

21st ANNIVERSARY

**Women Marines have
served on active duty
with the Corps since
the 13th of Feb., 1943**

by SSgt Joan Ambrose

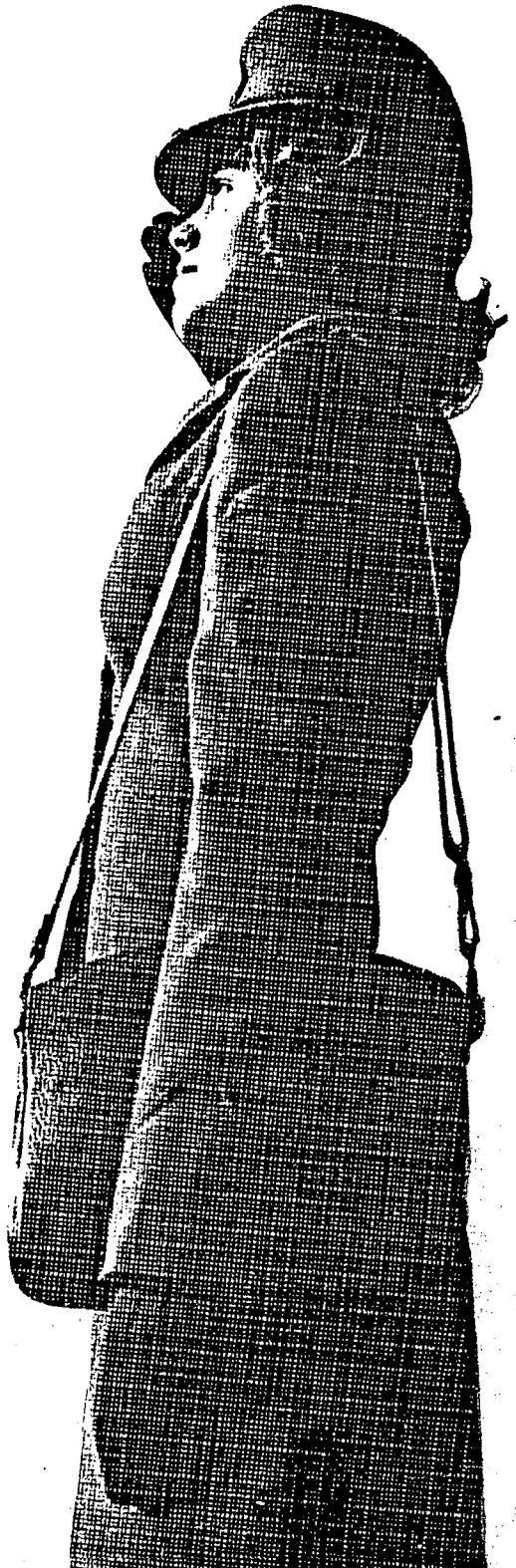
THE WOMEN Marines celebrate their 21st anniversary this month. It's natural, when you reach 21, to scan the record, mark a few milestones, and look to the future.

When the first women entered the Corps, on February 13th, 1943, few Marines predicted that they would still be around two decades later. Women in greens were strictly an emergency measure. Upon their entrance into what was traditionally an all-male outfit, the Corps wisely promised nothing in the way of a glory road—only the emblems of a proud service. This was, and is, quite enough.

It is a source of pride to women in the Corps that, with the exception of combat and those functions relative to combat, they serve on an interchangeable basis with male Marines. As an integral part of the Marine Team, their primary mission is to provide a well-trained nucleus of women officers and enlisted personnel in the event of mobilization.

Women Marines, officer and enlisted, are serving in such specialized fields as military law, public relations, aviation assignments, and logistics. They are not just holding their own—they are doing the job.

Today's Women Marines are a far cry from their 1918 counterparts, the



Marinettes, who blazed a trail for the women who followed. During WWI, approximately 305 Marinettes enlisted, and while they served less than a year, they released many men for combat by taking over clerical assignments. It's difficult to compare them to the sleek, well-tailored Women Marines of today, but they were, nevertheless, Marines from their high-buttoned shoes to their peaked hats—all hurriedly borrowed, with modifications, from the male attire.

The Marinettes were disbanded at the end of WWI, and women did not appear on the Marine scene again until 1943 when, with the war in the Pacific going badly, it was obvious that women could well take over desk jobs, thereby releasing a "Marine to Fight."

Actually, the jobs they assumed far surpassed the shuffling of papers. Talent poured into the Women's Reserve by the thousands. Soon they reached a strength of almost 19,000 serving in more than 200 billets, many of which were highly technical. They included lady attorneys, educators, draftsmen, aviation personnel, photographers, musicians, dietitians and even truck drivers. While requirements then, as now, were stringent, qualified women from every economic and social strata enlisted. Morale was at an all-time high and if any hardship was mentioned, it was the eternal wearing of the uniform during both liberty and duty hours.

One of the favorite tongue-in-cheek "sea stories" of WM's is the event which occurred the day the bill was signed in 1943 marking the establishment of the Women's Reserve. The Commandant, General Thomas Holcomb, remarked to his dinner guests that, "Old Archibald Henderson (fifth Commandant) would certainly turn over in his grave if he ever found out that females could become commissioned officers in his beloved Corps." Whereupon, the story goes, General Henderson's portrait which hung over the sideboard crashed to the floor. From this less than auspicious beginning, women in the Corps embarked on the not always easy road to a singular goal—bonafide membership in the most select military organization in the world.

When demobilization was started in 1946, Marine women took with them a

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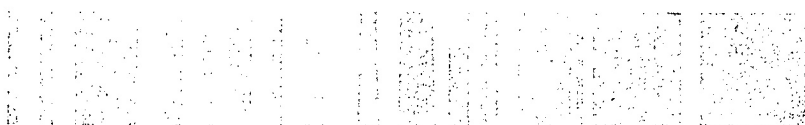
Women Marines are on duty at NATO Headquarters, as well as in London and Paris.

Lillian Russell volunteered for recruiting duty in WW I when the Corps enlisted women to "Free a man to fight."





In Basic Training, and after, the weight watchers are concerned by excess calories.



Many Women Marines consider Hawaii to be an ideal choice for a tour of duty.



sincere "Well Done" from a grateful Corps. A small cadre of women remained on active duty at HQMC, reaching at one point a record low of 30 enlisted women and one officer. It was from this nucleus that a limited expansion was begun when the Integration Act of 1948 made it possible for women to become, for the first time in history, a part of the Regular Establishment. Women Marines today number about 1600 enlisted and officers, restricted by law to two percent of the strength of the Corps.

The Women Marines have gone forth as individuals in a traditionally individual outfit. Now assigned to some of the highest offices in the land, WM's serve for the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary and Under Secretary of the Navy, the Offices of the Commandant and the Chief of Staff, and Critical overseas billets in Paris, Naples and London. In 1944, the first Women Marines were sent to Hawaii which was then considered to be an overseas billet. Stateside, they serve in Washington, D. C., Parris Island, Camp Lejeune, Cherry Point, Norfolk, Va., Philadelphia, El Toro, Camp Pendleton, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and numerous independent duty areas throughout the country. The women stationed in Europe rarely return without having toured the continent. And, many who are stationed in Hawaii take advantage of military hops to the Far East for shopping and sightseeing expeditions.

Five women, in recent years, have been responsible for the welfare and suggested duty assignments of the Women in the Corps. The first, Colonel Ruth Cheney Streeter, served with the Women's Reserve from 1943 to 1945. Her successor, Colonel Katherine A. Towle, served two terms, from 1945 to 1946, and from 1948 to 1953. Colonel Julie E. Hamblet served as Director from 1946 to 1948, and from 1953 to 1959. Colonel Margaret M. Henderson presided from 1959 to December 31st of 1963. Colonel Barbara J. Bishop took over the office in January of this year.

It was Colonel Towle, by the way, who said with small regret and much pride that, "While we lose many of our women through marriage to our fine Marines, it would indeed be regretful if our men did not find them highly suitable mates." And, who would better understand the commitments and dedication of a career Marine? The Marine Corps' policy regarding those WM's who marry Marines

is tolerant and cooperative. Should they choose to stay in, they are invariably assigned to the same duty station, excepting, of course, the periodic overseas tours, which are routine to all male personnel.

Whether a woman joins the Marines for a career, or a tour, the tried and true combination of discipline and the intangible esprit make it virtually certain that she will acquire a deeper love of country and sense of duty.

While Boot Camp has undergone subtle changes since the first 700 women were trained by Naval personnel at Hunter College in New York in 1943, many traditions remain unchanged. The emphasis has possibly shifted slightly from the inflexible militant, necessary in those fledgling years, to the more individual processing prevalent today. The basic aim is the same—to produce that ideal combination of a lady who has chosen to be a Marine.

Invariably, the oldsters look back and the youngsters look ahead. The heated discussions about whose basic training was the more arduous will go on so long as there are women in the Corps.

Boot Camp isn't easy for women. It wasn't designed to be. The Marine Corps has long held to the precept that if it is all that simple, it isn't worthwhile. A lot of the training doesn't make sense at first. Why the emphasis on close order drill? It doesn't really enhance a woman's value as a stenographer or supply clerk. The explanation is simple—drill instills the ability to work as a team. A Woman Marine must, like her brothers, be capable of working with others on any assignment, at any time, on very short notice, and with no questions asked.

The hour for arising has not changed. It's still 0515. For the 50 or so women enlisted from as many states, the first few days are dreamlike. While it is all calculated from years of successfully masterminding the transition of woman to Woman Marine, the crowded mess hall, the total lack of privacy and the feeling of loss of identity is, to say the least, disconcerting. There is no breakdown of discipline and if the male drill instructor feels at first that there may be a certain loss of face in his assignment to the Woman Recruit Battalion, he is in a highly enviable position on graduation day when he can tell his high-heeled group that he has never had a better platoon!

Basic training includes lessons in customs and courtesies, history, current events, physical fitness, first aid, character guidance and the social and personal standards demanded of Women Marines. Detail conscious as always, the Corps' curriculum for



Sergeants Major Bertha Billeb and Beth Albert greet General Wallace M. Greene, Jr.

Busy girl; busy job. SSgt Barbara Newton is a receptionist for SecDef, Robert McNamara.



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women even includes a course on the proper application of make-up.

School and duty assignments have undergone changes since the 40's. During WW II the WM's worked in fields no longer needed in peacetime. Now, more stress is placed on Women Marines becoming proficient as legal stenographers, data processors, cost accountants, and in other fields consistent with the modern military. However, since women in the Corps are more thoroughly integrated than their sister servicewomen, occupational fields are not closed to them. Because of this, there are many instances where only one or two women are assigned to a particular field—one woman communications officer, one flight officer, one lawyer, all assigned on the basis of

ability.

Again, the Corps' wise decision to place all women in direct competition with the men for promotion, means that they will progress, or not, according to their own competence and their ability to prove themselves proficient in their pay grades and occupational fields.

While, as it has been stated, many of the women marry and leave the Corps, a percentage elect to make it a career. The pay is the same as a man's of equivalent rank, the benefits on a par, and, last but not least, she has the satisfaction of "belonging" to an outfit which completely accepts her.

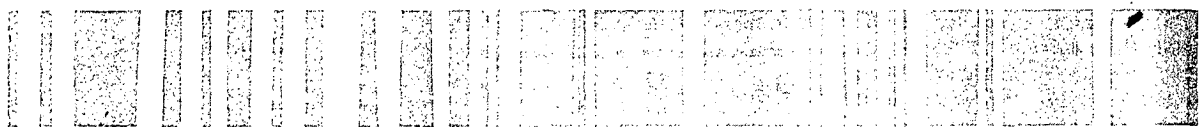
The uniforms have not undergone drastic changes over the years. The four-in-hand field scarf has been replaced by an ascot, and the greens have been altered to present a softer, more feminine appearance. They all,

however, retain unmistakable Marine Corps hallmarks in the piping and peaked cuffs. Lipstick worn in uniform conforms to the cord on the dress hat and during WW II a leading cosmetic manufacturer produced a lipstick just for the WM's and named it "Montezuma Red."

Unchanged since its inception, and flattering to all, the dress hat is worn with the greens and the blues.

Often referred to as the handsomest uniform in the service, the addition of the dress blues to the wardrobe of the Woman Marine was the most concrete evidence that she had indeed "arrived." Trimmed in scarlet, with gold buttons and emblems, it is the ultimate in feminine military chic.

Much to the gratification of the style conscious, black calf pumps and purses have replaced the cordovan accessories. Black gloves complete the ensemble.



(LEFT) WR's of WW II were assigned to many technical fields. Here, a young lady serves as an aerial gunnery instructor.

(RIGHT) These were some of the Marinettes who blazed the trail for today's women in the Corps.

White gloves are worn with the green and white pin-striped Summer uniform. Women officers wear a white dress uniform for Summer formal occasions.

Only a small number of women are assigned to the type of work where utilities are worn on a day-to-day basis. But, all WM's could switch to this uniform in a matter of minutes should it become necessary. Again, the basic design of the uniform is patterned after the men's. The three-piece work uniform consists of well-tailored slacks, tuck-in short sleeved shirt and a long sleeved jacket with the familiar "USMC" stenciled over the pocket. It is considered to be a decided improvement over the original version, which was a bibbed affair worn with high-topped combat boots.

The Corps, noted for selectivity always, may be just a bit more so about

the women it enlists. Not just "anybody" can be a Woman Marine. Even though a woman may pass the mental and physical tests, and have the proper letter of reference, recruiting officers evaluate and re-evaluate her potential value to the Corps prior to swearing her in.

Once selected, enlisted, processed, and trained—then what? The new Lady Marine is either assigned to duty or to school. She lives in a barracks since, under most circumstances, she is not yet eligible for independent duty.

The barracks, from the outside, look much alike. But here the resemblance ends. Being homemakers, and tidy by nature, the women brighten their corner of the world with rugs, colorful spreads, pictures, curtains, and other typically feminine ornamentation which has long left male inspecting officers bemused but impressed. They find that

not only have the women anticipated the inspection of out-of-the-way spots such as door sills, etc., but they've also gone to such lengths as the waxing and buffing of concrete floors, the washing of walls, and the military alignment of all cleaning material. They ordinarily receive an "outstanding" on their inspection reports.

But, then, they are women. And, if they wear Arpege instead of Aqua Velva, button their coats the other way, and keep flowers on their desks—who would have them change?

No longer may the Women Marines be referred to as a boot organization. Bands played, honors were rendered, and the year 1963 saw the first women qualify for transfer to the Fleet Marine Corps Reserve. They may be made of sugar and spice, and everything nice, but there's some salt in their make-up now. . . .

END

