

ABSTRACT

'We Shall Not Fail Freedom': Oveta Culp Hobby's Role in the
Formation and Implementation of the Women's Army Corps During
World War II

Rebekah S. Sills, M.A.

Mentor: Douglas R. Ferdon, Jr., Ph.D.

Oveta Culp Hobby remains unknown to the average American, despite the fact that she was the first director of the Women's Army Corp and was the second woman to hold a presidential cabinet position as the first Secretary of the Health, Education, and Welfare. This paper chronicles Hobby's public life as well as her role in the formation and implementation of the Women's Army Corps, an organization of women that helped the U.S. Army with non-combat related jobs. Oveta successfully directed the Women's Army Corps for the first three years of its existence, including overseeing the transfer to Army status in 1943. Her intelligence, courage, and devotion to her country paved the way for women to integrate into the armed forces and to participate in public life in a larger way than ever before.

'We Shall Not Fail Freedom:' Oveta Culp Hobby's Role in the Implementation and
Formation of the Women's Army Corps During World War II

by

Rebekah S. Sills, B.A.

A Thesis

Approved by the American Studies Program

Douglas R. Ferdon, Jr., Ph.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

Approved by the Thesis Committee

Douglas R. Ferdon, Jr., Ph.D., Chairperson

Sara J. Stone, Ph.D.

Janet H. Bagby, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
May 2007

J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Copyright © 2007 by Rebekah S. Sills

All rights reserved

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
Chapter	
1. OVETA CULP HOBBY AN INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THE CREATION OF THE WOMEN'S INTEREST SECTION.....	17
3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S ARMY CORP.....	25
4. OVETA'S ROLE.....	55
5. CONCLUSIONS.....	70
APPENDICES.....	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	90

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis project is the result of a patient graduate director, Dr. Doug Ferdon, who encouraged me to pursue Oveta Culp Hobby as a topic and guided the writing process. I also thank Dr. Sara Stone and Dr. Janet Bagby for participating on my committee and helping me wade through the murky waters of completing a thesis.

The staff at the Woodson Research Center at Rice University also assisted me during the research process with their expertise and willingness to help in any capacity, and for that I am grateful. As always, my parents remain a source of inspiration and my entire reason for being. Thank you all.

CHAPTER ONE

Oveta Culp Hobby, an Introduction

On 19 January 1905, Oveta Culp became the seventh child of Isaac (Ike) W Culp and Emma Elizabeth Hoover Culp. Oveta Culp, named after a heroine in a novel her mother had read, showed signs of fierce determination and an almost comical common sense at the tender age of five. At this time the temperance movement was sweeping through the country and was particularly evident in the central Texas town of Killeen, where all of the children in Oveta's Sunday school class were asked to sign a pledge vowing to never drink alcohol. After thinking about it for several minutes, Oveta decided not to sign the pledge. She did not know how she would feel as an adult about drinking alcohol, so she decided not to promise anything.¹ This anecdote remains popular in any biographical pamphlet or newspaper or magazine article written about Oveta, and for good reason. The character traits she showed even at such a young age fermented Oveta's later success as a politician,

¹Oveta Culp Hobby Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, courtesy of Woodson Research Center Fondren Library, Rice University, (hereafter referred to as OCH Papers.)

journalist, and businesswoman. She was prudent and clever beyond her years.

Her ability to organize people and implement plans developed as she grew. For example, her elocution skills were excellent even at the age of fourteen. In fact a talent manager once offered Oveta a touring contract after hearing her recite. When her parents declined, she organized a group of young musicians called the "Jolly Entertainers," who toured neighboring towns raising money for churches and other charities.² She had a way of turning even disappointing events into opportunities.

By the age of ten, she had begun reading the Congressional Record, so the Texas Legislature seemed the most likely place for Oveta to flourish. Her avid interest in the procedures of parliamentary law was cultivated when her father, Ike Culp, a lawyer, was elected to the Texas Legislature in 1919. Oveta accompanied him to sessions at the age of 14 and spent as many days as possible, all the while missing school, watching the proceedings. Perhaps these early visits to the legislature paid off later when she was appointed at age 20 to parliamentarian for the

²OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

House of Representatives. She filled this position from 1925-1931 and again from 1939-1941.³

Though Hobby thrived in school, she longed to be in Austin making a difference. She graduated high in her class from Temple High School, and went on to Mary Hardin Baylor College in 1922, but after a year she left for Austin and audited courses from the University of Texas Law School to appease her mother. The UT law school did not allow women to register for classes in the 1920s, so Hobby could only sit in on the lectures. Meanwhile, she participated in the Texas Legislature instead, clerking for several commissions in the House of Representatives and learning the intricacies of parliamentary law.

She served on two legislative committees before being elected parliamentarian. She clerked for a judiciary committee for several months, but her reputation as bright and capable developed while clerking for a banking commission. This particular clerkship resulted in Hobby codifying all of the state banking laws of Texas, no easy task considering the density and length of the laws. She accomplished all of this before her 25th birthday.

³Ibid.

This period of Hobby's life "really sparked things" in terms of her career. One of the many accomplishments spawned by Hobby's experience in the legislature was applying her expertise in parliamentary law to writing a textbook called "Mr. Chairman." The book consisted of a series of lessons about parliamentary law and procedures. This textbook was adopted into the Texas public school system in 1938. It was also widely used in Louisiana schools.⁴

Her role in the legislature also led to a deeper interest in elective politics. Hobby worked on a number of campaigns during this time, including the 1928 Houston mayoral campaign of Walter Embree Monteith. When Monteith was elected he offered Hobby the position of assistant to the city attorney.⁵ She accepted with the stipulation that she would return to her role as parliamentarian when the legislative session reconvened. Another stint in politics occurred when Hobby's colleagues convinced her to run for the Texas Legislature in 1930 as a representative from Harris County. Supporters called her "able, energetic, and patriotic," and a woman who was "progressive in thought."⁶

⁴Ibid.

⁵OCH Papers, Box 2, Folder 2.

⁶OCH Papers, Box 4, Folder 4.

The Mirror, a Houston newspaper, also endorsed Hobby claiming that she had demonstrated "unusual vision and understanding of the complex problems of life."⁷ Hobby ultimately lost this election when her opponent started the rumor that she was a Unitarian and a parliamentarian. She never again ran for elected office. All of these experiences in the Texas Legislature allowed Hobby to develop into a bright, charismatic, leader of her time. She learned how to manage and organize the activities of large groups of people, she learned the inner workings of a legislative system, and she learned how to remain unbiased in the face of political partisanship. These lessons would come in handy later in her career.

Oveta Culp Hobby's life cannot be easily broken into segments or moments of greatness because each of her interests and contributions are interwoven. However, she filled three large roles during her career. She was the first director of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corp (WAAC), she was the first Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), and she was publisher of the *Houston Post*. Because each of these three roles could easily encompass an entire book, this thesis will focus primarily on Hobby's

⁷Ibid.

influence in the execution of the WAAC. However, it is useful to understand her other roles in the context of her life so that there is a better understanding of how truly remarkable this woman was.

Hobby's work at the *Houston Post* began in 1931, shortly after she married William P. Hobby, governor of Texas from 1917 to 1921 and thirty years her senior. Her first experience with journalism occurred as a cub reporter for the *Austin Statesman*, but she truly became a newspaperwoman at the *Post*. Beginning in 1931, her responsibilities included research editing, but she soon added book editing and editorial writing to her workload.⁸ Meanwhile, she wrote a syndicated column called "How and When in Parliamentary Law," which was arranged as a question and answer format. Hobby used this column format to write her book "Mr. Chairman."⁹ She also worked as assistant editor from 1936-38 and eventually became executive vice president. She firmly believed that she was an equal to every *Post* employee, and that she must work her way up from the bottom like everyone else.

Hobby's stint as vice president of the *Post* was shortened by her arrival in Washington, D.C., in 1941 when

⁸OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 2.

⁹OCH Papers, Box 3, Folder 1.

General David Searles asked her to head the Women's Interest Section of the War Department Bureau of Public Relations (BPR).¹⁰ This position led her directly into the WAAC, so she did not return to the *Post* until 1945. When she returned, she continued her work, becoming the editor and publisher. During this time she also participated in the first round-the-world commercial flight on a plane called 'Clipper America'. She wrote a series of articles for the *Post* about the trip, and there were so many requests for reprints, that she arranged them into a book called "Around the World in 13 Days."¹¹ Hobby lived the most of her extraordinary life.

She took another leave of absence from the *Post* when President Dwight Eisenhower, the U.S. president from 1953-1961, asked her to join his staff in 1953 as Federal Security Administrator. He then appointed her the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, a post she resigned from in 1955. She immediately returned to the *Post* acting as executive president and publisher.¹² Besides working diligently as a leader and executive at this prominent Houston newspaper, she also managed to attend the

¹⁰OCH Papers, Box 56, Folder 1.

¹¹OCH Papers, Box 4, Folder 2.

¹²OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information and the Press as one of the U.S. delegates in 1948 and serve as president of the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association in 1949.¹³ To Hobby, "a newspaper editor is [a life] of public service."¹⁴ She considered it a duty to her country and fulfilled it with honor and grace. In 1940, the Hobby's acquired KPRC radio, which eventually became KPRC television network in 1950. She presided over these two media outlets as director along with her position at the *Post* after resigning from the Army. She sold both in 1984.

A woman managing an entire newspaper alone was unheard of during the '50s, even though a few women had done it behind the scenes in previous centuries. The fact that she could manage an entire staff, run the business part of a newspaper, and still decide what articles went into every issue all the while maintaining her femininity and charm shows that Hobby belonged in a different league.

When Dwight Eisenhower won the majority vote for the Republican presidential nomination in 1952, both Governor and Hobby gave him their full support from both a personal standpoint and at the *Post*. Hobby in particular became a key Democrat in his Republican campaign. As a result

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 2.

Eisenhower appointed her as the chairman of the Federal Security Agency. This position was not a cabinet position, but Hobby was welcome to sit in on all cabinet meetings.¹⁵ The Eisenhower administration created the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1953, and immediately Hobby was selected as the first secretary. Congress approved this appointment on 11 April 1953.¹⁶ Not only was she the only woman in Eisenhower's cabinet, she was also only the second woman to ever hold a cabinet position. The first was Frances Perkins, U.S. Secretary of Labor from 1933-1945.

As secretary, Hobby was responsible for organizing and executing the new department, a task with which she had much experience from her work in the War Department. HEW also consisted of public health, education, Office of Social Security, a number of children's programs, old age and survivors' insurance, aid to the blind, aid to all the various groups, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the food and drug administration.¹⁷ Oveta claimed that the "common thread of family service" held the entire

¹⁵OCH Papers, Box 27, Folder 10.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 2.

department together.¹⁸ She immediately gained control of \$17.7 billion in old-age funds as well as the pensions and welfare funds that amounted to another \$4 billion.¹⁹

The discovery of the Salk vaccine to prevent polio occurred during Hobby's term as Secretary of HEW.²⁰ This event was one of the most important of Hobby's career in the cabinet. Jonas Salk discovered that by injecting dead poliovirus, people could build up antibodies, an immune response to polio. He wrote about his findings in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, which prompted a nationwide testing.²¹ This major event could have been a catastrophe were it not for Hobby's calm and effective leadership. However, Hobby faced several problems with the administration of the vaccine. One dilemma with the Salk vaccine was when to release it to the public. To release the vaccine before it had been properly tested would risk infecting children, but waiting would put children's lives at risk as well. There was also an issue of who would

¹⁸"Lady in Command," *Time*, 4 May 1953, 25.

¹⁹OCH Papers, Box 27, Folder 9.

²⁰OCH Papers, Box 30, Folder 1.

²¹"Salk Produces Polio Vaccine 1952," *People and Discoveries*, A Science Odyssey [Internet]; available from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/databank/entries/dm52sa.html>; accessed 3 Feb 2007.

receive the vaccination and how much it would cost.²²

Partisan politics came up at this point, because members of the Democratic Party wanted the vaccine to be free to everyone, and Republican Party members believed free distribution to be one step towards socialized medicine. She received a great amount of criticism from several prominent Democrats for her handling of the situation, but Hobby believed that only children in need of financial assistance should receive the vaccination without paying for it.

As of May 1955, there was not enough of the vaccine for every child to receive before the end of the summer.²³ Hobby had to determine a way to prioritize who received the vaccine first. To make matters worse, 14 children died from an allergic reaction to the vaccine during that summer. This meant that all vaccinations had to stop and the vaccine tested again, which further delayed its distribution.

Hobby and the HEW department held several conferences to gather the opinion of scientists, doctors, and about the appropriate methods of distribution. As a result, Hobby

²²William Blair, "Mrs. Hobby Terms Free Vaccine Idea a Socialistic Step," *New York Times*, 15 June 1955, 1.

²³Oveta Culp Hobby, "Text of Analysis of Vaccine Distribution Problem," *New York Times*, 17 May 1955, 22.

issued an analysis of the problem in the New York Times. This analysis set out guidelines and principles for both federal and state procedures, because the HEW department controlled the output of the vaccine even within state governments. The HEW department also established that children aged 5-9 were the "priority consumers" of the vaccine, and should receive it first and foremost.²⁴ Furthermore, the HEW Department concluded that the distribution set up by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (N.F.I.P.), which vaccinated all 1st and 2nd grade children at no cost, was most appropriate.²⁵ As a result, HEW Department required physicians to administer the vaccine to all children in the predetermined age group.

Hobby handled this situation so judiciously that Senator Alexander Smith of New Jersey openly praised her. He stated that Hobby "worked out a program of voluntary distribution which promises maximum effectiveness and retains our basic American principle of non-federal control of the doctor-patient relationship."²⁶

Another contribution while Hobby was secretary was her proposal to build \$7 billion worth of schools for the

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶OCH Papers, Box 27, Folder 10.

children of the baby boom. She also wanted the opinions of grass-roots groups so she organized the first White House Conference on Education. Congress also signed into law more than seventy bills during Hobby's incumbency. Congress also approved \$182 million for the expansion of federal-state-local hospital building program and \$150 million for chronic-disease hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitations centers, and diagnostic and treatment centers.

The HEW Department, under her strict rule, improved the administration of food and drug laws, helped bring in money for grant research for mental health programs, established a nurse-training program, designed a hospital insurance program, and added ten million people to the Social Security rolls. In 1955 Governor fell ill and Hobby resigned to care for him in July.²⁷ In a press conference President Eisenhower stated that "none of us will forget your wise counsel, your calm confidence in the face of every kind of difficulty, your concern for people everywhere, the warm heart you brought to your job as well as your talents."²⁸ Hobby made a large impact on the United States in her short amount of time in office. She

²⁷OCH Papers, Box 27, Folder 14.

²⁸Ibid.

organized an entirely new department and had it functioning smoothly in two years. She executed the disbursement of a vaccine for one of the deadliest diseases known to Americans and saved countless children from the agony of polio.

Hobby's marriage in 1931 to Governor Hobby also greatly shaped her career. They had met long ago when she was a child, but became reacquainted when Hobby worked at the circulation desk at the *Houston Post* in between legislative sessions.²⁹ They began a formal relationship not long after this.

Hobby would argue that she would never have accepted the position of director of the Women's Interest Section had it not been for Governor. When the BPR asked her to direct this new section, she refused. After telling Governor about it, he convinced her that "every one of us is going to have to do whatever we are called on to do" to serve the country in a time of war.³⁰ He continued to be a steady source of inspiration and support as she served her country in every capacity. Governor waited patiently and cared for their two children, William Jr. and Jessica, while Hobby traveled overseas from Washington as the

²⁹OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

³⁰Ibid.

director of the WAAC. When Governor fell sick in 1955, Hobby resigned as HEW Secretary to care for him. Hobby turned her attention to his health and the family business at the *Post*. Truly, he influenced her career greatly. In her words, "nothing in my life would have been possible without Governor."³¹ He guided her steps and her decisions depended on his opinion.

Besides the three tremendous tasks of director of the WAAC, executive at the *Post*, and secretary of HEW, Hobby also fulfilled her civic duty by participating on numerous charitable boards and committees. In the late 1930s she served on the board of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, participated in the Junior League, was a member of the Houston Symphony Orchestra Committee, and chaired the regional Mobilization for Human Needs, which formed during the Depression. In 1946-47 she served on the boards of the Advertising Federation of America, the American National Red Cross, the American Cancer Society, and the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

She had a wide variety of interests at any given time, and it was clear that her love of her country and her community played throughout each of them. She received

³¹OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

honorary degrees from a number of institutions including Baylor University, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Ohio Wesleyan University, Columbia University, and Mary Hardin Baylor College.³² Hobby has a library named in her honor at Central Texas College in her hometown of Killeen. She was awarded the George Catlett Marshall Medal in 1978 for her service to the U.S. Army. She has received numerous awards from all types of organizations for her distinguished service to her community and country, for her role in the fields of business and journalism, and for her accomplishments as a woman. In 1984 she was named to the Texas Woman's Hall of Fame in the business and finance category, and in 1996 she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in the government category. Her life and story are retold at these places daily.³³

Subsequent chapters of this thesis will encapsulate Hobby's role in the formation and execution of the WAAC, which changed into Women's Army Corps (WAC) a year after it was established. It will include a history of the WAC beginning with the creation of the Women's Interest Bureau. Hobby's role will be discussed with great detail and then

³²Ibid.

³³OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 2.

her role and her life will be analyzed to assess her value to women in the United States today and to history.

CHAPTER TWO

The Creation of the Women's Interest Section

In 1942, General David Searles asked Hobby to come to Washington and direct the newly created Women's Interest Section of the War Department's Bureau of Public Relations (BPR.) This was the stepping-stone into her career in the U.S. Army, because she became familiar with the planning of the WAAC. She also won over the respect and support of prominent generals and politicians, who in turn trusted her with the position as director of this brand new corps. At this time the United States was not at war, but the political situation in Europe grew more volatile everyday. By 1941 Germany had invaded Poland, Denmark, Norway, France, Belgium, Holland, Greece and Russia. France and England had already declared war, and were in the throes of battle and turmoil.¹ Nazi Germany's Blitzkrieg, their military strategy of bombing cities continuously until they surrendered, was ripping both countries apart. Though the United States claimed neutrality, it continued to provide Britain with weapons and supplies. Meanwhile, unbeknownst

¹Bruce Robinson, "World War Two: Summary Outline of Key Events," World Wars [Internet]; available from http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/ww2_summary_01.shtml; accessed 25 February 2007.

to the U.S., Japan was preparing its Pacific invasion and an immanent attack on Pearl Harbor, a U.S. Navy base in Hawaii.

To prepare for what seemed like the inevitable, the U.S. Army enacted its first peacetime draft in history. As a result, it received tens of thousands of letters from concerned mothers, sweethearts, and other women wanting to know how their men were living and coping in the training camps and army bases.²

Hobby refused the position of director at first, since she had two young children and a newspaper to edit. Instead, she agreed to General Searles' request that she prepare a plan of action for the War Department to implement. As a result, Hobby wrote out a detailed strategy for creating this branch organizing the section by scope, objective, plan of procedure, development of plan, and methods for publicizing the information.³

The objective was to "attune the women of the United States to constructive attitudes and efforts" during this time of tribulation.⁴ Hobby wanted the information provided by the women's interest section to reach both rural and

²OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

³OCH Papers, Box 56, Folder 1.

⁴Ibid.

urban women, and to reach them by using existing women's organizations and creating new channels of information. In order to accomplish this task, Hobby urged the BPR to create a national facility to educate women about national defense issues. This facility should use national, state, and local organizations to establish channels of contact, as well as create publicity that will attract women. The Women's Interest Section was also used to help with recruiting for the WAC. Eventually, she accepted the position as director of the Women's Interest Section, on the condition that she would only be away from home for four months, and then attempted to implement her detailed plan. Her four-month stay turned into four years as her position at the Women's Interest Section led directly into her position in the WAAC.

In a speech before the National Training Institute of the American Women's Voluntary Services, Inc., Hobby said that women "are accustomed to thinking in terms of individuals."⁵ Women wanted personalized news, a local application, and "positive attitudes toward problems" instead of straight facts.⁶ Women wanted to know about the soldiers' lives, where they came from and who they were as

⁵OCH Papers, Box 43, Folder 14.

⁶Ibid.

individuals. To develop this plan, Hobby recommended that the BPR extend an invitation to all presidents of major national women's organization to serve on an advisory committee. Hobby, unlike the government and the War Department who underestimated the power of these women's groups, knew that they were the key to successfully informing women. One of her first tasks as director of this section was to create an advisory council of over 12,000,000 women who were active in their civic clubs either nationally or locally.⁷ She also thought that establishing national and local Speaker Bureaus would serve as an effective means of distributing press releases, magazine articles, and radio broadcasts.

Hobby would have made an excellent public relations executive. She had specific advice about the content of the press releases. She thought that writing the press releases in a way that would interest women would be more effective. Hobby expressed in her first press conference that women were more interested in their son's health than they were in army maneuvers. They wanted to know what their man or boy was doing in his "recreational hours, what opportunities the men have for training and promotion,

⁷John E. King, *Texan's Wife Named head of Women's Army Corps*, *Dallas Morning News*, 16 May 1942, 2.

about the health of camps and the provisions made for religious life."⁸ So Hobby recommended that the BPR write stories that emphasized health, disciplinary, recreational and occupational training.⁹ She also suggested that the BPR invite newspaperwomen to serve as the intermediary for their newspapers relaying information that would be of particular interest to women. She knew that involving women who had the ability to influence other women in their communities would make the message more receivable.

Another part of her plan included inviting members from women's clubs to visit nearby corps so that they could report back to their membership about the activities at the camps. She also had ideas about radio programs.¹⁰ Hobby thought that inviting big name speakers to speak on national defense might peak women's interest. She also advocated the creation of pre-recorded skits and speeches that would play on local radio stations.

The purpose of the women's interest section was to both interest women in the matters of the War Department and to inform them of all activities concerning the defense of the United States. However, this section was still

⁸OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁹OCH Papers, Box 56, Folder 1.

¹⁰OCH Papers, Box 43, Folder 14.

created as a branch of the public relations office. The purpose was to spin any information about defense programs and armed forces in favor of the War Department. As Hobby points out in her speech to the American Women's Voluntary Services, women's duty was to not "repeat the rumors propagated by the Axis governments and their agents among us."¹¹ The true purpose of this section was to combat any negative attitudes women might have developed due to the experience of World War I.

In a way, the women's interest section also reflected attitudes about gender at this time in history. In 1941, women had only had the right to vote for 22 years. Their role in American society was that of mother and housewife. Hobby indicated these stereotypes in her speech to the American Women's Voluntary Services, Inc. when she said that women "are missionaries at heart" who appreciate the "human side of the news." This need for personalized news came from "a life-time of thinking and planning for their husbands and their children."¹² Hobby was speaking to an audience of all women, but the idea that women could not serve in the same capacity as men was the reason why the women's interest section was created.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

Another press release from the BPR also emphasized these prejudices.¹³ In the third paragraph of the release, it stated, "while it is true that the Army is primarily a man's business, its moral and physical aspects are of great concern to the women." The release goes on in the next paragraph to say that the women who are intimately involved with these men, including their mothers and sweethearts, want to know "how the men are being fed, how their health is protected, and what provisions are made for their recreation and their spiritual welfare." Furthermore, "all women are interested in the gigantic housekeeping problems of the Army and the care given [to] men."

In her book "Mothers and Such: Views of American Women and Why They Change," the anthropologist Maxine Margolis charts the tradition of women's advice literature concerning domesticity and motherhood from the colonial period to modern day.¹⁴ In the early decades of the twentieth century everyone from President Roosevelt to religious leaders urged women into motherhood. Higher education was considered dangerous as it discouraged marriage and children. Furthermore, Margolis noted that

¹³OCH Papers, Box 56, Folder 1.

¹⁴Maxine Margolis, *Mothers and Such*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1984.)

"the spread of utilities and labor-saving devices, the decline in the number of household servants, and the training of women as administrators of consumption set the tone" for years to come.¹⁵

These trends did not escape Hobby who proclaimed in her speech, "the woman who gives her time and talent to conservation as she makes a home, plans the food for her family, watches the consumption of electric power and avoids waste in all of its forms is an important cog in the machine of national defense."¹⁶ Clearly, Hobby used the gender customs of the time period to her advantage. This is ironic when considering Hobby went on to be the first woman colonel in the U.S. Army and the second woman to hold a presidential cabinet position, positions that were traditionally held by men. These same stereotypes and traditions used by Hobby to establish the women's interest section would later hinder the successful launch of the WAAC.

¹⁵Ibid., 148.

¹⁶OCH Papers Box 43, Folder 14.

CHAPTER THREE

A Brief History of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps

One of the reasons Hobby's task of planning and implementing a women's corps was such an accomplishment was that the idea had been resisted for many years before she stepped into the role. Decades before the establishment of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), a number of individuals attempted to integrate women into the U.S. Army. Officers of the armed forces, as well as politicians in both the House and the Senate met these attempts with great resistance. However, American women have been involved in war as far back as the American Revolution, fought in 1775 between Britain and the American colonies. They were typically as nurses, laundry maids, clerks and emergency aides, but there were always stories about women who had disguised themselves as men and enlisted in the army, or women who had taken up their husbands' role on the battlefield.¹ These tales made for good headlines and news stories, but their novelty proved that most Americans thought that a woman's place was not in the armed forces.

¹Mattie Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), 3.

In 1901, Congress established the U.S. Army Nurse Corps (ANC), the predecessor of the WAAC.² During the Spanish-American war, (fought between Spain and the U.S. between the months of April and August of 1898) the U.S. Army contracted over a thousand nurses both overseas and at home to provide care and medical attention to soldiers.³ Most of these women remained in commission even after the Spanish-American war concluded. The ANC began because the Surgeon General wanted to keep tabs and regulate these nurses that were commissioned by the U.S. Army. The force was small in the beginning, with only 100 women during the first decade. World War I, fought between 1914-1918 in Europe, prompted thousands of women to become members of the ANC. In fact, at the end of the war, of the 20,000 plus women enlisted, 9,616 Army nurses remained on active duty while the others returned to civilian life.⁴

The ANC was a step in the direction of allowing women into the armed forces, but they faced a great number of inequalities all the same. The ANC suffered from lack of rank, poor pay and lack of benefits, and other

²Mary Sarnecky, *A History of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 51.

³Ibid., 38.

⁴Ibid., 135.

administrative problems. The nurses were not given rank or Army status, which hindered their ability to perform their duties. Patients oftentimes challenged their authority, they traveled in third-class, and were not allowed a retirement plan or enough rations. As a result, the ANC had trouble with recruitment. The following chapter will demonstrate that the WAAC suffered from similar problems.

Mattie Treadwell commented in her comprehensive history on the WAC that Army members believed that a woman had a "physiological handicap which renders her abnormal [and] unstable."⁵ The handicap to which she refers was the fact that women are naturally smaller than men in height and weight. The other stereotype that barred women at this time was the belief that men, and women for that matter, would not work for a woman employer. Surveys conducted in businesses confirmed the unpopularity of women supervisors. According to Sophonisba Breckinridge, author of *Women in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Their Political, Social and Economic Activities*, women in the field of business were employed in lower paying, lower skill positions such as a telephone operators or typists, rather than managers

⁵Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 5.

or executives.⁶ The fact that only a small percentage of women were in professional careers shows that women in these careers were not as socially acceptable. The Army, always influenced by social customs and traditions, fought against the inclusion of women for many years. The ANC received full military rank on 22 June 1944, 33 years after its creation, and two years after the WAC received military status.⁷

World War I also brought another opportunity for an American women's corps, as Britain created one of the most organized and most efficient women's auxiliaries of the times. Both Britain and Canada's women's corps were used as models when Army planners and Hobby were preparing for the creation of the WAAC. The war had created a shortage of manpower, which in turn created a need for women's services in many of the war-torn countries. In England hundreds of thousands of women joined the women's corps, Volunteer Aid Detachment or become clerks. Germany had 500,000 women in the munitions industry, while France had

⁶Sophonisba Breckinridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Their Political, Social and Economic Activities*, (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 168.

⁷Sarnecy, *Army Nurse Corps*, 269.

400,000.⁸ Several proposals, both within and outside of the Army, were initiated to utilize American women's contributions.

The American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in France serves as an example of these proposals. The AEF was the primary U.S. military force during WWI. General John Joseph Pershing, who eventually rose to General of the Armies, commanded this force. He requested one hundred women telephone operators who could also speak French in October 1917.⁹ The telephone system in France had suffered greatly due to the damage caused by the war, and so its efficiency hindered the AEF.¹⁰ Over 7,000 women applied for the position of telephone operator and the War Department chose 550, 150 for training and 400 for reserve.¹¹ General Pershing recommended that these women be uniformed members of the Army, but instead they were sent as civilian contract employees, very similar to the ANC. As stated earlier, the ANC sent thousands of women to France as well, as did the Navy nurse organization. These women were

⁸Lettie Gavin, *American Women in World War 1: They Also Served*, Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1997), ix.

⁹Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 6.

¹⁰Gavin, *American Women in World War 1*, 77.

¹¹Ibid., 78.

nicknamed the "Hello Girls" and served in over 75 towns in England and France, translating and operating the telephone system.¹²

Other groups of women traveled overseas per request of a number of departments including the Quartermaster General, the Ordinance Department, and the Medical Corps. When the AEF requested 5,000 more women for clerical work, the War Department refused and sent 5,000 men. Though women were greatly needed and greatly utilized, the U.S. was not ready for women to play a larger role in the conflict overseas.

The arguments for and against women in the Army continued until the end of WWI in November 1918. The War Department was not quite ready to make the leap into a women service corps, despite the shortage of soldiers. World War II would bring a different opinion and a greater need.

In the twenty-three years of peace leading up to World War II, fought between 1939 and 1945, the debate about women's role in the armed forces heated up once again. In 1920, the Army created a new position entitled Director of Women's Relations. This director, a woman, served as the

¹²Ibid., 79.

liaison between the Army and women voters, informing and educating women about the Army.¹³ She was not given military status at this time, which became one of the main problems with her position. The creation of this position stemmed from the Army's fear that the women voters of the U.S., who had only gained the right to vote one year after WWI ended, would fight for the dissolution of the Army to insure peace for their country. In truth, this position was created to circulate propaganda about the importance of and the need for an army.

Anita Phipps, who grew up in an Army family and was familiar with Army customs, became the permanent director after the first director resigned only a month into the job. Phipps's main complaint with her position was the Army's blatant lack of support for her ideas and their failure to grant her military status. In her opinion, this lack of support from the Army resulted in a lack of respect from the women's organizations with which she worked.¹⁴

Nevertheless, in 1929 Phipps had created a tentative plan for a system of civilian aides to the Secretary of War. These aides stationed in every state and at every major corps area, would be made up of members of prominent

¹³Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 6.

¹⁴Ibid.

women's organizations such as the League of Women Voters, American War Mothers, and the Daughters of the American Revolution.¹⁵ When the War Department announced this plan to the press in February 1929, members of the clergy, senators, and male citizens and civilian workers immediately wrote in protesting. The plan was promptly postponed and Phipps resigned in 1931. The Army realized it needed the approval of the entire country if it wanted to successfully implement the civilian aide plan.

The Hughes Plan was named after Major Everett S. Hughes, a general staffer of the G-1 Division. The War Department appointed Hughes the chief Army planner for a women's corps in 1928.¹⁶ The plan consisted of training women to understand Army thinking as well as Army drills prior to any conflict. Then, he suggested that the War Department should only militarize women in danger zones or combat areas.¹⁷ Hughes also argued that all parties should accept the inevitability of women in the Army and work to prepare for that time instead of debating minor details like the participation of women in combat. At this point Republican Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers from

¹⁵Ibid., 11.

¹⁶Ibid., 13.

¹⁷Ibid., 14.

Massachusetts became interested in this debate. She was primarily responsible for the future WAAC bill. Despite Hughes advice and hard work, his extensive plan was pushed aside and the idea of a women's corps was not taken up again until 1939 at the onset of WWII.

General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff during WWII, ordered planning for the women's corps to resume in September 1939. The staff of the G-1 division prepared a study of the situation without including any information from the previous studies of Phipps and Hughes. According to Treadwell, the planners had no awareness of their predecessors. This ignorance hurt the implementation of the WAAC, because Hughes had outlined and predicted a number of the problems that the WAAC would eventually face.¹⁸ Had the planners used Hughes plan as an example, many of these problems could have been eliminated. This particular G-1 study, echoing the sentiments of previous dissenters, advised that women not receive full military status. The planners named this organization the Civilian Conservation Corps, and this corps performed exactly like the Army without the military status. The Army continued to stall the acceptance of women into its forces.

¹⁸Ibid., 15.

Meanwhile, the War Department began to receive letters from women's organizations and individuals wanting to know how they could contribute. It was at this time that the War Department created the Women's Interest Section, which was run by Hobby. This section was also created because of the growing number of women organizations who began to take matters into their own hands by training and preparing women to help in any way, including in the military service. Because of the actions of these prominent women's organization, Eleanor Roosevelt, first lady of the United States from 1933 to 1945, issued two informal proposals about the use of American women in the Army. The first suggested that American women might be useful in antiaircraft barrage work, similar to Britain's women. The second stated that the Office of Civilian Defense could create a pool of women who could be used by all branches of the military. The military and members of Congress rejected both of these proposals. Immediately, Congresswoman Rogers stepped forward and informed General Marshall that she wanted to introduce a bill to establish a women's corps. The War Department then accelerated its planning of a women's force so that when the bill was introduced, it would be fully prepared.

Rogers brought H.R. 4906, "A Bill to establish a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps for Service with the Army of the United States," into the House of Representatives on 28 May 1941.¹⁹ Rogers accepted auxiliary status, because both the Army and the Congress would have opposed full military status for women at this time. The G-1 division then prepared a fourteen-page document that outlined the ways the WAAC differed from the Army.

The Army wanted to insure that the WAAC existed for noncombatant service, was not part of the Army, and that the women be skilled and educated workers numbering about 25,000. The bill also placed all command responsibility on the WAAC Director, Hobby Culp Hobby. Women officers could not hold the same rank or receive the same pay as their male counterparts and their travel pay was lower. These technicalities caused great confusion for all parties involved, and as a result, the bill was not approved for another year while the Army scrutinized the details. As the shortages in man-power became more and more evident, General Marshall began to examine the WAAC bill with greater enthusiasm and greater seriousness.

¹⁹Ibid., 18.

General Marshall set to the task of encouraging and urging the agencies that were still questioning the WAAC bill to approve it. He recruited Hobby, who was already directing the Women's Interest Section, to help the G-1 planners with the public relations aspect of the WAAC bill. As a result, she became an expert on the legislation.

General Marshall hit a stalling point in negotiations with the Bureau of the Budget, but it withdrew its objections quickly after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941. After this catastrophic event catapulted the United States into World War II, the need for the WAAC grew exponentially. This explains the immediate acceleration of the planning for a woman's corps. Rogers amended the bill according to the suggestions of War Department, renamed it H.R. 6293, and sent it back to the House floor. Treadwell quoted one of the planners as saying "In my time I have got some one hundred bills through Congress, but this was more difficult than the rest of the hundred combined."²⁰ The Navy Department disapproved of the bill, which is ironic considering the bill that established the WAVES, the Navy version of the WAAC, as a full-fledged part of the Navy rode on the coattails of the

²⁰Ibid., 24.

WAAC bill. Many members of Congress disapproved as well. Treadwell claimed that many Congressmen "feared that women generals would rush about the country dictating orders to male personnel and telling the commanding officers of posts how to run their business."²¹ The stereotypes that surrounded women about their ability to lead ran deep. Eventually, the bill made it through both the House and the Senate, passing by 249 to 86 and 38-27. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, U.S. President from 1933-1945, signed Public Law 554 "An Act to Establish a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps for Service with the Army of the United States" on 14 May 1942. Some might argue that had General Marshall and the War Department not supported the establishment of the WAAC as they did, the corps would never have been approved. However, the use of women in the armed forces was a necessity of the war, as the conflict continued to take a large toll on the manpower of the U.S. Inevitably the U.S. government would have employed the use of women in one way or another. But in the meantime, the WAAC's troubles, however, were only beginning.

The first summer of the WAAC was sprinkled with setbacks and bad press. After Hobby was sworn in on 16 May

²¹Ibid., 45.

1942, the War Department immediately held a press conference. The reaction of the press and of the American citizens was crucial to the success and acceptance of the WAAC. So Hobby and other Army leaders wanted the WAAC to appear as a respectable and serious organization. One of the preconceived notions they wanted to avoid was that they had created the WAAC to boost the men's morale by providing the soldiers with female companionship. Nonetheless, the press wanted to know more about cosmetics, clothes, and undergarments than they did tactics, the duties of the women, and what was their purpose. The issue of uniform, undergarments, and girdles was seen as one of the most important aspects of the WAAC, not only in the press from 1942, but also in Treadwell's history and in articles 45 years after the fact. Perhaps this is a stereotype that remains even today. For example, the *New York Times* featured an article about the WAAC's uniform a week after Hobby became director. The article commented on the material, cut, style, and color of the different seasons uniforms, saying it would be "neatly styled for the feminine figure by an expert designer."²² Another article written by a former WAAC 35 years later, commented that the

²²Olive Drab Chosen for WAAC UNIFORM." *New York Times*, 23 May 1942, 10.

uniforms were horrible. According to this author, they made even thin women seem "potbellied."²³ A majority of the two-page article concerned the different pieces that women were issued including the exercise suits, slips and girdles. The issues with press coverage and lack of credibility would continue to haunt the WAAC for many years.²⁴

Though the majority of the newspaper coverage was positive, a few articles poked fun at the WAAC. Some articles referred to "Fort Lipstick" or commented that a "women's prime function with relation to war is to produce children so that the supply of men for fighting purposes can be kept up to par."²⁵ The main problem with negative press was that it damaged the ability of the WAAC to recruit talented women. The press continued to have an effect on the WAAC's recruitment.

The selection of the officer candidates was the first crucial task of the WAAC. The WAAC staff was overwhelmed with pressure from many prominent people. A multitude of applications came in immediately seeking commissions for

²³Louise Edna Goeden, "Don't Tell Anyone, but WAC is Thirty Five this Month," *The American Legion Magazine*, July 1977, 12.

²⁴Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 48.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 49.

their family members and friends. To avoid accusations of discrimination, the staff told all applicants to return to their local Army recruiting stations and apply there. They were not expecting the response of more than 100,000 applicants.²⁶ Out of this number only 360 were chosen as officers. When narrowing the list of candidates, it was proposed that the Army recruiting facilities be used for physical examinations and other necessary activities. However, these facilities were neither clean nor welcoming to the WAAC, and Treadwell notes that the lack of separate facilities became a major problem with later recruitment.

The application process was grueling and included a physical exam, an aptitude test, and an assessment of mental health by a group of physicians and psychiatrists. Women were rejected not only for physical ailments such as eye defects or cardiovascular disease, they were also denied if they showed any signs of emotional instability or psychoneurotic disorders.²⁷ The requirements were strict, because the WAAC wanted only smart, adaptable, moral women. Later on, the War Department decided to lower the physical and mental standards to recruit more women even though Hobby and several Army officers strongly opposed.

²⁶Ibid., 54.

²⁷OCH Papers, Box 57, Folder 8.

Nevertheless, 360 candidates had been chosen by 30 June 1942.²⁸ The typical officer candidate was Caucasian, had held a steady job, had some college education, and the majority of the women were single between the ages of 25-39.²⁹

While the first training camp for the WAAC in Fort Des Moines Iowa, was being renovated and prepared, more than 80,000 American women applied for the WAAC. These renovations included converting stables into barracks, which resulted in the nickname "Hobby horses."³⁰ More than 60,000 women held adequate qualifications, 50,000 more women than originally planned. The need to expand grew imperative, despite the logistical problems this expansion posed. The Army barely had enough room at Fort Des Moines for the 10,000 women for which the Army originally planned. The Army also had issues with the number and size of the uniforms, and in some cases women had to wear men's clothing.

The WAAC candidates, both officers and basic, received traditional Army training, with the exception of combat

²⁸Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 58.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Margaret Greenberg. 'A Debt to Democracy, A Date with Destiny,' *Army*, May 1987, 55.

training. They learned military sanitation, first aid, military etiquette and customs, defense against air attack, and many other aspects of military life.³¹ The first class of WAACs graduated on 29 August 1942, and were sent into the field to perform the duties for which they had been trained. Eighteen of these women went on to serve in WAAC Headquarters in Washington, D.C. These women had the task of helping Director Hobby with all issues pertaining to the WAAC, and serving in other divisions such as Public Relations, Supply, and Plans and Training. The rest of the graduates served at Ft. Des Moines in differing capacities as well. Then in early September 1942 units of women were shipped to the Aircraft Warning Service.³² This proved a successful venture and soon the Air Force requested many more units to staff the hundreds of Aircraft Warning Service stations around the country. This was only one example of WAAC duties at the beginning of its creation. At first they were only approved for four types of jobs. After the Army saw their abilities, the jobs were expanded to 155.³³ These women went on to serve in a number of capacities both at home and in every theatre of WWII.

³¹Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 66.

³²Ibid., 78.

³³Greenberg. "A Debt to Democracy," 56.

Even more WAACs were needed to fulfill the demand for a number of services at different stations, and an elaborate plan of expansion to one million women began in November 1942. Again, this plan stalled due to the ever-present issue of Army status and rank. A slander campaign started by journalists did not help with recruitment or with expansion, and became a large setback to the plans of the WAAC.

Britain's version of the WAAC suffered a slander attack early on, so it seemed inevitable that the WAAC would suffer one as well. The WAAC survived an entire year without any major problems with recruiting, training, or supplies. Nevertheless, the morality of the women became even more important than efficiency or discipline in the public's eye. Rumors ranged from sexual promiscuity, venereal disease, unwanted pregnancy, and drunkenness, but the rumor that the Army freely passed out birth control to the WAAC women began the entire campaign.

The Slander Campaign can be traced to June 1943 when a columnist for the *New York Daily News*, John O'Donnell, wrote that the War Department provided the WAAC women with "contraceptive and prophylactic equipment."³⁴ This article

³⁴John O'Donnell, "Capitol Stuff," *New York Daily News*, 8 June 1943.

was not only published in the *Daily News*, but also in the *Washington Times-Herald* and the *Chicago Tribune* on three consecutive days.³⁵ Other prominent magazines such as *Newsweek* and *Time* also published articles examining the rumor about birth control as well as other rumors about the morality of the WAAC.

The slander campaign continued for the remainder of 1943 and well into 1944. At the time, the BPR did not allow the WAAC to control its own publicity, nor did the BPR want the WAAC to receive special attention. Any press the WAAC received was mostly generated by the small amount of information the BPR gave to news media.

As a result of O'Donnell's column, the War Department and WAAC headquarters began to receive private letters attacking the WAAC and wanting to extract their daughters and wives from the corps.³⁶ Every time an accusation lingered, the Army's Military Intelligence Service investigated. This was especially true when the issue of homosexuality arose. Each investigation failed to turn up any substantial proof of lack of morality. Regardless, by the late spring of 1944 the rumors had become more

³⁵Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During World War II*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 199.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 41.

organized. Cartoonists also picked up on the trend and began to draw grossly exaggerated caricatures of the WAAC women. One example of this was "Winnie the Wac," a weekly cartoon drawn by a corporal at an Army camp, picked up by *Life* magazine in 1945.³⁷ Both Treadwell and Leisa Meyer, author of *Creating GI Jane*, noted that these rumors were most likely caused by the fact that the Army had recently asked Congress to grant Army status for the WAAC.

The campaign grew so malicious that the War Department began to believe it was inspired by the Nazis, the German political party in control of Germany from 1933-1945.³⁸ They ordered an FBI investigation of the rumors. Even Hobby believed the campaign to be the result of an Axis influence in the beginning.³⁹ In the end, it was more likely an angry Army wife or disgruntled officers, and the rumors ran rampant when the newspapers picked up the trail.

Treadwell points out that the WAAC's "morality exceeded the civilian average."⁴⁰ Hobby commented in a letter that the unmarried pregnancy rate was below the American civilian average and incident of venereal disease

³⁷Ibid., 42.

³⁸OCH Papers Box 57, Folder 2.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 193.

almost zero.⁴¹ Despite the statistics, women in the WAAC were often portrayed as lesbians or prostitutes.⁴² Again, these accusations only demonstrated the type of discrimination these women faced.

Reporters began to investigate these rumors on their own. One such article stated that the wild stories were in fact over-exaggerated lies.⁴³ The reporter visited Fort Des Moines and followed the WAACs as they enjoyed their free time. He was quick to note that he did not go through the WAAC office, because he wanted a true account of the women's activities. He talked to them, danced with them, and concluded that parents had nothing to fear. He claimed, "what hurts [the WAAC] hurts the war effort." Though not all newspapers encouraged the slander campaign, enough contributed that it damaged public opinion of the WAAC.

Interestingly, the men in the Army received free prophylactics, no questions asked. The end result of such a campaign was decrease in the respectability and public opinion of the WAAC. For example, a survey conducted in early 1944 demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of

⁴¹OCH Papers, Box 57, Folder 1.

⁴²Greenberg. "A Debt to Democracy," 56.

⁴³OCH Papers Box 58, Folder 1.

civilian women believed that men disapproved of women in service, this being one of the main reasons they had decided not to enlist in the WAAC.⁴⁴ Parents also refused to let their daughters join the WAAC, which set back the recruitment of "good, moral girls" for years. However, the biggest setback was the postponement, once again, of Army status.

Finally in July of 1943, the U.S. government began the process of converting the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps to the Women's Army Corps (WAC), a full-fledged member of the U.S. Army. The bill circulating through the Congress at this time granted Army status to the WAAC with a few stipulations. The WAC would only be in service for the duration of WWII plus six months after the war ended. The women must be between the ages of 20 and 50, a WAC director could never hold a rank higher than a colonel and all other officers above the rank of lieutenant colonel, and the officers of the WAC would never command any men who were members of the Army. The hardest aspect of the bill, however, was that all women in the WAAC must reenlist with the WAC immediately, or choose honorable discharge.⁴⁵ Many Army officials including Hobby worried that this might

⁴⁴Meyer, *GI Jane*, 41.

⁴⁵Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 219.

cause a large drop in the number of women in the WAC, but Hobby claimed "we don't want them if they don't want to stay in."⁴⁶ Despite the issue of reenlistment, the bill creating the Women's Army Corps in the Army of the United States was signed into law on 1 July 1943. Congress gave the WAAC 90 days to convert all procedures and all officers over to the WAC.

Hobby was the first WAC sworn in as colonel four days after the bill was signed.⁴⁷ The rest of the officers followed on 1 September 1943. The recruiting of new members became the biggest priority. Treadwell reports that only 839 recruits came in the month of August.⁴⁸ The War Department and Army leaders thought that recruitment needed a theme and a public relations campaign to make it successful. The theme of this recruitment phase emphasized the different type of work open to WACs. One recruitment booklet contained a quote from Hobby and her photograph on the front page that said WACs helped "speed the war to a victorious conclusion."⁴⁹ This thirty-page booklet included a description of what the WACs were in relation to the

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷OCH Papers, Box 52, Folder 2.

⁴⁸Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 231.

⁴⁹OCH Papers, Box 4, Folder 5.

Army, quotes from prominent politicians and Army leaders such as President Roosevelt and General Marshall, and other relevant information about joining the WAC. The pamphlet even covered the different types of uniforms, with a quote from a WAC, "Of course I like frilly dresses and flower hats...but until the war is over, I'm proud and happy to wear the Army uniform."⁵⁰ The recruitment was aimed at a certain type of woman, ideal for the circumstances and living conditions of the WAC.

In a memorandum from the Office of Director, Women's Army Corps, a lieutenant colonel outlined the qualities they sought in WAC recruits; first they sought women who wished to fulfill their obligation that comes with the "acceptance of human rights." The WAC wanted women who were concerned with the freedom of democracy and who were aware of current events. The women also needed to be able to adapt to changing situations as they might be forced to change assignments or living environments frequently. The most interesting quality outlined by this lt. colonel was that women must follow the Golden Rule in their "every day contacts."⁵¹ The WAC sought women who had above average intelligence. Hobby commented that their intelligence made

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹OCH Papers, Box 57, Folder 8.

the women idealistic, which in turn caused morale to remain high throughout the duration of the war. Essentially, a member of the WAC should be the ideal American woman. She was moral, intelligent, patriotic, idealistic, and willing to sacrifice her career and life for a chance to serve her country.

During WWII, more than 140,000 women served in the WAC.⁵² Of this number, 18,000 served overseas in every theatre of operation. No WACS died directly from war-related injuries. However 14 received the Purple Heart, and many other women received decorations from both the U.S. Army and from foreign governments. In total, WACS participated in 250 jobs at more than 400 different installations. These jobs originally included clerical positions such as accounting and keeping records. The point of these jobs was to "Release a Man," another popular slogan for the WAC, which meant that the WACs performed these tasks in order to free men for the battlefield. Later, WACs were used as military photographers, technicians and weather observers, aiding the war effort both at home and abroad.

⁵²OCH Papers, Box 57, Folder 9.

The WAC suffered from a number of inequalities during WWII. Their pay never equaled that of Army men with equivalent rank. The director was never promoted to anything above a colonel, even though she commanded the entire corps. They were subjected to discrimination in terms of benefits as well. For example, WACs were not eligible for retirement benefits, they could not have a military burial, and their husbands could not receive spousal support. These women were also held to a higher moral standard than their male counterparts, and their morality came under question more often than their training or ability.

Another issue with the WAC concerned racial discrimination. In fact, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) originally opposed the appointment of Hobby as Director of the WAAC because she was Southern, a region typically associated with racism.⁵³ From 1943-1946 the highest percent of African American women in the WAC was 5.7 percent of total WAC strength. This was a reflection of the times as the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s had yet to begin. Many

⁵³Nona Balwin, "Mrs. Hobby Slated to Head WAAC," *New York Times*, 15 May 1942.

Southern training schools such as Eastern Kentucky State Teachers College refused to allow African-American women into their schools.⁵⁴ Hobby from the beginning wanted African-American women to be included in the same proportion as in the regular Army, which was 10.6% of the total number.⁵⁵ These women were segregated from white WACs due to the social customs of the time, and they also faced discrimination in the field. White unit members complained about the abilities of the African-American WACs, and many companies refused their help. Despite their claims, the WAC was not entirely free from the inequalities that crippled the remainder of the United States.

In June of 1948 the wartime WAC was disestablished and the Regular and Reserve Army WAC was created. After three years of more planning and more bureaucratic red tape, the War Department reached the decision that WACs would have both a regular Army and reserve status.

Vietnam was the last war for the WACs. Over 600 women served in Vietnam and returned in 1973 from their last WAC adventure.⁵⁶ After their return, the Army began to phase

⁵⁴Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps*, 35.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 590.

⁵⁶Bettie J. Morden, *The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978*, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History U.S. Army, 1990), 409.

out WAC groups and eventually closed the WAC Center and training school, which was located at Ft. McClellan, Alabama. Congress formally disestablished the corps in 1978. Again, public opinion and social customs shaped the Army's decision to integrate women into combat forces and into their institutions. The 60s served as a decade of great social change for women. The Army simply responded to the change.

D'Ann Campbell, author of *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, wrote that "making women soldiers was the most dramatic break with traditional sex roles that occurred in the twentieth century."⁵⁷ This is a strong statement when considering all that has happened for women during the twentieth century. This author places the creation of the WAC above the right to vote, the entry of women into the labor force, and the sexual revolution that occurred largely as a result of the release of the birth control pill during the 1970s. Regardless of the implications for women's rights, the WAC helped the United States achieve victory during WWII by serving in any capacity and performing any duty that was asked of them. With the guidance of Hobby, the WACs changed history when

⁵⁷D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 19.

they stepped out of their regular lives and into the uniform of a soldier, risking their lives and their reputation to help their country. The next chapter will look at Hobby's role in greater detail.

CHAPTER FOUR

'It's Not Just a Hobby:' Oveta Culp Hobby's Role in the WAC

While Hobby was directing the Women's Interest Section of the BPR, General Marshall asked her to examine the Canadian and British women's service corps. Secretary of War Henry Stimson also wanted Hobby to create a list of jobs women could perform in accordance with regular Army procedures. She began a careful analysis of not only these countries' examples, but also began to familiarize herself with the legislation of the American women's service corps. As a result, she was considered an expert on the subject, causing General Marshall to ask her to testify as the only female representative of the War Department while Congress negotiated the WAAC bill.¹ While the bill was moving through the appropriate channels, the War Department asked Hobby and Congresswoman Rogers to recommend the names of several women who could serve as director of the newly established WAAC. Hobby nominated several prominent businesswomen such as and Rogers nominated Hobby.²

¹Treadwell, *Women's Army Corps*, 22.

²Ibid., 29.

Treadwell noted that Hobby was chosen for a number of reasons such as she was familiar with legislation and preplanning, she knew many people in the War Department because of her position as Director of the Women's Interest Sections, and she was respected by men and women alike. General Marshall appointed her to the WAAC Pre-Planners in February 1942. The appointment occurred prior to the passing of the WAAC bill, which was confusing for Hobby, who had suddenly become director of an organization that did not yet exist. Her staff consisted of one lieutenant colonel and a woman assistant. She visited Canada's women corps in early March 1942 and was able to talk to the leaders of this corps, as well as members of Britain's women's corps who were visiting. What she heard from these women only encouraged Hobby to continue her work with the WAAC. At this time, WAAC legislation was under much scrutiny in Congress and many people opposed the idea of such a corps. Hobby would have to fight from this point on for even simple matters, and had a long road ahead of her.

With the passing of the WAAC bill, Hobby now had the task of planning the uniform, the insignia, coming up with requirements for officers, and where and how the WAACs would sleep. She chose a famous designer to design the uniform that had a leather belt and pleat, but the Army

Quartermaster Corps said the belt was a waste of leather and the pleat a waste of cloth.³ She helped the Army designers choose Pallas Athene as the insignia, because she was the goddess of handicraft, both feminine and industrious.⁴ Hobby also advocated for dormitory style housing for the women, who might not be used to living communally, but the Army also rejected this idea.⁵ The tiny details concerned Hobby most. She knew that these details were important for recruitment, for public opinion, and for the overall success of the WAAC. Hobby strongly believed that the WAAC should receive Army status, and she fought for this vehemently. Most disagreed with her, including the War Department and Congresswoman Rogers, who felt that the issue of army status would slow down negotiations in Congress.⁶

As previously discussed, the issue of army status continued to hinder the WAAC. Despite this, Hobby was sworn in as the first WAAC and director of the WAAC on 16 May 1942.⁷ She handled the first press conference with

³OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁴Treadwell, *Women's Army Corps*, 39.

⁵ Ibid., 41.

⁶Ibid.

⁷OCH Papers, Box 56, Folder 1.

grace and competence, even when reporters hounded her about nail polish, girdles, and dating.⁸ Most newspaper reporters had nothing but positive reviews of the director, with the exception of the NAACP and the NCNW. Their opposition to Hobby stemmed from Governor's position on race relations when he was the governor of Texas.⁹

The fact that Hobby received such positive press coverage, despite the African American protest, was quite contradictory to the negative press coverage the actual WAAC received. This irony continued throughout Hobby's duration as director and colonel. In fact, few journalists or politicians found fault with Hobby until the Salk vaccine incident, which occurred when she was HEW Secretary.

Many reporters described Hobby by her looks, as an "attractive" wife and mother.¹⁰ She was continuously described as "appeal[ing] to men with her womanly reserve, her daring hats, her exquisite clothes, and her maternal concern for the human factor involved in economic or political life."¹¹ An article written after conversion to

⁸Treadwell, *Women's Army Corps*, 48.

⁹Meyer, *GI Jane*, 29.

¹⁰OCH Papers, Box 58, Folder 1.

¹¹*Ibid.*

Army status referred to Colonel Hobby's position as a "dream job," describing Hobby's as a woman with "satiny-smooth olive complexion," and a face of "gentleness."¹² Hobby's looks were more frequently used to describe her than her accomplishments. She came across as feminine but capable, so the public and the media loved her. Her charming demeanor and attractive smile assured that she would be successful in the eyes of the media, as they plastered her picture in every article. Success in the War Department would not come so easily.

Hobby took her WAAC responsibilities to heart. As she had the only WAAC uniform in existence, she traveled with an electric fan and an iron so that she could wash, dry, and iron her uniform nightly. She and her staff often worked all night long for weeks straight trying to plan for the new officer candidates, establish training centers, and implement the WAAC plans.¹³ These long hours contributed to her resigning in 1945 for health reasons, as she was both physically and mentally exhausted.

The War Department also required Hobby to hold two-hour press conferences biweekly and interviews four times a week. Even this large amount of time set aside was

¹²Ibid.

¹³Treadwell, *Women's Army Corps*, 52.

inadequate for the amount of interview requests she received. Hobby knew this was an issue, because the public opinion was so important to the success of the WAAC. If it appeared that she was too busy, it could hurt the public relations of the WAAC.

Nevertheless, it was the military duties that represented the majority of Hobby's workload. When the WAAC began recruiting officer candidates, Hobby felt strongly about every woman having an equal opportunity. The War Department received hundreds of requests for commissions from prominent citizens and politicians, who knew girls that would make excellent officer candidates. Even Hobby's personal civilian advisors had to apply at their local Army recruiting station, like every other woman who applied.¹⁴

Hobby's need for equality applied even to her own position. She strongly desired to go through the training process as an ordinary WAAC so she could understand exactly what these women went through. However, the War Department refused to allow it. She persisted, but General Marshall eventually had to inform Hobby that this was not possible. This story demonstrates some of Hobby's beliefs about women

¹⁴Ibid., 55.

in the WAAC. She believed that every woman who joined the WAAC was sacrificing for her country, and they were all on an equal playing field because of it.

Hobby made one of her most famous speeches at Fort Des Moines when the first officer class began. This speech gave the WAAC a slogan that is still used to describe them today, and was historical because this was the first group of women to serve in the Army. It also served as a symbol of the many years of planning being transformed into a reality. This speech coined the famous phrase "You have a debt and a date, a debt to democracy, a date with destiny."¹⁵ Magazine articles, newspaper articles, and history books still use this phrase to describe the WAAC/WAC. The tone of the speech was sober, and was meant to inspire the women officers. Hobby wanted the women to understand the sacrifice they were making when she said, "you have given up comfortable homes, the individualism of civilian life, you have taken off silk and put on khaki."¹⁶ Hobby put into words the sentiments of the many men and women who had been working for this achievement for years when she said, "from now on, you are soldiers, defending a

¹⁵OCH Papers, Box 43, Folder 15.

¹⁶Ibid.

free way of life."¹⁷ The speech served as a morale booster for these women, who were creating history by participating in the WAAC, but uneasy about their new venture. Hobby continued to serve as a source of morale for these women as she traveled between camps and stations visiting WAACs.

In fact, the officers and WAAC members adored the "Little Colonel," as Hobby came to be known after the corps was converted into the WAC. In one WACs word, "it was Colonel Hobby's personality that held the WAC together."¹⁸ In a way they idolized her. She became the public symbol of the WAC and the symbol of what the women in the WAC wished to become. Stories of her visits to camps always were marked with excitement. Barracks were scrubbed spotless, women marched straighter and taller, and soldiers fettered around for a chance to glimpse Colonel Hobby.¹⁹

However, Hobby's job as director was difficult because of the lack of Army status and a lack of any directives on certain powers of her office in relation to other Army offices. In Hobby's words, one of the most difficult things about her job was the fact that the WAC director had "no real authority or control over the women

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸OCH Papers, Box 58, Folder 1.

¹⁹Ibid.

in WAC uniform," despite what the public thought.²⁰ This meant that much time was wasted trying to determine which department was responsible for each of the WAAC's needs. One example of these issues was Hobby's attempts to order more winter clothing for WAACs. In July 1942, Hobby had already begun to worry about a winter clothing shortage. She attempted to order more, but had trouble getting anyone in the Services of Supply department to respond. After repeated efforts to inform General Marshall of the situation via memos and letters, the Services of Supply department refused to change its practices about following the orders of a woman. The WAACs suffered from this miscommunication and lacked appropriate clothing for the winter that year.²¹ Supply shortages was only one of the many problems Hobby faced as director.

The Slander Campaign took a toll on Hobby and the WAAC/WAC. There were several reported instances of Hobby breaking down into tears, unable to speak because of the viciousness of the rumors and the damage they caused to the WAAC.²² She sought to reassure everyone that the rumors were untrue through public denials, but they did not help.

²⁰OCH Papers, Box 57, Folder 1.

²¹Treadwell, *Women's Army Corps*, 84.

²²*Ibid.*, 204.

As a newspaperwoman, it hurt Hobby to realize that not every journalist was ethical or truthful. At one point, even Hobby believed the Slander Campaign to be stoked by Axis influence.²³ Years later, Hobby wrote that the lowering of mental and health standards in 1943 resulted in a "subsequent lowering of moral ones."²⁴ Hobby believed the small incidents of immorality and the accusations that followed were caused by this event.

To fight back, Hobby and her office set out a vigorous campaign to boost the image of the WAAC. They created images of "female soldiers" that would "guard young women's welfare and morals" all the while appearing "sexually respectable."²⁵ This enabled Hobby and the WAAC to redirect the opinions of the country toward a more positive, family oriented image.

Hobby's first year as director was spent trying to fight her way around Army procedures, planning for a massive expansion and conversion to Army status, and traveling from one WAAC location to another. Her office was also responsible for recruiting. In the words of one

²³OCH Papers, Box 57, Folder 1.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Meyer, *Creating GI Jane*, 52.

magazine writer, she was "policy maker, inspirational leader, spokesmen for her charges, and salesman."²⁶

The conversion to Army status took place in the summer of 1943. Hobby again became the first colonel and the first member of the WAC on 5 July 1943.²⁷ This was the busiest time of Hobby's Army career. Her office's first responsibility was getting information about the new WAC out to the public. They also were responsible for transferring all the women from WAACs to WACs. This project was much larger than it first appeared and took several months to accomplish. Nevertheless, by September 1943, the conversion was complete.

The last task before her resignation was to combat WACs exhaustion and demoralization by opening a School Personnel Administration. In the last months of WWII, morale had dropped significantly. WACs were particularly disillusioned by the fact that they would never receive the military benefits that their male counterparts did. They were beginning to lose the idealism that had supported these women through the brunt of the war. This school was basically a refresher course, and was meant to teach WAC officers new ideas and give them new founded inspiration.

²⁶OCH Papers, Box 58, Folder 2.

²⁷OCH Papers, Box 57, Folder 1.

Hobby began to request the school in the fall of 1944, but her requests were not heard until April 1945.²⁸ It was open to both men and women and had courses in mental health, WAC policies and procedures, and what to expect after they left the Army. The school served its purpose well, and the officers were rejuvenated for the coming months of demobilization. Hobby attended every class.²⁹ Germany surrendered on 7 May 1945, a month after the school opened, and Japan surrendered in August of the same year. Since the WAC was supposed to last only six months after WWII, they prepared for the end of the corps. Meanwhile, the WAC officers were not the only ones suffering from exhaustion. Hobby also battled illness and fatigue.

It is difficult to comprehend the amount of work, both physical and mental, Hobby put into the WAAC/WAC. For nearly four years of her life she worked a minimum of 12-hour days. She traveled to every country and every city where WACs were stationed. She communicated with dignitaries and every day citizens, and commanded thousands of women, who all adored her. She served as a symbol and a source of morale for women around the country. Her job would be exhausting to any person. In June 1945 she

²⁸Treadwell, *Women's Army Corps*, 715.

²⁹Ibid.

resigned as director of the WAC, because her health had suffered significantly. She was hospitalized several times in 1944 for a number of ailments including anemia and exhaustion.³⁰ During this six-week hospitalization Hobby attempted to resign, since she could have little interaction with WAC policy matters or WAC members, but decided to finish out the war. She could no longer travel to and from WAC stations, despite the numerous requests for her presence. In Hobby's words, "any woman who brought a Corps through its early difficulties had to fight so many battles and antagonize so many individuals that she must eventually destroy her usefulness to the Corps."³¹ She was granted terminal leave, effective 3 September 1945, which meant she retained her rank as colonel, but went on immediate medical leave.

In her time as director she brought an entire Corps from a force of one woman to a force of 100,000 women, who served in the United States Army in over 250 jobs in every theatre of WWII. Because of her work, she was granted the Distinguished Service Medal, the Army's highest non-combat award, on 30 December 1944. Her award read "Without the guidance of precedents in United States military history to

³⁰Ibid., 719.

³¹Ibid., 720.

assist her, Colonel Hobby established sound initial policies, planned and supervised the selection of officers and the preparation of regulations."³²

As Hobby attempted to establish a Corps that would be both helpful to the Army and fair to the women who served, she had numerous setbacks and perceived failures. Despite this statement, almost every policy matter and every minor detail she fought for became a reality at one point or another. Sometimes it took years to achieve a small accomplishment, like equal access to recreational activities, but in the end the WAC was successful because of Hobby.

Beginning in 1992, several individuals, including former WAC officers and U.S. Senator Lloyd Bentsen, attempted to persuade President George H.W. Bush, U.S. President from 1989-1993, to promote Hobby to the rank of brigadier general.³³ He refused, saying she was not "eligible."³⁴ He offered to her instead a plaque commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the WAAC. Treadwell wrote in a letter to Senator Bentsen that this plaque was

³²OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 20.

³³"Bush Denies Request for Promotion for Oveta Hobby", *Austin American-Statesman*, 14 June 1992, B6.

³⁴*Ibid.*

"laughably inept" and "inappropriate to the point of being funny."³⁵

Treadwell's remarks are arguable because even without general stars, Hobby was still primarily responsible for the planning and the implementation of an entire women's corps, as well as the integration of that corps into the U.S. Army. Her success will never be forgotten despite her Army rank.

³⁵OCH Papers, Box 58, Folder 1.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Interpretations

"So much of life, so much of what shapes us and our country,
all begins right here at home." -Oveta Culp Hobby

History judges the actions of every human being as they live out their lives. Truly great people, and truly terrible people for that matter, live on in history, their stories retold and their contributions calculated so that others will always remember them. In the end, the ultimate question for the individual is 'What is my contribution?'

Oveta Culp Hobby lived her life conscious of this question. Perhaps her parents bestowed the idea upon her at a young age. They were socially conscious and active in their small Texas town. Her mother participated in local politics and spent a great amount of time helping neighbors and community members, sometimes leaving the children alone at home to perform daily chores.¹ Her father was a member of the Texas legislature and leader in the community. He instilled in Hobby the idea that service to one's community and country was an essential part of a good life, and told her that "[she] could turn the world around just as well as

¹OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

any of [her] brothers."² Perhaps her husband inspired her to serve her country. He used his position at the *Post* to participate in politics, to advocate for tolerance, and to sway the people of Houston. He encouraged her even when she doubted her own role. The question here is 'What are Hobby's contributions?' They revolve around her roles in the government, in the Army, and as a journalist at the *Post*.

Looking back at Hobby's roles shows that she challenged stereotypes about women and paved the way for the entry of more women into political and military life. Hobby would never consider herself an ardent feminist. She stated once that her service to the country was "not about carrying a torch for any subject of the population, but a discussion of the greatest good."³ She knew the traditional role women played, and used this to her advantage. She never tried to mask her femininity, which ensured she was successful at organizing and leading both men and women.

On the other hand, she was also keenly aware of the inequalities that women suffered. As colonel and director in the WAC, she experienced gender discrimination daily. Sometimes it was the subtle joke of a reporter, tantalizing

²Ibid.

³OCH Papers, Box 5, Folder 8.

the WAC with an article about the "petticoat Army."

Oftentimes the discrimination came from generals and army officers, and kept her from leading the WAC as effectively as possible. One story told repeatedly was when the Army-Navy club invited her to use the club's facilities, since she was an officer in the Army. They also requested that she use the back door.⁴ Despite the instances, she still denied that she experienced any discrimination.⁵

Hobby firmly believed that the free press was a contract between journalists and citizens. Journalists have an obligation to tell citizens as much about a subject as possible, but the citizens in turn have an "obligation to know."⁶ To women journalists she said, "the sky is the limit and what you put into the work you take out in results."⁷ She was an inspiration to journalists, both men and women.

What were Hobby's politics and how did she influence others? She believed in equality, education, and democracy. When asked about her political affiliations, she wrote, "when parties become vehicles for vote-getting

⁴OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁵OCH Papers, Box 5, Folder 8.

⁶OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁷OCH Papers, Box 43, Folder 3

and vote-swapping, then it is time to get out of parties."⁸ Her political "faith" rested in the Constitution. During the civil rights movement of the 1950s, she and Governor used the *Post* to advocate for civil rights and tolerance on the part of local officials.⁹ She once hired professional researchers to demonstrate that the Jim Crow laws were costing the nation.¹⁰ Prejudice, in her opinion, "covers the reasonless dislike of a person, the proofless distrust of anyone from another race or religion, the rejection without trial of a new idea or thing...and is an acquired attitude."¹¹

After studying Hobby, reading her words, and reading others words about her, it seems she had two main characteristics that shaped her life. She was loyal and humble almost to a flaw. Despite the gender discrimination she obviously experienced during her tenure in the War Department, she always denied all claims. She instead called any instances "amusing incidents."¹²

⁸OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁹OCH Papers, Box 42, Folder 13.

¹⁰OCH Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²OCH Papers, Box 5, Folder 8.

She also denied that the success of the WAC, the HEW department, or the *Post* was dependent upon her work there. Articles and letters written by Hobby always placed the accomplishment on someone else's shoulders or wanted to insure that others received the credit. Even her early accomplishments in the Texas legislature were credited to the supervision of someone else.¹³

In the end, everything her country asked of her was accomplished with enthusiasm, with passion, and with a heart full of service. Every time she grew tired, she rested, recovered, and went on to her next adventure. Oveta Culp Hobby paid her debt to democracy, had her date with destiny, and never failed freedom.

¹³Ibid.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Time Magazine Covers



Fig. A.1. Hobby appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine* twice. The first time was on 17 January 1944 as a result of her becoming the first woman colonel in the U.S. Army. Courtesy of *Time Magazine* website.



Fig. A.2. The second cover of *Time* occurred on 4 May 1953 after Hobby was selected as the HEW Secretary.

APPENDIX B


The Slander Campaign



Figure B.1. The slander campaign began with derogatory cartoons like this one. (Courtesy of the *History of the Women's Army Corps* by Mattie Treadwell.)



Fig. B.2. This is another example of a demeaning cartoon used to poke fun at the WAAC. (Courtesy of National Park Service website.)

 You replied on 3/29/2007 1:49 PM.
This message was sent with high importance.

Sills, Rebekah S

From: thomasc [thomasc@nowtranslations.com] **Sent:** Thu 3/29/2007 1:34 PM
To: Sills, Rebekah S
Cc:
Subject: RE: using graphics from AAA
Attachments:

Based on your e-mails, you can use the images for your thesis if you send me a copy of your thesis when you're done.

You also cannot sell your thesis for profit (that's where the copyright kicks into high gear).

Best,
Thomas

>Hello again,
>
>Sorry to bother you again, but I was wondering if you had decided
>about the copyright issue. I realize I should have done this when I
>first found the images, but to be honest I didn't see the copyright
>link until yesterday.
>
>I also want to emphasize that this is not a for-profit project.
>It's just a requirement for my degree program, so it will be used
>only for educational purposes, I assure you.
>
>If you want to see the thesis and how I've used the images, I can
>e-mail it to you.
>
>Thanks,
>Rebekah Sills
>
>-----Original Message-----
>From: thomasc [mailto:thomasc@nowtranslations.com]
>Sent: Wed 3/28/2007 7:43 PM
>To: Sills, Rebekah S
>Subject: using graphics from AAA
>
>First, what was the "slander campaign?"
>
>
>>Hello,
>>
>>My name is Rebekah Sills and I am working on my master's thesis at
>>Baylor University. My thesis is about the Women's Army Corps and
>>particularly Oveta Culp Hobby, the first director. I found on your
>>website several cartoons that depicted Wacs by Vic Herman. I was
>>wondering if I could have permission to use these in the appendix of
>>my thesis as examples of the Slander Campaign that the WAAC faced
>>from 1943-44.

https://fs-exchange.baylor.edu/exchange/Rebekah_Sills/Inbox/RE:%20%20using%20grap... 3/29/2007

This copyright agreement applies to all of the following
images courtesy of <http://www.americanartarchives.com>
(Hereafter referred to as American Art Archives website.)



Fig. B.3. "Winnie the WAC" was a cartoon drawn by Corporal Vic Herman and published in his camp newsletter. (Courtesy of American Art Archives.)



Fig. B.3. These cartoons were used during the Slander Campaign to prove that members of the WAAC were meant to be sexual companions to the soldiers. (Courtesy of American Art Archives.)



Fig. B.4. WAAC undergarments were a constant source of humor and interest in the media. (Courtesy of American Art Archives.)

APPENDIX C

Life as a WAC



Fig. C.1. One of the most famous portraits of Hobby as colonel. (Courtesy of Woodson Research Center at Rice University.)



Fig. C.2. Hobby being sworn in as WAC director and colonel, 5 July 1943, (Courtesy of Woodson Research Center at Rice University.)



Fig. C.3. WAACs marching at Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia.
(Courtesy of Woodson Research Center at Rice University.)



Fig C.4. The WAAC uniform was the subject of much scrutiny by the U.S. public and media. (Courtesy of the Woodson Research Center at Rice University.)



Fig. C.5. Undated picture of WAACs marching in a downtown. (Courtesy of Woodson Research Center at Rice University.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Balwin, Nona. "Mrs. Hobby Slated to Head WAAC." *New York Times*, 15 May 1942.
- Blair, William. "Mrs. Hobby Terms Free Vaccine Idea a Socialistic Step." *New York Times*, 15 June 1955, p. 1.
- Goeden, Louise Edna. "Don't Tell Anyone, but WAC is Thirty Five this Month." *The American Legion Magazine*, July 1977, p. 12-14.
- Greenbaum, Lucy. "10,000 Women in U.S. Rush To Join New Army Corps; They Want to Serve: Candidates for Officer Posts Report to Women's Army Auxiliary Corps 10,000 Women Rush to Join Army Unit." *New York Times*, 28 May 1942, p. 1.
- King, John E. "Texan's Wife Named head of Women's Army\ Corps." *Dallas Morning News*, 16 May 1942, p. 2.
- "Lady in Command." *Time*, 4 May 1953, p. 25-29.
- O'Donnell, John. "Capitol Stuff." *New York Daily News*, 8 June 1943.
- "Olive Drab Chosen for WAAC UNIFORM." *New York Times*, 23 May 1942, p. 10.
- Oveta Culp Hobby. "Text of Analysis of Vaccine Distribution Problem." *New York Times*, 17 May 1955, p. 22.
- Oveta Culp Hobby Papers*. Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University: Houston, Tx.
- "Stimson Condemns Gossip About WAAC; Secretary Asserts Immorality Charges Are 'Absolutely and Completely False.'" *New York Times*, 11 June 1943, p. 6.

Washington, Eleanor Darton. "WAACS FIGHT BACK; 'Sinister Rumors, Aimed at Destroying Their Reputation' Are Denounced." *New York Times*, 27 June 1943, p. X9.

Secondary Sources

Anderson, Karen. *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981.

Breckinridge, Sophonisba. *Women in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Their Political, Social and Economic Activities*. New York, NY: Arno Press, 1972.

Campbell, D'Ann. *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Gavin, Lettie. *American Women in World War 1: They Also Served*. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1997

Greenberg, Margaret. "A Debt to Democracy, A Date with Destiny." *Army*, May 1987, 55- 61.

Margolis, Maxine. *Mothers and Such: Views of American Women and Why They Changed*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1984.

Meyer, Leisa D. *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During World War II*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Morden, Bettie J. *The Women's Army Corps 1945-1978*. Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1989.

Robinson, Bruce. "World War Two Summary Outline of Key Events." *World Wars: World War II* [Internet]; Available from http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/ww2_summary_07.shtml. Accessed 25 February 2007.

"Salk Produces Polio Vaccine 1952," *People and Discoveries, A Science Odyssey* [Internet]; <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/databank/entries/dm52sa.html>; Available from Accessed 3 Feb 2007.

Sarnecky, Mary T. *A History of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps*.
Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press,
1999.

Treadwell, Mattie E. *United States Army in World War II
Special Studies: The Women's Army Corps*.
Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military
History Department of the Army, 1954.