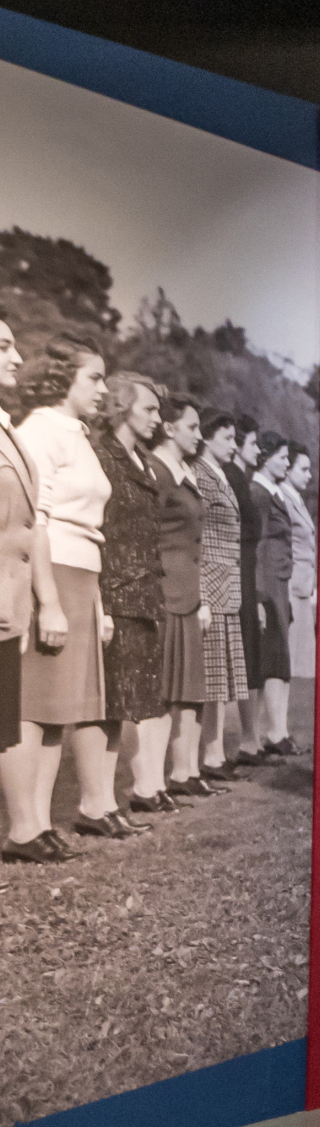




Our WAR Too WOMEN IN SERVICE

World War II disrupted every aspect of American society and forced the country to mobilize like never before. Women pushed for participation, not just in supporting roles, but also side-by-side with servicemen. Hundreds of thousands of women volunteered and 350,000 were accepted for service in the US Armed Forces. They shattered society's expectations of what was acceptable and proved what was possible for women. Their service helped secure Allied Victory and also edged American women closer toward inclusion in the military and expanded roles and rights in society. They changed the face of the American veteran.

The National WWII Museum thanks
our National Presenting Sponsor of

Our War Too:
Women in Service

The Gayle and Tom Benson
Charitable Foundation





Dear Teachers,

At The National WWII Museum, we are constantly adding to our collection, expanding our interpretation to incorporate complex and sometimes difficult narratives which tell a rich and diverse story of the war. Using oral histories, personal letters, and artifacts, we enable insight into the hopes, fears, and courage of Americans whose lives were changed by the war.

Special exhibitions are important storytelling tools to highlight significant aspects of WWII history that are often underexplored. I am so proud to play a part in bringing these exhibitions to life, particularly for the opportunities they provide to learn about the history of World War II through the lens of many different perspectives. The special exhibition *Our War Too: Women in Service* opened at The National WWII Museum on November 11, 2023. After a premiere appearance here, we will tour this exhibition to venues around the country bringing the important stories of WWII servicewomen to new audiences.

War is often seen as men's history even though millions of women contributed directly to the fighting in wide-ranging ways. It was a significant moment of recognition for the Museum to open this exhibit on Veterans Day, acknowledging the contributions of female veterans and celebrating their accomplishments on the Home Front and the battle front. With only a brief time remaining with World War II veterans—less than one percent of living American veterans in 2024—having Women's Army Corps Private Romay Johnson Davis and Army Nurse Corps Second Lieutenant Virginia Leeman Wilterdink take part in the ceremony was a tremendous experience.

In addition to their personal stories, veterans and their families shared material, military and personal items from the war. More than 200 artifacts related to women's service form the core of the exhibition. Everyone who participated in this project was fully committed and devoted to its success. Those contributors included a panel of expert advisors whose essays are featured in this volume, as well as many other curators, veterans, and modern-day women warriors who shared their collections, expertise, and personal experience in support of this exhibition.

As a woman and curator working with military collections, it is personally very important to bring these inspiring stories and histories to life—like Cadet Nurse Stella Andrade Hernandez, who was one of nearly 125,000 women to enter the Cadet Nurse Corps to aid their country at war; like WASP Ruth Westheimer, who ferried military aircraft across the United States; and WAC postal clerk Theresa Bell, who with the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion smashed through a bottleneck in mail delivery to keep important communication flowing. The *Our War Too* exhibition highlights how these women worked against expectations to demonstrate their valuable skills in service. Remarks in the exhibit's visitor comment book run the gamut from a Marine's "Thank you to all the strong women who paved the way for me to serve" to a young girl's "We are important too." And there are also numerous variations on "Women Slay!" and "#girlboss!" I hope this exhibition broadens the image that many have when they consider WWII veterans; they are men in uniform and alongside them, women too. I hope that young women are able to see themselves in history, not only as spectators, but as agents and active participants. It's *Our War Too*.



Sincerely,

Kimberly Guise
Senior Curator and Director for Curatorial Affairs
The National WWII Museum

