

Document E: Janie Mines

Background: Janie Mines was born Aiken, South Carolina, in 1958. Her sister, Gwen, was born a year later. During their childhood, segregation remained a common practice throughout most of the south. In high school, Janie Mines focused on performing well in school and participating in extracurricular activities. She joined the Navy's JROTC program and was a member of the National Honor Society. Having graduated as Class Salutatorian (second highest grade point average) and having been in the JROTC program, Mines was a great candidate for the Naval Academy in Annapolis. It just so happened that in 1975, the year before Mines was set to graduate, Congress passed legislation allowing women to attend military academies.

Naval Service: Mines was able to benefit from this changing legislation and was among the first women to enter the United States Naval Academy as a midshipman in the summer of 1976. Students at the Naval Academy are called midshipmen (even when they're women). Mines was one of 80 women selected to attend the Naval Academy, and she was the only African American woman in her class. At this time the Navy was dealing with issues of recruiting and retaining African Americans. Highly publicized racial riots only a few years before had shown that the Navy was not particularly inclusive of minorities. Janie was not deterred by this, though she did later recall, "It was challenging and lonely at times. I had to deal with difficult situations. It made me a better person, and I am hoping I helped make the Naval Academy a better place."

At Annapolis, Mines continued to prove her leadership and intelligence. She became a midshipman drill instructor, squad leader, and joined the fencing team. In 1977 her sister Gwen was also accepted to the Naval Academy. The two were featured in a 1978 *All Hands* article in honor of Black History Week. Janie graduated with the class of 1980, becoming the first African American woman to graduate from the Academy. Her sister Gwen graduated the following year. During her service to the Navy, Mines served in a variety of capacities. In addition to being one of the first women allowed to attend a military service academy, Mines became one of the first women to be assigned to shipboard billets (jobs). She sailed aboard USS *Emory S. Land*, was assigned to the Navy Annex at the Pentagon, and also served as the Senior Advisor for Business Processes for the Secretary of the Navy. After leaving the Navy, Mines continued to her personal and professional success, and in 2002, she was selected to be an Olympic Torchbearer for her commitment to serving her local community.



Photograph of Janie Mines and her sister featured in *All Hands* in 1978.