



United States Coast Guard

SPARS

Military Corner

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) Women's Reserve, known as the SPARS, was the World War II women's branch of the USCG Reserve. It was established by the United States Congress and signed into law by 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, for the duration of the war plus six months. Its purpose 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 SPARS, with the rank of lieutenant commander and later promoted to captain. She had been the Dean of Women on leave from Purdue University, and an officer in the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). Stratton is credited with creating the nautical name of SPARS.

The agreement reached between the U.S. Navy and the USCG required officer candidates receive their indoctrination at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. In June 1943, the USCG withdrew from the agreement, and the indoctrination of officer candidates was transferred to the USCG Academy at New London, Connecticut.

According to that same agreement, enlisted personnel would receive their training on college campuses operated for such by the Navy. In March 1943, the USCG decided to also establish its own training center for the training of recruits. The site selected was the Palm Beach Biltmore Hotel, Palm Beach, Florida. Beginning in June, all enlisted personnel would receive their recruit training and specialized training there. Some 70 percent of the enlisted women who received recruit training also received some specialized training. 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 were general duty officers, although some served as communication, supply and recruiting officers. Most of the enlisted women performed clerical duties, but they also rigged parachutes and drove jeeps. A select few 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 as LORAN, it was a top-secret radio navigation system developed for ships at sea and long-range aircraft. 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.

Two United States Coast Guard Cutters were named in honor of the SPARS.
[<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SPARS>]

