A History of the United States Coast Guard SPAR Band

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American women formed bands during the latter half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. These bands followed a parallel development to men's, with members forming town, family, immigrant, industry, school, swing, military, and professional touring bands. The women's bands provided music for a variety of community events, such as national holidays, suffrage campaigns, political campaigns, and veterans' activities, by performing in bandwagons, street parades, or in the town bandstand.[1] Women's participation continued to evolve during World War II as enlisted members of America's all-female military branches formed women's military bands. This article illuminates the responsibilities of one such ensemble, the thirty-five-member United States Coast Guard SPAR Band.

As European countries engaged in World War II, the neutral American government slowly began to prepare to become involved in the conflict. The question of when this involvement would begin was resolved after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, killing thousands of American men and destroying much of the Pacific fleet. This unexpected act catapulted America into declaring war on Japan and its allies the following day. Several months later, the government realized that more manpower was needed to win a war being waged on two fronts in the Pacific and the Atlantic. It was decided that women should be used in the civilian and military workforce to "Free a Man to Fight." Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, called upon the women of America to join the labor force as part of a military strategy: "The War Department must fully utilize, immediately and effectively, the largest and potentially the finest single source of labor available today—the vast reserve of woman power."[2] This call to duty provided the first opportunity for women to assist in the war effort, and ultimately they were credited with helping to win the war. Millions of

1. J. M. Sullivan, "A Century of Women's Bands in America," *Music Educators Journal* 95 (September 2008): 33–40.

2. Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, Simon & Schuster, 2004), 37.

American women gladly stepped forward to serve their country and some used their musical talents to serve the nation in women's military bands or civilian swing bands.

By two years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, while America was heavily engaged in war, women across the country had filled factory positions for men who had left to serve in the military. This work earned the women the nickname "Rosie the Riveter." Thousands of additional women were serving in separate women's units in branches of the military—the Army's WAC (Women's Army Corps), the Navy's WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), the Coast Guard SPARs (from the Coast Guard's Latin motto *Semper Paratus* and its translation, "Always Ready"), and the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR). The WAC had the largest enlistment, with 140,000 women in their ranks. Only one other service branch, the WAVES, also had a six-figure membership. The Coast Guard was the smallest unit, having enlisted only 11,000 women during the war.[3] Hartmann reported that 370,000 women served in six different military organizations—the aforementioned plus the Army and the Navy Nurse Corps and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).[4]

While women in the military was not a new concept in the United States, as women had served as nurses during the First World War, the creation of military bands of enlisted women was something quite different. This article illuminates the contributions of the thirty-five-member women's Coast Guard SPAR Band and the effect it had on participants by providing them a rare opportunity to perform professionally, an experience that many still believe was the most important of their lives.

Although a number of women's bands had formed in the United States during the Progressive Era (1890–1920) in much the same way men's bands had, it was difficult for some members of society to accept the idea that women would choose to play wind instruments. It certainly would not have been an acceptable choice for upper-class women. It is likely that only the brave women of middle and lower socioeconomic status who dared to challenge the stereotypes faced by women chose to play instruments other than piano, harp, and mandolin. Contemporary newspaper articles document this unfortunate sentiment: "Women cannot possibly play brass instruments and look pretty, and why should they spoil their looks?"[5] "Does anyone wish to see a woman playing a bass drum or an E-flat tuba? . . . And a forgiving heaven has often looked down on the

3. Susan M. Hartmann, *American Women in the 1940s: The Home Front and Beyond* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 32.

4. Ibid.

5. Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

puffings of a lady cornet soloist."[6] At times, a woman's character was questioned if she played a wind instrument:

> When I was a boy it was considered . . . out of place for a girl to take up a wind instrument. She was sort of classed with a "whistling girl," and everyone knows that a girl was considered coarse and rude, and very much a tomboy, if she whistled in public.[7]

It was the school band movement of the 1920s that eventually helped overcome these stereotypes and train enough young women with the necessary skills to form military bands during the Second World War. Evidence of young women's participation in school bands comes from Franklyn Wiltse, director of the Benton Harbor, Michigan Girls' High School Band, who wrote:

> It must be remembered that the "fairer" sex has been demonstrating its music abilities and the results show that the efforts of the girls are on a par with those of the boy musicians and in cases tend to surpass him. It appears to me to be very wrong and unfair, when the girls and boys are in the same organization, to slight the girl players, or, on the other hand, boys either. . . . musical abilities of both boys and girls are more or less equal, and the same spirit, enthusiasm, and loyalty exists in both sexes, and therefore, I maintain that both boys and girls in our school bands should be put on the same musical basis. . . . It has been said that girls' bands lack the ability to become good marching bands. I believe that such a statement is not always true. It must be remembered that girls usually surpass the males in dancing, poise, ballet work, style and dignity. . . . I have noticed that during the past several years that the number of exhausted participants of the male group usually out-number the female. . . . The main reason for having a girls' band in Benton Harbor, Mich., is merely to segregate boys and girls. When we closed the school year the personnel for the girls' band numbered sixty-four. At present we are drilling . . . with eighty-six players in the [girls'] band."[8]

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6. Beth Abelson Maclead, "Whence Comes the Lady Timpanist? Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853–1990," *Journal of Social History* (1993): 294.

7. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras* 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1998): 25.

8. Franklyn Wiltse, "Girls!" *The School Musician*, April 1933, 8–9. His is an interesting comment when you consider that many young women had to wait until the passage of Title IX in 1972 to be included in college marching bands. Lois Abrell, a band teacher and member of a World War II military band who graduated from the University of Oregon, remembered getting to march with the college marching band only when they were short a male baritone player. Another woman interviewed, Edith Knouff, also a World War II band member, remembered her segregated college marching experience at Kent State University where the women and men's marching bands would enter the field from opposing ends, perform their drill, then leave the field to their segregated seating in the stands. To see a photograph of the Kent State University women's marching band visit http://www.public.asu.edu/~jmsulli/Webpages/schoolbands.htm.

The author goes on to report that in the state of Indiana there were many successful girls' high school bands.[9] Another source reported as early as 1922 that Fostoria, Ohio, the city known for the fact that its male high school band won the first national band tournament, had a girls' band of high school and community women.[10] Interviews with seventy-nine women who played in the women's military bands during World War II revealed that all of them had played in mixed-gendered high school bands during the late 1930s, suggesting that the separate spheres for young instrumentalists may have ended in the second decade of the school band movement. It is interesting to consider why women who participated in these mixed-gender school bands chose to serve their country by performing in all-female military bands during World War II.[11]

Women Working in America

World War II, which required significant work commitments from both men and women, resulted in a "temporary retreat from prevailing notions of women's capabilities and proper roles."[12] White women, who generally had not previously worked outside the home, entered the paid labor force in large numbers, joining the groups of women who had always been there—poor women and women of color. Society's message to women in the United States had traditionally been that the most important job of their lives was that of mother and homemaker. That now changed, and many women found themselves being asked to do a different type of work. World War II not only created a disruption in their usual roles; it also required an increase of women in the paid labor force.

Although the gains made by women in the wartime workforce were not spread equally across all fields, women in music did experience more opportunities while the men were away. One scholar remarked, "The wartime experience of

9. While it may seem unfortunate to some today that these bands were segregated by gender, it did allow young women a choice to contribute on all instruments of the band, flute or tuba, avoiding the issue of gender stereotyping of instruments altogether. Women's bands were likely popular in Indiana in the 1920s because C. G. Conn, the instrument manufacturer, sponsored an all-female band during this decade, with musicians playing brass, woodwind, and drums. This band was likely formed to promote women as wind players in school bands, which in turn would help to increase the company's market share. Kenneth Clark, *Music in Industry,* (New York: National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, 1929), 192, 250.

10. Mabel Bourquin, "The Fostoria High School Band: Results Obtained by Perseverance and Determination Can Be Duplicated in Other Communities," *The Musician,* April 1922, 3.

11. Interviews with seventy-nine World War II bandwomen have taken place since 2000. Transcripts, videotapes, and cassette tapes reside with the coauthor Jill Sullivan in Gilbert, Arizona.

12. K. Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 4.

musicians exemplified the new professional opportunities for women. . . .The wartime shortage of male instrumentalists not only opened the doors of leading orchestras to women, but also found them playing instruments traditionally associated with masculine skills."[13] Another stated that the 1940s was "the great era for all-woman bands" and more than two hundred all-female swing bands were formed during this decade.[14] Also during the war era, many college bands were greatly affected by the draft, and their bands either became dominated by women (such as the Mansfield State Teachers College Band of Pennsylvania) or allowed women to participate for the first time to help fill out the sections (as in the bands of the Ohio State University, the University of Illinois, and the University of Wisconsin). After the war, men returned and dominated most college bands, especially college marching bands, which were often exclusively male.[15]

Because of these new performance opportunities, women music teachers quit their jobs or delayed entering the teaching profession to seize the opportunity to perform for a living. One music educator who had graduated from the University of Oregon decided to quit her band teaching position at Silverton High School after only one year of teaching because the Women's Army Corps was forming bands. Lois Abrell stated, "I always wanted to perform in a traveling band, and boy did I get it!"[16] These women's military bands provided this chance for more than two hundred instrumentalists.

Teacher shortages were vast during World War II. The women military band members interviewed quit their music teaching jobs to enlist for several reasons, including the opportunity to perform in a military band, the fact that the school bands they were instructing had diminished in size because their students dropped out of school to work in factories, the lack of instruments, and the fact that they were being asked to instruct students in subjects in which they had not been prepared. Joan Lamb, a band director from Ohio, stated why she decided to leave teaching to join the military: "I was supposed to be developing an instrumental program. It never happened. Mr. Jewel, the high school band director, wanted the program and the principal emphatically did not! I wound

13. Hartmann, 88.

14. S. Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 49.

15. L. K. McCarrell, "The Impact of World War II upon the College Band," *Journal of Band Research* 10 no. 1 (Fall 1973), 3–8; Nathan Rinnert, "A history of the bands at the Teachers' School in Mansfield, Pa.: 1871–1971" (Ph.D. diss., University of Miami, 2006).

16. Lois Abrell, interview with Jill Sullivan, video recording and transcript, Lebanon, Ore., June 4, 2004. Lois was a member of the 400th WAC Band at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Jill M. Sullivan, "Women's Military Bands in a Segregated Army: The 400th and 404th WAC Bands," *Journal of Band Research* 41 (Spring 2006): 1–35.

up teaching fourth grade. . . . When the administration realized what it was going to cost to establish an instrumental program, they decided not to start one."[17] Susan Hartmann reported: "Opportunities in the military and in civilian employment lured women away from teaching positions."[18]

The *Music Educators Journal* at this time encouraged its readership to serve their nation by contributing musically, and it featured women military band members on its covers, as well as listed names of male and female music teachers who were serving.[19] This support for the war may have encouraged women music teachers to join the military. In several cases, this experience enhanced their teaching and opened the door for performance and better teaching positions after the war. Joan Lamb secured a job teaching middle school band and orchestra at a junior high in California. She held this position for more than ten years until she moved into administration, a job she was qualified for after receiving her master's degree in music education from the University of Southern California, an accomplishment funded by G. I. Bill benefits. During her summers, she played with the Hormel Girls, a traveling industry band for veterans. For most women, serving in the military boosted their socioeconomic status and independence after the war.

Women's Military Branches

America in the 1940s was not ready for the idea of women as part of the military, although women had served in this capacity long before World War II—most notably as volunteer nurses in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and then as official military auxiliaries during World War I. Society was slow to accept that the present war demanded assistance from women, even though government officials publicly announced their expectations for women's participation in the war. One congresswoman, Edith Nourse Rogers, who had served in World War I, anticipated that women would be called to serve in World War II. Consequently, she wrote legislation that would create a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and was adamant about giving women the same benefits as men. She stated her motivation for this legislation as follows:

> In the First World War, I was there and saw. I saw the women in France, and how they had no suitable quarters and no Army discipline. Many dietitians and physiotherapists who served then are still sick in the hospital,

17. Jill M. Sullivan, "One Ohio Music Educator's Contribution to World War II: Joan A. Lamb," *Contributions to Music Education* 33, no. 2, (2006): 33.

18. Hartmann, 102.

19. Randy Andersen, a member of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band, appeared on the 1944 September/October cover of the *Music Educators Journal;* "M.E.N.C. Members in Service," *Music Educators Journal* 29, no. 6 (1943): 28.

> and I was never able to get any veterans' compensation for them, although I secured passage of one bill aiding telephone operators. I was resolved that our women would not again serve with the Army without the protection men got.[20]

She was also inspired by the British Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and Women's Royal Naval Service during World War I. Rogers believed the United States, with English advice, could emulate these women's branches, and she put forth a bill to create such an organization. After much debate in Congress, the bill eventually passed and President Roosevelt signed it, forming the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) on May 15, 1942. This group was later renamed the Women's Army Corps (WAC). The other military branches followed suit, and all had women's reserves by the end of 1943.

Most women who served were white; however, African American women also could do so, but they did not have the same opportunities and faced obstacles quite different than the white women. Not all military branches accepted them, and all branches enforced segregation, which reflected society's conduct at the time. The Army accepted African American women in the WAC, and they were assigned to the same jobs as the white women—as officers and enlisted personnel—as long as they could pass the same exams. Unfortunately, many of the African American enlistees were not able to score high enough on exams that would allow them to work in skilled labor jobs or be sent to technical-training schools. The Army found itself with an abundance of unskilled workers who were sent to schools to be cooks and bakers or were assigned to hospital and mess hall jobs. Treadwell reported, "Although white women with equal lack of qualifications were equally unassignable, it frequently appeared to Negro organizations that race rather than ability was the determining factor in Army job assignments for Negro women."[21] Treadwell asserts that the WAC, to allay public concern, sent African American women to motor transport school to give them an opportunity for more job variety.

The Army policy during the war stated, "There will be no discrimination in the types of duties to which Negro women in the WAAC may be assigned."[22] This statement was tested at one point when African American musicians wanted to be assigned to the WAC Band at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. The post commanding officer allowed an all-female African American band to be formed, the only one ever to exist in the United States military. This ensemble was initially referred to as WAC Band #2, but eventually was given an official Army Band

20. Mattie E. Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1954), 18.

21. Treadwell, 593.

22. Treadwell, 590.

title, the 404th WAC Band.[23] The WAC was the only branch of the military that allowed African American women to be assigned jobs as musicians. Other African American women participated as musicians for recreation, such as singing during chapel services on the base.

Although the Army was the only service branch to actively recruit African Americans, male and female, only 10.6 percent of the WAC was legally allowed to be African American , which reflected the African American proportion of the overall population in America at the time. The Army had a similar policy for African American men.[24] The number of enlisted African American women never rose above 4.9 percent of the total WAC personnel.[25] It was only after much effort and strong protest that the Navy and Coast Guard accepted African American women, and then only seventy-two African American women joined the WAVES. Four courageous African American women joined the SPARs. Like the WAC, these women were given the opportunity to train for any job available so long as they could pass the prerequisite exams.[26] The Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR) remained an all-white organization, although sources state that African American women were not specifically barred from the corps.

Coast Guard SPARs

Because the Coast Guard serves under its parent organization, the Navy, during wartime, the SPAR program was begun with an agreement that they would acquire its initial personnel from the WAVES—fifteen officers and one hundred and fifty-three enlisted personnel.[27] The SPARs would wear the same uniform as the WAVES with only an insignia that differentiated them, which caused SPARs to be mistaken as WAVES, much to their disappointment. Captain Dorothy Stratton, who had previously held the position of "Dean of Girls" and had been an assistant professor in psychology at Purdue University, was installed as the SPAR Commanding Officer. In May 1943, a SPAR enlistee-training center was created at the Biltmore Hotel in Palm Beach, Florida, where the women began basic military training (see figure 1). Although this was originally a beautiful hotel with many posh amenities, it was reported that

23. Jill M. Sullivan, WAC Band.

24. Martha S. Putney, *When the Nation Was at Need: Blacks in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1992), 1.

25. Ibid., 155.

26. "Negro Women May Enlist," *The Bowsprit* 2, no. 1, November 18, 1944: 1.

27. Captain Mary E. McWilliams, "Women In The Coast Guard: SPARs," *In Defense of a Nation: Service Women in World War II,* (Washington, DC: Military Women's Press, 1998), 97.

"the 430 rooms given up by the Biltmore were a far cry from their original pageantry when SPAR training began in June 1943. Walls were knocked out, partitions were built, and rich decorations were removed. . . . The former *Pink Palace* had changed to Coast Guard blue. . . . More than 7,000 women were indoctrinated at Palm Beach."[28]

These women were technically considered reservists, called into active duty on a temporary basis in keeping with the SPAR recruiting motto, which was "Release a Man for Sea." The women were needed to help with the expanding duties that the United States government mandated the Coast Guard perform during the war. After eight weeks of boot camp, the SPARs were sent to their various duty stations at all Coast Guard military bases including Hawaii and Alaska, but excluding Puerto Rico.[29]

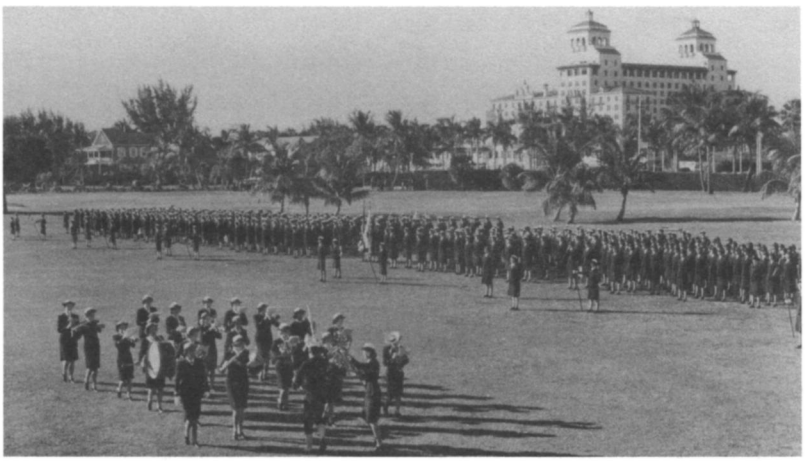

Figure 1. SPAR Training Station, Palm Beach, Florida.
The SPAR Band parades in front of the Biltmore Hotel.
Photograph courtesy of Florence Collins' personal collection.

About 70 percent of SPAR enlistees had clerical or stenographic experience, and because of those qualifications, most women became Yeomen or Storekeepers to perform bookkeeping, clerical, inventory, or supply jobs. The majority of the enlisted women had graduated from high school and had work experience, and their mean enlistment age was 23.9. Nearly all were white, working class, and single, and they came from all over the United States.[30]

28. *SPARs: A Look Back at The United States Coast Guard Women's Reserve* (New London, Conn.: Academy's Federal Women's Program for the Coast Guard), 9.

29. Mary C. Lyne and Kay Arthur, *Three Years Behind the Mast,* (Washington, DC: government publication, 1946), 67.

30. Ibid.

SPARs quickly replaced the servicemen, including officers, at stations throughout the country. About 20 percent of SPARs immediately took over home front jobs, and within two months 80 percent of men's jobs were being handled by women.[31] This was disturbing for the thousands of men who now faced going to sea, and some SPARs recalled being resented and despised by the men and their parents. The overall attitude toward women gradually improved as they demonstrated their value, but some ill-will continued, and "attitudes toward us ranged from enthusiastic reception through amused condescension to open hostility," stated one SPAR Band member.[32] Another SPAR remembered that she had been publicly accosted by a parent who blamed her for the death of a son after he had been replaced on the home front by a woman. By the end of the war, however, government officials congratulated and appreciated the women's contributions.

SPAR Band Formation

It was and still is common to have bands stationed at military bases to perform during parades and other base ceremonies. From 1942 to 1945 the United States military had eight all-female bands and several drum and bugle corps.[33] The Coast Guard decided to form a band at the Palm Beach SPAR Training Station soon after it opened in May 1943. This band began rehearsing in July 1943 with seven women directed by Lieutenant Martha M. Reddick, a violinist originally from Jacksonville, Florida, who held a music degree from The Juilliard School.[34] She had been trained as an officer at Smith College in Massachusetts and at the Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut. Lucille Andersen remembered this about Lt. Reddick: "Everyone seemed to enjoy Lt. Reddick for her leadership skills and conducting, but there were a few others in the band that marched better than she did, being that she was often out of step."[35]

31. Olga Gruhzit-Hoyt, *They Also Served: American Women in World War II* (New York: Birch Land Press, 1995), 147.

32. Lyne and Arthur, *Three Years*, 70.

33. Jill M. Sullivan, "A History of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band" *Journal of Band Research* 42, (Fall 2006): 5. The U.S. was not the only nation to form women's military bands; the British and Canadians had them as well. For more information on the Canadian WAC bands visit http://www.mts.net/%7Ebcape.

34. *SPARS: A Look Back at the United States Coast Guard Women's Reserve,* (New London, Conn., Academy's Federal Women's Program), 1991, 14.

35. Lucille Andersen, phone interview by Jill M. Sullivan, November 13, 2004. Cassette recording and interview transcript reside with coauthor in Gilbert, Ariz. Lt. Reddick had no experience being in a band before the SPARs. She often relied on the two school band teachers in the group, Louise Huep and Edith Taft, to conduct the concert and dance bands.

By September 1943, the SPAR Band had grown to fifteen members, and the band played its first concert and performed a regimental review that same month. To acquire more members, new recruits were canvassed for their possibilities as future band members.[36] Betty Frank, who played the cornet previous to the war in the Western Illinois College Band, had her Coast Guard experience planned out before arriving on base, but soon found out otherwise: "I was there to go to radio school—I thought! Never got past my first encounter with Miss Reddick; she kept me. I had a Captain's Mass (military complaint hearing) to try to go to radio school but Captain said 'No, she needs you here'!"[37] This turned out to be a good decision on the part of the military, as Betty Frank ended up as a bugler and made important musical contributions to the SPAR band. Many of the new recruits had high school and college music experience, so it was easy to form a skilled musical group in a short time.

Women were "happy to be asked to join," and soon word spread and women were joining the Coast Guard because of its band.[38] Virginia Taylor was "hooked" after talking to recruiters who told her that the band needed a drum major, and this is just what she wanted to hear because she had served in this capacity in her high school band. Joyce Williams-Sefer joined "because the Coast Guard was the only service that PROMISED I could play in the band!"[39] Some women gave up opportunities to go to Officer Training School because they wanted to play in the band. This enthusiasm is important to note because it makes clear just how significant this chance to perform was to these women. To give up officer status is no small thing in the military, making it obvious that some of these women truly wanted to serve their country as performers. Musician First Class Edith Taft wrote of her background that qualified her: "After receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education, I taught in the public schools for three years."[40] While this experience made her a perfect officer candidate, she declined in order to play in the band. She later was asked to help organize the ensemble as well as assume the role of assistant conductor—a responsibility she much preferred over that of becoming an officer (see figure 2). Women music teachers

36. "SPAR Band One Year Old," *The Bowsprit* 1 no. 10 (September 1944): 1. This source was the official newspaper of the SPAR Palm Beach Training Center in Palm Beach, Fla. There were often no authors listed for the articles.

37. Betty Frank, letter to coauthor Joanna Ross Hersey, 1998.

38. Marie Anderson, letter to coauthor Joanna Ross Hersey, 1998.

39. Virginia Taylor, letter to coauthor Joanna Ross Hersey, 1998; Joyce Williams-Sefer, letter to coauthor Joanna Ross Hersey, 1998.

40. *SPARs: A Look Back at The United States Coast Guard Reserve,* 24; photocopies of her diploma, final transcripts, and state teaching certificate were sent to Jill Sullivan by Taft's son. Taft graduated in 1940 from Shenandoah Conservatory of Music located in Dayton, Va.

Figure 2. Music educator Edith Taft conducts the SPAR Band during an outdoor rehearsal. Photograph courtesy Florence Collins' personal collection.

were quite influential as they conducted, led, and performed in women's bands during World War II.[41]

The enlisted women felt honored when they were recognized for their service. It was gratifying for them to see photographs and personal stories about them in their hometown newspapers. One SPAR Band member remembered a special sendoff she received from members of her college band:

> The University [of Minnesota] Band gave a concert before I went into the Coast Guard, and for a little extra publicity for the concert, my picture was in the paper wearing a Coast Guard uniform and holding a saxophone. . . . After the band played an armed services medley, our director stopped the band, turned to the microphone and announced that I was entering the Coast Guard SPARs. He then had me stand up. . . . As an added surprise, the next day while I waited with my parents and grandparents at the Great Northern Depot to catch my train to Florida, about ten university band members came to give me a musical sendoff![42]

These types of hometown recognition demonstrate the support women received from family and friends. Public accolades occurred again when women were selected to play in the SPAR Band. It was an honor and certainly an atypical way to serve their country. By the middle of the war, women were applauded

41. There were eight women's military bands created during the war to serve the women troops along with several drum and bugle corps. Nine leaders in these bands were either instrumental music teachers or music supervisors before the war. A research article on this topic is in progress.

42. Williams-Sefer letter, 29–30.

for enlisting in the military by society in general. Many, sixty years later, still receive personal attention in hometown newspapers for their contributions during World War II.

The women who formed the SPAR Band were close in age, learned to play their instruments in school bands, and were all white. Most women were well-trained in music; of those who responded to inquiries through the mail or in interviews some reported participating in college music programs, and about half had been working on music degrees at the start of the war. The women who had little formal training seem to have been accomplished enough to do their share of the work.

Although many women mentioned their music backgrounds in passing, we were especially intrigued when we received the beginning of an unpublished autobiography by Joyce Williams-Sefer detailing her music background prior to joining the SPAR Band.[43] Though not everyone sent such a detailed description of their musical beginnings, interviews collected from many of the women revealed that their backgrounds were similar. It was clear that music played an important role in the lives of these women long before they joined the Coast Guard; therefore, it is not surprising that they were successful contributors to the band. Joyce grew up in Minneapolis—in what she terms an "upper-class" neighborhood—with a stay-at-home mother, a working father, and two siblings.[44] The family owned a piano, and Joyce began lessons at age six. She gave her first solo performance at a recital not long after she began to play, but it was the only one because she soon became "bored" with the piano and quit taking lessons.[45] Soon after the failed piano attempt, Joyce learned to play the harmonica, and by junior high school was bragging to her favorite teacher that she knew more than three hundred songs by heart. This proves that she likely had a great ear at a young age, she enjoyed playing a wind instrument, and that she took pride in her musical achievement. By the end of junior high she had performed with her harmonica in front of the entire school in an assembly, and for parents at PTA meetings—an impressive performance record for her at that age. It was in high school that music really began to take hold, where she learned the knowledge to go with her informal musical experience. Joyce sang in the chorus, learned to play the saxophone, and joined the band. She recalled that she practiced at home, to the distress of the neighbors. By learning how to read music in band rehearsals and by working hard, Joyce won a regional solo contest in her junior year, which even today makes her very

43. Willaims-Sefer, unpublished autobiography, n.d.

44. Ibid., 2.

45. Ibid., 6.

proud. She devoted considerable space in her autobiography to this accomplishment, mentioning what she played and how she was judged.

In addition to school-sponsored musical activities, Joyce played in a local church orchestra, and performed a saxophone solo at her high school graduation, an honor that, she said, "dumbfounded" her.[46] Her high school years were full of musical growth and discovery. During her college years she undertook a formal, more disciplined study of music. Joyce attended the University of Minnesota, playing saxophone in the band. So she could also play in orchestra, she learned cello in lessons she paid for out of the living allowance received from her parents. When the war began, Joyce was getting As in band and orchestra but was unsure of what to get her degree in and was feeling restless. It seemed a perfect time to join the service, where she was promised she could play in the band. After the war, Joyce went back to the University of Minnesota and finished a degree in speech pathology as well as played first bassoon in the band, another instrument that she had also learned to play in college before enlisting in the SPARs. This is one example of the type of musical experiences that women in the SPAR Band possessed. It was common for them to play more than one instrument. Most were accustomed to marching with a band, learning new music, performing in public, and coping with the demands of practice and striving for musical-performance perfection long before they arrived in Palm Beach.

These women had supportive family, friends, and teachers all along the way, people who were ready to accept the notion that women could play in a marching band or play the cello, sousaphone, saxophone, or drums. Though the general atmosphere in professional music had long discouraged women from participating, by the 1930s music educators all over the United States were encouraging their young women students to participate fully. We know this because of the high level of skill achieved by the musicians in the SPAR Band and interviews with women from the other service bands. This was not a group made up of women chosen because of their attractiveness; rather, this was a band comprised of women who passed the audition because they were good players who had the skills, determination, and experience to do the job well.

The SPAR Band grew to thirty-five members and was a "close knit group."[47] Because of their similar backgrounds and common love of music, these women soon seemed "like a family" and shared a strong bond.[48] A typical day began at the flagpole at 8:00 a.m., playing "The Star Spangled Banner." The band would then have marching practice (with and without instruments). A concert band rehearsal began at 9:00 a.m. and went until lunchtime. In the afternoon,

46. Ibid., 25.

47. Taylor, letter.

48. Anderson, letter.

women practiced individually or in sections, "cleaned up Dress Blues, etc. to play a concert somewhere," and worked at additional duties.[49] Often some or all would travel to perform, and evenings on the weekends were usually spent in dance-band formation performing at various military bases in the area (see figure 3).

Figure 3. SPAR Dance Band. Photograph courtesy of Marilyn Wilson Ritter.

The SPAR Band also gave concerts for the personnel at the Coast Guard Training Station in Palm Beach and at other military bases throughout the state. One undated program indicated that the band played a concert at Camp Murphy near Palm City, Florida for male Army personnel. The instrumentation of the band at this time was one piccolo, one flute, one oboe, five clarinets, four saxophones, four trumpets, four French horns, four trombones, two baritones, one sousaphone, and five percussionists who were listed playing specific instruments such as the bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, castanets, and glockenspiel. The musical selections for this long performance that included two intermissions were Capt. F. S. Von Boskerck's "Semper Paratus," the "Light Cavalry" overture by Von Suppé, Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine," Gershwin's "Summertime" sung by a vocalist with piano accompaniment, Evan's "Lady of Spain," Fillmore's "The Klaxon," Hall's march "Independentia," Arnheim-Tobias-Lemane's "Sweet and Lovely," Schwartz's "Chinatown," Schmidt's overture "Louise," Sousa's "U.S. Field Artillery" and "Semper Fidelis," and Romberg's "Stouthearted Men." The concert ended with "The Star-Spangled Banner."

This program reflects the variety of styles and patriotic material of a wartime concert in any era, and was a demanding program for a group of any size. The SPAR Band's small woodwind section would have been challenged to perform

49. Collins, letter to Joanna Ross Hersey, 1998.

so many marches and overtures with their taxing parts and with little or no doubling available within their sections. The brass players needed fast, light tonguing and formidable endurance to withstand a concert of this length, and it is admirable that the group chose to perform the repertoire that it did, putting them on par with any other military band in the country. As these women took their places on stage, however, any fatigue they might have felt was put aside as they gazed upon the audience—a sea of faces longing for the entertainment, inspiration, and hope that the band's work provided.

The ensemble had no support staff and did all the extra work required to run the unit. This included things like setting up chairs before concerts, which provided an unfortunate memory for Toni Craig, who recalled dropping a chair and breaking her toe. There was an upcoming tour scheduled and the military doctor who set her toe said she shouldn't go, but Lt. Reddick said she "had to go," so the doctor cut her shoe around the broken toe.[50] Toni recalled, "I went on the tour, and my toe was healed by the time we arrived back. . . . Some of the band members, for fun, took pictures of my bandaged toe, in my fancy cut-away open shoes."[51]

Marching was part of everyday life for the SPAR Band, and these women remember it with pride. Because the band did so many parades they really needed to look sharp and be in step, especially when marching alongside companies of men. The band always marched in skirts (see figure 4) and were only authorized pants when doing work like mowing grass and driving trucks. The band members were taught to march by male drill instructors, whom were remembered fondly by name even today. One woman wrote, "[the instructors] were always polite and helpful, although I'm sure they were ready to pull their hair out at times trying to train young ladies to march!!" but then immediately added, "of course we band girls didn't need too much training because of our previous experience in school bands."[52] Even today, a parade can stir up old memories. As one tuba player wrote, "I enjoyed playing, every time I see or hear a band, I wish I was marching with them or just tooting my horn."[53] The pride with which these women recall their marching skill comes out in every letter, but none put it better than this: "The band's musical ability was second only to its marching prowess. The band had the reputation of being the best precision drill team in the Women's Coast Guard Reserve."[54]

50. Craig, letter to Joanna Ross Hersey, 1998.

51. Ibid.

52. Taylor, letter.

53. Craig, letter.

54. Ibid.

Figure 4. SPAR Band leading SPAR troops in Palm Beach, Florida. Photograph courtesy of Jenny Collins's personal collection.

In addition to their main duty as musicians, the band members each had an additional duty, which they did two hours each day.[55] The women were very proud of this extra training they received, which enabled them to make useful contributions besides music; after all, "one couldn't blow a horn all day."[56] Though most of the SPARs performed desk jobs, various band members' duties included a broad range of work, such as in the officer's mess, gate guard, duty driver, phone operator, file clerk, music librarian, instrument repairperson, newspaper editor, maintenance crew, and positions with the recreation department. Women in the band also achieved Yeoman and Pharmacist Mate ratings. It is important not to overlook this work, for though they were musicians first, these women made a significant contribution in other ways as well. As a duty driver, cornetist Betty Frank drove an ambulance as well as huge troop-transport trucks called covered wagons. She did "whatever they needed, even if it meant driving people to the hospital in the middle of the night."[57] Joyce Williams-Sefer served as the managing editor for the official newspaper for the training station in Palm Beach, the *Bowsprit*.

To fulfill requests for SPAR Band performances, the band was often split into several smaller ensembles. This way, besides providing the typical martial music on the Palm Beach base and presenting concerts in nearby communities, a dance band could be performing at a different base for officer's events or

55. This was different from the WAC Bands and MCWR Band, as these band members only served as musicians.

56. Frank, letter.

57. Ibid.

"Saturday night patio dances," to which servicemen were invited.[58] Sometimes soloists were needed to help cover several performances occurring on one day. Joyce Williams-Sefer remembered that on her first day in the SPAR Band, the ensemble had been booked for a concert in Miami, but was also needed on base that same day to provide music for the recruit graduation ceremony. Lt. Reddick assigned Joyce, her newest member, to perform a bassoon solo for the graduation. "I was it!" Joyce recalled, "I played Kreisler's 'Schoen Rosmarin.' "[59] Later, Joyce also gave a solo performance at a League of Women Voters meeting, and again, although it might not sound like an important assignment today, it must be remembered that the band's primary assignment was to be a buttress for public spirits in any way possible. These solo performances provided the individual musicians an opportunity to be the whole show, not one voice in an ensemble of thirty-five. Women who played instruments like bassoon or tuba were accustomed to playing boring oom-pah band parts, and they were excited to have a chance to shine by giving solo performances or by being members of small ensembles. Their interviews for this article indicate that these opportunities had a very positive effect on both their morale and their self-confidence as musicians.

Early in 1945, when the Palm Beach facility was closed as recruitment and basic training wound down, the band was assigned to Washington, D.C. Perhaps the finest example of the SPAR Band's contribution to the war effort can be demonstrated by their performances on a weekly live radio show, called *SPARs on Parade.* They broadcasted from a local radio station (WWDC) every Saturday to a national audience and also were recorded onto V-Disks to be sent to military men on ships to hear at a later date (see figure 5).[60] Through these broadcasts the band was able to provide a positive outlook on the war, the military, and women's contributions. The program focused each week on a military hero who was interviewed about his experiences in battle, while the SPAR Band played inspirational, patriotic pieces. Sometimes celebrities such as Sid Caesar, Spike Jones, or Bob Crosby would appear on the shows. The mood of these performances was very upbeat, and the male war hero was always positive about the job the United States was doing to help win the war. One broadcast that aired on June 30, 1945 featured a Navy sailor who was stationed on the *USS Franklin,* which had been recently attacked by Japanese warplanes. The overall feeling remained one of triumph, despite the tragedy, which resulted in

58. Ritter, letter to Joanna Ross Hersey, 1998; "Dance Band Goes to Miami," *Bowsprit,* 2, no. 2, December 16, 1944: 4.

59. Williams-Sefer, letter.

60. To hear a portion of one of their radio broadcasts visit http://www.public.asu.edu/~jmsulli/Webpages/spars.html.

Figure 5. SPAR Band performing for the Saturday morning WWDC radio program *SPARs on Parade.* Photograph courtesy of Marilyn Ritter Nelson's personal collection.

loss of life. In the words of this serviceman: "A lone plane came out of a thunderhead cloud and did wound us. But we came through all right; we gave the Japs more than they gave us. The Japs came over in force that day and threw practically everything they had at us, but we did a lot better pitching than they did."[61]

On these programs, the SPAR Band reached many people to boost morale and foster patriotism, as they played a variety of musical selections including many marches. On the aforementioned broadcast, they began with a drum roll, followed by a rousing version of the Coast Guard marching song, "Semper Paratus." This faded down for the announcement: "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. This is Fred Drake again speaking to you from Recreation Hall in the SPAR Barracks in our nation's capital. The *SPARs on Parade* features an all-SPAR Band under the direction of Lt. Martha Reddick of the United States Coast Guard Women's Reserve."[62] After the guest was introduced the band played "Pride of the Land March," followed by, "And now I can tell you, the boys on board the *USS Franklin* would really have enjoyed hearing this band of women musicians."[63] Later in the same broadcast, the band also played "Invercargill March," "In Storm and Sunshine March," "Shenandoah March," "In a Monastery Garden" (with vocal solo), "The Thunderer," and concluding with "Semper Paratus," over which the announcer again mentioned the band and advertised the next week's broadcast. The music the band played was standard

61. Ira Walsh, SPARs on Parade Radio Broadcast #9, WWDC, June 30, 1945, transcript, 4.

62. Ibid., 1.

63. Ibid., 2.

for the time and similar to what many other military bands performed—marches, transcriptions of light classics, and soloists with accompaniment.

The SPAR Band was the center of these shows, and the announcer often paid tribute to the fine work the band was doing to support the war effort. This was the case on the June 30th show, a week after a special broadcast from the Coast Guard wharf where a captured German U-505 submarine was on display. The SPAR Band performed a concert there encouraging spectators to buy a war bond, which turned out to be very successful. The announcer said, "And today we would like to salute this SPAR Band who turned out to be mighty fine salesladies of bonds . . . Almost twenty thousand people inspected the sub and the SPARs helped to sell more than $700,000 worth of bonds. We are mighty proud of the *SPARs on Parade* and know that the SPARs were glad they could cooperate in this way. Let's listen to a band that can sell bonds like that—let's listen as they play 'Invercargill March.' "[64]

The praise lavished on these broadcasts is a measure of the band's worth. They proved they were talented enough to perform to a national audience. This radio show is still a great source of pride for these women, who all wanted to convey this to us: "We had our own radio show every Saturday morning."[65] One remembered, "we met sailors downtown one day who told us off because their Captain wouldn't let them off the ship until after *SPARs on Parade* each Saturday, which cut into their liberty![66] This is a fascinating comment because it shows the true scope of the SPAR Band's efforts, that their music could be broadcast onto a Navy warship and be of enough importance to the Commanding Officer that he would keep his men there on their day off just to listen.

These broadcasts represent much more than simply a patriotic duty; they raise the status of these women's accomplishments. What better way could a group of "women musicians" reach a nationwide audience at so little cost? The fact that this was much more pressure than a regular concert, that the performers were playing into microphones, and that every wrong note was immortalized forever made this activity both challenging and extremely vital to the women's sense of pride. The radio broadcasts are by far the most truly professional activity they did, and were very important musical experiences for the band members. Everyone in society at that time was accustomed to hearing famous talent on the radio. Therefore, how gratifying it must have been for these women to walk into the studio and record, to meet and work with the male

64. Ibid.

65. Collins, letter.

66. Williams-Sefer, letter.

radio professionals who had worked with so many talented stars before, and tell their families at home to listen to their radio show. It would have been the biggest musical event ever in many of these women's lives—a sign that they, too, had finally made it into the world of professional music. It is not surprising that these women remember these shows with great pride. It is also a credit to the music teachers in the schools who prepared these women well enough so they could perform skillfully.

The SPAR women in the Coast Guard also sang a great deal, and this gives us a way to learn more about their life and work. The women in the band sang in concert and just for fun, and SPARs throughout the service sang together to make work fun, pass the time, and lift their spirits. This singing promoted morale, patriotism, and camaraderie among women who were away from home and concerned about their loved ones during a national emergency. These songs provide a glimpse at the way the SPARs saw themselves, their service, and the job they were doing. Not long after the SPARs began their work, the Coast Guard published the *Spar Song Book,* a collection that had been written by and for SPARs as well as some new sets of lyrics to popular-song melodies, such as "Semper Paratus." The SPAR Commanding Officer, Captain Dorothy Stratton, wrote an introduction to the Song Book:

> We SPARs like to sing. We sing as we march, as we work, as we play. We sing because singing expresses our sense of comradeship and good fellowship, as well as our continuous enthusiasm for the Coast Guard and for the job we are doing in it. We sing because in singing we say to the world that we are part of a team pulling together for the day about which we dream and for which we work—the day when the lights come on all over the world and the smiles come back into our comrade's eye.[67]

Most of the song lyrics in this book bring to mind salty air, rough seas, and other standard Navy and Coast guard song material. To this the SPARs added songs that related to their service jobs as well as some which highlighted the unique attributes of being SPAR Band members. An example is "Song of the SPARs," which relates the purpose and duties of their work. It begins with a reference to the "Free a Man for Sea" slogan, but also acknowledges the SPARs' unique place in history. These lyrics testify to the commitment of these women to the Women's Reserve. In "Bright march tempo," the song begins,

> We lucky tars, we thank our stars
> We are the Coast Guard SPARS,
> In back of every Jack who goes to sea,

67. Robert Moore, *Spar Song Book,* (Washington, DC, government publication, 1943).

We pledge to fight with all our might
Because we're Coast Guard SPARs,
Each mate will keep her date with history,
No job too tough, no sea too rough,
Because we're Coast Guard SPARs,
It's grand to lend a hand
To save this land of ours.[68]

Lt. Martha Reddick was one of the composers whose work was included in the collection, and one of her efforts, titled "The SPAR Victory March," was performed at graduations and reviews by the band, as well as often sung by the SPAR members. The lyrics of the first verse are:

The Coast Guard SPAR is the guiding star,
To her men on every sea.
Her head is high as she heeds his cry
"Semper Paratus" Ship to Sea!
Oh, ensign high flying to the sky
She will place her trust in thee.
She'll fight for right and carry the fight
Until her land is safe and free.[69]

Noticeably absent from these and other similar song lyrics—the *Songbook* contains twenty-two songs—is any mention of the problems faced by the SPARs when trying to do their duties. The songs are designed, not by accident, to present purely positive and inspirational messages. Because these women were trying so hard to support the value of their war effort, it would have been counterproductive to vent frustration. However, it is certainly quite possible that the women confided their frustrations and disappointments to each other in private, while always choosing to present a brave face to the outside world.

Mary Anderson, the Chief Storekeeper for the SPARs, remembered singing popular songs during the war in her barracks while stationed in Boston. Though not a member of the SPAR Band, Mary played piano in the evenings to entertain her fellow SPARs and recalled singing "at the top of our lungs" while traveling on a "Pie-Wagon" which transported troops to and from the base.[70]

68. Ibid., 11.

69. Ibid., 23; "The SPAR Victory March," words and music by Lt. Martha Reddick.

70. Mary J. Anderson Passé., letter to coauthor Joanna Ross Hersey, 1998.

Daily prayer services were held in an office building on base; hymn singing was an important component, and although it was not required, Mary as well as many other SPARs attended partly because "this was war time."[71] Mary also sent us the lyrics to another of her favorite SPAR songs, to which she attached the comments: "It's a goofy song, but many were in the war years:"[72]

> When a Coast Guard Girl walks down the street
> She looks a hundred percent from head to feet,
> She has a style, a smile, a winning way
> And when you see her, boy,
> You'll recognize her and you'll say,
> Now there's a girl I'd like to meet,
> She has that Coast Guard spirit, pep and go,
> And when you look at her, it's hard to beat
> A girl from the Coast Guard SPARs.[73]

The lyrics of the song are quite different than those of the "Song of the SPARs." While its lyrics stress the SPAR members "pledge to fight" and that there is "no job too tough," and she is working to "lend a hand to save this land," it also describes the SPAR as an attractive, sexy woman whom men would want to know, which brings to mind negative comments about nice girls not joining the military. Whatever the case, these songs remained popular among the SPARs all through their Coast Guard service, and together with hymn singing, helped to ease tension, pass the time away from home, and remind each woman how important her assistance with the war efforts had become.

The SPAR Band took its mission of promoting the Coast Guard, as well as the entire United States military, very seriously. The ensemble traveled extensively during the two and a half years they existed. Perhaps the band's most helpful actions were their concert performances in support of bond drives throughout the nation. When the American public purchased a $25.00 war bond for $18.75, they also received a ticket to a SPAR Band concert. The concert of rousing, patriotic music by a women's band helped encourage the general public to display patriotism. Money earned from the sale of war bonds was desperately needed to fund the ever more expensive medical care, ammunition, and equipment needed for the war. The SPAR Band's ability to help promote the sale of bonds, including selling more than $700,000 worth of bonds at the U-505 occasion alone, was seen as vital. One publicity flyer for

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

a SPAR Band concert read, "Buy a Bond—Enjoy a Full Evening's Entertainment by this 35-Piece Band. Their program will include popular arrangements of light classics, a comic dance routine, a vocalist, a drum major act, and a comedy sketch. A ticket will be given with each $25 bond purchased thru the women's organization of New Castle."[74]

After the German surrender, the band was again used to help raise more money to fund the government to bring the troops home: "The United States must meet the enormous [financial] obligation incurred in the achievement of victory. . . . There are many reasons why we must support the Victory Loan and with it must succeed, but the principal reasons are: to pay for munitions, to pay the cost of guarding Germany and Japan, to pay for the care of the wounded and disabled, to provide benefits for the millions of discharged veterans and to keep the lid on price inflation."[75]

Toward the end of the war, the SPAR band began performing for wounded soldiers in military hospitals. Joyce Williams-Sefer remembered performing for the injured soldiers at Walter Reed Hospital:

> One of the most moving and enjoyable experiences we had was playing for the many soldiers, mostly amputees, at Walter Reed Army Hospital. When we arrived in our bus, the young men patients descended on us and in spite of their handicaps, carried our instruments into the auditorium. As we came onto the stage to play the concert, the audience went into a frenzy. Catcalls, whistles and yelling and laughing greeted us. . . . Once our very appreciative audience settled down and were very quiet, we began to play "Stormy Weather." While counting measures, I watched the audience. Amputees without prostheses, and men with bandages and eye patches made up our listeners. . . . They all just seemed to accept their fate, work hard to learn how to handle what could have been a handicap, and get on with their lives.[76]

Ginny Collins initially felt differently about the hospital concerts:

> Well, at first I didn't like them, going to the hospitals. The first time I went they were very unnerving because . . . almost every young man that was in that place had lost limbs. They were sitting in wheelchairs and it was,

74. Flyer for a concert to be held in New Castle, Pa. on November 3, 1945. Archived with Jill Sullivan in Gilbert, Ariz.

75. "Coast Guard Band Spurs Bond Sales: VFW and Kronick Make Purchases." Unknown newspaper source, fall 1945; Although this article is the story of the SPAR Band, there was also a SPAR Drum and Bugle Corps made up of women volunteers and a SPAR fifty-member chorus from Massachusetts that traveled and performed while selling war bonds.

76. Joyce Williams, 35.

> it was hard. But after a while it got to the point where . . . you didn't pay attention . . . you went back and it was kind of like being with a buddy and they'd talk to you when we weren't playing. Those concerts were kind of neat.[77]

Sixty years after the war, many World War II band members feel that their performances in the hospitals were one of their most important efforts.

The band was in demand to serve military personnel and the community in both Palm Beach and Washington, D.C. They marched in many parades, participated in military reviews, provided music for various ceremonies on base, and entertained at civilian venues, such as sporting events. They also performed at schools and gave concerts at the White House and on the steps of the Capital Building. One article reports that the women were invited to perform during halftime of the Miami Orange Bowl on November 24, 1944, a game between the University of Miami and Auburn University. "The band marched onto the field at the half, followed by the SPAR drill team from Miami, and a company of the SPARs stationed in Miami. . . . The performance by the SPARs at the football game was part of a second birthday celebration [for the SPARs]."[78] This was yet another wonderful tribute to the women serving in the Coast Guard, and it was reported that fans both supported and appreciated their presentation. They must have been inspiring role models for young women participating in school bands at the time.

On a more somber note, the band was chosen to march in President Roosevelt's funeral parade and waited twelve hours at the train station for his body to arrive in Washington, D.C. so they could provide a musical homage as his coffin was removed from the train. They later also participated in the V.J. and V.E. Day parades, as well as marched in a parade honoring Admiral Nimitz, the American Pacific war hero (see figure 6). As one member put it, "We were one tired bunch."[79]

Although other branches of the armed services had all-female full-time bands, the SPAR Band was the only one where its members were given special musicians' ratings with special insignia to be worn on their coat sleeve. It signified that being a musician was their primary job. This special rating made the bandwomen feel unique among other SPARs as well as among other women

77. Ginny Collins, telephone interview, December 2, 2002. For more information on women's musical performances in hospitals during the war see Jill M. Sullivan, "Music for the Injured Soldier: A Contribution of American Women's Military Bands during World War II," *Journal of Music Therapy* 44, no. 3, 282–305.

78. "SPAR Band Performs in Miami," *The Bowsprit* 2, no. 2, December 16, 1944, 1.

79. Collins, letter.

Figure 6. SPAR Band marching in Admiral Nimitz's homecoming parade October 5, 1945, Washington, D.C. Photograph courtesy of Marilyn Wilson Ritter.

in military bands. Leah Coleman, a SPAR French horn player, remembered, "When we were shipped to D.C., two of us ran into a couple of members of the [men's] Navy Band on the street who were fascinated that we had the ratings on our sleeves, so we had quite a conversation there."[80] Additionally, the SPAR conductor was the only director who attended officer's training school and, therefore, earned a Commissioned Officer's rank.[81]

When the war ended, the ensemble was disbanded, and some of its members were sent to various Coast Guard units to assist with the overall demobilization. By late summer 1946, the SPAR program ended, and the Coast Guard was once again all male. The women of the SPAR Band went on to be teachers, performers, and parents. Some of them even continued their professional performing by joining postwar musical ensembles, such as the Hormel Girls, a traveling industry band, or the Women's Air Force Band, which existed from 1951 to 1961.[82] In addition to marriage and motherhood, some women had long careers as teachers, while others took advantage of the G.I. Bill and went back to college, earning degrees.

80. Coleman, letter.

81. Sullivan, "Women's Military Bands in a Segregated Army. . . ," 1–35. Six WAC Band members did attend the Army Music School where they received training to become military band directors and earned the non-commissioned rank of Warrant Officer—the same rank as men who attended and graduated from the school. For more information on the Army's Music School during the war see Patrick M. Jones, "A History of the Armed Forces School of Music," (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2002): 55–56.

82. Dixie L. Johnson, *The U.S. WAF Band Story*, (unpublished manuscript, 2004), vi.

Many band members attended SPAR reunions, and while there, they got out their instruments to play for each other, listen to Betty Frank offer up the ceremonial playing of "Reveille" and "Taps," or just reminisce about their service years. Most have tried to keep in touch with other members over the past sixty years, and while some are now deceased, the remaining women often correspond through e-mail, phone, and a yearly newsletter. They continue to maintain a network which keeps up with the U.S. Coast Guard Band's tour schedule, and SPAR Band members often attend their performances to hear the concerts and support the band as loyal veterans.

While the story of the band is not recorded elsewhere and the official SPAR history that the Coast Guard published after the war only mentions that there was a band, the response to our inquiries was immediate, and the bandwomen offered up artifacts they still possessed, such as scrapbooks, recordings, sheet music, photographs, and newspaper clippings. They also agreed to personal interviews conducted over the phone or responded to many questions sent through e-mail. This outpouring is in itself the best evidence of what an important time in their lives the war years were for these musicians.

All of the women we interviewed concluded that the SPAR Band experience affected their lives significantly. Being in the band was "a chance of a lifetime."[83] A baritone player wrote, "I truly am glad I was in the service, as a band member; I'm a patriotic person and anything I can do for my country I will do."[84] "I never had such an exciting time" wrote one woman, and many agree that it was the highlight of their lives.[85] One tuba player summed it up well, saying "Memories, I have many. Made new friends that I will never forget; it was a growing experience. I remember when I joined the band I was told, 'Don't think you're not doing your part because you are in the band, because entertainment is part of what everyone needs,' and I guess that's true."[86] It was true—the SPAR Band musicians did make a difference in the war effort, building morale, honoring graduates, establishing base ritual, entertaining troops, performing for the injured soldiers, helping raise money for the war, and bringing the SPAR recruits and military officials the accolades they so well deserved. Individually, it gave each woman the confidence, skill, and experience to demonstrate that she could succeed doing military jobs previously done by males, and perhaps most important, it provided them with memories for a lifetime.

83. Williams-Sefer, letter.

84. W. Anderson, letter.

85. Collins, letter.

86. Fowler, letter.

Conclusions

The story of the United States Coast Guard SPAR Band could easily fall into the dusky confusion of history where so much of the women's achievements in music remain. Bowers and Tick reminds us of this unfortunate circumstance, writing: "The absence of women in the standard music histories is not due to their absence in the musical past. Rather, the questions so far asked by historians have tended to exclude them."[87]

Therefore, this research article brings the activities of the SPAR Band women to a scholarly forum for posterity. Through their radio broadcasts and performances that promoted patriotism, united national sentiment, boosted morale, and painted a positive picture of the military at all times, the SPAR Band represented the Coast Guard well by setting an example of outstanding service and exemplified fine preparation that the members had received in their school bands. Women today who perform in military bands should understand that their opportunities are partially the result of the efforts by these former military musicians.

Before women's bands were organized during World War II, music performance opportunities in service organizations had been limited to men. The female bands provided excellent performance experience for bandwomen, and the women were excellent role models for young women in school bands. Unfortunately all of these bands were decommissioned following the war. Any female who wanted to participate in a military band would have to wait until 1948, when one Women's Army Corps Band was resurrected, or until 1951 when the United States Air Force started a women's band. The WAC Band launched in 1948 was the longest-existing women's military band in the United States, lasting until 1976 when men were integrated in the band and the ensemble was assigned a male conductor. In 1978, women were allowed to audition for all military bands.[88]

Immediately following World War II, there was one performance opportunity created solely for women who had served in military bands, The Hormel Girls, an industry band for veterans sponsored by the George A. Hormel Company.[89] Several Coast Guard SPAR Band members joined the group and spent the next seven years traveling as professional musicians. They formed an all-veteran drum and bugle corps that competed in the American Legion National Competitions

87. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, *Women Making Music* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1987), 3.

88. For more information on the 14th Army Band visit: http://www.public.asu.edu/~tmontgom.

89. For more information on this industry band read Jill M. Sullivan and Danelle D. Keck, "The Hormel Girls" *American Music 25,* (Fall 2007): 282-311. To hear a recording visit: http://www.public.asu.edu/~jmsulli/Webpages/keck_hormel.htm.

(the first female senior group to do so and make the final competition). They also produced a weekly radio and stage show and sold Hormel meat products.

This study reveals that public school and college band experience in the 1930s and 1940s provided young women with the necessary skills to make a living performing as professional musicians. Their work required dedication toward continued growth as a musician. When these women enlisted with high school and college band experience, they never imagined the performance opportunities a military band would bring after the war—chances that had long been available for male military band musicians who played in professional traveling bands and symphony orchestras after their service obligation was fulfilled.

World War II brought horrific tragedy throughout the world, but by paradox, also initiated women's freedom to choose new paths for their lives and further uncover their capabilities. Their war motto, "We Can Do It," still resonates with women today. Women's lives would not be the same without the efforts of these pioneering women, who today are seen as the foremothers to women employed in many civilian and military jobs, as well as the many women teaching school bands, performing in military bands, and now conducting the most prestigious military bands in the country. Today, military ensembles remain attractive performance options for women who graduate from high school and college with instrumental performance experience.