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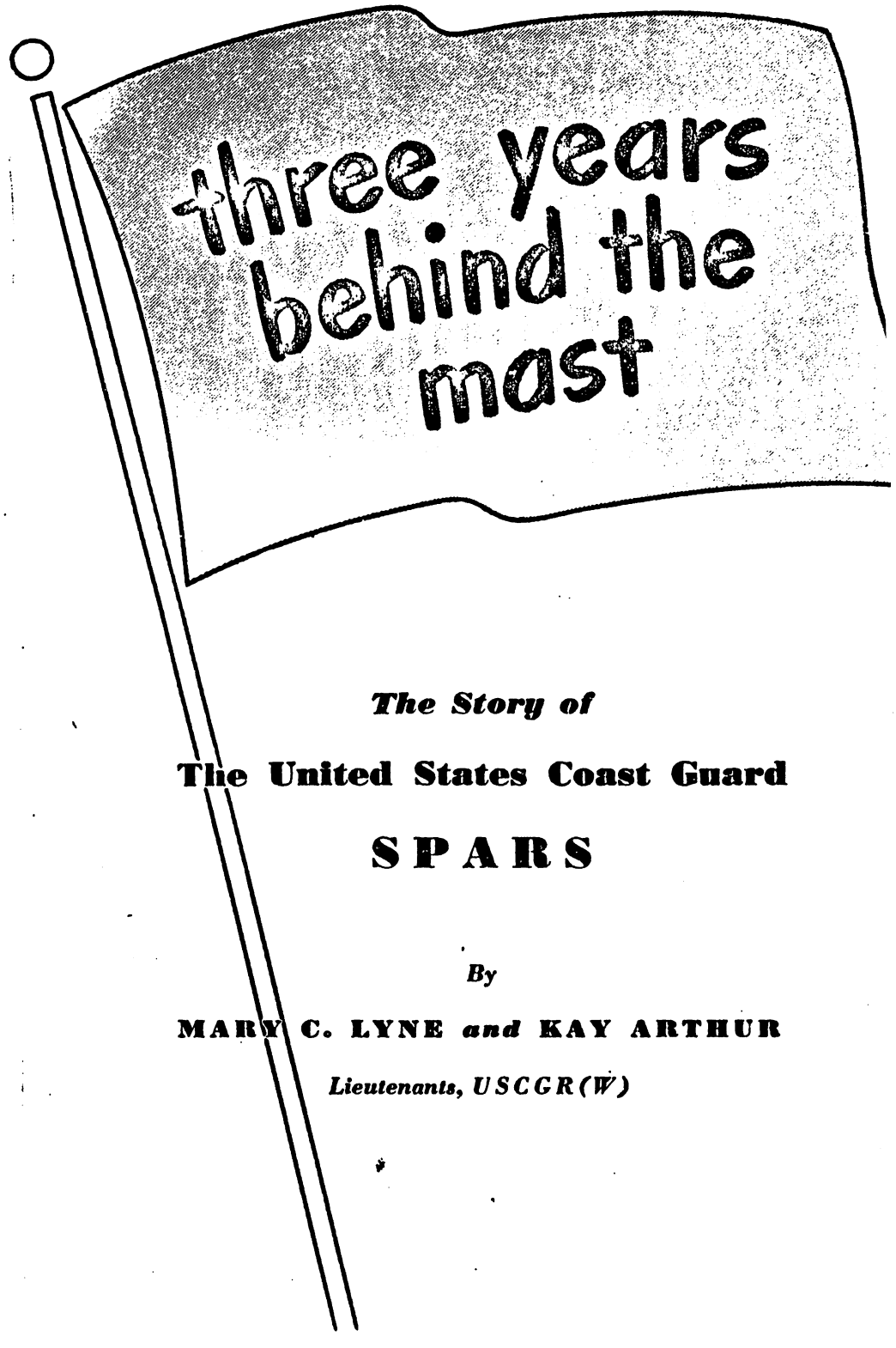
Three Years Behind the Mast



The Story of

The United States Coast Guard

SPARS

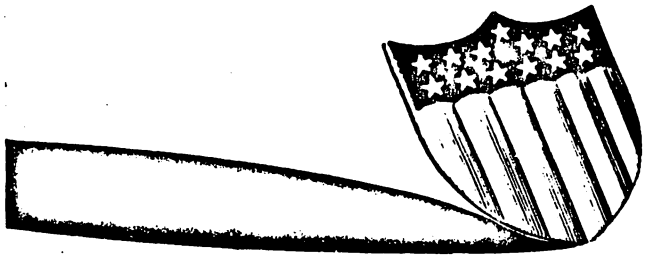
By

MARY C. LYNE *and* **KAY ARTHUR**

Lieutenants, USCGR(W)

To as Salty, Shipshape and Gallant a

Crew as Never Sailed the Seven Seas



FOREWORD

Being asked to write the foreword to a history of the Spars has shocked me back to my reaction of May, 1943. At that time I began my first association with the personnel of the Women's Reserve, those American women who joined up to release men to man the ships.

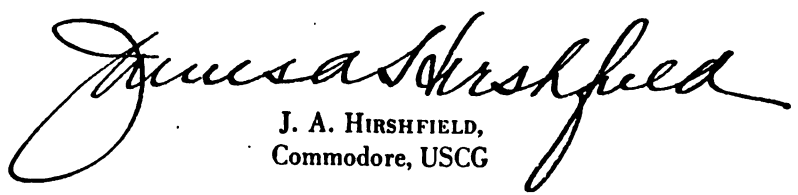
Most of us concede that sailors growl and gripe—it's a favorite sport aboard ship—and the idea of women in the military business of the Coast Guard brought forth its quota of comments. However, as with many other things in this life, association provided the real basis for evaluation.

Most of us—perhaps grudgingly—were agreeable to giving Spars a chance. It would have been pure folly not to recognize the need for women in service. We were up to our teeth in a two-front war which was making tremendous demands on everything, particularly manpower. American production was getting into stride. We were in danger of reaching the critical position of having insufficient men to wield the tools of our arsenal of democracy.

The Spars asked no favors and no privileges. They, like most Americans, knew there was a job to be done and they went to work. The amazement of some of their hardbitten superiors is legendary. With enthusiasm, with efficiency, and with a minimum of fanfare, these young women began to take over.

They *earned* ratings. As they increased in number, more and more of the men were sent to sea to man our new ships and carry the fight to the enemy. The Spars took over on an equal basis, and without them we would have required an equal number of men for the jobs.

As the time approaches for the Spars to leave us, we feel a sense of impending loss. It will seem strange not to have any of the girls around. The Service was fortunate in having the help of the 10,000 Spars who volunteered for duty in the Coast Guard when their country needed them, and carried the job through to a successful finish.



J. A. HIRSHFIELD,
Commodore, USCG

Commodore Hirshfield is the former commanding officer of the famous cutter Campbell *which in* 1942 *fought five submarines and rammed a sixth in a 24-hour North Atlantic battle. He was awarded the Navy Cross for "extraordinary heroism and distinguished service in action." Commodore Hirshfield is now DCGO for the Cleveland district.*

The Skipper Speaks

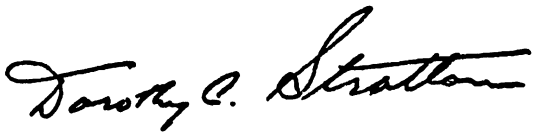
To All Spars — Past and Present:

This book is ours—written for all of us by some of us. Those talented ones of our number who have created it, have made permanent for us those fleeting memories and impressions of the past 40 months that will always be set aside in our minds and hearts as a very special period in our lives. The fun, the hard work, the dearness of associations, the despairs and frustrations, the satisfactions of the job, the seriousness of purpose, and the immense pride in being even a small part of the Coast Guard are all here. We will re-live our "Service Careers" with chuckles and groans many times as we leaf through these pages.

The publication of the story is made possible through the interest and cooperation of Coast Guard Military Morale, Public Information, and Separation Centers. It represents a farewell gesture of appreciation on the part of the Coast Guard for assistance rendered and good wishes for the years to come.

To The Coast Guard:

We, for our parts, return the compliment. We shall always think of the Coast Guard with loyalty and affection. Our "Three Years Behind the Mast" have been a never-to-be-forgotten experience which we shall always cherish. A hearty wish for smooth sailing goes with our final salute and our "By Your Leave, Sirs" as we bow out of your gallant company.



Dorothy C. Stratton,
Captain, USCGR(W)
Director, Women's Reserve

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to those Spars who contributed verse or narrative material for this book; to the individuals in the various districts and at Headquarters who provided information and ideas; to those who gave unstintingly of their critical faculties and manual skill; to the publishers who granted permission to reproduce copyrighted material. Photographs in this book, unless otherwise designated, are official U. S. Coast Guard photographs.

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Drawings by
Theone Bassett, SK 1/c, USCGR(W)

HUNTERS AND THE HUNTED

Make a Date With Uncle Sam

—Spar Recruiting Poster

FOR most of us in the Spars our earliest memories of the Service are centered around the recruiting office where we got our start. Recruiting being what it necessarily was, that may have been an impressive, well-staffed department of a DCGO, complete with filing cabinets and chain of command, or—and this is only one of the many possibilities—it may have been a trailer parked before the local post office and manned by a weary crew with a broken-down typewriter.

Usually by the time we reached that point we knew why we wanted to join and had either received our family's blessing or successfully surmounted all objections, ranging from "We just can't picture our baby as a sailor" to "A daughter of mine in the armed forces—NEVER!"

Reasons for joining differed with each individual. They weren't always the kind that could be set forth clearly and concisely like the four types of naval courts or the duties of a boatswain's mate. Once put into words, however, they fell under one or more of the following headings: patriotism, self-advancement, desire for travel and adventure, and escape. There were those who could hardly wait to be a part of the service, and there was at least one who admittedly stepped into a recruiting office to get out of the rain and who got into the Coast Guard as a result. The reason that always left the casual inquirer wishing he hadn't asked was, "My husband (brother, fiance) was killed at Pearl Harbor . . . the Java Sea . . . Salerno . . ."

Once we were within the recruiting office's portals, the enthusiasm of our reception depended largely upon how the quota was making out. If business was bad and the recruiters were beating the bushes, the appearance of a fairly intelligent looking individual with a reasonable number of teeth was greeted with ill-concealed rejoicing. Chances are we'd been on their list of prospects for a long time, and they had to suppress a wild desire to bar the door behind us and raise our right hands by force.

If applicants were plentiful that season, the atmosphere was likely to be friendly but brisk. The difference has been expressed as that between the "We'll be glad to enlist you if you qualify" attitude and "Please, God, let this one not be found wanting."

The Hunters

In most recruiting offices the latter attitude prevailed. From the very beginning, women between the ages of 20 and 36 were at a premium. If the eligibles didn't heed the call to the colors, it was up to the recruiters to go out and round them up. And, as every Spar who was in recruiting will testify, a recruiter's lot was not a big, soft bed of red, white, and blue roses.

In stiff competition with the other services and their snazzy station wagons, these harassed creatures were charged with the duty of meeting civilians on their own ground and feeding them doses of painless patriotism designed to inspire but never to antagonize. The ideal recruiter was the right combination of Aimee Semple McPherson and the very lovely Hildegarde.

By day they made speeches, distributed posters, decorated windows, led parades, manned information booths, interviewed applicants, appeared on radio programs, argued with medical departments, gave aptitude tests. By night they made more speeches, prayed women would be drafted, and lay down to dream of quotas.

They careened about the country in mobile units, leaving laundry and dry cleaning in their wake, ironing shirts on top of suitcases, battling with primitive plumbing and cockroaches, and being of necessity constantly cheerful and perpetually enthusiastic.

Shy girls who had previously done nothing more spectacular than selling garden seeds in the eighth grade, found themselves appearing on the stage of a theater between shows and pleading with the young women in the audience to see the light; or floating around the bay in a tub, as photogenically as possible, as advance publicity for Harbor Day.

A Headquarters memorandum for recruiting officers issued early in 1944 gave advice to the effect that recruiters should not sit in an office until applicants walked in, but should go "out in the field to talk to prospects and their families." They did. When the memo arrived at a southern recruiting office, the staff had just returned from a trek through a cottonfield to secure enlistment permission from a girl's irate parents who were at work there.

Yes, the hunters had rough going at times both at the hands of civilians and their own shipmates. They were blamed for not mentioning the fact that there were flies in Florida, they were accused of making false promises, they were upbraided because of their failure to make it clear that every Spar wouldn't be a Link Trainer instructor, they were berated for enlisting faulty applicants, they were frowned upon for not making their quota. The recruiters made plenty of mistakes—that's true—but they shall go down in *this* history, at least, as courageous pioneers, peddlers of patriotism!

In The Bag

After the hunters had given their all, it was the hunted's turn to squirm.

Regardless of time, place, or quotas, we all went through a similar experience called processing. It included, besides the inevitable filling in of application and sundry other blanks, an interview, a physical examination, and what is laughingly referred to as a mental aptitude test.

Although most of us had been led to believe we were as mentally apt as the next one, these tests often presented difficulties. Racing against time we'd bump into something like this: "Five cutters are at anchor in a horizontal row. Cutter A is beside and to the port (left) of Cutter B. Cutter C is beside and to the starboard (right) of Cutter B. Cutter D is beside and to the port of Cutter A. Cutter C is beside and on Cutter E's starboard. Which of the Cutters is not facing the same direction as the others?" If we didn't know what a cutter was to begin with (and even if we did), the picture in our mind's eye was likely to be a masterpiece of confusion at some waterfront.

We also had lots of fun quickly figuring out this one: "The intensity of illumination from a given light source varies inversely as the square of the distance from the source. If a certain searchlight has an intensity of 100,000 foot-candles at 10 feet, what will be the intensity of illumination in foot-candles on an airplane 3000 feet from the source?" What the heck, most of us asked ourselves angrily, thereby losing valuable time, did foot-candles have to do with our ability to serve in the Coast Guard?

The tests were usually followed by an orgy of rationalization.

"I always made good grades in school but I was so *nervous* this time."

"I didn't have enough time to *finish*."

"Listen. Mary Jones, the girl who sat next to me in high school biology, is in and if *she* can do the work I know *I* can."

If we really thought we'd busted it and couldn't get in, we concentrated on reasons to present to our families and friends. Flat feet, low blood pressure, poor vision—any genteel physical affliction to save our faces.

We went through the physical exam either stumbling over baggy, sheetlike garments or clutching skimpy ones around us. To prove to the Medical Department we were able-bodied seamen, we hopped on and off chairs, said "Ah" for the doctor, let the dentist rummage happily among our cavities, and gave up a quart or so of our life's blood in the interest of Dr. Wasserman.

Then came the search for essential documents. Oh, the difficulty of securing evidence of things unseen! Birth certificates had been destroyed by fire, college transcripts washed away by spring freshets, high school diplomas mislaid in attics. Those of us who were the victims of such misfortunes felt keenly that a few scraps of paper should not be allowed

to interfere with the winning of the war. But the Service was adamant. Already it was beginning to show its teeth.

The typical reaction to all this was a mounting determination to make the grade. By gum, we were going to get in or else! We may have only half-heartedly rallied round in the beginning, but there's nothing like a few obstacles to make a woman dead set to succeed.

For those who were hankering for rank there was yet another pitfall —the forwarding of officer-candidates' papers for the approval of Headquarters. There are cases on record when weeks—nay, months—rolled by while anxious applicants haunted recruiting offices. Unversed in the workings of a military organization, they got a vague impression that a BOARD met in Washington and the papers weren't there; the papers arrived and the BOARD couldn't meet; the papers met and the BOARD was mislaid.

In recruiting offices across the United States, all of us left a goodly share of blood, sweat, tears, and fingerprints.

We remember with pride the day we were sworn in. No matter under what circumstances it took place, it was a momentous occasion. Innumerable Spars may have taken the oath before with countless others to follow, but to the individual, *her* enlistment day was a milestone in military history.

The Women's Reserve of the United States Coast Guard was officially established by act of Congress on 23 November, 1942, but for each of us it really got under way on the date when, as a shakingly triumphant civilian, we raised our right hand and repeated the oath that made us a Spar.

"I, ..., do solemnly swear that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies whomsoever, and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the laws of the United States and the regulations governing the Coast Guard."

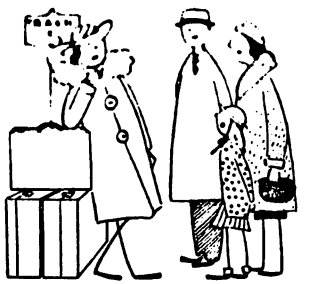
Shoving Off

After being a civilian for 20 years or more, it was not easy to pick up and leave for parts and experiences unknown. Whether we gave up a big job, or a little job, or a job we didn't like, we all gave up a familiar way of life for one that had never before been open to American women. Most of us had no idea what we would be doing or where we would be doing it. We sternly put aside families, friends, and wardrobes (giving up clothes may not seem like much of a sacrifice, but to some of us it was like parting with our front teeth) and a haphazard civilian existence lived without benefit of "The Bluejacket's Manual." We conscientiously bought name tapes, soap dishes, unbreakable drinking cups, easily laundered underwear, and all the other items listed on the mimeographed sheet.

As a rule we arrived at an embarkation point complete with bulging luggage and bewildered relatives. Whether we realized it or not, these scenes were something new in the military pageant. Seamen were bedecked in corsages; boys clung to their girl friends, urging them to be careful and write often, and civilians made jovial attempts to be congenial with women who already had one foot on the drill field.

The hour of farewell in a railroad station has a decided air of finality about it. Things may not have seemed real until then, but there is nothing vague or intangible about a departing train. For many of us on our first voyage out, the excitement and patriotic fervor were considerably dampened by waves of homesickness. The duration and six months sounded like a mighty long time.

If we were part of a draft, it was on these junkets to the training station that our first real awareness of the difference between ourselves and civilians began to set in. We mustered and answered roll call, we sang service songs from a mimeographed sheet (if there was one thing we saw enough of in the service it was mimeographed sheets). We were not permitted to talk to "civilians," we were allowed in the diner ahead of "civilians." We felt smugly self-conscious. Weren't we considered a troop movement—veiled hats and all?



BOOTS

ForWID Maaarch! Wud, two, tree-fuh; hup, hut, yep, twork; yaleft right, ya-left-right. By the right flank MAARCH! Detail Haw!

—Anonymous Drill Instructor

SPARS indoctrinated at the beginning of the program insist that their experiences were the worst. Those who went through training in later stages of the game laugh sardonically at the first group's claim. Something may be said for each point of view, but the choice is still between organized and unorganized mortification of the flesh. Any way we look at indoctrination, it was a case of the velvet heel in the iron boot. The Coast Guard called it basic.

A Headquarter's report stated: "Both important and minor decisions are made for the recruit and enforced through a military organization, the principles of which seem at first contrary to her civilian education. She is told what to do, what to say, when to sleep, when to eat, and what to wear." They're telling *us* we were told!

Beginning with the first 34 enlisted Waves who transferred to the Spars and were trained at Stillwater, on through to the last few of us to leave Manhattan Beach, the experiences we wrote home about and now remember are almost the same. They were the experiences which transformed Miss Jones of the casually stooped shoulders, glamor bob, long-winded opinions, and exclusive clothes into Seaman Jones, with her hair neatly trimmed, shoulders back, mouth shut, and an enormous pride in her non-exclusive uniform.

If any recruit had entertained the notion that going into service was a lark, she soon got over it. There was nothing lark-like about physical exams, aptitude tests, shots, Coast Guard courses, physical education (body mechanics, swimming, games, and drill), plus mess, maintenance, and watch duty. And we always had to hurry, hurry, hurry,—hurry up and wait.

It was up to the training-station to convert us as quickly as possible. They saw their duty and they did it. We didn't always see ours too clearly, but we did it anyhow. And we did it on the double!

It is probably true that the Service never seemed so terrible and so wonderful to us again as it did in the days when we were boots. We all

agree that we wouldn't want to live those days over again, but most of us feel that they were filled with experiences vouchsafed to relatively few American women. We'll never forget them.

Stillwater

Stillwater, Oklahoma, seemed like the end of the earth to those of us who heard we were going there—until we got there. If any of us joined the Coast Guard to see the coasts, we were in for a big surprise. But Stillwater, both to first-comers who were boots and later on to yeomen who were training in the specialist school, offered many unexpected pastoral delights. There was hardly a Spar who didn't affirm, sooner or later, the truth of that old proverb: "Stillwater runs deep." We came expecting the worst and left wiping away a tear for Oklahoma.

Margaret Gorley Foley, Y1/c, has recorded her memories of the U. S. Naval Training Station at Stillwater. The following paragraphs are taken from her more complete account:

"The railroad station was a small, red-brown frame building with several men lazing about who evidently had been well instructed that Spars carry their own luggage. We drove off to Agricultural and Mechanical College and were delighted with its beauty. There were large brick buildings trimmed with clean white frame windows. There were tall trees and lots of new fresh grass everywhere. Forsythia and honeysuckle ornamented many of the buildings and our rooms were attractively furnished with red maple. All this splendor made us so happy we forgot all we'd been told about field mice, snakes, and wild Indians.

"We fell into routine easily, working hard trying to finish each day's homework and keep our rooms shipshape as well. Captain's inspection on Saturday was a white-glove inspection, and the winds that blew in the Oklahoma red dust certainly didn't help any.

"After breakfast at 0530 we mustered outside, rain or shine. Most of the time the sun was just rising over the hills throwing out fingers of bright hues. Each minute it would change, and each morning it was different. With those magnificent Oklahoma sunrises before us it was a thrill to stand at attention. After 'all present and accounted for' we marched to classes to the beat of a drum. This always impressed me very much, for we followed three other companies of two platoons each, and all the way up the line ahead for blocks the girls' white caps swayed the same way, with their white gloves forming arcs at exactly the same time. The Radio City Rockettes have nothing over the girls who went to Oklahoma. And this feat wasn't so simple, because the Air Force and Radar men would stand about yelling, 'Eyes, right,' or 'You're out of step, sister,' or 'Hey, Cutie, your slip's showing.'

"There was a sort of collegiate air about even the service section of A. & M.'s campus. On Thursday afternoons during recreation period we would hold dances, inviting the men in the Radar and the Air Force schools nearby. They never got used to our salty lingo, especially when

they had to pass the quarterdeck and say, 'Sergeant McGillicuddy requests permission to come aboard.' On Saturday all the furniture from the lounge was removed, and dances were held there. This was always an extra-special night and we would have an Army orchestra pouring out hot licks.

"The residents of Stillwater were very kind, and whenever they saw a girl in uniform on her way to town or to church, they would offer her a lift even though the trip was short. 'Town' was a main street with stores on each side stretching out for about 10 or 15 blocks. It had three theaters and a bowling alley, and was such a busy little place it even had a couple of traffic lights. Sometimes, as we waited at the curb for cars to pass, a horse galloped by instead. A few of the men wore ten-gallon hats, spurs and all the western trimmings. Indians could be seen walking through the streets, but they weren't a bit wild.

"One of our big thrills was a real western rodeo held in a large nearby arena. This was no Madison Square Garden rodeo but an honest-to-goodness wild affair with everything from judging cattle to wild-cow milking and wild-cow riding.

"Our stay at A. & M. finally came to an end. It wasn't all fun, for we had worked hard, but they were perhaps the three most pleasant weeks I spent in Service. After we were logged out and our train rounded a curve, we may not have said it, but I think we all felt that scuttlebutt had dealt unfairly with Stillwater."

Cedar Falls

The first group of 150 girls enlisted as Spars entered the receiving unit of the Naval Training Station, Iowa State Teachers College, in January, 1943. Among them was Mary Jane Klein, CSK, who has described her transition at Cedar Falls from a confused apprentice seaman to a stoic seaman second class.

"I began guarding the coast in the corn state of Iowa. Not a drop of salt water nor a sailor in sight. Yet I was directed to the first ladder, portside, to my billet on the second deck, and ordered to square the corners of my bedding and learn to tell time Navy fashion.

"The first day at boot camp was chiefly one of relaxation and getting acquainted with my bunkmates. At 0530 the next morning, however, I heard a shrill whistle and a booming voice give forth with 'HIT THE DECK!' At 0545, sans makeup and with only one eye open, I was groping to the call of hup-two-three-four towards the mess hall. Here we were served by the college students in a style befitting the admiral himself. Just as I started to bite into a slice of hot, buttered toast, chow time was over, and once again I was on the march.

"Our first days in class were a bit confusing, for there were no Coast Guard officers to teach us. Naval officers, both male and female, taught us general knowledge about the Coast Guard and the Navy, such as nautical terms, rank, rate, insignia, and military courtesy. Upon the arrival of Spar officers, we were indoctrinated in the history and organ-

ization of the Coast Guard. It was school days again, for interspersed among the 'hip-hup's' of drill, vigorous exercises and classes, we were exposed to aptitude tests, which proved to someone's satisfaction that I was more mechanically minded than academic.

"Frozen in my mind are the chilling memories of the fire drills at 0200 or any hour before dawn, as I picture the long line of pajamas and robes planted in two feet of snow like stalks of corn, while the officers pretended that the dormitory was afire. I often wondered if I didn't prefer burning to death to the slow tortures of exposure.

"Girls always find time for social activities, so we looked forward to liberty and freedom. Our first liberty was on Saturday from 1300 to 2330. In GI shoes, cotton-lisle hose, and civilian dress adorned with a name tag identifying me as a member of the Spars, I invaded the town of Waterloo. In this, the uniform of the day, my Spar buddies and I parried the sharp glances of civilians, but this embarrassment was soon forgotten on the day I donned my new uniform of navy blue.

"After four weeks of intense training and drill, I found life in the Service not too confusing and looked forward with great enthusiasm to the day when I would report for duty at the DCGO, 3ND, as a seaman second class."

Hunter

At Hunter College 1900 of our number went through the rigors of a Bronx winter and spring in company with the Waves. Only an individual account can give the full flavor of the Hunter Factory. Toni Bassett, SK1/c, gives us hers.

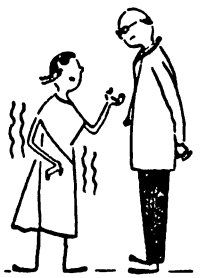
"'Through Surf and Storm and Utter Confusion' describes my arrival, my departure, and my stay at Hunter College, Bronx, N. Y. C., or the U. S. Naval Training Station for Women. In my mind is a vague memory of struggling off the troop train in Grand Central Station and of being herded along with hundreds of other prospective Spars into a subway train, to be whisked away to Hunter College.

"From the subway we sloshed in disorderly military fashion through the April downpour to a huge barren building where we filled in numerous papers, gave our name an excessive number of times, and were assigned to various billets. The barracks, a row of large brick buildings of approximately five or six stories, formerly were apartment houses. The billet, consisting of two rooms and bath, which I was assigned to share with nine other Spars, gave us a feeling of solace and respite notwithstanding the bareness of the quarters. As I stood looking at the bare floor, curtainless windows, the double bunks and straight chairs I was jolted back to my feeling of uncertain trepidation by the shout of 'MUSTER ON THE DOUBLE!' This was the real beginning of boot training and from that time on it was a succession of 'MUSTER ON THE DOUBLE!' and 'ON THE DOUBLE THERE, SEAMAN!'

"It was hit the sack at 2130 and hit the deck at 0530. I soon learned to slide in and out of the sack without disturbing the covers too much, as

it was 'MUSTER ON THE DOUBLE!' for morning chow at 0600, leaving little time to dress and put the room in shipshape order. The most difficult problem was the 10 of us trying to make the head in that half hour. In fact, when I did get in I had developed such a 'muster complex' that I was afraid to linger.

"The physical examination was one complete day of horror spent shivering in front of doctor after doctor dressed in nothing but a sheet-like ensemble. To finish off the examination I was pricked in one arm with a small needle and jabbed in the other with a larger one. It wasn't until I had received at least two more shots that I felt like a full-fledged apprentice seaman.



"Pride and self satisfaction made up for any miseries when I strutted around for the first time in my new uniform. Just wearing it brought about a new confidence and made 'getting the boot' much easier.

"When muster was called for classes I never knew which notes to take, being uncertain as to which class I was going to, even up until the day I left. Somehow out of the darkness of confusion I managed to grasp enough Coast Guard history and organization, important facts about ships, military courtesy, and rates, rank, and insignia to pass the final examinations. At least they didn't send me back home. They sent me, as a reward, to Storekeeper School in Milledgeville, Georgia."

Palm Beach

By May, 1943, the news was flashed around the country that on June 14 the first class of Spars would begin indoctrination at a fabulous new training station of their own: the Palm Beach Biltmore Hotel. Disgruntled civilians with reservations for the winter season read the headlines and wept: HUGE PINK PALACE IS SPARS' NEW FLORIDA TRAINING SCHOOL. (While recruiters were warned by Headquarters, "Don't play up the glamor!")

In preparation for the influx of boots, the old Biltmore gave up about 430 doors and much of the ornate *décor* that had formerly cost guests $15 a day and up. With walls knocked out, partitions built in, rich appointments removed, and over 900 girls installed, the Biltmore's decks were cleared for action. Personnel officers moved into the long cool room that had been the cocktail lounge, their desks trundled in beneath the mirrored ceiling. The only part of the hotel never used for any purpose was the formerly popular Crystal Bar, which stood untouched in the lobby. Outside, in the patio, the Stars and Stripes were hoisted on the mast of the old Coast Guard ship *Cumberland,* and the pink palace officially became navy blue.

It sounds easy. But during the first days at Palm Beach the reconversion period of the U.S.S. *Biltmore* from a luxury liner to a training ship inflicted no little amount of hardship on the crew. For instance, although thick carpets lay under the bare iron doubledeck bunks, the mattresses had not arrived, and the girls slept directly on the springs. It was not until the medical officer asked the "exec" why all the Spars, when their clothes were off, looked like waffles, that a plea was telephoned to Washington to expedite mattresses.

More than 7,000 of us were indoctrinated at the Coast Guard Training Station at Palm Beach. From the original class of June 14, 1943, to the final class of December 16, 1944, we hupped over the sunkissed soil of one of America's favorite playgrounds. We were guests at the Biltmore with all expenses paid, but if the hotel had done an about-face from the good old days, so had its clientele. Of yore, gorgeously-gowned ladies had been wont to float about the patio in the arms of handsome gents. We covered the same territory—done up in striped seersucker and waltzing with a mop. The Biltmore and its guests had gone GI!

But our stay in Florida is much more memorable than it would have been had we spent it in the pursuit of pleasure. Our memories of Palm Beach include everything from silvery moonlight on the ocean to greasy dishes in the galley.

Probably every one of us was impressed with the beauty of the place —although our days were so packed with activity that we had little time to commune with nature—the brilliantly-colored flowers; the curving, graceful palm trees; the soft, perfumed air; the blue of the Atlantic and Lake Worth. It *was* beautiful, even if we landed there "out of season" and were prey to an over-abundance of heat and insects.

The hotel was something to write home about, too. Flowers grew on vines over the entrances and the pink building was impressive with its two large towers.

The interior of this romantic-looking structure, however, was all business. On the quarterdeck, or basement, were the classrooms, the regimental offices, the clothing locker, shoe store, sick bay, and dentist's office, while the mess hall, library, and the captain's quarters were on the first deck. Above that, on the mezzanine, were the officers' wardroom, our recreation hall, and more offices. On the second deck were the "paydets," trainees for work as pay and supply officers. Then on the third and fourth decks the trainees attending Yeomen, Storekeeper and Cooks and Bakers Schools held forth. Fifth and sixth decks housed the boots and the new booties, with ship's company on the seventh and eighth, and Spar officers on the ninth. Every corner of the building seemed to be full of girls, moving about in long, orderly lines.

Our weeks there are now a montage of memories.

Our arrival, made conspicuous by our multi-colored outfits that had suffered through long train trips; the superior appearance and attitude of the old-timers who had been there several weeks and were full-fledged boots looking with a jaundiced, weather eye at the green booties; the first, uncertain days of getting into the swing of things when we often wondered why we had ever left Home and Mother; the whirlwind

schedule that soon overtook us and made us forget we ever had a Home and Mother; coxswains who taught us the ropes; the wonderfully understanding boot company commander for whom we would gladly have gone through surf and storm and anything else; the endless forms to fill out and aptitude tests to take; making friends with the strangers who were our roommates; the eternal running up and down ladders for muster; the frenzied scuttlebutt that ushered in the shots and medical exams—what did they do to you? would it hurt? how long did it last? suppose you fainted? And so on. The fearful scullery duty for which we were decorated—with a ruffle of jelly around the skirts of our chain-gang playsuits, a scallop of potatoes and gravy around the waistband, and perhaps a dash of stew around the collar; the "Hip! Hup! Hip! Ho!" of the drill instructors; the awe in which we held the blue and gold braid.

No Spar will ever forget her first flag-raising at morning colors. There is no thrill like standing in uniform and saluting the flag, especially if the uniform is newly acquired. When we were still in civilian clothes waiting for our uniforms to be tailored, we stood in little, unorganized groups on the balcony above the patio and watched enviously. We saw only the flag, the band, and hundreds of little white hat tops down below us. When the salute to the national ensign was given, there were suddenly hundreds of white-gloved hands meeting the white hat tops. Remember the eagerness to be a part of that ceremony?

Then there was the singing that did so much to ease regimentation and keep us swinging along. We can hear 'em now, marching back from the *Sun and Surf* or waiting in line for chow: "I've got sixpence, jolly, jolly sixpence . . ." "Here we stand like birds in the wilderness . . . "

There was the excitement of getting into uniform for the first time; the feeling of gradually becoming a real part of the outfit; the heart-warming companionship with hundreds of others—all in the same boat; the superiority with which we as boots greeted the incoming batch of booties; the precious liberties for which every minute was planned in advance; bicycle riding along palm-lined streets; the good old G.W.;* the ferryboat rides across Lake Worth when we relaxed and sang and felt breezily gay, momentarily carefree, even a little salty.

Those of us who were there at the same time as the paydets will always remember their huge stacks of books; those who hit foul weather won't forget the hurricane warnings and how we moved everything to higher decks in a state of dramatic but orderly excitement and lugged it all back when the storm failed to strike.

Speculating about our futures; praying the classification section would see things in the same light we did—yes, those were the days. Many more experiences that were common to all of us are recorded in the logs of three of the Biltmore's Spar guests.

In a description of indoctrination contained in her account of service life titled "Duration and Six," Dorothy Wilkes, PhoM2/c, brings back a flock of memories. That description is quoted in part:

*George Washington Hotel.

"When we arrived at Palm Beach, we were herded into a Coast Guard bus—perhaps herded isn't the right word since it hints of confusion or disorder. On the contrary, everywhere we went I seem to remember going two by two in some semblance of straight lines.

"At last we were marched into the Trasta itself. In cafeteria style we visited window after window, each one bearing a sign instructing us to 'show orders—be prepared to answer—' etc.

"They fed us, issued linen, and took us to our deck where the mate taught us how to make up our bunks according to regulations. This was not new to me but you should have seen some of those beds!

"In my room there were three of us who came down together, and three California girls who had arrived just before us. Inasmuch as we were assigned to certain bunks there was no argument as to who would sleep in uppers. I had a lower but I have since been assigned to uppers at various times and find that each has its virtues.

"It wasn't long before we got acquainted and learned to know the faces of the rest of our platoon. Each girl is one of six in a room, and one of twenty-five in her platoon. Six or seven platoons make up a company and when you put two of those together you form the regiment which is the total number to begin at one time. Other regiments are made up of personnel of ship's company and the various schools. It was very interesting to see just where we fitted as integral parts in the pattern of organization. In the whole U. S. Coast Guard there was one spot reserved for me. I was No. 21 in Platoon 5 of Company 121 12th regiment of Palm Beach Training Station. Nobody else could claim that particular combination of numbers and they were as much mine as my service number.

"Before many days we were talking the accepted salty lingo. To go upstairs we went 'topside' by way of 'ladders.' Walls became 'bulkheads' and we lived on sixth 'deck.' Each room or 'billet' had a 'head' (bathroom), and our bunks were also our 'sacks.'

"If there was one thing we did oftener than sing in Boot, I think it must have been mustering. No matter where we went, we were mustered and marched silently down the ladders. Misdemeanors brought demerits which could only be squared by extra duty during liberty time. I don't know whether I was good or lucky or both, but I got through my six weeks without any demerits.

"Time seemed to change its very nature in Boot. Into six weeks we crammed a lifetime, and every minute counted. In civilian life we might eat supper 'around five.' Our company was scheduled for chow at 1707 (5:07) which meant that precisely seven minutes past five o'clock, the first girl would select her silverware and start through the mess line. We were only given 30 seconds to clear the line, and you can imagine what would happen when a company was even a minute late. This split-

second timing was carried on all through our training, and by the time we graduated we had learned to make full use of each second and each minute of every hour.

"Room inspection was a weekly ordeal during which all hands were reduced to nervous wreckage. No one can begin to realize, unless he has done a hitch himself, just how it feels when an officer arrives and starts going over the place in the spotless white gloves required for inspections. Transoms, door frames, shower curtain rods, bunk slats—nothing escapes the watchful eyes and searching hands.

"Suitcases and pockets come in for all kinds of contributions on inspection day. Wastebaskets must be empty. Well, that's logical, but there is a catch—they must be emptied before eight in the morning. If you miss the pickup there's only one place left to dump the basket—into the luggage and hope they don't pick that day for luggage spot-inspection. The same thing applies to ashtrays, and it takes weeks to get ashes and dirt out of the corners of a suitcase. Any spare time is spent scrutinizing the deck for lint, hair, threads, or dust, which foreign matter is hastily stuffed into a pocket.

"Enter—the inspection party! The officer says, (usually in a bored tone), 'Good afternoon, girls.' It probably isn't, but the spokesman for the room is required to reply, 'Good afternoon, Sir.' The spokesman must be the girl who is facing the doorway because she may not look right or left even as she speaks. It's very hard not to look around when mention is made of something adrift. We could only stand and wonder just what was adrift, and in whose drawer. It wasn't until after the entire deck was inspected, that we were assembled to hear the results. Rooms were marked as shipshape, good, unsatisfactory, or demerits.

"For the first week or so of training, laundry is a problem, and remains so until a routine is achieved. Sometimes we had as many as five consecutive minutes in our rooms when it could have been done, but the hitch was that it couldn't be hung until a certain time; and when that time came, we were in a class or some other activity. Until five o'clock the rooms had to be shipshape except that any clothes which did not dry overnight were hung on the shower rod—providing they were on hangers! Eventually a definite pattern of living was set up so that everything got done in plenty of time, but until that happy state was reached, many anxious moments were spent trying to stay well-laundered and clean.

"On the subject of taps—it's strange how the same bugle call, under different circumstances, takes on a little meaning. All during my Girl Scout career of 11 years, taps meant the benediction to the day's work and fun. I even used to think the words at night before I slept:

Day is done; gone the sun
From the lakes, from the hills, from the sky;
All is well; safely rest;
God is nigh.

"To hear taps from the patio of the training station, I tried to stay awake even if sleep was engulfing me. I really hated to miss it. It is hard to explain the subtle difference between that taps, and taps at camp. The answer, I think, lies in the military significance. I felt closer to those fellows who were sacking in on rolling, tossing ships in enemy-infested waters, and to guys whose only rest would be found in a fox-hole somewhere over there.

"Did you know there is a very definite art to swabbing a deck, or mopping a floor as it used to be known? Well, there is, and I learned the hard way. Every other day a recruit devotes to classes, and the alternate days are spent on assigned galley and scullery detail. We were on maintenance. This duty I found covered a multitude of chores from swabbing to emptying and washing garbage cans. The less I remember about that part of my training, the better I like it, but it was all part of the game and wasn't fatal. I still have the impression, though, that the corridors had a faculty for elongating themselves each time I was on the end of a swab!

"When I wasn't swabbing I was in Recruit School classes which cover instruction in history and organization of the Coast Guard, as well as its activities and personnel. We were led through the intricate maze of knowing a lieutenant from a commander; whom, when, and how to salute; the difference between a cruiser and a cutter; Coast Guard's contribution to wars of the past and present; how to revive a drowned person; how to execute an about-face, and countless other things embraced by the A to N section of 'The Bluejacket's Manual,' the seaman's Bible.

"I guess most of us get a tingling sensation when we hear martial music. Weekly regimental review was a high spot in the week for me, and in spite of the usual heat and strain, I always enjoyed it. Like every other military review, there is a definite pattern of routine. The companies are dressed and ordered to a position of parade rest until company reports are summoned. In alternate positions of rest and attention, the business of forming the companies is completed, and all hands are prepared to stand inspection by the captain and his staff. We always followed the same routine but I never tired of being in, or watching, reviews. It's really something to watch regiments of girls in blue, their white gloves swinging and their heads held high and proudly.

"Each week the honor guidon is presented to the outstanding company from the standpoint of conduct, classwork, and precision in drilling. It was indeed a thrill to be the third boot company to walk off with honor spot. Incidentally, there was another compensation to being Honor Company; immediately following the band back to the Station, we were first into mess hall!

"The Station's chapel was simple and effective with altar set against a backdrop of satin-like royal blue drape. White candles in brass candelbra, white glads in simple vases, and bright red altar cloths fringed in gold, made a fitting setting for the chaplain's dress whites or blues. Upon entering the chapel I was always impressed by the perfect blending of red, white, and blue. Each service was concluded with the sing-

ing of the traditional seamen's hymn, 'Eternal Father,' my favorite.

Eternal Father—strong to save,
Whose arm doth bind the restless wave;
Who bidst the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea."

* * *

Another account of boot days, included in "Dress Blues" by Virginia Minuth, CY, describes outdoor activities at Palm Beach on those days when the beauties of nature were somewhat secondary.

"Drill was held on the grinder, a level space behind the Station and bordering upon Lake Worth. The grinder was covered with powdered slate rock which covered your beautifully polished shoes with white dust and, whenever the sun shone, created a most unpleasant glare.

"Many times it became slightly confusing as four or five groups were being drilled at the same time in that small area, with drillmasters barking orders at them for different movements. Occasionally someone would find herself obeying a 'by the right flank, march!' given to another company when her own was doing a column left. Her only recourse was to skid hastily around and try to creep back into place without catching the eagle eye of the drillmaster.

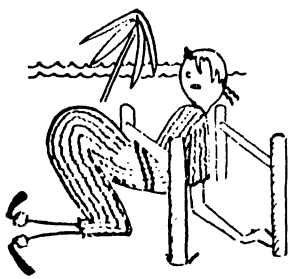
"When the drillmaster felt you were anticipating orders too much, he would let you step upon the brink of Lake Worth before he would give: 'To the rear, march!' And if the particular drillmaster who was your lot for that drill period had suffered a disagreement with his girl friend, woe unto you! Your pace would be even more rapid and confusing. Commands would be barked at you until (even if you did know) you would be unable to remember your left from your right. Eventually you would just give a sigh of relief if, by some miracle, you found yourself going in the same direction as your company.

"One occasion upon which you were expected to practice the lessons learned upon the drill field was in going to and from *Sun and Surf*. As usual, the citizens lined the sidewalks to watch the Spars march by, trying to keep cadence by singing. This was successful except when someone started off the song on the wrong foot or when one group sang one cadence while the group behind sang another. And did you ever try to march in tennis shoes? It's one thing to march in full uniform and quite another in a bathing suit topped by your playsuit, topped by your terry-cloth robe, and clutching a towel in the right hand. (Or was it the left? This was one of those things upon which no two people agreed, so it just depended upon who was in charge.)

"If the trip to *Sun and Surf* was not chic, the return trip was pathetic, particularly when you had been surf bathing. Back you marched trailing sand, your hair dripping, and your bathing suit sending rivulets of water down your legs. Never did sand stick like the Florida variety—that is, as long as you were on the beach. As soon as you returned to your room, it would begin to shed like a skin.

"Doing exercises upon the beach of the Atlantic Ocean you presented a picture that was intriguing to the jaded citizens escaping a New York winter to recline in the warmth and beauty of Palm Beach. Only alert and vigilant guards kept the fences from being lined with citizenry eager to applaud your efforts.

"It should be remarked at this point that sand is an unstable footing for active, rigorous exercises. It also has a tendency to stick like glue when you lie flat upon it, and it scratches. But the edge of the Atlantic is a beautiful place to be early on a warm morning, even if the purpose is calisthenics. No comments will be made about the mornings which were not warm.



"An obstacle course had also been designed for the purpose of enhancing what figure you might have and making you more supple and graceful. You were encouraged to balance on logs, swing on ropes, climb over a congo rope, and crawl on your knees and elbows under a series of low wooden sticks. There was, of course, nothing supple about your figure after you had completed the obstacles at a fairly rapid pace. It merely sagged."

* * *

Dorothy Cox, Sp(PR)1/c, in one section of her *Girls in Cadence** takes us back to our first liberty and our graduation from Boot School.

"It seemed as if everyone on the street was looking at me as I walked along in uniform on the alert lookout for officers' stripes. All the other newly-released boots had the same feeling. In our black-topped hats, we were conspicuous compared to the many trainees in their gleaming white-tops, and we walked with a hip-hup stride, expecting momentarily to hear 'muster.' We compared notes on going through the ritual of getting off the so-called ship. First, there was a personal inspection to see that our hats were squared, seams straight, insignia straight, and all the countless other little things that must be checked. Having passed this much, I had to approach the officer of the day, salute her, and request permission to go ashore. Having obtained it, I saluted her again, turned and saluted the flag, did an about-face, and marched into the outside world. The others followed the ritual, only one boot became confused and asked permission to go afloat. Visitors who come to take out Spars watch in amazement as we go through this performance. We can go out only in drafts at certain times. If we miss a draft, we have to wait for the next one. . . .

**Reprinted from the chapter, "Girls in Cadence", in SEA, SURF AND HELL, by Commander Arch A. Mercey, USCGR, and Chief Specialist Lee Grove, USCGR. Copyright 1945, by Prentice-Hall, Inc. and published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York.*

"We were all pretty tanned and fairly well acquainted with the Coast Guard and the ways of griping and scuttlebutt, when the momentous day arrived that our boot training was over—about eight weeks after we had arrived at the station. However, our acquaintance with Palm Beach was mighty slight. We assembled in the assembly hall where we had seen so many movies that stopped at the most interesting points and so many training films that seemed endless, but now we were at the end of our boot and at the beginning of our service careers. We knew we were going somewhere in the United States, but where? Friendships that had grown strong through sharing new experiences together seemed very precious. The atmosphere was electric with tension. On sheets of paper in the officer's hand were our fates.

"Babel existed at the completion of the reading. Some were exuberant, and others were in the depths of despair at being separated from their friends or at being sent far from home. Yet, we were all in the Service, and were to be sent where we were needed, not where we wanted to go. Underneath it all we were aware that the place we should want to go was the place where we were needed. Anyway, that was where we were going and nothing could be done about it, absolutely nothing. As seamen second class, we wore our white-tops that day, and the next day our company and its platoons were broken up and our ways parted."

* * *

Many of us felt that we did more to win the war while we were boots than at any other time after that! Curiously enough, by some perverse human instinct, the more we went through in boot training, the more dewey-eyed we became later in reminiscing about it. And the friendships we made were more than fleeting. The ties were as strong as with other people who have suffered shipwreck, earthquake, or flood together. It was just a few weeks, after all, but so much had been crowded into them that it was a real wrench to leave familiar faces and scenes behind and to venture out into the great unknown of the districts.

Many remained at the Biltmore for additional training in a particular field. As trainees we learned the skills so badly needed by the service—skills that we could perform as well as any man. Boot School enabled us to slide into the organization of a district without friction and raw edges; the specialist schools gave us a head start on being darned good yeomen, storekeepers, and cooks and bakers.

Whether we departed at the end of boot or specialist training, we all left Palm Beach with a sense of loss at taking farewell of many of the friends we had made. We had come to learn, we went out to serve. And our life as GI guests at the Biltmore was a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

Manhattan Beach

By December, 1944, recruiting for Spars ended except for replacements and special needs. There was no longer any need to maintain such an extensive station. All future Spars were to receive their training at Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, New York. So bag and baggage, Spar personnel left the balmy Florida breezes for the crisper ones of Brooklyn.

Towering pink stucco gave way to three low barracks buildings of frame construction for the Spars' exclusive use on a man's beach. All told, 1900 of us slept in the blue, green, rose, or yellow rooms, climbed up to the Sail Loft to look at the pieces of nautical equipment on display, and visited the *Never Sail*, dry land training ship, where we could learn the difference between a garboard strake and a mizzen mast. We were in training there from January to September, 1945.

Sometimes, in the strictly GI atmosphere of Manhattan Beach we felt that Spars were creatures to be seen and not heard. Only at the weekly dances when we were trainees did we find any time or opportunity to talk to the men on the Station. Otherwise we lounged separately, drilled separately, and ate in our own mess hall. But the fact that we were installed in a regular Coast Guard Training Station made those of us who trained at Manhattan Beach feel an especially strong sense of belonging to the service. There was even a healthy feeling of competing with the men for Station honors, and this esprit de corps comes out in an account of boot training at "The Beach" written by Patricia M. Raddock, S2 c.

"We arrived as celebrities, more or less, having come all the way from the sunny part of California. We left what had become our very familiar Pullman car at Jersey City and boarded the Coast Guard truck provided for us. In it we bounced across bridges and more bridges, lower Manhattan, and eventually Brooklyn. Riding along that beautiful speedway, we began to wonder if our own movies hadn't led us astray by drawing Brooklyn's tree a little loosely. But our faith in our home industry was soon restored when we were followed by a car full of 'dem bums' talking like Dead End kids, Bill Bendix, and Maisie all rolled into one. They provided our rear guard right up to the Station gate.

"Rain, they say, is traditional with the arrival of new boots, and we weren't exceptions. Pouring, droves of it. And we weren't equipped, having come from California. High heels, no hats, summer clothes. We looked awful.

"A few questions, and then we were assigned to bunks—the GI kind, but we slept like logs. We got up with the bugle and started right out in a military way, high heels and all, marching to chow.

"Right across the way there were boy boot companies to compete against, and we thought we made a mighty fine showing, although we probably just couldn't hear the snickers. Later on we really took pride in our formations and could even sing without losing cadence.

"We were spared very few of the details of training that were given to the men, right down to mess duty. Our usual beauty ritual had faded away to a quick shower, a smear of lipstick, and clothes thrown on to the ever-present call of 'Muster!'

"One memorable 'first' was our first liberty, when everyone headed into Manhattan without the beach, each determined to outdo the other

in seeing as much of the town in that one night as could ordinarily be covered in 10 years. For some reason we all ended up at 'Jack Dempsey's.'

"About the fourth week of boot camp we began to wonder if we weren't eating the Coast Guard out of all its budgets. Our appetites were prodigious. Chow was an event three times a day, but no wonder. We were on the move every waking hour and really hit that sack with fervor. In between times, we went swimming at the beach or in the Maritime pool. We got a few minutes of relaxation now and then out on the seawall, where we talked things over and got acquainted with one another.

"But there was always the call of duty, whether back to the classroom or to swab the ever-awaiting deck. We had classes all day long, and from eight to five were pounded with Coast Guard history and customs, the drill which we learned to love, and calisthenics to make us look svelte and do justice to the uniform.

"That uniform! After we got it 'fitted,' as they called it, we loaded all the tremendous list of items into our arms and carted it away in a seabag, sailor style, on our backs.

"Graduation came all too soon. There were speeches, not too many and not too long. The orders followed. Some of us were assigned to Coast Guard training schools here at Manhattan Beach: Yeoman, Storekeeper, Cooks and Bakers, and General Office Training. Others went right out on the job.

"We were full-fledged and we were salty. By gosh, we were Coast Guard!"

CADETS

In obscurity lies security

—Old Coast Guard saying

BLUE rank in the United States Coast Guard Reserve was not attained without great labor. It was passed out at the end of an endurance contest referred to as indoctrination. During said contest those of us who had qualified as officer candidates were faced with the necessity of further qualifying as gymnasts, scholars and housekeepers.

Whether we were age 20 or 45, we learned to do exactly as we were told, and we held our tongues even if they were sometimes tucked in our cheeks. We took it either gracefully or grudgingly according to our nature but we took it. No one was given any quarter. The bigger we were, the harder we fell.

We drilled with our coats on when it was 125° in the shade. We drilled minus topcoats when it was so cold we would have had pneumonia if our shots hadn't already given us typhoid fever. We griped like mad, but they couldn't have pried us loose with a crowbar. Bilge was a five-letter word that made sturdy women tremble and timid women quake.

We went through all this either at the Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School (WR) at Northampton, Massachusetts, or the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut, or at both.

Northampton

Twelve adventurous Waves broke the ice at the U. S. Naval Training School, Northampton, Massachusetts, by volunteering to become the first Spar officers. That was in December, 1942. Following in their footsteps, literally and figuratively, 200 more of us skidded up and down "Agony Hill" in company with long lines of Waves.

At the time we trained at Northampton, the Navy had not quite made up its mind about whether women could be indoctrinated exactly like the men. We don't know what they finally decided, for the Coast Guard Academy took us all over eventually. But in those months at Hamp we were plunged into the most frantic, exhausting, and confusing schedule of activities that the U. S. Navy Department could dream up.

The orders came through from Washington: "They will march to classes in both fair and inclement weather." Fair enough. We were physically perfect specimens—at least when we arrived. What nobody told the Big Boys was that the classroom and the dormitories, Gillett and Northrup, were about a mile away from the Hotel Northampton where we ate three times a day. So by the time we had marched back and forth from meals, back and forth from Filene's or sick bay (both also close to the hotel), with perhaps an extra jaunt back and forth for a sundae during an hour's liberty, not to mention the shorter hitches to and from classes, we had already covered a good 10 miles. On top of that, just to keep us pliable, we had two hours a day gym or drill.

After a few days of halting in icy puddles, dragging ourselves up one hill and down another, being quizzed in classes on material we hadn't had a chance to look at, bolting meals trying to beat the whistle, and carrying interminable lists of facts and figures for five classes a day around in our befuddled heads we were grim, gray, silent, dazed, beaten.

With shots in our arms and clovehitches in our muscles we were nevertheless expected to muster on the double. We crowded through the doors, sore to the touch and sagging low to the ground. We stood in formation in the mud outside the dormitories or behind the hotel while officers yanked our hats down over our eyes and barked, "Pull down your brim. Where do you think you are—Hollywood?"

After the first incredible week, no tale of what "They" were going to do to us would not have received credence. If we had been told of a new Navy ruling that all our teeth were going to be pulled out and false ones put in for the ultimate convenience of the Service, we would only have groaned feebly.

We were all desperately afraid of bilging out, and some of us did. It turned into a race to see who could cram the most information into her head in the shortest possible time. We pulled out our notebooks during any spare moment—sneaking a look at a page while marching, scrutinizing a diagram while standing in line for chow or sick bay, memorizing a few more numbers in the head. Sometimes after "lights out" we studied under the "admiral's blanket" with a flashlight or cut short our sleep an hour or so by getting up before dawn for an extra look at Naval Law or Naval History and Strategy. If we went away from the station on weekend liberty to Boston or New York, we studied feverishly on the train. More often we wearily stumbled into a local hotel and collapsed.

Our systems for remembering vital information were many and varied. One entire platoon astonished the instructor by murmuring aloud in a quiz: "Bad girl eats raw yellow mangoes too carelessly, poor, poor sap." But they all managed to name the grades that could be warranted, swinging easily into "Boatswain's mate, gunner's mate, electrician's mate, radioman, yeoman, machinist's mate, torpedoman, carpenter's mate, pharmacist's mate, photographer's mate and storekeeper."

Sometimes our throbbing brains played tricks on us in examination. One apprentice seaman, trying to think of "chief aerographer's mates" wrote down "chief choreographer's mate." Another, attempting to give the pet name for the old "four-stackers," pre-1920 cruisers, crashed through with "the old four-flushers" and never knew the difference. A touch of divine idiocy appeared on more than one answer sheet, returned, according to specification, to Washington. There was one on military etiquette filled out by a seaman who had to answer the question: "What do you say when you meet a captain coming down the street at ten o'clock in the morning?" She cautiously put down: "Good morning, Captain, Sir. It's ten hundred!"

Day in and day out we scurried around like animals from one of the lower orders living on a sub-human level. Yet, grim though it was, hectic though it was, beaten down though we were, Spars who trained at Northampton smile a curious tender smile as they think of it and sigh, "Good old Hamp . . ."

The Academy

The Coast Guard was the only service that trained women officer candidates at its Academy. Those of us who aspired to the blue braid sincerely appreciated this honor and realized what it must have meant to the men to have their last citadel invaded. For the Academy, overlooking the Thames River at New London, Connecticut, is to the Coast Guard what West Point and Annapolis are to the Army and Navy.

Ours was an indoctrination with genuine atmosphere. We lived on the banks of the Thames, we actually went out on boats, we trod the same paths as the future male officers of the U. S. Coast Guard, we were surrounded by the proud tradition of the nation's oldest, continuous, seagoing service.

Reactions to indoctrination at the Academy differed, of course, with the individual. Since it is impossible to record how each potential Spar officer felt, it has been deemed advisable to reproduce here parts of a manuscript written by a Spar cadet and found floating on the Thames River in a soft-drink bottle. The dead files at Headquarters reveal that, as a civilian, the manuscript's author was a well-groomed, good-dispositioned person with 20/20 vision and above average intelligence. Possessed of both initiative and poise, she held a responsible position and was respected by her community. The photograph of her on her ID card looked like something from the files of the F.B.I., but then, whose didn't? For obvious reasons her name will be withheld.

• • •

Well, here I am—a member of the good old USCG(WR) or is it USCGR(W)? No matter. Keeping a diary is strictly non-reg, I'm told, but I feel I owe it to posterity to record my experiences at the Coast Guard Academy. Besides, regulations shouldn't be taken too seriously—who'll be the wiser? . . . My arrival wasn't what you'd call triumphant. I took a taxi from the station, and the driver automatically dumped me at Chase Hall. I got over to the wing which is the Spar dormitory, and there was the reception committee. A cadet who had arrived early for

some unknown reason was acting as—company commander, I believe they call it. I don't know why, but I can't get that girl off my mind. She seemed to be so *uneasy*. Why she should be uneasy at a beautiful place like this, I don't know. She uneasily referred me to a Spar officer she called the OD or the DO or something who looked at me as though I were the uninvited guest at an already overcrowded house party. We tersely passed the time of day concerning my name, my orders, my room number, an identification button, and gummed labels for my bed, dresser, and door. She looked like a nice girl, though, and we'll probably get acquainted over a coke before the week has passed. . . . My two roommates had arrived ahead of me, so I was stuck with the upper half of the double-decker bunk. Before I could stick my labels on, a whistle blew and somebody yelled: "Muster on the weather deck!" That's pig Latin for "Come downstairs and line up." A Spar officer took one look at me and said, "No pocketbooks in ranks." Up to the third floor and down again, only to be greeted with "We will wear our identification buttons at all times." Back up and down. I didn't complain, though. It's a good thing to have people in authority notice you right off the bat—sort of gives you a head start. That's why I'm glad I wore my dashing, coachman-type hat. It made me stand out in the crowd, and since we'll be in uniform tomorrow it was my only chance to be conspicuous. . . . They taught us the correct response to the commands, "Attention!" "Right face!" and "Forward march!" We had to know these before we could get to meals. It seems we go everywhere in a group. I've made up a song to sing to the rest of the gang at breakfast tomorrow called "I Don't Want To Walk Without You." I think it will brighten up the business of eating. It shows initiative, too. . . . Taps just sounded, and I'm finishing this in the dark. I never get sleepy until around midnight and think I'll stay down in the lounge after this and read. I should be able to finish three or four books while I'm here. You know, lying here in this unyielding bed that I painstakingly made up according to the mimeographed diagram, I'm beginning to feel a little ill. The liquid notes of taps floated heavenward just as I'd always read they did, and I want to give way to the thrill of being in the service. But a stranger is snoring beneath me, and something inside me keeps insisting in a tiny, stricken murmur: "What the heck have you got yourself into this time?" Silly thought—at a beautiful place like this! Think I'll look up the OD or DO tomorrow and see if she doesn't want to go sailing. She's probably lonely, sitting there all day with those dumb, gummed labels.

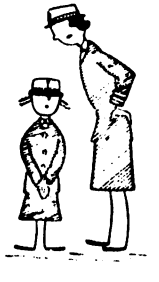
• • •

Whew! This is the first time I've had a chance to write in this since the day I arrived. I've never been so bushed in my life. If it weren't for the identification button on my chest, I couldn't even remember my name. . . . We hit the deck around here at 0615 which is the Coast Guard way of saying 6:15 a.m. which is too darned early no matter how you say it. Before the New England dawn has thoroughly jelled, we are up, dressed, fed, and marking time. We march to class, march to another class, march to chow, march back to class, march to drill, and so on, on

until 2200 when we topple into the sack. . . . And somebody is always tooting a whistle. I can never finish a cigarette before they start tooting a whistle. And a whistle here doesn't mean "get ready." It means not only "be there" but "be there five minutes ahead of time." . . . We're supposed to be studying now, but I want so much to lie down on my little bunk that's going to waste over there in the corner. Just snuggle down and put my aching head on the pillow and—but this way madness lies. We're not allowed to hit the sack until 2000, and I must not break the rules. It's not that I'm afraid of the officers; it's just that a sort of paralysis sets in whenever I see a sleeve with a blue stripe on it. That's not like me at all, but then I don't feel like myself these days. I think things might be better if I hadn't worn that coachman-type hat. I feel like a fool marching along in flat black oxfords, lisle hose, and that thing on my head. Why didn't somebody tell me we wouldn't be in uniform for a long time? We've been to the clothing locker for our fittings, but I don't believe they got my measurements right. I would have said something to the fitters; but a uniform officer with a long cigarette holder was sitting there, and I didn't want to hurt her feelings. You have to be awfully careful what you say and do here because everything is indicative—everything—and you don't know whether it's for good or for bad. I've made up my mind to show some initiative tomorrow. Right now, I better hide this and study.

• • •

A letter from the outside world is as eagerly awaited here as the command to "fall out." Now and then, however, they prove a keen disappointment. I do not expect to be fully appreciated but *where* did some of my civilian friends pick up the idea that I am doing nothing but eating the steak, butter, and chewing gum denied them; collecting shoe coupons, and taking advantage of free postage? We attend classes for at least five hours daily with an hour or so of infantry drill tucked in to prevent us from loafing in the ship's service store, and they write: "What do you *do* all day?" . . . My roommates are okay although one is a confirmed landlubber. She spent 20 minutes the other day running up and down stairs looking for a ladder to swab. . . . The cadets range in age from 24 to 40 with as widely varying backgrounds. In civilian life we were home economists, teachers, journalists, lawyers, technicians, social workers, personnel directors, and so on. No more. Here, there are only two classifications—in step and out. And it doesn't matter what we did in our pre-Academy days, we're all cut down to cadet size now—which is pretty small. Most of us are in the same boat—confused but stouthearted women who came here scarcely knowing the difference between a bilge pump and an albatross and whose sole ambitions in life have been reduced to (1) getting through this training period somehow and (2) smoking just one cigarette all the way to the end before a whistle blows. We speak now and then of how much better things would be if we were running the place, but that's not an ambition—it's wishful thinking. The way some of



these cadets can take it and doggedly come back for more is downright admirable. Of course, there are those in the group who, from their display of naval savoir-faire, would have us believe that in their civilian days they played gin rummy with the Commandant, but they are comparatively few. Some of the cadets are philosophical and take everything in their stride. A few even feel it's relaxing to have someone else do the thinking and planning for a change. Others are rebellious at heart. Still others are beginning to look beaten down and haggard. I find myself getting an inordinate amount of pleasure out of simple things, our system of sounding off at bedcheck for example. We panic ourselves by singing out of the darkness to the astonished cadet who is acting petty officer: "Captain Stratton!" "John Paul Jones!" "Colonel Hobby!" "Alexander Hamilton!" A puny defiance of regimentation, but it helps.

• • •

We heard today via scuttlebutt that nine cadets bilged out of the last class. I wonder how they possibly managed to do that. The idea of bilging is preposterous! I don't know though, now that I come to think of it maybe it isn't so preposterous. I'm afraid I'm not doing very well in my classes. Not everything is clear, and I can't memorize more than five pages at a time. When we have a test (and when *aren't* we having one), I put down what seems sensible to me, but it's usually incorrect. Some times I think they take two off if you're wrong and one if you're right. . . . Our classes, taught by the blue braid, with additional lectures by male instructors, include the following courses:

1. *Correspondence:* a TO-FROM-VIA proposition—with green copies, pink copies, and various other pastel shades all belonging in different files—that tends to discourage letter writing in any form.
2. *Ships and Aircraft:* enables cadet to identify a lake-class cutter at any distance and to glance nonchalantly heavenward and exclaim, "As I live and breathe, there goes a PBY2."
3. *Coast Guard Personnel:* acquaints cadet with insignia, ratings, and rank of the various armed forces, prevents mistaking an admiral for a head usher.
4. *Coast Guard Organization at Headquarters and in a District:* is equally complicated one place as another, will probably always stick in cadet's mind as a mess of boxes on a blackboard.
5. *Law:* teaches cadet enough about the workings of a court martial to know they are good things to steer clear of.
6. *Coast Guard History:* fills cadet with genuine pride at the long and glorious history of the Service, but in an organization that has been going strong since 1790, there's an awful lot to memorize.

When the instructor is sighted, the company petty officer calls "Attention!" We stand until instructor says, "Seats!" At lecture's end, the

p. o. says, "Rise!" I've got all that straight—it's what happens in between that confuses me. An instructor tells us one thing and then a former enlisted girl sounds off and says, "But in our district they did it like this." Then the instructor comes back with, "It varies in the districts, *but*—" I don't know. I guess Headquarters prefers things done a certain way, the districts do them any way they darn please, and the Academy is above it all. . . . Certainly wish I hadn't heard about that bilging business. It preys on my mind. Tomorrow I'll show some initiative to prove I'm officer material in spite of my grades.

• • •

I forgot to mention that there are male cadets here—both regulars and reserves. Since we usually go around with eyes straight ahead and they do the same, we don't see much of one another. Ah, the power of regimentation. Someday when we march past them, I'm going to drop my havelock and see what happens. . . . As far as drill is concerned, it gives us a real thrill to move in rhythm and precision and to see a group of individuals react as one. Of course, we don't always react as one, particularly since my coachman hat falls off each time everybody else is doing a "to-the rear-march." We received strict instructions to follow our commands in drill no matter what the consequences, and the other day a confused cadet had us marching over curbstones, into walls, and in all directions. Finally in desperation she stamped her feet and wailed, "Oh, girls, *please* cooperate!" . . . To my way of thinking, drill is much to be preferred to gym. The latter always falls on a day after our shots when we are suffering from a typhoid fever-smallpox-tetanus combine and should at the very least be in bed with the blinds drawn. Instead, we swing into calisthenics, wildly waving our aching arms; we thrash about in the swimming pool; we race through strenuous athletic contests. And the staff has seen fit to dignify our agony by listing it on the schedule as "organized playtime."

• • •

I wouldn't let anyone read this for the world, but today we got our uniforms and I look like something that even the tide wouldn't go out with. I think we're supposed to look trim and snappy and feel a glow of pride—it said so in the recruiting literature anyhow—and I'm trying like mad to glow but my uniform is so *big*. A lot of the cadets look quite shipshape and are really a credit to the Service; but not me. Tomorrow I'll show some initiative and ask to have my uniform altered. At least I won't have to wear this stage-coach on my head any longer, and that's something to be thankful for. . . . They told us we must greet an officer each and every time we see one. Yesterday I was waiting for someone in the hall, and an officer approached. The conversation went something like this:

"Good morning, Miss V—."

"Good morning, Cadet A—."

She went into the head and came out again.

"Good morning, Miss V—."

"Good morning, Cadet A—."

Things were getting a bit strained. I went into the head and prayed she'd be gone when I came out, but she wasn't.

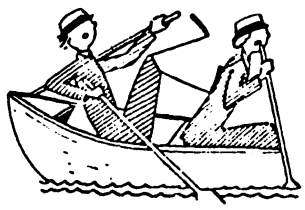
"Good morning, Miss V—."

"Good morning, Cadet A—."

We were both gasping. I honestly don't see how military personnel ever gets anything done at that rate. Maybe the district where I'm stationed will vary and skip that sort of thing. . . . To make matters even more confusing, when we're not referring to the Spar officers by name, we address them as "Sir" (it's a man's war, I guess). It's terribly difficult for me to remember, and this afternoon I was trying so hard that I got fouled up and greeted two of them with, "Good afternoon, gentlemen!" I can't see why that's any screwier than "Sir," but they stared at me strangely; and when I looked back, they were still staring.

• • •

I am not allergic to good wholesome exercise, but I do think it can be overdone. I'm sure I would be sounder of limb if I had never seen one of these pulling boats that we man frequently. When we go for a row on the Thames (rhymes with James up here), the cadet behind me is forever ramming me in the back with her oar; and I'm ruining my hands hoisting the boat out of the water at the end of our cruises. The other day I showed my blisters to an old salt who was instructing us. "Look," I said pathetically. "If I keep hauling on this chain, I'll get lockjaw." He regarded me coldly. "Lockjaw!" he growled with a leer. "What do you think you've had all those tetanus shots for ? Haul away!"



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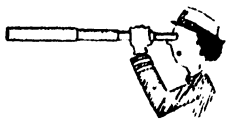
This afternoon was rope-yarn Sunday. In the old days it seems that a ship's crew set every Wednesday afternoon aside to make things out of rope. After so many years they reached the end of their rope, but the blessed tradition of having the afternoon off was handed down through the ages. We went off the reservation, but before we left we had to stand personal inspection. Two WR officers carried on a heated debate behind my back as to what was the matter with the fit of my uniform. They were inclined to blame the whole thing on my posture. I was at attention, of course, and couldn't even turn my head, much less enter into the discussion, so I let them keep guessing and prayed my size-20 skirt wouldn't slip from my size-14 frame before they were through. Posture indeed! I stayed noisily out of step on the way to and from New London and boosted my morale a little. We got our shoes fixed—mine have covered territory equal in size to the Louisiana Purchase—bought sundaes, practiced saluting, and bet on the identity of various Army insignia. I think my hat's too big, but I don't guess I'll mention it. Complaining is probably indicative of some kind of emotional disturbance—and they keep watching us, watching us, WATCHING US!



Oh, oh. It has happened. Several members of our class were bilged. And one or two of them seemed to be doing so well, too. Scuttlebutt has it that some apparently perfectly normal girls were discovered to have hidden complexes and phobias that they knew nothing about. We can't understand it. I guess they'll get me in the next batch, or maybe they're going to string me along until the last week. I felt so sorry for those girls. As much as we gripe, none of us wants to leave prematurely. It's a funny thing about this place. It's exhilarating and depressing, exciting and dull, wonderful and frightful. I can't quite explain it. All I know is I'm proud to be a cadet and wouldn't willingly return to my civilian status for anything, even though it would put me out of my misery.

• • •

I wish one of my roommates (I'm not mentioning any names) wouldn't keep talking about whom she's going to take a poke at when she has her commission in her hand. I have a feeling there's a dictaphone in our room. That's why I discuss only the weather and classes. I've examined every outlet, but I don't really know what to look for. I've never seen a dictaphone. . . . Today I had to deliver my five-minute speech to Gamma Beta Pi. The idea is that instead of our shipmates we are facing a sorority. This requires not only public speaking ability but also histrionic talents. It is all a hideous form of make-believe—this addressing an audience that isn't really there. My attempt was very painful for both me and the real audience. We have a choice of topics: "Why I Joined the Spars," "Amusing Things That Have Happened at the Academy," "Coast Guard Heroes," etc., but we may also make up one of our own if we so desire. I wanted to give a fiery oration exposing the military for what it is and go down to glory in irons. Instead, I spoke mildly on "The Seal Patrol; Organization of." Will I never get around to showing initiative?

• • •

I wish I had gone to New York this past weekend. The girls were really devilish. They slept until noon and didn't wear their ID buttons at all. I guess I was foolish not to go, but it sounded so complicated. The officer who briefed us raised distressed eyebrows and looked terribly worried about the whole thing. Her advice covered three main points which I painstakingly wrote down in my notebook: (1) Do get a big book to take refuge behind (2) Do be kind to civilians and (3) Remember, you can always call the Shore Patrol. I don't know—I have always found train trips to be fairly simple and enjoyable, but this time it didn't seem worth the effort—getting a big book, being kind, and keeping in the shadow of the shore patrol. I stayed in my room and looked for the dictaphone.

Today was "Be Kind to Cadets Day." One of the male officers (may there be many stripes in his crown) talked with us in a way that made us feel the Coast Guard needed us, wanted us, and was looking to us to do a good job; and that we, in turn, have what it takes to make good officers. We were touched, tremulous with humble gratitude. Imagine anyone building us up! Now I'm really determined to show some initiative.

• • •

My roommate says that way back at the beginning of the program, all the officers up here got together and tackled the question: "Just how hard can we make Saturday?" They must have done a great deal of research on the subject because the answer is 100 percent effective—captain's inspection, personal inspection, and tests. Every Friday night is made hideous with indecision. To study or to clean? To clean or to study? It's impossible to do both satisfactorily. . . . Captain's inspection is like a game of hide the thimble (we're determined they *won't* find anything and they're determined they *will*) except there's a sinister quality to it, and the stakes are higher. It seemed funny at first, going to all this trouble for a man who probably wouldn't notice it if we had a whale moored under the bed. We found out. An inspecting officer can spot a speck of dust at 50 paces. The only thing that consoles me is thinking of their poor wives. If seeing them on Saturday is bad, what must it be to have them around every day in the week! A quiet evening at home probably goes something like this:

Commander (reprovingly): Dear, there's a spot on the wallpaper 20 degrees east by northeast of grandfather's portrait.

Wife laughs nervously and tries to talk about the theater or books or something.

Commander (persistently): Dear, there is a cobweb on the port side of the rubber plant.

Wife moves uneasily and tries to get him sidetracked to celestial navigation.

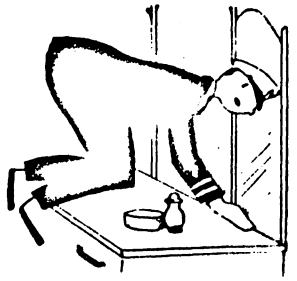
Commander (running his hand behind the bookcase): Dear, please! Just look at my white glove.

Wife takes a gulp of straight rye and gets up to clean the room. As she rises, she reveals the fact that she has been sitting on several of the children's toys and a few dirty ashtrays which she didn't have time to dispose of before his arrival.

Commander (shaking his head): My dear, you are certainly not semper paratus. Just because I usually start in the basement and work up is no guarantee that I won't occasionally reverse my tactics.

We don't trust ordinary cleaning utensils around here. We pick up dust with our hands and keep right on picking it up until the very last minute. When we hear the inspecting party drawing near, we put on our shoes, give one last swipe to the ashtray in the middle of the table, and come to attention. We stand there as though rigor mortis had set in while the inspecting officer knocks himself out trying to find dust *some-*

[illegible] above the transom, behind the radiator, under the bed springs. His every remark is immortalized in writing by the company commander, and if all is not to his satisfaction we're restricted and sit out the weekend on the reservation. Blessed are the tidy at heart for they shall see Manhattan!



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I know we're being watched. Sometimes, when I'm writing in this, I have a feeling someone is looking over my shoulder. I must be careful. It wouldn't do to have this discovered. Maybe I should never have kept it. After all, rules are rules . . . The Spar officers here know everything. Today I was called in by one of them.

"Are you happy here?" she asked, her eyes looking like a couple of stripes.

"Yes, oh yes!" I cried eagerly, trying to conceal the four nervous twitches I have developed since my arrival.

"Happy?" she went on, "With all these black marks?"

"Black marks, Sir?" I gasped, twitching all over.

"Yes. On 8 May you passed Miss —— in the bilge and did not salute. On 15 May you failed to wear your ID button. On 21 May your stocking seams were crooked. And you're happy—with all these black marks?"

I scarcely trusted myself to speak. "Oh no," I blurted out at last, "not happy, just determined to do better."

All is lost. It is only a matter of time until they discover that on 29 May I went to chow with my lapel insignia upside down; I simply *must* show some officerlike initiative soon.

• • •

Last night I dreamed that I was bilged from here. I was in my room picking up dust and memorizing organization charts, when a man with crossed hammers on his sleeve and red mustache appeared. While marking time, he read from a lengthy memo, "Subject: Cadet A.....; bilging of." Too late I tried to show initiative by setting fire to my bunk and calmly putting it out. In vain did I recite from memory the complete organization of HQ, all details concerning a general court martial, the definitions of a dozen nautical terms, and the major points of military etiquette. Too many black marks were on the memo. The man, whose sleeve now sported three gold stripes and crossed quills, handed me my discharge papers, my coachman-type hat, saluted smartly and ordered me to leave by the right oblique. I woke up screaming. It was a terrible dream, and I'm sure it is all most indicative.

We have had the ink-blot tests and our interviews with the psychiatrists. Everyone was on guard and we all tried

to show how well-integrated we are, but they were ready for us. They made all single cadets wonder why in heaven's name they aren't married and all married cadets wonder why in heaven's name, since they are married, they are here! I feel frustrated. . . . I'm writing this in the closet where no one can see me. For a second the thought came to me, "Pooh! Pooh! Is this the girl who made the first entry in this diary—poised, breezy, unafraid—now cowering here in the closet?" But that very thought was indicative of a wild, rebellious, unofficerlike nature. I was ashamed. Whatever possessed me to defy regulations and keep a diary? Just suppose they were to find it? I'd be bilged, I know. Oh I do wish there were something I could do with it.

• • •

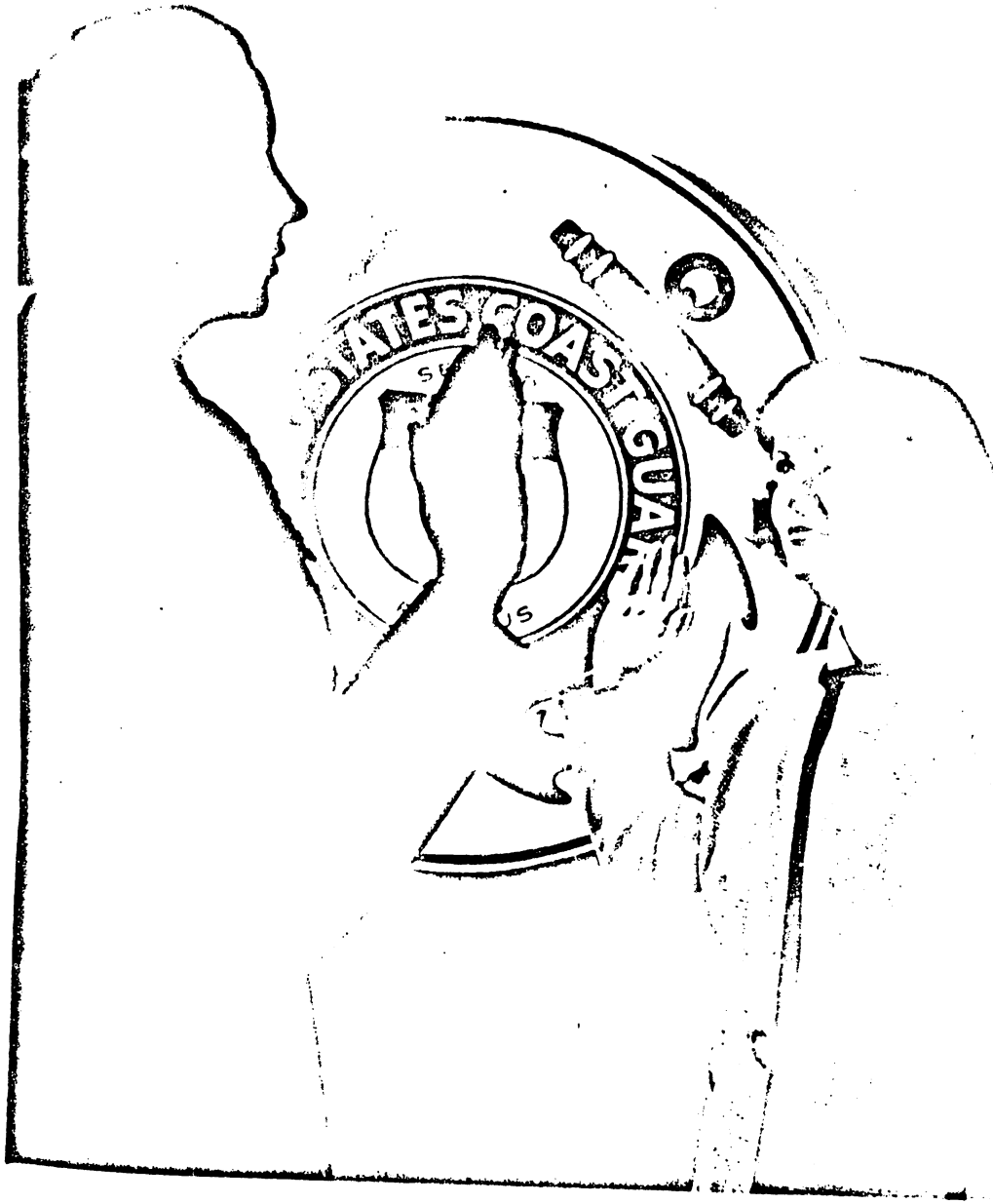
Today we practiced commissioning procedure. Maybe it's just as well that I am going to be bilged—I don't think I'd ever get through that ceremony. We're supposed to shake hands with the admiral with our right hand, grasp our commission with our left, shake hands with the chaplain with our—there you are, I always run out of hands. After the commissioning, there's nothing more to worry about except getting into striped uniforms, sewing eagles on our hats, attending a formal luncheon, and receiving our assignments. Maybe, instead of bilging me, they're going to assign me to do light housekeeping on some lonely island.

• • •

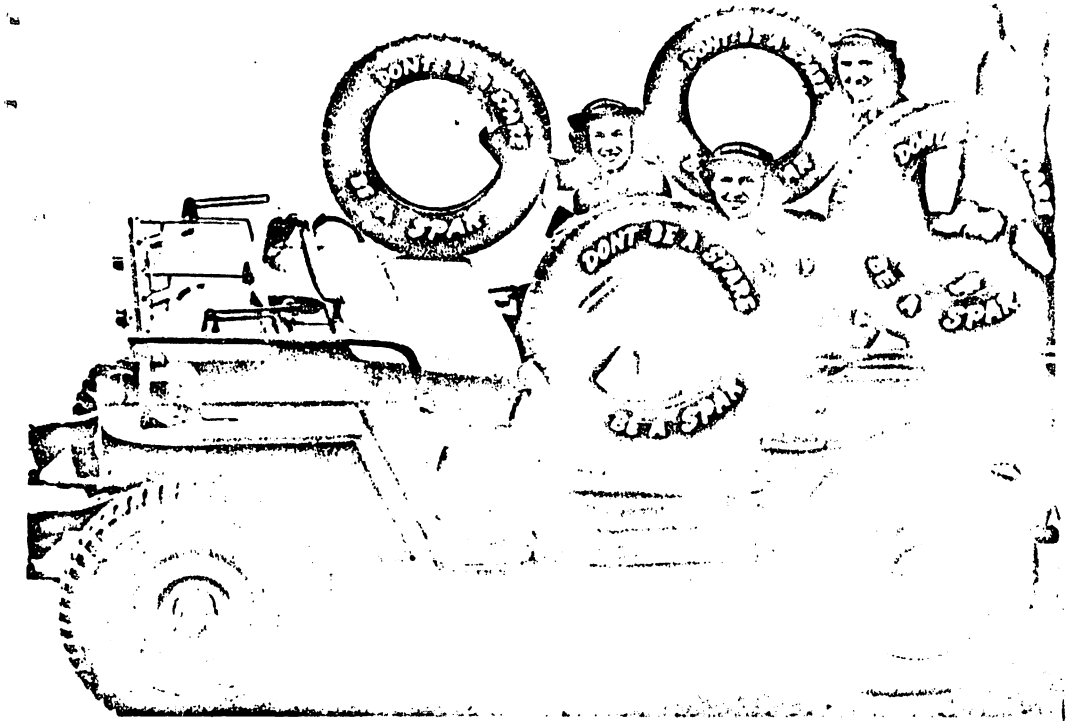
I can't stand it any longer. Two Spar officers looked at me today and *smiled*. They never would have done that if something hadn't been wrong. I'm sure they suspect I have this diary. I have figured out a way to get rid of it and only hope it isn't too late. Before chow tonight I shall roll it into a cylinder and put it in a—good heavens! I almost wrote the name of a product when I *know* the Service endorses absolutely nothing. I shall put it in a soft-drink bottle and hurl it into the Thames. To heck with initiative! To heck with posterity! In obscurity lies security!

* * *

In spite of Cadet A.....'s fears, she was commissioned an ensign in the Women's Reserve. Scuttlebutt has it that she made a very competent officer and, except for a slight nervous twitch whenever the Thames River was mentioned, turned out to be perfectly normal.



"I, ..., do solemnly swear . . ."



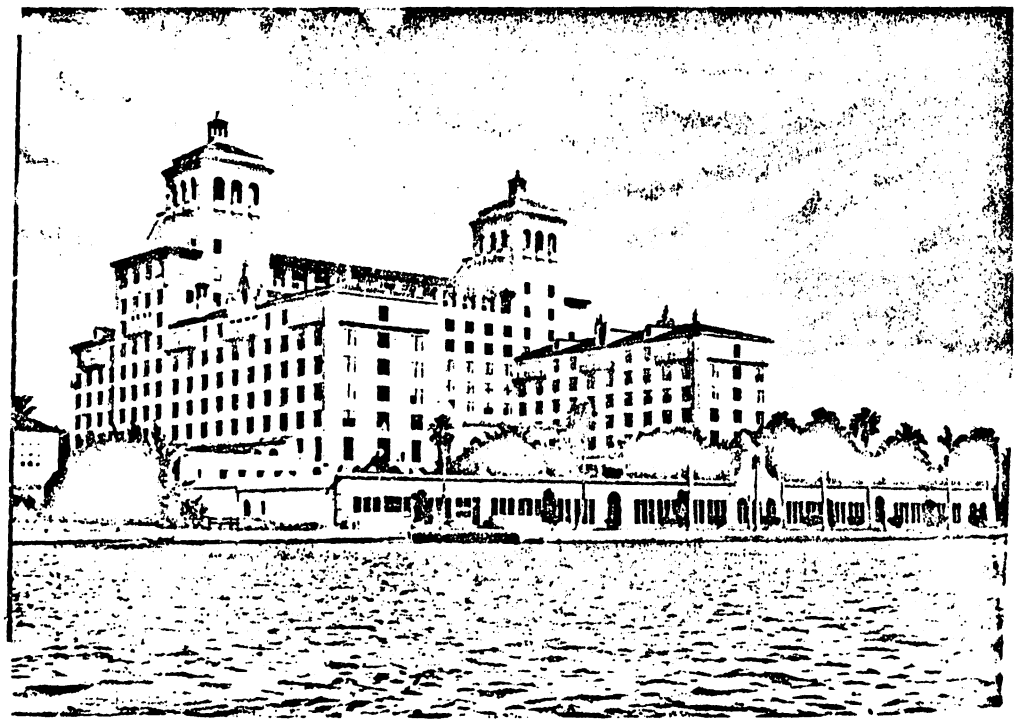
Hunters . . .

. . . and the Hunted

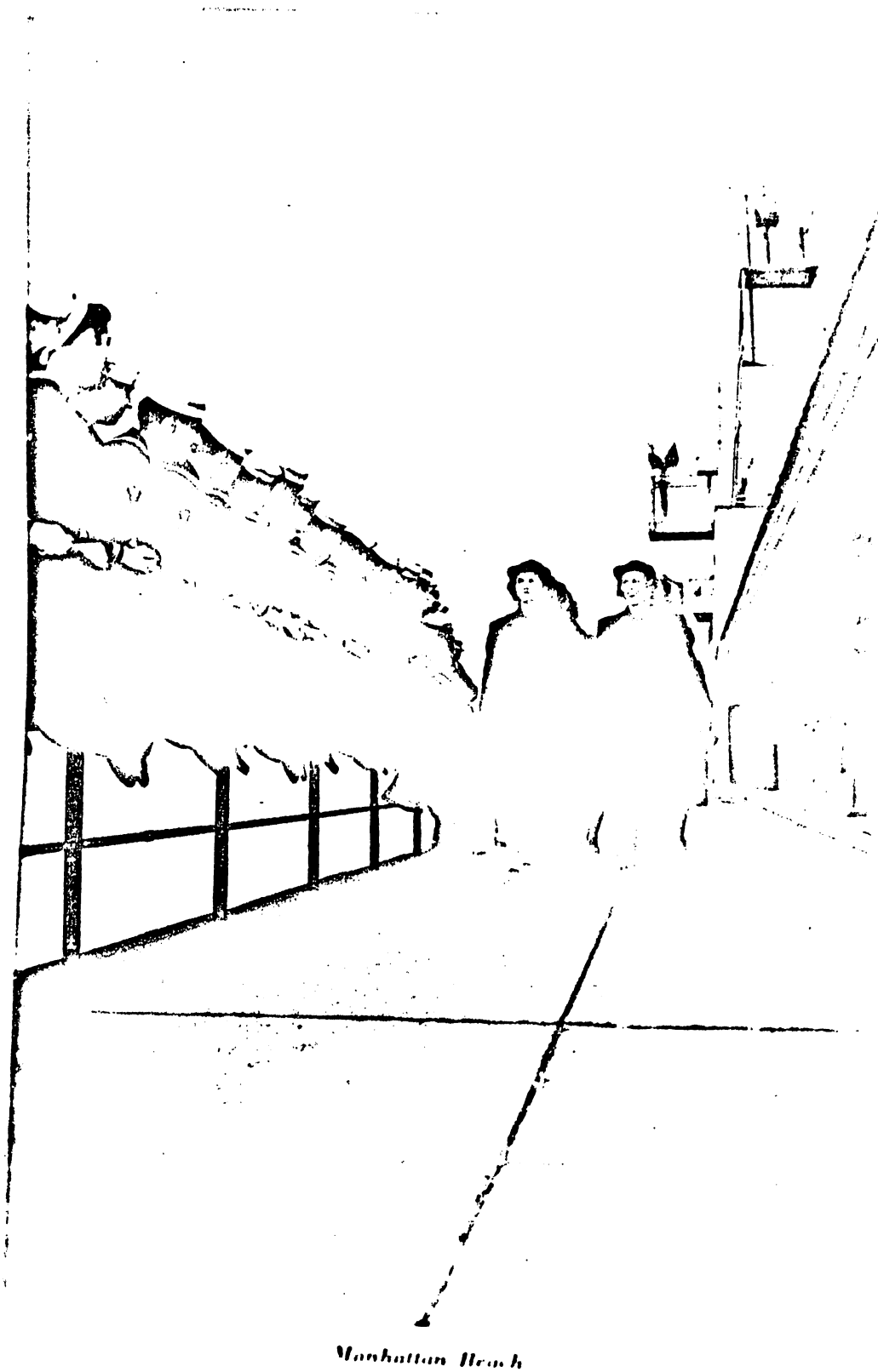
Cedar Falls

Official Navy Photograph

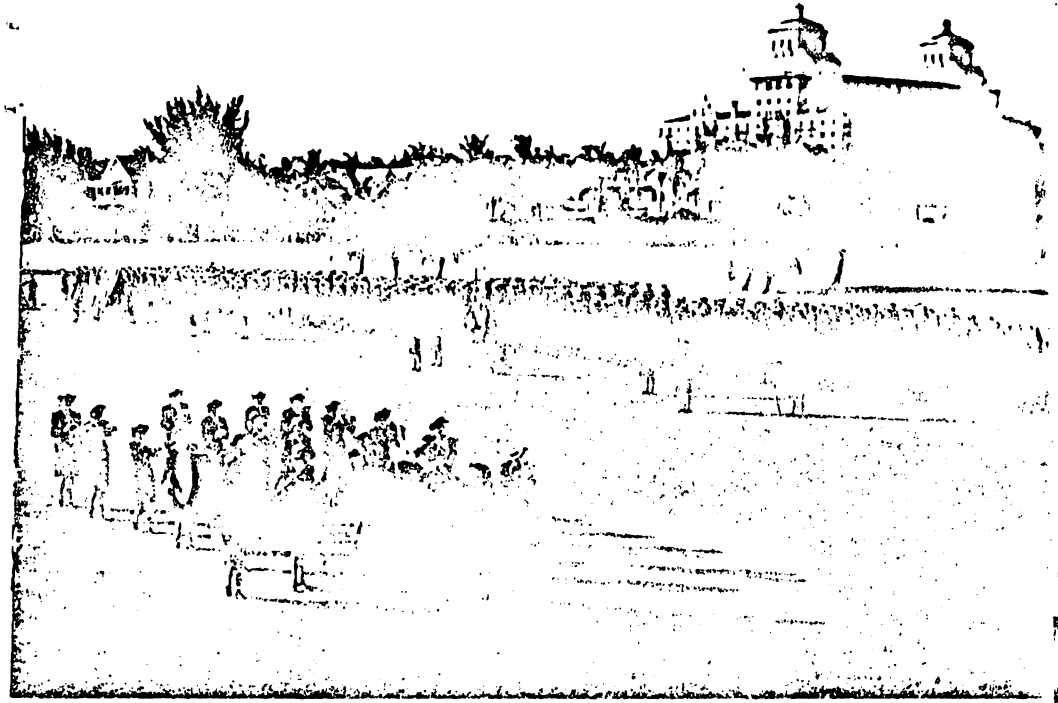
Hunter



Palm Beach



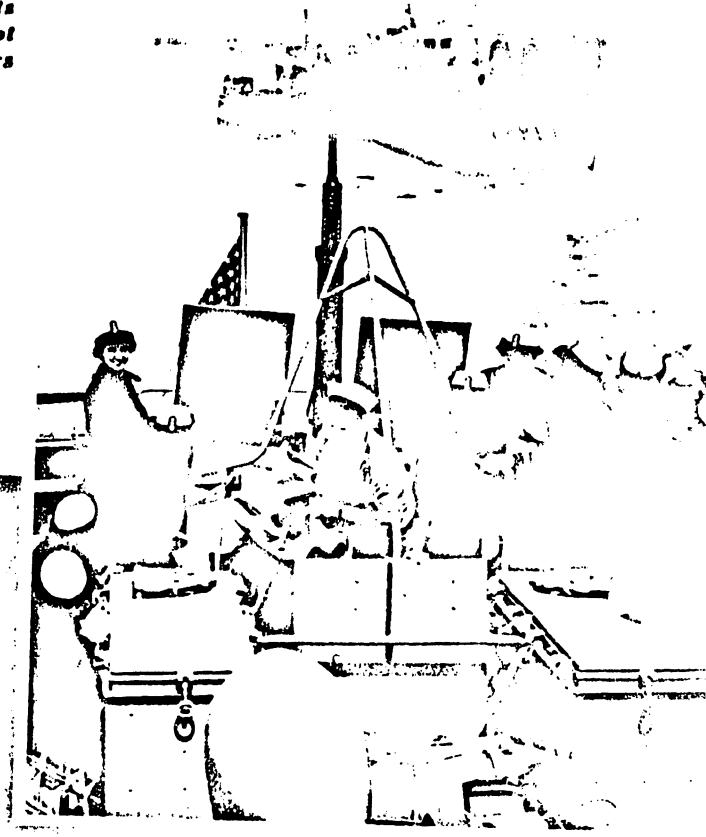
Manhattan Beach



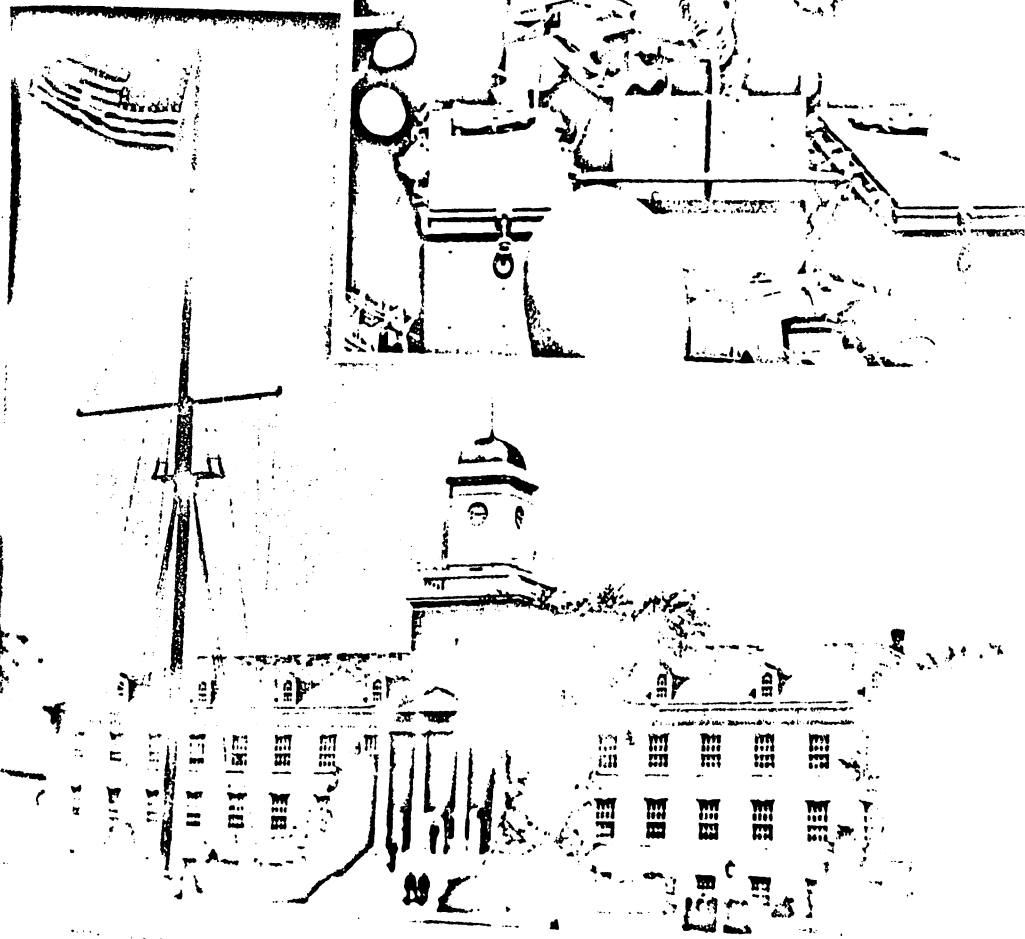
Regimental Review at Palm Beach

A Dip in the Atlantic, Palm Beach, Florida

Spar Cadets Aboard 83-Foot Patrol Cutters

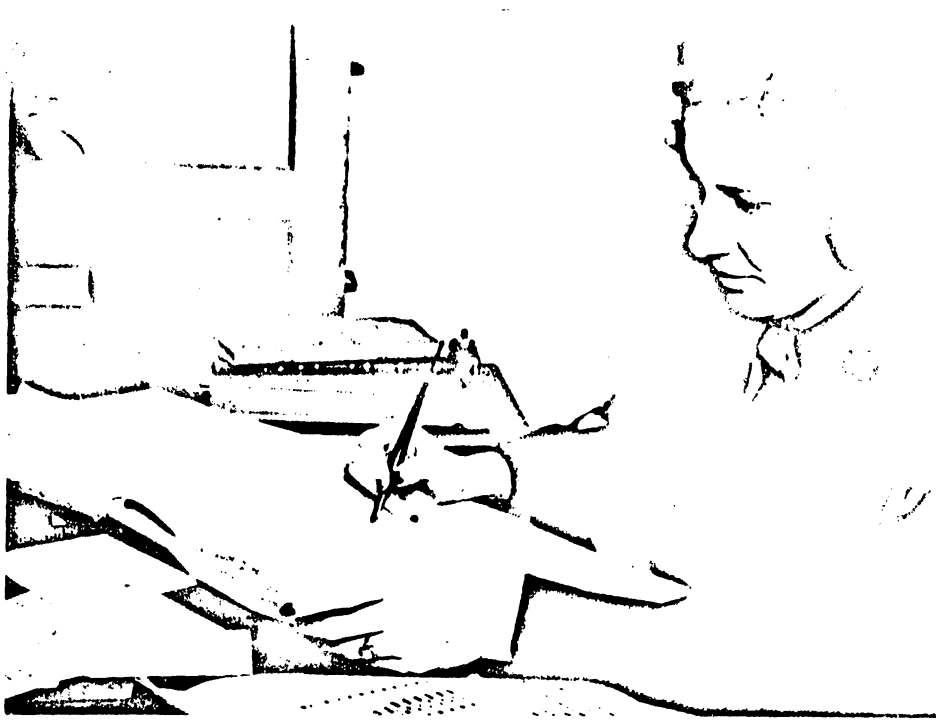


Hamilton Hall, Coast Guard Academy

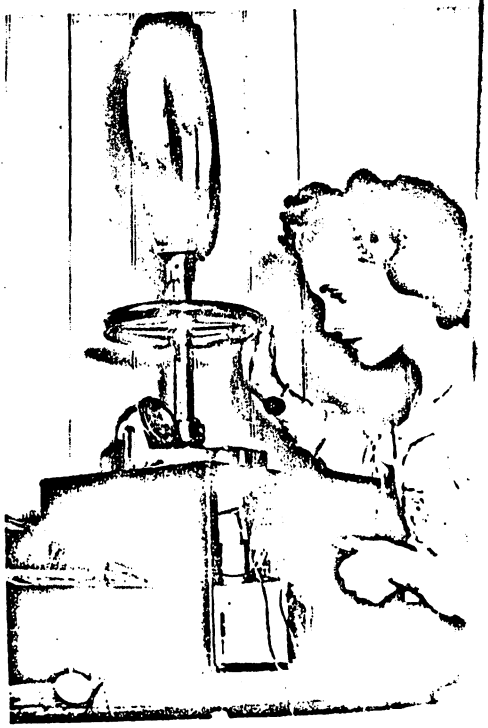


Ship's Cook

Pharmacist's Mate

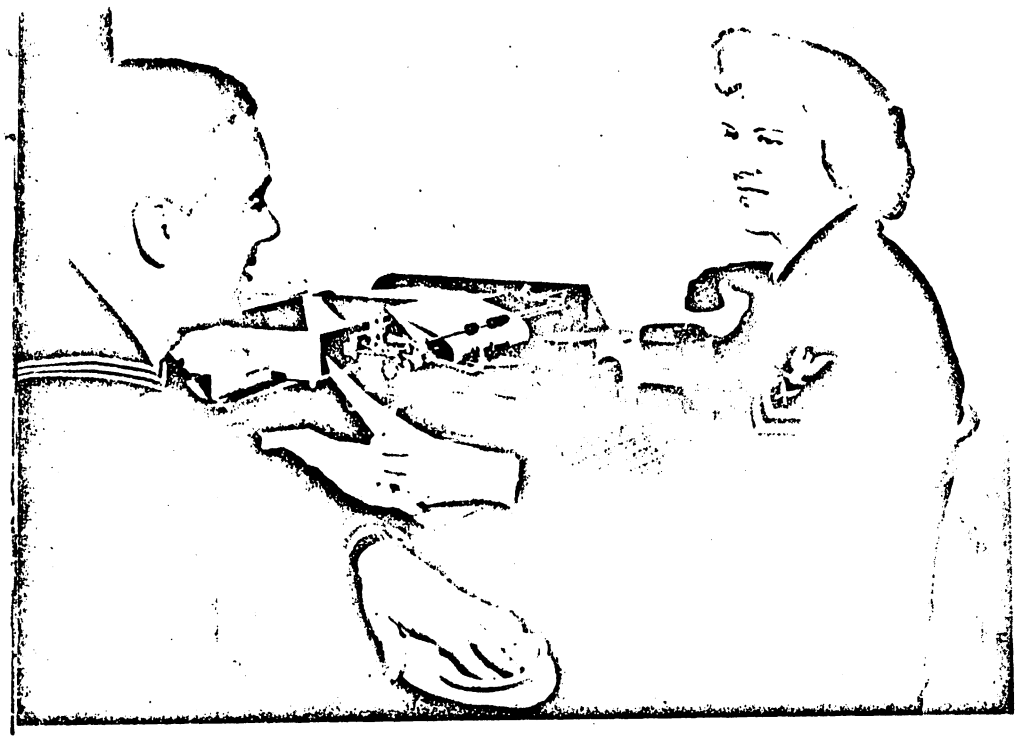


Storekeeper

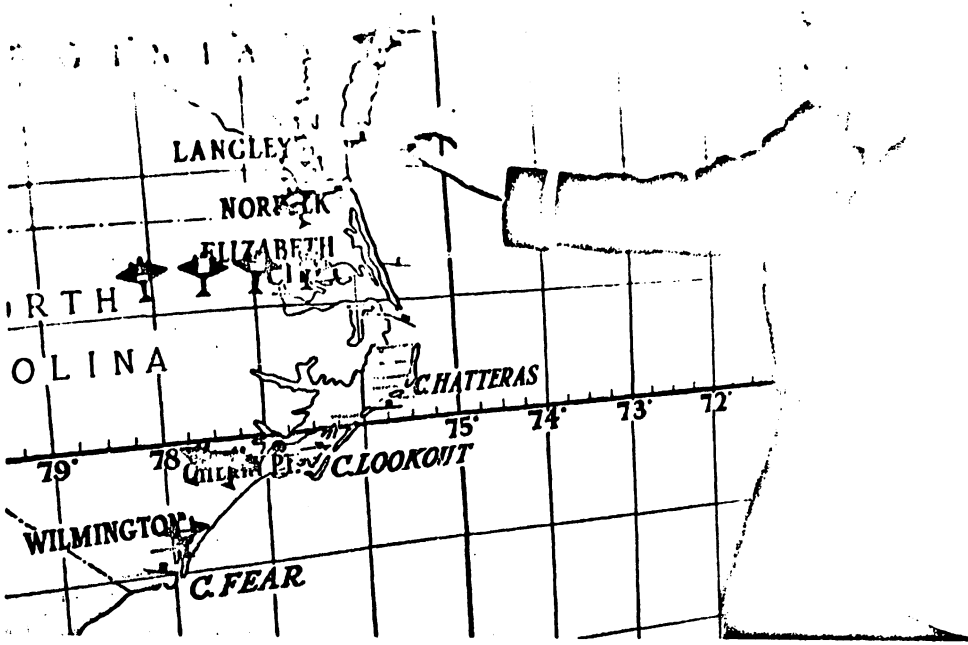


Radio Technician

Transport Aux Specialist



Yeoman



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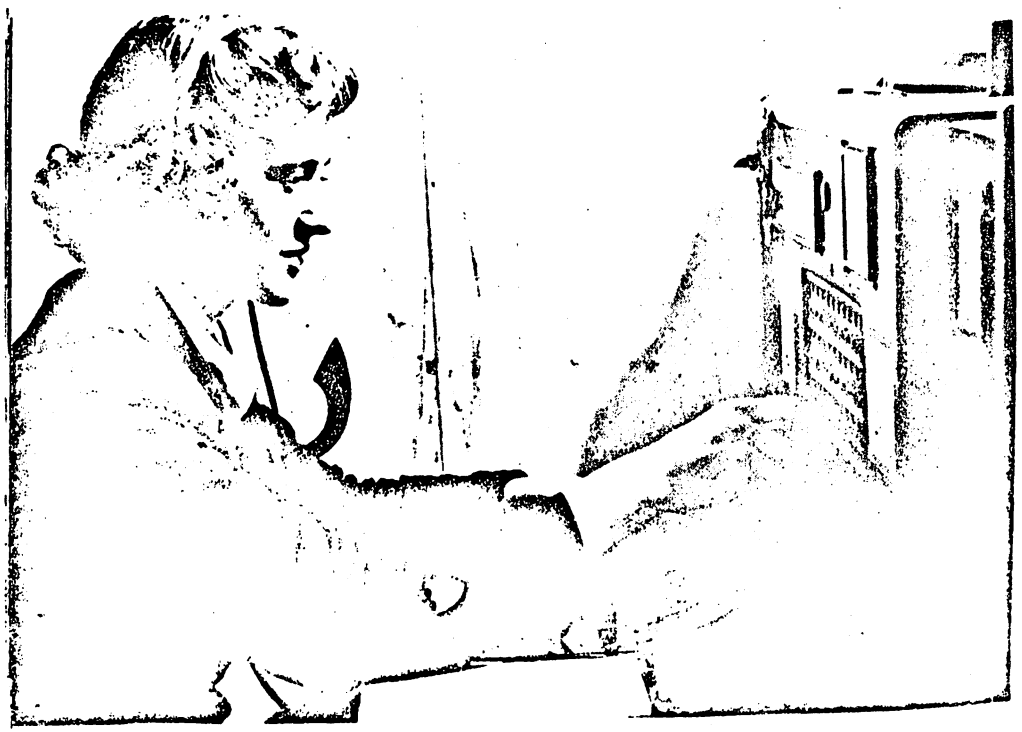
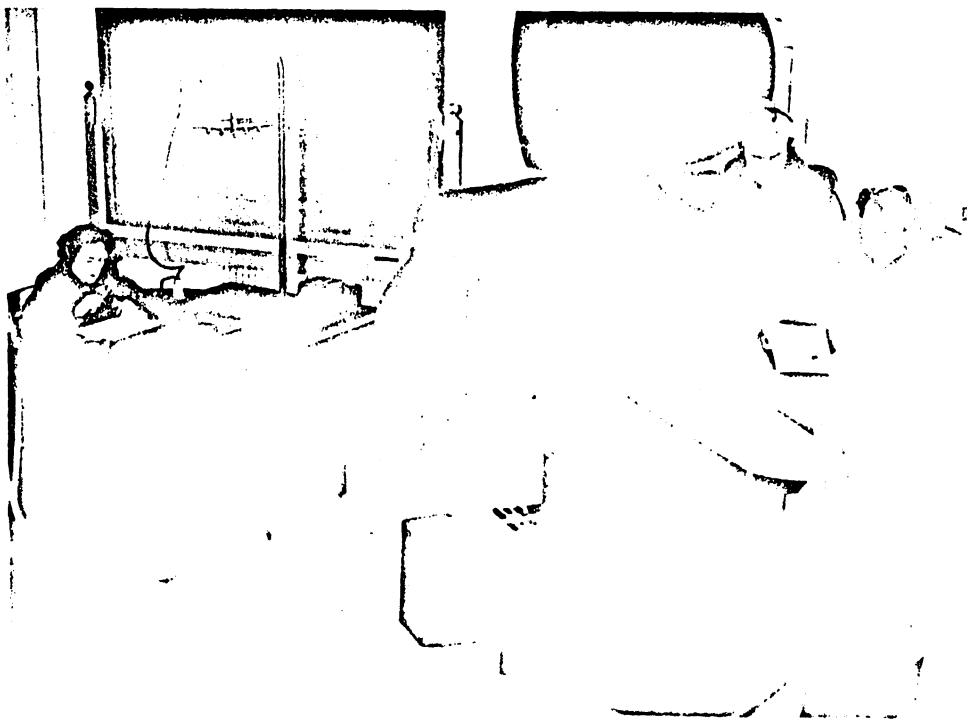


Switchboard Operator



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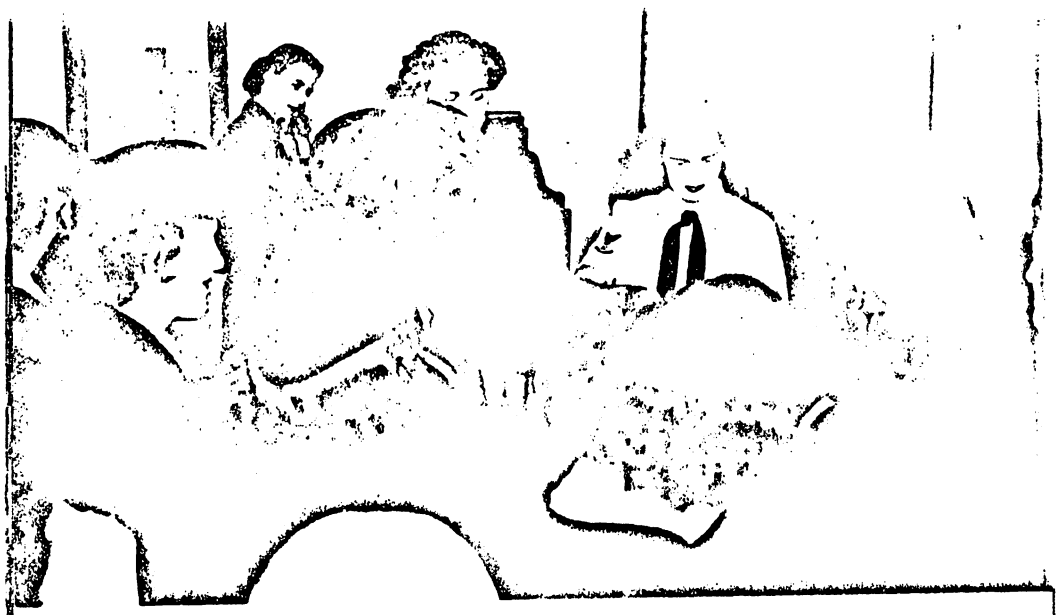
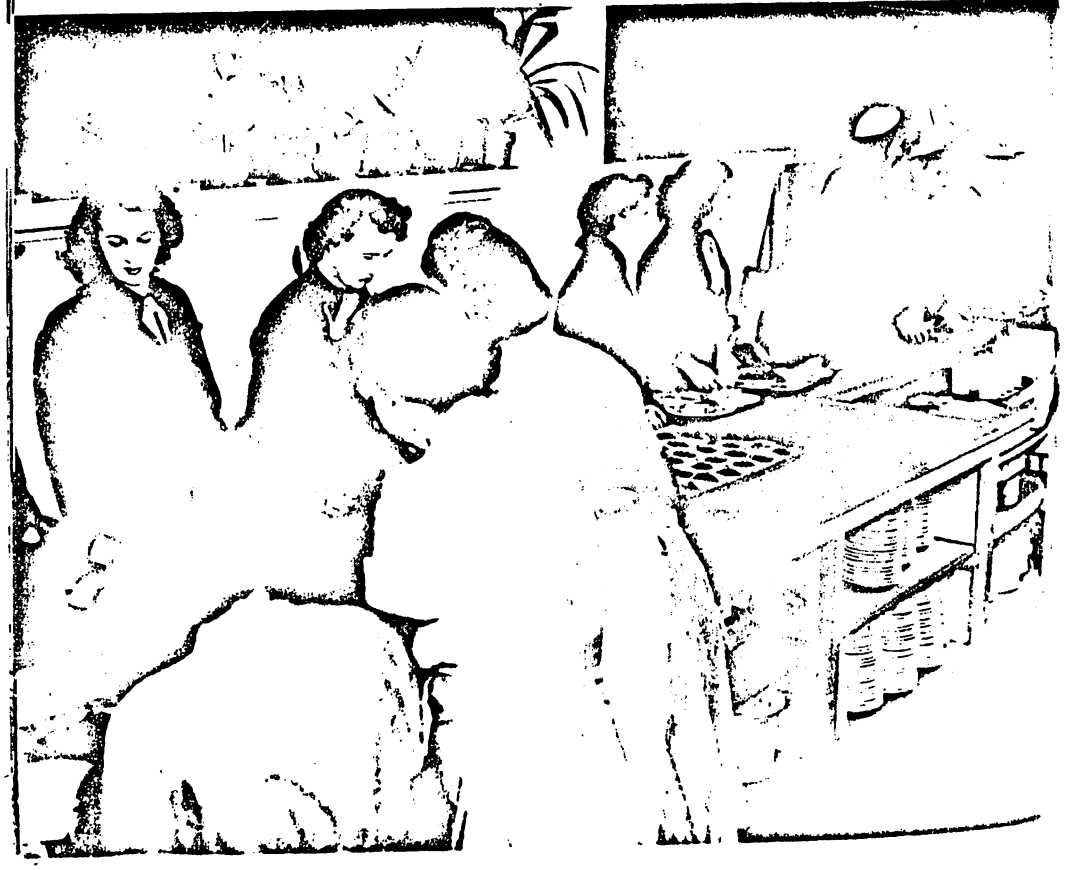


Mail Call



Chow Line

Shaving Oil

In Hawaii leis on uniforms were not tabu

The Skipper—Captain Dorothy C. Stratton, USCGR(W)

ON THE JOB

Where we are needed, there we serve —
We are the girls of the Women's Reserve

—Source Unknown

ONE of the old-line regulars said: "World War II is but an incident in the long history of the Coast Guard." The incident, however, caused some inconvenience.

Since 1790 the Coast Guard had somehow managed to get its work done without taking women into the ranks. Then along came World War II and it was faced with a desperate need for men at sea. With the rest of the armed forces, the Coast Guard agreed that the war effort could be expedited by filling many shore jobs with women, thereby releasing officers and men for duty elsewhere. So the Women's Reserve was established by law as a branch of the Coast Guard Reserve, and Headquarters went about the business of determining how many women the various districts believed they could use.

The whole idea was a little revolutionary, and the districts still weren't so sure how women would work out, what with the necessity of securing separate housing and messing facilities and all. Therefore, the returns of the first survey of the districts' needs for enlisted Spars were very conservative. Compared to the returns of a similar survey concerning Spar officers, however, they were big numbers. Apparently the DCGO's were particularly anxious to avoid women with stripes!

The next surveys were made after we had been on the job for awhile, and what a difference! There was an increase of about 81 percent in the number of enlisted personnel believed needed and the requests for officers zoomed as well. Women were doing all right! The Commandant had sent word to the field that commanding officers were expected to use women and release men wherever they could, and the CO's had found that it could be done. A *very* large percentage of men were made available for sea duty by filling their places with Spars. Well over half of all Coast Guard men were at sea during the war (and that compares more than favorably with the record of any other service), and Spars appeared in high proportion to men at shore establishments. At the peak of the reserve strength of the Coast Guard 1 out of every 16 or 17 enlisted persons was a Spar; 1 out of every 12 or 13 reserve officers was a Spar officer.

Many of us had become so imbued with the release-a-man-for-sea

idea that we had half-expected to find a man crouched on the edge of his chair, packed seabag beside him, ready to shove off the moment we hove into view. The process was necessarily more gradual and in some cases we *never* saw our predecessors go to sea. If this gave us the impression that our organization wasn't fulfilling its purpose, the preceding figures should be balm to cynical souls. We answered a definite need of the Service not only as replacements for male personnel but also to fill new jobs created by the increased activity of the Coast Guard.

The answer to the oft-repeated question as to why civil-service workers couldn't do our jobs was simple. The military services needed women who could be assigned to any duty post and who would be under military discipline at all times. Civilian workers were less mobile, were not under military law, and were restricted in the handling of military materials.

We were assigned to every Coast Guard district except the 10th (Puerto Rico). In a number of the districts Spars worked not only in the district office and those other Coast Guard activities located in the same city but in many of the small field units as well.

The progress of our organization was marked by steady growth and almost complete integration with the many activities of the Coast Guard. There were approximately 10,000 of us and we performed an ever-widening variety of duties. For the benefit of posterity, we should like to point out modestly that, on the whole, the manner in which we performed them was such that commanding officers continued to increase their requests for Spars.

Those are the facts as far as the work of the organization is concerned. Now for a cross-section view of us as individuals.

When we first reported for duty, we were rarin' to go. Hats squared, orders in hand, frightened that we might pull some boner that would impede the progress of the war but anxious, nevertheless, to start making our big contribution, we were eager, navy-blue beavers.

What happened from then on depended upon a great many factors—including the policy of the district where we were stationed regarding the utilization of Spars, the attitude of our commanding officer and that of our immediate superiors toward us, the type of work to which we were assigned and our ability to adjust satisfactorily to whatever befell us.

If we had jobs we enjoyed and/or recognized the value of, we were content. If not—well, it was the old story of individual differences again. Each of us reacted in her own special way.

Approximately 70 percent of enlisted Spars had clerical or stenographic civilian backgrounds. The Coast Guard wanted us for this very reason, but we more often than not wanted a change. Even when it had been made clear to us that the exciting jobs were few and far between and that most of us were needed for the routine paper work, we went on [illegible] believing that things *were* the way we wanted them to be. Then [illegible] us an uninteresting, repetitive job with apparently no [illegible] the war effort, it was tough to take. Our "surf and storm

and howling gale" was likely to take the shape of "files and forms and dull routine."

True—the humble, humdrum duties added up to an exciting whole; they *were* necessary to the winning of the war; but they were also the hardest to stick with. To perform them cheerfully often required not only a sense of duty but a sense of humor as well. One of our more ingenious members solved her individual problem simply by pretending she didn't *have* to stick. On bad days she mentally ran through a little scene in which she went to the DCGO and resigned.

Spar (giving DCGO cool, level glance and speaking in calm but firm voice): Sir, I am leaving.

DCGO starts to his feet with a cry of protest.

Spar: No, don't get up—as you were.

DCGO opens his mouth to beg her to stay.

Spar: It's no use. Nothing you can say will make me change my mind. I'm through.

DCGO sinks back into his chair and bows his head, a tired old man.

Afterward, she always felt better and decided not to quit.

Not that all of us assigned to paper work found it boring. We didn't—by a long shot. We may have liked that type of work to begin with or we may have had the kind of a job where, particularly if we had any imagination, we could see how our contribution fitted into the same pattern of victory which the men were weaving abroad. Whether we could see it or not, however, our greatest contribution was made in this field. By far the majority of enlisted Spars did clerical work. Something over half earned petty officer ratings and four-fifths of these held yeoman and storekeeper ratings. The paper-work brigade can well be proud!

Although in smaller numbers, Spars were also found in practically every other kind of shore job . . . from baking pies to rigging parachutes and driving jeeps. Spar officers, too, were used in a variety of ways by the Coast Guard. The percentage used in the administration of the Women's Reserve program itself was relatively small. A few officers to handle the Spar training program and the Spar barracks officers were the only ones engaged exclusively in work with Spars. All the others were in jobs where they dealt with both men and women just as their masculine predecessors had.

Whatever our job, we naturally all did our share of griping, with or without provocation. Some of us did more than our share. If nurtured too carefully, griping grew into a sleek, fat habit that was often a dreadful bore to other people.

There were a few of us, for instance, who had a most peculiar conception of the Coast Guard at times. We referred to it darkly as "They" and were convinced it was out to get us. There was nothing imper[illegible] about it—"They" knew we had sinus trouble, had just bought a [illegible] ticket to something or other, wanted to be near home because of a [illegible] aunt, were engaged to a boy who might be coming into port any [illegible] and "They" went and transferred us in spite of everything.

But the really chronic gripers—though loud—were in the minority. Most of us accepted the good and the bad as part of a day's work, let it go at that, and dug in and produced. We learned to see a job through and to establish satisfactory working relationships, not only with those we liked but also with those we thought belonged 50 fathoms under.

In retrospect, it won't be the wails of the chronic gripers we'll remember. Instead, we shall point with pride to the spirit, sportsmanship, and performance of the comparatively silent, but gallant, 90 percent!

The Feminine Touch

The boners we pulled when we were new on the job will make wonderful yarns for old salts to spin years from now when the days of women in the Coast Guard are but a dim memory.

They'll tell with relish of the time the Spars at an air station in Florida reported a tanker as being sighted 30 miles inland doing 20 knots. And the one about the girl assigned to Vessel Control in 13ND who gave the famous weather report. "What is the weather outside?" asked a voice over the phone. The Spar was not one to condone such laziness. "It's raining," she snapped. "Can't you look out the window and see?" The caller, alas, was the assistant DCGO and the term "outside" had only one meaning for him—"outside the harbor."

And so it went. But our faces weren't always the red ones. There was the day in a Merchant Marine Hearing Unit when all hands rallied round in an attempt to establish communication with a foreign-looking fellow. As soon as he appeared, they had immediately started trying out foreign languages on him, but so far no response had been forthcoming. In desperation they called in a Spar of Chinese descent and told her to speak a little Chinese. She did, but to no avail.

"He doesn't speak Chinese either," one of the men moaned.

"No," said the puzzled fellow, "but I speak English."

With a withering glance at the embarrassed men, the Spar returned to her job.

It had been pointed out to us from time to time that the Coast Guard had struggled along without our help for 153 years and was not looking to us for reform at this stage of the game. We laughed at the very idea of trying to reform the military but, if the truth were known, the service had the same effect on many of us as a picture hanging crooked on the living room wall in somebody else's home. If we could only have laid hands on it and moved it a little this way or that way, everything would have been so-o-o much better. A transfer here, elimination of red tape [illegible] . . ah wilderness were paradise enow!

Even though we had to suppress our rearranging instincts, our influ[illegible] was felt in many ways; and improvements made for Spars were [illegible] benefit to the men as well.

[illegible] some of the men had a bit of explaining to do now and [illegible] to the telephone conversation between a civilian and a

Spar stationed at a 9ND unit should have proved interesting. While on duty one night, the Spar noticed that the switchboard operator was having trouble and asked that the call be turned over to her.

"I want to speak to the kitchen," demanded a woman's voice.

Being schooled in nautical terms and with American names to complicate matters further, the Spar replied: "We have a bosun's mate here named Kitchen or did you want the galley?"

"Is this the Coast Guard?" the lady inquired sharply.

"Yes," said the Spar, "this is the Coast Guard."

"Is this the *men's* Coast Guard?" the caller persisted.

"This is the *only* Coast Guard," the Spar explained patiently, "and I am the officer on duty."

There was a stunned silence. Then, "Well!" sputtered the lady. "I want to speak to the cook on duty and *quick,* too. He never told me there were WOMEN down there!"

In rare instances a woman's touch was noticeable in the offices. At HQ a grizzled, weather-beaten commander, accustomed to stormy seas and a pitching deck, used to sit at his desk with an expression of dazed bewilderment, surrounded by an assortment of little potted cactus plants forced upon him by his Spar assistant.

It was the men's Coast Guard no longer.

The Men

And how did the men take this infiltration of women? The attitude toward us ranged from enthusiastic reception through amused condescension to open hostility.

We felt that one important factor in determining a man's attitude was his own desire for sea duty. If he were eligible and wanted to shove off, he was not inclined to frown with disfavor upon his deliverer, even if she appeared in Spar clothing. On the other hand, it was natural that the swivel-chair commando should rail against the presence of the little lady who had come to release him for the briny deep. Fortunately the proportion of the latter was low compared with the Coast Guard as a whole.

Men with axes to grind because of personal disappointments seldom took a shine to us either. Perhaps the greatest reason for resentment in this category involved ratings and rank. If they had not been advanced as rapidly as they thought they should have been, seeing a Spar go ahead of them was adding insult to injury, and they refused to believe that they were not being discriminated against. In some cases this feeling may have been justified; in others, it was pure bilge.

There was many a man whose ego was punctured when he found his place could be so easily taken by a woman. There was many a man who believed that women should not venture beyond the rose-covered door of the oven. And there were men who, resplendent with ribbons and beyond reproach, were pointed out to us as "a man who doesn't like Spars." No reason. These were the really fascinating individuals who stalked in solitary splendor and made the same impression upon us as a virile civilian bachelor who "doesn't like women."

Not all the objections to us were personal or petty. Some were purely objective. Many men sincerely failed to see the necessity for Spars in the Service; others felt the expense was unjustifiable, and so on. There was nothing surprising in any of the objections. Any women who tries to become part of a man's world even in time of a great national emergency is automatically placing herself at the beginning of an obstacle course.

Often the fault was our own. Just as in civilian organizations, friction between men and women working together in the military can be caused by minor irritants, easily avoided.

A little tact will go a long way with a man. Wise indeed was the Spar officer married to a male chief who answered the barbed inquiry of an acquaintance: "Does he have to salute you in the office?" with "Oh yes, indeed. But when he gets me home, he beats me." Some Spars even wore their raincoats when out walking with gentlemen of lower rank "so the seniority wouldn't show."

On the whole, if we did our part and proved equal to the job, the men, both regulars and reserves, were willing to give us our due. And we, in turn, gave our heartfelt thanks to those men—no small group—who, from the beginning, backed us with their unqualified support, taught us the ropes, encouraged us, worked with us harmoniously, and made us feel that we belonged and were doing a job, even as they. We will always remember them with the deepest appreciation.

MILITARY HAZARDS

2. (b) Wherever used in this bulletin the masculine includes the feminine

—Personnel Bulletin No. 101-44

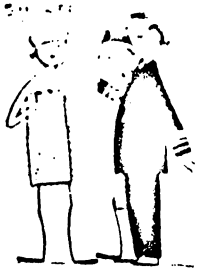
AFTER we had been around long enough to outdate the corny jokes about the Coast Guard going co-ed, the consensus of opinion seemed to be that women were surprisingly adaptable. It was agreed that we were good at drill, that we accepted regimentation more readily than had been expected (some inexperienced people actually believed we'd coo "Why?" to each order given) and that, on the whole, we settled with a minimum of disruption into the military scheme: Of course, because of us, things weren't like the good old days —the men were obliged to cut out throwing belaying pins in the office and to otherwise inconvenience themselves—but for *an emergency measure*, we were a pleasant surprise.

We adjusted, yes, but it wasn't always easy. The military was full of hazards and we were susceptible to most of them, especially in that state which immediately followed boot school.

Not many of us retained for long the first flush of GI-ness with which we emerged from training. Thoroughly indoctrinated, with rules and regs still ringing in our ears, we were at that point more than at any other self-consciously and keenly aware of military etiquette. An abundance of gold or blue braid dazzled us; we jumped to our feet whenever addressed by superiors; we were Semper Paratus plus.

Those of us inclined to be overly conscientious were tormented by the constant necessity of remembering on which side of superiors to walk, who salutes first under certain odd circumstances, and is or is not an elevator a small boat for heaven's sake. We even worried about hypothetical and highly unlikely situations, such as, if an admiral sneaked in unexpectedly and we saw him first would we have the presence of mind to call "Attention!"?

Now and again, however, the unlikeliest of situations actually arose. A Spar going to the West Coast by plane arrived at a naval air station and headed for the WAVE barracks and a shower. Towel wrapped around her like a sarong, she stepped from the shower room smack into the path of a Navy captain! He, accompanied by a Wave lieutenant, was inspecting the barracks. The Wave was aghast. The captain, instead of retreating, stopped to chat . . . "A Spar, eh? From New York? Well, well. How do you like the Service?" The Spar was torn between military courtesy and maidenly modesty. What to do? Snap to attention, drop the towel, and be covered only by regulations? Modesty triumphed. She clung to the towel.



As she was leaving, the Master at Arms said to her, "Thank heavens, you're through. There's going to be a captain's inspection."

"There has been," replied the Spar . . . with some feeling.

Women Overboard

Sometimes the burden of being military was too great to bear. One of our members, finding herself behind a high-ranking male officer, came alongside and said with admirable aplomb, "By your leave, Sir." Having sped by, she made the mistake of stopping to look in a store window and the officer passed her. Once again she went through the by-your-leave routine—though embarrassedly this time—and once again she succumbed to the temptation of window shopping. The third time she was faced with the problem of getting around the brass, she went to pieces. Instead of repeating "By your leave, Sir," the confused and desperate Spar screeched, "Leave me by, Sir!" and rapidly disappeared into the distance.

If officers, we were occasionally (usually only at training stations) faced with the dilemma of what to reply when someone *did* say, "By your leave, Sir." Was the correct answer, "Surely!" "Okay!" "Go right ahead!" "You bet!" or what? There were also plenty of other times when being on the receiving end of military etiquette wasn't a cinch. It was a rare Spar officer who ever said, "Carry on" or "As you were" without feeling pompous and ill at ease.

We were often so eager to do the correct thing that we overdid it. During a downpour in the Nation's Capital, a group of Spars efficiently procured a cab; scrambled in, silently congratulating themselves on remembering a cab is a small boat which juniors enter first; and, comfortably seated, saw to their horror that there was no room for the blue-braided object of their military courtesy who was still on the curb, soaked to the skin.

In this same eagerness, we seldom knew enough to keep our mouths shut and bluff a thing out. At the end of a ceremony at a Coast Guard unit, the order was given to "Set the watch." Hand on timepiece a Spar turned to a male officer standing nearby and asked briskly, "What time do you have, Sir?"

One of the things that particularly preyed on our minds when we first faced the outside world was saluting. We started out saluting like mad things. We saluted *everyone* in uniform—policemen, doormen, [illegible], *everyone* (we also said "Yes, sir" to bus drivers)—because in [illegible] they had told us, "When in doubt, salute." Since we were in

doubt a greater part of the time, we almost knocked ourselves out. If we realized our mistake in time, we tried to cover up by pretending we were scratching our heads or adjusting our hats. Some of us were seized by periodic fits of self-consciousness and at such times would go to any extreme to *avoid* saluting, e.g., ducking into stores, turning down side streets, removing imaginary particles from the eye, coughing violently.

The question of sex and rate was a puzzler, too. When confronted by an open door and a male officer, we never knew whether to behave as a seaman or a lady. Most of the men clung to the "women are women" school of thought and insisted we go first, but once in awhile an officer would doggedly stick to regulations and to heck with sex. Even the top braid was sometimes stumped. Early in the game a senior Spar officer and an admiral reached such an impasse. After many you-first gesticulations, they rushed forward simultaneously and were jammed in the doorway.

Another Spar was visiting a station heretofore inaccessible to women and one of the men questioned the ethics of her being there. The situation was saved when a gallant gentleman stepped forward and said reassuringly, "It's all right. This isn't a lady; she's a Spar officer."

We could never be entirely sure of our status. One of our more bitter shipmates held to the theory that the only time a Spar was really considered a Coast Guardsman was on a crowded bus with one vacant seat.

A great many of us were obnoxiously nautical immediately after training, and a few never completely recovered from their early dose of salt. We sported a vocabulary that, unless we were assigned to a station where such language was the accepted thing, made some of the conservative shorebound personnel a trifle seasick. We didn't stop with the more or less universal terminology such as referring to floors as decks, bathrooms as heads, belongings as gear. We persisted in cracking ports, going ashore or topsides or below, welcoming people aboard . . . and generally going down the drain. A case is on record of a Spar who so annoyed the personnel in her office by this pseudo-saltiness that they lay in wait, and one morning when she arrived two minutes late to work she was refused admission to the office. "Sorry, mate," they told her solemnly, "the ship has sailed."

Rugged Individualists

Of course some members of our organization were more a hazard to the military than it was to them. For instance, there were those with whom indoctrination never took. These hardy souls somehow managed to begin and end as rugged individualists. Not only were they unhampered by military etiquette. Logging in and out meant nothing to them, going through channels was an equally great mystery, conforming to routine regulations was out of the question, sticking to official correspondence was impossible, and as for the chain of command—they

ignored whole links without batting an eye. These were not the deliberately insubordinate who refused to conform out of pure stubbornness and acted as though they were doing the government a favor by sticking around at all. These were the vague, untrammeled souls who often unconsciously rushed in where admirals feared to tread.

Such a Spar was the indispensable yeoman who manned a picture file with gay abandon. While she was at lunch one day, the office went mad looking for a picture of Captain Stratton. The yeoman returned and, with unerring instinct, whisked it out of a folder labeled "Statue of Liberty Shots."

"Can't you get rid of her?" someone asked the CO.

"Rid of her!" shouted the 'old man.' "She's got the file so mixed up we can't get along without her!"

An equally free spirit was the unpredictable Spar driver whose commanding officer as a last resort tried to reform her by heaping responsibility upon her carefree shoulders. Against his better judgment, he assigned her to drive a four-stripe visiting fireman from Headquarters, accompanied by a local officer, to various points within the district. The driver tried hard. She held her tongue when the station wagon balked, she cursed only mildly when she got a parking ticket, but she lost control when the harassed officer-escort reprimanded her for never once saluting the distinguished passenger. Said the driver loudly, "I just don't hold with saluting."

Let it be said in all fairness that some of our number who were rugged individualists in moderation and who were in reality far from vague, often got there fastest with the mostest, though at great personal risk, simply by following the old geometric law that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.

Opposed to those who never got into the swing of indoctrination were those who never got out of it. Instead of becoming comfortably less GI as time went on, they became increasingly more so until they had all the charm and warmth of an icebreaker.

Old Salts

Fortunately, the majority of us took the middle road. Though we came from boot school trailing clouds of regulations, with the passing of time the glory of indoctrination faded and we relaxed. We learned what was expected of us, refrained from saying, "In training they told us to do it *this* way," and stopped taking ourselves so seriously.

But the military still had its hazards—right up until the day of discharge. Scores and scores of us never overcame the hazard of continuously talking shop. We often alienated some of our best friends when, at the end of a long hard day or in the midst of an otherwise gay evening, we launched into a play-by-play account of "My Day in the Service." . . . At least two Spars are known to have lovingly sewed up the traditional sword slits in their husband's uniform blouses, clucking

the while over the carelessness of men in wearing ripped clothing. . . . And there were those of us who, try as we might and seasoned as we were in other matters, were *never* sure what to do when "The Star Spangled Banner" was played indoors, who could read a personnel bulletin or anything else couched in official terms through three times and not make head or tail of it, and whose minds automatically went blank when questioned closely as to the exact meaning of Dress Blue B!

OUR PUBLIC

It is impolite to stare at people in public
—Emily Post

WE tried to be understanding, tried to sell ourselves that we were once civilians too. But it didn't help. Civilians were strange creatures who couldn't even tell the difference between a Wave and a Spar. In fact, it seemed to us that civilians took a keen, secret pleasure in remaining ignorant of the differences between uniforms, dismissing the whole subject with a simple, "I just can't tell them apart!"

With many inward groans we would explain that although our uniforms were basically the same as the Waves, we were *not* Waves, nor Wacs, nor nurses, nor yet Wasps or lady Marines. We also grew accustomed to being addressed as "You Girls."

"How do You Girls like being in the service?"

"What do You Girls do all day long?"

"Don't You Girls get tired of wearing the same thing every day?"

"What do You Girls do in your spare time—march?—play volley ball?"

By far the majority of civilians seemed to assume that we must have been leading miserably dull lives before, or we never would have plunged into uniform. At some time or other all of us were cornered by at least one who asked in a give-me-the-lowdown tone of voice, "Why did you join the service?" (Implying: "I don't understand it. You seem like such a nice girl, too . . .")

To look the inquisitor squarely in the eye and answer, "Because in this emergency the government of the United States sent out an urgent call for all able-bodied women to volunteer" would have sounded like an insufficient reason. Nothing short of a job in an opium den, a wicked stepmother in our home, or an unhappy affair with Charles Boyer could satisfy these questioners about our motives for volunteering.

On the other hand, we sometimes ran into bus drivers who wouldn't take our nickels, shopkeepers who wanted to give us all the merchandise on their shelves because "You're in uniform and my son is over there," old ladies who pled with us to take their seats on the subway because "You're doing so much." Homo Civilian was a peculiar, unpredictable human animal.

In Salt Lake City a Spar met one of them, a woman, who seized her

by the Mainbocher lapels and cried, "You sent my son away!"

"Me?" the Spar asked faintly.

"Yes, *you*. You released my son and sent him away."

The Spar, a kindly, sympathetic girl who just happened to be between the ages of 20 and 36, tried to comfort the irate mother. She expressed hope that the son would be coming home soon. She explained that by joining the service she was undoubtedly helping to bring him home.

But the woman, unmoved, continued her reproaches.

"I won't see him for months and months now," she moaned, "and it's your fault."

The Spar, envisioning a remote south sea island, asked fearfully, "Where was he sent?"

"IDAHO!" wailed the mother.

The Limelight

If our uniform baffled the public on sunny days, on rainy days they were mystified. That controversial object, the havelock, occasioned such comment as, "Look, Halloween!" or "What's the foreign legion doing around here?" or "Pardon me, Sister, do you mind if I smoke?" Had we carried pink parasols or sported sou'westers we should probably have passed unnoticed in the crowd. In our simple blue drapes we felt like Mati Hari between two flags.

Once explained, however, the havelock became greatly admired by civilians for its practicality if not its glamor.

"Very sensible idea," a deaf and rain-soaked old man once shouted to a Spar on the subway, "it won't be long before everyone will be wearing those hassocks on their heads!"

We had to face it. To civilians we were figures of fun wherever we went. We grew accustomed gradually on streetcars, buses, and trains to the frank stares, the furtive scrutiny, even the smiles and giggles. Just walking down the street in our conservative navy blue we were about as inconspicuous as a brass band.

We seemed to bring out a certain coyness in many civilians which was merely embarrassing to us at the beginning, but grew acutely boring as the years wore on. One classification of the plain-clothes gang tickled themselves pink shouting "Hup hup" as we walked past, trying to keep out of step. Members of another group liked to yell, "Ahoy, mate!" from cars and trucks, or murmur, "Hello, Wavie" insinuatingly when they were closer at hand. It was all in the spirit of good clean fun, we knew, but somehow we resented having the uniform we honored the object of such humorous sallies. And if there was one thing we had never thoroughly appreciated before we joined the Service it was the joy of being inconspicuous.

On days when our spirits were high, we could even bear being mistaken for Persian Wrens. But on bad days, sometimes a stray remark would be the last straw. One Spar admits that she still feels guilty about the time a little five-year-old girl, walking along with her mother, simply said, "Oh look, Mamma, a Wave!" The Spar, who had spent the entire day explaining that she wasn't a Wave, turned fiercely on the poor little thing and yelled, "Oh, *shut up!*"

Doubtless misled by recruiting posters describing "the fresh-faced girl in the trim navy blue with her jaunty hat," civilians expected us at all times to maintain an attitude of cheerful briskness. This role was often exceedingly difficult. Yet we could not permit ourselves the luxury of sagging in public—even if we had been up since 0600, had put in a hard day at the salt mines, and had drawn the duty for that night. Normal expressions of fatigue were usually interpreted by civilians as signs of frustration, boredom, or dislike of regimentation. "The only thing I have against women in uniform," we often overheard, "is that they go around with such frozen faces!"

We were all quite aware of the fact that civilians reasoned about us from the particular to the general. We were constantly under surveillance by the public eye. Should one of our number have too much beer, ergo—"All Spars are drunkards." Should one misfit express publicly dislike for her job, ergo—"All Spars hate the Service." Spars as a group were judged, appraised, and compared with the other women's reserves as groups. When our white gloves and hat covers were dazzling and we were on our best behavior, we proclaimed loudly that we were Spars, do you hear, *Spars!* If anything went wrong, we consoled ourselves with the thought, of which only we could appreciate the irony, "Oh well, they probably don't know what we are anyway."

Home Sweet Home

Even members of our beloved families began to behave queerly—like civilians! Mamma's little baby had to explain many a time why she couldn't "Just tell that old commander that Tuesday night would be *very* inconvenient." One officer was the recipient of regular letters from her father exhorting her to work extra hard and "get ahead," so that she wouldn't have to remain an ensign for the duration. In one letter he enclosed a picture of Captain Stratton with the attached note: "Now, she seems to have made the grade—*why not you?*"

We were lucky if we had families and friends who appreciated our craving for frothy lingerie, perfume, and elaborate cosmetics. But many of us were the victims of those "Presents for the Service Girl" signs in department stores at Christmas—and had to coo "Just what I always wanted" over a shoeshine or first-aid kit! One Spar was even given a pup-tent by her little brother, and several others had to beam over nautical instruments.

The admiration of civilians, particularly our families, was dear to our hearts. She was the rarest Spar of all who didn't think up some

excuse to have her picture taken as soon as she found a Spar hat and uniform approximately her size! We couldn't help preening and purring at the little remark we heard so often: "Your uniform is certainly the best-looking one."

On leave we descended on our homes like rockets from Mars. We were no longer the same girls who had gone away. Whether we had trained at Palm Beach, Florida, or Stillwater, Oklahoma, whether we had sailed on salt water or merely gargled it, to the old folks and the neighbors we were now—sailors.

Usually the explanation that we ourselves were not going in for active duty afloat but were releasing the men for sea duty was sufficient. But sometimes our families were hard to persuade, as in the case of the Spar whose account of her trials is quoted in part.*

"When I visited my sister Shirley on leave, after six months in the Spars, all I had in mind was catching up on sleep, playing a little badminton, and getting a sun-tan. The report that I set their house afloat and made my brother-in-law walk the plank has caused considerable misunderstanding. It is high time to set forth the facts.

"When I arrived Shirley said, 'Ahoy, mate!' and gazed disapprovingly at my suitcase. 'I thought you'd have a seabag.' (It was salty, coming from someone whose seafaring experience consisted of a ferry boat ride from Oakland to San Francisco.)

" 'Your sister,' said my brother-in-law, Leonard, 'is doing her best to make you feel at home.'

"He waved a hand toward the mantel, on which was a model of a clipper ship and a clock which looked like a ship's helm. It struck eight times in bell-like tones.

" 'Eight bells,' said Leonard dryly, 'or in my landlubber parlance, four P.M. Looks like we've shoved off on a long cruise. And I've a feeling that when I get the bills I'll be seasick.'

"He carried my suitcase upstairs, and then departed for his workshop in the basement, where he builds furniture as a hobby. My sister lingered while I unpacked.

" 'Your lingerie!' she exclaimed. 'It's just the same!'

"I laughed. 'What did you expect?'

" 'I thought it would be labeled "U. S. Coast Guard" and have anchors. Isn't everything you wear GI?'

" 'Everything that shows,' I said, changing from my uniform to white sharkskin slacks.

" 'You look just like a civilian, dear.' My sister looked disappointed. 'What will the neighbors think?'

" 'I don't care what they think,' I retorted cheerfully. 'I'm on leave and I'm going to relax.'

"She sighed. I went out to the front yard to cut roses. I was still there when my nine-year-old nephew, Tony, came home from a game of sand-lot baseball. His 'Hi!' was warmingly welcoming, then his grin faded.

" 'Gosh,' he said accusingly, 'nobody would know you've been to war. You look the same. That's just like a girl!'

" 'Well,' I said defensively, 'I am a girl.'

"I snipped roses in silence, dimly aware of a figure in khaki walking past on the sidewalk.

" 'That's the captain,' Tony said. 'He's visiting at Buddy Mason's house. He flew a bomber in Italy.' His tone was admiring and touched with awe. 'Aren't you going to salute him?'

"I felt guilty. 'We don't salute unless we're in uniform.'

"Tony gave me a disillusioned look, turned on his heel, and went into the house.

"My duty was clear. I went into the house and put on my uniform.

"When I came downstairs I encountered Tony sprawled on the floor reading the comics.

" 'Would you mind going topside for me?' I asked. 'I left some gear on my bunk, and my handkerchief is in the head. Don't slip on the ladder. That new varnish is slick.'

"He looked at me blankly. 'We call the bathroom the head,' I explained, 'and the stairs a ladder.'

"Then Tony looked at me with new respect. 'Sure—I mean aye, aye, sir!' He flew up the stairs before I could have said shiver my timbers, if ever I said shiver my timbers.

"There is such a thing as the armed forces letting down the people on the home front."

Battle of the Sexes

Men, all men, regarded as one great big awkward group, protested longly and loudly that they didn't care for "women in uniform." We knew that, and didn't expect them to care for us collectively. What man cares for women as a group anyway? Individual men cared for individual women in uniform, and that was all that mattered to us.

Men's prejudice often took the form of what in civilian life would be called slander. Attacks upon the morals of Spars were common, and where there was little basis in fact for the charges, tales were invented and improved upon in the telling. Others, less aggravated and more literate cases, blew off steam by drafting letters to magazines and newspapers, secure in their knowledge that the general public, all too suspicious of any innovation, would applaud. Either we had to grin and bear it or fall into the trap of becoming embittered ourselves.

Actually, some of the men who yelled the loudest fell the hardest. True, many of them let us struggle with our own suitcases, and, resenting our intrusion into their world, often took delight in making us feel uncomfortable in many small ways. But, sooner or later, when it got down to individuals, it was Boy meets Girl—uniform or no uniform. One by one they came around.

*Mary B. Hale, Lt. (j.g.) "Please Pass the Salt". Reprinted by permission of

In spite of themselves, servicemen turned to us because they knew they would find sympathetic shell-pink ears beneath the Coast Guard blue brims. They might have thought it unromantic, but they were all full of the service and liked to talk about it. They didn't have to explain ratings, restrictions, liberty, duty nights, or extra watches to *us*—we knew. We shared their gripes with them, and when dances or service functions came up, somehow there was never any lack of uniformed men to attend them.

As far as the dates were concerned, blue braid was a distinct handicap, as all Spar officers realized. The Braid's common lament is summed up in the following revealing verses:

R. H. I. P.
(Rank Has Its Privileges)
or
Lament of a Woman Officer

The streets of the city are crowded
With sailors so manly and cute,
I walk out expecting a whistle
And get—a snappy salute.

I date the plump, stuffy Major
And stifle my envious sighs
While my yeoman steps out with a bos'n
Who has passionate Boyer eyes.

While waltzing, I gaze most sedately
At my silver-haired three-striper date
And long to be tagged for a rhumba
By that handsome machinist's mate.

And so I dine with the Captain,
Or chat with the Colonel—alas
And yearn to exchange my "privilege"
For fun as a seaman first class.

Dorothy E. Bunyan, Lt., U.S.C.G.R.(W)

A high-ranking woman officer, one of the group sent to Hawaii to survey the situation before the enlisted girls were assigned, tells this story on herself. From the second she set foot on the island she was given a big rush by nearly every man in the place, constantly wined and dined and covered by leis. One evening, she tells us, when she was dancing to smooth music with a handsome officer, she was jerked abruptly out of seventh heaven by his ecstatic murmur in her ear: "If you're this good, *what'll* the young ones be?"

It might have been expected that civilian men, especially 4-F's, would resent us. No doubt many of them did. But quite often they actually seemed to be fascinated by the fact that we were living a life so different from theirs and to feel that when dining or dancing with us they were more closely identified with the war effort.

After the war's end new veterans often sought our company. They wanted to talk about their own experiences in the service, and the sight of our uniforms seemed to fill them with nostalgia. We had already noticed that veterans of the first world war invariably cottoned up to us. They would seize any slight opportunity to engage us in conservation, and they were always willing to treat us to food and drink if in return we didn't wince at the familiar opening: "Too old this time. Tried to get back in, told they couldn't use me. But listen, sailor girl, in the last war we . . ." On subways, buses, trains, and streetcars we noticed that when the men wore discharge pins they also wore an eager, wistful expression when they looked at us. Gone was the blank, hard, or sassy expression of former days. A small triumph, but our own!

Last Straws

Even after V-J Day we were quite often taken for Wacs. And by that time if someone asked if we were Waves, we almost answered in the affirmative. A tendency on the part of the public after V-J day was to imagine that we had all served overseas in wild, desolate, and dangerous places. To disabuse civilians of this idea took diplomacy.

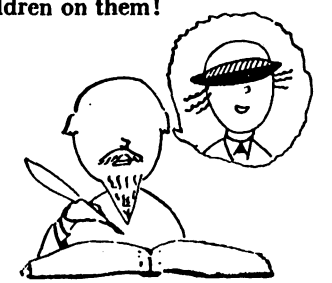
Riding on a bus one day, a Spar got into conversation with the woman sitting next to her. After telling her seat companion about her two sons who had been fighting in the Pacific for several years, the voluble mother asked the Spar where she had been stationed.

"Oh," the Spar replied modestly, "I've been right here in New York all during the war."

The woman turned on her. "Shame on you!" she said.

Perhaps, after all, we and not civilians were the ones to be regarded as curiosities. But after our thorough indoctrination into a new way of life, we lost our perspective for awhile, forgot for the time being that actually we were a comparatively small, unique group. We learned how slowly new ideas trickle down into the public consciousness, for we were a new idea to America. Yet, when all is said and done, America finally responded with vigor to the phenomenon of women in uniform—even to the point of imagining tenderly that we had all been stationed either in jungle bivouacs or the tails of B-29's.

When the great histories of this war are written, historians will not overlook the part we played—but they'd better not call us Waves or we'll sic our grandchildren on them!



BARRACKS LIFE

You don't have to go out,
but you have to come back
—Barracks version of an Old Coast Guard motto

IN San Francisco, Boston, Norfolk, New York, or Seattle, barracks life for Spars followed much the same pattern. Except for the few buildings especially constructed for our use, such as in Washington, D. C., small hotels with a new coat of military veneer housed our dreams and disappointments for the duration.

The few dim joys which group living afforded us were judged and found wanting—let's face it—compared with the life of single or double blessedness. Those of us who were hearty extroverts fared best, for our mates were always with us. There was never any chance to remain solitary, to brood in Bohemian loneliness—not with the pattering of hundreds of little feet in black oxfords, not with girlish laughter and voices at any time of the night or day, not with bells, bugles, whistles, radios, and public address systems. We worked together, ate together, washed and ironed together, often spent liberty together, and slept one above the other. If we found we had nerves, we soon learned to ignore them.

When we stopped every once in a while to consider the whole picture, we couldn't help marveling at the very idea of hundreds of girls from every state in the union living together under one roof. We heard speech and intonations unlike our own, observed habits and mannerisms unlike ours, met in the persons of our mates both strange prejudices and stimulating new ideas. In short, by the act of living together in a group of this kind, we could not escape what the recruiting officer told us we would find in the service: a broadening experience.

Sometimes it seemed to us that we were being broadened a little too rapidly—and not merely by sitting at a typewriter all day. To put it bluntly, some of our Spar acquaintances were "characters." Even while we were glowing at a spontaneous act of generosity performed by one Spar, another snide spook would walk out with our last pair of white gloves. We learned about life from meeting some fearful and wonderful examples of it, first hand, face to face, and shoulder to shoulder. We learned the real meaning of tolerance, for we had to find the common denominator in us all.

Of course our backgrounds made a difference in our adjustment to group living, and those Spars who were used to living in campus [illegible] found the transition easier. But most of us had been business girls living at home, or in rooms or apartments of our own.

It was harder for us who hadn't been to college to realize that in many ways our barracks life was bound to be beset by some of the traditional "hardships" of dormitory life: rules about closing hours, lockouts from the dining room if we were late, roast pork and dressing for dinner when we felt like a light salad, fire drills at the most inconvenient times, too few private nooks to talk things over alone with our dates, and so on ad infinitum. We "adjusted," however, and will always feel that our service experience in group living gives us the license to pose as experts in that field whenever the occasion for discussion may arise.

Room Service

In a barracks as in college, an attempt was made to make us feel at home by allowing us to decorate our rooms more or less as we pleased. In fact, the amount of junk we had around was actually curtailed only by the size of the rooms. Occasionally a Spar would become so enthusiastic about her scheme of interior decoration that inspection parties would register complaints about ceilings festooned with wreaths and oriental parasols, or would comment "circus adrift" at the sight of china menagerie which multiplied too fast. In general, our barracks rooms resembled our own home as much as possible, with the exception of the bunks, and the adornments on the hall doors.

Besides bearing the names of the occupants of the room, the door was usually plastered with cutouts of Disney characters, favorite comic strip figures, admonitions to the rest of the barracks of a "Sleeping—sh-sh-sh!" nature, or merely "Men at Work," or "Waitress Wanted" signs.

Inside, our taste in art varied from Donald Duck to Pablo Picasso. But our collective penchant for stuffed animals of all kinds was evident. Teddy bears, rabbits, cats, and horses vied with pin-up boys, china animals, and colognes as claims to our attention. As for the heads, the question became: how many pairs of stockings belonging to two to four girls can be hung up on one rail?

One situation that brought on tears at the time, and about which we can laugh now, happened in December of 1943 in 6ND. That month Charleston was embarrassed by the appearance of its first snow storm in about 30 years. Following this a freeze set in for about a week's time, during which the barracks took a terrible licking. (The houses down there are not built to withstand the cold, nor are they equipped with any system of central heating.) Most all the pipes and plumbing froze, and there was only one head in the whole building in working condition, to accommodate 87 Spars. One girl told of trying to take a bath, and as she soaked and scrubbed, the traffic in and out amounted to 18 different Spars! Then, on the heels of that predicament, there was no hot water at all, because the moisture in the gas pipes froze so that there was no

gas for the water heaters and the stoves. On Christmas Day, two Spars were able to get a hotel room (the only room available in all of Charleston), and there was a steady stream of grimy-looking individuals in Spar uniforms, with bundles of shirts and underwear under their arms, traipsing up to this room for a visit and a shower. Then bright and shining they traipsed back down through the lobby! Toothbrushes and washcloths became standard equipment and were carried everywhere, so that when warm water was found, at the office or out visiting, the suds flew.

Fire

Then there was the fire drill. It always seemed to arrive at precisely the moment calculated to inconvenience us most—at the beginning of a long-hoped-for telephone call, or halfway through a shampoo. Herded by whistles, we filed outside arrayed in a motley collection of feminine attire that never failed to amuse the casual bystander.

This turned into the worst of all possible worlds when we had to parade through the lobby past the dates who were waiting for us, who then saw us looking our most unglamorous and unromantic—with curlers in our hair and cold cream on our faces. The question then became whether to slink past Romeo in a soiled wrapper, eyes averted, or to brazen it out and wave to him with a smile meaning, "Not many people see me like this, you lucky man!"

Thanks to the unceasing vigilance of the various barracks commands, no serious fire endangered our lives and limbs. Yet many of the punishments and restrictions for carelessness in this direction seemed slightly excessive at the time. There was the case of the two roommates in one barracks who allowed a fire to start in their wastebasket, and as a punishment had to repaint all the "Fire Exit" signs in the building. Starting in at 1900, they returned to the duty desk with their buckets of paint four hours later. The duty officer took one look at the sad sacks, dripping with blood red paint, looking like victims of Jack the Ripper, and let out a scream that roused three decks.

It's a wonder that one certain Spar who found it difficult to wake up in the morning never found herself in the center of a holocaust. At 0630 every morning her roommate used a unique system to awaken her. She propped an extra pillow behind her head, stuck a cigarette in her mouth, lit it, and left the room with the crisp matutinal greeting: "All right, Seaman, go ahead and burn to death!"

Somehow we usually managed to get up and get dressed in the mornings, but it was a struggle. What with telephone calls for roommates just when we had a chance for some extra shuteye, and fiendish noises that inexplicably arose at odd hours, combined with the shortness of the time between bed-check and reveille, it was no simple matter to get beauty sleep. We staggered out of our sacks, of necessity paying no attention to whether it was light or dark outside.

There was the case of two unfortunate roommates who were accus-

tomed to being awakened gently every morning by the MAA. When she came in one night for bedcheck, the girls had been asleep for about an hour. But dazed and dutiful, they crawled out in response to the familiar knock at the door, got dressed, and were disconcerted to see nobody else at breakfast when they went down to the mess hall!

The Log

Such incidents in our daily lives caused us much concern at the time, yet they will be recorded only in our memories and not in any log book. The logbooks of any Spar barracks in the country, however, reveal other happenings which are characteristic only of barracks life.

To scan the pages of a few of these logs, one would think that Spars spent a great deal of time during the war throwing objects out of their windows. A notation in one states that a dripping colonel came in to the desk to complain bitterly that he was "hit by water." In another case a civilian, incoherent with rage, came in waving a broken umbrella. Apparently an object dropped from an upper story window had gone straight through his umbrella onto the sidewalk. It was a pear.

On page 47 of the logbook of the Embassy Hotel, New York Spar barracks, to pick an example at random, we find this terse notation for 26 July, 1945: "Civilian reported to coxswain of being burned on nose by cigarette from window in the vicinity of corner rooms. Investigation of rooms by MAA's disclosed no one guilty."

On another page, for 28 March, 1945, we read: "2400—Marine attempted to open bottle of beer on lobby door and then went on his way." "2400—all secure." No real prowler he.

But we had to cope with some prowlers who were accomplished hands at that ancient art. All over the country Spar barracks entertained mysterious strangers for brief and hazardous visits, in spite of every effort to keep rigid guard. Usually the dark hand that appeared around the door turned out to be a black GI glove, or the tall figure making himself at home in the head proved to be a new roommate in a pair of slacks. But in rare instances we met bona fide prowlers face to face in the hall, on the fire escape, or on the roof.

The roof of the San Francisco barracks, the former Glenroyal Hotel, was especially famous. The commanding officer, weary of calling the shore patrol, ordered an elaborate burglar-alarm system to be installed up there. Satisfied that the ingenious device would end the trouble once and for all, she stepped out on the roof for a breath of air one evening, touched the wrong wire, and got caught in a racket approximating a four-alarm fire!

Usually the prowlers were innocuous enough—some were civilians whose curiosity had got the better of them; some were innocents who had strayed into the wrong hotel.

Of this latter group, one log carries the following curious item of information: "A little man with a bundle was discovered by the elevator near Room 512. Upon being questioned, he said he was in the wrong hotel and immediately left by the elevator bearing his bundle."

The executive officer of the Spar barracks in St. Louis came across the following entry when she was checking the log: "Weewee In—1200, Out—1205." When she investigated the curious entry, she discovered that it was a male seaman's name .

Healthy Griping

If griping, as has sometimes been said, indicated a healthy adjustment to military life, we were certainly well adjusted. We reached the ultimate in griping during bull sessions outside of office hours. One of the commonest general gripes, of course, was barracks food.

Eventually in every Spar barracks in the country special concessions were made in the mess to the feminine taste. More salads and lighter foods were served than to the men, even a daily smorgasbord in one case. But could anyone have persuaded us that this was so! Every day we became more robust in every way, and we blamed our avoirdupois on the quantities of starchy food passed out to us over the steam table. When confronted with oatmeal and a heap of scrambled eggs in the morning we groaned, "Why can't we just have fruit juice, coffee, and toast?" In our peculiar scheme of food values, a piece of *crisp* buttered toast became a real luxury.

We never complained, like the rest of the world, of lack of food. America fed its armed forces well. We actually spent time in bull sessions griping about being served too much food. Question: "Well, you didn't have to eat it all, did you?" Answer: "If it's before me, I can't resist it." Moral: "Go ahead, you pig, *gain* weight!" We did.

Another topic in our sessions was the barracks staff. They were bound to be a target for indignant beating of the gums now and then, but we had to admit that barracks officers as a rule were good sports, the kind we could go to with our problems. Some of them even had a sense of humor about crime and punishment. In Washington, when Spars did not sign up in hordes for an Army dance, the barracks officer gave two Spars who were on restriction the task of getting recruits. The idea was that if the two could get a full quota, they could also attend the dance. They attended the dance.

We were always ready to spread choice, provocative scuttlebutt. One challenging piece with great sociological implications was circulated by the newspapers and caused endless speculation among us. We gathered in small, intense groups in our rooms late at night to discuss the rumor: that the Navy had decided to give Waves and Spars only a leave of absence while bearing children. Girls who had not even the remotest plan for families became incensed. "Imagine putting your baby in a nursery school run by the Navy department while *you* log in and out of Pay and Supply every day!" "It's inhuman!" "I'll get a court martial

rather than have the Navy bring up *my* child!" We never heard any more about it, but we pounded desks furiously for three days on that one.

For many of our real problems we received more help than we would have received as civilians. The Red Cross worker, for instance, available to each barracks did all she could to raise our morale. She obtained information for us about husbands and sweethearts overseas in prison camps, and in many cases found out other kinds of vital information, such as when that certain ship would be coming into port. If we were worried about conditions at home, the Red Cross would investigate and either relieve our minds or arrange emergency leave.

Silver Lining

We had our troubles, all right. We lived through dull routine and hair-raising experiences. It was not an ideal existence, but the world was not exactly in an ideal state. Any regimentation whether in a barracks or anywhere else is apt to be considered a necessary evil at best by most healthy young Americans. We were no exception! On the other hand, we appreciated the effort on the part of the Coast Guard to give us rooms for two, four, or six girls instead of billeting us in tremendous one-room, traditional-style barracks. "They" did see to it that the Washington barracks, the only big one built especially for us, had tiny rooms for two girls each, and that the big open barracks of Manhattan Beach and Ketchikan were done over into rooms for our greater comfort and some semblance of privacy.

We look back now upon the particular barracks in which we lived with a feeling akin to affection. Be it ever so spacious or humble, it was home for a long, long time!

OVERSEAS

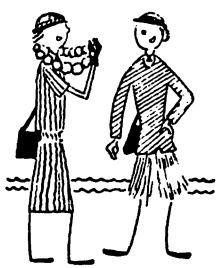
From Atlantic to Pacific,
From the palm tree to the pine,
With the old flag waving o'er you
There's no foe can stand before you
Land o' mine!

—Patriotic Song

AT last Congress relaxed its firm ruling that women of the naval reserves were strictly for home use, and decided late in 1944 that we could go overseas. For us that meant Hawaii and Alaska. The rush at first was not so great as had been anticipated, for again, as when we joined the Service, it was a question of giving up a warm berth for the Great Unknown—and for a minimum of 18 months.

The Coast Guard did not try to coerce us. The choice was frankly ours. But Headquarters formulated rigid instructions governing the application and selection of Spars for overseas duty. Only those with good records, good physical health, a year's service, training and experience in types of duty requested, stability, good nature, and a strong desire to be of real service were to be selected for assignment outside the United States. The most important single factor in the successful performance of overseas duty, Headquarters stated, was the sincere desire to further the war effort to the best of one's ability in any capacity.

Altogether, about 200 of our number served in Hawaii, doing approximately the same kind of work and holding the same ratings that they would have held at home. But with what a difference! In the United States any Spar wearing flowers with her uniform would have been as batty as Ophelia; in Hawaii, a lei on seersucker was hep gear. In Hawaii Spars did not have to wear stockings, as in several of the southern naval districts, yet here again with a difference. One Spar Wahine moaned, "We still have to wear shoes, though . . ."



After the girl had requested overseas duty and had been selected by Headquarters as the perfect girl for the far-off job, the first step was set up at the overseas processing center. Subjects taught included the history and geography of the area, its political structure, recreational opportunities, and social conditions. But for a true picture of the Spars' trek to Hawaii, we turn away from the classroom to a letter written by Wilma Carnell, RM 2/c, to her former roommate in New York:

"Dear Peg:

"That was a wonderful letter you kids wrote me. I'm saving it for years to come. And in return, Doc, I'll try to tell you what's cooking over here.

"First—the trip over. The time I really started to feel it was true that we were going overseas was the night we packed our seabags. Everyone was cutting up, officers and enlisted alike. The seabags were large and our gear only half filled them. So in order to pack them tight we used boxes and boxes of—well, everything we could find, and the cardboard it came in. We also crumbled magazines, page by page, until it was a large bundle. Finally they were packed. The next thing was to carry them. What a job! but *exciting*.

"The evening before we left we were told we'd shove off in the morning at 0830, out the Golden Gate. There was a mad dash for the showers. For some reason everyone had the same idea: 'We're leaving! I've got to wash my hair!'

"The next morning we went down to the pier in a Navy bus, singing all the way. Getting our packs on once we got there was another thing, but we managed. Then we marched up and formed lines of two's, and finally a port security officer called our last names and we answered by the first and middle ones. Our last spoken words in the United States! Then we charged up the gangplank.

"My first impression of the ship was that we were in a small hotel. I still wasn't sure we were on the ship until we got to our cabin. Triple decker bunks were on both sides as we entered. We had a large dresser and also a basin, closet space, and a room steward who was Admiral Waesche himself when it came to getting lemons and crackers for us. Just down the passageway we had a head and showers. That I didn't expect—the showers, I mean.

"Have you ever washed in salt water? It leaves you with a sticky feeling, but your skin feels nice and soft. The sun deck was exclusively for women passengers, so we spent most of our time up there in slacks and shorts. We ate in officers' mess—*good* food. I didn't get seasick but I found I was sleepy most of the time. I loved being rocked to sleep. I'd never be a sailor, I guess—couldn't keep my eyes open.

"We had a show our last night aboard. Otherwise every day was the same. Time seemed to pass rapidly, with nothing to see but beautiful deep blue water. Once we passed a ship. The water was so blue I felt certain I could stick my pen in it and write a letter.

"Our debarkation was something. We docked at a Coast Guard pier and all the Coast Guard and Navy were out to greet us. The first girl

off met the captain and also was kissed by a sailor when he put a lei on her. The husband of one of the girls was standing watching us, and when he saw his wife he just yanked her out of line and smothered her with kisses.

"Our quonset huts are extremely nice, each a different color. Ours is pastel green. It's divided into cubicles which have two bunks, a mirror, four lockers, a bench, and at the end of each hut a beautiful, modern, spacious lounge. The huts are cool and the weather ideal. We have two large huts for recreation halls. To every three huts we have one which is a complete head. Inside are the lockers which resemble square drawers. And we also have ironing huts, with laundry basins outside so we don't have to roast while we scrub.

"We have a full schedule of entertainment planned for two weeks. First night (while the roll of the ship was still with me, incidentally) we went to the Coast Guard vs. Army Air Force basketball game. We were the only women present—and did we make a sensation when we entered! The Coast Guard won the game, too. Last night we had a dance at the Breakers. On the way we did some sightseeing in the city, and I know I'm going to love it. I do already. The Royal Hawaiian Hotel is the most beautiful sight I've ever seen. Pink trimmed in blue.

"The fellows were overjoyed to see and to talk to white women. Our fellow Coast Guardsmen were swell to us. We all had leis, which are regulation here with the uniform. Imagine—flowers! And of course a kiss always accompanies the lei. It's funny kissing someone you don't even know. It does break the ice, though, if any happens to be present. We had a wonderful time.

"Tonight is the *luau*—a real Hawaiian feast. I'll tell you all about it later. I'll bet the censor hates me already. Our letters aren't supposed to be too long. Maybe she's a very patient person, I hope. It's really heavenly here, Peg, so you'd better sign up before the rush begins!

Love,

Willy"

Looking back at it now, the little group of 40 Spars who filed off the somber, war-camouflaged ship seem like pioneers in Lotus Land. But then, in January, 1945, little information had been given them concerning housing or restrictions peculiar to the district. Yet they were willing to change and had given up responsible positions back home, trusting the Service to place them where the need was greatest.

The history of the Women's Reserve in the 14 ND is short but full of accomplishment. Each Spar in that first group could have been assigned five times, so great was the need, but each division was given a few. They went to work with a vengeance and before long the transfers of men began—some to sea, some stateside after a long tour of Pacific duty. As an example, the Pay Department received six Spar storekeepers on Wednesday, and by Friday seven men were reassigned. Comparable changes took place in each division with each new draft of Spars that arrived.

Of all the Spars who came to Hawaii, the Specialists (X) (Switch-

board) were perhaps the most heartily greeted. Service had not been good. The height of indignation was reached when the assistant personnel officer, trying to call another island, found himself carrying on a conversation with his chief, who sat five feet away. With new Spars and new switchboards installed, the poor man's telephone troubles ended at last.

The progress of the war and the increased activity in the Pacific theatre brought additional responsibilities to the 14th. The arrival of the Spars coincided with an expansion of many vital departments which previously had been forced to operate in a limited way. Our last group to debark in Hawaii walked down the gangplank on August 2 and was hardly settled in the quonset village before V-J Day.

For the girls who volunteered to serve in Hawaii, the climaxing thrill of their stay there must have been the victory celebration at Pearl Harbor. The Spars marched in the big parade and were a part of the demonstration of military power that was, from all accounts, breath-taking.

With demobilization came the problem of space on ships for women. Like the men, Spars were eager to return home when the job was done. But they left the island with lumps in their throats and even, as "Aloha" was played, with tears on their leis and ribbons.

Alaska

Up in 17 ND, where about 200 Spars served beneath the midnight sun, the feel of a fur parka on the neck was more natural for a member of the U. S. Coast Guard than a lei in Hawaii. For even though Alaska was filled with new experiences for the Spars, it was familiar ground to the rest of the Service. The Coast Guard has been closely tied up with the history of the territory since the year of the Alaska purchase, when "the first fleet" was given the job of protecting the new arctic possession.

For years the Coast Guard has brought medicine, doctors, food, and law to the natives, besides maintaining weather stations and ice patrols in the North Pacific for international use. During wartime the anti-submarine patrol was an important Coast Guard function. So it was only natural that Spars should feel like comparative old-timers up there. Only natural—and yet, judging from a description written by Agnes Schmitz, Y 2/c, what the Spars did to Alaska wasn't anything compared to what Alaska did to the Spars.

"Up in Ketchikan these days, Coast Guardsmen say 'Please' when they're at chow. It's a sign of the times—the Spars have arrived.

"There are other signs of the times here and there on the base—nail polish in the ship's service store, hair dryers in the barbershop, slicked-up men in the date rooms. Even the sun did an about-face on our arrival and was out for the longest period in twenty-five years.

"The barracks, used previously by men, have been spruced up and equipped with a laundry, partitions have been built dividing the large dormitories into rooms, and dressers have taken the place of sea chests.

Of course, we had no sooner crossed our respective thresholds than we started rearranging things, moving the bunks to take full advantage of the window space, redecorating the rooms with pictures of mothers, fathers, and servicemen. It's still a mystery to the men how identical white rooms could suddenly become individual and homelike.

"Our whole stretch of duty up here has been punctuated by one exclamation point after another. The scenery defies description, by me anyhow. The lakes and mountains and waterfalls and woods are breathtakingly beautiful. By the time our ship pulled into port after several days of travelling through the Inner Passage, I had completely exhausted my repertoire of superlatives.

"The Ketchikan dock was crowded as we walked down the gangplank. Natives, local citizens, sourdough pioneers, Coasties we were relieving, WR officers, photographers—everyone turned out to welcome us to Alaska. The whole place was buzzing.

"When we were driven away from the genial reception in GI transport trucks I was disappointed. I had a lot of preconceived ideas about Alaska—all parts of it—that included saloons with swinging doors, knee-deep snow, dog sleds, and a lady named Lou. I even entertained the notion that the Spars up here might be paid off in gold dust.

"Ketchikan isn't like that. In the first place, it's a much more modern town than most of us had anticipated. There *is* snow, but it's thousands of feet up in the air on the tops of mountains. And as for dog sleds—well, you can't say 'Mush!' to a GI truck.

"But all else was forgotten when we arrived at the base and were greeted by men—hundreds of them. The Spar next to me took one look and gasped, 'Oh, if the girls from home were only here!' Then she added quickly, '*What* am I saying?'

"Our weather eyes went from the men to the mountainside. There was a stairway built right up it. A still, small voice inside me said that we were going to see much of those stairs. The still, small voice hit the nail right on the head. The stairway, consisting of 72 (count 'em) steps separates our barracks from our duty stations. Some days, pausing at the first landing to catch my breath, I think with deep nostalgia of escalators I have known.

"The life here, though, is putting us in shape for our daily climbs—or vice versa. Most of our off-duty hours are spent out of doors. We go on picnics, cruises, and trips to Indian villages. I still haven't seen a dog sled, but oh the totem poles! They're as numerous in this section as telephone poles back in the states. They're an integral part of the Indians' life and the history behind each carving is fascinating. Some of the Spars are taking up whittling and will doubtless send home a few miniature poles of their own, decorated with carved facsimiles of family and friends.

"My particular family and friends would be much happier if I struck gold and sent them a nugget. The more optimistic among us are still prospecting in the streams. As yet we have picked up no pin money and usually terminate these expeditions by trying our luck at fishing.

Nothing we might catch could ever compare with the 'big ones' in the fish stories told us by the sourdoughs. The biggest fish I've seen was caught on a sportsman's rod and reel and was a King Fish Salmon measuring 53 inches and weighing 64 pounds, two ounces.

"As part of my job in the Public Information Office I interview bearded Coast Guard veterans back from long, bleak northern patrols and write up their stories for the people back home. We Spars will not return with beards, but at the end of our stretch of Alaska duty, believe me, we'll have some stories of our own to tell!"

If Agnes Schmitz felt that the beauties of Alaska were beyond her powers of description, several other Spars did not, among them a Spar officer who writes in a letter:

". . . the gal who asked for this assignment wasn't asking for nor anticipating glamor or easy living. She actually expected something much more rugged. There have been rugged spots. But we wouldn't have missed them—we would have felt cheated. Have you ever seen 20 days in a row of pouring rain? And then some more of it when you were sure you couldn't take another drop? Then awake some morning to a Coast Guard blue sky with fluffy little white empties floating around in this same sky, and the earthy green of the mountains fresh from their long bath, and the streams running clear and fresh, and the waters of the Narrows calm and glassy? Or a sunset with the snow-patched mountains gaudy in rose dust and the waters glazed patches of green, pink, red, and blue reflecting back at the sky, and a fawn ambling across the road, and bears fishing in the falls for salmon leaping in the clear water? Or still more spectacular, the Northern Lights shimmering in the sky so close that you feel *in* them? And—well, shall I continue the picture sometime over a tall glass of milk? MILK! *How* I long for it . . . that's something they forgot here in Alaska. I shall go on a milk bender when I reach the states, drink gallons of it . . ."

Shirley Mann, Y 2/c, describes still other aspects of duty in Alaska in her account, which begins before the men of the Coast Guard learned to say "Please."

" 'Chow down' was our introduction to 'Ptomaine Row.' First we waited patiently. Then the guys began to shove and we were pushed into line. Here was the real Coast Guard mess hall, a long barren room with the inevitable garbage can. There were long wooden tables flanked by long wooden benches. We looked down at our 45 gauge hose with a sigh and made a desperate attempt to get into place á la lady. One spoon had to do for vegetables, coffee, and dessert. Everyone was yelling at once, call-of-the-wild style, 'Jo down!' 'Red lead, down!' The whole meal was an endless succession of passing food that seemed like an eating marathon, climaxed by dessert piled on top of gravy left-overs.

"The office set-up was baffling bliss, with so much freedom and fun and a new sense of independence in our work. We were put in responsible positions in Pay, Personnel, Communications, and stayed after office hours because everyone in the office was a buddy, a real shipmate.

"Military Morale arranged for weekend and Sunday trips to nearby

islands on fifty-foot cutters. At Helm Bay we searched into deserted miners' shacks, toured the damp dark mine, and hunted 'fool's gold.' The Loring hike took us through eerie forests, up moss-laden slippery trails. At the trail's end we watched the thousands of salmon leaping over steep rocks, through rushing waters, making their way upstream to spawn. We watched brown bears tear salmon apart in their claws.

"Sacking in sleeping bags for the first time was a new experience at Belle Island. We zipped ourselves into the waterproof bags, snuggling into the warm kapoc down inside like papooses folded into a blanket. Breakfast cooked on an old wood stove, the fire glowing inside, window drapes for towels because we'd forgotten ours, catching fish that amazed everyone including the fish—it was all a part of it.

"Came the first precious liberty and we took off toward town, past the salmon cannery, the Indian school playground, past the dilapidated shacks on stilts with stairs leading up and animal skins hung outside on racks. Little streams ran beside the road, unexpected waterfalls flowed from rocky crevices. There was dense brush beside the walk, fir trees and dead cedar thick along the mountain. Dirty Indian children, chubby, moon-faced, were playing on the boardwalks. We peeked curiously into the Indian stores and saloons on the outskirts of town. Weathered fishermen with their high boots and wool plaid shirts gathered idly on the bridge overlooking Thomas Basin, the harbor jammed with fishing dories.

"We wandered into souvenir shops, fascinated by black diamonds, hand-carved ivory, small wooden totem poles. And so *pfft* went our paychecks! One Ketchikan theatre provided cowboys on the screen and Indians in the seats, and the other was a place to munch popcorn while watching ads on the screen introducing the wares of every shop in town.

"Sometimes we were homesick for family and boy friends, missed concerts and plays, street signals, streetcars, and big city life. But we discovered pleasures to take their places—bridge parties in civilian homes, USO dances and movies, gatherings at local clubs, and dinners at interesting cafes on the outskirts of town. We learned how to knit or sew, took up photography, and painting, wood carving, or writing.

"There was baseball during nice weather and basketball later, wild DCGO vs. Base games. There were Base movies in the gym on hard chairs with uncertain canvas backs. Sometimes we went early and listened to popular Ketchikan favorites, sentimental ballads like 'Behind Those Swinging Doors' and 'Those Wild, Wild Women.'

"We discovered the thrills of Alaskan outdoor life, hiking and biking through rugged mountain terrain, catching occasional glimpses of wild deer and bears. We tramped to town in typical Ketchikan downpours and lived through more rain than we expected to see in a lifetime.

"'Foul weather gear' meant Spar-manned tents. We wore fur-lined parkas, olive drab knit gloves and socks, heavy laced brown field shoes, and wool-lined pants. Big enough for three, and no style show, but warm, comfortable, and weather-resistant.

"Barking dogs and scratch records kept us amused every morning

at colors while we waited shivering in the cold darkness. Then, as the strains of the 'Star Spangled Banner' echoed sharply from the mountain we snapped to attention, watching the flag creep slowly up the white staff on the distant hill.

"We'll remember Alaskan scenes, nature-painted pictures of rugged grandeur and inspiration as we looked from the top of the ladder across the Narrows to the snow-capped mountains of the neighboring island. We'll remember sunrises of soft blending pastels, diffusing pinks and yellow and orange like an impressionistic painting; moonlight on the water in the dark cold morning; soft thin snow with 'rose dust' permeating everything; the mountains with mist hanging low around them, making them appear suspended.

"From here on out Alaska will mean something more to us than a bleak spot on a map. It will add up to a thrilling, enriching experience that began with a piece of paper and a signature."

DEMOBILIZATION

After the war I'm going to buy a strapless evening gown and wear it 24 hours a day and have a Yeoman 3rd rating tattooed on my left arm

—Florence Newman, S 1/c

V-E Day, the atom bomb, V-J Day and here was the news that the goal toward which we had been working with millions of other men and women in uniform had been reached. The country rocked with celebrations. World War II was over! The news was tremendous, dramatic, worldwide. At the same time it was personal, with a different meaning for each of us.

In the days immediately following the armistice, after the initial rejoicing, we prepared ourselves psychologically for our return to civilian life. We were sure it would be only a matter of days. Then came the realization that the emergency was not over and that many of us were destined to wear blue for a long, long time yet.

Our post-war, pre-discharge period was full of paradoxes. We were elated over the war's end, but the letdown was terrific. Our chief incentive was gone and the Service didn't seem so important any more. Morale was sagging like a pair of rayon hose.

Those of us who were very anxious to get out and who were not kept busy enough, loudly beat our heads against a stone wall. We had signed up for the duration and six months and it wasn't that we wanted to quit as long as we were needed—it was just that it wasn't always easy to see that we *were* still needed. And when we were in a rate that was frozen . . . well! Even if we hadn't been in a hurry to get out before, the minute we knew we were frozen the urge to leave became well-nigh uncontrollable. Many a "frozen" Spar could literally be identified by her icy stare.

The picture also had another side. As far as being busy was concerned, some of us had plenty to do—sometimes more than ever before. Not everyone was beating on the door to get out either. There were those who agreed to stay until the end and a few would have volunteered to remain indefinitely if the Women's Reserve had been made a permanent part of the Coast Guard.

Regardless of whether we wanted to go or to tarry, however, we were testy when it came to regimentation. The magic hour had struck and we had turned back into civilians as far as rules and regulations were concerned. During the war, even the most annoying and seemingly

far-fetched rule could be shrugged off with "C'est la guerre" or "War is hell." But now, *now*, why did it matter if our hair was a trifle long, if we wore no hose, if we came in a little late—why? why? why? The furor died down eventually, but to the handful directly responsible for enforcing regulations until the last—a seaweed cluster for courage! Never before had so many Spars blamed so much on so few.

Brave New World

As soon as demobilization set in, we were discharged gradually along with the Reserve men. We were separated from the Service on a point basis and upon the closing of our particular jobs. A good many of us were assigned to the personnel separation centers where we were on deck until the final bit of demobilization was completed. One Coast Guard man recognized a former Spar recruiter and exclaimed in amazement, "Cheez, she got me in and now she's gettin' me out."

No matter how much we longed to trade our GI oxfords for a pair of spike-heeled pumps, it was gratifying to find that—far from speeding the parting guest—the Coast Guard had need for us right up until the last. Many of the regulars were still out of the country, many more had to be recruited and the work of the Coast Guard couldn't stand still in the meantime. In Spar recruiting the slogan had been "Release a Man for Sea." In postwar male recruiting it might well have been "Release a Spar for Pity's Sake."

While we were waiting for our points to mature, the questions-most-likely-to-be-asked by families, friends, and total strangers included:

1. "When are you getting out?"

Unless we were frozen we could supply a snappy comeback to this one. If we were frozen, we were often the butt of jolly jokes of the "look who's a military necessity" variety.

2. "Do you *want* to get out?"

Here was a question with a double edge and, before answering, it was necessary to size up the person asking it. An enthusiastic "Yes!" might leave them with the impression that servicewomen had always been miserably unhappy and were ready to desert at the first opportunity. A "No" could just as easily bring out the taxpayer in them and the implication that we were loathe to let go of the government's purse strings.

3. "What are you going to *do* when you get out?"

This was the payoff for most of us. It was like asking someone who was poor but proud for a peek at his bank account. We usually smiled mysteriously and gave an evasive answer, e.g., "I haven't quite made up my mind," "I'm not at liberty to say just yet," "That depends." For the most part, the question was prompted by honest interest and that alone, but now and then it carried a special connotation—not "Thank God the war is over and you can resume your normal living" but "You'll soon be out of a job, my pretty."

The question of what we would be doing once we were back in real life was always with us in one form or another. Some of the Spars and men had let it be known during the war that they had given up civilian jobs the like of which most of us would never see. They affected faraway expressions of sadness just thinking of the privations of the Service, but were strangely reluctant to return to their glorious pasts when they had the chance.

Others, and this was especially true of the men, were eternally on the verge of something colossal. They never lined up an ordinary job by ordinary means. It was always a *big* deal which they were going to swing, through some really *hot* contacts.

For most of us the simple truth seemed to be that we didn't know *what* we were going to do—we weren't even sure what we wanted to do. Unless we were married and planned to keep house, or were on leave of absence from a job that would be so nice to go back to, or had definitely decided to take advantage of the GI Bill of Rights, the future took the shape of a question mark. We saw the opportunity for a brand new start—new wardrobe, new job, new set of values—and we balked at the thought of sliding back into our pre-service rut. Many of us had found in the Service the independence. and self-confidence that had been lacking back home. Many had new ideas, new-found skills, new hopes. We were at the threshold of a brave new world, and even those who knew it wasn't any use got a thrill thinking of what *might* be. We changed our minds a hundred times. Like everybody else we were looking for something bigger and better than ever before.

But there was at least one of our number whose cup ranneth over. When asked what she planned to do after leaving the Service, she answered emphatically and blissfully: "I'm marrying the most *wonderful* man."

To the question of where she was going to live, she looked thoughtful, then replied in all seriousness, "Oh that depends on which one I marry."

Civilian clothes crowded in on our horizons. Those who had never ceased pining for the clothes they left behind, who had continued to peer longingly into fashion magazines and store windows and who had even defied regulations upon occasion and blossomed forth in forbidden finery, were ecstatic at the prospect of discarding navy blue. Those who had found in the uniform a refuge from accessory trouble, an escape from spending-orgies because "I simply *couldn't* resist it," and an unbeatable answer to the age-old problems "*What* should I wear?" and "I haven't a *thing* to put on!" looked forward grimly to forthcoming shopping sprees, but perforce developed a sudden interest in what civilians friends were wearing, where they bought it, and how much it cost.

We were always curious to see what an ex-Spar looked like in civvies. Those who came back were the center of attention. Some were knockouts; others were cause for such catty thoughts as: "*Why* would she

wear *that* color?" "Oh brother, whatta hat!" "She's just *not* the frilly type" and so on. It was apparent that in some cases a Spar had been hiding her light under a bushel while in others the uniform had covered a multitude of sins! As a rule these new veterans were self-conscious and anxious to be assured, "Say, you really look good!"

One WR personnel officer noticed with bitter interest a strange trend. She found that many girls who had doggedly stuck to too-high heels and too-long hair for the duration often returned after discharge sporting flat heels and feather cuts!

Memories

Discharge day had always loomed vaguely in the distance as the "big day." That was the accepted way to look at it, and we sang with real feeling "I don't want no more of Coast Guard life—gee, Mom, I wanna go home!" Of course, some of those who had been discharged before the war's end had told us that being a civilian again wasn't all it was cracked up to be, that they missed the Service, their friends, and countless things that had never seemed important before. But we paid them little or no heed.

As the "big day" rolled around for each of us, we learned by experience that the jubilation of getting out was somewhat diluted by memories. There were many things about the Service that we were going to miss—the easy comradeship with more people than most of us had ever known before . . . the feeling of belonging; the few special friends who shared our gripes, good times, and clean shirts; the tremendous thrill of being a part of this nation's military forces—we'd miss all this.

There was no sentimentality about it. No one wanted to take along a double decker bunk to remember the Service by. But the war was over, and as our usefulness ended, we wanted to get out.

Instead of hashing over our personal grievances, we thought of the good breaks that had come our way in the Coast Guard. By gosh, the line they had fed us in recruiting was true! We *had* made new friends (many of us had even met our future husbands), we *had* seen new places we might never have seen otherwise, we *had* learned many new things and we *were* proud of having been in uniform. And, along with our GI shirts and regulation oxfords, we were taking away many intangible things that should be of value to us for the rest of our lives—increased tolerance, a new sense of self-confidence, a better idea of how to live and work with all kinds of people, a keener recognition of our responsibility as world citizens.

"As You Were"

Those of us who had come early and stayed late saw the cycle completed. Civilians were staring curiously at us once more. In the early days the stares had a "What do we have here?" meaning. Now the implication was, "*You* still around? Don't you know the war's over?"

Back in our veiled hats at last, we found ourselves losing pocketbooks that were not slung over the shoulder, getting wet because we forgot umbrellas were no longer taboo, automatically starting to salute when confronted by brass or braid. Our reconversion didn't take long, though, and soon our discharge button (or camouflaged wearing apparel reminiscent of our serge and seersucker days) was the only tangible evidence that we had once been women in uniform. No more rank or rate—just Miss or Mrs.

But for years to come there will be reunions taking place all over these United States. In restaurants, on trains, and at parties, those who were never in the service will be frequently amazed to see their otherwise safe and sane friends suddenly stiffen, peer hesitantly, then stare with more certainty and finally rush forward with outstretched hand; to hear them emit glad cries of "Smitty!" or "Murphy!" or "Jonesy"; to be completely ignored while the two ex-Spars chat about "good old Blinker, best storekeeper in 11ND . . . how about the time the captain found the turtle in the head? . . . remember Dobbs and Hanks—4.0 kids in personnel—they were married right after discharge . . . will you *ever* forget the day at Palm Beach when I was platoon leader and that dope came . . ." and so on ad infinitum.

There will be domestic scenes, too, when our grandchildren (those of us who are lucky enough to have them) will chin themselves on the arms of our rocking chairs and clamor for a story of the good old days when Grandma was a Coastie. Will we smile modestly, put them aside with "Aw, it wasn't nuttin', child," and go on reading the World's Almanac? We will NOT. Eagerly laying down our knitting, we will gather the young ones into our laps and tell them, on a note of triumph, how we won the war single-handed with the U. S. Coast Guard Spars!

POSTSCRIPTS

There is always More to Say

—Elementary Psychology

IN order to qualify for enlistment in the Spars, the applicants must have been between the ages of 20 and 36, with at least two years of high school or business school, an American citizen with no dependents under 18, able to pass an aptitude test, a physical examination, and a personal interview.

The average enlisted Spar was 24 years old, single, a high-school graduate, worked for over three years in a clerical or sales occupation before joining the Service, was approximately 5′ 4″ tall and weighed about 124 pounds. The chances were that she came from Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, or California.

In order to qualify for officer training in the Spars, the applicant must have been between the ages of 20 and 50, with a college degree or two years' college work plus two years of acceptable business or professional experience. Requirements concerning citizenship and dependents were the same as for the enlisted girl. The officer candidate must also have been able to pass a special aptitude test, a physical examination, and personal interviews. The final selection of officers was made by a Headquarters board.

The average Spar officer was 29 years old, single, a college graduate, worked seven years in either a professional or managerial position before she joined the service—in the field of education or government. She served first as an ensign and then as a lieutenant junior grade in the Women's Reserve of the Coast Guard, using, in most instances, the tools of her professional or civilian experience.

The Uniforms

One of the early recruiting pamphlets described the Wave-Spar Mainbocher-designed uniform as a "navy blue, semi-fitted garment." This uniform was evidently created to make the figures of all members of the Women's Reserve as nearly equal as possible. The six-gored skirt of serge gabardine or tropical worsted was topped by a blouse bearing

four buttons and rounded lapels. The Coast Guard shield was worn on the sleeve, the seal on the lapels.

Variety was achieved in this costume by means of the several shirts worn for various occasions and seasons. Choices were: a short-sleeved, white cotton shirt; a long-sleeved, reserve blue shirt; a long-sleeved, white silk shirt for dress; a navy blue work shirt. Except for the reserve blue tie worn with the dark blue shirt, the black tie was standard. It was adapted from the Navy and Coast Guard enlisted men's square-knotted tie, which is worn as a traditional symbol of mourning for Lord Nelson.

Accessories included white cotton gloves for summer and dress wear, black leather gloves for winter. The handbag of smooth black leather was worn on or near the left hip and suspended from the right shoulder by a long strap.

Coats were of two types: the plain-belted raincoat and the dressier, back-belted topcoat.

The round-crowned, snap-brimmed hat of the enlisted girl was often described as "jaunty" or "casual." The brim was worn in various ways—rolled, turned up, back on the head, or at an angle—but only one way was regulation: squared, with the brim snapped down firmly in front, no hair showing on the forehead. Crowns were generally white in summer, dark in winter. Enlisted Spars were identified by "U. S. Coast Guard" lettered in gold on the hatband.

The officer's "boat," vaguely resembling the ancient cockade of admirals, was equipped with removable white covers for summer, dark for winter. The crown was stiff, surrounded by a stitched brim rolled up on the sides. The cap device was the same as that worn by the male officers: the Coast Guard gold eagle on a horizontal silver anchor. No provision was made for Spar officers with the rank of commander or above to wear reserve blue "scrambled eggs" on the brim.

For informal use, garrison or overseas caps were permitted. Sporting identifying insignia, they were worn by both Spar enlisted girls and Spar officers.

Shoes—laced oxfords for work and pumps for dress—were black, smooth leather. Regulations called for "heels not exceeding $1\frac{6}{8}$ inches high." No perforations, wedge soles, nailheads, fancy leathers, or stitchings, straps, open heels or toes were allowed. Heel height was measured from the inside of the arch and did not include the "taps."

For summer work wear, gray and white striped short-sleeved seersucker dresses with removable jackets and non-adjustable waist bands were provided. Garrison caps or cap covers of the same gray and white seersucker were worn with the summer work uniform. Black cotton gloves completed the costume.

For summer dress occasions the Mainbocher-designed standard uniform was worn in white palm beach cloth, tropical worsted, or other light fabrics. Black handbags were disguised for this outfit by removing the straps and covering with an envelope of white poplin. Shoes were oxfords or pumps of smooth white leather.

In inclement weather, draped navy blue cap covers of water-resistant

material were used instead of umbrellas. These havelocks were patterne after gear worn by British soldiers in the Sepoy mutiny in 1857 as protection for the neck from the India sun. They were named after Si Henry Havelock, English general who helped to put down the revol

FACTS AND FIGURES

Enlisted Training

The first enlisted Spars were recruited from the WAVES. At th beginning of the program all Spars were trained at Navy schools, bu later the needs of the Service required the establishment of separat Coast Guard indoctrination and training schools.

The Coast Guard Training Station at Palm Beach, Florida, was th only training station for any women's reserve that housed both recrui and specialized schools. In addition to Recruit School three specialize Spar training schools were located at Palm Beach—the Yeoman School the Storekeeper School and the Cooks and Bakers School. Upon the completion of indoctrination Spars were assigned either to a specialized school for further training in some particular field or directly to a job. Assignments were determined by the individual's aptitude, previous training, work experience, preference, and the immediate needs of the Service.

About 70 percent of the enlisted women who received recruit training also received specialized training of some kind. While yeoman and storekeeper training represents the great bulk of specialist training given by the Coast Guard, many Spars were given the opportunity for training in other fields. Spars attended certain Navy schools and were trained as sound motion picture technicians, link trainer operators, parachute riggers, chaplains' assistants, and air control tower operators. Others attended Coast Guard schools and learned to be cooks and bakers, radiomen, pharmacist's mates, radio technicians, and drivers of motor vehicles who knew how to maintain their own cars.

As a result of this specialized training and practical experience on the job, many Spars not only gave valuable service to the Coast Guard but also prepared themselves for good post-war positions. For example, girls assigned to Yeoman School without previous secretarial training were given the opportunity to learn to type and take shorthand; Spars trained as Coast Guard storekeepers got a good start in qualifying for the civilian fields of purchasing, accounting, banking, insurance, or general commercial office work; those graduated as cooks and bakers had a useful knowledge of foods and nutrition that would stand them in good stead in a post-war home or career.

By October, 1944, most of the Coast Guard's needs for Spars had been met. At this stage of the game, women were recruited and trained for special needs and replacement purposes only. The decline in the number of Spars to be trained made it unnecessary to keep the Palm Beach property. In January of 1945 the training of Spar enlisted personnel was transferred from the Palm Beach training station to the Coast Guard's largest training station for men at Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn.

Enlisted Specialist Schools*

Yeoman

USNTS, Cedar Falls, USNTS, Stillwater	255
USCGTS, Palm Beach	2000
USCGTS, Manhattan Beach	345

Storekeepers

USNTS, Boston, USNTS, Milledgeville, USNTS, Bloomington	305
USCGTS, Palm Beach	1085
USCGTS, Manhattan Beach	280

Cooks and Bakers

USCGTS, Palm Beach	285
USCGTS, Manhattan Beach	105

Radioman

USNTS, Madison, USNTS, Oxford	205
USCGTS, Atlantic City	390

GOT

USCGTS, Palm Beach	135
USCGTS, Manhattan Beach	230

Vehicular Maintenance

3ND	60
7ND	30
11ND	30
13ND	25

Sound Motion Picture

USNTS, San Diego	15
USNTS, Navy Yard, Brooklyn	20

Radio Technician

3ND	10
4ND	30
5ND	10

Radio Materiel

5ND	7

Pharmacist's Mates

Columbia University	200

Cox.(WR) and BM(WR)

USCGTS, Manhattan Beach	130

Link Instrument

USNAS, Atlanta, Ga.	20

Parachute Riggers

USNAS, Lakehurst, N. J.	25

Aerographer's Mates

USNAS, Lakehurst, N. J.	5

Control Tower Operators

USNAS, Atlanta, Ga.	20

Number of Spars who attended each school is an approximate figure.

Officer Training

The Coast Guard intended to recruit as officer candidates wom who already had some civilian training or work experience that cou be used in the Service without any further need of training the ind vidual. Therefore, the great majority of Spar officers received a sho general indoctrination course and no specialized training. Approx mately 33 percent did receive additional specialized training either communication officers or as pay and supply officers.

Those who were to be communications officers received their indo trination along with those slated for general duty billets. Pay and suppl officers, on the other hand, received both officer indoctrination an specialized training at a school located on the Palm Beach training sta tion. Known as the Paydets, they were selected from qualified enliste Spars who had successfully demonstrated their interest and ability i pay and supply work and who possessed officer-like qualities.

Special Features of the Academy

At the Academy, the Spar officer training course was designed to give the officer candidates an overall picture of the Coast Guard. It was also a testing period to determine whether the candidate had the desired officer-like abilities and qualities. Each cadet gained a practical knowledge of leadership and organization because of her responsibilities as a company officer.

An excellent method of presenting information on leadership and on Coast Guard administration was the practice of having two experienced women officers ordered temporarily to the Academy to instruct each class, as it was about to be commissioned, in the fine points of Coast Guard personnel policies and general administration. Presented in the form of lectures and group discussions, this material was of particular value in bridging the gap between officer-candidate training and actual experience in the field.

Up from the Ranks

Many enlisted Spars took advantage of their opportunity to apply for officer training. Of the total 955 Spars officers trained, 299 were formerly enlisted—or 1 in every 3. Any qualified enlisted woman might apply for officer training. The final decision was made by a selection board at HQ. General qualifications included:

(1) six months' service, including training period

(2) no mark less than 3.5 in proficiency in rating and 4.0 in conduct for the immediately preceding 6 months

(3) recommendation of the commanding officer who was to take into account the candidate's qualities of leadership, her ability to get along with people and to adjust easily to unusual and frequently changing situations, and her emotional stability

(4) satisfactory health record

(5) satisfactory score on the officer candidate test.

Last of the Braid

The last class of Spar officer candidates was made up exclusively of former enlisted personnel and trained at Manhattan Beach. Officer training had been concluded some time before and was reopened for this one class in order to replace Spar officers who were overseas or with the Air-Sea Rescue Agency or separated from the Service.

Spar Officers Trained

Officers' Training CG Academy	831
Officers' Training, CG Trasta, Manhattan Beach	18
Pay and Supply Officers' School, CG Trasta, Palm Beach	106
Communications Officers' Training, Trasta, Atlantic City	85
Communications Officers' Training, Mt. Holyoke	50
Communications Officers' Training, Northampton	40
Advanced Officers' Training (WR), Purdue University	26
Chemical Warfare Training, Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland	4
Pre-Loran Radar Training, CG Academy	6
U. S. Marine Corps Recreation Conference, (WR), Chicago, Ill.	9

Ratings Held by Spars

RATINGS	ABBREVIATIONS	RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION
Boatswain's Mate	BM	Personnel supervisor—instructor
Coxswain	Cox.	Personnel supervisor—instructor
Gunner's Mate	GM	Ballistic expert, gunsmith, ordnance assembler
Quartermaster	QM	Surveyor, instrument maker and inspector, meter tester, geodetic computer
Surfman*	Surf.	Instructor in boat handling, first aid instructor
Seaman**	S2/c	Clerk, driver, messenger
Electrician's Mate	EM	Electrician, instrument maker, electrical adjuster
Radioman	RM	Radio communications, equipment operator, telegrapher, airport control operator, control tower operator, radio operator
Carpenter's Mate	CM	Cabinet maker, carver, wood-working machine operator
Radio technician	RT	Radio installer, radio assembler
Radarman	Rdm	Radio dispatcher, control tower operator, airport control operator
Motor Machinist Mate	MoMM	Vehicle operation, mechanics, and maintenance
Fireman*	F	Plumber, industrial machine operator

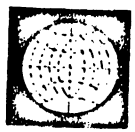
**In view of the fact that the rating "surfman" and "fireman" are not descriptive of the duties performed by women so rated, it was deemed advisable to rate them and then award the appropriate designator—Specialist (T)*

Specialty Marks worn by Spars


Boatswain's Mate
Coxswain


Gunner's Mate


Quartermaster


Electrician's Mate


Radioman


Carpenter's Mate


Radarman


Motor Machinists's Mate

Specialist - Mail
Letter indicates
Specialty


Ships-Cook
Steward


Photographer's Mate


Yeoman


Storekeeper


Pharmacist's Mate


Musician


Bugler


Parachute Rigger


Aerographer's Mate

Advancement in Ratings Follows Pattern Illustrated


Yeoman 3/c


Yeoman 2/c


Yeoman 1/c


Chief Yeoman

RATINGS	ABBREVIATIONS	RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION
Parachute rigger	PR	Parachute packer, leather worker, sewing machine operator, upholsterer
Storekeeper	SK	Bookkeeper, accountant, clerk
Ship's Serviceman (Barber)	SSMB	Beauty shop operator
Ship's Serviceman (Laundryman)	SSML	Cleaner, presser
Ship's Serviceman (Tailor)	SSMT	Seamstress
Pharmacist's Mate	PhM	Dental hygienist, medical technician, dietician, physical therapist, pharamacist, chemical lab. tec.
Hospital Apprentice	HA	First aid teacher, dentist's assistant, physician's assistant, medical technician, nurse's aide, practical nurse
Musician	Mus	Musician, band leader, music teacher, musical director
Bugler	Bug	Musician
Specialist (Public Relations)	Sp(PR)	Writer, journalist, publicity agent, advertising, artist
Specialist (Transportation)	Sp(TR)	Transportation clerk, vehicle operator
Specialist (Classification Interviewer)	Sp(C)	Employment interviewer, classification and placement expert
Specialist (I B M Operator)	Sp(I)	I B M Operator
Specialist (Mail)	Sp(M)	Mail clerk
Specialist (Recruiting)	Sp(R)	Speaker, publicity agent,advertising, personnel administrator
Specialist (Teacher)	Sp(T)	Teacher
Specialist (Welfare)	Sp(W)	Social worker
Specialist (Miscellaneous)	Sp(X) (MSC)	
Specialist (Control Tower Operator)	Sp(X) (Y)	Control Tower Operator
Specialist (Intelligence)	Sp(X) (INT)	Interviewer, investigator
Specialist (Engineering Draftsman)	Sp(X) (ED)	Draftsman, architect, engineer
Specialist (Hydrographic Draftsman)	Sp(X) (HYD)	Hydrographer
Specialist (Telephone Switchboard Operator and Supervisor)	Sp(X) (SB)	Switchboard operator
Ship's Cook	SC	Chef, dietician, kitchen manager, supervisor
Steward	St	Dietician, cook, baker
Specialist (Visual Training Aids)	Sp(X) (VA)	Artist
Specialist (Typewriter and Office Equipment Repairman)	Sp(X) (TYP)	Typewriter repairman, office equipment repairman
Aerographer's Mate	AerM	Meteorologist, weather observer
Photographer's Mate	PhoM	Commercial photographer, cameraman assistant, projector operator, film developer,blueprint machine operator
Yeoman	Y	Stenographer, secretary, clerk

Officer Billets

The greatest number of Spar officers—37 percent—held gener duty billets. These included administrative and supervisory assignmer in the various divisions of the Coast Guard.

About 23 percent of the total served as communications officers a 17 percent as pay and supply officers. Other important special catagori of assignments included barracks with about 8 percent of the Sp officers in that duty and recruiting, (including the recruiting of men as well as women) with about 7 percent.

Ribbons

AMERICAN THEATER—The ribbon is a blue field with narrow re white, and blue stripes in the center, and wider stripes of white, re black, and white near either end. It was originally designed to awarded for service in the American theater of war outside the co tinental United States, but at the conclusion of hostilities it w announced that all military personnel who had served a year or mo anywhere in the United States were eligible for the medal.

VICTORY—After V-J Day a World War II victory medal w authorized, consisting of a red field with rainbow stripes at either en All personnel who had served honorably in the armed forces we eligible to wear this award.

PACIFIC THEATER—The ribbon is a yellow field with narrow re white and blue stripes in the center and white and red stripes on eith side symbolizing the war against Japan. Spars who saw duty in Hawa and Alaska were eligible for this theater medal.

The first Spar to receive this medal was Mrs. Florence Eberso Smith. Before coming to this country and enlisting in the Coast Guar she had spent five months in Japanese prison camps as a penalty for ai ing Americans through the Philippine underground movement. Sh was liberated by American forces.

COAST GUARD GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL—Spars with three yea service and 4.0 conduct were eligible for this medal. The ribbon is maroon field with a wide white stripe in the center.

COAST GUARD EXPERT PISTOL SHOT—Spars who attained qua fications as expert with either the .45 caliber pistol or .38 calib revolver in prescribed courses were eligible for this medal. The ribbo is a dark blue field with a narrow white stripe at either end.

COAST GUARD EXPERT RIFLEMAN—Spars who attained quali cations as expert with the rifle in accordance with prescribed cours were authorized to wear this medal. The ribbon is a dark blue fie with a narrow white stripe at either end and two white stripes in th center.

SILVER LIFESAVING MEDAL—This medal is awarded to those pe sons who have endangered their lives in saving or endeavoring to sa lives from the perils of the sea in waters over which the United Stat has jurisdiction, or upon American vessels. The medal can be given

only those instances in which exceptional bravery has been displayed or in which unusual effort or some great personal sacrifice has been made. The ribbon for the silver medal is a plain silver-gray bar.

First woman in uniform to receive this medal was Mrs. Margie Bell Victors, Hospital Apprentice. The citation supporting the award reads in part:

"Margie B. Victors and Patsy Gillispie, hospital apprentice, second class, U. S. Coast Guard Women's Reserve, on duty at the infirmary of the Coast Guard base, Charleston, S. C., while on liberty rented a rowboat and went fishing in Folly River, eight miles from Charleston. It was about dusk and they were on their way back to the dock. Spar Victors was rowing. She heard a splash and look quickly around to the bow of the boat where Gillispie had been. She was gone. Then there was a solid thump on the bottom of the boat. This was Gillispie's head striking the underside of the boat as her body came to the surface. Instantly Victors dived in. She was able to find her companion . . . After reaching the rowboat with the then unconscious girl, Victors succeeded in balancing her across the stern of the boat. Then she made the difficult maneuver of climbing into the rowboat herself so steadily that the unconscious girl, delicately balanced on the stern, did not again slump off into the water. She pulled her comrade into the rowboat and immediately applied artificial respiration and other first aid measures which doctors said forestalled consequences which might have been fatal to the Gillispie girl. The row to the dock against the tide and current was a further ordeal for Victors. At the dock she wrapped Gillispie, who was now semi-conscious, in both of their Coast Guard uniforms. She then carried her about 300 yards to their automobile, wrapped her in a blanket and drove to the infirmary at the Coast Guard base. . . ."

COMMENDATION RIBBON—The Secretary of Navy's commendation ribbon, bright green field with two broad white stripes in the center, was awarded to the following Spar officers:

COMMANDER HELEN B. SCHLEMAN,* for services as set forth in the following citation:

"For outstanding performance of duty while serving as Assistant Director of the Women's Reserve and Assistant Chief of the Women's Reserve Division from December 14, 1942, to October 15, 1945. Employing wisdom and foresight, Commander Schleman carried major responsibilities for building from the words of the Congressional Act creating the Women's Reserve, an efficient working organization which, true to the purpose for which it was conceived, released thousands of Coast Guard men for duty at sea. Alert to the opportunities of the organization and the needs of its personnel, Commander Schleman directed the procedures which provided adequate housing for SPARS and made surveys of the districts both within and outside the United States, which resulted in the wider utilization of both officers and enlisted SPARS. Her administrative ability and devotion to duty reflect great credit upon Commander Schleman and the United States Naval Services."

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER VIRGINIA H. BLUNT, for services as set forth in the following citation:

"For outstanding performance of duty in developing and establishing the training programs for officers and enlisted members of the Women's Reserve while assigned to the Women's Reserve Division and later to the Training Division of the Office of Personnel, United States Coast Guard Headquarters. By effecting a judicious combination of military training with modern educational practices in the indoctrination and training of women to become effective members of the United States Coast Guard, Lieutenant Commander Blunt developed and established training programs which resulted in a uniformly high standard of military conduct and technical performance by 1,000 officers and 10,000 enlisted personnel of the Women's Reserve. The service rendered by Lieutenant Commander Blunt in planning these new programs and in bringing to bear upon the problem of military training for women the best modern educational practices has contributed materially to the effectiveness of the performance of members of the Women's Reserve and thereby to the Coast Guard's contribution to the war effort."

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER TERESA M. CROWLEY, for services as set forth in the following citation:

"For outstanding performance of duty while serving as senior Spar officer at the United States Naval Training Station, The Bronx, and as senior Spar Officer and later as Executive Officer of the United States Coast Guard Training Station, Palm Beach, Florida, from February 15, 1945. Placed in a position of leadership over approximately ten thousand enlisted Spars, Lieutenant Commander Crowley ably dealt with the many difficult problems arising in connection with inducting thousands of women into a highly regimented life and teaching them both military ways and actual skills and procedures. By her intelligence and fair-minded leadership, Lieutenant Commander Crowley contributed materially to the brilliant success of the Spar training program and hence to the prosecution of the war."

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER INEVA R. MEYER, for services as set forth in the following citation:

"For outstanding performance of duty in the pioneering task of formulating wise and workable policies for the administration of enlisted women of the United States Coast Guard, Women's Reserve. In the early months of the organization of the Women's Reserve Lieutenant Commander Meyer, serving as the senior Spar officer attached to the Enlisted Assignment Division and

*Commander Schleman succeeded Captain Dorothy C. Stratton as Director of the Women's Reserve in January 1946 and was promoted to the rank of captain on

as the liasion officer between that division and the Women's Reserve Division, rendered invaluable service to the Coast Guard and to her country through her assistance in formulating the policies governing the administration of enlisted women. She brought keen intelligence and insight to bear in shaping policies relating to utilization, assignment, housing, messing, working conditions, discipline, and discharging of enlisted Spars. Her quick grasp of Coast Guard procedures and standards always led her to the solution of a problem that would be in keeping with general service policies. Her primary concern was that the women of the Coast Guard should render the best possible service to the Coast Guard. She helped immeasurably to build the framework which made this goal possible of achievement. The service rendered by Lieutenant Commander Meyer has contributed materially to the effectiveness of the prosecution of the war by the Coast Guard."

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER EUGENIA LAWRENCE, for services as set forth in the following citation:

"For outstanding performance of duty as Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Barracks, Washington, D. C., from September 4, 1943, to October 15, 1945. Charged with responsibility for the welfare, conduct and appearance of all Spars stationed in Washington, Lieutenant Commander Lawrence supervised women quartered in seven different sections of the city while planning and overseeing the construction of Spar barracks which included a dispensary, beauty parlor, ship's service store, tailor shop and facilities for recreation and religious services. Operating this activity with judgment and common sense, she set up routines and regulations, assigned personnel to man the various sections and handled the many details necessary for the orderly functioning of a unit housing over a thousand Spars. Her tact, intelligence and executive ability contributed materially to the fine esprit de corps maintained by Coast Guard women in Washington, reflecting the highest credit upon Lieutenant Commander Lawrence and the United States Naval Service."

LEGION OF MERIT—This medal, whose ribbon is a rose field with a narrow white stripe at either end, was presented to Captain Dorothy C. Stratton for services as set forth in the following citation:

"For exceptionally meritorious service to the Government as Director of the Women's Reserve of the United States Coast Guard Reserve. Captain Stratton was primarily responsible for originating policies for the procurement, training, utilization and maintenance of morale of members of the Women's Reserve. At the peak of its war program, the Coast Guard utilized 1,000 officers and 10,000 enlisted women in shore billets. Through her qualities of leadership, Captain Stratton inspired the finest type of woman to volunteer her services to her country. Through her keen understanding of the abilities of women, her vision of the

jobs which they could perform, and her consummate tact in fitting women into a military organization, she was able to direct the efforts of the women of the Reserve into channels of the greatest usefulness to the Coast Guard and to the country. She has thus made substantial contributions to the successful prosecution of the war effort through her competent leadership and direction of the Women's Reserve of the United States Coast Guard Reserve."

Now It Can Be Told

Probably the most unique and least-publicized job done by Spars was their work in connection with Loran. Any kind of communications was hush-hush enough—Spar communicators were so secure they even suspected their best friends of being spies and gave the lie to anyone who said women couldn't be trusted with confidential matters—but Loran was the last word. In fact to most of us it wasn't a word at all because it was uttered only behind locked doors.

A Spar officer in Washington had never heard the word and when she received an imprudent letter asking if she could recommend another Spar officer for Loran, she thought it was a place. Gaily waving the letter, she wandered into several offices and inquired loudly if they knew of anyone who wanted to go to Loran. Met either by blank stares or horrified glances, she finally spotted a friend in the hall and called to her: "Do *you* know of anyone who wants to go to Loran? Someone must live near there. Where is it anyhow?" The better-informed friend dragged the bewildered officer into an empty room, closed the door, looked under the desks and in the filing cabinets, and then told her the facts of Loran—or all she knew of them which amounted to: NEVER EVEN *THINK* LORAN.

Now it can be told and Lt.(jg) Vera Hamerschlag, one of the Spars who remained silent for so long, has a chance to tell the rest of us what life with Loran was like.

"In the summer of 1943, Headquarters decided that Loran Monitor Stations within continental United States should be manned by Spars. Loran is one of those alphabet names meaning Long Range Aid to Navigation—a system developed at the beginning of the war whereby radio signals, transmitted from two shore-based stations, are picked up by a certain type of receiver-indicator installed in ships and planes, enabling them to calculate their exact position. The monitor station is equipped with the same type of receiver-indicator, but being a fixed station, is able to check the accuracy and general operations of the transmitting stations. The Spar operators had to stand watch 24 hours a day, taking and recording these measurements every two minutes.

"Having worked as an assistant to the Naval Liaison Officer for Loran at Radiation Lab and thereby becoming familiar with the Loran System, I was selected to be in charge of the first Spar monitor station at Chatham, Massachusetts. One enlisted Spar and I were assigned to a two months' course at M. I. T. in Loran operation and maintenance of

receiving equipment. We were the only women in the whole Loran section of the Naval Training School and, needless to say, caused comment. Later, 10 enlisted Spars were assigned to a one-week course in operations only. The selection of these Spars was unique to say the least. Loran was so 'hush-hush' that not even the Training Officer had any conception of what the duties of these Spars would be, nor what their qualifications should be. The Engineering Officer had laconically said: 'Ability to keep their mouths shut.' Thus, all Spars selected were volunteers who had accepted the assignment with a spirit of adventure. It was the first time that Spars were being sent out of the district office and the newness and mystery of the work was a challenge to us all.

"At the time I reported, Unit 21 was manned 100 percent by men and the idea was for them to leave for overseas assignments as quickly as we were capable of taking over. We did this within one month—100 percent Spars with the exception of one male radio technician who was a veritable 'man Friday' to us all. He acted as instructor as well, and left six months later when we felt qualified to accept the responsibility of technical maintenance.

"The station consisted of one small building about 50 feet long and 30 feet wide. This provided sleeping quarters, recreation room, office space, operations room, repair shop and storage space! I had arrived in advance purposely to get the hang of operations on the spot and additional technical information, but in actuality the whole week was spent in 'setting up housekeeping,' trying to make this small space accommodate 12 Spars and all their gear. Little had I realized when I was told I would be commanding officer of a Loran monitor station how many angles it involved. I was operations and engineering officer, medical officer, barracks officer, personnel officer, training officer—and even Captain of the Head! I had to learn the intricacies of plumbing, of a coal furnace, of a Kohler engine that supplied emergency power when the main line was out—and being on the Cape where nor'easters are frequent, the times were many. I remember the feeling I had when I looked at the 125′ mast for the station's antenna and wondered which Spar would climb the riggin' if something went wrong. I asked the CO whom I was replacing who took care of it. His nonchalant answer was not to worry since nothing would happen to it short of a hurricane. Well, we had that too the following fall during which operations were suspended and all hands evacuated in case the mast should topple over onto the buildings!

"Well, after a week of planning night and day for the arrival of the Spars, preparing barrack regulations, watch-standing schedules (which resulted in four hours on and eight off due to the nature of the duties, with a '48' every six days and a '72' every eighteen days), contacting the chaplain, the USO, the laundry, ordering supplies and feeling very much more like a housekeeper than a CO, I went down in the Lighthouse truck to meet the first contingent of Spars coming from Boston on the morning train. Our arrival on the Cape was at the worst time of the year—January. All was bleak and lonely, but oh—so white and clean! The station was located right on the water's edge at the show place of

the town, about a mile from Main Street. In front was a vast expanse of white sand and beyond, the Atlantic. I shall never forget the hypnotic beauty of the moonbeams on the water, the slowly revolving light from the Lighthouse and the small sentinel light on our antenna mast, combining to make our station a bit of fairyland.

"The esprit de corps of Unit 21 was outstanding. We were a family unit. I remember the church wedding we had for one of our members. I gave the bride away, the chaplain performed the ceremony in the local church, and all the townspeople turned out for it!

"The human element of the work kept it from getting dull and routine for the operators. The thought that we were participating in a system that was playing such an important part in winning the war gave us a feeling of being as close to the front lines as it was possible for Spars to be. Furthermore, we were part of a network that covered nearly all the world where we or our allies were fighting.

"Inasmuch as Loran is considered one of the outstanding scientific developments of this war, it is a satisfaction to know that Spars were given the opportunity to participate in its operation."

The unit at Chatham is believed to have been at that time the only all-female manned one of its kind in the world. A Headquarters letter of commendation stated: ". . . the operation of Unit 21 under the Spars has been carried out in a most efficient manner and the efforts of the Spar personnel have contributed greatly to the overall efficiency of the Loran system during World War II."

Spar Extras

Many of us felt that doing a good job as a Spar involved more than the performance of our immediate Coast Guard assignments.

A high percentage of Spars in every district gave regular blood donations to the Red Cross blood bank, with special donations often being made to hospitals for charity patients and emergency use. For example, a two-year old boy in Cleveland was literally kept alive by a group of 70 Spars and Coast Guardsmen who gave him almost daily blood transfusions for a period of five months.

Spars became active nurse's aids to serve at hospitals near their stations, spent evenings rolling bandages for the Red Cross, made weekly visits to entertain convalescent service men in hospital wards, collected gifts for men overseas, gave Christmas parties for orphans and poor families. Choral groups from every district made regular appearances for civic organizations, hospitals, churches, and charity benefits. Trios and quartets of Spars were in great demand, as well as entertainment programs like the 7ND Spar Minstrel Show, The St. Louis Drum and Bugle Corps, the Washington Drum and Bugle Corps, and the official U. S. Coast Guard Spar Band performed on countless occasions for service and civic functions.

Direct contributions of time and effort were made by many Spars in clothing drives, waste paper salvage drives, the March of Dimes for

the infantile paralysis fund, war chest drives, and of course all the war bond drives. Although only 12ND received a letter of commendation from Rear Admiral Chalker for a 94.7 percent overall participation in the allotment program with the Spar average probably well over 95 percent, the percentage of Spars buying monthly bonds was extremely high in every district.

To alleviate conditions caused by a general shortage of labor, many Spars worked outside of their duty hours as switchboard operators in hospitals, as harvesters, drivers, mail-clerks, "baby-sitters," and in canneries.

When emergencies arose caused by storm or fire, Spars stationed nearby invariably rushed to offer their services—their donations of blood, their knowledge of first aid, their time preparing coffee and sandwiches to take to the scene of the disaster, their skill as drivers. In 11ND a group of twelve Spars earned a Headquarters commendation for the energy and fine cooperation they displayed in caring for the victims of a serious harbor fire. Examples of the same spirit were found in every other district, as in Cleveland during the gas company fire, in Massachusetts during the ship and storm emergencies which arose in the Cape Cod Canal area, and along the Jersey coast when the Spar radiomen manned their posts during the hurricane until the water swirled around their ankles.

Throughout the country Spars took top honors in various athletic contests, which included basketball, softball, volley ball, swimming and diving, archery, riding, tennis, skiing, skating, bowling, and golf. Precision drill teams won the admiration of civilians and members of other services alike. In San Francisco, the DCGO of 12ND awarded a plaque and individual medals to each member of the Spar softball teams for excellent teamwork. In Seattle, the Spar Mounted Drill Team, only known one of its kind in the country, put on many exhibitions and carried off awards in horse shows.

Tars and Spars

Newspapers put out by the Spars in every district were widely read and appreciated. They helped to raise the morale not only of members of our own service but also of others. One Spar paper had regular subscribers among fighting men who were over 10,000 miles away.

To assist in accomplishing the transition to civilian life at the close of the war, a number of the districts arranged extensive vocational guidance programs, organized and directed by enterprising Spars. Outstanding experts in various professional fields were invited to lecture, style shows were given, individual interviews and tests were arranged.

First service show to combine the talents of men and women in uniform, the Coast Guard's "Tars and Spars" was a streamlined, musical revue that toured the country in the interests of Spar recruiting.

Its all-service cast of 60 included many well-known personalities of stage and screen in uniform for the duration. The score was played by

the Coast Guard Invaders Band, once crew members of the famed assault transport U.S.S. *Samuel Chase* and participants in the invasions at Sicily, Salerno and North Africa.

With book and music written by the Broadway team of Howard Dietz and Vernon Duke, and direction provided by Max Liebman, the show played to capacity and record breaking audiences from coast to coast.

Columbia Pictures later produced a movie by the same name with several of the original performers in the cast.

Lest We Forget

Below—Beneath the deck.

Bilge—The part of the hull that bulges out from the keel, ending where the sides become vertical. *Bilge keels* are large metal strips fastened near the turn of the bilge to lessen the degree of the ship's rolling; to flunk out; also means "nonsense".

Blue braid—Spar officer.

Boat—A small craft; sometimes described as a seagoing vessel less than 100 feet long, sometimes as a small vessel that can be carried aboard ship. Whatever it is, only lubbers call a ship a boat. Also means a Spar officer's hat.

Boot—(Slang) A newly enlisted recruit undergoing basic training. *Bootie*, a girl even newer to the Women's Reserve than a boot.

Bright-Work—Metal fittings to be kept polished.

Bulkhead—Transverse or longitudinal partitions dividing a ship into compartments.

CO—Commanding Officer.

Command—A superior's direction to do a certain act in a certain way. No choice in manner of performance is allowed.

DCGO—District Coast Guard Officer.

Exec—Executive Officer; next in rank and next in command to the CO.

Fouled—Tangled, jammed up, not clear.

Galley—A ship's kitchen.

Gangway—An opening in the bulwark to give entrance to the ship; a command meaning, "Make way for an officer."

Gear—A general term for equipment, either a ship's or personal.

GI—Abbreviation for Government Issue; sometimes used as a name for a serviceman, or description of his attitude.

Gold braid—Male officer.

Goldbrick—(Slang) A loafer.

HQ—Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D. C.

Head—A toilet, so named because it was always located in forward section of a ship.

Irish Pennants—Rope strands or loose ends hanging about the rigging or deck. Among members of the Women's Reserve a petticoat that shows.

Knock Off—To stop work.

Ladder—Any stairway aboard ship.

Leave—In the Coast Guard, authorized absence from ship or station duties for more than 64 hours.

Liberty—In the Coast Guard, authorized absence from ship or station duties for less than 48 hours.

MAA—Master at Arms.

ND—Naval District; 3ND—Third Naval District.

OD—Officer of the day or duty officer taking his turn being in charge as the commanding officer's representative.

Order—Direction by a superior to perform a certain act; the method of carrying it out is left to the individual.

Pipe Down—Phrase meaning, "Stop talking"; also, a boatswain's mate's pipe call to go below.

Port—The left side of the ship when facing front. A red light indicates port and a green light starboard.

Quarter Deck—A section of the deck designated by the captain for ceremonial purposes.

Quarters—Living compartments; muster formation for all hands.

Rank—The grade of an officer.

Rate—The grade and specialized work designation of an enlisted man. A man is said to have two duties, his military and that of his rate.

Sack—(Slang) mattress. *Sack Drill*, sleep.

Scuttlebutt—Drinking fountain; gossip or rumors.

Secure—To lash down, make fast or safe; an order to stop work and pick up tools.

Shipshape—Neat, orderly.

Shove Off—A command for boats under oars; colloquially, to depart.

Sick Bay—Ship's hospital or dispensary.

SNAFU—(Slang) Situation normal, all fouled up.

Spars—A general term applied to all masts, yards, gaffs, booms, etc.

Spar—A member of the U. S. Coast Guard Women's Reserve.

Spook—Spar wearing a havelock.

Square Away—To clean up, to stow, to prepare.

Starboard—The right side of a ship when facing forward.

Stow—To put gear in its proper place, to pack.

Striper—(Slang) An officer, so called because of the gold stripes on his sleeves.

TARFU—(Slang) Things are really fouled up.

Time—In the Service the time of day is indicated on a 24-hour scale, ending at midnight, 2400. One a.m. is 0100, two a.m. is 0200, twelve noon is 1200, twelve-forty p.m. is 1240, eleven p.m. is 2300.

Topsides—Above decks, top decks; colloquially, the powers that be, as "Topsides wants this done."

Turn To—Start the day's work, get the work done.

Watch—A period of time on duty, usually four hours alternately. In order that a man will not get the same watch each day the watches are usually *dogged*, that is one watch is halved and the two short ones are known as the *dog watches*. They generally occur between four and eight p.m.

Wilco—Code for "Will Comply"; sometimes used colloquially.

4.0—Perfect.

*Terms Commonly Used By Superiors**

Have you any remarks?—Give me an idea what it's all about.

Snowed under—Only able to take 1½ hours off for lunch.

Give him the picture—A long, confusing, and inaccurate statement made to a newcomer.

Will be borne in mind—No further action will be taken until you remind me.

Being dealt with separately—Maybe, but will be probably forgotten.

You will remember—You have forgotten, if you ever knew about it, because I have.

In due course—Never.

A growing body of opinion—Two very senior officers agree.

Transmitted to you—You hold the bag; I'm tired of it.

In conference—Don't know where he is.

Kindly expedite reply—For Pete's sake, try to find the papers.

Passed to higher authority—Pigeonholed in a more sumptuous office.

Appropriate action—Do you know what to do with it? We don't.

Referred for remarks—Unscrupulous method for making a junior officer do all the work, so senior may write "Forwarded" and sign.

Herewith are forwarded—Or not, as the case may be. But you're to blame if the inclosures are missing.

For your consideration—It means nothing to me and probably nothing to you.

**Reprinted from "Sparkles," 7ND.*

Important Dates in the History of the Spars

23 November	1942—Legislation approved for creation of the Women's Reserve.
24 November	1942—Director of Women's Reserve sworn in as Lieut. Comdr.
16 December	1942—First Spar officers assigned to duty.
2 February	1943—First enlisted Spars assigned to duty.
23 May	1943—Commissioning of Coast Guard Training Station at Palm Beach.
14 June	1943—Coast Guard assumed responsibility for uniforming Spars — previously the Navy had supplied clothing.
28 June	1943—Coast Guard Academy assumed complete responsibility for the training of Spar officers.
30 June	1943—Coast Guard assumed complete responsibility for recruiting Spars.
23 November	1943—Spars celebrated first anniversary. (Organization expanding rapidly).
1 February	1944—Director of WR promoted to rank of Captain.
4 February	1944—First class of pay and supply officers were commissioned at Coast Guard Training Station, Palm Beach.
27 September	1944—Legislation approved permitting Spars to serve overseas.
1 November	1944—Last officer class commisioned at Academy.
23 November	1944—Spars celebrated second anniversary. (Organization reaches peak of strength in numbers).
23 November	1944—Recruiting closed except for replacements.
5 December	1944—Last officer class commissioned at Palm Beach Training Station.
17 February	1945—Spar training moved to Coast Guard Training Station, Manhattan Beach, from Palm Beach.
28 January	1945—First Spars arrived in Hawaii.
19 May	1945—First Spars arrived in Alaska.
8 May	1945—V-E Day.
14 August	1945—V-J Day.
23 November	1945—Spars celebrated third anniversary. (Organization in process of demobilization).
30 June	1946—Target date for completion of demobilization of Spars.

Coast Guard in World War II

1941—Coast Guard transferred to Navy Department, ships and planes assigned to anti-submarine patrol; Coast Guard Auxiliary and Reserve Act provides for expansion of an auxiliary force and creation of Reserve; Coast Guardsmen man invasion barges, troop and supply ships; Port Security and Marine Inspection under Coast Guard.

JUNE—South Greenland Patrol by Coast Guard cutters established following signing of an Agreement Relating to the Defense of Greenland by United States and Denmark in April.

SEPTEMBER—Cutter *Northland* captures sealer *Buskoe*, takes prisoners; destroys Nazi radio station in Greenland. *Buskoe* first enemy ship captured by United States in World War II.

DECEMBER 7—Japanese planes attack Pearl Harbor; Cutter *Taney's* screen of anti-aircraft fire prevents raiding planes from destroying Honolulu power plant.

1942—JANUARY—Cutter *Hamilton* torpedoed in Icelandic waters as she completes five-day rescue mission, 26 die, first Coast Guard vessel lost in the war. Coast Guard-manned transport *Wakefield* under fire at Singapore, evacuates 500 women and children.

MARCH—BUREAU OF MARINE INSPECTION AND NAVIGATION, established in 1838 as Steamboat Inspection Service to provide greater safety at sea by regular examination of boilers and other machinery, incorporated into the Coast Guard. Cutter *Acacia* lost by enemy action in Caribbean waters; all hands saved.

MAY—Cutter *Icarus* sinks submarine; takes 33 prisoners.

JUNE—Coast Guardsman John Cullen leads Federal Bureau of Investigation agents to capture of four Nazi saboteurs of Amagansett, Long Island.

JULY—Cutters *Foremost* and *McLane* sink Japanese submarine in Alaskan waters.

AUGUST—Coast Guardsmen land Marines at Tulagi and Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands.

SEPTEMBER—Coast Guardsman Douglas Munro gives life in daring rescue of beleaguered Marine battalion at Guadalcanal; posthumously awarded Congressional Medal of Honor.

NOVEMBER—Cutter *Muskeget* disappears on North Atlantic station; no survivors. Coast Guard-manned assault transports in North African invasion.

DECEMBER—Cutter *Natsek* disappears on North Atlantic station; no survivors.

1943—JANUARY—Coast Guard participates in landings at Amchitka, Aleutians. Cutters on anti-submarine patrol in adjacent waters.

FEBRUARY—Cutter *Campbell* fights submarine pack, rams and sinks U-boat.

APRIL—Cutter *Spencer* depth-bombs, shells, sinks German submarine in Atlantic; captures 43 Nazis. Coast Guardsmen participate in occupation of Funafuti, Ellice Islands.

JUNE—Cutter *Escanaba* blows up while on North Atlantic convoy duty; two survivors. Coast Guardsmen participate in landing at Rendova Island, New Georgia.

JULY—Coast Guard-manned ships land first troops in Sicily. First Coast Guard bomber squadron activated. Cutters *Northland* and *North Star* destroy Nazi station on Sabine Island, Greenland.

AUGUST—Coast Guardsmen participate in invasion of Vella Lavella, central Solomons, and Nukufetan, Ellice Islands.

SEPTEMBER—Coast Guardsmen participate in invasions of Salern, Italy; Finschafen, New Guinea and Nanumea, Ellice Islands. Cutter *Wilcox* lost in Atlantic storm.

OCTOBER—Coast Guardsmen participate in landing at Choiseul, Treasury Islands. Former Presidential yacht *Mayflower* commissioned as Coast Guard cutter.

NOVEMBER—Coast Guard-manned ships participate in invasions of Bougainville, Solomon Islands; Makin and Tarawa in Gilberts.

DECEMBER—In conjunction with Coast Guard, Navy forms first Air-Sea Rescue unit at San Diego, Calif. Secretary of Navy at request of Joint Chiefs of Staff early in 1944 establishes Air-Sea Rescue Agency in Coast Guard, with other Services participating, for study and improvement of rescue work. Coast Guard-manned ships in invasions of Arawe and Cape Gloucester, New Britain.

1944—JANUARY—Coast Guard-manned ships in four invasions: Anzio-Nettuno area, Italy; Saidor, New Guinea; Roi and Kwajalein, Kwajalein atoll.

FEBRUARY—Coast Guard-manned ships in invasions of Namur Island, Kwajalein atoll; Eniwetok and Engebi, Marshalls; Los Negros in Admiralties.

MARCH—*USS Leopold*—DE 319 lost in Atlantic. Coast Guardsmen in invasions of Manus Island, Admiralties, and Emirau, St. Mathias Islands.

APRIL—Coast Guard-manned vessels in invasions of Aitape and Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea; Parry Island in Eniwetok atoll.

MAY—Coast Guard-manned ships in invasion of Wakde Island, off Dutch New Guinea coasts, and Biak Island, Southern Group. *USS Pride*—DE 323, assisted by a Navy DE and a French DE sinks U-boat in Atlantic, takes prisoners.

JUNE—Coast Guard-manned ships in invasions of Normandy, Saipan in Marianas.

JULY—Cutters *Storis* and *Northland* destroy fortified Nazi radio station on Shannon Island, Greenland. Coast Guard-manned ships in invasions of Noemfoor Island, off Dutch New Guinea; Sansapor, New Guinea; Guam, and Tinian, Marianas Islands.

AUGUST—Coast Guard-manned ships in invasion of southern France.

SEPTEMBER—Coast Guard-manned ships in invasions of Peleliu and Anguaur in Palau Islands; Morotai Island, 300 miles from Philippines. *Northland* captures crew of scuttled Nazi ship in Greenland waters. Cutters *Bedloe* and *Jackson* lost in Atlantic coast hurricane, survivors rescued by Coast Guard air and sea units.

OCTOBER—Coast Guard ships in invasion of Leyte Island, Philippines. Cutters *Eastwind* and *Southwind* destroy Nazi radio station on Little Koldewey Island, 800 miles south of North Pole, capture Nazi trawler *Extersteine*.

DECEMBER—Coast Guardsmen participate in landings at Ormac and Palompon, Leyte, and Mindoro Island, Philippines.

1945—JANUARY—Coast Guard ships participate in invasions of Luzon, in Lingayen Gulf area, and Nasugbu, Luzon, Philippines. *USS Serpens*, ammunition ship, explodes off Guadalcanal; 200 Coast Guardsmen killed, two rescued.

FEBRUARY—Coast Guardsmen participate in invasion of Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands.

MARCH—Coast Guardsmen participate in landings at Geruma Shima, Hokaji Shima and Takashiki in the Ryukyu Islands.

APRIL—Coast Guard ships in invasion of Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands.

AUGUST—Offer of surrender received from Japan and accepted by United States and Allies.

* * *

Semper Paratus

From Aztec shore to Arctic Zone,
To Europe and Far East,
The Flag is carried by our ships
In times of war and peace;
And never have we struck it yet
In spite of foemen's might,
Who cheered our crews and cheered again
For showing how to fight.

CHORUS

So here's the Coast Guard marching song,
We sing on land or sea.
Through surf and storm and howling gale,
High shall our purpose be.
"Semper Paratus" is our guide,
Our fame, our glory, too,
To fight to save or fight and die!
Aye! Coast Guard, we are for you.

Surveyor and Narcissus,
The Eagle and Dispatch,
The Hudson and the Tampa,
The names are hard to match;
From Barrow's shoes to Paraguay,
Great Lakes or ocean's wave,
The Coast Guard fought through storms and winds
To punish or to save.

Aye, we've been "Always Ready"
To do, to fight, or die
Write glory to the shield we wear
In letters to the sky.
To sink the foe or save the maimed
Our mission and our pride,
We'll carry on 'til Kingdom Come
Ideals for which we've died.

—FRANCIS VAN BOSKERCK, Captain, USCG