Photo courtesy of Sarah Thornton

Women drivers and mechanics comprised the Motor Transport Section at Parris Island in 1944.

they rarely supervised men. Society had long since deemed certain jobs too dirty, too dangerous, too strenuous, or for unspecified reasons, just not suitable for women.

In this social climate, the Marine Corps set out to select, train, classify, and assign 18,000 newly recruited civilian women at the rate of more than 1,000 a month, and have them on the job and making a contribution in the shortest time possible. That it was done as magnificently as it was is a tribute both to the women who made it happen and to the men who allowed it to happen. Colonel Streeter's philosophy was ". . . anything except heavy lifting and combat. They could try."

One of the first WR officers, Captain Cornelia Williams, with a doctoral degree in psychology from the University of Minnesota and wide experience as a college administrator

Women Marines worked in the office of the Sergeant Major of the Schools Training Regiment at Camp Lejeune in August 1944.

Pencil sketch by Marion A. Allen in Marine Corps Art Collection

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 6265

Cpl Essie Lucas and PFC Betty J. Ayers, graduates of Motor Transport School, replace a reconditioned engine at Camp Lejeune's post garage in 1943. Lucas was commissioned six years later in the first postwar Women's Officer Training Class.

in student personnel work, reported to Headquarters on 19 February 1943 for duty in the Classification Division, Detail Branch. Her task seemed simple enough: come up with a plan that balanced the new Marines' skills and abilities against the needs of the Marine Corps. Initially, Marines studied the systems used by the WACs and the WAVES, but in the end, the answer was found closer to home and the preferred plan was based directly on the system already set up for male Marines.

On 1 January 1944, the original arrangement which involved three women officers working in various divisions of the Detail Branch was changed, and a separate Women's Reserve Section of the Detail Branch was organized. Beyond analyzing jobs and translating the duties into military occupational titles and compiling a directory of training courses, its mission was to design the Women's Reserve Qualification Card (NAVMC-940 C), write appropriate instructions for maintaining it, select classification tests to be given all Women Reservists, plan for selection and training of women classification specialists, and train people in the field in the basics of the classification process.

For the most part, there was little difference in the methods and procedures used to classify officers and enlisted women: the same tests were used for both. In the case of officers, however, closer attention was paid to assessing personality traits and probability of success as leaders and supervisors. While male officers could reasonably expect to be assigned at the bottom rung of an organization, working under the watchful eye and care of experienced senior officers and non-commissioned officers, women officers had neither senior role models nor seasoned non-coms to guide them. It was a sink-or-swim situation where they faced the prospect of teaching and supervising women as green as themselves.

At first, the basic test battery chosen included the Army standardized tests to assess general learning, mechanical, and clerical ability. From September 1943 through May 1944, the Army Radio Operators Aptitude Test was given to all enlisted women. In June, a test of vocational and job interests was added, and finally in December 1944, when the decision was made to send selected women Marine volunteers to Hawaii, personality and adjustment tests were added.

Once again, just as had happened in the early phases of training, because this was a start-up operation with no women experienced in classification, male Marines ran the system until WRs were qualified to take over. With classes of about 500 boots each arriving at the recruit depot every two weeks, the challenge of matching the women to critical job openings was ambitious enough, but the novelty of using females to fill military titles caused more than a few miscues.

It just wasn't the same as it was with the men who were transferred from boot camp to their first duty station in large troop drafts, based on the theory that most military skills had to be learned by all. In contrast, women were transferred with their names linked to identified job vacancies because many possessed unique skills. The idea was sound, but its success depended upon a cooperative adjutant at the receiving station assigning the women as planned. If, for example, a woman was classified as a telephone operator and arrived at a post only to be assigned by the G-1 as a soda jerk in the post exchange, the process broke down.

The Marine recruiting brochures in 1943 promised women openings in 34 job assignments: the shortsightedness of the planners can be seen in the final statistics recording women in more than 200.

Miscalculations led to bothersome reassignments when newly identified, high-priority jobs had to be filled but qualified women were no longer available. For example, the first calls for IBM tabulating machine operators, teletypewriter operators, sewing machine operators, draftsmen, utility repairmen, and even telephone operators came only after many women with this kind of civilian training and experience had been assigned to other duties.

Expensive errors in judgment were made because no one knew exactly how many women were needed and Marines underestimated their skills and efficiency. Marines requested far too many women, especially for office work at Headquarters, because they thought that half again as many women were needed to replace a given number of men. For clerical work, the reverse was generally true. Worse, in the time-honored tradition of the Corps, Marines often asked for twice as many women as were needed, expecting to receive half of what was requested.

Adding to the confusion, many men did not understand the duties involved in specific job titles, and people who could not dictate requested stenographers, and people needing file clerks asked for clerk typists. In the end, large numbers of women Marines felt let down and were bored by monotonous assignments that took only a fraction of their time and made scant demands on their skills. Colonel Streeter understood their frustration and made it a habit to visit women Marines in the field often to give regular pep talks on the vital importance of every job to the overall war effort.

Cpl Ellen V. Russell freed a Marine to fight when she served as a butcher in the post commissary at the Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia, during the war.
Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 25224

Contradicting the adage that there is never too much of a good thing, the exceptionally high caliber of the women recruited in the early phases of the war resulted in too many underemployed WRs. In Colonel Streeter's opinion:

> In test scores, educational level, civilian experience, and special skills, these women, as a group, were well above "average." Only a few of the jobs open to them in the Marine Corps were "above average" in responsibility and demands for skill, a great majority of the jobs were quite ordinary, and many more were actually extremely simple. Yet, somebody had to do these simple jobs. There were not enough women sufficiently *lacking* in intelligence, clerical ability, education and skill to be happy in these simple jobs. So, Women Reservists capable of more skilled work had to be misassigned – especially at first and especially at Headquarters Marine Corps.

One woman who was not bored with her job in Washington was Audrey Bennington, who summarized her tour from 23 March 1943 to 25 October 1945 and declared it one of the most important times of her life:

> May 1st 1943 assigned to Headquarters Colonel Streeter's section, working with Colonel Cecil Rhoads, and Major Charlotte Gower. February 1944, first Woman Marine – oldest Marine Barracks, 8th & Eye Streets, Washington, secre-

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 8927

Crew Chief TSgt Selma "Rusty" Olson, standing below the propeller, directs a WR repair crew servicing a North American Mitchell B-25 bomber at Cherry Point in March 1945. In the war, 40 percent of the women Marines held jobs in aviation.

> tary to the CO and his officers. Every 10 days taken to then Shangri La (Camp David now) to do ration records. That post was where the action was, believe me. I wish I were capable of writing a book—what material I have.

With time, the dilemma of too many, overqualified women resolved itself because as the war progressed there was ample work for everyone, male supervisors eventually gained confidence in the women and were more willing to release the men they had held back to train them, and the later recruit classes had fewer exceptionally skilled enlistees.

More than half of all Women Reservists were engaged in clerical work—about the same percentage as in civilian life. But new ground was broken as women went to work as radio operators, photographers, parachute riggers, motor transport drivers, aerial gunnery instructors, cooks, bakers, Link trainer instructors, control tower operators, motion picture technicians, automotive mechanics, teletype operators, cryptographers, laundry managers, post exchange salespersons and managers, auditors, audio-visual librarians, assembly and repair mechanics, metalsmiths, weather observers, artists, aerial photographers, photograph analysts, chemists, postal clerks, musicians, statisticians, stewardesses, and writers.

In a 1979 interview, Colonel Streeter confided she was greatly amused that WRs were in "secret and confidential files" because " . . . they always claim that women can't keep a confidence, you know." One WR second lieutenant assigned to secret and confidential files presumably had little trouble with the security clearance—Eugenia D. Lejeune, the youngest daughter of Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune.

Aviation

The most open-minded military units throughout the war and after were the aviation components of all the services. Presumably because they were relative pioneers themselves, aviation leaders were less tradition-bound, and they enthusiastically asked for large numbers of women and were willing to assign them to technical fields. Marines were no exception and right away asked for 9,100. Eventually, nearly one-third of the Women Reservists served in aviation at Marine Corps Air Stations (MCAS) at Cherry Point, Edenton, Santa Barbara, El Toro, Parris Island, Mojave, El Centro, Quantico, Ewa, and at the Marine Corps Aviation Depot (MCAD) in Miramar.

Because of the large number of women posted to air commands, Aviation Women's Reserve Squadrons were formed: Number 1 at Mojave; Number 2 at Santa Barbara; Number 3 at El Centro; Numbers 4 and 5 at Miramar; Numbers 6-10 at El Toro; Number 11 at Parris Island; Number 12 at Ewa; Numbers 15-20 at Cherry Point; and Number 21 at Quantico.

Matching Skills to Needs

World War II changed for all time the notion of proper women's work. In the Armed Forces as in civilian life, necessity caused the rules to be rewritten and while an effort was made to fit the women into jobs related to their former occupations, there was, by necessity, an openness to new ideas. Fewer Marine women than civilians were used as stenographers and general clerks, but more were assigned as typists; fewer were used as office machine operators, but far more were assigned to supply and supervisory work. Fewer women Marines were considered professionals in the Corps, but this was due to the large number of school teachers who enlisted but could not be used as instructors.

Fewer women were used in skilled trades than came from these jobs in civilian life, but more women proportionately were used in mechanical jobs than came from these jobs as civilians—especially in aviation.

In 1945, looking towards the future, Colonel Streeter suggested that if women were ever again to be enlisted into the Marine Corps, the whole process of classification and assignment could be greatly improved if all jobs were categorized into four classes:

Women's Reserve Employment

At the end of the war a statistical breakdown of the 17,672 women on duty on 1 June 1945 showed them working in the following occupations:

Professional; Semi-professional

Scientific	76
Personnel	338
Artistic, Musical	306
Misc (teachers)	622
TOTAL	1,342

Clerical

Clerk General	1,764
Clerk Typist	2,982
Stenographer	1,129
Special Clerical	1,182
Clerical: Supervisory or Administrative	498
Clerical: Communications	661
Clerical: Supply	1,936
Clerical: Office Machine Operators	127
TOTAL	10,279

Sales

TOTAL	741

Service

Personal Service	438
Protective Service	149
TOTAL	587

Mechanical

Mechanical: Aviation	1,086
Mechanical: Non-Aviation	285
TOTAL	1,371

Skilled Trades

Skilled Trades Aviation	83
Skilled Trades Non-Aviation	261
TOTAL	344

Semi-Skilled Jobs

Semi-skilled: Aviation	143
Semi-skilled: Non-Aviation	1,162
TOTAL	1,305

Unskilled Jobs

TOTAL	14

Students

TOTAL	35

General Duty: not elsewhere classified, Basic no SSN

TOTAL	1,648
GRAND TOTAL	17,666*

* 6 women unaccounted for

Class I jobs in which women are better, more efficient than men.

Class II jobs in which women are as good as men, i.e., they can or did replace men on a one-to-one basis.

Class III jobs in which women are not as good as men, but it is possible to use them if the need is great.

Class IV jobs in which women cannot or should not be used at all.

Administration of Women

Until February 1944, the Women's Reserve Section, Officer Procurement Division, a entity within the Division of Reserve, handled most administrative matters concerning Women Reservists. Then, as a result of a reorganization at Headquarters, all matters involving recruiting, uniforming, recreation and welfare, plans and training were transferred to the appropriate departments and divisions, stripping the Women's Reserve Section of much of its work. After that, its principal duties were: to form and move basic training classes to the recruit depot, to make appropriate selections for officer candidate school, to process resignations and separations of MCWR officers, and to maintain the records and handle correspondence concerning the above matters.

In essence, the MCWR as an organization was always more a perception than reality. Generally, the women were regarded as "extra" Marines to be managed by the long-established divisions that oversaw the administration of the men. Furthermore, when Women Reservists were assigned to posts and stations, they reported to the commanding officer of their unit, who was subordinate to the commanding officer of the post, and who, in turn, was responsible to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The MCWR Director was a staff officer not in the chain of command, and, in truth, she had nothing to "direct."

Director, MCWR

There was never any question that there had to be an MCWR Director, especially to gain the public's favor, but her authority was an illusion. She had a great deal of influence but

Photo courtesy of Mary R. Rich

The WRs parade at Camp Lejeune in 1944.

could not take independent action. The Director was clearly responsible for the tone of the Women's Reserve and as Marines gradually gained confidence in her judgement, they paid more attention to her suggestions.

At the outset, in an unusual move, Major Streeter was assigned a running mate—the very patient Major Rhoads who sat beside her for six months and taught her the Marine Corps way. As it turned out, this was a great advantage both for the Director and for the MCWR. Captain McAfee, first WAVE Director, once remarked that she had not had a running mate, and since she came into the Navy totally inexperienced in military custom, she made some unfortunate mistakes which stirred up a certain resentment against her. Grateful for Major Rhoads' guidance, but somewhat embarrassed that after six months on the job, she was the

Henderson Hall women Marines presented a stage production, "Manhattan Scene," in which they could once again don formal civilian attire in 1945. From left are: Sgt Shirley Heyser; Sgt Margaret Michalik; Sgt Myrtle Douglas; Cpl Emma Guidry; PFC Angeline Porfilio; Sgt Vivian Coss; Cpl Bernice Peart; Sgt Mary Thompson; and Cpl Mary Kerkhoff.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 13064

Marine Corps Art Collection

Artist Marion A. Allen drew this sketch of Barracks 57 in the WR area at Camp Lejeune in 1944. The women made their living quarters "homier" with an abundance of photographs, stuffed animals, and other mementos of their civilian lives.

Members of the 2d Headquarters Battalion at Henderson Hall pass in review for BGen Littleton W. T. Waller, Jr., the Director of Personnel at Headquarters, Marine Corps. With Gen Waller is Maj Martrese R. Ferguson, battalion commander.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 13470

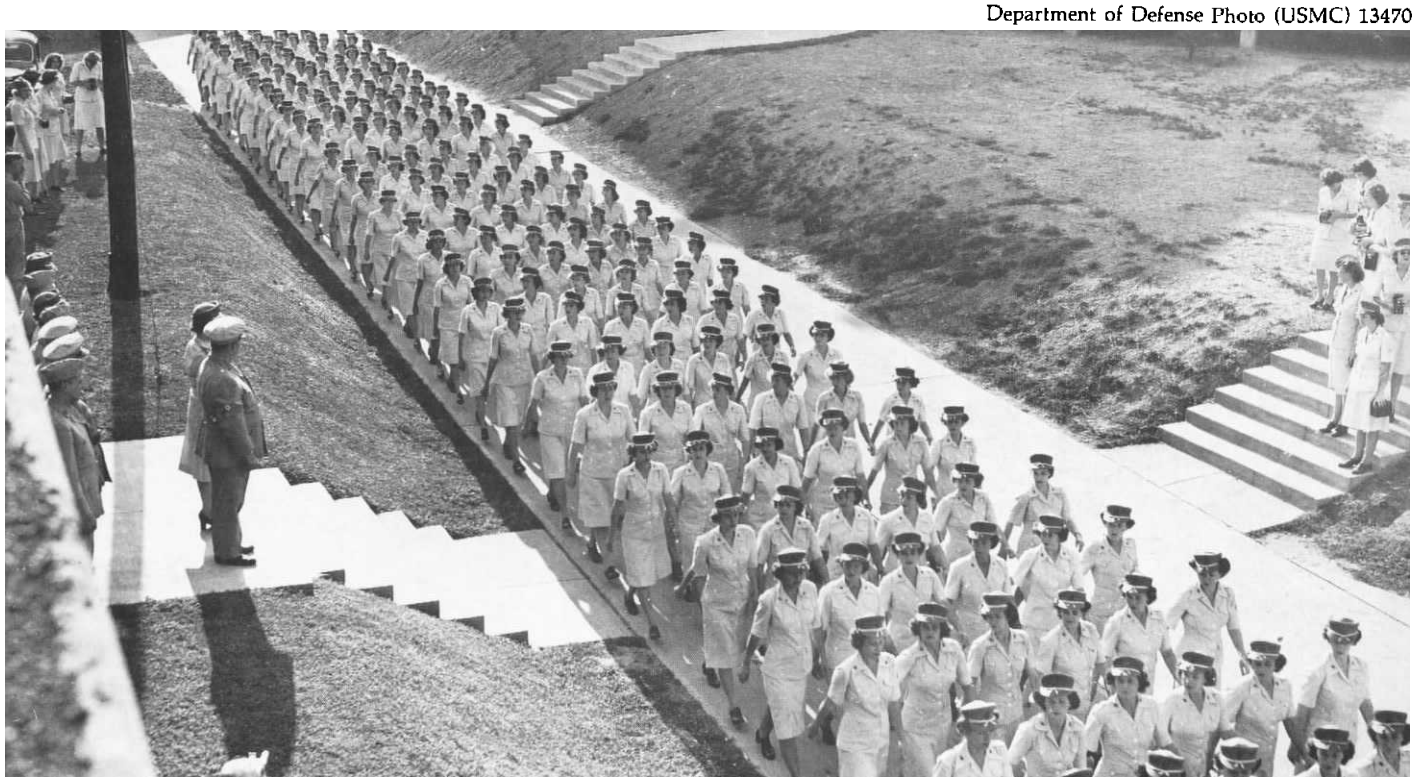

Photo courtesy of Sarah Thornton

Cpl June Richardson models a "new" uniform at a Parris Island fashion show.

only woman director with a mentor at her elbow, Major Streeter sent a memo to Colonel Waller asking for more autonomy. Officers at every level in the chain of command recommended disapproval, but Major Streeter eventually prevailed by acknowledging the wisdom of their decision to give her a running mate—which she admitted kept her from falling flat on her face—and by making the points that one can't stay in leading reins forever, it would be more dignified if she would be allowed to take over alone, and the Marine Corps wasn't getting its money out of her.

So, on 29 October 1943, she became a Special Assistant to the Director of Personnel to advise him on matters of policy. A month later on 22 November, the law amended, she was promoted to lieutenant colonel and then, on 1 February 1944, to colonel. Still, she had no authority of her own, never signed official letters except acknowledgements of monthly reports, and was expected not to interfere unless the situation involved blatant disregard of approved policies. Even then, she merely apprised the Director of Personnel of problems and perhaps offered suggestions, but he took such action as he saw fit.

It was quite a disappointment to Colonel Streeter when she recognized, quite by chance, the limits of her position. Once, looking for sympathy, she went to Colonel Waller and said, "You know, Colonel, it's a little hard on me. I've got so much responsibility and no authority." She was taken back by his quick response, "Colonel Streeter, you have no responsibility either." It served her very well that no one else—male or female—was ever quite sure just how much authority she did have.

Assistants for the Women's Reserve

The concept that WRs were Marines just like all others, to be administered and managed in the same manner as the men, was not easily put into practice. Routine information was transmitted through the established chain of command, but the Director needed to know much more if she held any hope of guiding the fledgling organization, nourishing and encouraging the good and putting a stop to the bad. Therefore, at each station where WRs served, the senior woman was designated Assistant for the Womens' Reserve and she was charged with keeping the post commander informed of all matters pertaining to the women under his command.

Perhaps more importantly, she was expected to keep in close touch with the MCWR Director, advising her on the state of health, welfare, jobs, training, housing, recreation, morale, and discipline of the women while not violating the chain of command. Each month, she sent a written report to Headquarters with a copy to the post commanding officer. It contained information on all aspects of the well-being of the women, along with comments of particular interest at the station. Normally, the information was shared with Colonel Streeter who used it to supplement her own frequent inspection trips to assess the success or failure of official policies.

Authority

In most cases, men supervised women Marines on the job, but routine matters of discipline were left to the women officers. When male officers had serious problems with the women at work, they generally turned to the senior woman on board. This unusual idea of shared responsibility was certainly alien to Marines and caused more than a few problems, but in most instances it worked.

Ordinarily, women Marines were organized into battalions or squadrons with women line officers in command. If a WR did not perform her work satisfactorily, or arrived late, her male work supervisor did not discipline her but reported the problem to her commanding officer

At whatever base they were stationed in the States, women Marines had an active athletic program, as shown by this 1945 MCWR softball team at Parris Island.

Photo courtesy of Sarah Thornton

for action. On the other hand, if a WR requested leave, her commanding officer did not grant it without first clearing it with the work supervisor. It often happened that unit obligations in the barracks area, such as mess duty, training, parades, "field days," and inspections conflicted with work schedules, and this created some animosity between female commanders and male work supervisors.

There was genuine ambiguity, as well, about the authority invested in women officers and NCOs. The stated policy said that it was limited to the administration of the Women's Reserve and to be exercised solely over WRs. Someone had determined that the relationship of women officers and noncommissioned officers to enlisted men was akin to that of a civilian teacher in a military school – senior women could give instructions, but matters of discipline and job performance were to be referred to the man's commanding officer.

In time, the Commandant found it necessary to provide some clarification. "It appears that the services of officers and non-commissioned officers of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve are not being realized to the fullest extent due to some doubt as to the scope of their authority . . . . " he wrote in March 1944. Explaining that the matter had been considered by the Navy Department he continued, " . . . it is concluded that it is entirely proper for a woman officer to be assigned to duty subordinate to a commanding officer and her directions and orders in the proper performance of such duty are the acts of the officer in command, even though such orders are directed to male personnel." This simple statement allowed women to become adjutants, personnel, and mess officers.

Assignment and Housing

Out of consideration for the women – their welfare, morale, and reputation – geographical assignments were based on several factors besides Marine Corps personnel needs. Originally, women were to be sent only to posts where their services had been requested and then only if appropriate housing was available. The November 1942 survey which queried Marine Corps posts on the number of women they could use also asked about suitable quarters.

In the 1940s, "nice girls" seldom lived away from home or by themselves, and when they did, there was always a chaperone figure somewhere in the picture. Even in wartime, and even in the midst of such unusual circumstances as women serving in the Armed Forces, homage was paid to the accepted protocol. To prevent loneliness and avoid unfavorable comments, no fewer than two Marine women were assigned to a station or sub-station, enlisted women could not be assigned to a post unless there was a woman officer in the near vicinity, and it was customary to assign women officers to units of 25 or more WRs. The ratio was considerably less in the procurement offices in large cities.

On most posts women Marines had a commanding officer who reported to the post commander. However, there was a new wrinkle in that the women were an autonomous entity – proud to run their own outfit, handling general administration, barracks area maintenance, and mess halls. The relatively few women Marines stationed in large cities were given subsistence, a monetary allowance to pay for housing and meals.

An exception was made in Washington, D.C., where a new and independent post, Henderson Hall, was built to house the 2,400 WRs stationed there. Officially, it was named for the first Commandant, General Archibald Henderson, but understandably it became "Hen Hall."

When women joined the Marine Corps they elevated the quality of barracks living up a notch or two. Stark squadbays were sometimes softened with pastel paint and stuffed animals could be found resting on tightly made bunks. Dressers were lined up to provide a little privacy, shower curtains were hung, and doors closed off toilet stalls. Day rooms set aside to entertain dates were furnished with board games, pianos, and record players and space was found for cooking appliances, hair dryers, and sewing machines in lounges reserved for women only.

Marines didn't rush to embrace the feminine touches, but after a reasonable period of adjustment, commanding officers were proud to traipse visitors and dignitaries through the immaculate WR barracks and mess halls – clothing hung facing in one direction, sparkling mirrors, no dust kittens under the bunks, and glossy floors buffed to perfection with Kotex.

Punishment

As early as November 1942, Headquarters wisely considered a disciplinary plan for the Women's Reserve. The other services were no help since the WAACs still served with the Army but were not part of it and the Navy had no predetermined policy except to say they would treat problems according to principles generally used for men with whatever modifications might be necessary for special instances such as sex offenses.

Not knowing what to expect and unwilling to leave it to chance, Marines wisely established discipline policies for Women Reservists:

1. Distinctions between officers and enlisted personnel would, in general, be the same as made between officers and enlisted men of the regular Marine Corps.

2. Officers would exercise normal disciplinary functions and MCWR officers would have similar respon-

sibility when they attained appropriate rank and command.

3. Establishment of brigs or post prisons for the confinement of women was not contemplated, but confinement to quarters was deemed appropriate.

4. Exclusive of sentences involving confinement, punishment would be awarded as it was for officers and men of the regular Marine Corps.

5. Trial by court-martial would be recommended only in serious cases, particularly when confinement seemed a possiblity.

6. For offenses not warranting trial, separation from service would be by the most expeditious means in accordance with policies applicable to men.

Little time was wasted on female offenders, and fortunately, there were relatively few problems. Because of their communal, intense desire to be accepted by Marines and approved by the general public, women Marines were their own severest critics and peer pressure to walk a tight line proved very effective. The records show only 36 enlisted women separated out of the total of 18,000 as a result of general and summary courts-martial. When officers resigned to escape a general court-martial, their discharge was "under other than honorable conditions."

Unauthorized absences—usually less than 10 days—accounted for the most common infractions; violations of regulations (uniform, fraternization, etc.) followed. Unlike earlier policies governing female military nurses, marriage was a cause for neither discharge nor punishment, and pregnancy was considered a medical rather than disciplinary case.

Much as with the men, punishment included confinement to quarters, loss of pay, reduction in rank, extra police duties, and in extreme cases, disciplinary discharges. However, the severity of punishment meted out to men and women accused of sex offenses differed markedly and the female officers balked at the harsh treatment of WRs in these instances.

Marines are the acknowledged masters in matters of discipline and morale, but there was no history to help them bridge the gender gap when the women landed. These women were not pliant teenagers, but rather adults, all 20 years old or older. Some were married, some had children, and a few had grandchildren. Since it was a time when females were expected to adhere to near-Victorian standards, military leaders assumed a paternalistic attitude and the inevitable occurred—grown, mature women were often treated like school girls. The senior women officers, many with roots in academia, were often more guilty than the men.

A galling but unchallenged rule was that women on board a base, unlike men of equal rank, could not have an automobile. It added to the allure of assignment to the motor pool that the drivers of trucks, jeeps, and buses were more mobile than their sisters.

Luckily, Colonel Streeter was able to balance high standards of behavior with an earthy understanding of human nature and she seemed to know just when to tighten the reins and when to turn her head. She was pragmatic about discreet instances of fraternization and she recognized that when dealing with men and women, some things could not be strictly regulated. She was a gifted leader who subscribed to the theory that ". . . the most able commanders, be they men or women, are those who take care of their people and who keep them out of trouble by anticipating the problems that may confront them."

She expected women officers, regardless of their assignment, to

Twin sisters Irene and Madelene Spencer toured New England with the War Bond drive show, "Direct Hit," which starred boxing champion Jack Dempsey, who was a Coast Guard officer, cowboy star Gene Autry, and comedian Frank Fontaine.
Photo courtesy of Irene and Madelene Spencer

Photo courtesy of Evelyn Wallman Gins

Following the devastation visited upon the carrier Franklin *in operations off Japan, as seen in the picture held by these Women Marines, they were sent on a bond tour in 1945, which took them to Dallas, Texas, where this picture was taken.*

share responsibility for the morale and welfare of enlisted women and this policy was sacred until separate women's units were abolished in the 1970s. Colonel Streeter was rightfully proud that the Women's Reserve organized a recreation and education service long before the Special Services Division was formed, and she credited it with the high morale of the women Marines. Yet, in the end, it was her own good sense, concern for her women, pride in the Marine Corps, and determination that sustained the wartime WRs.

Overseas

Since the Women's Army Corps began as an auxiliary, it was less strictly regulated than the other women's services. Consequently, WACs served in all theaters of war including the Southwest Pacific Area, the Southeast Asia Command, the China-Burma-India Theater, the China Theater, and the Middle East Theater, as well as in Europe, Africa, Hawaii, Alaska, New Caledonia, Puerto Rico, and several smaller sites.

While some members of Congress, uncomfortable about American women so close to combat, argued for restrictions, there were military men like Marine Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith who insisted that women Marines could be used at Pearl Harbor to release men for combat. His view was shared by Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal, who told Congress that an estimated 5,000 naval servicewomen were needed in Hawaii. The outcome was new legislation, Public Law 441, 78th Congress, signed on 27 September 1944 which amended Section 504, Public Law 689, 77th Congress, 30 July 1942 by providing that:

> Members of the Women's Reserve shall not be assigned to duty on board vessels of the Navy or in aircraft while such aircraft are engaged in combat missions, and shall not be assigned to duty outside the American Area and the Territories of Hawaii and Alaska, and may be assigned to duty outside the continental United States only upon their prior request.

Colonel Streeter, anticipating the new policy, was concerned about choosing mature, stable women for duty outside the continental United States. So, she went to see WAC Director Colonel Hobby, and said, "Look, Oveta, what did you find was the best way of selecting your people to go overseas?" By her own admission, going straight to Colonel Hobby was ". . . not exactly according to Hoyle," but ". . . it was certainly sensible and nobody fussed about it."

Colonel Hobby offered simple advice: "A person who's had a good record in this country is likely to have a good record abroad, and a person who's had disciplinary problems in this country, or whose health wasn't good, we wouldn't send abroad. Sometimes you sent more mature ones than the newest enlistees."

With this in mind, the Marine Corps laid out the criteria for selecting volunteers for duty in Hawaii: satisfactory record for a period of six

Photo courtesy of *Marine Corps Gazette*

Col Ruth Cheney Streeter, Director of Women Reserves, and Maj Martrese Ferguson, commanding officer of the WRs at Henderson Hall, review a parade in October 1944 during a conference of senior WR officers at Headquarters, Marine Corps.

months military service subsequent to completion of recruit or specialist training; motivation, the desire to do a good job, rather than excitement or hope of being near someone they cared about; good health; stable personality; sufficient skill to fill one of the billets for which Women Reservisits had been requested; and age. Not having been a significant factor for success in the WACs, age was not specified, but since the minimum tour was to be two years with little hope for leave, the health and status of dependents and close family members was considered.

This settled, in October 1944, Colonel Streeter and Major Marion B. Dryden flew to Hawaii to prepare for the arrival of the women and most of all to inspect the proposed living arrangements. Major Dryden, the senior woman officer serving in aviation, accompanied the Director because half the women were to be stationed at the Marine Corps Air Station, Ewa.

There was no shortage of volunteers and on 2 December an advance party of four officers—Major Marion Wing, commanding officer; First Lieutenant Dorothy C. McGinnis adjutant; First Lieutenant Ruby V. Bishop, battalion quartermaster; and Second Lieutenant Pearl M. Martin, recreation officer—flew to Hawaii to make preliminary arrangements at Pearl Harbor. Not long after, they were followed by the advance party for Ewa, Captain Helen N. Crean, commanding officer; First Lieutenant Caroline J. Ransom, post exchange officer; Second Lieutenant Bertha K. Ballard, mess officer, along with Second Lieutenant Constance M. Berkolz, mess officer for Pearl Harbor.

Meanwhile, a staging area was established at the Marine Corps Base, San Diego, where the women underwent a short but intense physical conditioning course that included strapping on a 10-pound pack to practice ascending and decending cargo nets and jumping into the water

In early 1945, first Women Reserves to be deployed overseas embarked for Hawaii, carrying haversacks with blanket rolls. Upon arrival they were greeted with acclaim.

Photo courtesy of Mary R. Rich

Photo courtesy of Mildred Cornwell Kelliher

Soon after arriving in Hawaii, WRs stand to for evening colors in the women's area.

from shipboard. In the classroom, they learned about the people of Hawaii, how to recognize Allied insignia, shipboard procedures, and the importance of safeguarding military information.

On 25 January 1945, with Captain Marna V. Brady, officer-in-charge, the first contingent of five WR officers and 160 enlisted women, with blanket rolls on their backs, marched up the gangplank of the S.S. *Matsonia* to sail from San Francisco to Hawaii. Their shipmates were a mixed lot of male Marines, sailors, WAVES, military wives, and ex-POWs, and because of the lopsided ratio of men to women, the WRs were restricted to a few crowded spaces on board ship.

Two days out to sea, they changed to summer service uniform, and on 28 January, they disembarked in Honolulu as the Pearl Harbor Marine Barracks Band played "The Marine's Hymn," the "March of the Women Marines," and "Aloha Oe." The WAVES went ashore first—dressed in their best uniform. Then came the WRs—astonished that their no-nonsense appearance in dungarees, boondockers, and overseas caps seemed to please the crowd of curious Marines who had gathered to look them over and welcome them to Hawaii.

The majority was quartered in barracks recently vacated by the Seabees at the Moanalua Ridge Area adjacent to the Marine Corps Sixth Base Depot and Camp Catlin. The large, wooden, airy barracks were already very comfortable, but needed modifications for female occupants, so a small number of Seabees remained behind to do some reconditioning. Major Wing, the commanding officer, ". . . had a fine way of treating men" according to Colonel Streeter.

> No Seabee could pay for a coke. As many cokes a day as he wanted and he couldn't pay for them. We got more work out of those Seabees than you could ever imagine.

In Hawaii, the women worked much the same as in the States, with most assigned to clerical jobs. More than a third of the women at Ewa came from the Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, and lost no time before picking up their tools and working on the planes.

At Pearl Harbor, the WRs ran the motor transport section, serving nearly 16,000 persons a month. Scheduled around the clock and with a perfect safety record, they maneuvered the mountainous roads of Hawaii in liberty buses, jeeps, and all types of trucks carrying mail, people, ammunition, and garbage. Marines easily became accustomed to the sight of women drivers, but never quite got used to grease-covered female mechanics working under the hood or chassis of two-and-a-half-ton trucks.

The Deputy Commander, Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, gave the WRs high marks for their efficiency, attitude, and enthusiasm, and reported: "The work of Women's Reserve personnel trained in Marine Corps Specialist Schools has measured up to the standard of performance required of men in specialists' assignments, such as Quartermaster Supply Men, Radio Operators, Radio Repairmen, Financial Clerks, Drivers, and Mechanics."

He went on, however, to criticize the typical women's command structure and recommended that, in the future, the administration of the Women's Reserve be handled by the unit to which the women are attached for duty. It was a widespread complaint, already voiced by Colonel Streeter and destined to be repeated by Marines—men and women—for nearly 30 years until the all-female units were finally disbanded in the mid-1970s.

Just before she left the Corps, Colonel Streeter expressed some reservation about the wisdom of sending WRs to Hawaii—despite their substantial contribution. After the initial enthusiam, interest waned, boyfriends were opposed to having their girls go so far away, especially where they were vastly outnum-

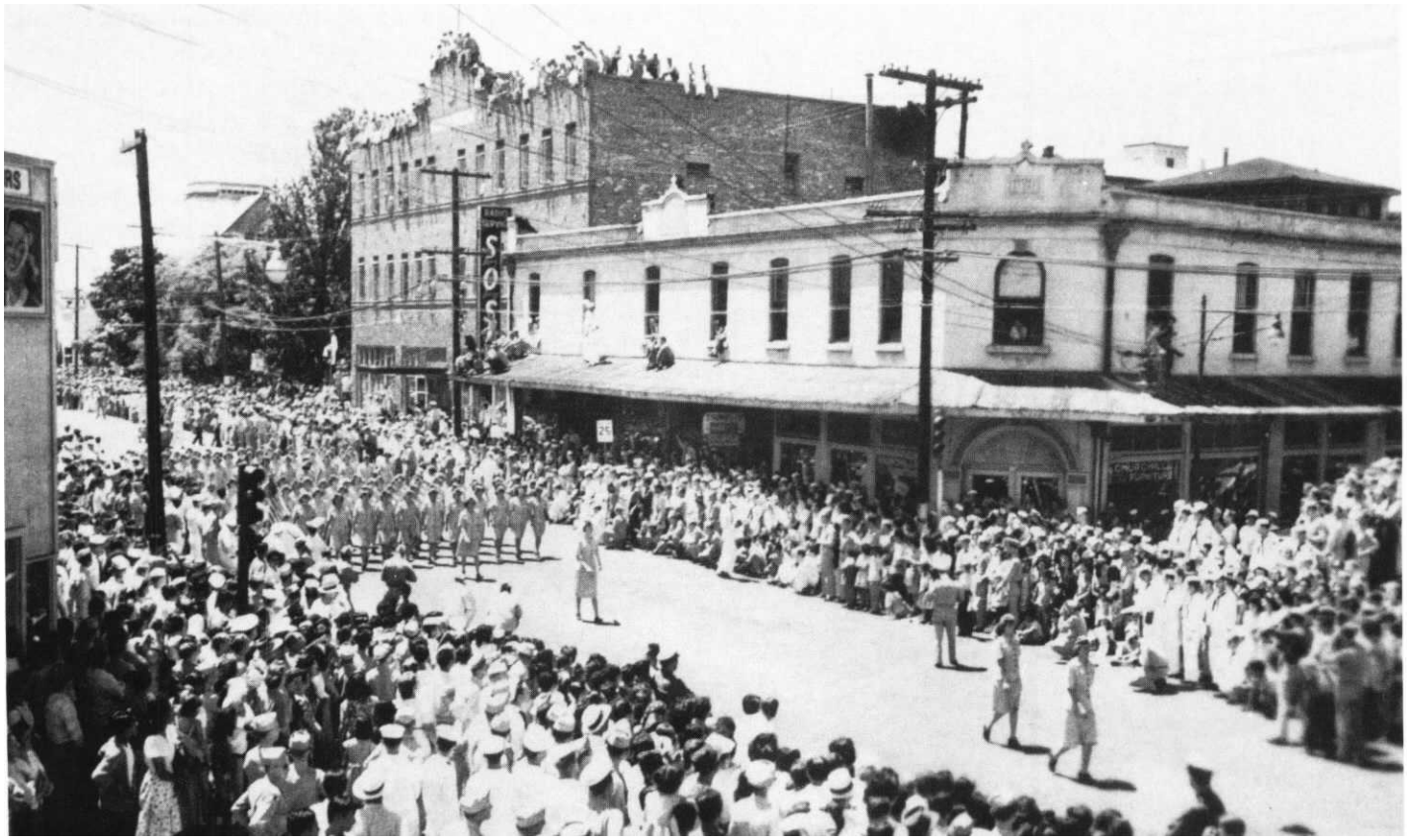

Photo courtesy of Mildred Cornwell Kelliher

Women Marines participated smartly in the VJ-Day parade in Honolulu on 11 August 1945. They also took part in other ceremonial events on the island of Oahu while stationed in the islands, a tour they all found extremely enjoyable.

bered, and parents were put off by the length of the tour. There was uneasiness among the women caused by the shifting pronouncements from Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, about how many WRs they really needed, and at the same time, it was becoming clear that victory over Germany was imminent. Fewer women volunteered for overseas and the Director was disappointed.

By the summer of 1945, there were 21 officers and 366 enlisted Women Reservists at Ewa, and 34 officers and 580 enlisted women in the Women's Reserve Battalion, Marine Garrison Forces, 14th Naval District. Some stayed to process the men being shipped through Hawaii on their way home for demobilization, but they were all back in the States by January. Because women serving overseas accumulated credits for discharge at the rate of two per month, compared to one per month for those in the United States, most were eligible for discharge soon after V-J Day.

Women's Reserve Band

Probably the most colorful of all the Women's Reserve units was the Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band formed in November 1943 by Captain William F. Santelmann and trained by members of the Marine Band. Prominent music schools and colleges were canvassed for candidates and talented enlisted women were auditioned to find the requisite 43 musicians. Its director was Master

The WR Band at Parris Island, trained by musicians from the Marine Band in Washington, D.C., played for women's reviews and men's formal guard mounts, and entertained both on and off of the bases throughout the country during the war.

Photo courtesy of Sarah Thornton

Sergeant Charlotte Plummer, formerly director of the Portland, Oregon, public school system band and member of the city's municipal band.

The Camp Lejeune-based band gave concerts at Parris Island, Cherry Point, Henderson Hall, and on national radio programs. It played at guard mounts, inspections, graduations, dances, and occasionally at the officers club. It may be best remembered for stirring performances at the weekly Saturday morning MCWR recruit depot reviews, marching to the rhythm of its own "March of the Women Marines," written especially for it by Musician First Class Louis Saverino of the Marine Band.

The band members were deeply affected by the hospital concerts where they entertained young Marines on gurneys, in wheelchairs, propped up in bed, and trying to applaud without hands. They couldn't help but think of their own husbands, boyfriends, brothers, brothers-in-law, cousins, classmates, neighbors, and loved ones. Not a week passed that a band member didn't receive bad news from the front.

Playing for the wounded and maimed Marines added an aching poignancy to the graduation parades where the band stepped off in front of thousands of men headed for the Pacific. And, it was equally hard for members to be indifferent to the trainloads of arriving recruits, as they greeted the youths with stirring martial music, already thinking of the day when they, too, would graduate and go off to war.

The WR Band played for President Roosevelt and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and, at the request of the Treasury Department, it made War Bond and Victory Loan tours, traveling to Chicago, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Cleveland—always to great acclaim.

The work must have seemed frivolous and glamorous and it certainly had those moments. But the band members rehearsed long hours; toured in crowded, poorly maintained buses; and carried heavy instruments in pouring rain, under the broiling sun, and while marching through sucking mud. Most had played in orchestras and bands as civilians, but had never worked at their music for eight intensive hours a day.

The practice room was unheated and Loudene Grady (saxophone and clarinet) and Louise Hensinger (Sousaphone and dance band vocalist) had to get up before the others and go over to the room and build a fire in the coal stove before rehearsals.

Ellen Stone and Bonnie Smallwood (snare drum, traps, percussion) recalled the base concerts:

> The weather was changeable . . . . One day a cold wind would blow the marching women musicians off balance, hitting the instruments against their teeth and bruising their arms. The drums would loosen up and have no tone. Valves on the brass instruments would stick. The clarinets would crack and lips would stick to the brass mouthpieces.

No complaints were heard in August 1945 when the band director called the women together to announce that Japan was expected to surrender at any moment:

> . . . we're to hit the streets in uniform, and we're to parade, parade, and parade! When word of the surrender comes, we must be ready to fall out and parade immediately . . . . We have to be ready to put on our uniforms, get our instruments, and our music pouches, and be out of here.

They freshened their make-up, rolled up their hair, brought their in-

The MCWR Band, directed by TSgt Charlotte L. Plummer, performed in concert at the Camp Theater, Camp Lejeune.
Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 7305

Photo courtesy of Audre Fall Wells

Audre Fall was the first drum major of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band.

struments into the squadroom for the first time in two years, and quietly waited. When at about 1900 on 14 August the announcement finally came, the women cheered and fell out for the victory celebration. For three hours they zigzagged throughout the base, playing until their lips were sore, and blisters formed on their fingers and heels.

Thousands of Marines, men and women, spilled out of the barracks and the theater and danced in and out of their ranks. The women played every march they knew by heart because they couldn't read their music in the pandemonium that followed them. And, when entire sections couldn't play because of their tears, the drums just beat out the cadence.

Epilogue: War's End

Strength

A mere two-and-a-half years after the formation of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, there were 18,460 women on active duty: 17,640 enlisted persons and 820 officers. Women commanded 28 units and comprised

WRs Jo Meers, Mickey Merrill, Mary Szoroletta, and Neva Vredevoogd celebrate the end of the Pacific War with "lemonade" at the Blue Mirror, a favorite "watering hole" on 14th Street in Washington, D.C., where Marines often met.

Photo courtesy of Neva Vredevoogd Austin

Photo courtesy of Sarah Thornton

As other WRs look on, SSgt Elaine Martin cuts the birthday cake on 13 February 1946 for Parris Island Marines celebrating the 3d anniversary of the founding women's program. Demobilization of women Marines had already begun by this date.

another 17. A few were assigned independently to specialities such as recruiting.

When the war finally ended with the abrupt surrender of the Japanese, women Marines were working in 225 specialties in 16 out of 21 functional fields, filling 85 percent of the enlisted jobs at Headquarters Marine Corps and comprising one-half to two-thirds of the permanent personnel at all large Marine Corps posts and stations.

Despite the tentative beginning, women's units flourished. Line organizations included Women's Reserve battalions at Henderson Hall, Quantico, Camp Lejeune, Parris Island, San Diego, Camp Pendleton, and Pearl Harbor; the School Detachment at Camp Lejeune; and Women Reservist companies at San Diego, San Francisco, and the Navy Yard at Mare Island, California, and in Washington, D.C., along with aviation units at Cherry Point, Quantico, Parris Island, El Toro, Miramar, El Centro, Santa Barbara, Mojave, Ewa, and Eagle Mountain Lake (Texas).

Since it was natural to use women in the quartermaster field, WRs were working at the Depot of Supplies in Philadelphia; South Annex, Norfolk; Camp Elliott, California; and Depot of Supplies, San Francisco. They also worked at the four procurement districts: Eastern, in Philadelphia; Southern, in Atlanta; Central, in Chicago; and Western, at San Francisco.

Demobilization

The task of demobilizing the war machine was essentially an administrative process requiring more clerks than warriors. There's an old saw that says an army fights on beans and bullets. In 1945, the War Department learned that an army disbands on a mountain of paperwork. Although nearly everyone expected the women to return home quickly, they were needed more, not less. Policies regarding the discharge of women – not only from the Marine Corps, but also from the other services – changed daily. Even while acknowledging their own opposition to women in uniform, a lot of men were anxious to keep female clerks on the job to process separation orders, cut paychecks, distribute medals and decorations, arrange transportation, assist surviving dependents, and otherwise settle the accounts of thousands of Marines.

The demobilization procedures called for mandatory resignation or discharge of all WRs, officers and enlisted women, by 1 September 1946. In fact, in November 1945 the Commandant was quoted in the newspapers as saying that the Marine Corps Women's Reserve would be reduced to 2,638 enlisted women and 200 officers by 30 June 1946 and the organization ". . . will completely vanish from the picture by September . . . ."

With the MCWR already at two-thirds its peak strength, Colonel Streeter, believing women should remain no longer than needed, asked to be released. She resigned on 6 December 1945 and, the following day, her assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Katherine A. Towle, was appointed the second Director of the wartime Marine Corps Women's Reserve and promoted to colonel. To Colonel Towle fell the dual responsibility of overseeing the demobilization of the women and planning for a postwar women's organization.

In the spring of 1946 there was a steady stream of correspondence among the Services exploring various proposals to give women permanent status in the military. The Commandant endorsed a plan for a small women's reserve to be led in peacetime by a director with three officers at Headquarters and six in recruiting.

Conceding that some sort of women's military organization was inevitable, and legislation authorizing it was pending, the Marine Corps relaxed the requirement that WR

Photo courtesy of Raelyn Harman Subramanian

The WRs of Squadroom 1, Barracks 6, Company L, Henderson Hall, enjoy a farewell dinner on Admiral Nimitz Day in 1945.

officers resign. Those still on active duty could ask for assignment to inactive status, and those already separated were sent a letter asking them to reenlist in the Reserve and reminding them of the privileges and responsibilities of belonging to the Marine Corps Reserve. Upon request, they were reappointed to the permanent rank held upon resignation.

A point system, similar but not identical to the one used for men, was worked out to control the flow of separations. Women with 25 points on 1 September 1945 were eligible for immediate discharge and the required number of points was progressively reduced until it reached zero the following July. Exceptions were made and immediate separation was possible for women at least 38 years old (later changed to 35) and for married women whose servicemen husbands had been discharged. Married women with a minimum of one year's service could be released if their husbands, discharged or not, were in the country.

At first, commanding officers released women directly from their duty stations and when a unit's strength fell below 100, it was disbanded. Later, separation centers were set up at Henderson Hall, Camp Lejeune, San Diego, and El Toro. In contrast to the others, the WRs in San Diego were attached to the male 1st Separation Company. Maintaining the paternalistic stance taken right from the start, female leaders were charged with assisting the women through the transition from Marine to civilian.

The office of the wartime MCWR was closed on 15 June 1946 when Colonel Towle began terminal leave. Before leaving the Marine Corps to return to the University of California's Berkeley campus as administrative assistant to the vice president and provost, Colonel Towle proposed the name of Major Julia E.

Capt Henry W. Bransom swears in Julia E. Hamblet, the first woman from the nation's capital to join the Marine Corps, who became the director of the postwar Women's Reserve, 1946-1948. She is credited with maintaining the interest of the released WRs during those years and for organizing WR platoons across the country.

Marine Corps Historical Collection

Photo courtesy of Raelyn Harman Subramanian

Sisters Petrina and Rose Nigro, with their fellow Marine, Betty Hall, have dinner in Washington, D.C., in 1945, before Rose and Betty leave for duty in San Diego.

Hamblet to be director of the women's postwar organization. She wrote:

> It is believed that Major Hamblet has all the attributes and qualifications desirable in a director of a postwar MCWR. She is a college graduate, about 30 years of age (which is considered a great advantage in appealing to volunteers among younger women, especially those of college age), of fine appearance, with a great deal of natural dignity and poise, and has an outstanding service record and reputation. She has had experience in both line and aviation assignments and has served in the present MCWR since her commissioning in the First Officers' Class in May 1943.

The recommendation was acknowledged by Headquarters but not acted upon. Meanwhile Colonel Towle's assistant, Captain Mary V. Illich, set to work tidying up the details of shutting down the wartime Women's Reserve. With one private first class, Captain Illich expected to finish by 15 July 1946, about a month and a half ahead of the Commandant's schedule.

Ironically, on the day before she left, Colonel Towle, in a report of the state of the MCWR to the Director of Personnel, wrote:

> General morale during demobilization has been gratifyingly high. Part of this had been due to the definite stand the Marine Corps itself had taken from the beginning on MCWR demobilization, particularly in setting and maintaining 1 September as the terminal date of the wartime Women's Reserve. It has been a goal to work toward, and Marine Corps women have never had the uncertainty and confusion concerning demobilization which have occurred in some of the other women's services because of the shifting of date and changes in policy.

The cover of the music for "March of the Women Marines," music and words by Louis Saverino and Emil Grasser, respectively, of the U.S. Marine Band.

Cover sheet courtesy of Marine Band

How could she have foreseen that as the September deadline neared, case after case of exception would be requested? Few were granted, but it kept Captain Illich so busy that on 30 August she received an assistant, First Lieutenant Mary Janice Hale. Lieutenant Hale's appointment came on the heels of a major change in policy when on 7 August 1946 the Commandant authorized keeping 100 WRs on active duty at HQMC, for a period of eight months. The women, clerk typists, payroll clerks, and auditors were assigned to a new division of the Personnel Division to administer the Armed Forces Leave Act of 1946. As an inducement to stay, qualified privates first class who applied were automatically promoted to corporal.

The very next day, on 8 August, the Commandant authorized the retention of even more WRs—200 who would stay until 30 June 1947—10 months beyond the original deadline for complete disbandment. He clearly specified that these women ". . . must have clerical, stenographic or other specific ability (no cooks, truck drivers, hairdressers, etc., unless they have a secondary clerical specification)."

So, in the midst of a determined drive to demobilize the Women's Reserve, 300 women were asked to stay, and even as the last of the WR barracks was being closed, a new unit, Company E, 1st Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, commanded by First Lieutenant Regina M. Durant, was activated on 19 August 1946 with 12 officers and 286 enlisted women.

An anonymous author summed up the demobilization of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve quite well in an undated, unsigned brief history that begins:

It is rumored that when it was announced that women were going to be enlisted in the Marine Corps the air was colored with profanity in the language of every nation as the members of the old Corps gathered to discuss this earth-shattering calamity. It is entirely probable that the wailing and moaning which went on that day amongst the old Marines was never equaled—never, that is, until it was announced that the women Marines were going home. Then, with a complete reversal of attitude, many of those same Marines declared that the women in their offices were essential military personnel and absolutely could not be spared from the office.

On its first-year anniversary, 13 February 1944, the Women's Reserve received a treasured message from President Franklin D. Roosevelt:

> The nation is as proud of you as of your fellow Marines—for Marine women are upholding the brilliant traditions of the Corps with a spirit of loyalty and diligence worthy of the highest admiration of all Americans. You have quickly and efficiently taken over scores of different kinds of duties that not long ago were considered strictly masculine assignments; and in doing so, you have freed a large number of well-trained, battle-ready men of the corps for action . . . .

But, standing out among all the beautifully worded accolades bestowed on the women Marines of World War II, is a simple statement made by General Holcomb, the Commandant so opposed to having women in the Marine Corps in the beginning: "Like most Marines, when the matter first came up I didn't believe women could serve any useful purpose in the Marine Corps . . . . Since then I've changed my mind."

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A119296

The statue of Molly Marine at the corner of Elke Place and Canal Street in New Orleans was dedicated on 10 November 1943 to the women of the Marine Corps and serves as a symbol of continuous service for today's women Marines, who send an anniversary tribute each year from their duty stations around the world.

Doris Bibb and members of the Women Marines Association and other former Marine associates gather at the funeral of Col Ruth Cheney Streeter, on 3 October 1990.

Photo courtesy of Doris S. Bibb

Sources

The primary sources for this pamphlet are *History of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve: A Critical Analysis of its Development and Operation, 1943-1945* (Washington 6Dec45), written by Cols Ruth Cheney Streeter and Katherine A. Towle at the end of the war, and LtCol Pat Meid's *Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II* (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1968).

Oral history transcripts of interviews with Col Streeter, *Ruth Cheney Streeter, A Lively Life* (Morristown, N.J. 1979), and Col Katherine A. Towle, *Katherine A. Towle, Administration and Leadership* (Berkeley: University of California, 1970), give behind the scenes insights into the era.

Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution, written by MajGen Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret), is a key reference because it presents a complete picture, comparing the road taken by each service in integrating women into the Armed Forces and argues that interservice cooperation among the female directors played a vital part in the success of all.

Special thanks are reserved for Peter A. Soderbergh, who allowed the author to use anecdotal material from his entertaining and informative social history, *Women Marines: The World War II Era* (Westport and London: Praeger Publishers, 1992). Stories about the women of the WR Band are from their privately published history, *Musical Women Marines of World War II*.

The author's previously published, *A History of the Women Marines, 1946-1977* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Dvision, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1986), and *Coping With Sexism in the Military* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 1990), were also used. Marine Corps World War II recruiting brochures and booklets, especially "Be A Marine . . . Free a Marine to Fight: U. S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve", and "So Proudly We Serve: U. S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve," were important souces of information regarding recruiting, training, and job opportunities.

"Lady Leathernecks," written by Col Towle for the *Marine Corps Gazette* and published in February 1946, is a good summary of the era. Finally, the contributions of the WRs who entrusted me with their precious photographs and took the time to pen their personal stories were immeasurable. I hope this overview brings back many fond memories.

About the Author

Colonel Mary V. Stremlow, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (Ret), Deputy Director, New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs, has a bachelor of science degree from New York State University College at Buffalo. Her Marine Corps service includes experience as a company commander; staff operations officer; executive officer, Woman Recruit Training Battalion, Parris Island; inspector-instructor, Women's Reserve Platoon, 3d Infantry Battalion, Boston; instructor at the Woman Officer School, Quantico; woman officer selection officer for the 1st Marine Corps District; and officer-in-charge, Mobilization Station, Buffalo.

She is the author of an official history, *A History of the Women Marines, 1946-1977*, and of *Coping With Sexism in the Military*. She is a frequent public speaker on the history of women veterans and for three years served on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Women Veterans.

Colonel Stremlow counts three other women Marines in her family—Sergeant Rose M. Nigro and Master Sergeant Petrina C. Nigro, both Women Reservists in World War II, and her sister, retired Major Carol Vertalino Diliberto.

WORLD WAR II

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