

= SPARS =

For the various meanings of " spar " , see Spar (disambiguation) .

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) Women 's Reserve , better known by the acronym SPARS , was the World War II women 's branch of the USCG Reserve . It was established by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by the President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 23 November 1942 . This authorized the acceptance of women into the reserve as commissioned officers and at the enlisted level , effective for the duration of the war plus six months . The purpose of the law was to release officers and men for sea duty and to replace them with women at shore stations . Dorothy C. Stratton was appointed director of the Women 's Reserve (SPARS) , with the rank of lieutenant commander and was later promoted to captain . She had been the Dean of Women on leave from Purdue University , and an officer in The United States Naval Reserve (Women 's Reserve) , better known under the acronym WAVES for Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service . Stratton is credited with creating the nautical name of SPARS .

The age for officer candidates was between 20 and 50 ; they had to have a college degree , or two years of college and two years of professional or business experience . The enlisted age requirements were between 20 and 36 ; candidates had to have completed at least two years of high school . For the most part , SPARS were white , but five African @-@ Americans did eventually serve . The agreement between the U.S. Navy and the USCG required that officer candidates receive their indoctrination training at Smith College , Northampton , Massachusetts . But in June 1943 , the USCG withdrew from the agreement , and the indoctrination of SPAR officer candidates was transferred to the USCG Academy at New London , Connecticut . Most SPAR officers were general duty officers , but some officers received specialized training .

At first , according to agreement , the SPARS enlisted personnel received their indoctrination training on college campuses operated for such by the U.S. Navy . In March 1943 , the USCG decided to establish its own training center for the indoctrination of enlisted recruits . The site selected was the Palm Beach Biltmore Hotel , Palm Beach , Florida . Beginning in late June , all enlisted personnel received their indoctrination and specialized training there . Some 70 percent of the enlisted women who received recruit training also received some specialized training . Yeoman and storekeepers represented the largest share , but many SPARS were given the opportunity to train in other fields . In January 1945 , the training of enlisted personnel was transferred from Palm Beach to Manhattan Beach , Brooklyn , New York .

The SPARS were assigned to every USCG district except Puerto Rico , and served in Hawaii and Alaska as well . Most officers held general duty billets , which included administrative and supervisory assignments . Others served as communication officers , supply officers , barracks , and recruiting officers . The bulk of the enlisted women performed clerical and stenographic duties . In smaller numbers , the enlisted personnel were found in practically every other billet , from baking pies to rigging parachutes and driving jeeps . A select group of SPAR officers and enlisted personnel were also assigned to work with the Long Range Aid to Navigation at monitoring stations in the Continental United States . Better known under the acronym LORAN , it was a top @-@ secret radio navigation system developed for ships at sea and long @-@ range aircraft . The first monitoring station staffed by SPARS was at Chatham , Massachusetts . Chatham is believed to have been (at the time) the only all female @-@ staffed station of its kind in the world . The SPARS peak strength was approximately 11 @,@ 000 officers and enlisted personnel. Commodore J. A. Hirschfield , USCG , said the SPARS volunteered for duty when their country needed them , and they did their jobs with enthusiasm , efficiency , and with a minimum of fanfare . To honor the SPARS , two USCG cutters were given their name .

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Women 's Reserve act was passed by the 77th Congress as Public Law 773 , and signed into law by the president on 23 November 1942 . It amended the USCG Auxiliary and Reserve Act of 1941 , providing for the releasing of officers and enlisted men for duty at sea to be replaced by women at shore stations . It was established as a branch of the USCG Reserve , with authority to enlist and appoint women to serve during World War II and for six months thereafter . The reservists were to be trained and qualified for duty at the continental shore stations of the USCG . They were not to be used to replace civil service personnel . The act was similar to that of the Navy 's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service or WAVES . Initially , the SPARS were only stationed in the United States , but in 1944 they were allowed to deploy to Hawaii and Alaska . The USCG was the smallest of the military branches and was under the wing of the United States Department of the Navy , although , just prior to World War II , it had been under the supervision of the United States Department of the Treasury .

Dorothy C. Stratton was appointed director of the Women 's Reserve (SPARS) with the rank of lieutenant commander and was later promoted to captain . She had been the Dean of Women on leave from Purdue University and a lieutenant in the WAVES . Stratton is credited with creating the nautical name of SPARS . The name was fashioned by taking the first letters of the USCG 's Latin motto , *Semper Paratus* , and the first letters of its English translation , " Always Ready " . Stratton held a master 's degree from the University of Chicago and a doctorate from Columbia University . (She died in 2006 at age 107 .)

= = = Recruiting = = =

At the outset , the U.S. Navy , U.S. Marine Corps , and USCG agreed to recruit and to train the members of their respective women 's reserves together , using existing Navy facilities . For recruiting purposes , the SPARS would utilize the Offices of the Naval Officer Procurement . Their first recruiting efforts got underway in December 1942 , but they were hampered somewhat by the absence of SPAR recruiting personnel . Their absence resulted from the agreement between the Navy and the USCG , whereby the SPARS would receive its first personnel by transfer from the WAVES . A total of 15 WAVE officers and 153 WAVE enlisted women requested and were discharged from the WAVES to become the first SPARS . Eventually , SPAR officers were assigned to most of the Naval Officer Procurement offices . The recruiting information about SPARS was disseminated with WAVES publicity materials and it was also done separately . But it became apparent that the job of selling the SPARS included selling the USCG as well .

By June 1943 , it was clear to the USCG that the recruiting process in place did not favor the SPARS , so it withdrew from the joint agreement effective 1 July 1943 . Hence , all women applicants for SPARS would be interviewed and enlisted at USCG district recruiting stations . The change was met with increased enthusiasm by the recruiters and it proved positive overall . Still , the competition remained keen with the other , better known , women services . Some recruiters referred to themselves as peddlers of patriotism , but their lot was not an easy one . In their book , *Three Years Behind the Mast* , the authors Mary Lyne and Kay Arthur , both officers in SPARS , described the realities of recruiting in this way :

During the day , we made speeches distributed posters , decorated windows , led parades , manned information booths , interviewed applicants , appeared on radio programs , and gave aptitude tests . By night , we made more speeches ; prayed women would be drafted , and went to bed dreaming about our quotas .

The main recruiting effort had ended . During the 25 @-@ month recruitment period , about 11 @, @ 000 women signed enlistment contracts to serve in the SPARS . Yeoman Third Class Dorothy Tuttle was the first woman to enlist in the SPARS at a recruiting station on 7 December 1942 .

In late 1942 , recruiting requirements were such that both enlisted and officer candidates had to be American citizens ; have no children under 18 years of age ; present three character references ; pass a physical examination ; and submit a record of occupation after leaving school . Enlisted applicants were also required to have completed at least two years of high school and be between the ages of 20 and 36 years . Officer candidates were expected to be college graduates , or to have

completed two years of college , and have at least two years of acceptable business or professional experience , and be between the ages of 20 and 50 years . Certain regulations with respect to marriage applied to both enlisted and officer candidates . Married women could enlist provided their husbands were not in the USCG . Unmarried women had to agree not to marry until they had finished their training period . After training , they could marry a civilian or service man who was not in the USCG .

In August 1943 , recruiting policies were changed to permit SPARS to marry men of the USCG without having to resign . The USCG would continue to accept applicants who were married to men in the Army , Navy , or Marine Corps , but would not accept a woman who was already married to an enlisted man or an officer serving in the USCG . However , women could join the SPARS if their husbands were enrolled as temporary members of the reserve . In November 1943 , the marriage policy with respect to recruits was changed further to permit women who were wives of cadets , warrant officers , or enlisted men of the USCG to enlist or be commissioned in the SPARS . The ban remained on women whose husbands were commissioned officers in the USCG with the rank of ensign or above .

Although the USCG officially opened its doors to African @-@ American women in October 1944 , it was not until March 1945 that the first five women were accepted ; they were the only African @-@ American women to serve in the SPARS . Although the Women 's Army Corps (WAC) accepted African @-@ American women from its inception , the U.S. Navy 's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) only began accepting African @-@ American women in October 1944 , with fewer than 100 of them serving in the WAVES , and the U.S. Marine Corps Women 's Reserve never opened its ranks to African @-@ American women . The five African @-@ American women who served in the SPARS were : Olivia Hooker , D. Winifred Byrd , Julia Mosley , Yvonne Cumberbatch , and Aileen Cooke .

= = = Officer training = = =

The agreement between the Navy and the USCG (noted earlier) , required the initial classes of SPAR officer candidates to receive their indoctrination training at Smith College , Northampton , Massachusetts ; officially known as the United States Naval Reserve (WR) Midshipmen 's School . But in June 1943 , the USCG withdrew from the agreement , and the indoctrination of SPAR officer candidates was transferred to the USCG Academy at New London , Connecticut . It was the only U.S. military service that trained women officer candidates at its own academy .

Initially , the training period was for six weeks ; later it was changed to eight weeks . General in scope , the program was designed to give cadets an overall view of the USCG . Academic study included : administration , correspondence , communications , history , organization , personnel , public speaking , ships , and special lectures and visual aids . The regimental part of the training was designed to help cadets adjust to military life , and to acquaint them with their responsibilities as officers . The cadets ranged in age from 20 to 40 , with diverse civilian backgrounds from teachers and journalists to lawyers and technicians .

During the two @-@ year life of the officer indoctrination program , about 930 women completed the training and were commissioned as SPAR officers . In late 1944 , the USCG determined that this complement was sufficient for its needs and discontinued the program . However , to replace the officers who had gone overseas , and those separated from the SPARS , the officer candidate school was later reopened for one last class . The candidates were all former enlisted personnel , who received their indoctrination at the USCG training station , Manhattan Beach , Brooklyn , New York . The USCG strived to recruit officer candidates who already had some civilian training or work experience of the type that could be used without further training . As result , only about one third of the officers received any specialized training . However , the specialized training programs produced 203 communications officers , and 106 pay and supply officers , prior to its discontinuance in November and December 1944 .

= = = Enlisted training = = =

At first , the SPARS enlisted personnel received their indoctrination training on college campuses operated for such by the U.S. Navy . A few SPARS received their recruit training at Oklahoma A & M University , Stillwater , Oklahoma , another 150 of them received their training at Iowa State Teachers College , Cedar Falls , Iowa , and about 1 @, @ 900 SPARS received their recruit training at Hunter College in the Bronx , New York . In March 1943 , the USCG decided that there was a need to establish its own training center for the indoctrination of recruits and to provide specialized training programs . The site selected was the Palm Beach Biltmore Hotel , Palm Beach , Florida ; it was leased , and then commissioned as a training station , on 23 May 1943 . Beginning in late June , all enlisted personnel received their indoctrination and specialized training at this station .

The recruits ' indoctrination period at Palm Beach was six weeks . It covered instruction on subjects such as : activities , organization , personnel , current events , and social hygiene . The physical education aspects consisted of : body mechanics , swimming , games , and drill . Another important part of recruit training was the testing , classification , and selection process . This was designed to make the most of the recruit 's abilities , background and interests . The results of the testing were usually the basis for general assignments or the opportunity for specialized training .

From the first class of 14 June 1943 , until the final class of 16 December 1944 , more than 7 @, @ 000 recruits were indoctrinated at the Palm Beach station . Approximately , 70 percent of the enlisted women who received recruit training also received some specialized training . Yeoman and storekeepers represented the largest share , but many SPARS were given the opportunity for training in other fields . Some attended other Navy schools and were trained as motion picture sound technicians , link trainer operators , parachute riggers , and air control operators . Others attended USCG schools and learned to be : cooks , bakers , radioman , pharmacist mates , radio technicians , and motor vehicle drivers . In January 1945 , the training of enlisted personnel was transferred from Palm Beach to Manhattan Beach , Brooklyn , New York , the largest USCG training station for men .

== = Assignments == =

The SPARS were assigned to every USCG district except Puerto Rico . In some districts , they worked in the district offices and in the small field units as well . Most officers held general duty billets , which included administrative and supervisory assignments . Others served as communication officers , supply officers , and barracks and recruiting officers . The bulk of the enlisted women had clerical and stenographic civilian backgrounds and the USCG wanted them for this reason . Exciting jobs were few and far between , yet not all assigned to paperwork found it boring . Some saw how their contribution fit into the big picture . In smaller numbers , the enlisted personnel were found in practically every other billet , from baking pies , to rigging parachutes , and driving jeeps .

Initially , SPARS were prohibited from serving in USCG districts outside the country . But in late 1944 , Congress amended the law allowing SPARS to serve overseas . For the SPARS , this meant Hawaii and Alaska . However , only those with good records , good physical health , a year 's service , and training and experience in the types of duty requested were selected . About 200 women served in Hawaii , doing roughly the same kind of work , and holding the same ratings , that they would have held in the United States . About an equal number of women served in Alaska as well . A select group of SPAR officers and enlisted personnel were assigned to work with the Long Range Aid to Navigation at monitoring stations in the Continental United States . Better known under the acronym LORAN , it was a top @-@ secret radio navigation system developed for ships at sea , and long @-@ range aircraft . The first monitoring station staffed by SPARS was at Chatham , Massachusetts , after they had received two months of instructions at M.I.T. on the operation and maintenance of LORAN . The unit at Chatham is believed to have been (at the time) the only all @-@ female staffed one of its kind in the world .

The SPARS enjoyed success in the work place , but they also suffered a degree of intolerance at times . On more than one occasion , male guardsmen would make the point that the USCG had

struggled along without women for over 150 years . Attitudes toward them ranged from enthusiasm and amusement to open hostility . But not all the objections were personal or petty . Many of the men simply failed to see the need for women in the service , while others felt it was an unnecessary expense . However , if the women were equal to the job the men were willing to give them their due . Many men , regulars and reservists , supported them , taught them the ropes , and gave them encouragement .

= = = Women of the SPARS = = =

The average SPAR officer was 29 years old , single , a college graduate , and had worked seven years in a professional or managerial position (in education or government) before entering the service . The average enlisted SPAR was 24 years old , single , a high school graduate , and had worked for over three years in a clerical or sales job before joining the service . The likelihood was that she came from the state of Massachusetts , New York , Pennsylvania , Illinois , Ohio , or California . The reasons for becoming a SPAR differed , but most likely it was patriotism , self @-@ advancement , desire for travel and adventure , or the loss of a loved one in the war .

In their off @-@ duty hours , SPARS contributed time and effort to many community and wartime causes . Some became active nurse 's aides , some rolled bandages for the Red Cross , others donated blood to blood banks , some visited service men in convalescent hospitals , and others collected gifts for the men overseas . Many of them were also involved in the March of Dimes campaigns , and war chest and war bond drives . Both officers and enlisted were awarded ribbons and medals based on their service , and some were acknowledged for their outstanding contributions to the SPARS and the country . In general , SPARS looked upon their service favorably , and many of them found a form of kinship in having been a part of the nation 's military forces during wartime . With the surrender of Japan in August 1945 , the USCG demobilization effort began , and the SPARS were gradually discharged . They were separated from the service on a point system , and on the basis of their jobs . However , many SPARS were reassigned to the personnel separation centers to help with demobilization (women and men reservists) and they were not separated until it was completed . The Women 's Reserve of the USCG (SPARS) was inactivated on 25 July 1947 .

= = = Legacy = = =

In his foreword to *Three Years Behind the Mast* , Commodore J. A. Hirschfield , USCG , observed that the SPARS asked no favors and no privileges . They did their jobs with enthusiasm , with efficiency , and a minimum of fanfare . The USCG was fortunate in having the help of the SPARS who volunteered for duty when their country needed them , and carried the job through to a successful finish . The USCG named two cutters in honor of the SPARS : USCGC Spar (WLB @-@ 403) was a 180 @-@ foot (55 m) sea going buoy tender commissioned in June 1944 and decommissioned in 1997 , and USCGC Spar (WLB @-@ 206) , a 225 @-@ foot (69 m) seagoing buoy tender that was commissioned in 2001 .

Although the SPARS no longer exist as a separate organization , the term is sometimes informally used for a female Coast Guardsman ; however , it is not an officially sanctioned term .

= = Uniforms = =

The uniforms worn by the SPARS were the same design and style as those worn by the WAVES , except for the service insignias ; created for them by the New York fashion house of Mainbocher . The decision made regarding the type and style of the uniforms was largely that of the U.S. Navy Uniform Board . The standard uniform was a navy blue suit , consisting of a jacket and a six @-@ gored skirt . Included were black oxfords and plain black pumps ; a brimmed hat ; black gloves ; black leather purse , and rain and winter coats . The summer uniform was of the same design as the standard uniform , worn in white Palm Beach cloth , tropical worsted , or other light fabrics . Shoes

were oxfords or pumps of white leather . The summer work wear was a grey and white striped seersucker dress with jacket .