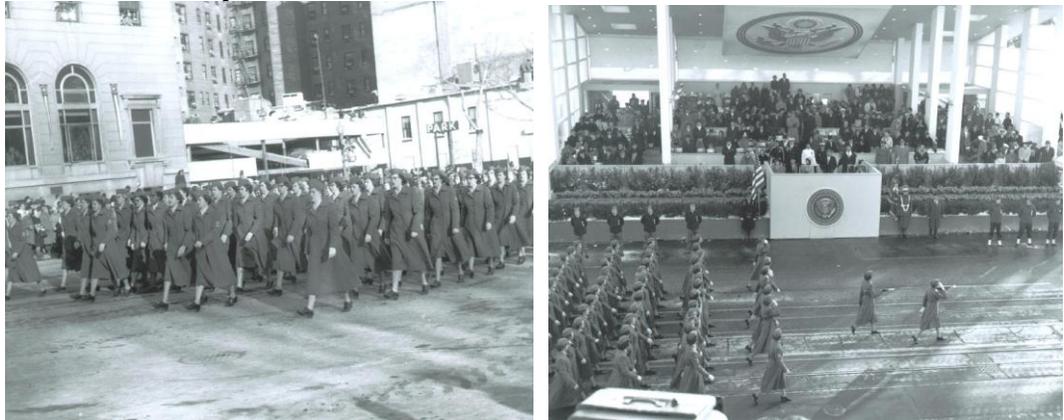


**History of Army Women in the NCO Corps  
1961-2002**  
*US Army Women's Museum*

**1961  
Jul** Centralized by-name assignment for all enlisted personnel initiated by the Adjutant General's Office, DA.

**1962  
20 Jan** Participation by the 14th Army Band (WAC) in the Inaugural Parade for President John F. Kennedy

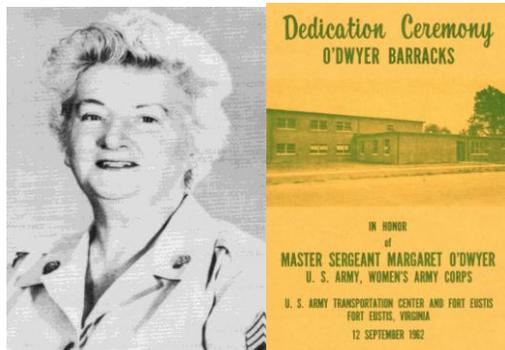


**WACs at the John F. Kennedy Inaugural Parade**

**1 Jul** Office of Personnel Operations established in DA with an Officer of Personnel Directorate and an Enlisted Personnel Directorate for personnel actions.

**31 Jul** SFC Mina A. Nelson retired, the first enlisted woman to retire with 20 or more years active duty. She entered active duty 17 July 1942 at age 43 at Seattle, WA. She served with the 149th Post HQ Company in Algeria, Italy, France and Germany.

**12 Sep** A newly constructed barracks for the WAC Detachment, Fort Eustis, VA, named in honor of MSG Margaret O'Dwyer who died 7 December 1961 after 10 years of service.



***MSG O'Dwyer Pictured with Dedication Ceremony  
Brochure for Barracks Named after Her***

**1963**  
**14 May** The WAC Exhibit Unit, called "Serving with Pride and Dignity," initiated to inform the public of WAC service in the Army. For six years a WAC officer, WAC NCO and four enlisted women traveled USA-wide with the unit.

**Jul** Weapons familiarization and voluntary firing of small arms was deleted from WAC training programs when the US Carbine, 30 Cal., M1 rifle was replaced by the M14, a four pound heavier weapon.  
NCO Logistics Specialization Program initiated to encourage all NCOs to serve in supply and logistics.

**Aug** Leadership Orientation Course initiated at WAC Training Battalion, WAC Center - the first for basic trainees since Leaders Course at Fort Lee. (In 1973, it was retitled Special Leadership Program).

**1964**  
**Jun** The first WAC (SGT Patsy Wright) assigned for duty in the Army Attaché System was posted to Athens, Greece.

**Jul** DA Enlisted Personnel Directorate organized a special section for centralized assignment of E-8's and E-9's.  
A new policy allow WACs in grade E-5 with 10 years' service and E-6's and above to be assigned to posts and activities without a WAC unit. In 1965, the 10 years' service requirement for E-5's was withdrawn.  
For the first time, DA allowed women to be assigned to bands other than the 14th Army Band (WAC).

**1 Oct** US Army Recruiting Command activated at Fort Monroe.

**5 Oct** Drill Sergeant Courses opened at the NCO Academies at basic combat training centers.

**1965**  
**15 Jan** The first two WACs to be assigned as Advisors to the Women's Armed Forces Corps of the Republic of Vietnam arrived in Saigon - MAJ Kathleen I. Wilkes and SFC Betty L. Adams. NCOs who followed SFC Adams as WAC NCO Advisor to the WAFC between 1966 and 1973: MSGs Jane O. Salzobryt, Mary E. Phillips, Evelyn Ford, Mary J. Hinton and Sylvia R. Bernardini.



*MAJ Kathleen Wilkes and SFC Betty Adams in Vietnam observes the issue of clothing to members of the newly formed (at that time) Army of Vietnam's Women Army Corps.*

- Mar** The Enlisted Personnel Management System initiated to enhance career development for all NCOs and enlisted personnel.
- Apr** An interchangeable (I) code authorized for use on manning documents to designate manpower spaces by grade and MOS that could be filled either by an enlisted man or woman, effective 1 July 1965.
- Jun** SFC Ramona J. Meltz appointed the first enlisted Bandleader of the 14th Army Band (WAC). Later promoted to MSG, she held this position until she retired in 1973. Upon retirement she received the Legion of Merit. MSG Bernice R. Goldstein served as Bandleader until 1975 when she retired; SFC Barbara L. Graham was bandleader until she transferred to another Army band in 1976; then the 14th Army Band received a male bandleader.



*MSG Ramona J. Meltz*



*SFC Barbara L. Graham*

- Oct** The WAC Training Battalion building (#2281) at the WAC Center, Fort McClellan, named in honor of SGM Florence G. Munson, who died 29 October 1964. She had been Sergeant Major of the WAC Training Battalion from 6 August 1959 to 12 January 1964.
- Nov** The first NCO to hold the rank of E-9 as Sergeant Major in the Office of the Director WAC (ODWAC) at the Pentagon was Florence M. Tait, promoted 4 November 1965. Between 1967 and 1978, these NCOs held the position: SGM Elizabeth J. Burns, SGM Mary E. Richmond, MSG Lois J. Williams and SGM Beverly E. Scott. (ODWAC was deactivated April 1978). Fifteen WAC stenographers arrived in Saigon for duty at HQ, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). The senior NCOs were: Sp7 Mary L. Curry, SFC Louise M. Farrell, Sp6 Theresa A. Catano and Sp6 Anna S. France.
- 1966** Enlisted Evaluation System implemented. It included an MOS Proficiency Test, a Commanders' Evaluation Report and established the Variable Enlistment Bonus.

**A WAC Career Management Section established in the Enlisted Personnel Directorate, DA, to assign WAC NCOs in grades E-7, 8 and 9. Section headed by a WAC NCO Assignment Adviser (E-9). NCOs assigned this position 1966 to 1975: SGM Betty L. Adams, MSG Mary K. Johnson, SGM Grace L. Mueller and SGM Mildred C. Kelly.**

- Feb** Women's Tri-Service Barracks opened at Fort Myer, VA, with Anna M. Armour as First Sergeant.
- 30 Jun** Discharge on marriage for enlisted women eliminated.
- 1 Sep** First enlisted women assigned counter-intelligence duty under the Office of the Provost Marshal General.
- 31 Oct** Advance party arrived Tan Son Nhut Airport in Saigon to establish a WAC unit for HQ U.S. Army Vietnam. Cadre members were: 1st SGT Marion C. Crawford; Administrative NCO, SFC Betty J. Benson; Supply Sergeant, SSG Edith L. Efferson and two unit clerks: PFC Rhynell M. Stoabs and PFC Patricia C. Pewitt.



*1st SGT Marion C. Crawford, WAC Detachment, Vietnam, stands retreat with the detachment, January 1967*

- 1967** Unit members began arriving in Vietnam for the WAC Detachment. The unit moved to Long Binh in July 1976 and remained until deactivated on 12 October 1972.
- Jan**
- 10 Feb** Secretary of Defense authorized a 30 percent increase in WAC strength for the Vietnam War.
- 14 Apr** Two WAC NCOs graduated from the Women Marines' NCO Leadership Course, Quantico, VA - SSG Lorna E. Mix and SSG Josephine Soboleski, who was top graduate.
- Jul** SFC Louise M. Farrell was the first WAC assigned to Thailand. Secretary of Defense authorized top three graders an off-post housing allowance when

minimum standards (a private sleeping room) could not be met on post. Living space in barracks for lower graders was increased.

The Army's Command Sergeant Major Program initiated.

- 8 Nov** Law enacted (PL 90-130) that removed grade and retirement restrictions on women officers and permitted WAC officers and enlisted women to serve in the Army National Guard.
- 1968** A 4-week NCO Leadership Course initiated at WAC School. SSG Rosalie A. Fleshman was honor graduate of the first class that graduated 2 February 1968. A total of ten classes graduated 380 NCOs before the course was discontinued in 1972. Women were included in the NCO Educational System and attended the same leadership courses as men.
- 5 Jan**
- 30 Mar** Sergeant Major Yzetta L. Nelson, Sergeant Major of the WAC Training Battalion, was the first WAC appointed a Command Sergeant Major (E-9) in the Regular Army.
- Apr** Authorized strength of the 14th Army Band (WAC) increased from 42 enlisted women and one officer to 60 enlisted women and one officer.  
First WAC assigned the Pacific Stars & Stripes, Editorial Dept., Tokoyo - SFC Jean E. Bienert.
- Jun** First WAC assigned to Berlin since the end of World War II - SP6 Florence I. Woolard.
- Sep** First WAC NCO instructor assigned to the Adjutant General's School, Fort Benjamin Harrison - SFC Florence Torrence.
- 1969** An Enlisted Career Management Program initiated for E-5's with over three years' service and for grades E-6 through E-9. Program included the centralized selection for promotion to grades E-7, E-8 and E-9 by DA Selection Boards.
- Jan**
- 1 Apr** Discharge on marriage reinstated for enlisted women who completed 18 months on active duty and fulfilled all school commitments.
- 30 Jun** The Meritorious Service Medal was awarded to SGM Ellen B. Steel upon her retirement on 30 June - the first enlisted woman to receive this medal.
- 1 Jul** Social Security numbers replaced Army Service numbers.
- 22 Sep** CONARC approved addition of Personnel Specialist Course at WAC School (4 weeks) and authority to award MOS 71H20 to graduates. Classes began in January 1970 and continued through August 1972 when all specialists training at WAC School was discontinued.
- 1970** First issue of the magazine, *The WAC Journal*, published by the WAC School.

**Jan Business Manager and Enlisted Adviser was SFC Joan C. Whittaker.**



*First and Second Issue of the Women's Army Corps Journal*

- Jul** The WAC Officers Association with headquarters at the WAC Center, Fort McClellan, was renamed the WAC Association to admit NCOs in grades E-6 and above. First NCO members were: CSM Ellina Spyker and CSM Elizabeth Bodell. First NCO to serve as President in 1972 was CSM Elizabeth Bodell.
- Oct** The Army implemented the Modern Volunteer Army Program.
- 1971** The NCO Education System was first implemented with three levels of career development training (basic, advanced, senior).
- Apr** For the first time Army regulations permitted pregnant women to request a waiver to remain on active duty.
- 30 Nov** The Army Chief of Staff approved enrollment of WACs in Army Drill Sergeants Schools and in the NCO Academy Programs.
- 1972** The first six women graduated from Drill Sergeants School, Fort Jackson, SC. Distinguished Graduates were: SFC Sylvia Dobson (African-American) and SSG Ladina L. Moore. Also graduated were: SFCs Ada L. Mercado, Ellen F. Garvey, SSG Anita L. Daniels, SGT Vickie J. Eblen.
- Jun** SP6 Elizabeth A. Neil was the first WAC to graduate from the 3rd Army NCO Academy at Fort Jackson, SC.
- Jun & Jul** In preparation for a 100% expansion of the WAC and the need for troop housing and classroom space, the WAC Officer Advanced Course, Clerical Training Courses (including typing, stenography, and personnel specialist) and the WAC NCO

**Leadership Course were discontinued at the WAC School.**

- Sep** The 2d WAC Training Battalion and 3d WAC Training Battalion activated at the WAC Center 1 July and 27 September, respectively, for basic training with Sergeants Major Mary Lou Biggerstaff (2d WTB) and Ethel S. Frieze (3d WTB). Women entered Army ROTC units at U.S. colleges for the first time.
- 12 Oct** The WAC Detachment, US Army Vietnam, deactivated. Last commander was CPT Constance C. Seideman; First Sergeant was Mildred E. Duncan.
- Dec** All E-6's phased into the Centralized Management System at Department of the Army.
- 15 Dec** Army Regulations permitted WAC personnel to command men except in combat units.  
The last WAC Officer Basic Course class graduated, replaced by an 11-week WAC Officer Orientation Course.
- 1973** WAC Reception Station established at WAC Center.
- Feb**
- Apr** The Army Chief of Staff approved Army fighting training (fixed wing and helicopter for women).
- 14 May** Supreme Court (Frontiero) Decision gave military women the same right as men to declare spouses and children as their dependents - retroactive 10 years.
- Jun** MSG Patricia Browning became the first female Band leader of the 214th Army Band, HQ Forces Command at Fort McPherson, GA. She was later promoted to SGM.
- 30 Jun** SGM Betty J. Benson, was the first graduate of the new Sergeant Majors Academy, Fort Bliss, TX. The next graduates, in June 1974, were MSG Helen I. Johnston and MSG Dorothy J. Rechel.
- 1 Jul** The draft ended and women again were called upon to help fill the manpower gap. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) established to replace Continental Army Command (CONARC).
- Aug** Discharge on marriage discontinued for all WACs.
- 1 Oct** To train additional WAC recruits, the 17th WAC Battalion was activated at Fort Jackson, SC; followed by activation of the 18th WAC Battalion on 1 July 1974; and
- 9 Oct** the 5th Training Bde (WAC) on 1 July 1974 to command the two battalions.  
Army Chief of Staff approved plan to expand WAC strength from 20,400 to 50,000 by the end of FY 1979.
- 1974** The fourteenth Army Band (WAC) and WAC Reception Station reassigned from the
- 1 May** WAC Center to the US Army School and Training Center, Fort McClellan, Alabama.

- 16 May** The Army Uniform Board approved for optional purchase a mint green summer dress with jacket. Also a black raincoat and black beret to replace the green raincoat, the overcoat and the garrison cap. A green pantsuit was approved for testing.
- 24 May** Congress reduced minimum age for enlistment of women to 17 years with parental consent; 18 years without it - effective 1 April 1976.
- 30 Jun** SGM Mildred C. Kelly became the first black WAC NCO to hold the grade and position of Command Sergeant Major at a major Army headquarters - HQ, US Army Proving Ground, Aberdeen, Maryland.
- 1 Jul** Weapons familiarization on the M-16 included in WAC basic training with firing on a voluntary basis - approximately 85% volunteered to fire.
- 1975 May** A WAC NCO Dining-In and NCO Retreat Parade held to raise money for the first museum of Army women (WAC Museum - now U.S. Army Women's Museum). The events were led by CSM Betty J. Benson, CSM Helen Johnston, CSM Elizabeth Bodell, CSM Sylvia Swinney and First Sergeant Molly Edwards.
- 2 Jun** Jennie A. Vallance was the first WAC to graduate from rotary wing flight training at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and be appointed warrant officer junior grade.
- 30 Jun** Secretary of Defense ordered discontinuance of involuntary discharge on pregnancy and parenthood effective this date.
- 1 Jul** Defensive weapons training became mandatory in WAC basic training and in specialist courses as required. In January 1976, it became mandatory in women officers' training courses except in the Medical Department and Chaplains' Corps.
- 14 Sep** The mint green uniform was no longer optional but became a uniform of issue to replace the green cord summer uniform; the Army green pantsuit was approved for issue.
- Sep** WAC officers, NCOs and enlisted women assigned to Refugee Receiving Centers on Guam, at Fort Chaffee, Arizona, and Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, to house and administer immigrants from Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries - April through December 1975.
- 1 Oct** Under a new Enlisted Personnel Management System (EPMS) implemented this date: Enlisted women, all grades, to be assigned by the career management branch that controlled their primary MOS; the NCO Education System was expanded from three to five levels; under the revised Enlisted Evaluation System, MOS Proficiency Tests were replaced by Skill Qualification Tests; the promotion system stayed the same - to E3 & 4, local control; to E5 & 6, semi-centralized DA control; to E7, 8 & 9, by DA centralized control. The grade Specialist 7 (SP7) was abolished.
- 1976** First enlisted women (20) entered the US Army Military Academy

- Jan**      **Preparatory School, Fort Monmouth, NJ; 17 graduated.**
- 1 Jan**    **The 14th Army Band (WAC) integrated men and women; "WAC" was dropped from the Band's title.  
Women began serving the same length of overseas tour as men.**
- 23 Jan**   **Women authorized to serve as members of ceremonial firing teams, funeral details and color guards.**
- Jul**        **One-hundred nineteen women entered the US Military Academy, West Point, NY (Class of 1980).**
- 30 Sep**   **The end of the fiscal year changed from 30 June to 30 September throughout the Federal government.**
- Dec**       **CSM Helen J. Allen was the first woman assigned as Command Sergeant Major of an MP Training Battalion - 11th MP Battalion, Fort McClellan, AL.**



*CSM Helen Allen with Members of the 11th MP Battalion*

- 1 Dec**    **The Army women's green pantsuit was issued to women assigned military police duties; in September 1977, the pantsuit was issued to all enlisted women.**
- 31 Dec**   **The WAC Center and WAC School at Fort McClellan were deactivated. The two WAC basic training battalions and other remaining units, were absorbed by the US Army School/Training Center & Fort McClellan.**
- 1977**    **The Army Chief of Staff approved common basic training program for male and female recruits.**
- 7 Feb**
- 8 Jul**    **First combined (male/female) class of Military Police one-station-unit**

**training (OSUT) began at Fort McClellan (Company B, 9th OSUT Bn, Training Brigade). On 3 October 1977, combined classes of Signal Corps one-station-unit training began at Fort Gordon, GA, 1st Signal Training Brigade.**

- 3 Sep Women in basic training at Fort McClellan began the common (male/female) basic training program. On 14 October, women at Fort Jackson began the program.**
  
- Sep For the first time, 1,500 WAC NCOs and enlisted women participated in REFORGER (Restationing of Forces to Germany) -- a NATO war games exercise conducted in Germany. WACs were assigned combat support roles in transportation, communications, medical, and law enforcement duties.**
  
- 1 Oct The option to enlist for Army Officer Candidate School opened to women.**
  
- 20 Dec Army Combat Exclusion Policy issued. Women could serve in any military occupational specialty or unit for which qualified, except those of Infantry, Armor, Cannon Field Artillery, Combat Engineers, and Low Altitude Air Defense units of battalion size or smaller. Women could not serve in an MOS that involved combat duty.**
  
- 1978 Effective FY 78, the OCS Enlistment Option was open to women.**
  
- 1 Feb Women enlisting at this date incurred the same 6-year obligation as men. After completing 3 years of active duty, must upon separation spend 3 years in the Individual Ready Reserve.**
  
- 21 Feb New Army policy allowed women to serve as members of joint honor ceremonial units at the White House or within the National Capitol Region.**
  
- 5 Mar SGT Margaret T. Hawthorne accepted for duty in the previously all-male 3d Infantry Honor Guard Battalion. SGT Margart T. Webb, on this date, was the first woman to participate in a White House Honor Guard Ceremony.**
  
- 28 Apr Congress gave the Secretary of Defense permission to eliminate the Office of the Director WAC effective this date -- awaiting passage of law to disestablish it and the Corps. The positions of Director and Deputy Director, WAC, were discontinued and members of the Director's office were reassigned.**
  
- 1 Oct The Women's Army green hat (w/visor) was dropped as an item of issue**

and replaced by the black beret.

**20 Oct** Congress enacted a law, signed by President Carter, that disestablished the Office of the Director WAC, the Deputy Director WAC and the Corps as a separate corps, effective on this date.

**1983** U.S. military forces entered the Caribbean Island of Grenada to rescue  
**25 Oct** American Citizens. Approximately 100 women officers, NCOs and enlisted women served in intelligence, military police, transportation and communication roles.



*Women in the Army Quartermaster Corps, assist with unloading operations during the Grenada Invasion*

**1988** CSM Karen M. Erickson was the first woman assigned as Command Sergeant Major, 1st Personnel Command, Germany.

**1989** CSM Daisy C. Brown (African-American) was the only female command sergeant major at Fort Bragg, NC, in 1989.

**1989** Army and Air Force regulations as of this date permitted 6 (instead of 4)  
**6 Feb** weeks for convalescent leave after childbirth.

**20 Dec** U.S. Army women NCOs and enlisted women deployed to Panama with their units to assist in the overthrow the Dictator Noriega. Almost 600 women officers, NCOs and enlisted women helped provide transportation, law enforcement, intelligence and logistical support to the combat forces.

**1990** The United States began a build up of all allied forces in Saudi Arabia  
**Aug** (DESERT SHIELD) for action against Iraqi forces that invaded Kuwait on 2 August.

- Jan** UN forces began an air attack against Iraq on 17 January followed by a ground offensive on 14 February (DESERT STORM). Three days later, Iraq surrendered. Over 26,000 Army women officers, NCOs and enlisted women served in DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM. Twelve Army women died there (6 from enemy fire). Two became prisoners of war - MAJ Rhonda Cornum, a flight surgeon and SP4 Melissa Rathbun-Nealy, a truck driver; both were released at war's end.
- 1991** A Huey helicopter on a humanitarian mission in Honduras crashed, killing three female crew members - CPT Saphee Dawn, 1LT Vicki Boyd and SSG Linda W. Simonds.
- 1992** Former WAACs, WACs and women in today's Army celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Women's Army Corps at the former museum at Fort McClellan, AL.
- 14 May**
- 1996** SGT Heather Lynn Johnson was the first woman to earn the silver tomb guard identification badge 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard), Arlington National Cemetery, and became the first female to guard the tomb of unknowns, 22 March 1996.



*SGT Heather Lynn Johnson at Arlington National Cemetery*

- 2000** SGT Tennille Marquis, an instructor with ADFSD, 16th Quartermaster Company, U.S. Army Quartermaster Center and School, Fort Lee, VA, was selected as the First Army Times Soldier of the Year, August 2000. She was awarded the Soldiers Medal for a heroic act of "selfless service" due to critical assistance to a victim of a wreck. Without her assistance, there was a real possibility of loss of life.
- SFC Yvonne Griffith, a Senior Instructor/Writer at the Petroleum and Water Department at Fort Lee, was selected as NCO of the Year at the U.S. Army Quartermaster and School. She was also Distinguished

Instructor in 2000, as well as a member of the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club and a member of the Honorable Order of Saint Martin. She was Instructor of the Year in 2001.



**CSM Johnnie M. Font**, a graduate of Class 35 of the Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, TX, retired after 30 years of service while serving at the U.S. Army Quartermaster Center and School. She served in a variety of Noncommissioned Officer leadership positions throughout her outstanding career. CSM Font had many important assignments, both in the Continental United States (CONUS) and overseas. Her awards and decorations included the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal (third oak leaf cluster), Army Commendation Medal (second oak leaf cluster) and the Army Achievement Medal.



*CSM Johnnie M. Font*

**2001** NCOs SGT Tamara C. Thurman, 25, and SSG Maudlyn A. White, 38, lost their lives on 11 September in the terrorist attack that hit the Pentagon. Both worked in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel at the Pentagon in service to their country.



*SGT Tamara C. Thurman*



*SST Maudlyn A. White*

**2002** CSM Michele Jones became the first woman selected as command sergeant major, US Army Reserves, 28 October; she was the ninth command sergeant major of the Reserves. Jones was also the first woman to be chosen as the senior NCO in any of the Army's components.



*CSM Michele Jones*

**Source:** *US Army in World War II, Special Studies, The Women's Army Corps* (Treadwell); *The Women's Army Corps, 1945 - 1978* (Morden); and the US Army Women's Museum archives.