Crossed Currents

*Navy Women in a Century of Change*

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Chapter One - America’s First Enlisted Women

Women were enlisted in the navy under the Yeoman rank as there was no restriction on gender. Women recruited under the Yoeman (F) rank were expected to take on the land based duties that would free their male Yeoman counterparts to fight and were paid the same as their male counterparts.

The Double Standards

* Starts almost immediately. Women’s first encounter with military bureaucracy was facing the challenge of being outfitted with uniforms. Logistically it was a challenge and many women had to supply their own uniforms and afterwards some found that their pay was docked. ( pg 15) and were denied reimbursement by Secretary of the Navy J. Daniels. It took objections all the way up the COC. ( pg 15) to change this.
* “Cannot deal with women as men” ( pg 16) The next challenge was discipline. Superior Officers were immediately faced with the dilemma of treating women the same as men. It starts the dilemma of balancing the public perception of how women should be treated with the needs of the Navy to ensure discipline in its ranks.
* “ ordinary” or “good” discharges were the standard for women and if given to a man, would have been a derogatory discharge and prevented him from qualifying for re-enlistment. ( pg 18)
* The math makes no sense. Only women between the ages of 21 and 27 with a Bachelor's degree and no dependents under the age of 18 were eligible for commissions. Impossible, as a 27 year would have have to have a child by age 11 to fit the criteria. Though men who had minor children were allowed to become commissioned.( pg 144)
* Involuntary service. Changing form denying women access they went to where retention was an issue so implemented mandatory minimum service and denied women the right to release early if married. ( pg 147)
* No role models. All the senior female officers were single creating another layer that could not identify with married women or mother’s issues and being in the Military. ( pg 153)
* Freeloaders. Civilian wives of military men were considered dependents and expected to be the ones to care for the children but civilian men were not given any benefits as they were expected to have a job and were freeloaders if they expected the same access to benefits as women ( shopping at the commissary, access to base facilities etc... )
* Give up your kids. Women who could not fit the criteria of age for their children were forced to have other family care for their kids or put them in boarding school. Civilian fathers did not have the option of being the parent that stayed home. ( pg 153)
* “Women stood security, stood guard, manned machine guns” Women went from being reluctantly included to operating under extreme dangerous and deadly conditions in Iraq side-by-side with men. ( pg 288) “They allowed women to be shot at but not to shoot.” Raised the issue of Women in Combat again. ( pg 292) arguments against were slowly discredited. Upper body strength- not an issue, women can and do hold their own and save the lives of others.
* “They’ve been trained, they know the job and they do it very well” ( pg 313) Men and women are more than capable of working together and working well.
* “We neither want or need lowered standards...we can compete very well on our own.” Women are hesitant to take the well meaning “help”. ( pg 315)
* A cleaner navy. “Women take a shower every day and wash their hair .... It’s the men who are washing more because the women are there” ( pg 328)