



# WOMEN in DEFENSE OF OUR NATION

## KEY DATES

**1901:** Army Nurse Corps established

**1908:** Navy Nurse Corps established

**1942-1943:** Women's Army Corps (WAC), Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES) (Navy), and Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) established

**1948:** Women's Armed Services Integration Act passed

**1951:** Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) created

**1972:** Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) opened to women

**1976:** Women admitted to service academies

**W**omen have served with great honor and valor in defense of our nation since the Revolutionary War in 1775. Deborah Sampson disguised herself as a man to fight in the Continental Army and Mary Ludwig Hays ("Molly Pitcher") brought water to soldiers on the battlefield. During World War I women served as nurses, bilingual telephone operators, stenographers, and clerks. During World War II hundreds of thousands of women served the war effort at home and abroad performing a variety of jobs in intelligence, supply, medicine, communications, and administration. Women also flew American military planes as carriers, test pilots, and anti-aircraft artillery trainers. The contributions of these women convinced congressional leaders to pass the 1948 Women's Armed Services Act granting women more status in the US military. Opportunities for women continued to increase during the Cold War era with the opening of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), Chaplain Corps, Civil Engineer Corps, and the service academies.

## FAMOUS WOMEN IN HISTORY

**Dr. Mary E. Walker** - the first, and only, woman to receive The Medal of Honor; earned as a contract surgeon during the Civil War

**Annie G. Fox** - the first woman to receive The Purple Heart; earned while serving as an officer in the Army Nurse Corps at Hickam Field during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

**Grace Hopper** - Rear Admiral in the US Navy and leading computer scientist during the Cold War; developed Mark II and Mark III computers, contributed to the design of the COBOL programming language, and received the National Medal of Technology

**Ruby Bradley** - survived two wars, a prison camp, and near starvation to become a Colonel in the Army and one of the most decorated woman in US military history with 34 medals and citations of bravery



Above: The Sacred Twenty, the first Navy Nurses



Right: WAVES working on a radial aircraft engine block



WACs assigned to the 8th Air Force in England operate teletype machines



A WAC repairs a Springfield rifle at Camp Campbell, Kentucky



WACs making photographic mosaics during training at Lowry Field, Colorado



Left to Right: Deborah Sampson, served under General Washington during the Revolutionary War; Charlotte Edith (Anderson) Monture, a member of the Iroquois Nation and Army nurse during WWI; Maude Fitch, an ambulance driver during WWI; Jacqueline Cochran, director of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) during WWII; Eva Romero Jacques, clerk in the Army Air Corps in the Pacific Theater of WWII; Mary Aurtrey, served in the Army during both the Vietnam and Persian Gulf Wars; Barbara Kurts, worked for the Navy at the NSA during the Korean War; Debra Lewis, one of first female graduates from West Point in 1980

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By the 1990s women commanded ships, directed bases, and flew jets for the US military. In 1993 Congress repealed the combat exclusion law. That same year Sheila Widnall became the first female Secretary of the Air Force and the first woman to lead an entire branch of the US military in the Department of Defense. Today women constitute 15 percent of the total active duty force and make vital contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan and other overseas contingency operations. In 2010, the Navy announced submarine positions were opening to women for the first time. Female service members also assist with humanitarian relief efforts in countries affected by earthquakes, flooding, or famine. As of late 2010 there were 47 female Generals and 23 female Admirals in the US military. The opportunities for women to serve and achieve leadership positions have never been greater.



03/31/2011 **BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** Historic Dudettes Flight – the first combat mission to be planned, maintained, and flown entirely by females



*"I have never considered myself anything but a Soldier. I recognize that with this selection, some will view me as a trailblazer, but it's important that we remember the generations of women, whose dedication, commitment and quality of service helped open the doors of opportunity for us today."*

*- General Ann Dunwoody became the first female 4-star in the US Army on November 14, 2008*

Corporal Jennifer San Martin and Corporal Tracy Hauk, part of the Marine Corps Lioness Program, search an Iraqi woman at a checkpoint in Haditha City, Iraq >



Lieutenant Junior Grade Karen Sankes stands watch aboard the USS Kearsarge >



Colonel Eileen Collins, a military instructor and test pilot for the Air Force, was the first female commander of a Space Shuttle in 1999



< Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michèle Flournoy is the highest ranking female civilian in the Pentagon



< Captain Janet Rose joined the Army Reserve at 48 after working 20 years as a nurse; she has deployed to Iraq on medical missions

Rear Admiral Raquel Bono served as a surgeon with the Navy during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm; in 2011 she became the first Hispanic woman selected for the rank of rear admiral



Airman 1st Class Veronica Cox loads relief supplies onto a helicopter in Sendai, Japan >



Staff Sergeant Joy Hollonquest, a claims/paralegal specialist with the 355th Fighter Wing Staff Judge Advocate, helps Staff Sergeant Angela Hardy with paperwork >



Lieutenant Junior Grade Jeanine McIntosh-Menze was the first African American woman in the Coast Guard to get her wings in 2005



< Airman 1st Class Ncharallah Jasper is a technician who calibrates and repairs equipment



< Commander Yvette Davids, shown hosting members of the Royal Malaysian Navy, was the first Hispanic woman to command a Navy ship

Specialist Leigh Ann Hester was the first woman awarded the Silver Star since WWII when her convoy was ambushed in Iraq; she was serving with the 617th Military Police Company, a Kentucky Army National Guard unit



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