

# WAVES

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**WAVES** was established on 30 July 1942 as a World War II division of the United States Naval Reserve, that consisted entirely of women. On 12 June 1948, women gained permanent status in the armed services of the United States. The name was an acronym for "**Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service**"<sup>[1]</sup> (as well as an allusion to ocean waves). The word "emergency" implied that the acceptance of women was due to the unusual circumstances of World War II, and at the end of the war the women would not be allowed to continue in Navy careers, but it or its successors continued for decades afterwards. Their official name was the **U.S. Naval Reserve (Women's Reserve)**, but the nickname as the WAVES stuck.



A WAVES Photographer's Mate 3rd Class

## Contents

- 1 History
  - 1.1 African-Americans
  - 1.2 Evaluation
  - 1.3 Permanent status
- 2 List of Directors
- 3 WAVES song
- 4 See also
- 5 References
- 6 Further reading
  - 6.1 Official history
  - 6.2 Primary sources
- 7 External links

## History

Mildred McAfee, President of Wellesley College, was sworn in as a Naval Reserve Lieutenant Commander in early August 1942. She was the first female commissioned officer in U.S. Navy history, and the first director of the WAVES. This occurred two months after the WAAC (Women's Auxiliary Army Corps) was established, and Eleanor Roosevelt had convinced the Congress to authorize the women's component of the Navy.

WHAT PAY DOES A NAVY **WAVE** GET?

RATE	Monthly Base Pay - Enlisted	Final Allowance	Quarters Allowance	Total Monthly Income
Apprentice Seaman	\$30.00	\$34.00	\$37.50	\$141.50
Seaman Second Class	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$7.50	\$145.50
Seaman First Class	\$4.00	\$4.00	\$7.50	\$137.50
Petty Officers	\$7.00	\$4.00	\$7.50	\$109.50
	\$12.00			\$117.50

(Values listed are provided by Navy)  
 Plus \$200 for clothing, the first weekend and travel pay, medical pay, and other benefits, and \$100 for quarters, and \$100 for travel, medical pay, and other benefits, and \$100 for quarters, and \$100 for travel, medical pay, and other benefits.

WAVES recruitment poster

Women entering as enlisted personnel in the Navy or Coast Guard attended the **V10 WAVE Enlisted Rating Volunteer Program**. Women seeking to become officers in the WAVES or SPARS attended the **V9 WAVE Officer Candidate Volunteer Program**. Officer candidates went through basic training as seamen recruits, then became midshipmen during officer training, and graduated as ensigns. The WAVE graduates from the V9 and V10 programs were considered part of the U.S. Naval Reserve.

The important distinction between the WAAC and the WAVES was that the WAAC was an "auxiliary" organization, serving *with* the Army, not *in* it. From the very beginning, the WAVES was an official part of the Navy, and its members held the same rank and ratings as male personnel. They also received the same pay and were subject to military discipline. The WAAC became the Women's Army Corps (WAC) on 1 July 1943, giving its members military status similar to that of the WAVES.

The WAVES could not serve aboard combat ships or aircraft, and initially were restricted to duty in the continental United States. Late in World War II, they were authorized to serve in certain U.S. possessions, and a number were sent to Hawaii. The war ended before any WAVES could be sent to other locations.

Within their first year, the WAVES were 27,000 strong. A large proportion of the WAVES did clerical work, but some took positions in the aviation community, medical professions, communications, intelligence, storekeeper, science and technology.

## African-Americans

The WAVES did not initially accept African-American women into the division. In November 1944, Harriet Ida Pickens and Frances Wills graduated from the United States Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School (Women's Reserve) at Northampton, Massachusetts, and became the first female African-American WAVE officers. From the fall of 1944 onwards, the Navy trained roughly one black woman for every 36 white women enlisted in the WAVES; this was about 2.77%, below the 10% cap agreed upon by the armed services in 1940.

## Evaluation

According to historian D'Ann Campbell, American society was not ready for women in military roles:

The WAC and WAVES had been given an impossible mission: they not only had to raise a force immediately and voluntarily from a group that had no military traditions, but also had overcome intense hostility from their male comrades. The situation was highly unfavorable: the women had no clear purpose except to send men to the battlefield; duties overlapped with civilian employees and enlisted male coworkers, causing confusion and tension; and the leadership cadre was unprestigious, inexperienced, and had little control over women, none over men. Although the military high command strongly endorsed their work, there were no centers of influence in the civilian world, either male or female, that were committed to the success of the women's services, and no civilian institutions that provided preliminary training for recruits or suitable positions for veterans. Wacs, Waves, Spars and women Marines were war orphans whom no one loved.<sup>[2]</sup>



Lt. Harriet Ida Pickens and Ens. Frances Wills, first African-American Waves to be commissioned.

## Permanent status

With the passage of the *Women's Armed Services Integration Act* (Public Law 625) on 12 June 1948, women gained permanent status in the armed services. The new unit became a small cadre that could be expanded in wartime. The V9 and V10 Volunteer Reserve programs were discontinued and renamed the **W9 Women's Officer Training** and **W10 Women's Enlisted Training** programs. Although the official name WAVES ceased to exist, the acronym was in common use well into the 1970s.

On 7 July 1948, Kay Langdon, Wilma Marchal, Edna Young, Frances Devaney, Doris Robertson, and Ruth Flora became the first six enlisted women to be sworn into the regular U.S. Navy.

On 15 October 1948, the first eight women were commissioned in the regular Navy: Joy Bright Hancock, Winifred Quick Collins, Ann King, Frances Willoughby, Ellen Ford, Doris Cranmore, Doris Defenderfer, and Betty Rae Tennant took their oaths as naval officers.<sup>[3]</sup>

## List of Directors

The director held the position of Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Women during the years of 1942-1972. In 1972, the office was disestablished in favor of integration of women into the main force. There still remained, however, the office of Bureau of Personnel Special Assistant for Women's Policy] (PERS-00W), which existed until 1991.<sup>[4]</sup>

- Captain Mildred H. McAfee (1942–1946)
- Captain Jeanne T. Palmer (1946)
- Captain Joy Bright Hancock (1946–1953)
- Captain Louise K. Wilde (1953–1957)
- Captain Winifred Collins (1957-1962)
- Captain Viola B. Sanders (1962–1966)
- Captain Rita Lenihan (1966–1970)
- Captain Robin L. Quigley (1970–1972)



Target practice on Treasure Island, using .22 caliber training pistols

## WAVES song

The WAVES kept the homefront affairs of the US Navy going while the men were assigned to ships serving around the globe. While the official song of the US Navy men was "Anchors Aweigh," the WAVES official song was sung in counterpoint to the men:

### *WAVES of the Navy*

WAVES of the Navy,  
There's a ship sailing down the bay

And she won't slip into port again  
Until that Victory Day.

Carry on for that gallant ship

And for every hero brave  
 Who will find ashore, his man-sized chore  
 Was done by a Navy WAVE.<sup>[5]</sup>

Music and words to this and other songs sung by the WAVES can be found in *Marching to Victory*,<sup>[6]</sup> a 1943 booklet published at the Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School (WR), Northampton, Massachusetts.

## See also

- SPARS (the United States Coast Guard Women's Reserve)
- United States Marine Corps Women's Reserve
- Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), US
- Women in the Air Force (WAF), US
- Women in the United States Navy
- Women's Army Corps (United States Army)
- Women's Auxiliary Air Force (British)
- Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service "Wrens"
- Women's Royal Naval Service (British)
- Women's Royal Australian Naval Service



"TO LOOK THEIR BEST" Original Caption LA Times, Fireman Apprentice Adolt, 19, sees something new on destroyer: Marion Koopman, left and Margaret Williams, prettying up on board USS *Uhlmann*, 1950

## References

1. "World War II era WAVES -- Overview and Special Image Selection" (<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/females/wave-ww2.htm>). Naval Historical Center. Retrieved March 4, 2009.
2. D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private lives in a Patriotic Era* (Harvard University Press, 1984) p 49
3. Jean Ebbert and Marie-Beth Hall, *Crossed Currents: Navy Women from WWI to Tailhook* (Brassey's, 1999).
4. "Records of the Bureau of Personnel Special Assistant for Women's Policy (PERS-00W), 1947-1991" (<http://www.history.navy.mil/ar/bravo/bupers-00w.htm>). history.navy.mil. July 2, 2003. Retrieved October 3, 2011.
5. Great Lakes Naval Museum; *Marching To Victory. WAVES of the Navy*. Lyric by Betty St. Clair (<http://www.nsgreatlakes.navy.mil/museum/marching/page3.html>)
6. *Marching To Victory* (<http://www.nsgreatlakes.navy.mil/museum/marching/index.html>)

## Further reading

- Campbell, D'Ann. "Servicewomen of World War II." *Armed Forces and Society* (Winter 1990): 16#2 pp 251-270(1990): online (<http://afs.sagepub.com/content/16/2/251.short>)
- Campbell, D'Ann. *Women at War With America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984. OCLC 10605327.
- Campbell, D'Ann. "Women in Uniform, the World War II Experiment." *Military Affairs* 51 (Jul. 1987): 137-39 in JSTOR
- Disher, Sharon Hanley. *First Class: Women Join the Ranks at the Naval Academy* (Naval Institute Press, 1998)
- Ebbert, Jean and Marie-Beth Hall. "Navy Women's Reserve: WAVES," In *In Defense of a Nation: Servicewomen in World War II* edited by Jeannee M. Holm and Judith Bellafaire. Washington:

Military Women's Press, 1998. OCLC 38173523

- Ebbert, Jean and Marie-Beth Hall (1999). *Crossed Currents: Navy Women from WWI to Tailhook [Revised]*. Washington, D.C.: Brassey's. ISBN 978-1-57488-193-6.
- Gildersleeve, Virginia C. *Many a Good Crusade* (New York: Macmillan, 1954)
- Godson, Susan H. *Serving Proudly: A History of Women in the U.S. Navy* (2002) pp 106-226; the most detailed scholarly history
- Hancock, Joy Bright Captain, U.S. Navy (Retired) (1972). *Lady in the Navy A Personal Reminiscence*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press. ISBN 0-87021-336-9.
- Holm, Jeanne Maj Gen, USAF (Ret) (1972). *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution [Revised Edition]*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press. ISBN 0891414509.
- Litoff, Judy Barrett, and David C. Smith. "The Wartime History of the Waves, SPARS, Women Marines, Army and Navy Nurses, and WASP's." in *A Women's War Too: US Women in the Military in World War II* ed. by Paula Nassen Poulos.(Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1996)

## Official history

- Bureau of Naval Personnel, "History of the Women's Reserve." (2 vol 1946, 322pp); summary (<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/Admin-Hist/USN-Admin-Guide/USN-Admin-Guide-3A.html#88>)

## Primary sources

- Collins, Winifred Quick Captain, U.S. Navy (Retired) with Herbert M. Levine (1997). *More Than A Uniform: A Navy Woman in a Navy Man's World*. Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press. ISBN 1-57441-022-9.

## External links

- Department of the Navy - Naval Historical Center: World War II era WAVES (<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/females/wave-ww2.htm>)
- Documents and a Bibliography on Women in the Navy (<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq48-1.htm>)
- "Sources" annotated bibliography of books and films (<http://www.blitzkriegbaby.de/waves/waves4.htm>)
- Women of the Waves (<http://www.womenofthewaves.com/>) - online presence for WAVES National
- Betty H. Carter Women Veterans Historical Collection, the University of North Carolina Greensboro (<http://library.uncg.edu/dp/wv//branch/?b=2>) - digitized letters, diaries, photographs, uniforms, and oral histories from WAVES and other female service orgs
- WAVES: Women in the World War II US Navy ([http://ww2db.com/other.php?other\\_id=24](http://ww2db.com/other.php?other_id=24))
- Marching To Victory (<http://www.nsgreatlakes.navy.mil/museum/marching/index.html>), on-line version of a 1943 booklet of songs from the Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School (WR), Northampton, Massachusetts.
- Women's Reserve of the United States Naval Reserve (WAVES) (<http://www.blitzkriegbaby.de/waves/waves2.htm>)
- Oral history interview with Constance Sullivan Cain, a member of the WAVES from 1944-1946 (<http://content.library.ccsu.edu/u/?VHP,5612>) from the Veterans History Project at Central Connecticut State University



Wikimedia Commons has media related to ***Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service.***

- *Summary of Ranks and Rates of the U.S. Navy Together With Designations and Insignia* NAVPERS-15004 | MAY 1943. (<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ref/Ranks&Rates/index.html>)

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=WAVES&oldid=667039083>"

Categories: [Women in the United States Navy](#) | [American women in World War II](#)

| [All-female military units and formations](#) | [Military history of the United States](#)

| [Naval history of World War II](#)

---

- This page was last modified on 15 June 2015, at 12:33.
- Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.