

The background of the cover is a close-up, slightly faded image of a Chief Petty Officer's rank insignia. The insignia features an eagle with its wings spread, perched atop a shield. The shield is decorated with a pattern of stars and stripes. The entire insignia is set against a background of vertical stripes. The text is overlaid on this background.

The First Four

Women Chief Petty Officers
WWII

by

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Author's Note



The abbreviations used for petty officer rates through the late 1940s were different than what is used today. For example, a Chief Yeoman was abbreviated as “CY” and a Chief Gunner’s Mate was a “CGM.” The abbreviations for petty officers were also different. A Yeoman First Class was “Y1c” and a Gunner’s Mate First Class was “GM1c.” This convention applied to all Navy chief petty officer and petty officer rates.

The paygrade for chief petty officers was paygrade 1 (permanent appointment) and 1A (acting appointment). Petty officers first, second, and third classes were paygrades 2,3,4 respectively. Seaman first class and seaman second class were paygrades 5 and 6. Recruits were Apprentice Seaman or Mess Attendants Third class and were paygrade 7--equivalent to E-1 today.

The system in use today replaced the old system in 1947. The convention used in this document conforms to what used at the time.

The Women's Reserve was established on 30 July 1942. Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) became members of the newly established Women's Reserve (WR). The WR was a separate auxiliary of the U. S. Naval Reserve. WAVES were classified as either officer candidates (Class V-9) or enlisted Class (V-10). Enlisted men who entered the Naval Reserve during WWII were designated as Class V-6. Over three million men and women served in the Naval Reserve and Women's Reserve during the war. WAVES, like musicians, cooks, and stewards, had no military authority over men of the Regular Navy and Naval Reserve.

1942-1943

Enlistment requirements for WAVES included; to be between 20 and 36 years old and be a high school or a business school graduate. An officer candidate had to be at least 21 years, but not over 50, and have a baccalaureate degree or have completed at least two years of college. The first WAVES began reporting for active duty in the summer and fall of 1942. Within eighteen months, 56,000 women had entered the Navy--at a rate of nearly one-thousand a week.

Initially, enlisted WAVES attended basic indoctrination school (basic training) with follow-on training at service schools at various locations around the country including Stillwater, Oklahoma; Bloomington, Indiana; Madison, Wisconsin; and Cedar Falls, Iowa and others.

In February 1943 the U.S. Naval Training School (WR), at the Bronx NY, was established at Hunter College. This school became the primary facility for WAVES basic training for the remainder of the war.

Enlisted women, unlike their WWI predecessors, generally did not receive direct appointments as petty officers and entered the Navy as Apprentice Seamen in paygrade 7--equivalent to E-1 today.

The only female chief petty officer from WWI, who also served in WWII, was Joy Bright Hancock. Although, she would serve as a naval officer until

retiring, as a Captain, in 1953.

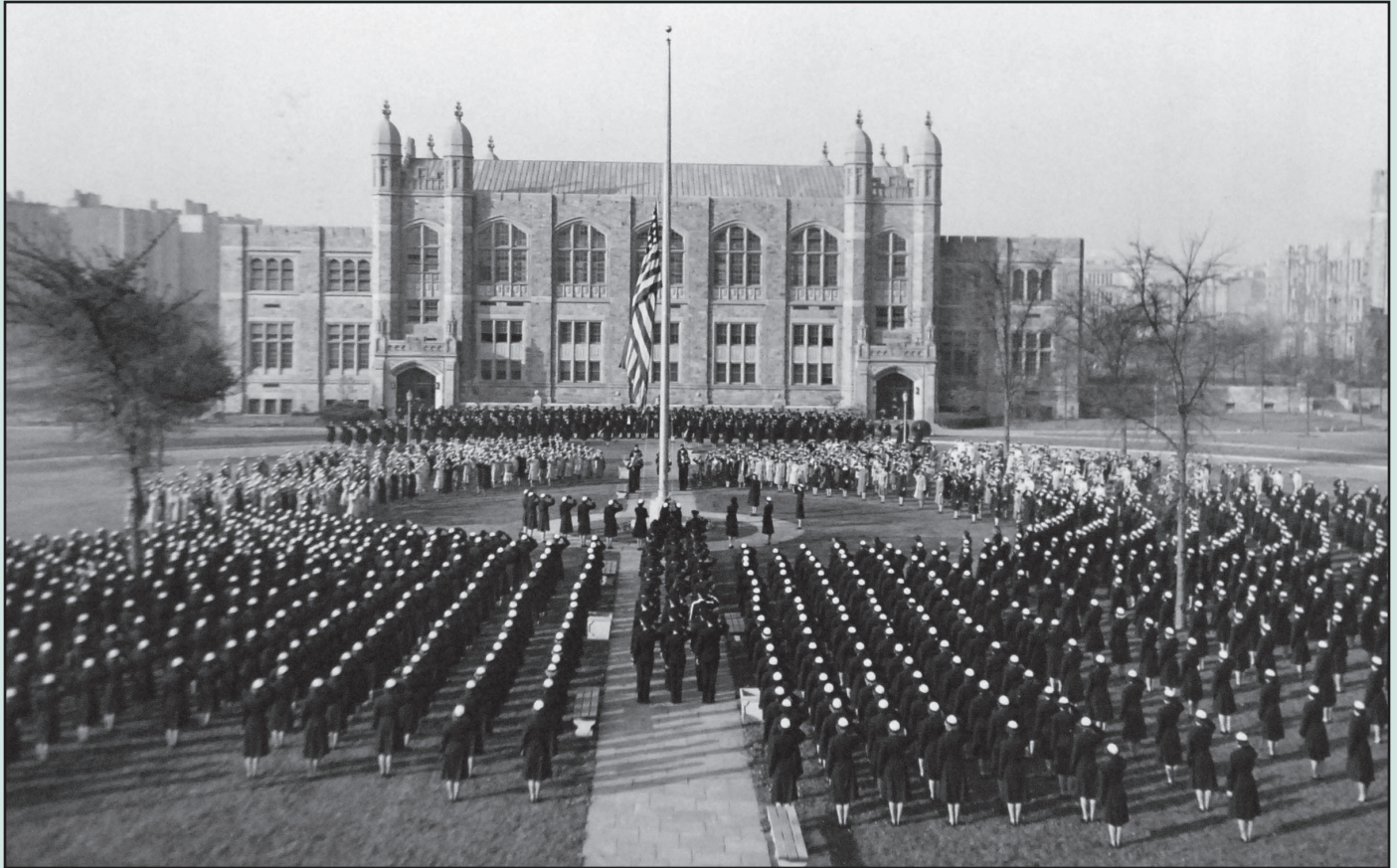
During WWII, Navy enlisted women were required to compete for advancement in the same manner as Navy men. This included passing a written examination and being recommended for advancement by their commanding officer.

This was a change from World War I, when most enlisted women were directly enrolled as petty officers--often as chief petty officers. When WWI ended there were 11,000 women in the Naval Reserve Force with hundreds rated as chief petty officers. In contrast, at the end of WWII, over 86,000 women were serving, yet only 100 were chiefs.



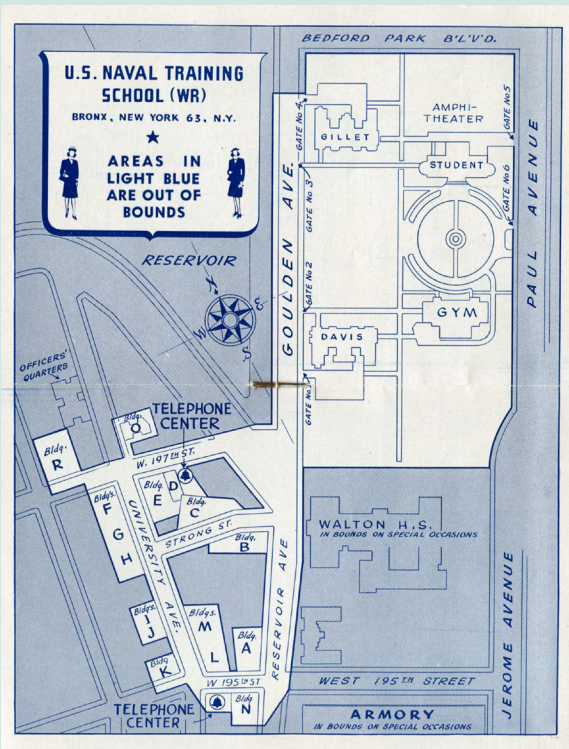
NHHC PHOTO
1943 Lt. Joy Bright Hancock W-V(S), USNR and Lt.(jg) Eunice White, W-V(S) were the only WAVES entitled to wear the Victory Medal from WWI. Both served during WWI. Hancock was a Chief Yeoman during WWI.

U. S. Naval Training School (WR) The Bronx, N.Y. 1943



NHHC PHOTO

1943 Raising the flag for the first time at U.S. Naval Training School (WR) in the Bronx, N.Y.



1944



LEUCI PHOTO

The first four women chief petty officers were appointed in the spring of 1944. They all entered the Navy in the fall of 1942. During the war advancements were accelerated allowing qualified men and women to quickly advance through the petty officer rates. They were commonly known as “Slick Arm” chiefs and petty officers since they had not yet qualified to wear a service stripe, on their lower left sleeve--which indicated four years of naval service, .

The first four women promoted to Chief Petty Officer were appointed in the spring of 1944--three Chief Yeoman (CY) and one Chief Storekeeper (CSK). CY Rhodell Angel, CY Vera Maxine Pearson, CY Marion T. Longhurst, and CSK Francis D. Hanusik worked their way up through the rates of petty officer third class to petty officer first class.

At the time of their appointments, three of them were stationed in Washington, DC. The fourth, CY Longhurst, was assigned to the Eighth Naval District.¹

CY Rhodell Angel, from Thief Rivers Falls, Minnesota was on duty in the office of Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet. Chief Angel enlisted in October 1942 and was a member of the first class of female yeomen to graduate from U.S. Naval Training School

¹ The IOWAVE 8 June 1944 . This was the newspaper of the U.S. Naval Training School, Cedar Falls, Iowa

(Yeoman) in Stillwater, Oklahoma. She reported for duty in Washington, in November 1942, and had already been advanced to Yeoman Third Class. Prior to enlisting, Chief Angel worked as a civilian stenographer in the Bureau of Aeronautics.

CY Vera Maxine Pearson, from Loda, Illinois, was also assigned to the staff of Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet. She was also a member of the first class of women yeomen from Stillwater. Pearson was also advanced to third class petty officer prior to reporting for duty in Washington, in November 1942. She had also been a stenographer for six years before enlisting. In January 1945, Chief Pearson led the first contingent of WAVES transferred to Hawaii for duty.

CY Marion T. Longhurst, from Stamford, Connecticut, was also a graduate of the first yeoman class at Stillwater. Upon on graduation, she was assigned to the Eighth Naval District, in New Orleans, for duty with the office of the Assistant Commandant (Logistics).²

CSK Francis D. Hanusik, of Yonkers, New York, was a member of the first class of storekeepers to graduate from the U.S. Naval Training School (WR) in Bloomington, Indiana. Upon graduation, Hanusik was advanced to third class and transferred to the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts in November 1943. Prior to joining the Navy, Chief Hanusik performed merchandising and statistical work for R. H. Macy and Company in New York.



² The WAVE Rave NAS Norfolk 29 June 1944.



Chief Storekeeper (CSK) Francis Hanusik.

NHHC PHOTO COLORED BY LEUCI

The first four women appointed to Chief Petty Officer during WWII included CY Vera Pearson, Cy Rhodell Angel, CSK Francis Hanusik, and CY Marion T. Longhurst (not shown).



NATIONAL ARCHIVES PHOTO

1944 Chief Yeoman (CY) Rhodell Angel. Note the large (male) rating badge.



NHHC PHOTO COLORED BY LEUCI

Chief Yeoman Vera Maxine Pearson.

1945 and Beyond

During the remainder of the war, nearly one-hundred more women were appointed as chief petty officers. Virginia Scott Potter became the first female Chief Radioman (CRM) on 8 May 1945 while stationed at Naval Air Station Floyd Bennett Field, New York. Chief Potter enlisted in December 1942 and attended radioman school at the University of Wisconsin. While there, she posed for a recruiting poster by Naval Reserve artist Lieutenant Commander John Falter. The poster portrayed her as the 'ideal' Navy WAVE and was an effective tool for recruiting women into the Navy.³

The uniform for the female chief petty officers was a cross between the uniforms worn by other enlisted women and officers. Women chiefs wore the same style combination cap as female officers but with CPO insignia.

Women chief petty officers continued to wear the same enlisted uniforms but with CPO rating badges and gilt buttons. Initially, female chief rating badges were not available and women were authorized to wear the larger male rating badges.

The Women's Reserve remained an auxiliary of the Naval Reserve until 1948 when Public Law 625, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, became law. At that time, the Women's Reserve was disestablished and all members of the WR were transferred into the Naval Reserve, Class V-6.

The law also authorized the commissioning and enlistment of Naval Reserve women into the regular Navy. On 7 July 1948, the first six enlisted Navy women were discharged from the Naval Reserve for immediate reenlistment in the regular Navy. One of the six included Chief Yeoman Wilma Juanita Marchal, USN.⁴

The acronym "WAVES" was officially abolished with the disestablishment of the Women's Reserve. However, Navy women continued to be referred to as WAVES for the next thirty years--**and were proud of it!**

³ All Hands Magazine June 1945

⁴ All Hands Magazine September 1945



THE NAS NORFOLK DOPE SHEET PHOTO
1945 NAS Norfolk. Chief Specialist (S) Helen Carter Pogue eats the traditional first meal in the chief petty officer mess, from a trough, upon being appointed a chief petty officer.



Chief Specialist (S) WAVES uniform coat. WAVES who were Master-at-Arms wore a specialty mark consisting of an "S" inside a diamond. The same mark was worn by men assigned to permanent shore patrol billets.

1945 and Beyond



NHHC PHOTO COLORED BY LEUCI

CRM Virginia Scott Potter became the first female Chief Radioman in 1945.



NHHC PHOTO

CRM Potter posed, while attending Radioman school, in 1942, for a recruiting poster created by Naval Reserve artist LCDR John Falter. Scott was portrayed as the "ideal" WAVE.



NHHC PHOTO

1945 First contingent of WAVES for duty at Pearl Harbor led by CY Vera Pearson (second from the right).

Women's Armed Services Integration Act 1948



NHHC PHOTO COLORED BY LEUCI

The First Six Women Enlisted into the Regular Navy 7 July 1948.

Front Row: Wilma Juanita Marchal, YNC, BuPers, Edna Earl Young, YN2, BuPers, Ruth Flora, HM1, USNH Bethesda.

Back row: K.L. Langdon, AK1, Air Transport Squadron 3, MATS; Frances Teresa Devaney, SK2, BuSandA; Doris Roberta Robertson, TE2, NCS, CNO.

Also pictured are: Secretary of the Navy John Sullivan, Rear Admiral George L. Russell, JAG of the Navy, and Captain Joy B. Hancock, USNR, Director of the WAVES.

YNC Marchal became the first female CPO in the regular Navy. Pictured next to Chief Marchal is YN2 Edna Earl Young who would retire as a Chief Yeoman in 1967. She was probably one of the first, if not the first, female African American chief petty officer.