to the Inactive Reserve, and the platoon maintained a waiting list of potential recruits.¹⁸

Add Six More Platoons

After the original seven platoons were well established, plans were announced for an additional four. On 15 October 1949, WR platoons were activated as

elements of the 4th Infantry Battalion, Minneapolis; the 5th Infantry Battalion, Washington, D.C.; and the 9th Infantry Battalion at Chicago. On 1 November, the fourth WR Platoon was activated at St. Louis as part of the 3d Infantry Battalion.

Chicago's WRs were led by First Lieutenant Genevieve M. Dooner who had compiled quite a record as a volunteer recruiting officer in the postwar years. She was assisted by platoon officer Lieutenant Isabel F. Vosler and I&I Lieutenant Dorothy Holmberg.

First Lieutenant Elaine T. Carville, although of French background and from Louisiana, was ordered to Minneapolis because "she looked like a Swede." A Reserve officer on extended active duty, she activated the WR Platoon, 4th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, which came under the leadership of First Lieutenant Ardath Bierlein and Second Lieutenant Phyllis Davis. Well known for her enthusiasm and *esprit de corps*, Lieutenant Carville soon had a unit made up of 10 former WRs, 37 nonveterans, 2 ex-WAVES, and 1 ex-SPAR. Minneapolis-St. Paul had been chosen for a WR platoon from among a number of cities which had asked for one. The large number of wartime WRs from Minnesota plus the personal interest in the project displayed by Lieutenant Colonel Emmet O. Swanson, commanding officer of the 4th Battalion, combined to bring the unit to the "Twin Cities."

When plans for the platoon were first announced, 250 inquiries flooded the Reserve office at Wold-Chamberlain Naval Air Station. Lieutenant Carville personally interviewed 150 applicants. The first group of 45 selectees was sworn in on 2 November 1949 by Brigadier General Elmer H. Salzman in a ceremony at the airfield. Wartime WRs included Master Sergeant Cecilia Nadeau, Staff Sergeant Lucille Almon, Staff Sergeant Leona Dickey, Staff Sergeant Betty Guenther, Sergeant Gladyce Pederson, Sergeant Anna Homza, Private First Class Betty Lemnke, Private First Class Grace Moak, Private First Class Ruth Mortenson, and Private First Class Kathleen Schoenecker. Among the nonveterans was Private Julia L. Bennke, who later went on to a full active duty career and retired in 1970 as a master sergeant.

Despite the commanding officer's enthusiasm for a WR platoon some members of his staff were concerned at the changes it would bring. Reportedly, Sergeant Major Thomas Polvogt said that on occasion he would issue rifles to the women Marines so they would know what they were dealing in when they handled

records for M-Is issued to guards, but he was not going to be responsible for powder puffs “or them other things they are going to issue.” Lieutenant Carville assured him that the women would be issued full Marine Corps uniforms “from the skin out” and Sergeant Major Polvogt would not have to worry about “them other things.”¹⁹

Captain Jeanette Pearson, Assistant I&I of the 5th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, Washington, D.C., activated that WR platoon with Major Mary L. Condon as platoon leader and First Lieutenant Ethel D. Fritts as platoon officer. Theresa “Sue” M. Sousa, later president of the Women Marines Association, was an early member of that very active unit which met at 230 C Street, N.W.²⁰

After the first WOTC, Captain Nita Bob Warner, selected for a three-year active duty contract, left Quantico for a Headquarters Marine Corps briefing before setting out for St. Louis to form the WR Platoon, 3d Infantry Battalion, USMCR. Officially activated on 1 November 1949, the unit received a great deal of publicity. On the night that enlistments opened, more than 100 applicants—one of whom was former WR Peggy Musselman, later assigned as the platoon leader—came to the Navy-Marine Corps Reserve Training Center at the foot of Ferry Street. According to retired Lieutenant Colonel Warner, this unit was supposed to be self-contained. That meant they were to recruit or train women to handle all matters of administration, supply, recruiting, disbursing, or whatever else it took to run an efficient organization.

Like the rest of the women Marine Reservists, those in St. Louis were shod in civilian shoes of various shades of brown and tan—an intolerable situation to Captain Warner. She enlisted the help of Staff Sergeant Mabel Otten, stationed at Headquarters Marine Corps, who sent a full case of cordovan brown shoe dye to the WR platoon. All 50 Reservists spent one drill period outside the armory “. . . wielding a bottle of cordovan brown shoe dye and shoe polish, dyeing their shoes dark brown and then learning how to give them a Marine Corps spit shine.” When St. Louis saw its first women Marines, a proud group, on 20 May 1950 in an Armed Forces Day parade, they were stepping out in regulation cordovan brown shoes.

As it turned out, the shoe color problem was more easily solved than that of providing the Reservists with summer uniforms. There were none! In the summer of 1950, Headquarters allowed the platoon two weeks



Inspector-Instructor 1stLt Doris V. Kleberger (standing second from right) attends an Open House for the Women Reserve Platoon, 17th Infantry Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, in Detroit, 1950.

of active duty for training at the armory, which they performed wearing the utility uniform—bib overalls and white T-shirts—which Lieutenant Colonel Warner laughingly recalls, “. . . made really quite a handsome outfit.”²¹

February 1950 saw the formation of the last two WR platoons. Second Lieutenant Doris Kleberger left Quantico to become the Assistant I&I, 17th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, Detroit, with Captain Cecelia Vandenberg as the platoon leader.²²

Captain Mary J. Hale went from Parris Island to Dallas where she served as Assistant I&I, 23d 155mm Howitzer Battalion, USMCR. She remembers that the Marines, Regular and Reserve, were very proud of the preparations they had made to welcome the WR platoon. On the night of the open house, planned to kick off the recruiting effort, Dallas was the scene of a “terrible ice storm,” but the Texans were undaunted and the unit was off to a good start. Captain Hazel C. Tyler was platoon leader and First Lieutenant Grace E. Kathan was platoon officer. Captain Hale, scrupulous in her explanation to recruits of a Reserve unit’s mobilization potential, was asked by the I&I if she really had to emphasize the point so strongly. Fortunately she continued to make an issue of it because within six months mobilization became a fact.²³

*Mobilization of Organized
Reserve Units—Korea*

Within 15 months of the initiation of women into the Organized Reserve, the value of the program was realized with the mobilization of all 13 WR platoons. Women, as a result of the Korean crisis, and for the first time in American history, were called involuntarily to military service along with men. Mobilization of Reserves, including women veterans, was announced in June 1950.

Since a number of women Reservists had belonged to organized platoons for only a few months, the term "veteran" was defined as women who had:

- a) served 90 days or more on active duty with the Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reserve; or
- b) attended 36 drills as members of an organized platoon; or
- c) attended 30 drills and 10 days active duty for training.

Those women who did not meet the criteria were classified as nonveterans, transferred to the Volunteer Marine Corps Reserve, Class III, and directed to await orders to recruit training at Parris Island.²⁴

Unfortunately, the 3d Recruit Training Battalion had closed down for the summer. Recruiting was something of a disappointment and thus far, no women

recruit platoon had reached its authorized strength of 50. That fact coupled with the manner in which WOTC was organized—as a temporary unit established anew each summer—led to the decision to terminate training at Parris Island and to assign the staff to Quantico temporarily to conduct officer training. Platoon 2A, graduating in May, was the last scheduled class until 18 September. Three officers and seven enlisted women from the permanent staff of 3d Recruit Training Battalion were temporarily reassigned to a subunit activated at Quantico on 2 June. The first group to leave Parris Island included Captain Jeanette I. Sustad, Second Lieutenants Joan Morrissey and Betty Preston, Technical Sergeant "A" Fern Schirmer, Staff Sergeant Bertha Schultz, and Sergeants Rosa V. Harrington and Ruth Ryan. Sergeants Grace M. Karl and Agnes C. Thomas and Private First Class Allis V. Wall soon followed.²⁵ They were barely established in Virginia when the news of mobilization broke and the urgent need for recruit training was realized, but it was too late to change plans as WOTC would be without a staff. So, when the WR platoons left for military duty, the nonveterans stayed behind expecting orders to Parris Island in early September.

The women Reserve officers were not mobilized in

Capt Cecelia Vanden Bossche, Commanding Officer, WR Platoon, 17th Infantry Battalion, Detroit, reads mobilization orders resulting from the Korean crisis in August 1950.





MSgt Petrina C. Nigro leads the platoon of the first post-World War II women Marines assigned to Headquarters, Department of the Pacific, San Francisco, California in 1950.

order to maintain a sufficient number of stateside billets to allow the rotation of male officers. Before the plan was published, several officers gave notice to their employers and prepared to leave for duty. The decision to exclude WM officers caused a morale problem at several levels of the women's Reserve program. According to retired Lieutenant Colonel Carville, Assistant I&I at Minneapolis at the time of mobilization, "It was a terrible, terrible, terrible mistake!" The I&I hated to tell Reserve officers, who, in turn were embarrassed in front of their troops. The enlisted women were at first apprehensive at the thought of leaving without their own, familiar officers. Later, some were even angrily asking, "Why us, and not them?"²⁶

The mobilization of the women caused by the conflict in Korea brought two significant changes to the women Marine program: it enabled women Marines to return to several duty stations, from which they had been absent during the postwar years, and it enabled them to break out of the strictly administrative mold into which they were cast after World War II. An analysis of tables of organization indicated that 1,183 women Marines could be assigned immediately,

releasing an equal number of men according to the following distribution:²⁷

Hq, Department of Pacific and Depot of Supplies, San Francisco	172
Marine Barracks and Marine Corps Supply Depot, Camp Pendleton.....	189
Marine Barracks and Marine Corps Supply Depot, Camp Lejeune.....	190
Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro	95
Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island	133
Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point	195
Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego.....	68
Marine Corps Schools, Quantico.....	141
Total	1,183

The WR platoons with 25 officers and 594 enlisted women were up to 88.6 percent of their authorized strength.²⁸ To make up the difference and to fill vacancies in critical specialties, an immediate call was made for veteran volunteers in the following occupational fields:

- 01 Personnel Administration
- 15 Printing and Reproduction
- 22 Fire Control Instrument Repair
- 25 Operational Communications
- 30 Supply Administration, Accounting and Stock Control
- 31 Supply Procurement, Warehousing, Shipping, and Receiving

- 34 Disbursing
- 35 Motor Transport
- 40 Machine Accounting
- 41 Post Exchange
- 43 Public Information
- 46 Photography
- 49 Training and Training Aids
- 52 Special Services
- 67 Air Control
- 70 Aviation Operations and Intelligence²⁹

Volunteer Reservists Answer The Call

An intensive short-term recruiting drive attracted former WRs like Corporal Anne Revak who volunteered at the start of the war, but could not be recalled from her home in Fairbanks, Alaska. She drove to Seattle in order to report within the continental United States, was accepted, and sent to Camp Pendleton.³⁰

Sergeant Ethyl Wilcox was recalled in August 1950 and ordered to recruiting duty, a billet she filled all through World War II. She was on the job, in civilian clothes, for several months before she had time to go to Chicago for a physical examination and uniforms. On duty in Minnesota, she spent her time processing Reservists and later recruiting women.³¹

Sergeant Mary S. Mock completed officer candidate training in 1949, and returned home to finish college. Too young to be commissioned, she accepted a teaching position but on 12 September, two days before school was scheduled to begin, she received a *collect* telegram ordering her to report to Quantico on 14 September. She attended Basic School, which was shortened from eight to four weeks because of the emergency, as an officer candidate, the only enlisted WM on the base. As such, she could not eat in the officers' mess with her classmates, and the commanding general thought it inappropriate for her to eat by herself in the general mess hall, so, in time, she was given an allowance to eat in civilian restaurants in the town of Quantico.³²

There were a number of women serving in district offices on continuous active duty contracts which stipulated that they could not be transferred against their wishes. One of these was First Lieutenant Mary E. Roddy, who had been the last WR to leave Cherry Point in 1946. When the transfer program was announced in 1948, she found that she did not meet the age criteria for integration, but that she was eligible for continuous active duty. She was selected and assigned to the 9th Reserve District Headquarters in the Federal Court Building on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. She was the woman Marine liaison officer and handled all WM matters, Reserve and Regular.

During this time, the Korean situation "was heating up" and the district director asked if she could find women Reservists to help with the administrative work. She successfully recruited some 15-20 former WRs for continuous active duty. At the time that they were recruited, Lieutenant Roddy explained that the contracts did not offer too much—a minimum of one year's duty and a clause that protected them from an involuntary transfer. But, she added that they had all left the Corps with good records, and if an emergency arose, she expected that they would fulfill the spirit of their contract as a Marine. Not long after, a mobilization roster, not entirely unexpected, arrived and the lieutenant called a meeting in the only available private spot, the ladies room. The women knew what was coming and although not legally obligated, they accepted the fate of mobilization "with good grace" and all, including Lieutenant Roddy, were soon sent to Washington, D.C.³³

At the time of mobilization, only 12 women were deferred or rejected which resulted in a mobilization of 98 percent of the women in the Organized Reserve.³⁴ Two hundred eighty-seven veterans were ordered to extended active duty and 298 nonveterans were ordered to Parris Island. All had been trained and assigned by January 1951. Together with the volunteer Reservists, a total of approximately 1,000 women were assigned to extended active duty. They worked in clerical fields, recruiting, public information, communications, photography, cartographic drafting, disbursing, and motor transport.³⁵

Women Marines Return to Posts and Stations

In June 1950 the only woman Marine company was Company E at Headquarters Battalion, Henderson Hall. The battalion at Parris Island was strictly a recruit command and no regular WMs worked outside of it. Women Marines were assigned to the Department of the Pacific at San Francisco, but they had no government quarters. All other WMs were working with the Reserve districts, Reserve platoons, or as recruiters.

The first priority then was to prepare billeting space at the posts and stations for the incoming women Marines. Major Pauline B. Beckley, Commanding Officer, Company E, was transferred to Parris Island to assume command of the recruit training battalion, with a temporary assignment en route. She, Technical Sergeant Schirmer, and Corporal Leona M. Fox reported to Camp Lejeune on 24 July 1950 to open and ready a barracks for occupancy by the women Reservists be-

ing ordered to active duty. The building had been vacated by men and, of course, did not pass the women's inspection. Lieutenant Colonel Beckley, looking back, wrote in 1977, "Don't think any three WMs worked harder—manually—than we did." With the exception of a battle with the G-4 for supplies, the women received fine cooperation from the Marines at Camp Lejeune, especially the commanding general, Major General Franklin A. Hart, and his staff.³⁶ Major Beckley was no stranger to Camp Lejeune, having served there as the postal officer of the schools and the executive officer of the WR battalion during World War II.

With Camp Lejeune prepared on the east coast, and San Francisco ready to process WMs on the west coast, it was at last possible to ship the Reserves. Many of the WR platoons left home on the same troop trains as the men. When the 5th Infantry Battalion of

Washington, D.C. entrained for Camp Lejeune, on 31 July 1950, the Marine Band gave them a sendoff befitting the country's first mobilized Marine Corps Reserve unit. Along with wives and children at Union Station to say goodbye were two husbands, W. G. Kegel and Edmund A. Gibson, there to bid farewell to Corporal Virginia S. Kegel and Technical Sergeant Josephine R. Gibson.³⁷

The WR platoon in Boston was mobilized on 7 August, one week before actual departure, and the women reported to the armory where they lived while performing the administrative tasks essential to the mobilization of an infantry battalion. When the day came to leave, 15 August 1950, marching to the music of the 2d Infantry Battalion band, 700 male Marines and 32 women Marines boarded the train for North Carolina. Billeting was carefully arranged so that the men occupied the forward cars, followed by the

In August 1950, Base Commander MajGen Oliver P. Smith greets (from left to right) TSgt Catherine G. Murray, Capt Jeanette I. Sustad, and Sgt Beatrice M. Kent, the first women Marines to be stationed at Camp Pendleton since the end of World War II.



dining car, then the male officers' car, and finally the women's car, guarded by MPs.³⁸

The first three Reserve platoons to arrive at Camp Lejeune were those from Washington, Philadelphia, and Boston. Three Regular staff NCOs, Staff Sergeants Esther Waclawski, Ruth Ryan, and Virginia L. Moore, students at Supply School, were already living in the barracks. In 1977, First Sergeant Waclawski could still hear the "click . . . click . . . click" of the high heels of the Reservists trooping off the buses and into the barracks. Customarily, women Marines wore oxfords for such formations and so the Regulars were undecided as to whether they should laugh at the Reservists in their more attractive shoes or envy them.³⁹

As soon as they arrived, and before they had time to settle, the women were processed and put to work to alleviate the personnel shortage caused by troop drafts for Korea. After the Camp Lejeune quota of 190 women was reached, Reservists were sent for duty to other east coast duty stations—Cherry Point, Parris Island, and Quantico. To avoid the establishment of additional administrative units, the women were attached to existing male units, and unlike World War II, they ate in existing male mess halls.⁴⁰

Those first few months were hectic. Many of the so-called "veterans" had never seen a Marine Corps base before. In addition to working long hours, an improvised boot camp was held evenings by the handful of experienced NCOs. Typically, a WM worked five days, had one-half day of military subjects training, and attended close order drill classes after evening chow, and according to Sergeant Major Judge, excuses from training were unheard of. The barracks routine, which included outside morning muster and chow formations (to make the formation and march up to the mess hall was mandatory; to enter and to eat was optional) was a culture shock to many of the women.⁴¹

The WM Company, Marine Barracks, Camp Lejeune, the first postwar women's company was formally activated on 13 October 1950, with Captain Mary J. Fisher commanding, and with Technical Sergeant Schirmer, first sergeant.⁴² The women were housed in Barracks 60 and 63 with the main area service club between. At the height of the Korean War, the WM company numbered approximately 400 women: 270 on duty with the base; 75 attached to the depot quartermaster; and 155 attending supply school and disbursing school.⁴³

At the same time that Camp Lejeune was being readied for the arrival of the WMs, women Reservists

from cities west of the Mississippi were reporting to San Francisco for processing and classification. Captain Sustad, Technical Sergeant Catherine G. Murray, and Sergeant Beatrice M. Kent reported to Camp Pendleton on 8 August to make advance preparations for the billeting of women Marines who would arrive as soon as the Department of the Pacific's and Depot of Supplies' quotas were filled.

The Pendleton WMs were assigned the same barracks in the "24" area occupied by their predecessors during World War II. Just before the Reservists arrived a fire destroyed all the mattresses, chests of drawers, and other supplies set aside to furnish their quarters.⁴⁴ A lesser crisis arose with the news that Headquarters required a guard from 1800 to 0600 posted around the WM barracks. To save personnel, the Marines at Camp Pendleton fenced in the WM area, and the gate was locked each night when liberty expired. In First Sergeant Waclawski's view, it looked like a prisoner-of-war compound, and she was pleased to see the fence come down after a visit by Colonel Hamblet in the mid-Fifties.⁴⁵

In addition to her regularly assigned duty as the custodian of registered publications, Captain Sustad was the "Supervisor of Women Marines," all of whom were attached to Headquarters Company, Headquarters Battalion, Marine Barracks, Camp Pendleton. The WM company, under the command of Captain Sustad, was eventually activated as an element of Service Battalion on 1 June 1951.

One month after the WMs landed at Camp Pendleton, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego saw its first postwar woman Marine, First Lieutenant Kathryn E. Snyder, who had been on I&I duty in San Francisco until the WR platoon there was mobilized. In November, she was joined by Second Lieutenant Dorothy Dawson. Both women were assigned primary duties in the depot G-1 office, and additional duties, respectively, as WM platoon commander and platoon officer. The enlisted women arrived in December 1950 and were attached to Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion. Private First Class Dawn Zimmerman was first to report. By 8 December she had been joined by 15 others: Master Sergeant Cecilia Nadeau, Staff Sergeant Annette Burkhead, Sergeant Dorothy Walker, Privates First Class Inga Boberg, Margaret Cooper, Patricia Pfeiffer, and Frances Quinlan, and Privates Norma Adams, Jo Carrera, Phyllis Curtiss, Nita L. Fagan, Joy Hardy, and Rebecca

Rarrick. The balance of the WM platoons came directly from recruit training.⁴⁶

Major Emma Hope Clowers (nee Hendrickson) reported to San Diego in December of 1951 and in 1977 gave the following account of the activation of the WM company and of the problems encountered by the women officers assigned as supervisors rather than as commanding officers:

When I reported to MCRD in Dec 1951, the women were housed in two two-story barracks near the main gate and were carried on the rolls of HqCo, H&S Bn. Both barracks had open squadbays, with double-deck bunks for most of the women. (I believe the NCOs and SNCOs had single deck bunks, but that there were no separate areas set aside for them.) As I recall, even SNCOs were scattered at random through both barracks, alongside PFCs, in some cases. There was only one woman officer and myself, and there were no quarters on the base for either of us. Therefore, supervision of the women Marines after working hours and during weekends and holidays was almost entirely in the hands of the NCOs, even though I was on call much of the time at the home I had in Ocean Beach. It seemed as though a night rarely passed when I wasn't called at least once by the Post Duty Officer or by our Barracks NCO and I made many a trip to the base during the night. My position was strictly that of a barracks officer (such as WAVE officers at that time frequently held as additional duty). I had no authority over the women in administrative or disciplinary matters, or in fact any area, and the women were aware of that fact. At one time the women's CO was the Post Communications Officer, who had command of the company as additional duty. It was an impossible situation as I soon found out when I reassigned the women within the two barracks to break up the little cliques that had developed and to have the Staff NCOs in a separate area. I recall that some of the women staged what was probably one of the first of the "sit-ins" when I rearranged the barracks and reassigned them. It is amusing now but wasn't then. My "C.P." was a tiny converted stock room in the barracks with scarcely enough room for a desk. I was receiving urgent calls from Colonel Towle at HQMC about the formation of a women's company, but could never clear the hurdle set up by the base—a magic number which we had to meet before they would give us a company. Each time our strength was about to reach that number, we would have an unexpected discharge or transfer. But eventually we were given company status, and by the time I was transferred back to HQMC in May 53 I felt we had accomplished much in organization of the company, improvements in the barracks, reduction in disciplinary problems, and improvement in morale of the women.⁴⁷

The WM Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot was activated on 1 July 1952, Captain Clowers, commanding; Second Lieutenant Joyce M. Hamman, executive officer; and Master Sergeant Vera E. Piippo, first sergeant.

El Toro was originally programmed to receive 90

WMs, but later the commanding general actually identified 235 positions which could be filled by women. Plans were made at once to receive and quarter the women Marines—even before the usual advance group arrived. The large, eight-wing barracks behind the station administration building which had been occupied by the WRs during the war was vacated by the male Marines, then repainted and renovated.

Captain Warner left St. Louis shortly after her platoon was mobilized and during the first week of October became the first woman Marine to report to the Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro since 1946. Until the company was activated, she was assigned as the station assistant personnel officer and administrative assistant for WMs.

Seven NCOs from Headquarters Marine Corps (Master Sergeant Bette A. Kohen; Staff Sergeants Margaret H. Crowell, Doris M. Plowman, and Martha J. Clark; Sergeants Chadeane A. Rhindress and Rita M. Walsh; and Corporal Maxine H. Carlson) who arrived in early November 1950 were the vanguard of the unit which would be known as the Woman Marine Detachment 1 (WMD 1). Waiting for more women to report in, the seven lived in the station hostess house.

Public Works had scrubbed and polished the barracks, and the NCOs settled in and made up the bunks for the incoming women, newly graduated recruits from Parris Island. Just one week before the barracks was to be occupied, a Santa Ana windstorm blew in from the desert and dumped an inch of red sand throughout all the squadbays in the women's building. Lieutenant Colonel Warner remembers that it was "an awful mess." There was sand everywhere and in everything—sheets, blankets, pillow cases. She and the NCOs literally shoveled out the barracks, got two wings ready, and closed off the others. A squared away living area awaited each new group of privates. Settled in, they, in turn cleaned a wing for the next contingent.

WMD 1 grew to a strength of approximately 250; almost all were recent graduates. The officers and the NCOs felt a great sense of responsibility and were like "mother hens" to the 18-year-old WMs—a new phenomenon in the Marine Corps. An NCO advisor was assigned to each squadbay and was always ready to listen and to help the young Marines make whatever adjustment was necessary. WMD 1 was a closely knit unit which Lieutenant Colonel Warner remembers as a "fine group of women."⁴⁸



The first post-World War II women Marines arrived at Quantico, Virginia, in 1951 and were assigned to the Administrative Section of the Landing Force Development Center.

Hard pressed for personnel, the Marines at El Toro made the women feel welcome and needed. The various squadron and station offices vied for WMs who were assigned to all except combat units. Interest ran so high that the *Flight Jacket*, the station newspaper, regularly published the number of women Marines expected along with their occupational specialty. On 20 October 1950 one article read:

Out of El Toro's first draft will be 11 basic personnel and administration women, seven basic communication girls and four basic supply people. There will be two basic shipping and receiving WRs, five basic post exchange stewards, two basic air controlwomen, and one basic flight equipment woman.⁴⁹

The return of the WMs made a similar impact on East Coast posts and stations, Matters of housing, uniforming, administration, and assignment had to be resolved quickly. At two of the bases, Quantico and Parris Island, training sites for WM officers and recruits, the adjustment was minimal.

The 3d Recruit Training Battalion underwent a minor organizational change on 20 November 1950, and WMs not involved in training but rather assigned to the depot offices were made members of Post

Troops Section under the section commander, Second Lieutenant Mary S. Mock. On 16 November 1951, the Post Personnel Company under the command of Captain Emily Schultz was officially activated as an element of the 3d Recruit Training Battalion.

The influx of women Marines to the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico was made less traumatic by virtue of the presence of a senior woman officer involved in officer training, a barracks already occupied by WMs, and a male unit, Headquarters Battalion, accustomed to having women on its rolls. Lieutenant Carville, having seen the Minneapolis WR platoon off to duty in San Francisco, was transferred to Quantico, where in addition to her assignment as administrative officer for the Marine Corps Landing Force Tactics and Techniques Board, she became the barracks officer for the permanently assigned WMs, the first of whom included Technical Sergeant Mary C. Quinn; Staff Sergeants Dorothea E. Hard, Mary K. Arcure, and Martha E. Kirchman; Sergeant Muriel V. Artz; Corporals Alma Noffke, R. F. Black, and Jane L. Reynolds; and Private M. L. Williamson.⁵⁰ In spite of the nontraditional command and administrative relationship where the women Marines were attached to one unit, worked in another, and were under the

supervision of a woman officer with no real authority, the first arrived WMs at Quantico were a cohesive group, and evidently, a well disciplined one. For a period of a year, there was not a single case of nonjudicial punishment involving a WM. Maintaining the record became a matter of great pride. But bad luck was their undoing when a private first class' auto broke down in the town of Triangle and after walking the three miles to the barracks in her high heels, she reported in from liberty 10 minutes late. On this and other occasions when a WM appeared before the battalion commander for office hours, it was Lieutenant Carville's habit to stand behind him and squeeze his shoulder when it appeared that he was weakening and unduly moved by a tearful story.⁵¹

For about 18 months, the WMs at Quantico were customarily attached to Headquarters or Service Battalion. A WM company was eventually formed under

the command of Captain Bernice M. Pittman on 1 May 1953 as an element of Service Battalion.

Captain Helen A. Wilson, on 7 September 1950, was the first of the WMs to return to the Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina. She easily moved into the Navy nurses quarters, but housing the newly arrived enlisted women was more of a problem. When Staff Sergeant Katherine Keefe, a Boston Reservist, was transferred to Cherry Point after spending only a very short time at Camp Lejeune, she was temporarily quartered in the maternity ward of the naval hospital.⁵² The station WMs were attached to Headquarters Squadron until WMD 2 was officially activated on 1 March 1951 with Captain Wilson commanding, Second Lieutenant Natalie Noble, executive officer, and Master Sergeant Alice J. Connolly, sergeant major. In November 1951, ground was broken for the *Jet Hangar*, a new WM service club, and when it opened the

The Commanding Officer of Woman Marine Detachment 2, Cherry Point, North Carolina, Maj Helen A. Wilson (center), pictured in 1953 with (from left to right) MSgt Elizabeth Tarte, SSgt Muriel Artz, MSgt Alice Connolly, and MSgt Jessie Van Dyke.





Capt Helen Wilson, the senior woman officer at Cherry Point, and Col Katherine A. Towle, Director of Women Marines, check clothing display in 1952.

next spring, complete with juke box and patio, it was a popular spot for snacks, beer, soft drinks, and milk shakes.^{53*}

Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic (FMFLant), located at Norfolk, Virginia, asked for and received a total of 10 WMs; all were administrative clerks, and all were privates first class. It was Colonel Towle's policy to assign a woman officer to any base where enlisted women served and so Lieutenant Kleberger was assigned to Norfolk as the assistant force adjutant and additionally as the "Supervisor of Women Marines."⁵⁴

The original 10, Privates First Class Henrietta L.

*"Being the first Woman Marine on a major Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS - Cherry Point) in five years (1945 -1950) posed its problems. Upon my arrival, I was directed to report to the Commanding General. During this meeting, he pointed out that the five-year interim that had elapsed since women (other than Navy nurses) had been aboard made it evident that male Marines were unaccustomed to having female Marines as an integral part of their daily lives. Therefore, I was stunned when he said he'd hold me personally responsible if 'anything happened' to any of the women! He further suggested that no women should leave the base except in pairs (like Nuns, as I later expressed it). I wanted to remonstrate, but all I could say was 'Aye, Aye, Sir!'—knowing full well that I couldn't go on liberty with the women. They arrived shortly after my meeting with the General, in increments of 100 to 200. Nothing untoward happened. The men seemed happy to have them aboard, and I think they really were!" Col Helen A. Wilson comments on draft manuscript, dtd 1Jan80.

Belcher, Dorothy P. Eastman, Naomi M. Hallaway, Beatrice I. Harper, Theresa S. Kovar, Martha M. Ludwig, Margaret M. Martin, Mary A. Seman, Earlene Slanton, and Mary H. Clements were attached to Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, FMFLant and quartered with the WAVES at the Norfolk Naval Base. Eventually on 1 April 1952, a WM Company was activated with Second Lieutenant Mary E. Sullivan commanding.

During the Korean War years, women Marines returned to Hawaii, in 1951 to FMFPac at Pearl Harbor and in 1953 to the Marine Corps Air Station at Kaneohe Bay. On 31 July 1951 Lieutenant Colonel Hamblet became the first WM to be assigned to Headquarters, FMFPac. It was three months before Second Lieutenant Essie M. Lucas, graduate of the first WR recruit class in 1943 and the first officer candidate class in 1949, left San Francisco with 17 enlisted WMs on 5 October 1951. On board the military transport were Technical Sergeant Mary E. Roche; Sergeant Julia M. Pierce; Corporals Doris Allgood, Shirley Anderson, Lillian Brown, Olive G. Chapman, Anita F. Dale, Joyce R. Dupuy, Evangeline I. Lyon, Audrey E. Kleberger, Mary E. Scudder, Naomi J. Sexton, Ruth V. Tate, and Joan V. Walsh; and Privates First Class Nita M. Oliver, Vivia Smith, and Adoree R. Troche.⁵⁵

Upon arrival, the women were attached to Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, FMFPac, and were assigned a small, but very attractive two-storied wooden barracks overlooking the parade deck. Mrs. Victory, wife of Brigadier General Randall M. Victory, had supervised the decoration and when dignitaries visited the command, receptions were often held in the WM lounge.⁵⁶ Within six months the WMs had their own command, Company A, Headquarters and Service Battalion, FMFPac, under Second Lieutenant Margaret M. Schaffer. Unlike the male companies in the same battalion, the commanding officer of the woman Marine company was not empowered to sign record books or to issue company regulations. Only through the intervention of Colonel Towle several years later did the company commander gain the control usually associated with that position.⁵⁷ Early members of the command included: Master Sergeant Mary E. Roche, Technical Sergeants Mary E. Grande and Ann M. Kopp, Staff Sergeant Margaret E. Boerner, and Sergeants Barbara Jean Dulinsky (who later was to be the first WM to serve in Vietnam) and Emma G. Ramsey (who retired as a captain in May 1971).

In January 1956, Headquarters, FMFPac, moved from the Naval Base at Pearl Harbor to the old naval hospital at Aiea, which was designated Camp H. M. Smith. The women's company, commanded by Captain Kleberger, moved into former Navy nurses' quarters. The newly renovated barracks afforded suites for the senior SNCOs, private rooms for some, and rooms of two-to-four persons for sergeants and below. "The building abounded in lounges, exercise rooms, study rooms, and other fantastic facilities," recalled Lieutenant Colonel Kleberger.⁵⁸

WMD 3, a group of 56 WMs led by First Lieutenant Phyllis J. Young, stationed at Kaneohe Bay, on the opposite side of the island from Pearl Harbor, was the last woman Marine command to be activated in the 1950s. In an interview published in the *San Diego Chevron*, First Sergeant Doris P. Milholen recounted her trip to the island:

There were four of us from the detachment that were to leave by seaplane [the MARs] to arrive in Kaneohe ahead of the rest of the women Marines. But for about four days before takeoff the plane had engine trouble and the flight was delayed. The main detachment almost made it to the islands by ship before we finally got off the ground.⁵⁹

The women were quartered in one of the Marine Corps' newest and most modern barracks, sometimes referred to as "The Waldorf." The living areas were painted in pastel colors, and the amenities included a complete kitchen and adjoining dining room. The staff noncommissioned officers, living in single rooms, had private showers and their own lounge.⁶⁰

WMD 3 was a short-lived unit. It closed on 1 September 1956 due to personnel replacement problems, but was reactivated during the Vietnam War.

Korean War Brings Changes To Recruit Training

The year 1950 marked significant changes to the woman Marine program and consequently to the 3d Recruit Training Battalion at Parris Island. Until May 1950, classes with a quota of 50 recruits each were convened consecutively. Beginning with the class of 18 September each class was composed of three platoons with a total strength of 150 women, and for the first time since World War II classes overlapped each other.

The Division of Plans and Policies indicated a need for 2,257 women Marines at posts and stations during fiscal year 1950 in addition to the 492 regular enlisted women on active duty. Based upon an estimate of 1,000 Reservists—organized and volunteer—on ex-

tended active duty, 1,257 women had to be provided for regular recruits. Added to this figure were the 300 nonveterans of the WR platoons who required basic training. The plans necessitated an increase in the table of organization of the recruit battalion and the assignment of another barracks, Building 901.⁶¹

Most of the staff members returned from Quantico where they had been assigned to WOTC and were supplemented by the I&Is of mobilized platoons. Captain Hale, away only six months, returned to Parris Island on 29 August as the interim commanding officer with First Lieutenant Dorothy A. Holmberg, the executive officer. Major Beckley, her work at Camp Lejeune completed, assumed command of the 3d Recruit Training Battalion on 18 September 1950 and Captain Hale became the executive officer.

With the increased need for Marines, the recruiting requirements were eased, allowing for the first time the enlistment of 18 year olds and also women who were not high school graduates but who could pass a high school equivalency examination. Colonel Towle was much opposed to the lowered educational standards, but was pressured by the other services and the Department of Defense. During this period the Veterans Administration, working on behalf of veterans desiring a college education, asked the colleges and universities to accept the equivalent examinations as evidence of successful completion of high school. The academic community was quick to point out the anomaly of asking an educational institution to recognize the examination when the military services did not.⁶²

It was a different woman recruit who reported to Parris Island in September 1950: many were younger and less skilled; others, with a smattering of Reserve experience, arrived wearing PFC stripes. In the class that convened on 18 September, 33 of the 144 were nonveterans from WR platoons.⁶³ Reluctantly, they moved the stripes from their uniforms. First Sergeant Schultz spoke of her duty as platoon sergeant and of her last recruit platoon—an honor platoon—which consisted mainly of Seattle Reservists. She said, "They must have had very good training. They were an outstanding platoon and my job was really alleviated as far as basic training was concerned."⁶⁴

A Few Changes at Officer Candidate School

The changes at the Woman Officer Candidates Course marked a significant shift in policy regarding



In the summer of 1951, Officer-in-Charge 1stLt Doris V. Kleberger (seated at far right) meets in barracks lounge with the first women Marines assigned to FMFLant, Norfolk.

the entire woman Marine program. Until the Korean situation arose, only a few women were offered commissions in the Regular service and allowed to remain on active duty. In contrast, the entire graduating class of 1951 was ordered to duty for 24 months.⁶⁵ Although this was intended as a temporary, emergency measure, it continued thereafter, changing only to lengthen the required service. The emphasis had changed from a strictly Reserve force on inactive duty to a nucleus of trained women Marines with at least a minimum of active duty experience.

The candidates who arrived in the summer of 1951 were uncertain of their status through much of the training, and those who were not college graduates feared that the Marine Corps would retain them on active duty as enlisted personnel rather than releasing them to finish their college education. Candidate Margaret A. Brewer, the last Director of Women Marines, and destined to be appointed the first woman general in 1978 was in this category, and she remembers the daily, changing rumors. The final result was that the women who accepted commissions were retained, those who refused commissions were dis-

charged, and undergraduates returned home in a Reserve status. Colonel Brewer recalled that with one semester remaining she returned to school, finished in January, and expected to attend the officer's basic class convening in the fall. Instead, she was ordered to active duty in May and assigned to El Toro as a communications watch officer, one of only a few woman Marine officers never to have attended the Basic School.⁶⁶

During the same period the Woman Officer Indoctrination Course underwent only a modest revision—shortening its training for the new lieutenants from eight to four weeks. For the graduates of the Woman Officer Candidate Course of 1952, however, the basic indoctrination class was lengthened to six weeks.

The Korean Years—Reprise

During the Korean years, the relatively few experienced women Marines were spread thinly and transferred often—Lieutenant Kleberger, for example, had four assignments, Quantico, Detroit, Norfolk, and Washington, D.C. in just two years. The officers and

NCOs worked together scrubbing and polishing barracks, setting up the new companies, training Reservists and Regulars, guiding young lieutenants and privates, and holding together a group consisting of a disproportionate number of inexperienced Marines. In March 1950, at the beginning of the Korean war, there were only 28 Regular officers and 496 Regular enlisted WMs and 18 Reserve officers and 41 Reserve

enlisted women on continuous active duty. Their common purpose and special pride in being a woman Marine served to override any personal differences which, if aired, would have undermined the group. They worked as one to bring the WMs back into the mainstream of the Marine Corps. Until one by one, the members of this pioneer group began to retire in 1963, they served as role models for the WMs who followed.



Congratulations are extended to 2dLt Nancy Flint (right) by Col Katherine A. Towle, Director of Women Marines (left), and LtCol Julia E. Hamblet, Commanding Officer, Women Officer Training Detachment, upon Lt Flint's graduation from the 4th Woman Officer Indoctrination Course, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, on 1 November 1952.

CHAPTER 5

Utilization and Numbers, 1951-1963

Utilization of Women Marines, Evolution of a Policy—Report of Procedures Analysis Office, 1951
Women Officers' MOSs, 1948-1953—1950-1953 Summary—1954-1964
Numbers—Utilization, 1954-1964—Rank Does Not Have Its Privileges, Officers
Rank Does Not Have Its Privileges, Staff Noncommissioned Officers
Noncommissioned Officer Leadership School—A Woman in the Fleet Marine Force
1954-1964 Summary

Utilization of Women Marines—Evolution of a Policy

The war in Korea marked the first of three turning points, each one opening new career fields to women Marines. The second turning point was the Woman Marine Program Study Group (Pepper Board) meeting in 1964. The third was the Ad-Hoc Committee on Increased Effectiveness in the Utilization of Women in the Marine Corps (Snell Committee) of 1973.

After World War II nearly all women Marines worked in the areas of administration and supply. WR veterans who had served in technical fields in World War II, especially in aviation specialties, were disappointed when they found themselves reclassified as typists and stenographers upon integration in 1948 and 1949. It is probable that many skilled WRs, trained during the war, when faced with the prospect of a change in occupational field, did not apply for Regular status.

Pre-Korea recruits, in spite of the detailed classification procedures followed at Parris Island, were invariably earmarked for administrative work. Ninety-five percent of them were assigned directly to a job; the remainder, however, were given formal training at the Personnel Administration School at Parris Island or the Yeoman Course at San Diego.¹ In the spring of 1950, just before the war, two recruits, Privates Nancy L. Bennett and Cynthia L. Thies, slated to be photographers, became the first WMs to complete boot camp and to be assigned to an occupational field other than administration. Both Marines had had experience in photography.²

The shortsightedness of these restrictive measures limiting the occupational opportunities and training of women to clerical duties was evident as soon as the North Koreans invaded South Korea in June 1950. Then, expediency dictated a more diverse classification of women. Manpower was in critically short supply. Each Marine Corps base was polled on the number of billets that could be filled by women, and on the billeting space available for distaff Marines. Unfortunately, the available women Marines had not been trained to fill many of the needs identified by this survey.

Report of Procedures Analysis Office, 1951

On 12 December 1950, four months after the mobilization, an internal memorandum in the Division of Plans and Policies on the subject of requirements for women Marines revealed that there were 76 military billets at Headquarters Marine Corps which by their nature could be filled by WMs but to which women were not assigned. Lack of training was cited as the cause. Furthermore, women were assigned to billets in accordance with ability, regardless of rank deficiency. At the time of the memorandum, 70 women privates first class were assigned to billets designated for higher ranks: 27 filling corporals billets; 32 filling sergeants billets; 9 in staff sergeant billets; 1 in a technical sergeant slot; and 1 in a master sergeant billet. It was noted, as well, that of a total of 438 military jobs at Headquarters, 230 were coded as requiring male Marines and of these "must be male" billets, 12 were filled by WMs. The recommendations made in view of the situation was that the table of organization be reviewed with an eye towards decreasing requirements for male Marines and that WMs, Regular and Reserve, with adequate work qualifications and rank be ordered to Headquarters. A like number of WMs from Headquarters, the least qualified clerically, would be transferred to posts and stations.³

Colonel Towle found the memorandum useful in pointing out what she saw as, "The difficulty of attempting to utilize untrained personnel in skilled military billets" and "the need of remedial measures."⁴ She reiterated her position that specialist training beyond recruit indoctrination was essential to meet the needs of both the Marine Corps and the individual Marine. Her conclusion was:

A policy which relies upon an ever-diminishing supply of World War II women reservists to continue to provide the skills presently needed by the Marine Corps as well as those which would be required in all-out mobilization, rather than establish systematic long range training beyond recruit indoctrination for younger women enlistees of the regular Marine Corps is considered unrealistic and shortsighted, as well as uneconomical.⁵

Subsequently, in May 1951, Plans and Policies Division asked that a study be made to determine the



Attending the Conference of Women Marine Commanding Officers and Women Representatives of Marine Corps Reserve and Recruitment Districts in June 1955, were (from left, seated): Maj Dorothy M. Knox; LtCol Pauline B. Beckley; Col Julia E. Hamblet; LtCol Elsie E. Hill; LtCol Barbara J. Bishop; and Maj Helen M. Tatum. Also (from left, standing): 1stLt Rita A. Ciotti; Capt Mary S. Mock; 1stLt Ruth J. O'Holleran; Capt Dolores A. Thorning; Maj Emily Horner; 1stLt Anne S. Ritter; Capt Valeria F. Hilgart; Capt Jeanne Fleming; Maj Nita B. Warner; Maj Shirley J. Fuetsch; 1stLt Nancy L. Doser; Capt Margaret E. Dougherty; Capt Elena D. Brigotti; and Capt Rosalie Crites.

military occupational specialties (MOS) in which women could be utilized and the proportion of the total number which could be profitably employed. The ensuing study conducted by the Procedures Analysis Office, evaluated MOSs on the basis of utilization of women in the past, legal restrictions, physical requirements, job environment, availability of training facilities, and the existence of promotional outlets. They noted that while women Marines were assigned MOSs in 25 different occupational fields, actually about 95 percent of the WMs were concentrated in only six fields. The lessons learned in the emergency brought on by the war in Korea were apparent in the conclusions drawn by the committee that:

- a. Women can be used in 27 of the 43 occupational fields.
- b. For maximum effectiveness, women should be employed (as a general rule) in a limited number of major activities.
- c. Under the present tables of organization, a maximum of

approximately 6,500 women can be employed.

d. Full utilization of women Marines requires an evaluation of the combined influence of all "restricted assignment" groups upon rotation policies.

e. Immediate steps should be taken to utilize women in all appropriate MOSs so that under full mobilization, expansion can be readily accomplished.

f. Service schools must be opened to women to train them for the appropriate MOS.

g. Billets that can be filled by women must be identified on tables of organization.

The 27 occupational fields considered appropriate were:

- 01 Personnel and Administration
- 02 Intelligence
- 04 Logistics
- 14 Mapping and Surveying
- 15 Printing
- 22 Fire Control Instrument Repair

- 25 Operational Communications
- 26 Communication Material
- 27 Electronics
- 30 Supply
- 31 Warehousing, Shipping, and Receiving
- 33 Food
- 34 Disbursing
- 35 Motor Transport
- 40 Machine Accounting
- 41 Post Exchange
- 43 Public Information
- 46 Photography
- 49 Training and Training Aids
- 52 Special Services
- 55 Band
- 66 Aviation Electronics
- 67 Air Control
- 68 Aerology
- 69 Aviation Synthetic Training Devices
- 70 Aviation Operations and Intelligence
- 71 Flight Equipment⁹

Colonel Towle endorsed the study calling it, "thorough, thoughtful, and essentially a realistic presentation of facts pertinent to the utilization of women within the Marine Corps." She did, however, take exception to the stated position that while women could perform the duties of the 27 recommended occupational fields, they could not be placed in all of the billets falling under each major heading since the "most effective utilization occurs when women supervise only women and when situations in which women supervise men or mixed groups are minimized."⁷ She submitted that:

... the most effective utilization of women does not necessarily depend upon women supervising women, unless credence is also given to the corollary of this statement that men should supervise only men. The situation at Headquarters Marine Corps is an excellent example of the invalidity of this contention. During World War II there were many instances at many posts and stations where women supervised both men and women with notable success. In this connection, it should be remembered that women officers' commissions are identical in wording to those of their male counterparts charging them not only with the duties and responsibilities of their grade and positions, but also assuring them of comparable military authority.^{8*}

*In fact, during the Korean War, women Marines made a few tentative steps toward taking over supervision of several all male groups. In 1952, Staff Sergeant Hazel A. Lindahl, a Reservist from Boston, held the top enlisted post at Camp Lejeune as Camp Sergeant Major of more than 40,000 Marines. During the same period, Master Sergeant Margaret A. Goings was the First Sergeant, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune. (DivWMs Scrapbook, box 4, *WMs HQMC Records*)

The final report of the Procedures Analysis Office was submitted in November 1951 and generated a letter the following January to all interested divisions and sections for comment. For the most part there was general agreement with the theory that wider utilization of women Marines would increase their potential effectiveness upon all-out mobilization. The Division of Aviation suggested a greater percentage of WMs could be properly assigned aviation specialties and recommended the addition of Occupational Field 64, Aircraft Maintenance and Repair, to the list of appropriate MOSs, but was overruled. The agency managing the 35 field, motor transport, commented that women were qualified to drive the cars, trucks, and jeeps, but the requirement that the driver load and unload the vehicle restricted their use. In the area of communications, it was recommended that a new field, administrative communications, be created and that women be used as switchboard operators. Women as instructors at the Communications-Electronic School was specifically ruled out due to their lack of combat experience and because they would have to supervise men.^{9*}

All comments and recommendations were incorporated and the list of appropriate MOSs for enlisted women Marines was promulgated in April 1952, about a year before the end of the Korean conflict.¹⁰

The same memorandum identified the following 16 occupational fields as unsuitable for women Marines.

- 03 Infantry
- 07 Antiaircraft Artillery
- 08 Field Artillery
- 11 Utilities
- 13 Construction and Equipment
- 18 Tank and Amphibian Tractor
- 21 Weapons Repair
- 23 Ammunition and Explosive Ordnance Disposal
- 32 Supply Services
- 36 Steward
- 56 Guided Missile
- 57 Chemical Warfare and Radiological Defense
- 58 Security and Guard
- 64 Aircraft Maintenance and Repair
- 65 Aviation Ordnance
- 73 Pilot

*In 1961, 10 years later, Lance Corporal Priscilla Carlson became the first woman Marine to instruct at Communications-Electronic School at San Diego. She was a graduate of 36 weeks training at the Basic Electronic Course, Radar Fundamentals Course, and Aviation Radar Repair Course, and she instructed the Radar Fundamentals Course. (*San Diego Chevron*, 28Jul61).

In spite of the above exclusions, during the Korean War at least a few women served in the utilities, weapons repair, supply services, and security guard field.¹¹ It is probable that they were Reservists already knowledgeable in these occupations.

At the time of the study, only six WMs were in the motor transport field. One of these, Sergeant Theresa "Sue" Sousa, mobilized with the Washington, D.C. Reserve platoon and on duty at Camp Pendleton, became a driver through determination, persistence, and because she proved she could handle a truck and jeep.¹² Then, in the fall of 1952, women were assigned to motor transport school for the intensive five-week course. The first WMs to receive such training since 1945 were Privates First Class Hazel E. Robbins, Christin Villanueva, Jessie Chance, Elizabeth Drew, and Ann Oberfell. By 1954, the number of women in motor transport jumped to 111.¹³ Colonel Valeria F. Hilgart, who was Commanding Officer, Company A, Pearl Harbor that year, remembered that she had 22 women Marine drivers and a woman Marine dispatcher, Sergeant Barbara Jean Dulinsky.¹⁴ This career field has been volatile for WMs as the number dwindled to seven in 1964 and rose to 186 in 1977.¹⁵

Now retired Gunnery Sergeant Helen A. Brusack and one other former WM worked in radio repairman assignments in 1950 but formal training in this field was not reopened to women until March 1953 when four WMs (Technical Sergeants Rosita A. Martinez and Katherine F. Tanalski and Sergeants Norine Anderson and Mary Williams) received orders to the 16-week course at the crystal grinding shop at the Baltimore Signal Depot in Fort Holabird, Baltimore. The highly technical course covered the manufacture of precisely cut crystals which controlled the frequency in radios.¹⁶ Like the motor transport field, this also proved to be a volatile field as the number of WMs assigned to it dropped to two in 1961 and then grew to 166 in 1977.¹⁷

Women Officers' MOSs, 1948-1953

After World War II, all officer MOSs were grouped into categories.¹⁸ For example, Category I included MOSs suitable for Regular unrestricted officers; Category II MOSs were suitable for Regular limited duty officers of company grade; and with the passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, Category V MOSs were deemed suitable for Regular women officers. Only the following nine MOSs in four occupational fields, plus the designation for basic officers (unassigned second lieutenants) and one

ground colonel were considered to be appropriate for women:

0101 Basic Personnel and Administration Officer
 0105 Administrative Officer
 0110 Personnel Classification and Assignment Officer
 0130 Adjutant
 0190 Personnel Research Officer
 3001 Basic Supply Administrative Officer
 4001 Basic Machine Accounting Officer
 4010 Machine Accounting Officer
 4301 Basic Public Information Officer
 9901 Basic Officer
 9906 Colonel, Ground

For most of the fields, women officers were limited to the basic position and therefore not allowed to move up the ladder in that specialty as they were promoted. The war in Korea caused some of the restrictions to be lifted in 1950, but women officers continued to serve in a relatively minute number of fields.

This untenable situation was noted by the Classifications Section on 1 November 1952 when it was found that the large majority of the older, more experienced women officers were assigned MOS 0105 (Administrative Officer); few women held an additional MOS; and no woman at the time had two additional MOSs. In all, over 60 percent of all women officers in the Marine Corps were assigned a basic MOS or MOS 0105. The discovery led to a study involving a review of the cases of all women officers on active duty and letters to all sections interested in MOS assignments. In view of the antipathy displayed in 1947 and 1948 toward the use of women in the Marine Corps, the comments emanating from this study were gratifying to the women officers. The Assistant Chief of Staff G-1 wrote:

During the congressional discussion prior to the passage of the "Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948" it was emphasized that the primary reason for establishing women in Regular services was to provide a nucleus of trained women for rapid expansion in event of an emergency. If the Marine Corps assigns women officers only to the MOSs listed . . . there will not be a group of well trained, experienced women officers who could provide the necessary leadership in the many fields where large numbers of women will be utilized in the event of a national emergency.¹⁹

From the Classification Branch came the comment, "In fact in the final analysis it became apparent that a woman officer should be assigned any MOS for which she had become qualified by actual performance of duty in a satisfactory manner."²⁰ And following the list of recommended MOSs submitted by the Personnel Control Branch was the statement, "It is further

suggested that women officers not be precluded from assignment of other MOSs for which an individual may be qualified.”²¹

In the second phase of the study each woman officer's qualifications were considered as well as the description of each MOS. Decisions were based on legal restrictions, physical restrictions, rotation constraints, technical schools open to women, billets held by WRs in World War II, and “American mores.” As a result, the variety of MOSs assigned to women officers increased somewhat, mainly in the area of additional MOSs, that is, in secondary jobs for which they were considered qualified. On 1 March 1953, the allocation of primary MOSs to women officers was as follows:

01 Administration	87
02 Intelligence	1
25 Communications	7
30 Supply	25
31 Transportation	1
34 Disbursing	10

41 Post Exchange	4
43 Public Information	7
49 Training	2
52 Special Services	7
9906 Ground Colonel	1
Women Marine Officers on active duty ²²	152

The Division of Aviation had identified the seven fields of aircraft maintenance, aviation electronics, air control, aerology, aviation synthetic training devices, aviation operations and intelligence, and flight equipment as suitable for assignment to women Marine officers, but only three, aerology, training devices, and flight equipment appeared on the final approved list. As it turned out, women officers were not assigned to aviation specialities of any nature until about 1960.

Subsequent to the study, in March 1953, the Director, Division of Personnel, Brigadier General Reginald H. Ridgely, Jr., recommended that category restrictions on the assignment of MOSs to women officers be permanently removed and that a policy be established

Col Julia E. Hamblet (left), Director of Women Marines, and her assistant, 1stLt Doris V. Kleberger, confer with Maj Wesley C. Noren, monitor of woman officer assignments.



which would be consistent with the intent of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948.²³

1950-1953 Summary

The Korean War brought permanent changes to the women Marine program, the most obvious being the return of WMs to major posts and stations. When the armistice was signed on 27 July 1953, women were serving at Headquarters Marine Corps; at the Marine Corps Air Stations at Cherry Point, El Toro, and Kaneohe; at the Recruit Depots at San Diego and Parris Island; at Marine Corps Bases at Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton, Quantico, Norfolk, and Pearl Harbor; at both the Depot of Supplies and the Department of the Pacific in San Francisco; at the various Reserve districts; and in Stuttgart, Germany.*

1954-1964

As the pressures of war subsided, so did the urgency to revitalize the women Marine program. The Personnel Department stated that "The Marine Corps' long range plan for the utilization of women Marines is to utilize them in sufficient numbers and appropriate military occupational specialties to provide a nucleus of trained women for rapid expansion in the event of full mobilization."²⁴ The wording was sufficiently vague to allow commanders to vacillate, to balk at the idea of women placed in key positions, and to deny formal schools to WMs.

Numbers

Numerically, women were limited by law to a ceiling of two percent of the authorized strength of the Corps, and the women officers were limited to 10 percent of the number of enlisted women. The Marine Corps set a goal of one percent rather than the allowable two, but never reached even that figure during the period 1954-1964. The one percent was not just an arbitrary, antiwoman measure but was arrived at in recognition of the Corps' mission and organization. Traditionally, the Marine Corps is a compact fighting

*In September 1952, for the first time, women Marines were assigned to duty in Europe. Arriving to serve on the staff of the Commander in Chief of U. S. Forces in Europe was Second Lieutenant Sara Frances McLamore, followed a week later by Captain Jeanette I. Sustad. Captain Sustad was assigned to message control and Second Lieutenant McLamore became the commanding officer of the joint detachment of enlisted women. They were soon joined by 11 enlisted women Marines. (Colonel Jeanette I. Sustad interview with Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, dtd 20Jun77 [Oral Hist Collection, Hist&MusDiv, HQMC]).

unit with much of its logistics and some of its supporting personnel furnished by the Navy. Women Marines were prohibited, by law, from ". . . duty in aircraft while such aircraft are engaged in combat missions and duty on vessels of the Navy except hospital ships and naval transports."²⁵ They were prohibited, by tradition, from Fleet Marine Force units, security forces at shore activities, and any unit whose mission it was to develop tactics or combat equipment.

To accomplish its mission, the Marine Corps is divided generally into 60 percent operating forces and 40 percent supporting units. Of the latter, during wartime and based on Korean War figures, eight percent could be patients, prisoners, and transients, leaving only 32 percent of the billets available to women. Even within the supporting establishment, certain factors restricted the utilization of women: legal prohibitions, Marine Corps rotation policy, and the necessity for in-service training for men in preparation for assignment to combat jobs or to the fleet. To further complicate the matter, women are only one in a list of restricted assignment groups which include sole-surviving sons, and twice-wounded Marines.²⁶ Added to the above constraints was the fact that all services planned a cut in women's strength in 1954. During the years between Korea and Vietnam the strength of the women Marines went from a peak of 2,787 in September 1953 to a low of 1,448 on 30 June 1964.

Utilization, 1954-1964

While women were assigned at various times to as many as 27 occupational fields, for the most part they remained concentrated in the same six or seven specialties, with 45-55 percent in personnel administration, followed by supply, communications (telephone operators), disbursing, data processing, post exchange, and public information. It took nearly 100 women officers to fill the strictly women's billets (WM companies, WM recruit and officer training, recruiting, officer selection duty, I&Is of WR platoons). Since the women officer strength averaged 125 for the years 1954-1964, the incidence of their assignment outside the woman Marine program was minimal.

Colonel Hamblet, Director of Women Marines 1953-1959, devoted much time on her annual inspection trips trying to convince the personnel people to assign senior women Marines to jobs other than those within the women's program. She found a reluctance to place women in positions where they had not served before, at least in the memory of the current base population. Most activities, on the other hand,

welcomed the presence of young, attractive women Marines in window dressing type jobs, as receptionists, for example, as long as they did not count against their allotted strength. Having succeeded in placing WMs in suitable billets, the director then met just as strong resistance in getting them released for a tour as a recruiter, drill instructor, or company commander.²⁷

A number of factors combined to bring on this ambivalence in the utilization of women Marines, only a portion of which could be attributed to sex discrimination. The average woman Marine was in the marriageable and child bearing age group and the forced separation brought on by prevailing regulations in this regard caused a proportionately high attrition rate for WMs compared to male Marines. A married woman could ask to be discharged after serving only one year of her enlistment.* There was, therefore, some instability and an unsatisfactory rate of personnel turnover that could not be stemmed without a drastic change in policy.

A second factor working to the detriment of the women was the insufficiency of their training coupled with the male Marines' expectation that women are naturally good typists, stenographers, and clerks. As late as 1955, only five percent of the WMs received formal training of any kind.²⁸ The majority of the enlisted women reported to their first duty assignment after a mere eight weeks of recruit training whereas the male private spent 12 weeks in boot camp followed by advanced training, and usually a tour in the Fleet Marine Force, thereby arriving at a post with some service behind him. The woman private suffered in comparison from both a military and a professional point of view, unless her supervisor understood the situation and took extra time not only to correct her work but to help her with the basics of military life like uniform regulations and saluting. Lieutenant Colonel Gail M. Reals, recalling her first job out of boot camp, relates that she reported to one office in the Education Center at Quantico in 1955 and was transferred to another almost immediately because she did not have a firm grasp of naval correspondence procedures, although she was an above average typist.**²⁹

*See Chapter 7 for a detailed discussion of marriage and motherhood regulations.

**In 1985, while serving as the chief of staff of the Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Colonel Reals became the first woman to be selected by a promotion board, in competition with her male Marine peers, to the rank of brigadier general.



LtCol Lily H. Gridley, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, first woman to serve as a legal assistance officer, is photographed at Marine Corps Headquarters in 1955.

There is a feeling among women veterans of the time, almost impossible to prove, that women had to perform better than men to be considered acceptable. Then, once a woman was found unsatisfactory, the office would not want another woman, no matter how many men had done poorly in the same billet.

Women officers were in an even less favorable position since their training after officer candidate school was limited to the six-week Woman Officer Indoctrination Course compared to the male lieutenants' nine-month Basic School. Furthermore, technical training was extremely rare and, for women, professional military schools were unheard of.

During these years, 1954-1964, very few new fields became available to women Marines. Generally, they were assigned to the same 27 occupational fields that were opened to them as a result of the Korean War. Most of the time, they served in no more than 21 of these at one given moment, and they maintained the usual 50 percent in administration, followed by supply, operational communications, and disbursing.

Rank Does Not Have Its Privileges — Officers

In this post-Korean era, senior women officers and senior staff noncommissioned officers faced similar problems, since by this time there was a sizable number of each and only a limited number of women's

program billets requiring so much rank. Women lieutenant colonels exchanged a few jobs as if on a circuit: Commanding Officer, Woman Recruit Training Battalion; Commanding Officer, Woman Marine Training Detachment; and an occasional assistant G-1 billet at a base that had been asked if it would accept a woman. It was the rule rather than the exception to serve in the same billet a second time. Typical of the pattern was the career of Lieutenant Colonel Elsie E. Hill, who commanded the officer candidate school 1949-1951 and again 1965-1966. She commanded the recruit battalion 1954-1956, exchanged positions with Lieutenant Colonel Barbara J. Bishop as Head, Women's Branch, Division of Reserve, Headquarters Marine Corps and in 1959 returned to the recruit battalion at Parris Island. In contrast to the Regular women officers, the two Reserve lieutenant colonels on active duty, Hazel E. Benn in educational services, and Lily H. Gridley, a lawyer, served a full 20 years in specialized jobs.

Perhaps the most remarkable senior woman officer assignment during this period was that of Lieutenant Colonel Emma H. Clowers as Head, Personal Affairs Branch, Personnel Department, Headquarters Marine Corps.³⁰ She was originally ordered in as the assistant branch head on 28 April 1959 but became branch head when a male colonel's orders to that department were rescinded. No record can be found of a woman Marine branch head on that level either before or for many years after her tour. She served in that capacity for seven years, during which she received strong and loyal support from the director of the Personnel

LtCol Emma H. Clowers discusses the assignment of women Marines with a fellow officer in the G-1 Division at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps in 1955.



Department and from the 15-20 male officers serving as heads of the various sections and as assistant branch head. Lieutenant Colonel Clowers found only one difficulty in her position which was directly related to her being a woman, and that was her lack of rank during some of the interbranch negotiations. The law at the time barred women officers, other than the director, from promotion to colonel, resulting in a woman officer (Clowers) performing duties for many years in a billet which before and after her assignment were performed by male colonels. Upon completion of that tour, Lieutenant Colonel Clowers was awarded her second Navy Commendation Medal, having received the first during World War II. The citation that accompanied her award noted that the duties were normally assigned to an officer of greater rank and that the hostilities in Vietnam demanded a rapid expansion of the branch. The scope of her responsibilities are underscored in that citation which read in part:

Extremely competent and resourceful, Colonel Clowers performed duties, which are normally assigned to an officer of greater rank, in a highly professional manner during a time when hostilities in Vietnam demanded rapid expansion of the Personal Affairs Branch to meet the added responsibilities. Through infinite foresight and judicious planning she accomplished organizational reforms which enhanced the effectiveness of the Personal Affairs Branch. In addition to establishing and maintaining excellent liaison and cooperation with agencies in both the military and civilian communities through which Marines and their dependents receive counselling, financial help, and other needed assistance, she substantially improved and expedited methods of informing concerned and anxious families of the condition of wounded or seriously ill Marines. She brought the needs of Marines and their families to the attention of those who draft and present proposed legislation to the Congress, thereby improving the scope and applicability of laws directed toward the necessities of military servicemen. With immeasurable personal concern and a keen sense of responsibility for the welfare and interests of Marines, she formulated a program for personal notification of the next of kin of casualties in Vietnam; developed and coordinated a system by which Marine Retired and Reserve General Officers visit evacuees in twenty-three naval hospitals; contributed materially to the formation of the Family Assistance Program, and directed expansion of job counselling facilities to assist retiring and retired personnel in finding suitable employment. Throughout her seven years in this capacity she skillfully directed her attention to the most minute details of each facet of her responsibilities in a manner which exemplifies more than could possibly be expected from any officer. Colonel Clowers' outstanding service, judgment and devotion to duty reflected great credit upon herself and the Marine Corps and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.³¹



A World War II mail clerk, TSgt Frances A. Curwen, the Marine Corps' only female postmaster in 1952, supervised the Montford Point Branch, Camp Lejeune Post Office.

*Rank Does Not Have Its Privileges—
Staff Noncommissioned Officers*

The staff noncommissioned officers were in a slightly different position in that they generally had a specialty and some training, whereas nearly all of the field grade officers at the time were classified as either women's unit officer or personnel administrator. Nevertheless, the staff noncommissioned officer found that 1) she was moved out of her field too often to serve in women's recruiting or training billets, and 2) as she became more senior, she was less welcome since she would be in the position to supervise male Marines. Then, once she proved herself, she was often considered indispensable. Inevitably, a controversy erupted when she was needed to fill a slot in the women's program, and more often than not, the Director of Women Marines was blamed by the woman for sending her on a third recruiting tour, and accused by the assignment branch of meddling in their business.

The staff noncommissioned officers of this period were, for the most part, former WRs who had served in responsible positions during World War II and had seen women perform all manner of duties to include supervision of male Marines. This only made them more incredulous at the narrow attitude taken by many male Marines. Master Sergeant Ruth Ryan, in 1960,

for example, was on orders to the Reserve district in Atlanta as the Logistics Chief until it was discovered that she was a woman. Eventually she went as planned, but only after being interviewed by her prospective officer in charge, an unusual procedure, and then not as the Logistics Chief, but as the Fiscal Chief, since that was deemed more appropriate.³²

Retired First Sergeant Frances A. Curwen Bilski represents a similar case. She had been a mail clerk from August 1943 until September 1946 at the fleet post office in San Francisco. Following the war, she was a member of the VTU and later the WR platoon in Boston. Mobilized for the Korean War, she served as postmaster at the Montford Point branch of the Camp Lejeune post office, and as an instructor at the Marine Corps East Coast Postal School in 1952. In the early 1960s, after having served as postmaster at Paris Island, she was ordered to similar duty in Hawaii, but the command absolutely refused to have a woman in the job, saying that the mail bags were too heavy for a female.³³

*Noncommissioned Officer
Leadership School*

With a memorandum to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, written by 12 May 1952, Colonel Towle initiated a stream of correspondence that culminated

with the creation of an NCO Leadership School for women Marines.³⁴ She cited the prevailing accelerated promotions of enlisted Marines with short periods of service and the loss of older, qualified NCOs as evidence of the need for such a course. Colonel Towle recommended that the school be located at Quantico in the same barracks used by officer candidates and basic second lieutenants from June through November.

The Commandant, Marine Corps Schools, and Commanding General, Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, were both queried on the matter and in the meantime, the Director was asked to furnish guidance concerning the mission of the proposed school, subject matter to be covered, course length, and appropriate rank of the students. In answer, Colonel Towle recommended a four-week course whose mission would be “. . . to train an efficient and continuing staff of women noncommissioned officers for the duties and responsibilities commonly associated with ‘troop’ leadership,”³⁵ and to provide a source of potential officer candidates. She emphasized classes in leadership, personnel management, technique of in-

struction, use of training aids, Uniform Code of Military Justice, and military customs and courtesies for students ranking from staff sergeant through master sergeant.

Camp Lejeune was selected as the site and First Lieutenant Mary Jane Connell was named officer in charge. On 19 January 1953, for the first time since 1945 a Staff NCO Leadership School for women was convened. Major General Henry D. Linscott, the commanding general, gave the opening address to the 25 members of the new class.³⁶ Classes were held in a wing of Barracks 65 at the Navy Field Medical Research Laboratory five and a half days a week. In preparation, all the hand-selected instructors, Technical Sergeant Alice McIntyre, Technical Sergeant Frances A. Curwen (later Bilski), Master Sergeant Lillian V. Dolence, and Technical Sergeant Josephine R. Milburn attended a month-long session at the Navy Instructors School at Norfolk, Virginia.³⁷ Members of the first class included:

Master Sergeant Margaret A. Goings
Master Sergeant Alice M. Reny
Master Sergeant Margery R. Wilkie

Instructors of the Woman Marine Staff NCO Leadership School, Camp Lejeune, congratulate Officer-in-Charge Elaine T. Carville on her promotion to captain in July 1953.





Capt E. T. Carville, officer-in-charge, NCO Leadership School, is pictured (front row center) with Class 9 in 1953. MSgt P. C. Nigro (second row left) was the honor graduate.

Technical Sergeant Loraine G. Brusco
 Technical Sergeant Eleanor L. Childers
 Technical Sergeant Margaret L. Harwell
 Technical Sergeant Beatrice J. Jackson
 Technical Sergeant Dorothy L. Kearns
 Technical Sergeant Blossom J. McCall
 Technical Sergeant Sarah N. Thornton
 Technical Sergeant Laura H. Woolger
 Staff Sergeant May S. Belletto
 Staff Sergeant Phyllis J. Curtiss
 Staff Sergeant Anna M. Finnigan
 Staff Sergeant Nellie C. George
 Staff Sergeant Naomi Hutchinson
 Staff Sergeant Inez E. Smith
 Staff Sergeant Dorothy L. Vollmer
 Sergeant Carolyn J. Freeman
 Sergeant Sonya A. Green
 Sergeant Mary E. King
 Sergeant Dorothy L. Ley
 Sergeant Carol J. Homan
 Sergeant Margaret A. Shaffer³⁸

Colonel Towle gave the graduation speech and distributed the diplomas at ceremonies held on 13 February 1953, 10th anniversary of the Women Marines. The honor student for this first woman Marine NCO Leadership Class was Master Sergeant Reny, with Technical Sergeant Childers in second place, and Staff Sergeant Vollmer in third. Classes continued at Camp Lejeune for a little more than a year on a five-week cycle, four weeks of training and one week off. Staff

changes brought Captain Elaine T. Carville as the officer in charge with First Lieutenant Connell as her assistant and Technical Sergeants Lillian J. West and June V. Doberstein as instructors.³⁹

Colonel Hamblet, successor to Colonel Towle, reevaluated the situation and while convinced of the real need for the school, found the basis on which it was being run to be inefficient. Only 129 students rather than the authorized 225 had completed the training. The table of organization called for one officer, four enlisted instructors, and one clerk typist and the physical facilities used by the women included an office, a classroom, and a wing of a barracks. She proposed a move to Quantico since the staff required to train officer candidates from June through November could handle the NCO School during the winter months with only two additional enlisted women instructors. In turn, these enlisted women could be profitably used as platoon sergeants in the officer candidate program. There was at the time an unsuccessful (in terms of numbers) winter officer candidate class which would have to be cancelled, thereby making the barracks, classroom, and staff available.⁴⁰

The plan, promising a personnel and financial savings, was enthusiastically endorsed at Headquarters and by September 1954 the change were made. Technical Sergeants West and Doberstein was transferred

to Quantico where they worked with NCOs during the winter and officer candidates in the summer. Captain Carville was sent to Parris Island, and the remainder of the staff was dispersed.

The majority of women noncommissioned officers received leadership training during these years, 1954-1964, at the course conducted by the Women Marines Detachment, Quantico. Several commands assigned women to local, predominantly male, NCO schools. In fact, as early as 1951, Staff Sergeant Laura H. Woolger attended the 2d Wing NCO leadership school, graduating on 10 August of that year. A different tactic was tried at San Diego, California, where in 1959, the depot NCO school conducted two one-week accelerated courses for women Marines.

A Woman in the Fleet Marine Force

In this decade of status quo, it is surprising to find the first reported WM working in an FMF headquarters, admittedly in a traditional job. On 13 January 1954, Private First Class Betty Sue Murray was assigned as the secretary to the Commanding General, 2d Marine Division, Major General George F. Good, Jr.⁴¹ The general had called Captain Elaine T.

Carville, Commanding Officer, Woman Marine Company, Camp Lejeune, and told her that his office was in a mess, that he could not find anything, and that he wanted a woman Marine immediately. She explained that women Marines could not be assigned to an FMF unit, but the general only answered that he trusted her to work out the administrative details. Private First Class Murray was officially attached to the office of the Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battalion, Marine Corps Base (Colonel John H. Cook), billeted in the WM barracks, and worked for Major General Good. She stayed at the job long enough to serve his successors, Major General Lewis B. Puller and Brigadier General Edward W. Snedeker.⁴² Not until 1975, 20 years in the future, would WMs be assigned legitimately to any FMF unit

1954-1964 Summary

The WM situation then, on 30 June 1964, was a strength of 129 officers and 1,320 enlisted women serving in 20 occupational fields. Women received little formal technical MOS training and were assigned to only one professional development course, the NCO Leadership School.

Utilization and Numbers: Pepper Board, 1964-1972

*The Pepper Board—Women Marine Program Revitalized, 1965-1973—Strength Increases
Women Officers Specialist Training, 1965-1973—Women Lawyers and Judges, A Beginning
Professional Training—Amphibious Warfare School—Post-Graduate Schooling
Command and Staff College—The Armed Forces Staff College
Advanced Training and Assignment of Enlisted Women Marines, 1965-1973
New Woman Marine Units, Stateside—Women Marines Overseas—Women Marines in Vietnam
Women Marines in Marine Security Guard Battalion—Women Marines Overseas, Summary*

Rapidly waning strength, unsatisfactory recruitment and retention results, and a need to improve the status and acceptance of women in the Marine Corps were the basis of Marine Corps Bulletin 5312, dated 27 February 1963, asking commands for recommendations on more efficient utilization of WMs. The results were collated and sent to the Director, Colonel Margaret M. Henderson, for comment. She categorized the recommendations into:

1. those which could not be implemented by the commands themselves.
2. those which were presumably already in effect.
3. those relating to more formal training for women Marines.
4. those which had possibilities, but required more study.
5. those in which she nonconcurred.

Taken as a whole, the recommendations made by the commands demonstrated a general lack of understanding of the status of women in the Marine Corps. It was readily apparent that the women were not thought of as personnel assets to be managed as all Marines. Statements that WMs should be assigned to billets appropriate to their grade and MOS, that women should be encouraged to participate in correspondence courses relating to their occupational specialty, and that the same performance standards be demanded of them as for male Marines, indicated a flaw in the system at the command level rather than in Headquarters policy since all of these matters came under local purview.¹

On one subject, the need for more formal training for women Marines, there was unanimity. Colonel Henderson strongly concurred, pointing out the fallacy of assigning WMs with eight weeks of recruit training directly to support establishment billets, and expecting the degree of knowledge and skill shown by male Marines who, after 11 weeks of recruit training, and four weeks of infantry training, had more than likely served 13 months in the Fleet Marine Force. She supported her stand with the statement:

Seventy percent of our Women Marine recruit graduates are between the ages of 18 and 20 and, in most instances, have come directly from high school into the Marine Corps with little or no work experience. These young women are bright, capable trainees, but we are actually expecting them

to be proficient in a specific MOS with only eight weeks of basic training. During calendar year 1963, 771 women Marines completed recruit training and only five were ordered directly from recruit training to a service school. In comparison, the women basic graduates from the Army, Navy and Air Force were ordered directly to service school as follows:

- (a) Army, approximately 90 percent
- (b) Navy, approximately 50 percent
- (c) Air Force, approximately 60 percent²

Colonel Henderson reasoned that specialty training in administration, supply, and communications would greatly improve the performance of WM recruit graduates since 77 percent of the 1963 graduates were concentrated in those three fields.

One week following the submission of her comments, Colonel Henderson completed her tour, and on 3 January 1964, she was relieved as Director of Women Marines by Colonel Barbara J. Bishop. Just three days earlier on the 1st of January, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., took the helm as the 23d Commandant of the Marine Corps, a timely occurrence for the women Marines. Writing about him later, Colonel Bishop said, "General Greene was light years ahead of his time in his support of increased opportunities for women Marines."³

Shortly after assuming command of the Corps, he directed Colonel Bishop to submit recommendations to effect improvement in the selection, training, and utilization of women Marines. Taking each identifiable problem in order: a strength decline to 1,333 WMs on 30 April 1964; conflicts over the assignments of noncommissioned officers and officers; unsatisfactory recruiting results for officers and enlisted women; inadequate training; inefficient utilization; low retention; and poor living conditions for enlisted women, Colonel Bishop expressed a number of highly controversial facts, observations, and recommendations.⁴

A discussion of the strength and general utilization of women Marines centered on the traditionally accepted goal of one percent of total enlisted strength, 1,750 enlisted women and 175 officers, which was considered workable based upon billeting conditions at the time. Women were assigned to all bases having mobilization requirements for WMs except the Ma-



LCpl A. Digman Atau, one of two women at El Toro in 1965 to give pilots training in the aviation trainer field, instructs Cpl J. Harris in the operation of an F8 link trainer.

rine Corps Supply Centers at Barstow and Albany, a factor which would cause a delay in time of emergency. Accordingly, Colonel Bishop recommended that woman Marine units be established at those two activities. And finally, in connection with general utilization of women, Colonel Bishop noted that in filling certain command, training, and recruiting billets there was a conflict between the authority of the Personnel Department and the Director of Women Marines, she asked that all changes of station orders for WM officers and enlisted women be routed to her office for information and concurrence.

Turning to officer training, policy at the time allowed officer candidates to disenroll at any time dur-

ing the training cycle, and many did so before giving themselves a chance to adjust to military life. The colonel recommended a change that would require all candidates to complete the course before making such a decision.

As for the career officer, she said:

There is a definite need to provide women majors and lieutenant colonels with professional education in command and staff duties. The value of advanced military education is recognized for male officers and the need is met by assignment to the Senior Course [later Command and Staff College]. Women officers of field grade would benefit equally from broadened knowledge of policies, programs and problems at all levels of the military establishment and of staff functioning at Headquarters Marine Corps, in the Department of Defense, and on joint staffs.⁵

To that end, Colonel Bishop reviewed the 1964-1965 syllabus for the Senior Course, held at Quantico, and determined that at least 432 hours of instruction would be extremely valuable for women. She specifically identified the following courses: Executive Leadership, Management Techniques and Procedures, Geopolitical and Current World Situation, Organization and Functioning for National Security, and Foreign Language.

In respect to senior WM officers' utilization, she discussed the hesitancy to assign them on the basis of their professional qualifications. She wrote:

When a woman major or lieutenant colonel becomes eligible for transfer and one of the billets requiring a woman is not available, there is a tendency prior to issuance of orders to query commands on their willingness to accept a woman. Acceptance is not based on ability since certainly the Personnel Monitors would not recommend the assignment of a woman to a billet inappropriate to her rank and professional qualifications.⁸

Then, as each Director of Women Marines before had done, Colonel Bishop pointed out the need for advanced specialist training for enlisted women. And, she ended her report with recommendations designed to improve the retention rate of WMs. These included a stricter policy on separations due to marriage balanced by increased efforts to station husbands and wives together, abolishment of the two-year enlistment contract in favor of a three- or four-year commitment, a guarantee similar to the one made to male enlistees of a change of station during the first enlistment, and improved living conditions. On the latter subject she was emphatic. It was not just that the women needed more privacy, she argued, but they spend more time in the barracks than men; the women staff NCOs who remain in the service are more likely to be single than male Marines who marry and live in their family homes; the majority of career women Marines would never share in the large expenditures made on married quarters and in the support of dependents' programs; and because the women took such good care of their barracks, inspecting officers were duly impressed by the cleanliness and attempts to create a homelike atmosphere. She recommended new construction of barracks adapted to the needs of women or at least the complete rehabilitation of existing structures, to be accomplished with the aid of a nationally known interior decorator.

That then is the essence of Director of Women Marines Study No. 1-64, a report that precipitated so much opposition that the Commandant ordered the

creation of a study group to "propose a program to render the peacetime service of women Marines of optimum benefit to the Marine Corps."⁷

The Pepper Board

On 3 August 1964, Lieutenant General Robert H. Pepper, USMC (Retired), was designated chairman of the Woman Marine Program Study Group, popularly known as the Pepper Board.⁸ The members included Colonel Bishop; Colonel Frank R. Porter, Jr., representative, G-1; Lieutenant Colonel Eugenous E. Hovatter, representative, Director of Personnel; Lieutenant Colonel Alfred I. Thomas, representative, G-3; Major Paul R. Fields, representative, G-4; Major Patricia A. Maas, representative, WM; Major Charles E. Baker, representative, Aviation; Major Paul P. Pirhalla, representative, Fiscal; and Major Jenny Wrenn, recorder. The Commandant's letter of instruction directed the study group to convene on 11 August 1964 and to submit its report by 1 October. Early on it was apparent that a detailed study could not be completed in the time allowed and verbal authority was given to extend the deadline as necessary. The final report was submitted on 30 November and routed to staff sections at Headquarters Marine Corps for comment.

Reaction was mixed and ranged from enthusiastic support for the 83 recommendations to bitter opposition. The Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, Major General Richard G. Weede, for example, concurred with all but one recommendation under his purview. The one exception was the recommendation that selected field grade officers attend the Marine Corps Command and Staff College as full-time students. G-3 Division preferred courses in civilian universities for women officers or attendance at only a few selected subcourses of the Command and Staff College.

On the other hand, the Personnel Department, headed by Major General Lewis J. Fields, took issue with the thrust of the report and the philosophy that costly improvement would, in his words, "... attract more young ladies into the Marine Corps and induce them to stay longer and be more productive during their stay."⁹ He continued, "We should ... tailor our whole women's program to attract not young, untrained small-town high school graduates, but young women of professional skills and training who truly want to make their mark in a man's (which the military is unarguably) world."¹⁰ General Fields recommended recruitment of women already trained for a skilled trade, advanced rank, personal freedom com-

parable with Civil Service, and "a modified training program designed to teach about the Corps and not how to be a male Marine in skirts."¹¹ And lastly, since the Personnel Department reasoned that the greatest problem in WM housing in most places was caused by overcrowding, it was submitted that, "the best and quickest means of improving current housing would be to reduce the WM strength. . . ."¹²

In light of staff comments, some recommendations were changed or modified and on 13 April 1965 a Marine Corps Bulletin directed the staff agencies to take action on 75 of the recommendations already approved by the Commandant, and a reporting schedule was set up to keep General Greene informed of the progress being made. Although the program was considered long-range, not to be fully realized for two years, more than half of the proposals were at least a matter of policy by mid-1965. As a result, Lieutenant Colonel Jeanette I. Sustad was named to the new post of Deputy Director of Women Marines. In the past, the next senior woman officer at Headquarters filled that billet as an additional duty.

Women were to be assigned to and get training in a broader range of occupational fields, to include drafting, lithography, operational communications, communications maintenance, auditing, finance, accounting, informational services, aerology, air control, and flight equipment. The Basic Supply School and Teletype Operator School were made available almost immediately. The Pepper Board recommendation that senior officers attend Command and Staff College was unacceptable to most staff officers and post-graduate training in civilian or military schools was approved as a substitute.

An impressive list of new duty stations for WMs was published to include: Fleet Home Town News Center at Great Lakes; Marine Corps Reserve Data Services Center, Kansas City; Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, California; Marine Air Reserve Training Center, Glenview, Illinois; the Supply Centers at Albany and Barstow; and Marine Corps Air Stations at Beaufort, New River, Kaneohe, Santa Ana, and Yuma. The absence of a WM Company or barracks no longer precluded the assignment of women Marines to any post or station as long as suitable offstation housing was available. Additionally, women would be afforded more overseas billets.

Changes in basic training included a greater use of male instructors; increased instruction in personal de-

velopment and grooming;* integration of some classes at the Woman Officer Basic Course and the Woman Officer Candidate Class; and a new requirement that candidates complete four weeks of training before being allowed to disenroll. At Parris Island, a two-platoon system or series system was created to inspire competition, and on-base liberty for recruits was to be in effect by January 1966.

Enlistment incentives that guaranteed preferred area, school, and occupational assignments to qualified enlisted women were planned. For the new officers who requested it, there was the promise of two duty stations during the initial three-year period of active duty.

To settle the difficulties of assignment arising from varying interests of the Director of Women Marines and the Personnel Department, a woman officer was assigned to the Classification and Assignment Branch at Headquarters as an occupational field monitor. Major Valeria F. Hilgart was the first to fill that position, arriving in Washington in November 1966.

An aggressive enforcement of the recommendations covering better living conditions for the women awaited the result of a Department of Defense study on the subject. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps reevaluated all WM barracks, SNCO quarters, and the furnishings. At Parris Island, lockers and dressers were installed in the recruit barracks to make their quarters less austere.** At Camp Pendleton, plans were made for a newly constructed WM barracks.

These are but a fraction of the changes in effect or on the drawing board in 1965. Some were implemented quickly; others came only with firm prodding from

*"Strangely (?) this became the most controversial change in WM training and was fiercely and almost entirely opposed by the senior WM officers and senior WM NCOs! I was determined to institute this program for a number of very valid (as they later proved) reasons:

(1) to give polish and new confidence to the individual woman.
 (2) to improve WM recruiting by sending the girl back home where her improved and smart appearance invariably brought compliments and new recruits.

(3) to emphasize femininity as an asset to a woman's role in the military—to be coupled with proper assignment.

I enlisted and received the enthusiastic assistance of airlines which conducted aircraft hostess training schools (e.g. Pan Am) to which I assigned selected WM instructors for training and return to P.I. where we established a good grooming school. Beauty aids were provided free of charge by national cosmetic firms." (Gen Wallace M. Greene, Jr., comments on draft manuscript, dtd 26Dec79)

**A new clothing layout inspection requiring certain items to be displayed hanging in a locker hastened the addition of lockers to recruit barracks.



At the time the Marine Corps' only woman Marine lawyer on active duty, future military judge Capt Patricia A. Murphy, is promoted by Maj Jane Wallis, Commanding Officer, WM Company, and LtCol Frederick D. Clements, at Camp Butler in 1967.

General Greene. In November of 1965 the Commandant was given a resume of actions completed on the Pepper Board recommendations which indicated considerable progress had been made. Not fully satisfied, he sent it to Colonel Bishop for her views. She began her remarks by noting the strength increase from 128 officers and 1,320 enlisted women on 30 June 1964 to 145 officers and 1,718 enlisted women on board on 31 October 1965 and the increased satisfaction expressed by commands with the performance and appearance of women Marines.¹³

She then commented in depth on the more disappointing progress shown in some areas. Of particular concern was the question of advanced training for senior officers. The original recommendation to send WM officers to Command and Staff College had been diluted to a statement about providing postgraduate training in civilian or military schools and the notation that WM officers were eligible to compete with male applicants for post-graduate training. No other action was considered necessary on this recommendation. Colonel Bishop wrote:

This has always been the case, with the result that one woman in 1950 managed to obtain a year in Personnel Administration at Ohio State. No gain has been made here as post-graduate training for senior women was to be a substitute for advanced professional training available to career Marines in AWS (Amphibious Warfare School) and Command and Staff College.¹⁴

After comparing Colonel Bishop's separate assessment of the progress made with that provided by the G-1, the Commandant pencilled in on the latter:

1. I want this type of report coordinated with the DIRWM prior to submission to CMC.
2. I have approved this particular report, but I am *definitely not satisfied* with action reported. See attached comments DIRWMs which deserve consideration and action.¹⁵

Women Marine Program Revitalized, 1965-1973

Three unrelated factors of disparate importance all joined to alter the future course of the woman Marine program at this point: a stricter policy on discharge based on marriage effective 15 July 1964; the Pepper Board report of 30 November 1964; and increased involvement of Marines in the war in Vietnam in 1965. Dramatic progress was made in strength, availability of formal training, opening of new occupational fields, and in assignment possibilities in the United States and overseas.

Strength Increases

The Pepper Board reaffirmed the policy stated in 1948 of maintaining a woman Marine strength of one percent of total Marine Corps enlisted strength. Actually the number of WMs had been steadily declining since 1953, leveling off at the one percent goal, approximately 1,700 from 1956 to 1959 and reaching a nadir of 1,281 in December 1964, when the Pepper Board reported its findings. In August 1965, due to Vietnam commitments, a 30,000-man increase was approved for the Marine Corps and higher objectives were concurrently set for WMs. By 31 May 1967, enlisted strength was 2,082 and officer strength reached 190. A peak of about 2,700 WMs was reached during the Vietnam era of 1968 and 1969 and then tapered to 2,288 on 30 June 1973.¹⁶

Higher recruiting goals accounted for some of the success, but more impact was made by better retention due to tighter control of discharges solely for reason of marriage. On 15 July 1964, a joint household policy became effective which denied discharge to women Marines who were located in the same area as their husbands. All discharges of this type were then suspended on 20 August 1965 in conjunction with a four-month involuntary extension for all Marines. By 1966 new regulations virtually eliminated marriage as a condition for discharge for WMs resulting in a reduction of that type of separation from 18.6 percent of woman Marine losses in 1964 to 2.3 percent in 1966 and finally 0 percent in 1969.¹⁷

Recruiting incentives guaranteeing geographic choices of duty and formal training combined with other enhancements resulting from the implementa-

tion of Pepper Board recommendations raised enlisted recruiting from about 60 percent attainment of quota in 1963 to 105.7 percent in 1966. Officer selection not only improved numerically, but a larger proportion of candidates were seniors or graduates than in previous years, a factor which cut down on the drop-out rate of younger students and ultimately led to an increase in commissions accepted. In 1966, officer selection attained 103.3 percent of senior-graduates quota and 152.5 percent of junior quota. Sophomores were no longer eligible.¹⁸ At the same time, the percent of women recruited as Regulars to serve a three- or four-year contract as opposed to Reserves with a two-year obligation rose from 48 percent in June to 77 percent on 31 March 1968.¹⁹

All told, efforts in the mid-1960s to stabilize the woman Marine program, to encourage women Marines to complete their initial enlistment, to lengthen the average tour of women Marines, and to make the Marine Corps an attractive choice for potential enlistees achieved demonstrable success.

*Women Officers' Specialist Training,
1965-1973*

In 1964, women officers were serving in only eight occupational fields with about 70 percent in administrative billets, and no deliberate attempt was made to achieve a wider distribution. Only 30.6 percent of the second lieutenants commissioned in the three-year period ending in 1964 had received formal specialist training. No training was available in personnel administration although the majority of women officers served in this field. In contrast, members of the 20th Woman Officers Basic Course which graduated in October 1966 were assigned in 14 occupational fields to include intelligence, operational communications, transportation, legal, avionics, aerology, and aviation operations, specialities in which women officers had been a rarity since World War II. Other fields to which the graduates were assigned were personnel and administration; supply administration and operations; auditing, finance, and accounting; data processing; Marine Corps exchange; information services; photography; training and training aids; and air control-antiair warfare. Seventy-two percent of these newly commissioned women officers received formal training at eight schools.²⁰ Earlier in the year, First Lieutenant Alice K. Kurashige, the first woman Marine officer since World War II to be assigned a primary MOS in food service, completed a 12-week course in food services supervision at Fort Lee, Virginia.



Capt Carol A. Vertalino, first woman Marine officer to attend Amphibious Warfare School, is shown with LtGen Carson A. Roberts, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, at Quantico in 1963.

The following spring, 1967, Colonel Bishop reported in the *Woman Marine Newsletter* on the status of this officer training. The first WM officers to attend the Communication Officers Orientation Course at Quantico had made an impressive showing. In a class of three women and 23 men, Second Lieutenant Margaret B. Read finished second; Second Lieutenant Patricia A. Allegree fourth; and Second Lieutenant Lyn A. Liddle sixth. Second Lieutenant Janice C. Scott had completed the Military Intelligence Orientation Course at Fort Holabird, Maryland, in January and continued on to attend the 18-week Aerial Surveillance Officer Course. Second Lieutenant Tommy L. Treasure, also a graduate of Fort Holabird's Military Intelligence Officer Course, was ordered to a subsequent Aerial Surveillance Officers Course. CWO Elaine G. Freeman was to begin a four-week course in automatic data processing analysis in April and Captain Sara R. Beauchamp and Second Lieutenant JoAnn Deberry would follow in June. Four WM officers, Second Lieutenants Alpha R. Noguera, Donna J. Sherwood, Norma L. Tomlinson, and Harriet T. Wendel were scheduled to attend the 10-week Air Traffic Control Officers Course at the Naval Air Station, Glynco, Georgia.²¹

Women Lawyers and Judges—A Beginning

On 1 May 1944, Captain Lily S. Hutcheon, a lawyer stationed at Camp Lejeune, became the first woman judge advocate in the history of the Marine Corps. Captain Hutcheon had originally joined the Navy, but upon completion of Midshipman's School at Northampton, Massachusetts, was commissioned a first lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. She was released to inactive duty in 1946 but returned to continuous active duty in 1949. Under her married name, Gridley, she became a well-known Marine, highly respected for her work in legal assistance at

Headquarters Marine Corps where she served until her retirement in 1965. Lieutenant Colonel Gridley, for all those years, was the only woman Marine lawyer.²²

Then, as a direct result of the Pepper Board study, a woman was permitted to complete officer candidate training, accept a commission, and delay her active duty service while attending law school. In 1966-1967, First Lieutenant Patricia A. Murphy received her bachelor of laws degree from Catholic University in Washington, D.C., graduated from the Woman Officer Basic Course, passed the District of Columbia Bar examination, graduated from the Lawyer's Course at

SSgts Mary L. McLain (left) and Carmen Adams (right), the first enlisted women to arrive for duty at Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni, Japan, are greeted by Col William M. Lundin, commanding officer; SgtMaj J. F. Moore; and 1stSgt K. L. Ford in 1967.



Naval Justice School, was selected for promotion to captain, and was certified by the Judge Advocate General to perform as a trial or defense counsel of a general court martial.²³ Two years later, she became the first woman Marine officer ever to argue a case before the Court of Military Appeals, and in 1970 while stationed at Treasure Island, California, and by then Captain Patricia Murphy Gormley, she became the first woman Marine lawyer in 26 years to be certified as a military judge.²⁴

Professional Training

The Woman Marine Program Study Group (Pepper Board) identified the lack of career-type formal school training as the most notable deficiency in the woman Marine officer program. There was almost total opposition to the inclusion of women students at the Marine Corps' Command and Staff College since it would deprive a male Marine of the opportunity to attend this career-enhancing school. Less was said of the junior level course conducted for captains and majors at the Amphibious Warfare School and there was no opposition to sending women to Army or Navy schools provided these services would not ask for a reciprocal space in a Marine school for a WAC or WAVE officer.

Through unofficial conversation with the Director, Women's Army Corps, Colonel Bishop was able to lay the groundwork for women Marines to participate in the five-month WAC Career Officers Course at Fort McClellan, Alabama. Captain Barbara J. Lee, the first Marine to attend, graduated in May 1965.²⁵ She was followed by seven others. Captains Elaine E. Filkins (later Davies), Gail M. Reals, Jeanne Botwright (later Humphrey), and Joan M. Collins, who distinguished herself as an honor graduate by finishing second in the class, comprised an early group. The last three women to attend this school before it was disestablished in 1972 were Captains Karen G. Grant, Judybeth D. Barnett, and Ellen T. Laws.²⁶

Amphibious Warfare School

Given the climate of the period following the Pepper Board, the intense interest of Colonel Bishop in woman officer schooling, and the vigorous support of General Greene, it was but a matter of time before a woman officer was enrolled in the Marine Corps' Amphibious Warfare Course. Captain Carol A. Vertalino (later Diliberto) was assigned to a modified version of AWS 1-67, on a trial basis, beginning on 23 August 1966. Aware of the limits of her formal mili-

tary education, and knowing that the future assignment of WMs to the school was contingent upon her performance, Captain Vertalino spoke of her apprehension to Colonel Bishop. The director assured her that her selection was based on her professional reputation and her ability to get along with people. She was not expected to finish first in the class, indeed that might antagonize her fellow students. With five months to prepare herself, Captain Vertalino, on her own time, completed the Basic Officer and the AWS correspondence courses, each one designed to take the better part of a year.

The normal syllabus was altered to allow the lone woman student to visit base staff offices for briefings and informal training while the class was working on combat-related matters. It proved awkward for all concerned, the academic staff making suitable arrangements, the staff sections assigned to brief her, and, most of all, for Captain Vertalino. After her successful completion of the course in May 1967, it was decided that woman officers would attend subsequent, unmodified classes at AWS.²⁷

Post-Graduate Schooling

For the first time in more than 15 years, a woman officer was selected for postgraduate training in the Special Education Program.* In July 1967, First Lieutenant Judith Davenport reported to the Naval Post Graduate School at Monterey, California, to pursue a two-year course in applied mathematics.²⁸

Command and Staff College

The question of women officer students at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College remained unresolved for more than three years after the recommendation was made by the Pepper Board. Encouraged by the passage of Public Law 90-130 in 1967 which made women eligible for selection to the permanent grade of colonel, Colonel Bishop sent a memorandum to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, in which she stated:

... women officers will be expected to fill established billets appropriate for the grade of colonel in various Marine Corps commands. . . . Women Marines who are now lieutenant colonels have had little or no formal professional education during their service careers. Efforts should be directed toward providing the younger group of these lieutenant colonels with career training which will enable them to serve beneficially in higher grades.²⁹

She asked that Lieutenant Colonel Jenny Wrenn be

*In 1950, Major Julia E. Hamblet attended Ohio State.

assigned, on a trial basis, to the class convening in August 1968. Lieutenant Colonel Wrenn had previously asked for such an assignment and the colonel for whom she worked, Chief, Plans and Operations Branch, Marine Corps Education Center, indicated to Colonel Bishop that he considered her to be, "an outstanding candidate should women officers be assigned to Command and Staff College."³⁰ Approval came on 9 February 1968 and included the words:

It is recognized that the restricted nature of assignments for Women Marine officers will preclude the full application of all instruction received from the college. However, participation in the full syllabus will provide valuable professional knowledge to enhance the growth of this selected Woman Marine officer and correspondingly increase her value to the U.S. Marine Corps.³¹

Women officers at the time reasoned that all Marine officers are limited to some degree by their classification as infantry officer, aviator, supply officer, etc., and none of them could expect to use fully all the instructional material. Since Lieutenant Colonel Wrenn successfully completed the Command and Staff College, women officers have been regularly included as class members.

The Armed Forces Staff College

The Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia, opened its doors to women officers in 1970. Provision was made for a quota of one woman officer of each service for the class which convened in February. Competition for selection between men and women was thereby eliminated and apparently there was no Marine Corps opposition to the plan to send a woman officer to this high-level school. Lieutenant Colonel Mary Evelyn Bane was selected to attend this course, graduated, and was then assigned to the G-1 Division at Headquarters Marine Corps.³²

Completion of such a prestigious military school did not dispel the notion that women colonels were not to be assigned in the normal fashion. When Lieutenant Colonel Bane was selected for promotion, the personnel monitor responsible for colonel assignments called her in and asked her where she thought she should be transferred since in her words, "The thought of disposing of a woman colonel was turning him pale."³³ Based upon her past experience, and her training, she offered the opinion that the most logical place might be Headquarters. He did not agree and said, "That would never do. You would have to be a branch head."³⁴ And so Colonel Bane was ordered to Camp

Pendleton where she filled an assistant chief of staff billet.*

Advanced Training and Assignment of Enlisted Women Marines, 1965-1973

Little time was lost between the Commandant's approval in mid-1965 and the implementation of the Pepper Board's recommendations regarding advanced training for enlisted women Marines. On 1 January 1966 a program emphasizing advanced technical training for women recruit graduates was published. Its purpose was to bring the woman Marine to an effective level of proficiency in her MOS as soon as possible. During the first six months of 1966, 75 percent of the women recruit graduates went on to advanced formal schools in 17 different fields, a sharp contrast to the five recruits who received post-recruit training in 1963.³⁵ In the Winter 1967 *Woman Marine Newsletter*, Colonel Bishop reported that women Marines attended a variety of military schools at Army, Navy, and Marine Corps bases and received basic-level instruction in such areas as administration, supply, telecommunications, electronics, disbursing, photography, aviation operations, aerology, air control, aviation training devices, optical instrument repair, transportation, cooking and baking, and journalism. Others attended advanced courses such as NCO leadership, administration chief, recruiting, air control, legal clerk and court reporter, supply, process photography, Marine security guard, instructor orientation, and data processing.³⁶

During the period 1965-1973, opportunities for women Marines were greatly expanded. The gains were evident but not to be taken for granted. Many long-held assignment prejudices persisted. Women Marines sent to the Naval Air Station, Memphis, for advanced training in aviation specialties, for example, were nearly all channeled into aviation supply and aviation operations, crowding these two specialties while others were far short of the planned WM quotas. Others, upon arrival at Memphis were reclassified into fields such as administration, which Colonel Bishop noted as ". . . unfortunate since they are denied advanced training and, having qualified for aviation school, they are among the better qualified WMs. . . ." ³⁷ The Commandant reacted quickly with a letter to the com-

*In 1975 Colonel Bane returned to Headquarters as the Head of the Separation and Retirement Branch where she served until her retirement in 1977.

manding officer of the Marine Aviation Detachment at Memphis stating:

It is the Commandant's desire that Women Marines be assigned to a greater range of military occupational specialties to form a more efficient mobilization base. In consequence, it is requested that Women Marines assigned to your command for aviation training be assigned in the percentages indicated. . . .³⁸

A second example of strictly "sexist" assignments was the practice of using attractive, intelligent women Marines in jobs that were more show than substance. A number of WMs served in highly visible positions as receptionists in the Pentagon and it often happened that the most capable were retained there for inordinate periods of time. This worked to the disadvantage of the individual woman Marine who, when eventually transferred, found herself on a Marine Corps base as a staff noncommissioned officer without adequate experience to supervise, instruct, and counsel, let alone to drill a platoon or stand a duty watch. In the latter part of 1966, the Marine Corps was queried on the prospect of establishing a new billet in the office of a Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Colonel Bishop's comment was:

As desirable as these billets may be as "window dressing" for the Marine Corps, they have long been wasteful of the most capable and best appearing Women Marines. The work entailed in receptionists' billets offer no challenge to the caliber of women assigned to them. Each time a replacement is needed unreasonable selectivity requires a long parade of nominees to be submitted for the personal inspection of the office concerned. It is considered that the Marine Corps already had an undesirable monopoly on receptionist billets in the various Navy Secretary's Offices. It is recommended that the invitation to establish yet another billet be declined.³⁹

Overall, the plusses outweighed the minuses in the training and assignment of enlisted women in the years following the Pepper Board. In 1972, Colonel Sustad, as Director of Women Marines, reported to Congress that women could serve in 23 occupational fields; service in two of them, motor transport and band, was restricted to time of war. Women Marines were, in 1972, as a matter of law and of Marine Corps policy, prohibited from the following 12 fields: infantry; field artillery; utilities; construction equipment and shore party; tank and amphibian tractor; ammunition and explosive ordnance disposal; supply services; nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare; military police and corrections; electronics maintenance; aviation ordnance; and air delivery. Colonel Sustad went on to explain that:

Marine Corps policy on the utilization of women permits wide flexibility and interchangeability with male Marines. While 100 percent workability of this policy cannot be attained because of such factors as billeting, physical limitations, rotation base, or combat capability, it is recognized that basically a Woman Marine is qualified to serve in any location or in any billet if she possesses an appropriate and required skill.⁴⁰

At the time of her statement before Congress, enlisted women were actually assigned in 21 occupational fields with 34 percent in administration, 12 percent in supply, and 5 percent in operational communications, the three fields of greatest WM concentration.

New Woman Marine Units, Stateside

Coupled with new job opportunities came new geographic assignments. In Director of Women Marines Study 1-64, Colonel Bishop recommended the opening of woman Marine companies at bases with a mobilization requirement for women Marines, specifically, the Marine Corps Supply Centers at Barstow and Albany. The Pepper Board reaffirmed the idea and expanded it to include the Air Station at Kaneohe, Hawaii. Additionally, it recommended that women staff noncommissioned officers be assigned to Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms; Marine Corps Air Stations at Yuma and Beaufort; the Marine Corps Air Facilities at New River and Santa Ana; and, finally, it proposed that WM sergeants and above, be assigned to appropriate billets with the support and administrative sections of the various Marine barracks overseas.⁴¹

Marine Corps Supply Center, Barstow

On 13 January 1966, *Prospector*, the Barstow post newspaper, announced the arrival of the first woman Marine to report for duty at the Supply Center since 1946. Captain Veal J. Smith was named supply operations officer in Services Division. She became the expert in residence in the planning for a company of 100 women Marines due to be established when billeting arrangements were completed. The following month, First Lieutenant Wanda Raye Silvey assumed duties as disbursing officer in the Comptroller Division.⁴²

Gunnery Sergeants Virginia Almonte and Lea E. Woodworth arrived in June 1966, both assigned to the Center's Adjutant office.⁴³ First Lieutenant Rebecca M. Kraft, slated to be the first WM company commander at Barstow, joined them a year later on 25 June 1967.⁴⁴

And so, the first WM Company in the 25-year his-

tory of the Supply Center was activated on 1 July 1967. It was also the first new WM unit to be established in 13 years and brought to 11 the number of major Marine Corps commands with women's organizations. The first contingent of WMs, Lance Corporals Suzanne Bryant, Sheryl L. Moore, and Christina M. Christopher, arrived on 17 July and were greeted by First Lieutenant Kraft and the company first sergeant, Gunnery Sergeant Woodworth. Building 182 had been completely renovated and outfitted with new furniture.⁴⁵

The company at Barstow was short-lived, being deactivated in August 1971 and designated as a platoon of Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion. The senior WM on board was thereafter assigned additional duty as woman Marine advisor on the commanding general's special staff. From 1967 to 1971, seven officers served as WM company commanders at Barstow: First Lieutenant Rebecca M. Kraft, Captain Joan M. Hammond, First Lieutenant Diane L. Hamel, Captain Alice K. Kurashige, First Lieutenant Geraldine E. Peeler, Captain Vanda K. Brame,* and First Lieutenant Linda J. Lenhart.⁴⁶

Marine Corps Supply Center, Albany

Similar activity was taking place at Albany, Georgia. Private First Class Donna L. Albert, on 4 February 1966, was the first WM to report to that post for duty. Her assignment, making a departure from the custom of only stationing lower ranked women at locations with a WM unit was permitted because she was able to maintain a household with her husband, Private First Class Dennis M. Albert.⁴⁷

Second Lieutenant Emma G. Ramsey, formerly enlisted, arrived on 29 July 1966, the first WM officer to serve at the center. She was followed shortly thereafter by Master Sergeant Rita M. Walsh, making a total of three.

Second Lieutenant Ramsey, officer in charge of the manpower utilization unit, found herself undertaking the additional duty of commanding officer of the WM company then being formed. Working with Master Sergeant Walsh, she began the task of planning and preparing for a full-strength company. Barracks were remodeled, administrative support was arranged, and directives were drafted.⁴⁸

Apart from Second Lieutenant Ramsey and Master Sergeant Walsh, the initial company members arriv-

ing in August 1967 were: Master Sergeant Bernice P. Querry, the new first sergeant; Corporals Margaret G. Wegener and Barbara A. Zimmer; Lance Corporals Doris H. Pallant, Carrie M. Saxon, Marjorie W. Groht, Donna L. Correll, Cheryl L. Larison, Robin M. Holloway, Virginia Gonzales, Cathy L. Pierce, Barbara L. Bradek, and Rosemary Lamont; Privates First Class Kathleen A. Kisczik, Daryl R. Cessna, Linda A. Dewaele, and Gertrude Martin. Captain Sara R. Beauchamp arrived in September and was named the new commanding officer.⁴⁹

At the formal activation ceremonies on 13 September 1967, Sergeant Major of the Woman Marines Ouida W. Craddock unveiled a cornerstone plaque on the Woman Marine Barracks. Colonel Bishop and Captain Beauchamp assisted Albany's mayor, the Honorable James V. Davis, with the ribbon-cutting at Barracks 7103.⁵⁰ But, like the company at Barstow, the WM Company, Albany, enjoyed but a brief existence. It was deactivated on 1 November 1972 and the women became a platoon of Service Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion.⁵¹

Marine Corps Air Station, Kaneohe

The Pepper Board had recommended reactivation of a WM unit at the Marine Corps Air Station at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. Approval was initially deferred mainly because WM strength could not support establishment of this unit as well as new units at Barstow and Albany. Under the new policy permitting the assignment of women on an individual basis to commands where no WM unit or housing existed, two officers, Captain Manuela Hernandez and First Lieutenant Diane Leppaluoto were ordered to Kaneohe early in 1966. By the end of the year, the decision was made to activate a company of 100 enlisted women and two officers. Alterations began on a barracks and the company was formed in December 1967.⁵²

Women Marines Overseas

In July 1966 a decision was made to assign women Marines to the western Pacific area. The purpose was twofold: to free as many male Marines as possible for duty with committed Fleet Marine Force units and to provide WMs with additional career incentives. Plans were made to send women to Camp Butler on Okinawa; the Marine Corps Air Station at Iwakuni, Japan; and Headquarters, United States Military Assistance Command at Saigon, Vietnam. Each command was queried on the number of billets suitable for WMs and billeting space available.

*Captain Brame was one of four women Marines to receive the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for heroism. See Chapter 15 for details.



1stLt Anne Tallman (center), officer-in-charge of the first woman Marine contingent to arrive on Okinawa, stops to confer with members of her group upon arrival at Kadena Air Base in November 1966.

Women were asked to volunteer for the 13-month tour and had to be recommended by their commanding officers. Those with less than 13 months to serve were required to extend or reenlist to cover the tour length. Opportunities for enlisted women, private through gunnery sergeant, were greatest for those in administration, logistics, operational communications, telecommunications maintenance, supply, disbursing, data processing, informational services, photography, weather service, air traffic control, and aviation operations. Officers, warrant through major, were eligible for assignment to the Far East and were especially needed in administration, communications, supply, disbursing, and legal services. WMs were ordered to the Pacific area in increments to avoid a 100 percent turnover at the end of 13 months.⁵³

Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni

There was very little resistance to the idea of assigning WMs to Vietnam. The enthusiasm on Okinawa was somewhat less. There was outright opposition to the proposal at the Marine Corps Air Station at Iwakuni, Japan. The Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, had doubts about the plan based on the inadequacy of appropriate on-base recreational facilities and a lack of suitable off-base liberty areas. Colonel Bishop, when asked by the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., to comment on the subject, wrote:

Verbal and written objections expressed to date concerning the assignment of enlisted women to Iwakuni imply either that the prime consideration is the women's enjoyment of their tour or that their presence constitutes a serious threat to the good order and discipline of their masculine associates.⁵⁴

She advocated the weighing of adequate liberty facilities against the chance for the women to make meaningful contributions to Marine Corps personnel needs under conditions of minor personal hardship, and continued, "This response was not beyond their capabilities in the past."⁵⁵ Taking up the matter of the female presence, she added:

Presumably, the local command has been able to maintain sufficient disciplinary control over the masculine element to avoid undue unpleasantness for Navy Nurses, dependents of the other services, and civilian school teachers aboard the base.

The most telling argument against the assignment of women to Iwakuni is not their ability to adjust to unusual or difficult circumstances but the negative attitude expressed at all levels of command in WestPac toward their presence at Iwakuni. This attitude is hardly conducive to their welcome reception and normal uneventful adjustment.^{56*}

Colonel Bishop and the Sergeant Major of Women Marines, First Sergeant Evelyn E. Albert, made a trip to WestPac to confer with the commands and to inspect the available barracks. At Iwakuni all the briefings were designed to discourage the plan. In response to a question on the controversy, the former director wrote in a letter to the History and Museums Division in 1977:

Controversial is an understatement of the assignment of women to the Far East—particularly to Japan. Okinawa was no great problem—nor Vietnam, but the CO of the Air Station in Japan was unbelievable in his efforts to prevent this "catastrophe." (He made my trip interesting tho by having me dragged through an assortment of bars and what not as an indoctrination to the horrors of the Far East. I still have a fan presented to me by an aging proprietress of one of those establishments to show she bore no ill will to the women.)⁵⁷

*"Interestingly, the senior Navy nurse [when queried by General Greene during a visit to Iwakuni] adamantly opposed the assignment of women Marines to the station without being able to justify her opposition!

"This observation also applied to the CO of the Air Station! Based on an on-the-spot analysis it quickly became evident that WMs should be assigned to the station and I left determined to see this done, even if it became necessary to relieve the CO—a prospect which I communicated to him before my departure!" (Gen Wallace M. Greene, Jr., comments on draft manuscript, dtd 26Dec79)

Captain Marilyn E. Wallace became the first woman Marine to serve in the Far East, reporting to the Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni on 15 October 1966. Assigned as station disbursing officer, she was billeted in a BOQ housing Navy nurses.⁵⁸ Five months later, on 23 March 1967, the arrival of the first enlisted women Marines raised the air station distaff strength to seven. The WMs, Gunnery Sergeant Frances J. Fisher, Staff Sergeants Carmen Adams and Mary L. McLain, and Sergeants Elva M. Pounders, Patricia Malnar, and Donna K. Duncan were accompanied on the last leg of their journey from Okinawa to Japan by Major Jane L. Wallis, senior WM in the Far East.⁵⁹

At Iwakuni, Colonel William M. Lundin, station commanding officer; Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Taylor, station executive officer; Sergeant Major J. F. Moore, station sergeant major; and First Sergeant K. L. Ford of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron were on hand to greet the women Marines and to take them to lunch. They were taken on a tour of the station ending with a welcome aboard gathering where they met the officers for whom they would work. Staff Sergeant Adams wrote to the Director of Woman Marines, "These Marines over here just can't seem to do enough for us."⁶⁰ The WMs received thorough briefings on customs, laws, and Japanese religions. Interviews were arranged with the Japanese press explaining the work of the women Marines to dispel any notions that they were taking jobs away from Japanese women.⁶¹

The welcome accorded the WMs at Iwakuni in 1967, in the wake of the bitter opposition voiced at the prospect of their assignment, was not unlike the reception given the first Regulars in 1948. Once the decision was final and the presence of women Marines was a *fait accompli*, Marines, with few exceptions, accepted the situation with good grace.

*Marine Corps Air Station,
Futema, Okinawa*

Within days of Captain Wallace's arrival at Iwakuni in October 1966, First Lieutenant Anne S. Tallman and nine enlisted WMs reported to Travis Air Force Base, California, for transportation to Okinawa.⁶² Arriving at Kadena Air Force Base not far from Futema on Saturday, 22 October, they were greeted by Major John D. Way, administrative officer; Captain George A. Kinser, personnel officer; and Sergeant Major John W. Arnby, the facility sergeant major. Included in the first group were Sergeant Carol A. Kindig; Corporals

Joan A. Carey, San Crosby, Patricia Hurlburt, Elizabeth Turner, and Ronelle Wuerch; and Lance Corporals Maryann Burger, Suzanne Davis, and Diana Savage. First Lieutenant Tallman took up the duties of informational officer and the enlisted women were assigned to operations, disbursing, supply, weather service, and communications.⁶³

The women Marines were attached to Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron. The senior WM officer functioned as the WM liaison to the commanding officer of the Marine Corps Air Facility. When more officers arrived, the senior woman officer became, as an additional duty, the officer in charge of the WMs. She reported to the commanding officer of the squadron and helped him with duty assignments, inspections, and matters related to the distaff Marines. The officers and staff noncommissioned officers (due to a lack of adequate space) lived in BOQ 217. The enlisted women lived in a small barracks, ideally situated behind the post exchange, and next to the swimming pool, theater, and gymnasium.⁶⁴

*Marine Corps Base,
Camp Butler, Okinawa*

The renovation of a barracks at Camp Smedley D.

BGen Ronald R. Van Stockum, assisted by Maj Jane L. Wallis, WM Company commander, Camp Butler, Okinawa cuts the birthday cake in November 1967.





Between 1967 and 1973, 36 women Marines served in South Vietnam. Capt Elaine E. Filkins (left) and Sgt Doris Denton (right) tour Saigon in a cyclo on a rare afternoon off.

Butler delayed the arrival of WMs for a few months. The first aboard were Major Jane L. Wallis and Second Lieutenant Doris M. Keeler, reporting in on 10 December 1966. Major Wallis, assistant base adjutant, was in addition officer in charge of the women Marines. Second Lieutenant Keeler, formerly enlisted, was assigned as communications officer.⁶⁵

On Monday, 16 January 1967, a contingent of 18 enlisted WMs arrived on Okinawa for assignment to Camp Butler and Futema. On hand to meet the arrivals were Brigadier General Ronald R. Van Stockum, Commanding General, FMFPac (Forward); Colonel Robert B. Laing, Sr., Futema Marine Corps Air Facility commander; Colonel James A. Gallo, Jr., Camp Butler executive officer; and Major Wallis, the senior woman Marine on the island. The 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade Band from Camp Hansen serenaded the women during the welcoming ceremony. The first enlisted women to be assigned at Camp Butler were Staff Sergeant Helen A. Dowd; Corporals

Kathleen Wright,* Sharon Lynn Bowe, Suzanne T. Guyman, Susan W. Blair, and Mary J. Andlott; and Lance Corporals Linda C. (nee Jaquet) Beck, Virginia Emaline Baker, and Brenda Ray Brown.⁶⁶

At work in the adjutant's office, Major Wallis saw much of the correspondence dealing with the opposition of the command toward the assignment of WMs to Okinawa. Yet, the welcome the women received was characteristically cordial. Major Wallis believes the Marines were sincere as they performed small acts of courtesy and consideration beyond the routine. As an example, at the time it was unofficially accepted that the men of each unit had their own table at the Staff Noncommissioned Officers Club, leaving the women SNCOs with literally no place to sit except the

*Sergeant Wright became the first Camp Butler woman Marine to receive a Certificate of Commendation for outstanding performance of duty. The certificate was presented by Major General John G. Bouker in February 1968.

bar. When Master Sergeant Sarah N. Thornton arrived, men from several of the units invited her to join their group whenever she came to the club. The WMs further found that once on the job, they soon became indispensable. Their work sections did not easily release women on Saturdays or Mondays, making weekend liberty trips difficult.⁶⁷ It was a bittersweet compliment.

Women Marines on Okinawa had a uniform problem since they wore the two-piece summer cord dress all year and it was often quite cold. The raincoat did not provide a satisfactory answer as it was too hot and sticky in the humid weather. Major Wallis and Second Lieutenant Keeler designed a green, V-necked cardigan sweater that fit under the lapels of the uniform. The small standard green buttons normally worn on the epaulets of the summer uniform were used on the non-regulation sweater. It cost about \$15 to have one custom made, and Colonel Bishop gave permission to wear it on Okinawa only.⁶⁸

WMs stationed at Camp Butler and Futema joined together to celebrate Christmas in Japan in 1967. Major Wallis and one enlisted woman flew to Camp Fuji to check the facilities. The question was, "Could 17 women live in one hootch (quonset hut) with only one shower?" They decided they certainly could manage for 72 hours. Marines moved out, doubled up, and turned over their hootch to the WMs. The medical dispensary was made into quarters for the women officers and staff noncommissioned officers. In all, 25 WMs spent the holidays at the Camp Fuji Range Company. Time was spent climbing the slopes of Mt. Fuji, skiing, and ice skating, but the highlight of the trip was a Christmas Eve party at the Seibi Yamanaka Orphanage. The Marines, men and women, arrived laden with pots of spaghetti and meatballs, orange soda, chocolate cake, and gaily wrapped presents for the 51 orphan boys. After the party the group returned to Camp Fuji to carol and to decorate the trees in the mess hall and the clubs. Late in the afternoon of Christmas Day, the Marines enjoyed a family-style traditional Christmas dinner.⁶⁹

February 1968 marked the 25th anniversary of the women Marines and Major Wallis' tour was extended to complete plans for a special celebration. It was planned to have WMs from all WestPac commands attend, and a search was made to find as many former WMs as possible from among the dependents. At the last moment, the WMs from Vietnam could not leave the country due to the Tet offensive of 1968.

Women Marines from Camp Butler, Futema, and Iwakuni gathered at Kadena's Airmen's Open Mess along with their guests. The traditional cake was cut by Major General John G. Bouker, who presented the first piece to Master Sergeant Thornton, oldest WM at the party, and the second to Lance Corporal Maureen McGauren, the youngest.⁷⁰

Women Marines in Vietnam

Companion to greater opportunity is greater responsibility and for women in the Marine Corps in the 1960s that meant service in the war-torn Republic of Vietnam. The announcement was made and plans were set in 1967 for one officer and nine enlisted women to fill desk billets with the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), based in Saigon. Generally, they were to work with the Marine Corps Personnel Section on the staff of the Commander, Naval Forces, Vietnam. The section provided administrative support to Marines assigned as far north as the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Later, another officer billet was added and Lieutenant Colonels Ruth J. O'Holleran and Ruth F. Reinholz eventually served as historians with the Military History Branch, Secretary Joint Staff, MACV.

Care was taken to select mature, stable WMs who could be expected to adapt to strange surroundings and cope in an emergency. Interested women Marines were asked to volunteer by notifying their commanding officer or by indicating their desire to serve in Vietnam on their fitness reports. There was no shortage of volunteers, but not all met the criteria. Then there was a number of women who would willingly accept, but not volunteer for orders to a combat zone. Theoretically, all WMs who served in Vietnam were volunteers in that nearly all had expressed their willingness to go and none objected.⁷¹ When Master Sergeant Bridget V. Connolly was asked what made her volunteer for duty in Saigon, she laughed and said, "Who volunteered? I received my orders in the guard mail." She became a legitimate volunteer when her initial tour ended and she extended for an additional six months.⁷²

The first woman Marine to report to Vietnam for duty was Master Sergeant Barbara J. Dulinsky, who arrived on 18 March 1967. After an 18-hour flight, she landed at dusk at Bien Hoa, about 30 miles north of Saigon. Travel was restricted after dark on the unsecure roads, so she was billeted overnight at the airfield. The next morning she was taken by bus and armed escort to Koeppler Compound in Saigon and

there her tour began with a security lecture. The briefing was not concerned with security of classified material as one might expect, but with security in day-to-day living in Vietnam, such as recognizing booby traps, and checking cabs upon entering to ensure there was a handle inside. Arrival procedures were similar for most WMs.⁷³

At first, the enlisted women were quartered in the Ambassador Hotel, and later they moved to the Plaza, a hotel-dormitory, two to a room. Women of other services and several hundred men called the Plaza home. By spring 1968, the enlisted women were moved to the Billings Bachelor Enlisted Quarters (BEQ), located near MACV Headquarters and Tan Son Nhut Airbase.

Generally, the women officers were billeted in Le Qui Don, a hotel-like Bachelor Officers Quarters (BOQ). Company grade officers were usually assigned two to a room; WMs and WAVES billeted together.

Like the Plaza and Billings BEQ, Le Qui Don Hotel was air conditioned, but electricity was a sometime thing.

There were no eating facilities in either the Billings BEQ or the Le Qui Don BOQ. Most of the women cooked in their room on hot plates or with electric skillets. When the power was out, they managed with charcoal-grilled meals served by candlelight.⁷⁴

There were no laundry facilities, but for about \$15 a month, each woman hired a maid who cleaned her room, and washed and pressed her uniforms. Before leaving the United States the women Marines were cautioned to bring an ample supply of nylons, sturdy cotton lingerie, and summer uniforms. Not only were these items scarce in the post exchange that catered to male troops, but the maids were unduly hard on them. Lieutenant Colonel Elaine E. Filkins (later Davies) spoke of looking out her window to see the maid laundering her nylon stockings and lingerie in a creek

SSgt Ermelinda Salazar, nominated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary for the 1970 Unsung Heroine Award, recognizing her assistance to children of the St. Vincent De Paul Orphanage, Saigon, is the subject of this painting by artist Cliff Young.



by pounding them with rocks. The garments that survived were a mass of torn, short elastic threads. Girdles and bras were short-lived "in the combat zone."⁷⁵

Nylon hosiery was a luxury. Women of some services were even excused from wearing them when in uniform, a privilege not extended to women Marines. Vietnamese women were fascinated by the sheer stockings and Lieutenant Colonel Vera M. Jones told of walking down the streets of Saigon and being startled by the touch of a Vietnamese woman feeling her stockings.⁷⁶

The women were advised to arrive with four to six pairs of dress pumps for uniform wear because the streets were hard on shoes and repair service was unsatisfactory. In the "Information on Saigon" booklet provided each woman before leaving the United States was written, ". . . bring a dozen sets of heel lifts. . . . Heels can easily be extracted with a pair of pliers and new ones inserted with little difficulty."⁷⁷

For the most part the WMs worked in Saigon, but on occasion duty took them outside the city. In January 1969, Captain Filkins, in a letter to the Director of Women Marines, wrote:

In early December, Corporal Spaatz and I traveled to Da Nang with nearly 100 SRB/OQRs [service record books/officer qualification records] to conduct an audit of the service records of the men stationed in the north. The Army I Corps had been most kind in aiding us in our efforts to provide administrative assistance to our widely scattered men. Corporal Spaatz is a fine representative for the WMs with her professional handling of the audit. It was obvious that the men enjoyed the unfamiliar click of the female high heeled shoes. The weather was on our side so we were able to wear the dress with pumps the entire visit.⁷⁸

When the weather was unusually wet or when the city was under attack, the women wore utilities and oxfords. In addition the Army issued field uniforms and combat boots to any woman required to wear them for duty.

The Tet offensive of January-February 1968, a large-scale enemy attack that disrupted the city, brought some changes to the lives of WMs in Saigon. At the time enlisted women were still quartered at the Plaza which received automatic weapons fire. Bus service to many of the BOQs and BEQs was cut off, confining the women to their quarters.

Captain Jones was unable to leave the Le Qui Don for a day and a half before bus service, with armed escorts, resumed. Excerpts of a letter from Captain Jones to Colonel Bishop told something of the situation:

3 February 1968. It's hard to believe that a war is going on around me. I sit here calmly typing this letter and yet can get up, walk to a window, and watch the helicopters making machine gun and rocket strikes in the area of the golf course which is about three blocks away. At night, I lie in bed and listen to the mortar rounds going off. The streets, which are normally crowded with traffic, are virtually bare MSgt Dulinsky, Cpl Hensley, and Cpl Wilson finally got into work this afternoon. Cpls Hensley and Wilson plan to spend the night.⁷⁹

Excerpts from a letter from Master Sergeant Dulinsky elaborated:

9 February 1968. We are still on a 24-hour curfew, with all hands in utilities MACV personnel (women included) were bussed down to Koeppler compound and issued 3 pair of jungle fatigues and a pair of jungle boots.

Right now, most of us don't look the picture of "The New Image." Whew! Hardly! I can't determine at night, if I'm pooped from the work day or from carrying around these anvils tied to my feet called combat boots.

Our Young-uns (and me too inside) were scared; but you'd have been proud of them. They turned to in the mess, cashiering, washing dishes, serving and clearing tables.⁸⁰

Although the Tet offensive kept the women from attending the celebration of the silver anniversary of the women Marines in Okinawa, they were not without a celebration. Thanks to a WAVE and male Marines, they had a cake in the office and the traditional cake-cutting ceremony.

The command expected each person to work 60 productive hours a week. Time off was precious, and recreational facilities were limited. Bowling was a popular sport, and old American television shows were broadcast a few hours each evening. The city was often under curfew with the Americans back in their quarters by 2000 or 2200. Movies were available several nights a week in some of the BEQs and BOQs. A number of the women kept busy during their off-duty hours by working at the Armed Forces Television Station, helping at various orphanages, and visiting Vietnamese families. Captain Jones, the only woman Marine who attended Vietnamese language school, taught English to a class of Vietnamese policemen.

Captain Filkins, interested in an orphanage for blind girls, solicited soap, clothing, linens, toys, and supplies from the women Marine companies at home. In her letter she wrote, "They are rather confined in their small, dark world of the orphanage so they seem quite thrilled when visitors come to see them Many of these children are lucky if they are picked up and held for a few minutes each week."⁸¹



Assigned to administrative duties in Saigon, GySgt Donna Hollowell Murray, shown here in Tanh Anh, Vietnam, in 1970, gave time to work with children in outlying areas.

One woman Marine in particular, Staff Sergeant Ermelinda Salazar (later Esquibel), who touched the lives of Vietnamese orphans, was nominated for the 1970 Unsung Heroine Award sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, and was immortalized in a painting by Marine artist Cliff Young. During her 15 months in Saigon, Staff Sergeant Salazar essentially took over a MACV civic action project involving the St. Vincent de Paul orphanage.

In a letter dated 10 September 1969, to Gunnery Sergeant Helen A. Dowd, she told of her work with the children:

I don't remember if I mentioned to you that I had been working with the orphanage supported by MACV. It is not a big one—only 75 children ages from a few weeks old to about 11 or 12 years of age. They are precious and quite lively. . . . This whole orphanage is taken care of by two Catholic sisters. . . . One of them is rather advanced in age (about in her 60's) and the other is quite young and active. Still and all, Gunny, these two souls work themselves to death. . . . The two sisters are Vietnamese who speak no English

at all. . . . And me? I know a limited number of broken phrases and words in Vietnamese. . . .

Since I've been working at the orphanage, I've had to overcome much repugnance. There's a lot of sickness and disease here in Vietnam. . . . So when I say the orphanage it doesn't have the same connotation that it does back in the states where the children are well fed . . . and healthy for at least they have medical facilities and medicines available. These children have nothing! If the WM company is wondering about any projects for Christmas here is something you can think about. Anything and everything is needed.⁸²

Determined that these children would have a party, Staff Sergeant Salazar personally contacted Marine units for contributions, arranged a site and bus transportation, enlisted interested people to help, and wrapped individual gifts for each child. Her interest continued after the holidays and in spite of 11-hour workdays, six days a week, she was able to influence other Marines to follow her lead in working at the orphanage. Nominating her for the Unsung Heroine Award, her commanding officer wrote: "Her unusual

and untiring efforts to assist these otherwise forgotten children reflect great credit upon herself, the United States Marine Corps, this command, and the United States.”⁸³

Staff Sergeant Salazar was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for meritorious achievement in the performance of her duties during the period 10 October 1969 to 10 January 1970 while serving with the Military History Branch, Secretary Joint Staff, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. In addition, the Republic of Vietnam awarded her the Vietnamese Service Medal for her work with the orphans.

Women Marines in Vietnam normally numbered eight or 10 enlisted women and one or two officers at any one time for a total of about 28 enlisted women and eight officers between 1967 and 1973. Their letters and interviews reveal their apprehension before arriving in Saigon, their satisfaction with their tour, and their increased sense of being a Marine.

Women Marines in Marine Security Guard Battalion

Traditionally, women Marines had not been assigned to the Marine Security Guard Battalion, commonly referred to as embassy duty. The primary mission of an embassy Marine is to safeguard classified material vital to the United States' interests and to protect American lives and property abroad. In 1967 the first two women officers joined the Marine Security Guard Battalion, not as guards, but as personnel officers. First Lieutenant Charlene M. Summers (later Itchkawich) served with Company C, Manila, Philippines, and Warrant Officer Mary E. Pease was assigned to Company D, Panama Canal Zone. The following year, Captain Gail M. Reals reported to Company B, Beirut, Lebanon.⁸⁴

Women Marines Overseas—Summary

Opportunities for women Marines to serve outside the continental United States had been extremely

Sgt Doris Denton receives the Joint Service Commendation Medal from MajGen Richard F. Shaffer, USA, assistant chief of staff, J-5, in Saigon, South Vietnam, on 5 March 1969.



limited from World War II to 1966. Billets available in Europe never accommodated more than nine or 10 women, officers and enlisted. Until October 1966, Hawaii was the only location in the Pacific at which WMs could serve. On 30 June 1966, 3.7 percent, or 63 women Marines, 56 in Hawaii and seven at foreign locations, were serving outside the continental limits.⁸⁵ On 30 June 1971, 9.3 percent, or 209 women were serving in the following locations:⁸⁶

	Officer	Enlisted
MCAF, Futema, Okinawa	3	20
MCB, Camp Butler, Okinawa	6	37
MCAS, Iwakuni, Japan	5	34
FMFPac, Camp Smith, Hawaii	14	59
MCAS, Kaneohe, Hawaii	5	9
AFSE, Naples, Italy	1	1
EUCOM, Stuttgart, Germany	1	3
MarDet, London, England	0	1
MAS NATO Brussels, Belgium	1	0
MACV, Saigon, Vietnam	2	6
MarSecGdBn, Hong Kong	1	0
TOTAL	39	170

The location of the billets and the numerical requirements change from time to time but the policy of expanded overseas assignments for women in the Marine Corps made during the years 1966-1972, following the recommendations of the Pepper Board, has persisted.

These years saw remarkable changes made in the utilization, training, and assignment of women Marines and marked success in recruiting, officer procurement, and retention efforts. The Pepper Board reported its findings and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of women Marines in 1965 at a time when the war in Vietnam demanded maximum effort and performance of each Marine. Many questioned the price tag that would accompany implementation of the study group's recommendations; others recognized the costliness of inadequately trained and disillusioned Marines. Largely due to the leadership and untiring efforts of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Greene; the chairman of the Woman Marine Program Study Group, Lieutenant General Pepper; and the Director of Women Marines, Colonel Bishop, notable progress was made and the status of women placed on a firmer footing than any time previously in the history of the Corps.

Utilization and Numbers: Snell Committee, 1973-1977

Strength, 1973-1977—New Occupational Fields—Military Police—Presiding Judges—Breaking the Tradition Bandsmen—Women Marines in the Fleet Marine Force—Women in Command—1973-1977 Summary

There was, in the early 1970s, an increased awareness of the phenomenon called equal opportunity for women.¹ It permeated the family, the schoolroom, business, religion, and the military. In all fairness, laws, customs, and prejudices notwithstanding, a case can be made for the advantageous position of servicewomen compared to women in education, business, and industry. There were, however, recognized shortcomings which had to be dealt with. The advent of the all-volunteer force and the national women's liberation movement were leading to increased use of women in the military. On 1 September 1972, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., recommended a plan tailored to meet a goal stated as "allowing women an equal opportunity to contribute their talents and to achieve full professional status in the Navy."² The Marine Corps had no such plan.

One week later, the Secretary of Defense, Melvin R. Laird, directed the services to develop by 30 November 1972 detailed equal opportunity/affirmative action plans for minorities and servicewomen. As a result, the Deputy Chief of Staff (Manpower) of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant General Ormond R. Simpson, proposed an ad hoc committee to be chaired by Colonel Albert W. Snell. The committee was tasked with developing a plan of action, objectives, and milestones for a program to increase equal opportunity for women Marines.

The membership of Colonel Snell's committee varied from time to time but included representatives of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Deputy Director of Personnel; Director Division of Reserve; and Director Women Marines. Included were Lieutenant Colonel Jenny Wrenn and Major Barbara E. Dolyak. At the initial, formal meetings, the committee established the goal to "increase the effectiveness and utilization for all women Marines to fully utilize their abilities in support of Marine Corps objectives." Five specific objectives identified to accomplish the goal were:

- a. To identify and eliminate all discrimination based solely on sex.
- b. To ensure to women Marines equal opportunity for as-

signment to and within noncombat occupational fields.

c. To provide the opportunity for women Marines to obtain technical and professional schooling at all levels.

d. To provide equal opportunity to women Marines for progression and advancement through duty assignments.

e. To ensure equal economic opportunity for women Marines.³

It happened that the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Central All-Volunteer Task Force on the Utilization of Military Women, headed by Colonel Helen A. Wilson, USMCR, published a separate but related study in December 1972. This report specifically recommended that the Marine Corps:

- (1) Intensify its recruiting efforts for enlisted women.
- (2) Open additional job specialties to women.
- (3) Take action to reduce attrition rates to a level more comparable to that being experienced by the other services.
- (4) Advise . . . after six months the results achieved in (1), (2), and (3) above and how these results affect its FY 1974 plans for female military strength in Marine Corps.⁴

A further consideration by the Snell Committee was the report of a task group chaired by the Judge Advocate General of the Navy to review the portion of Titles 10 and 37 of the United States Code which differentiated between the treatment of men and women.

Taking all into consideration, the Snell Committee identified 17 separate tasks needed to attain its objectives. A background position paper containing the 17 tasks was then staffed to appropriate Headquarters agencies for comment. Colonel Margaret A. Brewer was given the job of reviewing the comments, summarizing the recommendations, and making appropriate modifications.

The recommendations that evolved included several concerning promotion boards that would require legislative action. Most, however, challenged the Marine Corps' policies and regulations that barred women from occupational fields or schools based solely on sex. The fields of logistics, military police and corrections, and aircraft maintenance, all closed to women, were singled out as possibilities for immediate action while all other noncombat fields would be studied to determine their appropriateness for women Marines. Two



LCpl Brenda Hockenbull, in 1972 the first woman Marine to graduate from the Test Instrument Course, Albany, Georgia, examines a piece of electronic equipment with fellow student, LCpl William Day.

of the most unorthodox ideas presented were the plan that a pilot program be established to assign women to stateside Fleet Marine Forces and the recommendation that:

. . . the prohibition in the *Marine Corps Manual* which limits women officers to succeeding to command only at those activities which have the administration of Women Marines as their primary function be eliminated.⁵

According to Lieutenant Colonel Barbara Dolyak, a member of the Snell Committee, it came as a surprise when the Commandant approved all recommendations on 14 November 1973. On the final page of the report, General Robert E. Cushman, Jr., penned, "O.K.—let's move out!"⁶

Strength, 1973-1977

In April 1973 a goal was set of 3,100 women Marines by 30 June 1977.⁷ This represented a 30 percent increase of women's strength and completely disregarded the traditional figure of one percent of total Marine Corps enlisted strength. Subsequently, the target date was moved up to 1 January 1976. During the summer of 1976, the Commandant, General Louis H. Wilson, Jr., responding to requests from commanders for additional women, to the improved effectiveness of women in the Corps, and to the realities of the all-volunteer force, approved an additional increase in the size of the woman Marine force.⁸ The change was planned to be implemented over a six-year period beginning 1 October 1976, with a recruiting goal for the year of 1,700 women or 164 over the current annual

input. Beginning with fiscal year 1978, in October 1977 the Corps aimed to recruit 2,500 women annually. Then in March 1977, appearing before a House Armed Services subcommittee, General Wilson made the surprise announcement that the Marine Corps expected to have 10,000 women in its ranks by 1985.⁹ Incremental increases were planned based on logistical limitations related to uniform supplies and billeting space rather than on need or availability of qualified applicants. In 1975 18 percent of all women who enlisted in the Marine Corps had attended college and some had baccalaureate degrees.¹⁰ In 1977, both recruiting and officer procurement quotas were easily met with many fine young women being turned away. On 30 June 1977, the strength of the active duty women Marines was 407 officers and 3,423 enlisted women for a total of 3,830.

The reenlistment and retention rate for women improved to the point where in 1974, the rate of retention for first-term WMs bettered that of male Marines, 9.9 percent to 7.9 percent. In 1975, it was 10.4 percent for women compared to 7.9 percent for the total Marine Corps.¹¹ No one factor is responsible for the improved recruiting and retention of women. The indications point to a generation of women awakened to new horizons, improvements in the woman Marine program brought on by the Pepper Board and the Snell Committee, and the positive action taken by the Commandants to publicize to all Marines the role of women in the Marine Corps.

New Occupational Fields

The Snell Committee had recommended that the Marine Corps regulations and policies not governed by law be reviewed to revise or eliminate those which discriminated solely on the basis of sex without rational and valid reason, and that all noncombat MOSs be examined to determine which could be made available to women. Since a task analysis of all noncombat occupational fields was already underway at Headquarters and would not be completed for several years, it was further recommended that certain fields be opened immediately as a sign of good faith. For officers, logistics, military police and corrections, and aircraft maintenance were suggested, and for enlisted women, the same three fields plus utilities and electronics. Because of some disagreement and in view of the ongoing study of all noncombat MOSs, only logistics and military police and corrections were approved for officers and utilities and military police and corrections for enlisted women.

The final breakthrough, dropping all barriers except those grounded in law, was made on 15 July 1975 when the Commandant, General Wilson, approved the assignment of women to all occupational fields except the four considered combat-related, infantry (03), artillery (08), armor (18), and flight crews (75). Management limitations, preservation of a rotation base for male Marines, equal opportunity regardless of sex for job assignments and promotions, need for adequate facilities and housing for WMs, and availability of nondeployable billets, of necessity, affected the number of women assigned to some fields, but this was truly a decisive change.¹²

Military Police

Records indicate that there were five women with a military police MOS in 1952 but a search of the records failed to reveal who they were or what duties they performed. It is likely that they were former WRs since the policy after 1948 had been not to assign women to this field.

The Corps' first known post-World War II military policewoman, in January 1974, was Lance Corporal Harriett F. Voisine, a WM who had a bachelor of science degree in criminology with a major in police science and administration. She had worked with the Police Department in Westminster, California, before enlisting in July 1971 and, after recruit training, served for two and one-half years in the Provost Marshal Office at Parris Island. Taking courses on her own in juvenile delinquency; vice and narcotics; criminal law; and arrest, search, and seizure procedures, she was a

Sgt Karen Cottingham, a trained telephone switchboard repairman, checks the level of battery acid in the standby power source, at the Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, California, on 4 February 1977.



PFC Regina T. Musser, first woman Marine tank mechanic, works on the optic unit of a tank turret while assigned to the Tracked Vehicle Maintenance Unit at Camp Pendleton, California, in 1974.

natural candidate for the military police field when it was finally opened to women Marines¹³ Lance Corporal Voisine, given on-the-job training by the recruit depot's MPs, was used on the desk, on traffic control details, and on motorized patrols.

Two women Marines, Privates M. B. Ogborn and J. E. Welchel, were the first to attend the seven-week Military Police School at Fort Gordon, Georgia, graduating in April 1975.¹⁴ Private Mary F. Bungcayo, who graduated from the same course the following month was assigned to the Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, for duty. In a 1977 interview, Corporal Bungcayo stated that she met some male opposition at first, but no restrictions. She worked on the desk and on patrol; she responded to fires and flight emergencies; and she stood guard on the gate. Corporal Bungcayo, who joined the Marine Corps with the guarantee of military police work, believed that on the job she was given the same responsibilities as the male MPs.¹⁵

Second Lieutenant Debra J. Baughman, the first woman officer in the military police field, was assigned to the Provost Marshal Office at Camp Lejeune after graduation from the 35th Woman Officer Basic Course in March 1975. She entered the field with a degree in corrections but no experience. At Camp Lejeune she was assigned as platoon leader for a platoon of MPs and in the opinion of Colonel Valeria F. Hilgart, the base G-1, "She did a topnotch job."¹⁶



1stLt Debra J. Baughman, first woman officer in the military police field, inspects her platoon at Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in the summer of 1975.

The next two officers to enter the 5800 field, military police, were Second Lieutenants Mary A. Krusa and Judith A. Cataldo. Neither had any police experience but both had majored in criminology and the police science field in college. In January 1976 all three attended the Military Police Officer Orientation Course at Fort McClellan, Alabama, to obtain formally the 5803 MOS. After graduation in February 1976, Second Lieutenant Krusa reported to El Toro as the assistant operations officer for the Provost Marshal Office and Second Lieutenant Cataldo reported to Cherry Point for assignment as the officer in charge of the Traffic Investigation, Traffic Control, and Pass and Identification Section. Second Lieutenant Baughman returned to Camp Lejeune. Each of the three officers had received more extensive training in their MOS to include attendance at Northwestern University's Traffic Institute at Evanston, Illinois.¹⁷

On the subject of police work for women, Second Lieutenant Cataldo, in March 1977, wrote:

Speaking for myself, I love the field. It is a constantly changing challenge. Twenty-five male MPs work for me and I am given a great deal of responsibility. I feel that after the initial testing and proving period I have been fully accepted. I would recommend the field to other women trained in it as it is still growing and developing professionally. . . . It frequently demands 24 hour duty (PMO duty officer) five days per month and proficiency with various weapons. . . . For women interested in the police field it offers a great deal.¹⁸

Presiding Judges

There were seldom more than one or two women Marine lawyers on active duty at one time, and it was news when in 1970, First Lieutenant Patricia Murphy was named a certified military judge. But in 1974, it was Captain Eileen M. Albertson, second woman to

be certified a military judge, who became the first to preside in a courtroom. A graduate of Bloomsburg State College and the Marshall Wythe School of Law at the College of William and Mary, she served in the Marine Corps Reserve for a six-year tour before going on active duty. She served nine months in Judge Advocate General School for military lawyers at Charlottesville, Virginia; 14 months on Okinawa as prosecutor and foreign claims commissioner; and some months as defense counsel at Quantico.¹⁹

As a judge, Captain Albertson was praised by her colleague, Captain David A. Schneider, who said, "I would give her the highest compliment—I'd call her a professional. She shows that she is more interested in justice and fairness than formality or speed . . ." ²⁰ Her former commanding officer, Colonel Joseph R. Motelewski, commented bluntly, "She is one of the finest lawyers I've ever worked with."²¹

In an effort to attract persons of needed skills, the Marine Corps inaugurated a program of direct Reserve commissions for those who met the criteria. Reserve Marine Major Sara J. Harper, a judge of the Municipal Court of Cleveland, Ohio, entered the Corps as a lawyer and served a number of tours on active duty over a four-year period. Then in 1977, she was appointed a military judge by General Louis H. Wilson, in ceremonies in his office.²²

Breaking the Tradition

Improved educational level of women recruits, a changed attitude of society toward the role of working women, especially in technical and professional fields, and an openmindedness in the Corps brought on by the Pepper Board and fostered by the Snell Committee, and finally the Commandant's key decision in July 1975, combined to increase the assignments of women to a greater variety of occupational fields. For example:

In November 1973, Second Lieutenant Patricia M. Zaudtke was assigned as one of the first two WM motor transport officers.²³

In June 1974, Captain Shirley L. Bowen was the only woman and the first woman Marine to graduate from the 34-week Advanced Communication Officer Course.²⁴

Private Mary P. McKeown made history at the Army's Ordnance Center and School, Aberdeen, Maryland, when she became the first WM to attend the Metal Body Repair Course. Her classroom instruction included practical work in gas welding, exterior finishing of metal bodies, glass cutting, and



Capt Eileen M. Albertson, first woman Marine military judge to preside in a courtroom, administered the foreign claims section and acted as trial counsel at the Camp Smedley D. Butler Law Center in 1972.

instruction in inert gas metal welding techniques.²⁵

First Lieutenant Dian S. George, in 1975, was the first woman Marine to be assigned to the inspector-instructor staff of an all-male Reserve unit, Headquarters and Service Company, Supply Battalion, 4th Force Service Support Group, at Newport News, Virginia. Previously she had served as the assistant SASSY officer at Cherry Point, North Carolina. SASSY is the acronym for Supported Activity Supply System, which was, at the time, a new computerized way of keeping track of all Marine Corps equipment. Thus it was not merely coincidental that First Lieutenant George found herself at the Newport News unit, the first Reserve company to have the SASSY system, one which tied into the computer at Camp Lejeune. During drill weekend she worked on the organization and supervision of the training program which included computer programming and key punch operations skills. In addition she served as personnel, public relations, and recruiting officer on the staff headed by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. Esposito. For the lieutenant, being in an all-male outfit was not entirely new since she had participated in the 1974 pilot program permitting women to serve in the Fleet Marine Forces.²⁶

Private First Class Cathy E. Smith was the first woman Marine to attend the Water Supply and Plumbing Course at Camp Lejeune. The training which began on 14 July 1975 was concerned mainly with water purification, i.e., supplying fresh water to Marines in the field.²⁷

On 28 January 1977, Sergeant Deborah A. Rubel, a mechanic in the fuel and electrical shop, Motor Transport and Maintenance Company, 2d Maintenance Battalion, Force Troops, 2d Force Service Support Group, was named Force Troops 2d FSSG Marine of the Quarter, high praise for a woman serving in the FMF in a nontraditional job.²⁸

Second Lieutenant Jo Anne Kelly became, in January 1977, the first of four women in her occupational field to qualify for the 7210 MOS, Air Defense Control Officer. She finished initial training at Twenty-nine Palms in August 1976 and then reported to the Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort, where she completed the required number of live intercepts in tactical flight missions.²⁹

On 9 January 1977, three WMs, Sergeants Connie Dehart and Cynthia Martin, and Corporal Geneva Jones, were reported to be the first women to earn their wings while serving as flight attendants on the C-9B Skytrain. After a two-week familiarization course at the McDonnell Douglas School, the women's duties included loading baggage and cargo, and serving meals. In an interview in March 1977, Sergeant Jones indicated that there was no resentment shown by male Marines with whom she worked, but at least one lieutenant colonel was uncomfortable about her work as

Sgt J. S. Burke, a tractor-trailer driver with Base Material Battalion, Camp Pendleton, California, adjusts the chains of her rig on 11 February 1977.



he ordered her out of the cargo compartment and loaded his own baggage.³⁰

Private First Class Pamela Loper, the first woman Marine to hold a tractor-trailer license at Camp Lejeune since World War II, was described in April 1977 by Lieutenant Colonel John F. Drummond, base motor transport officer, as "... a much better driver than some of our experienced men." Private First Class Loper drove a large tractor-trailer rig, known as a "semi" or "18 wheeler." She obtained her license after passing tests on handling the vehicle and hooking up and unhooking the trailer.³¹

Private First Class Katie Jones Dixon, Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron-32's first WM jet mechanic, worked on jet engines and components which MAG-32's squadrons sent to its power plant for repair. Extensive schooling prepared her to do the type of intermediate maintenance that the squadrons were not authorized to perform.³²

Private First Class Gail Faith Motise, first enlisted woman to attend the 12-week Automotive Mechanics School at Camp Lejeune, was also the first WM to be assigned to Cherry Point's Motor Transport Division.³³

Bandsmen

Well before the final verdict was in on opening new occupational fields to women, an old one became available once more. Until 1973, the musical MOS 5500 was designated for wartime duty only. Women Marine bandsmen were a rare sight after the demobilization of Camp Lejeune's renowned MCWR band of World War II. In 1967, Colonel Bishop reported that Corporals Donna L. Correll and Marjorie W. Groht had joined the Marine Corps Supply Center band at Albany and played in ceremonies on 10 November.³⁴ These two Marines, members of the first group of WMs to report to Albany, played the clarinet and trumpet and were believed to be the only women performing with a Marine band at the time. In 1969, Lance Corporal Judy A. Tiffany volunteered on a part-time basis as a cymbal player with the newly formed Drum and Bugle Team at the Marine Barracks, Treasure Island, California. And then, in 1971, five WMs, Corporals Sue Redding and Nancy Wright, Lance Corporals Sue Deleskiewicz and Joan Mahaffey, and Private First Class Martha Eveland became the first WM musical unit since World War II when they formed the WM Drum Section of Treasure Island's Drum and Bugle Team.³⁵

Private Jay C. Clark was assigned the 5500 MOS in February 1973 while in recruit training at Parris Island.



PFC Katie J. Dixon, H&MS-32 mechanic, safety wires the fuel control of an A-4 Skyhawk power plant in the squadron's powerplant section, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina, in 1977.

She was assigned to the post band and later sent to Basic Music School in Little Creek, Virginia. Upon completion of the six-month course, she served in the bands in Hawaii and at the Recruit Depot at San Diego, California.

The famed U.S. Marine Band of Washington, D.C., however, remained an all-male bastion until 1973, when, due to a critical shortage of certain instrumentalists, the band sought and received permission to enlist women.³⁶ Elizabeth A. Eitel, an oboist and University of Montana student, became, in April 1973, the first woman to audition and to be accepted. Before she graduated and subsequently enlisted on 30 July, another young woman, Ruth S. Johnson, a University of Michigan graduate, joined the band on 16 May, becoming its first woman member. Like all members of the band, the women were appointed to the rank of staff sergeant and were not required to attend recruit training. Gunnery Sergeant Johnson, in 1977, was the Marine Band's principal French hornist.³⁷

At first there were several conditions imposed by the band. The women, for example, were to wear the male bandsmen uniforms. Colonel Margaret A. Brewer, Director of Women Marines, satisfied that this new

opportunity was available to women, prudently offered no opposition. It was soon obvious that the men's trousers were ill-fitting and difficult to tailor for the women, so new uniforms, following the traditional pattern but proportioned for the female figure, were designed. Eventually long skirts were added to the wardrobe. The WM hat posed some problems, especially in wet weather as it required careful blocking to keep in shape. The band had a white vinyl model designed and asked Colonel Brewer for her opinion. With its gold emblem, red cap cord, and semi-shiny fabric, she found it unattractive at first, but agreed to a test period. The vinyl hat not only looked fine when worn during performances, but it solved the maintenance problem. Recognizing the practicality of a hat that can withstand rain and snow, the white vinyl was later copied for use by women MPs.³⁸

By July 1977, the Marine Band counted in its ranks the following 10 women musicians:³⁹

Gunnery Sergeant Gail A. Bowlin	flute
Gunnery Sergeant Elizabeth A. Eitel	oboe
Staff Sergeant Elnora Teopaco Figueroa	violin
Staff Sergeant Michelle Foley	oboe
Gunnery Sergeant Carol Hayes	viola
Gunnery Sergeant Ruth S. Johnson	French horn
Staff Sergeant Denna S. Purdie	cello
Staff Sergeant Linda D. Stolarchyk	cello
Staff Sergeant Vickie J. Yanics	violin
Staff Sergeant Dyane Wright	bassoon

Women Marines in the Fleet Marine Force

The Snell Committee recommended that a pilot program be established to assign women to stateside division, wing, or force service regiment headquarters in noncombat rear echelon billets such as disbursing, data systems, administration, etc. General Cushman, Commandant of the Marine Corps, approved the concept on 14 November 1973.⁴⁰ In February 1974, a message was sent to FMF commanders notifying them of a yet-to-be published change in policy which would permit the assignment of women to FMF billets involving service support, aviation support, or communication occupational specialties that would not require them to deploy with the assault echelon of the command if a contingency arose. The legal restrictions that women not be assigned duty in aircraft that are engaged in combat missions nor on vessels of the Navy other than hospital ships and transports were included.

The 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and the 1st Marine Division were designated as the commands to participate in a six-month pilot program, and they were



First woman Marine music unit since 1945 was the drum section of the Marine Barracks, Treasure Island Drum and Bugle Team, 1970-1971: (left to right) Cpls Sue Conley and Nancy Wright, LCpl Sue Deleskiewicz, PFC Martha Eveland, and LCpl Joan Mahaffey.

provided information on the grade and MOSs of the women selected for FMF assignments. The message stated, "These Marines will be joined on the rolls of, and administered by, the headquarters indicated. Their duties will be consistent with the requirement of the billet to which assigned."⁴¹ This simple statement, referring to Marines without the usual modifier, women, bespoke an important change in attitude. As an adjunct to the pilot program, all FMF commanders were asked to identify billets within their headquarters considered suitable for women Marines.

Originally, 13 women were selected to take part in the experiment: seven to the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and six to the 1st Marine Division. Actually, nine WMs, four officers and five enlisted women, were assigned to the wing. They were:

First Lieutenant Maralee J. Johnson
 First Lieutenant Dian S. George
 Second Lieutenant Vicki B. Taylor
 Second Lieutenant Margaret A. Humphrey
 Gunnery Sergeant Sharyl E. Shefiz
 Sergeant Charlene K. Wiese

Corporal Pamela S. Scott
 Corporal Eva J. Lugo
 Lance Corporal Marsha A. Douglas

In an interview published in the *Windssock*, the Cherry Point newspaper, in July 1974, Corporal Scott said, "At first I heard there might be some problems because men didn't want women in the Wing, but everyone here has been helpful, and I haven't had any problem at all."⁴² Sergeant Wiese, accounting analyst with the comptroller section, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing said, "There was a lot of apprehension between myself and the Marine I was working with, but it's gone now and things are great."⁴³ Others commented on the changes brought by being administratively attached to the wing rather than Woman Marine Detachment 2, a small unit where everyone knew everyone else.

The six women assigned to the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton were Captain Karyl L. Moesel, First Lieutenant Maria T. Hernandez, Second Lieutenant Mary S. Burns, Gunnery Sergeant Esther F. Peters, Ser-

geant Judith A. Alexander, and Sergeant Lynn J. Powell.

At the end of the six-month experimental period, in November 1974, the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, Brigadier General William L. McCulloch, reported that, ". . . the WMs have managed to assimilate necessary knowledge of FMF-peculiar systems to allow them to be assets to their respective sections"⁴⁴ and, he continued:

It is this command's interpretation . . . that WMs assigned to FMF commands are deployable to advanced areas as long as they are not deployed with assault echelon . . . and are, therefore, not necessarily bound to rear echelon . . . billets . . . This command enthusiastically supports assignments of WMs to CONUS FMF commands and foresees no insurmountable problems associated with program. Assignment of WMs would provide source of talent and critical skills and would ease skill shortages within the First MARDIV.⁴⁵

The Commanding General, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, Major General Ralph H. Spanjer, in his assessment of the pilot program, noted that the nine WMs *GySgts Ruth Johnson (left) and Beth Eitel (right), first women members of the U.S. Marine Band, frequently performed with the Band's Woodwind Quintet.*



were rapidly assimilated into the wing staff, and no problems were observed in military courtesy, appearance, or bearing. The physical fitness testing had been conducted by the senior woman officer without difficulty and with notable success. He continued that the small number involved precluded any effect on deployment and during field exercises, the women Marines had a positive effect on the headquarters by remaining in garrison and continuing the daily administrative routine. Finally, he submitted:

The pilot program of assigning Women Marines to 2d Marine Aircraft Wing has thus far been successful in terms of orientation, capability, and performance. Realizing the practicality of assigning Woman Marines to CONUS Fleet Marine Force Commands, it is felt that the program should be continued.⁴⁶

The commanding general of FMFPac, on the subject of women in ConUS FMF commands, wrote: "This headquarters regards utilization of women Marines in FMF commands both feasible and desirable providing such assignment does not adversely affect combat readiness. . . ." And he offered the recommendation that:

. . . Marine Corps education and training programs be modified to:

1. Increase emphasis on FMF-related instruction and training for women Marines, to include extension school courses and, if possible additional quotas to intermediate and high level schools.
2. Incorporate into Human Relations and Leadership training consideration of the role of women Marines in the FMF.⁴⁷

As part of the pilot program, the commanders of the division, aircraft wings, force troops, and force service regiments identified rear echelon billets totaling 75 officer and 450 enlisted that could be filled by women without requiring them to deploy with the assault echelon. The billets included supply, disbursing, communications, intelligence, administration, data systems, and legal specialties. When new MOSs were opened to women by the 1975 decision, even more FMF billets were considered suitable for women Marines.

Women in the 1st Marine Division were featured in an article published in the *Los Angeles Times* in September 1976. Among those mentioned were Second Lieutenant Michele D. Venne, combat engineer officer, who was the first woman officer to attend Combat Engineer School and finished first in her class; Lance Corporal Victoria Carrillo, a plumber and water supplyman who, at the time, was the only woman

water purification expert in the Marine Corps; Second Lieutenant Carol Sue Lamb, the only female motor transport officer in the FMF, who was serving as assistant division motor transport officer and later served as a division supply group platoon commander; Corporal Cynthia Robinson, an electrician, who performed duties such as pole line construction and the stringing of power lines; Second Lieutenant Laura A. Hull, headquarters battalion adjutant; and Lance Corporal Kimberly Greene, only woman coxswain in the Marine Corps. Lance Corporal Greene, who grew up on Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island, practiced her seamanship in the Corps by handling a 58-foot landing craft which could carry up to 40 combat-loaded Marines for an assault on an enemy beach.

There were at the time, 42 women in the 1st Marine Division, and their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. White, confessed that while the obvious problems such as restroom facilities and billeting were nettlesome, they were not difficult. The women Marines lived in motel-like BEQs with their male colleagues, since it was thought that segregated barracks would run counter to unit integrity.

The men found that women tend to keep their quarters better policed, but Colonel White soon learned that:

... there is a greater sense of urgency from the women when equipment, such as washing machines, fails. The women seem to be more conscious of how they look in uniform ... and when it comes to wearing sidearms which might make a hippy woman look hippier, an option of uniform is allowed. They can wear either skirts or utility outfits.⁴⁸

Anticipated problems resulting from men and women living in the same barracks did not materialize as the division men seemed to take a protective attitude toward the WMs. Barracks and office language was noticeably improved, but the feminine presence apparently caused little resentment on that score, since Lieutenant Colonel White was quoted as saying, "The division is more fun with the girls."⁴⁹

The women unanimously endorsed FMF assignments for WMs. Lance Corporal Debora Pederson, a correspondence clerk in the headquarters battalion adjutant's office, said, "... at Pendleton, we are treated as Marines, not specified as women Marines."⁵⁰ First Lieutenant Venne found senior officers dubious when she was assigned as a division engineer, responsible for equipment used in bridge building, grading roads, and other construction projects associated with combat. But the skepticism was because she was a lieutenant and not because she was a woman.

In July 1977, there were 610 women Marines serving in the FMF, 96 officers and 514 enlisted women.⁵¹ The policy to assign them only to stateside organizations was still in effect, but individual exceptions had been made where FMF commanders overseas had specifically asked for women Marines.

Women in Command

The *Marine Corps Manual*, from 1948 until 1973, laid down the rule that women could command only those units that were predominantly female. At least one exception was made when Captain Jeanne Fleming was assigned as the commanding officer of Company B, Headquarters Battalion, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, from July 1956 until September 1958. The company consisted of all officer students at Quantico, less those attending The Basic School. Her duties were primarily administrative, but it was quite unusual, nevertheless, for men to report in and find a woman commanding officer. One of them was Major Albert W. Snell, later to head the Ad Hoc Committee in 1973.

After approving the Snell Committee recommendation that women be permitted to command units other than woman Marine companies, General Cushman announced the new policy at a press conference in southern California in December 1973. He added, as a side comment, that, indeed, Camp Pendleton was soon to make such an assignment. According to the woman destined to become the Marine Corps' first woman commander of a nearly all male battalion, Colonel Mary E. Bane, the general's pronouncement was news to the command at Camp Pendleton. The press picked up on the Commandant's statement immediately and all other topics of his news conference were forgotten.

Colonel Bane, who had been filling a colonel's billet as an assistant chief of staff for personnel services, was informed by the Assistant Chief of Staff (Manpower), "You have been selected to sacrifice, Evie."⁵² The day following the Commandant's announcement, the commanding general, Brigadier General Robert L. Nichols, named Colonel Bane to be Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California. The furor was astonishing. In less than 24 hours, she had to change her telephone to an unlisted number. She had spent a sleepless night answering calls from the media, women's liberation organizations, cranks, and friends. In a short time she received over 300 letters,



Capt Kathleen V. Ables takes command of a predominantly male unit, Supply Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, in 1975.

both congratulatory and abusive. There were requests for autographed photographs and an 80-year-old retired Navy chief petty officer wrote to General Earl E. Anderson, Assistant Commandant, and asked for a set of Colonel Bane's first lieutenant bars. Mail came from Germany, Vietnam, Korea, and the Philippines, and from such diverse sources as the American Nazi Party and the National Organization of Women. In fact, the letters continued to arrive two years after she left the command.

Headquarters and Service Battalion was a unit of 1,700 Marines, including a woman Marine company. Colonel Bane's immediate staff, the executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Topping, and the battalion sergeant major, were all very supportive. She, herself, felt unprepared for the billet and resented being assigned because of sex rather than qualifications. In due time the commotion subsided, and business at the battalion went on as usual. Eleven months later, Brigadier General Paul Graham assumed command of Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, and reassigned Colonel Bane for, in her words, ". . . precisely the same reason for which I was assigned — because I was a woman."⁵³ He just did not want a woman as the commanding officer of a headquarters battalion. In fact, he did not want a woman in a colonel's billet and Colonel Bane, who had held the responsible position of an assistant chief of staff and had been a battalion commander for 11 months, was reassigned as the base human affairs officer, a major's billet.⁵⁴

When Captain Kathleen V. Abbott Ables took command of Supply Company, Headquarters and Service

Battalion, Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, California, on 7 March 1975, there was none of the hoopla that accompanied Colonel Bane's appointment. It was, just the same, an historic event, a woman in command of a predominantly male company. Looking back, Major Ables was not certain what prompted the battalion commander to assign a woman to the job. The billet was open, and she was the next senior captain in the battalion. She wrote, "The prevailing attitude was that it was my job as a captain, and that I could and would handle it professionally."⁵⁵

The company first sergeant, Gayle R. Heitman, made it known to the NCOs and SNCOs that he had worked with Captain Ables before and their expressed fears were unfounded. Only the company clerk, a sergeant, had real difficulty accepting a woman commanding officer, and he went to the battalion commander several times, in vain, to ask for a transfer.

In the beginning, as might be expected, inspections were the cause of some concern. Personnel inspections had been held without weapons at Supply Company so that when Captain Ables arrived on the scene she merely had to learn the details of male uniform regulations and personal appearance standards. As for quarters inspections, it was not difficult to respect the privacy of Marine shift workers who were apt to be sleeping or relaxing in the barracks during the day since the battalion was billeted in motel-style rooms rather than in open squadbays. First Sergeant Heitman would knock and if there was no answer, he would

unlock the door and go in. If the room was empty, Captain Ables followed him in to inspect. The procedure was reversed in the women's BEQ. Male Marines learned something about a woman's idea of a clean barracks. In a 1977 letter, Major Ables wrote:

BEQ inspections caused some heartburn in the company for about a month after I became commanding officer. With two of us inspecting, a large number of previously undetected discrepancies were found. One morning, we arrived at one room to find one of the occupants leaning over a table with a cloth in his hand. I made some comment about making the final touchup, and he replied, "Yes, m'am. We hear you're a real stickler on dust."⁵⁶

Nonjudicial punishment is always unpleasant but with a woman commanding officer could be awkward as well, depending upon the nature of the offense. One case involved language that neither the accused nor the witnesses wanted to use in front of a lady. A relatively simple solution was found: the offending statement was written out and all parties read and signed it.

Five months after taking over Supply Company, Captain Ables was assigned as commanding officer of her second and larger nearly all-male company, Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, which consisted of about 330 men and 40 women. Again, the first sergeant, Gene A. Lafond, was a key to a successful tour. Integrated battalions and companies such as this one gave rise to some interesting adjustments, notably in the area of physical training. In this instance, the battalion organized a competitive seven-mile conditioning hike. The course included a climb over hills behind the main camp, but because the WMs did not have adequate boots for the cross-country portion, a seven-mile road march was planned for them to be lead by Captain Ables. The battalion commander had arranged to take her company himself. The women's platoons from each company were combined to form a single WM unit and

scheduled to hike on the day before Captain Ables' Headquarters Company.

Having finished her portion of training, Captain Ables was challenged by her husband, Major Charles K. Ables, to lead her own company the next day. She admitted that it was a struggle to run-walk to keep from straggling. It happened that she was not only not the last to complete the course, but she helped to push a Marine over the finish line, and Headquarters Company won the competition. Afterwards, it was decided that future company hikes would be conducted with men and women participating together, maintaining unit integrity.

An interesting aspect of Captain Ables' experience as a commanding officer is the fact that her husband was a member of her command, no doubt a unique situation in Marine Corps history.

In addition to the command tours of Colonel Bane and Captain Ables, other assignments evidenced some change in philosophy and policy. In 1974, Lieutenant Colonel Annie M. Trowsdale was assigned as executive officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, and Sergeant Major Eleanor L. Judge was named sergeant major of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point. Gunnery Sergeant Frances Gonzales, in 1975, became the first sergeant of Casual Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego.⁵⁷

1973-1977 Summary

The Snell Committee report, approved in November 1973, challenged the Marine Corps to take a new look at its use of womanpower, and the zero draft situation for military services demanded it. Combined with the women's movement, changing attitudes in American society, and successful recruiting in terms of quality as well as numbers, these factors added up to a role of increased importance to be played by women in the Marine Corps.