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People Report

Will Fay

**Honolulu
Advertiser**

Wednesday, June 20, 1979



Spec. 4 Debra Booher, an aircraft mechanic: "I always liked working with my hands."

Spec. 5 Mildred Pitman, an air traffic controller: "It was the best move I ever made."

Advertiser photos by Charles Okamura

G.I. Joe, meet G.I. Joan

BY RONN RONCK
Advertiser Staff Writer

It's not easy being a woman soldier.

"The Army has had us around since 1942," explains Maj. Betty Flick, "but we've always had to prove ourselves. Ask the average senior male officer if the Army needs women and he'll say 'hell, no!' But the fact is if all of us went out on strike the Army couldn't function anymore.

"You will seldom get a man to admit that women are keeping the volunteer Army afloat but that is what's happening. With no pressure from the draft, men are staying away from the service at the same time that a tremendous number of women are trying to enlist. It's that simple."

She leans back in her chair and points to a wooden sign on the wall across from her desk. It reads, "The best man for the job may be a woman," and the major looks at it frequently during the day.

"Believe me," she says, "there's a lot of truth in that sign."

Flick had just picked up her French degree from the University of Hawaii when she joined the Army in 1967. She didn't want to teach and decided that two years of military service would give her enough time to figure out what to do

You no longer find WACs in the Army. The Women's Army Corps, established during World War II, officially came to an end on October 20, 1978. Now these women are simply female soldiers. Exempt from only combat-duty jobs, they work alongside men in hundreds of occupations throughout the volunteer service. Here are a few examples of women in today's Army.

retirement.

"In the past," she said, "the Army didn't do anything to keep husbands and wives together. One of my friends was stationed in Japan and her husband in Okinawa. They didn't see each other for three years except on long weekends. Everything has changed in recent years and now the Army will bend over backwards to accommodate us."

Today, Flick is executive officer to the deputy chief of staff for personnel at the U.S. Army Western Command headquarters at Ft. Shafter. It is a long title but, in essence, it qualifies her as an expert on Army personnel matters locally. As the command's senior woman officer, she also keeps a special tab on the problems — as well as the opportunities — of women in the contemporary Army.

examination to see if they are qualified to serve. It tests them in the area of mathematics, vocabulary, spacial relationships and other things. The men are also tested in mechanics.

"On a scale of 100, the women must score at least a 50 while the men may score as low as 30. This means that the average Army woman has more on the ball but there are also complaints that this is unfair."

The Army currently faces a class action suit filed by women who claim the different standards for males and females discriminate against women. A further trouble spot is the insistence that all women entering the Army have a high school diploma. While the Army prefers that its men also have diplomas, this is not a strict requirement.

expected to decline 15 percent. In order to help close the numbers gap the volunteer Army must increase the number of women in uniform.

"In order to do this," Flick said, "we are going to have to change some of the basic qualification requirements and job descriptions for women. To say that we can't get enough women into the Army isn't quite accurate. The truth is that we have a great many young women who are trying to get in but can't."

Another problem is that the Army is still basically a combat-ready outfit and some skill positions are permanently closed to women because of the physical difficulties or danger. Other positions may be temporarily frozen to keep a workable ratio of men to women.

For instance, a woman might reasonably approach a recruiter about being a medic — a common Army skill for women — only to be told that this field will be closed for the next five months. The thinking is that even though women perform very well as medics in peacetime, the possibility of war makes it imperative that there always be more men than women in this occupation.

The recruiter will try to interest her in other areas but, in many cases, she has no interest in being a



to teach and decided that two years of military service would give her enough time to figure out what to do about the future.

Her original two years have now turned into 12 and Flick is making the Army her career. A personnel specialist, she is married to a quartermaster officer she met in Germany and feels that the military's new attitude towards service couples will keep both of them in uniform until

ties — of women in the contemporary Army.

According to Flick, the latest statistics show 55,887 there are women in the Army service-wide. Here in Hawaii there are currently 1,280 women, most in administrative or medical jobs. By 1984, the Army hopes to have over 80,000 women in uniform.

"All men and women" Flick explains, "must take an entrance

entering the Army have a high school diploma. While the Army prefers that its men also have diplomas, this is not a strict requirement.

Earlier this year, reports from the Pentagon said that, for the first time, the Army is failing to enlist enough women to meet its recruiting objective. Defense experts find this alarming because in the next decade the population of young men between the ages of 17 and 21 is

The recruiter will try to interest her in other areas but, in many cases, she has no interest in being a typist or supply clerk. Flick said that while the majority of Army women still fill administrative jobs, there has been a growing trend, as in by society at large, for them to move into non-traditional roles, especially in the enlisted ranks.

Two such examples are Spec. 5
See WOMEN on Page C-3



Advertiser photo by David Yamada

Army personnel specialist Maj. Betty Flick: "We've always had to prove ourselves."



Advertiser photo by Gregory Yamamoto

Staff Sgt. Barbara Hoapili, Recruiter of the Year for the Army Reserve in Hawaii.

. . . And if you'd rather be part-time

While many women prefer the employment opportunities of the regular Army, there are others who are looking for something less than a full-time military commitment. The Army Reserve could be it.

There are 99 women in the Hawaii Army Reserve today. They range in rank from private to lieutenant colonel and fill positions from nurse to intelligence interrogator. With the exception of potential combat units such as the 411th Engineer Battalion and the 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry, all reserve groups are open to women.

Staff Sgt. Barbara Hoapili, assigned to Headquarters IX Corps, was the Hawaii Army Reserve "Recruiter of the Year" in 1978. Her processing of 59 new reservists topped all other local recruiters. No longer on "active duty for training," she is now the non-commissioned officer in charge of the IX Corps military history section.

"Unlike the regular Army," she said, "a person enlisting locally will be assigned to a unit in Hawaii. We fill the openings here. Most of the women's positions available are for clerical and administrative jobs.

"This is a part-time job. It's meant to supplement either school — there is a fan-

tastic tuition assistance program for students — or a regular full-time job. It provides an extra income and military privileges to the post exchange, restaurants and gasoline stations."

"Another benefit is transportation. You can fly for free on military flights anywhere in the country. All you need is the time."

Born in New York, Hoapili came to Hawaii in 1967. She decided to join the Army Reserve in 1974 and signed up for three years. Re-enlisting in 1977, she's now going for 20.

"Some women join the Reserve for the job, others for the skilled training they can receive. But to tell the truth, I joined because of the retirement benefits. As a divorced woman with a child I'm interested in something that will take care of me down the road. Of course, I also find the job interesting and a lot of fun.

"I came in on a special program because I already had the clerical skills the Reserve needed. I came in as an E-3 and after two weeks of basic training and 32 hours of additional schooling hours I was promoted to E-4."

Women who have never been in the Army before may enter a Reserve program between the ages of 17 and 24. After basic training the reservists spend 16 drill

hours a month plus two weeks of annual training. Each unit takes its drills separately. IX Corps took its March annual training in the Republic of Korea.

According to Hoapili, reservists must stay in the service 20 years to qualify for retirement. The benefits are based on the number of service years, the highest rank held, the amount of pay based on that rank and the total of accumulated points.

"You have to have what we call "good years," she said. "That's at least 60 points in a year. Just being a member of the reserves gives you 15 points but annual training nets you another 15 and each drill equals one point. In other words you have to really participate."

Because two of the largest units here are not open to women, openings are limited. There are also relatively few turnovers.

"There are a number of reasons for this. First of all, the average woman reservist is more mature than her male counterpart because of the entrance requirements. It is also no longer necessary to leave the service if you get pregnant."

Still another reason women end their reserve status is to convert to regular Army duty. They may have wanted to join the regular Army from the beginning but used the Reserve to get acquainted with

military life before making a full-time commitment.

"As far as our recruiting efforts go," Hoapili explained, "we try not to stress the fact that people use the reserves as a try-out. We don't want to act just as an entry into active duty.

"While it's great to have a 'one Army' concept we actually function differently. Yet we're after the same bodies — primarily 17-year-old high school seniors who haven't made future plans yet"

Surprisingly enough, Hoapili says she has not recruited very many women into the Hawaii Army Reserve. It's a fact that fewer positions are open to women than men here but the real reason seems to be that women prefer being recruited by men.

"Most people I talk to believe women recruiters are more effective with women but this is just not true. Perhaps a woman might go to another woman to get a first-hand impression of basic training but for plain all-around information she prefers a man.

"And, to be perfectly honest, she might just get a better deal. I've had men recruiters tell me that they just can't say no to a woman."

— Ronn Ronck