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# The Round Tablette

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Tuesday, 11 March 2025

38:09 Volume 38 Number 9

Published by WWII History Round Table

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[www.mn-ww2roundtable.org](http://www.mn-ww2roundtable.org)

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## Welcome to the first March session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.

There are two speakers tonight. First, is Major General Mari K. Eder, author of *The Girls Who Stepped Out of Line*. She will speak on the overlooked major contributions by a selection of women during the World War II era.

Second, is Peggy Munro Scholberg, author of *Girls in a World at War* tells the experiences of her mother in the European theatre.

Almost before the smoke cleared over Pearl Harbor in 1941, Americans everywhere wanted to do their part to help their country, first in the fight against the Japanese and later against the Axis. World War II was a total war which meant it was a war of societies, with mobilization of virtually all aspects of the economy and industry, and especially the citizenry. Americans joined the armed forces in huge numbers, and those that did not also participated in many ways to support the war effort. In 1942, rationing of many commodities deemed essential affected every household. Neighborhood scrap metal drives, planting Victory Gardens, even saving cooking fat for homemade soap were encouraged across the country. In May 1942 a “Victory speed limit”, not to exceed 35 mph, was adopted along with severe rationing of gasoline and tires. These efforts on a neighborhood level fostered a sense of national unity of purpose which later generations can scarcely comprehend.

One of the essentials was, if you pardon the expression, the exploitation of the nation’s manpower, or in the case of tonight’s presentation, womanpower. Women played many roles in direct and indirect support of the war effort in the United States. Home nursing classes were taught by women nurses in many cities as a public health measure due to so many medical personnel being drafted. Classes on food preparation, clothing repair and above all home economics to stretch rations to avoid waste were more traditional spheres for women to participate in.

However, many new jobs and positions were especially newly created for women—women who “stepped out of line” from traditional activities to jobs hitherto once male-dominated. Congress approved the creation of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in May 1942. Their first

training center was at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. The women worked primarily as cooks and bakers, clerks and typists, drivers, or in medical units. In July 1942 the Navy created their own “Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service” (WAVES). These women took over mostly on-shore clerical and support duties or served in support of Naval aviation. Some served as codebreakers in the Office of Naval Operations, recruited from top colleges, these “Code Girls” worked tirelessly to decipher the German and Japanese military codes.

Other important jobs would follow as the areas where women were employed expanded as the war developed. General Henry “Hap” Arnold, the head of the Army Air Forces, agreed in September 1942 to the formation of two groups to help ferry airplanes from factories to training bases. First, the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS), led by Nancy Harkness Love, enlisted already-qualified women pilots to transport training aircraft from factories to training bases. Second, the Women’s Flying Training Detachment (WFTD), led by Jackie Cochran, oversaw an intensive training program to increase the number of women who could fly for the Ferrying Division. On 5 August 1943, the WAFS and WFTD merged into a single unit for all women pilots, who quickly extended their qualifications to every type of aircraft. The new unified group called itself the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).

In November 1942, the Coast Guard and the Marine Corps also ran short of manpower and turned to women. The Coast Guard created the SPARS who served much as the WAVES did. Their name came from the Coast Guard Motto, *Semper Paratus* (*Always Ready*). Like the Army, SPARs accepted black women starting in October 1944. The Marine Corps also created a Women’s Reserve (MCWR) in late November 1942 and the first women finished training January 1943 after the losses at the Battle of Guadalcanal made for severe manpower shortages.

The demands of war also produced significant changes in the position of black women in national service. Unlike the male Marine Corps which did not allow for integration, the MCWR was not segregated, but it did not actively seek black women. The US Army’s WAAC was integrated with about 400 black enlistees and 40 black officer candidates from its very beginnings. One of those black officer candidates was Major Charity Adams, who led the 6888<sup>th</sup> Central Postal Delivery Battalion (the Six Triple

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If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)

Eight), sent to England and then France to organize the Army mail system. In 1943, the WAAC became full members of the US Army and became known as WACs (Women's Army Corps).

These women performed vitally important jobs that significantly increased our war-making capacity. In addition, their presence boosted morale for many soldiers coming off the line after a hard engagement. They found the sight of one of these service women a welcome relief. Working and serving alongside women in civilian and military roles would inevitably lead to a greater recognition of women's roles in society at large, which would significantly affect the civil rights movement in the 1950s and later feminist movements in the 1960s and 70s. Indeed, even today, many young women know the name of "Rosie the Riveter" and her image has been used as a symbol of female empowerment even into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

#### FURTHER READINGS:

MG (ret.) Mari K. Eder, *The Girls Who Stepped Out of Line* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2021).

Peggy Munro Scholberg *Girls in a World at War* (Burnsville, MN: Kirk House Publishers, 2024).

Liza Mundy, *Code Girls: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II* (New York: Hachette Books, 2017).

Sarah Byrn Rickman and Deborah G.

Douglas, *WASP of Ferry Command: Women Pilots, Uncommon Deeds* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2017).

Denise Kiernan, *The Girls of Atomic City: The Untold Story of the Women Who Helped Win World War II* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2013).

Charity Adams Earley, *One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1995).

#### Announcements:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table – 18 Mar. 2025, *Early Baseball & the Civil War* – [www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) – e-mail: [info@tccwrt.com](mailto:info@tccwrt.com)  
Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345. 320-616-6050.

<http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>.

8th AF Historical Society of MN, KC Hall Bloomington, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 1100.

<https://www.8thmn.org>.

Friends of Ft. Snelling - [www.fortsnelling.org](http://www.fortsnelling.org)

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN - Air show – TBA 2025 – 320-564-6644

<http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.

Wings of the North Airshow - Eden Prairie –TBA 2025 - Flying Cloud Airport - 952-746-6100 -

[www.wotn.org](http://www.wotn.org)

Alliance Française 612-332-0436 - [www.afmns.org](http://www.afmns.org)

Friends of the National WW II Memorial –

<http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org.US>

Pittsburg Veterans Breakfast Club

- <http://www.vbcphg.org>.

Western Naval Historical Association –

[info@wnha.net](mailto:info@wnha.net)

WWII Discussion Forum – [wwiidf.org](http://wwiidf.org)

History Happy Hour - Sundays, 3 pm -

[www.historyhappyhour.com](http://www.historyhappyhour.com)

CAF - Commemorative Air Force - 651-455-6942 -

[www.cafmn.org](http://www.cafmn.org)

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - 651-338-2717 -

[jkysr45@gmail.com](mailto:jkysr45@gmail.com)

**We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)**

#### Round Table Schedule 2024–2025

25 Mar. Pacific Naval Strategy

8 Apr. 11th Airborne Division

**22 Apr. Eighth Air Force (new)**

13 May Patton's Tactician: War and Occupation

**The Round Table is a 501(c)3 nonprofit.**

**We would greatly appreciate your supporting the HCDWW2HRT.**



6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion parade in honor of Joan d'Arc in Rouen.



251<sup>st</sup> Station Hospital disembarking, New Britain 1944.



US Naval Computing Machine Laboratory, Dayton OH, 1943

