

# WOMEN MARINES IN THE 1980's





# **WOMEN MARINES IN THE 1980s**

**I. BASIC ARTICLE**

**WOMEN MARINES**

**II. APPENDIX A**

**HISTORICAL REVIEW OF  
WOMEN IN THE MARINE  
CORPS**

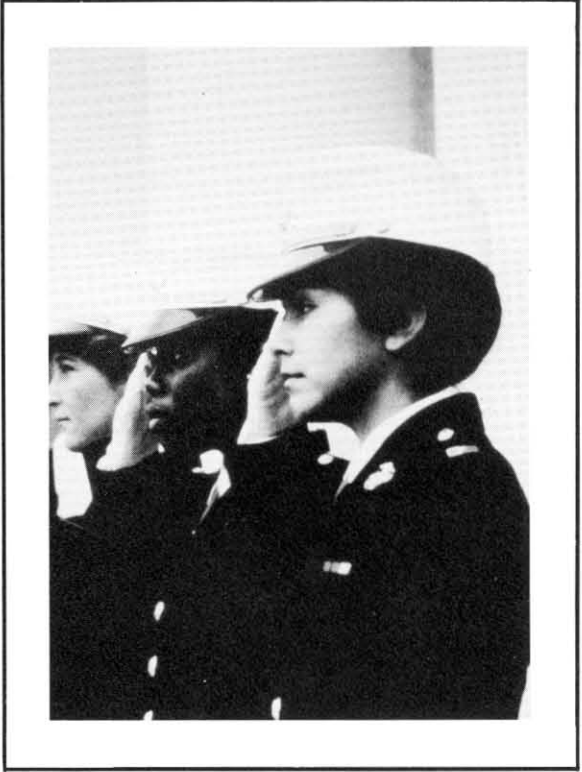
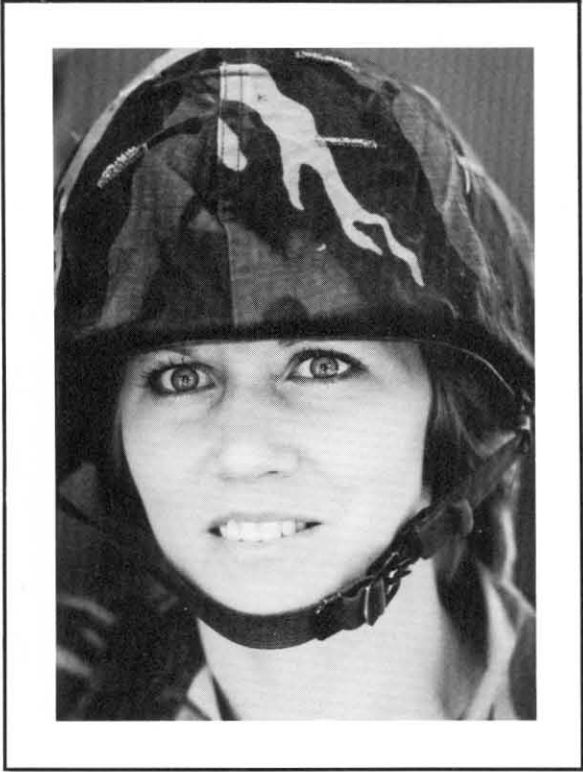
**APPENDIX B**

**QUALIFICATIONS FOR A  
COMMISSION OR  
ENLISTMENT**

**REVISED OCT 1986**

**DIVISION OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS (CODE PAM)**

**HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS**



# WOMEN MARINES IN THE 1980s

## Introduction

Forty-three years ago, in the midst of a war, legislation based on the needs of this nation enabled women to enter the United States Marine Corps. Later laws ensured their continuing service. Current laws provide them with equality of opportunity.

Yet, the contribution made by women Marines, past and present, could not be legislated or predicted 43 years ago. Their role was made possible by the sustained efforts of thousands of Marines, both men and women. The historical synopsis at Appendix A provides a brief glimpse of some of the men and women, and the landmark decisions and actions that opened the door for women to serve in the Marine Corps.

There are now approximately 9700 officer and enlisted women Marines on active duty and over 1600 in the Reserve component—more than at any other period except during World War II when the Marine Corps swelled to an all-time high of 485,000 Marines, including almost 20,000 women Marine reservists.

Women can trace their continuous active service from February 1943 when the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR) was formed for wartime service. The idea of women serving in the formerly all-male military was not entirely new, however. For the Marines, the precedent had been set in World War I when 305 "Reservists (Female)" were admitted into the Marine Corps to perform clerical duties, and, thereby, "Free a Marine to fight."

All told, beginning with their brief initial service in 1918, and followed by their extensive, unbroken record of service from 1943 to the present, women have demonstrated a consistently high degree of competence and dedication to duty as Marines. To their current status as members of the active forces, they have brought a broad range of skills and professional achievements.

As their numbers grow, the scope of promotion and career opportunities open to women has increased, and women Marines have moved into a more fully integrated role in the Marine Corps.

Women Marines come under the same policies as male Marines at every level of command, except where legal or physical differences warrant separate treatment. In general, to meet the needs of the Service—and within the limits of its mission and organization as a combat Service—it is Marine Corps policy to assign women Marines to billets commensurate with their capabilities to the maximum extent practicable.

By law, women Marines are restricted from assignment to combatant vessels or aircraft. Consequently, women Marines are not classified within the combatant occupational fields, i.e., infantry; artillery; tank and assault amphibian vehicle; and pilot/naval flight officer; nor within certain combat-related military occupational specialties including flight crew.

The combat exclusion is reflected in training and assignment policies relating to women Marines. In all other respects, however—quality and variety of training, education, choice of assignments, promotions, incentives, and benefits—women have the same opportunity as men for a rewarding career in the Marine Corps.

## Officer Training

Women officer candidates are recruited from college campuses throughout the United States; from the ranks of qualified enlisted women; and from the U.S. Naval Academy, beginning with the Class of 1980, the first graduating class which included women.

Candidates for a Marine commission, except Naval Academy graduates, must undergo at 10-week training and evaluation course at the Officer Candidates School (OCS), Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, Va., prior to being commissioned as second lieutenants. Following commissioning, they are assigned to The Basic School (TBS), also located at Quantico, for basic officer training.

At OCS, the Officer Candidates Class is designed primarily as a testing ground rather than a total training environment. The program includes training in basic tactics, weaponry, drill, combat signals, and physical fitness.

Officer candidates serve in temporary leadership positions so they can be evaluated on appearance, command presence, strength, agility, coordination, endurance, intelligence, and moral and physical courage. During the course of the program, a candidate's ability to lead other Marines under conditions of extreme stress is also evaluated.

Formerly, because women Marines had been limited to non-Fleet Marine Force assignments and served primarily in an administrative role, the officer training program for women was shorter than that provided men and generally oriented toward administrative duties.

In 1977, pilot programs were authorized to partially consolidate officer training for men and women at the OCS level and, thereafter, at TBS level. With modifications primarily in the physical fitness program, women adjusted rapidly to the broadened training opportunities provided them.

Using physical fitness data from the military service academies and professional civilian training and development courses, a pilot program was developed to provide a challenge for the physical capabilities of women Marine officer candidates. After assessing the program, a number of adjustments were made and the program was approved. The agility course, for example, while similar for men and women, was modified to accommodate differences in strength, physiology, and physical capabilities between men and women. With these differences taken into consideration, the physical fitness test, conditioning hikes, and endurance runs for women are considered as individually demanding as those required for men.

The training curricula at OCS now places all officer candidates in the same military environment where they can be judged fairly and uniformly on their performance under stress. Men and women are tested in similar environments which duplicate, to a degree, the stress they will encounter in carrying out their demanding assignments in the field and in garrison.

After completing the program, the candidates are commissioned and assigned to The Basic School. The Officers Basic Course is designed to provide newly commissioned Marine officers with a foundation of professional knowledge and to develop the attitudes and values necessary to help them discharge their duties as company grade officers.

The program at The Basic School provides instruction in:

leadership	personnel administration
marksmanship	management
map reading	Marine Corps history and traditions
communications	roles and missions
small unit infantry tactics	first aid
infantry weapons and supporting arms	patrolling
field engineering	combat intelligence
nuclear, biological and chemical defense	helicopter-borne operations
organization and staff functioning	mechanized operations
drill, command, and ceremonies	aviation and air support amphibious operations
military law	physical training and conditioning techniques
logistics	

On the whole, the pilot consolidated training program at TBS proved successful. One change, initiated in 1980, discontinued the practice of integrating men and women within the same platoon, and provided for the establishment of a separate Woman Marine Officer Platoon within those companies having women officers. With this modification, women officers continue to participate in all phases of training within a separate woman Marine platoon operating within the integrated company.

The evaluation system has also been modified. At one point, the training and evaluation systems were consolidated to such a degree that in 1978, for the first time, a woman Marine was able to become the "Honor Graduate" of The Basic School. Now, however, men and women Marine officers are evaluated separately in several academic areas.

Under the present consolidated training program, women officers receive identical and consolidated training in all areas except where the combat restriction and physiological limitations pertain, i.e., offensive combat, physical fitness training, and sword manual. Participation by women Marines in tactical field training exercises is limited to the defensive role, survival and to support and staff functions on the offense.

Where separate training is conducted, emphasis is on ensuring that all standards are fully met within each group. During the process, leadership traits are developed and emphasized, as are pride, discipline, and esprit de corps. Positive attitudes are instilled and enhanced, among them, respect for, responsibility toward, and appreciation of one's fellow Marines, whether men or women, and the contribution each makes to the unique "Corps of Marines" concept.

About three months into their post-commission training, the new officers are given the opportunity to state their preference for assignment. Approximately 90 percent of all newly commissioned Marine officers are assigned to an Occupational Field (OF) of their choice. This initial choice is not limiting, as officers will most likely work in a variety of other assignments during their service careers.

For example, a Marine officer assigned a primary Military Occupational Speciality (MOS) of Intelligence, Motor Transport, or Communications may eventually serve as an instructor, a member of a joint service staff, or a White House aide. He or she may work in the civilian community with a Marine Reserve unit or on recruiting duty. In these and other occupational fields, women officers work side by side with their male counterparts.

## ENLISTED RECRUIT TRAINING

Qualifications for women enlisting in the Marine Corps include high school graduation and excellent health and moral character. Age limits are 17 to 28.

Women train separately from male recruits, and their program of instruction differs in some respects from that provided male recruits. Both programs, however, have a common goal: to build basic Marines. The recruit training is 10.3 weeks long for both men and women.

Women recruits are trained at the Fourth Recruit Training Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C., the Corps' sole recruit training facility for women. The training is designed to produce a basic woman Marine, one who will instinctively practice the personal and professional traits essential to, and that will distinguish her as, a Marine. She will become sufficiently familiar with individual weapons and field skills to meet the minimum training requirements necessitated by the Marine Corps woman Marine assignment policy. The overall goal of recruit training is to instill in each recruit the skill, knowledge, discipline, pride, and self-confidence that will make them, upon graduation, worthy of recognition as United States Marines.

The intensive 10.3 week program is divided into three training phases, all of which are professionally administered and supervised. In the first training phase, emphasis is on physical conditioning, close-order drill, first aid, Marine Corps history and traditions, military customs and courtesies, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, interior guard, uniform regulations, and water safety survival training. During the process, the recruit begins leadership training. She also attends introductory classes on the service rifle, primarily from the standpoint of becoming familiar with and learning safety in handling the M-16.

One of the first things a recruit learns is to respond to orders. Instructions, commands, routine requests and procedures are handled quickly, a pattern of action she will carry over into her life as a Marine. Appearance, weight, and good grooming are emphasized, along with responsiveness and performance throughout the training program.

The many hours spent on physical fitness enhance the recruit's appearance and self esteem, and provide the increased stamina and muscle tone required for the rigorous training schedule and physical fitness tests ahead.

In the second training phase, the recruits attend classes on nuclear, biological and chemical defense; field sanitation; preventive dentistry; and hygienic standards.

While women Marines are not assigned to combat units or given offensive combat training, they do receive training with the service rifle and pistol. Women are now required to fire for record and qualification on the rifle range. The new program at Parris Island, S.C., boot camp teaches female recruits how to handle a rifle. The new policy governing military combat training for women was established in October 1985. The policy, which stresses that the ban on women serving in combat jobs has not been relaxed, nevertheless concluded that all female Marines should be qualified in using the M-16 rifle.

During the third and final phase of training, the recruits are instructed in a variety of subjects, including personal and financial responsibilities; occupational specialty training and formal schools available to women in the Marine Corps; career opportunities; and the Corps' policy on drug and alcohol abuse. They undergo their final exams, take the physical fitness test, and prepare for "Command Inspection," the most intensive inspection of the entire training process.

The day of graduation, the recruit wears the Marine Corps emblem for the first time. During an informal but memorable ceremony, the Drill Instructors attach the emblem to each recruit's uniform jacket. Upon graduation, the young woman is addressed as a Marine for the first time. Graduation ceremonies, or "Final Review," are usually held at the Recruit Depot's main parade deck, and family and friends are invited to attend.

As a new Marine, she is now ready to begin Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) training in one of the 35 occupational fields open to women Marines. In this phase of training, she will learn her assigned job specialties by attending a formal school or by a combination of schooling and on-the-job (OJT) training.



The subjects and instructional hours completed by each woman Marine in the recruit training program are listed below:

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Instructional Hours</u>
Drill & Evaluation; Ceremonies & Parades	45
Physical Training & Physical Fitness Test	37
Clothing, Equipment, Inspections	27.5
Introductory Marksmanship	18
Troop Information	18
Marine Corps History and Traditions	15
Leadership	9
Field Soldiering	8.5
Swimming	8
Professional Development	8
Weapons Training	7.5
Personal Health, Hygiene, & Sanitation	7
Military Law	6
First Aid	5
Orientation Lectures	4
Interior Guard	4
NBC Defense	4
Defense Familiarization	4
Land Navigation	4
Character Guidance	4
Conduct in War	2
Field Engineering	2

## PROMOTION, CLASSIFICATION, ASSIGNMENT AND DEPLOYMENT POLICIES

**PROMOTIONS**—In keeping with the provisions of the Defense Officers Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), a far reaching piece of legislation signed into law by President Carter, Title 10 of the U.S. Code has been revised to provide an integrated promotion system for men and women officers through the general officer grades. Effective September 15, 1981, women Marine officers became eligible to compete directly with their male contemporaries for promotion. They are also eligible for selection to the various Limited Duty Officer (LDO) categories.

Enlisted women serve in all grades from private to master gunnery sergeant or sergeant major (E-1 through E-9). They are promoted along with their contemporaries, both male and female, as a matter of policy.

**CLASSIFICATION POLICY**—As indicated earlier, the Combat Arms occupational fields—infantry, artillery, tracked vehicles, and pilot/naval flight officer—are closed to women. Women Marines do not serve as pilots or naval flight officers since virtually all Marine aircraft are considered combat aircraft.

Although occupational fields other than the Combat Arms are generally open to women, there are certain Military Occupational Specialties, within these fields which are closed to them. The specialties, described as combat related/flightcrew MOSs, range from Interrogation-Translation Specialist to Airborne Radio Operator.

**ASSIGNMENT AND DEPLOYMENT POLICIES**—The restrictions on assignment of women are based on 10 U.S.C., section 6015, which states:

*“... women may not be assigned to duty on vessels or in aircraft that are engaged in combat missions nor may they be assigned to other than temporary duty on vessels of the Navy except hospital ships, transports and vessels of a similiar classification not expected to be assigned combat missions.”*

Subject to the above restrictions, women Marines may be assigned to any other billet consistent with their training, qualifications, and physical capabilities. They serve on an interchangeable basis with male Marines in noncombatant positions, subject to restrictions imposed by current laws. Women now serve in 90 percent of all Marine occupational fields, and hold positions of responsibility in combat support and combat service support units throughout the Marine operating forces.

In non-Fleet Marine Force assignments, women may be assigned to any unit or duty station for which qualified. They may also be designated as enlisted crew members and assigned duties aboard base and command support aircraft (C-9 and T-39).

Women Marines may be assigned to and will deploy with the Headquarters Staff of the Marine Amphibious Force (MAF), division, aircraft wing, and Force Service Support Group (FSSG). Women Marines will not be assigned to any of the standing Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB) staffs.

During conflict women Marines will deploy with the MAF, provided appropriate transportation is available. They may deploy with certain elements of the MAB depending on area of operations and the availability of appropriate transportation.

Women assigned to deployment units in the Western Pacific (WestPac) may deploy with their units, providing the units go to and from WestPac by air. Women Marines will not deploy with a Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) since these deployments are made by ship and involve units on combat standby. In order to provide field training necessary to be fully MOS qualified women Marines may participate in all MAF and MAB-size exercises, provided appropriate transportation is available.

While women in the Marine Corps may see temporary duty aboard ship, provided adequate separate quarters are available for them, they are not assigned permanent duty with ships as Marine complements are assigned only to combat ships.

**RETENTION**—Pregnancy is not a bar to the assignment or retention of women in the Marine Corps. Those who become pregnant have the option to remain on active duty or to be discharged.

If they elect to remain on active duty after becoming parents, they are treated the same as their male counterparts in similar circumstances. They will not be guaranteed special consideration in duty assignments and duty stations, based solely on the fact that they have dependents and family responsibilities.

A woman's request for separation by reason of pregnancy may be denied if she has incurred an additional active duty obligation following receipt of special compensation (e.g. reenlistment bonus), fully funded education or advanced technical training, or when she is serving in an MOS which requires her retention based on the demands of the service. A request for separation will be considered when any of the above conditions apply if the woman Marine can show overriding or compelling factors of personal need.

Certain considerations apply, however. Pregnant women will not be ordered overseas where the prescribed tour length is 12 months. If stationed in the continental United States, they will not be detached after their sixth month of pregnancy. If stationed overseas, they may apply for special modifications to their overseas tour date, depending on individual circumstances. In addition, women Marines may be assigned to dependents-restricted tours of duty overseas, depending on grade and MOS requirements of the particular assignment.

## SUMMARY

Because of its status and mission as a fighting organization, the Marine Corps' purpose is combat readiness. The combat exclusion will continue to limit the number of women the Marine Corps can effectively utilize. However, the Corps' ultimate goal is to take full advantage of the significant contributions that women can make to mission accomplishment.



## APPENDIX A A SHORT HISTORY OF WOMEN MARINES WORLD WAR I

A look back at their earliest beginnings shows that 305 women served briefly, but efficiently, in the Marine Corps during World War I. These were the "Reservists (Female)," who were enrolled to perform clerical jobs, thus freeing men in those billets for combat duty. The first of these forerunners of today's women Marines, Opha Mae Johnson, enlisted in Washington, DC on August 13, 1918, one day after the Honorable Josephus Daniels, then Secretary of the Navy, authorized the Navy and Marine Corps Reserves to accept women for service.

Opening the ranks of the Corps to distaff Marines was based on a government estimate that "40 percent of the work at Headquarters Marine Corps could be performed by women as well as men." Recruiters were instructed to enlist only women of excellent character and neat appearance with business and office experience. The greatest demand was for competent stenographers, bookkeepers, and typists, but women who possessed a working knowledge of correspondence and basic clerical skills were also eligible.

Less than a month after the initial recruiting call, 31 Reservists (female) had signed up, and by September 1918, the Commandant of the Marine Corps had called them to active duty. Most of them were assigned duties at Headquarters Marine Corps, in the offices of the Paymaster, Quartermaster, Adjutant and Inspector, and the Office of the Commandant. A handful were stationed in recruiting offices outside the Washington area, some as far away as San Francisco and Portland, Oregon.

On July 30, 1919, Major General Commandant George Barnett issued orders for the separation of all women from the Reserve. Those on active duty were immediately transferred to inactive status. Gradual disenrollment continued until, by 1922, all of the Women Reservists had packed away their uniforms and returned to civilian life. Many of them accepted Civil Service appointments at Headquarters Marine Corps, thus retaining contact with the Corps. But, from a military standpoint, for the next two peaceful decades, the Marine Corps remained strictly a man's world.

## WORLD WAR II

Americans were still remembering Pearl Harbor, but the war in the Pacific was almost a year old before the Marine Corps again looked to woman-power to meet the new war's unprecedented demands for personnel. On November 7, 1942, the wartime Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Thomas Holcomb, approved the formation of the United States Marine Corps Women's Reserve, under legislation sponsored by Congressman Melvin J. Maas of Minnesota (the late Major General Maas, USMCR).

Prior to public announcement of the new Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR), Mrs. Ruth Cheney Streeter of Morristown, New Jersey, had been selected to head the program. Mrs. Streeter, married since 1917 to lawyer Thomas W. Streeter, was the mother of three sons, all of whom saw World War II service, and a teenage daughter. An alumnus of Bryn Mawr College, she held a commercial pilot's license (1942), was active in health and welfare matters for the state of New Jersey, and was a member of a citizens committee assisting servicemen stationed at Fort Dix.

On January 29, 1943, she was quietly commissioned a major, USMCWR, and sworn in as the first Director of the Women's Reserve by the Honorable Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy. She served as Director throughout World War II and achieved the grade of colonel prior to resigning her commission on December 6, 1945, in accordance with demobilization procedures. Colonel Streeter was not, however, the first woman to go on active duty in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in World War II. That distinction, and the first commission in the new Women's Reserve, went to Anne A. Lentz, Women's Reserve (WR) representative for Clothing. A civilian clothing expert who had helped the Army's WAC, Captain Lentz had originally come to the Marine Corps in December 1942 on a 30-day assignment to help design the uniform for the Women's Reserves, and wound up wearing a Marine Corps uniform herself.



In addition, six other women whose abilities and civilian experience qualified them for priority billets were subsequently selected for "direct commissions" to aid in setting up the new women's program. One of these, Captain Lillian O'Malley Daly, WR representative for West Coast activities, was a former World War I reservist.

Public announcement of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve program was made by General Holcomb on February 13, 1943. From the beginning, recruiters throughout the country found themselves swamped with women who wanted to be Marines. In the nation's Capital alone, more than a hundred volunteers appeared during the first two days. Widows of Marines, high school girls, college students, office workers, grandmothers—all wanted to do something for their country during the war, and the Marine Corps was the service they chose.

Since the Marine Corps had no facilities for training women, the Navy offered the use of its training schools: Hunter College (New York) for enlisted women; and Mount Holyoke College (Massachusetts) for officer candidates.

Seventy-five women (the first officer class) entered Mount Holyoke on March 13, 1943; they were commissioned on May 11. The first enlisted class (722 women) arrived at Hunter College, March 26 and graduated April 25, 1943.

Women Marine Reserves continued to train with the Navy until July 1943, when a newly constructed training complex opened at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The new complex housed both the officer candidate and enlisted schools and the Women's Reserve specialist schools.

The Women's Reserve had received an "official frown" from high Marine Corps sources in the beginning. However, once the women came aboard, both they and the men worked to make the program a success. Two major morale factors contributed to this. First, the Marines shared their own proud name with the women reserves, making them the only service women who did not answer to an alphabetical designation or quasi-official nickname. They were accepted as a full-fledged part of the Corps, not an auxiliary in any sense. Second, the men's distinctive uniform was followed closely, with requisite feminine modifications for the women Marines. As a Director of the Women's Reserve at the time expressed it, the men wanted the women to wear the traditional forest green of the Corps, in a design "sufficiently like the Marine Corps uniform to permit no possibility of doubt as to the branch of the service to which the Women Reservists are attached."

Their recruiting slogan was "Free a Marine to Fight!" and the women lived up to it. Within a year of activation, Women Reserves were serving at every major post and station and in recruiting districts throughout the United States. An original prediction of 30 jobs had grown into more than 200 assignments. Besides the usual clerical jobs, specialist billets for which women had been trained were turned over to them. In significant numbers, they were assigned to such fields as communications, quartermaster, post exchange, motor transport, food services, personnel, intelligence, administration, recruiting, community relations, education, legal assistance, and photography. In aviation, their skills ranged from parachute rigger, to link trainer instructor, aerologist, and control tower operator.

By June 1944, Women Reserves constituted 85 percent of the enlisted personnel on duty at Headquarters Marine Corps, and from one-half to two-thirds of the personnel manning all major posts and stations in the United States.

In September 1944, Navy Regulations were modified to permit women of Naval service to serve on a volunteer basis anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, including Alaska and Hawaii. On January 28, 1945, the first contingent of Women Reserves (160 enlisted and five officers) arrived in Hawaii. Before the war ended, nearly 1,000 women, making up two detachments, served with Marine Garrison Forces, Pearl Harbor, and at Marine Corps Air Station, Ewa, Oahu, Hawaii.

Exactly how many Marines the Women Reserves freed to fight was often a subject for speculation. Their peak strength—over 19,000—approximated the strength of a Marine Corps division. General Alexander A. Vandergrift, the

second wartime Commandant, once remarked that the Women Reserves could “feel responsible for putting the 6th Marine Division in the field; for without the women filling jobs throughout the Marine Corps, there would not have been sufficient men available to form that division.”

With the end of hostilities, the women’s units were rapidly demobilized. By December 1945, two-thirds of the Women Reserves, including their first Director, had been separated from the service or transferred to inactive status. Those who remained were scheduled for release by September 1, 1946.

Upon Colonel Streeter’s resignation, her assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Katherine A. Towle, was appointed the second Director of the wartime Women’s Reserve, with the rank of colonel. A native Californian, she had earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at the University of California at Berkeley. She was on the university’s staff at the time she accepted a direct commission as a captain in the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve early in 1943. Colonel Towle served as Director, MCWR, from December 7, 1945 until the wartime office was phased out on June 14, 1946.

## THE POSTWAR YEARS (1946-1949)

In late 1946, with total demobilization of the Women’s Reserve imminent, the Marine Corps elected to retain a small nucleus of trained women to set up a postwar Reserve, so that never again would it be necessary to “start from scratch.” Accordingly, a few selected Women Reserves were assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps to work out plans for the postwar Reserve. Other Women Reserves were also retained on active duty in assignments other than MCWR postwar planning, at major posts and stations, and in the recruiting districts.

Major Julia E. Hamblet who had only recently been released to inactive duty was almost immediately recalled to head the postwar Women’s Reserve, and, on September 6, 1946, was sworn into office as Director. Major Hamblet, a 1937 graduate of Vassar College, was among the original group commissioned in the Women’s Reserve upon graduation from the first Women Officers’ Class at Mount Holyoke.

From the end of 1946 through early 1948, there were no more than a hundred volunteer Women Reserves on active duty with the Marine Corps. These were the women whose continuity of service bridged the gap between the wartime Women’s Reserve and a permanent war-and-peacetime component of the Marine Corps.

With the passage of the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act (Public Law 625) on June 12, 1948, Congress authorized the acceptance of women into the Regular component of the Marine Corps. Initially, appointment or enlistment was limited to women then on active duty or with previous honorable Reserve service; but in January 1949, recruiting was opened to women without prior military service.

Under Public Law 625, the number of women in the Regular component could not exceed two percent of total service strength; women could not hold permanent rank above lieutenant colonel; and they could not be assigned duty in aircraft engaged in combat missions nor to vessels of the Navy other than transports and hospital ships. In addition, the Director of Women Marines was to be selected from women officers serving in the rank of major and would hold the temporary rank of colonel.

Because of Colonel Towle’s seniority in rank and service, Major Hamblet, still Director of the Women’s Reserve, recommended that the colonel be appointed as the first Director of Women Marines. Colonel Towle, then serving as Assistant Dean of Women at the University of California at Berkeley, was recalled to active duty. On November 3, 1948, she was discharged as a colonel from the Marine Corps Reserve and accepted a Regular commission as a permanent lieutenant colonel in the United States Marine Corps. On the following day, she was appointed Director of Women Marines, with the temporary rank of colonel. She and Major Hamblet were among the first women officers to receive a Regular commission.

Basic ("boot") training for enlisted women, which had been deactivated at Camp Lejeune in 1945, was reactivated early in 1949 at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C. The newly formed unit, the 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, was a battalion in organization and operation, if not in size. Its first commanding officer was Captain Margaret M. Henderson, who, ten years later, would be appointed Director of Women Marines with the grade of colonel.

In a recent letter recalling her experiences in the unit's formative days, Colonel Henderson, now retired, wrote: "I readily observed how having women train at a station where male recruits trained resulted in increased responsiveness by the women Marines to the requirements of the Marine Corps." The key to the success of the new program, she noted, was "... the guidance, cooperation, and acceptance of the women's training program by the Commanding General (then Major General Alfred H. Noble) and his entire staff at Parris Island..."

Parris Island was chosen rather than San Diego because, although the largest number of women were accredited to California, the largest overall percentage of women had been recruited from the Middle Atlantic and Central States.

In June 1949, the Women Officers' Training Class was established at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, with Captain (later lieutenant colonel) Elsie E. Hill serving as the unit's first commanding officer. The Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools at the time was Major General Lemuel C. Shepherd (later, Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1952-56) who personally welcomed the first class and assured them of his support. There is, he said, a "definite place for women Marines during peace, as there was during war." Less than a year later, with the outbreak of the Korean War, there was added reason to recall his words.

During this same period, the first Organized Woman Reserve Platoons were activated. Beginning in April 1949, with units in Kansas City, Mo., and Boston, Mass., 13 of these Reserve platoons were established as part of the men's Organized Reserve units in major cities throughout the country. Women members attended regularly scheduled drill sessions and participated in the two-week Reserve summer field training program the same as the men.

## KOREA

At the beginning of the Korean War, the number of women Marines on active duty consisted of 28 officers and 496 enlisted personnel, members of the Regular component; and 18 officers and 41 enlisted women from the Reserve component. At the height of the war, the number of women Marines on active duty reached a peak strength of 2,787.

Reservists joining the women's platoons could not have foreseen that they would soon be living up to the World War II recruiting slogan, "Free a Marine to Fight!" But in the summer of 1950, the Korean War broke out; the Marine Corps Reserve was called up; and for the first time in history, Women Reserves were mobilized.

By August 1950, all 13 Organized Women Reserve Platoons had reported, as units, for duty at major posts and stations. In numbers they did not approach the strength of the Women Reserves of World War II; but their reserve training was an asset and helped them respond swiftly to their wartime mission. Like the women of two previous wars, they stepped into stateside jobs and freed male Marines for combat duty.

## POST KOREA

As the Korean conflict was ending, Colonel Towle retired and Julia Hamblet once again succeeded her as Director—this time as colonel. Colonel Hamblet held this post from May 1, 1953 to March 1, 1959, a record eight years of total combined service as Director, Women's Reserve (1946-48) and Director of Women Marines (1953-59).



Following the Korean War, seven new Organized Women Reserve Platoons were added to the original 13, bringing their total to 20. These platoons continued as the backbone of reserve training for women until 1958, when budget limitations forced their disbandment. About a third of the women who were attached to the deactivated platoons affiliated with the men's Organized Reserve units, their parent organizations. Of the remainder, who were transferred to inactive reserve status, many continued their Marine Corps service as active participants in the Reserve Volunteer Training Units (VTUs).

In the Regular component, the number of women Marines remained small. By 1964, the number on active duty had dropped to a low of 1,448. But their selection and training continued to provide the Marine Corps with a source of well-trained, professionally qualified women.

During this period, Colonel Margaret M. Henderson had succeeded Colonel Hamblet as Director. A 1932 graduate of the University of Texas, she had been commissioned a second lieutenant in the wartime Women's Reserve in June 1943 upon graduation from the Third Women Officers' Class at Mount Holyoke. Later, she was one of the first 20 women Marine officers selected for a commission in the Regular component. Colonel Henderson served as Director from March 2, 1959 until January 2, 1964, and retired two years later following a tour of duty as Assistant G-1 (Operations), Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego.

## VIETNAM

In 1965, due to the Vietnam commitment, a strength increase was approved, and by October, the number of women Marines had risen to 1,863. By 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, their strength had risen by 1,000 to a wartime peak of approximately 2,700 women Marines on active duty.

With the Marine Corps heavily committed in Southeast Asia, women Marines continued in their traditional role of freeing male Marines for combat. During this period, however, women Marines served in stateside jobs and overseas assignments undreamed of by those who had set the tradition. From 1965 to 1973, throughout a long and arduous war, women Marines, both officers and enlisted, carried out an increasing variety of duties.

Acting on the recommendations of the Woman Marine Program Study Group of 1964 (a board headed by Lieutenant General R. H. Pepper, USMC Retired), the Marine Corps began opening career-type formal training programs to women Marine officers. Following the study, a number of "firsts" took place: a woman Marine officer was assigned as a student in the Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare School (1966); the Command and Staff College (1968); the Armed Forces Staff College (1970); and the Naval War College (1978).

At the same time, larger numbers of enlisted women began to receive advanced technical training. By mid-1966, 75 percent of women recruits, upon graduation from boot camp, had been admitted to advanced formal schools in 17 different occupational fields. By comparison, five women Marines had received formal post-recruit training in 1963.

Along with enhanced training programs and professional training opportunities, the Marine Corps broadened geographic assignments for women. In 1965, there were approximately 60 women Marines serving outside the continental United States. Five years later, there were more than 200. During this period, women Marines saw duty in England, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Japan, Okinawa, Hong Kong, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere. Hawaii, long their farthest outpost, became a stop-over for women on the way to duty in the Philippines and beyond.

As their horizons expanded, women Marines established other "firsts." In April 1965, an unexpected turn of events in the Dominican Republic brought Master Sergeant Josephine (Gerbers) Davis recognition as the first woman Marine to undergo hostile fire.

In September 1966, the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed that women Marines be permitted to volunteer for service in the Far East. Within a month, Captain Marilyn W. Wallace was on her way to the Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni, Japan.

On March 18, 1967, Master Sergeant Barbara J. Dulinsky, who had volunteered for duty in Vietnam, reported to the Military Assistance Command in Saigon—the first woman Marine ordered to a combat zone. Prior to the American troop withdrawal, 28 enlisted women and eight officers had been seen in Vietnam, with usually eight to ten Marine women on duty at any one time. A number of them voluntarily extended their initial tours of duty there.

Throughout the Vietnam years, Colonel Barbara J. Bishop, and later, Colonel Jeanette I. Sustad served as Director of Women Marines. Colonel Bishop held the billet from January 3, 1964 to January 31, 1969. She had reported to Headquarters Marine Corps from duty in Naples, Italy, where she had been assigned as Military Secretary of the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, Southern Europe. A graduate of Yale and the University of Chicago, she was a member of the Second Women Officers' Class at Mount Holyoke in World War II and was commissioned in June 1943. She retired from active duty in August 1969 following service as Marine Corps Liaison Officer to the U.S. Senate.

One of the highlights of Colonel Bishop's tenure as Director occurred on November 8, 1967. On that date, President Johnson signed into Public Law 90-130, a bill increasing and, to a certain extent, equalizing, promotion opportunities for women in the military. Present at the White House ceremony were leaders and representatives of all the military services. Included were Colonel Bishop and three of her predecessors, Colonels Streeter, Hamblet and Henderson.

In his remarks that day, the President noted:

*“Our Armed Forces literally could not operate effectively or efficiently without our women . . . So, both as President and Commander-in-Chief, I am very pleased and very proud to have this measure sent to me by the Congress.”*

This law repealed the legal limitations on the number of women in the armed services; permitted the permanent promotion of women to colonel; and provided for the temporary appointment of a woman to rear admiral or brigadier general while serving in a specified “flag rank” billet in the Navy or Marine Corps. Women officers were still precluded from competing directly with male Marines for promotion. But, beginning in 1974, they were selected for promotion by the same board membership as male Marine officers, with the addition of a woman officer to the selection board.

At the time Public Law 90-130 was passed, Colonel Sustad was just completing her assignment as the first full-time Deputy Director of Women Marines. On February 1, 1969, she was appointed Director, and served in this capacity through the last years of the Vietnam War. A 1943 graduate of the University of Washington in Seattle, she had received officer candidate training at Camp Lejeune and was commissioned a second lieutenant in December 1943. She was among the first women to accept a Regular commission, in 1948, upon passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act. Colonel Sustad retired as Director on January 31, 1973. It was during her tenure as Director that regulations were changed to permit the permanent appointment of enlisted women as first sergeant and sergeant major in the Marine Corps. During this period, also, regulations which had mandated the separation of women who were pregnant or had custody of minor children were modified to permit waivers to remain on active duty on a case-by-case basis.

## POST VIETNAM

With the signing of the Paris Peace Accords on January 27, 1973, the war in Vietnam was declared officially ended. Not only a war, but an era, was coming to an end in 1973. The draft was replaced by the All-Volunteer Force policy. Societal roles for women were also changing rapidly. Both these factors would soon be reflected in the increasing number and role of women in the military.

On February 1, 1973—almost 30 years to the day that the first Director was sworn into office—Colonel Margaret A. Brewer became the seventh, and final, Director of Women Marines. The only Director without prior World War II service, she had entered the Marine Corps during the Korean War, immediately following graduation from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1952. Within weeks of her graduation, she was on duty as a communications watch officer at the Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, California.

In many ways, her service career paralleled that of the previous Directors. She was commissioned during a war, at the time of acute personnel shortages, and faced the unexpected demands that wartime service entailed. She served as Director during a period of sweeping change.

In the post-Vietnam era, the Marine Corps took positive steps, within the limits of its combat mission and organization, to integrate women more fully. Many of the actions which were to take place in coming years stemmed from increased effectiveness and utilization of women in the Marine Corps.

In November 1973, recommendations were approved by the Commandant with the written comment, "Let's move out!" Among the most significant recommendations were: (1) the establishment of a pilot program to train women for duty with selected, stateside elements of the Fleet Marine Force; (2) the assignment of women Marines to all occupational fields except the combat arms; and (3) the elimination of the regulation which prohibited women from commanding units other than women's units.

## MAJOR POLICY CHANGES

In 1974, the Commandant approved a change in policy permitting the assignment of women to specified rear echelon elements of the Fleet Marine Forces, on the condition that women Marines not be deployed with assault units or units likely to become engaged in combat. The decision came at the conclusion of a successful six-month pilot program and carried the provision "that such assignment not adversely affect combat readiness." Three years later, out of a total of approximately 3,830 women Marines on active duty, 600 were serving in Fleet Marine Force assignments.

In 1975, another major step was taken. The Marine Corps approved the assignment of women Marines to all occupational fields except the four designated as the combat arms, i.e., infantry, artillery, armor, and pilot/air crew.

Of necessity, some assignment restrictions remained, including the preservation of a rotation base for male Marines; the need for adequate facilities for women; the availability of non-deployable billets for women; and the legal restrictions prohibiting the assignment of women Marines to combat ships and aircraft.

## A NEW ERA

As women became more fully integrated in the Marine Corps, the decision was made to disestablish the Office of the Director of Women Marines. In a historic ceremony on June 30, 1977, the Office of the Director was disestablished following 34 years of existence and its functions were transferred to the other Marine Corps staff agencies. During the ceremony, Colonel Brewer was cited for her role in expanding and enhancing career opportunities for both officer and enlisted women Marines, including their routine assignment to various FMF units, and for her singular role in developing the new expanded sports program for women Marines.

**FIRST WOMAN GENERAL OFFICER**—With the disbanding of the historic office of the Director, Colonel Brewer was appointed the Marine Corps' Deputy Director of Information, the first woman to hold this billet. On May 11, 1978, she was appointed to a general officer's billet as Director of Information (later redesignated, Director of Public Affairs), with the rank of brigadier general. With this assignment, she became the first woman general officer in the history of the Marine Corps, and served in this capacity until her retirement on June 30, 1980.

General Brewer's appointment to brigadier general in the Marine Corps was effected under the provisions of Public Law 90-130 (codified under Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 5767, now repealed), which had been signed into law by President Johnson in 1967. Section 5767(c) of Title 10 stated:

*"Whenever the Secretary (of the Navy) determines that there is a position of sufficient importance and responsibility to require an incumbent in the grade of rear admiral or brigadier general, and that there is a woman officer of the Navy or Marine Corps who is best qualified to perform the duties of the position, he may designate that woman officer to hold that position. A woman officer so designated may be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to the grade of rear admiral or brigadier general. Such an appointment is effective on the date the officer reports for the designated duty and terminates on the date she is detached."*

In February 1985 and for the first time in Marine Corps history, a board of general officers selected a woman to be advanced to brigadier general. Colonel Gail M. Reals was selected from a group of 312 colonels and became the second woman to hold the rank of a general officer. Although President Carter nominated Brigadier Margaret A. Brewer to be the Corps' first woman general officer in 1978, Brigadier General Reals' selection by a board of nine Marine Corps general officers set a precedent.

**EMBASSY DUTY**—From 1979 to 1981, a number of women Marines served as members of the Marine Security Guard (MSG) detachment stationed at various embassies overseas. The pilot program for women Marines was discontinued following a wave of hostile actions directed against several U.S. embassies during a period of widespread international turbulence. In spite of the danger inherent to American embassy personnel and property during this period, the women Marines served creditably and all opted to complete their tours of duty at their embassy posts rather than accept immediate reassignment elsewhere.

Military women satisfy their duty requirements with the same professional competence displayed by military men. This fact has been widely recognized for many years. In November 1983, the numerous historic contributions made by women to national defense were commemorated in the Women's Corridor located in the Pentagon.

## WOMAN MARINE REVIEW

In September 1984, the Commandant of the Marine Corps approved the results of the initial phase of the Woman Marine Review which focused on the classification, assignment and deployment of enlisted women Marines. The objective of the review was fourfold. First, it had to ensure that the Force Commanders had sufficient men to meet deployment requirements. Second, it had to ensure that whatever policies resulted from the review would control combat risk for women. Third, the results had to guarantee equitable opportunity for men and women to serve in the Fleet Marine Force and the supporting establishment. Finally, the review results had to ensure fair and equitable career progression for men and women.

The results of the review were:

- (1) The ideal enlisted woman Marine strength has been established at about 10,500. Most of the growth will occur in the supporting establishment, with the number of women in the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) remaining at about 3,800.
- (2) Women will continue to serve in all major commands, both FMF and supporting establishment.
- (3) Women will deploy with a Marine Amphibious Force (MAF). They may deploy in the Air Combat Element (ACE) of a Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB) and may augment a MAB Headquarters, subject to combat risk and transportation factors. Women will not deploy with a Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU). The results of the enlisted portion of the Woman Marine Review are now being implemented. The Woman Officer Review is presently ongoing.

## OUR MARINE CORPS TEAM

Forty-three years ago, women entering the Marine Corps inherited a name and a tradition that up till then had been represented by men only. It was a bold step for the Marine Corps of 1943, and a brave step for the women of that era. Out of the Corps' more than 210 years of existence, women Marines have shared in and added to the traditions of the past 43 years.

Challenge and effort go hand in hand. Today, as in the past, women Marines are demonstrating the capacity to meet the challenges facing the Marine Corps and the willingness to voluntarily assume a larger share of the responsibilities. In turn, the Marine Corps has steadily increased the number of women in its ranks and expanded the opportunities and career fields open to them, within the limits of its combat mission. The goal of 10,500 enlisted women Marines is expected by the year 1989. Women serve in the Marine Corps in all noncombat specialties at posts and stations in the United States, the Far East and at selected posts in Europe.

Historical Note: The Legion of Merit, awarded for "exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service," is the highest award held by a woman Marine. Among its recipients are all seven former Directors of Women Marines. In addition, a second Legion of Merit was awarded to Brigadier General Brewer for exceptionally meritorious service as Deputy Director and, subsequently, Director of Public Affairs.

## APPENDIX B Qualifications for Commission or Enlistment

**Officers.** To qualify for acceptance as a woman Marine officer candidate, the following requirements are necessary:

1. American citizenship (aliens are eligible under certain conditions).
2. A baccalaureate degree or enrollment as a college junior or senior, carrying a full, daytime, academic program leading to a baccalaureate degree, and maintaining a "C" average or higher.
3. Minimum age of 20, and less than 28 at the time of commissioning. Waivers may be granted down to age 19 or up to age 30.
4. The mental, moral and physical standards determined by the Marine Corps as essential for a commission as a Marine officer.

**Enlisted.** Minimum qualifications for the enlistment of young women in the Marine Corps are:

1. American citizenship (aliens are eligible under certain conditions).
2. Minimum age of 17, maximum of 28.
3. High school graduate or non-high school graduate who has completed at least 30 semester hours with a "C+" average or better at an accredited college may be accepted for enlistment.
4. Excellent health and moral character.

—USMC—

*Revised OCT 1986  
(Code PAM/gd)*

