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Advertising Aimed Toward Working Women Before and After World War II

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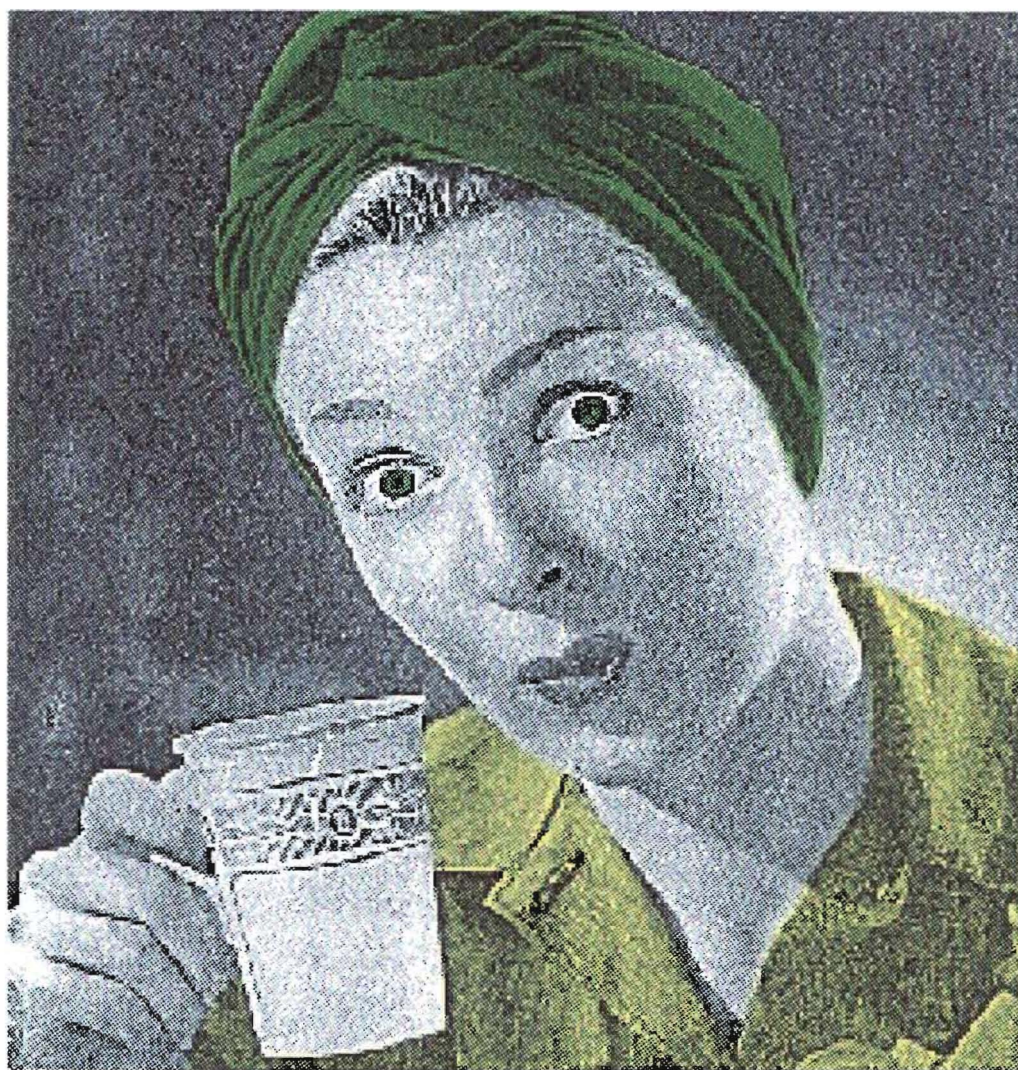
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ADVERTISING AIMED TOWARD WORKING WOMEN BEFORE & AFTER WORLD WAR II

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1994



Table of Contents

Explosion of Opportunity	3
Unwritten Laws Partially Erased	7
Opal Nave	9
Questioning Why?	11
Helen Wilson	15
The Idea Survives	17
War Advertising Council Proposal	20
Frances Alexander	22
They Were My Students	24
Louise Lange	27
It's A Matter of Class	29
The Dames of Fame	33
Memories	35
Double Duty	38
Marcella Alverson	42
Dual Vision	44
Words Used to Describe Women During WW II	48
Velma Call	50
What We Did & Did Without	52
Mariam Babcock	57
On the Job	59
Janet Murray	63
That's Opinionable	65
Thelma Babcock	69
He's Back	71
Dorothy Funsch	76
Your Baby or Your Job?	78
Bibliography	81



Explosion of Opportunity

The bombing of Pearl Harbor on a winter Sunday in 1941, triggered an incredible influx of women into the workforce on a scale hitherto unknown. Long standing employment restrictions were temporarily discarded in order to tap into the newly found labor supply. Social barriers were worn down, letting women take advantage of the new opportunities laid out in front of them. "The war . . . opened doors, changed attitudes, made women aware of possibilities they had not previously considered." (Kessler-Harris, 273) However, this did not happen overnight.

Even at the start of the war in Europe in 1939, women workers were only turned to as a last resort. The war in Europe had brought a flood of economic activity to America. Recovering businesses damaged during the Great Depression were once again prosperous, bringing hope to the American public for a bright future. In fact, World War II quickly "turned the unemployment problem into one of a labor shortage and rocketed the economy into new heights of production and prosperity." (Hartmann, 2) Business was booming and people were working.

Traditional beliefs "that men should be the primary or sole breadwinners in the family was especially significant in limiting women's job opportunities as long as unemployed men were still available to fill the labor needs." (Anderson, 24) The resistance to hiring women before all sources of male labor were depleted was encouraged by the War Department itself. A Civil Defense official was quoted as saying "give the women something to do to keep their hands busy as we did in the last war--then maybe they won't bother us." (Kessler-Harris, 274) Meaning women were still only expected to volunteer and do housework.

When the United States officially entered World War II, employers still preferred to hire men first, especially in traditionally male fields. Lyn Childs, a San Franciscan shipbuilder recalled that:

When we first got into the war, the country wasn't prepared. And as the manpower in the country was getting pulled into service, all of the industries were wide open. So they decided, "Well, we better let some of those blacks come in." Then after the source of men dried up, they began to let women come in. The doors were opened. (Frank, 49)

The resistance to hiring women quickly subsided as America stared straight at the face of war. Margaret Hickey, head of the Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) to the War Manpower Commission (WMC), recalls that "employers, like other individuals, [were] finding it necessary to weigh old values, old institutions, in terms of a world at war." (Chafe, 143) America needed to win the war. With most of the male workers being drawn into the service, America could not win unless it replaced its labor supply. Workers were needed for such tasks as making airplanes, supplying ammunition, and sewing uniforms.

The breakdown of the traditional sexual division of labor was a necessary step towards

national survival. Recruitment campaigns were begun, searching for women to enter the war industries and the armed services. These campaigns opened the doors for women to enter male fields of work that offered higher pay. Such opportunities included shipbuilding, aircraft, weapons manufacturing, and other related industries.

Altogether, the percent of women in war industries rose 460% during the war. (Chafe, 140) From the beginning of the conflict in Europe to December 1942, the number of women employed in the construction of ships rose from 32 to over 160,000. (Chafe, 140) Women auto workers grew from 29,000 to 200,000 and women electrical workers grew from 100,000 to 374,000. (Chafe, 140) The 4,000 female air industry workers employed in December of 1941 rose to a total of 310,000 in December of 1943. (Chafe, 141) Overall, the female manufacturing force grew 110% during the war, while women operating heavy industry rose from 140,000 at the beginning of the war to 2 million just four years later. (Chafe, 140-141) Even the government employed over 2 million women in office work. (Chafe, 141)

Not all women who went to work during World War II entered the war industries. Many women took jobs as taxi drivers, public bus operators, Red Cross volunteers, police radio operators, ambulance drivers, and airplane spotters or participated in motor pools, community centers, and even professional sports like baseball.

Female employment in the professions of doctors, dentists, chemists, personal directors, and lawyers rose although the overall number of females employed in professional fields declined. The only other female employment area to decline was in domestic services.

Many women who were employed before the war shifted to the war industries because of the larger wage benefits. In fact, in munitions and air alone, the standard pay rate was 40% higher than consumer factories. (Chafe, 143) This was a major incentive considering that the majority of women worked for economic reasons. Others, especially low-class women, filled in the gaps left behind in the traditional, lower-paying, female jobs like clerical, textile, and domestic work.

Some women, however, were drawn towards the opportunity of serving their country in the armed forces. Before World War II, the only women in the military were nurses. However, the government felt that "for reasons of security, permanence, and flexibility it was necessary to have support personnel under military control." (Hartmann, 35) Civilian volunteers were found to be less cooperative when it came to such things as relocation, long hours, and undesirable shifts. Also, they were able to quit at any point. With these concerns in mind, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), the Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES), the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPS), the U.S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR), the Army Nurse Corps (ANC), the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), a small number of female physicians, and the Coast Guard Women's Reserve (SPARS) were heavily recruited. Altogether, Approximately 351,000 women joined these services during the war.

The government went even further than just recruiting women. It issued a nondiscrimination directive, breaking down prior restrictions based on things like age and marital status. Previously, society expected women to work in traditional feminine jobs for a brief period of time, the time between finishing school and getting married. Many employers discriminated against women over 35, especially if they were married. "The assumption [had] been that married women [sought] employment only to enable the family to buy 'extras' and that single women work while waiting to get married, then drop out. Men, on the other hand, have been considered permanent workers, responsible for supporting the family." (Honey, 26)

With the temporary suspension of such discriminatory practices, married, middle-aged women showed a strong desire to reenter the workforce. In fact, over 35 year old, married working women outnumbered the young, single female workers during the war period. They entered formally forbidden jobs at a time in their life when they were traditionally not allowed to work.

The only women still discouraged from seeking work in the market place were mothers of young children. "Proper" care and upbringing was still considered to be women's primary role. "Thus, although the war caused an unprecedented expansion of the female labor force, it was women whose housekeeping and child care responsibilities were lightest who contributed most to the expansion." (Anderson, 194) This accounts for the great number of older workers whose responsibilities at home were less than younger women's.

Even though the government believed that "now, as in peacetime, a mother's primary duty is to her home and children," (Hartmann, 58) many people were aware of the benefits that could be gained through letting mothers work. For instance, a proponent of the Thomas Bill that was shot down by the house stated, "while none of us like the idea of mothers of infants working, many of them have essential skills and many of them, particularly soldiers' wives, need the money." (Kessler-Harris, 295) And so, many mothers overcame or went around such restrictions and entered the workforce despite the reluctance of employers to hire them.

American women definitely took advantage of the opportunity to explode into the workforce during World War II.



UNWRITTEN LAWS PARTIALLY ERASED

"Racism was a distinctive force that weakened the nation at a time when all hands were needed to guide the country to safety." – *Honey*, p. 50

Black women were ignored by the recruitment campaigns and advertisements. All of the "government propaganda films and posters recruiting war workers for factories were aimed only at white people." (Frank, 49) However, there was enough of a reduction in discrimination for black women to enter well-paying jobs. They accomplished this with the help of organizations like the War Manpower Commission, the National Council of Negro Women, and the Fair Employment Practices Commission, formed in July 1941.

Before the war, many black women worked for low-paying, low-skilled jobs for economic survival. They mainly worked in domestic and farm services. When the labor shortage hit, they took advantage of their previous work experience to move into high-paying, skilled jobs. Approximately 20% of black women in service industries before the war found more desirable jobs previously forbidden to them. (Kessler-Harris, 279)

The number of black females employed in white-collar federal agencies, nursing, and apparel industries increased by 350% during the war while black females in industrial jobs rose 115% between 1940 and 1944. (Honey, 53-54) Altogether, the number of black women employed in low-status, low-paid domestic work decreased by 15%. (Kessler-Harris, 279) The slack in domestic service was not picked up during the war, representing a decrease in the demand for domestic workers during the war.

Black nurses who entered the military had to follow the discriminatory practices of segregation. They were only allowed to treat black patients and prisoners of war. They were kept separate from the white nurses. They slept in separate barracks, ate in separate dining halls, and used separate washrooms.

Even though discriminatory policies were still employed and they never received the best-paying jobs, the black woman's economic status greatly improved. Without the war, such opportunities never would have become available for any woman, but especially a black woman.



Opal NAVE

Opal was teaching seventh and eighth grade in the city school system where she lived in Southern Illinois when the war started. She recalls that:

They took the men teachers out of the school to go to service and that left an opening. Now, up to that time, they wouldn't hire a married woman to teach. After all, you had a family. You had to stay home and take care of them. The attitude change that the war brought on allowed Opal to teach there.

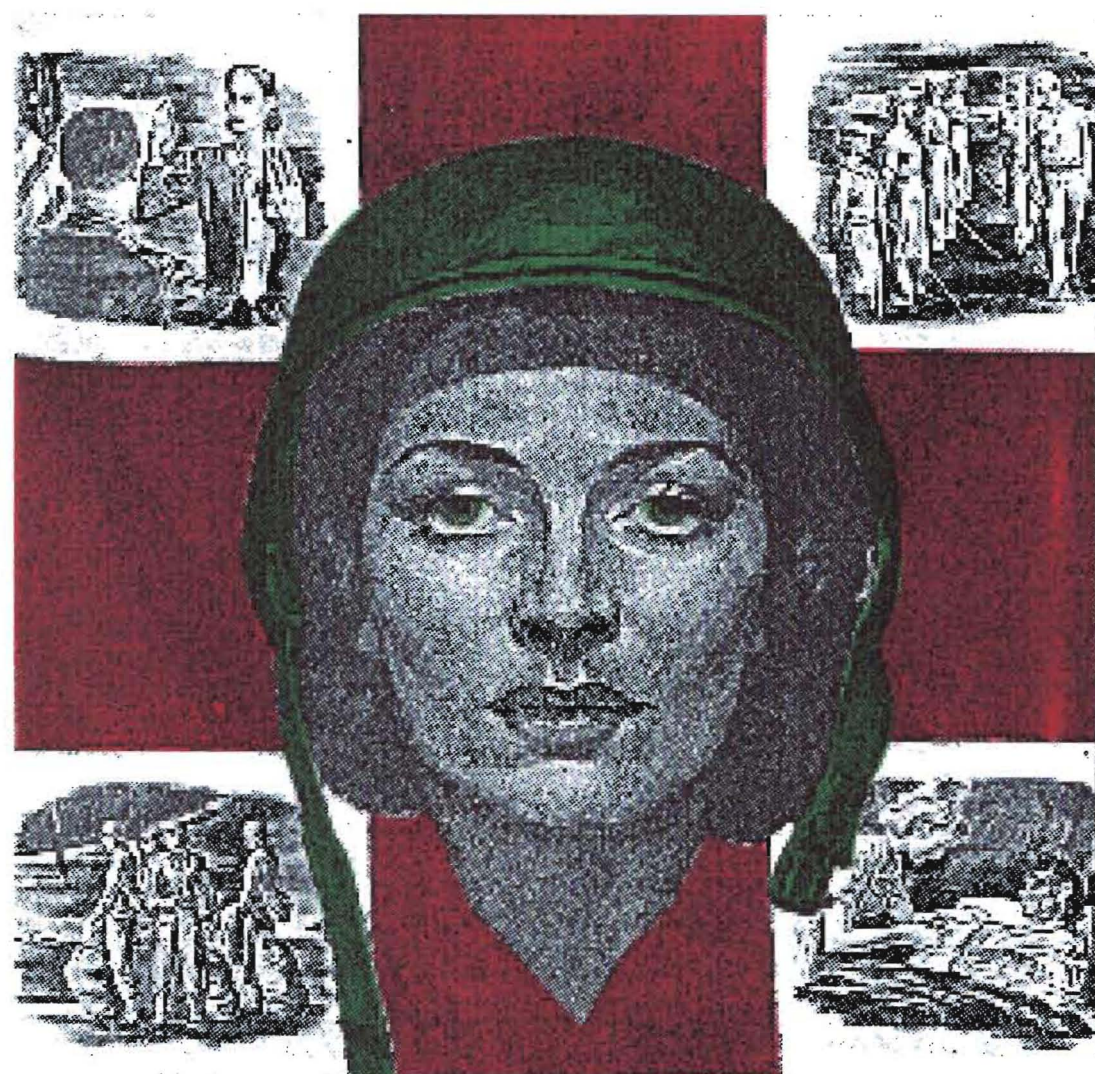
Her husband did not go overseas. She says that he:

Went to be examined but he came back 4-F. There were a lot of men in our community that did have to go. Their wives kind of looked down on me for awhile, until they found out that he was 4-F." They'd ask her, "Well, why in the world didn't your husband have to go?" Well, he had polio as a child and never regained full use of his arm. So, they wouldn't accept him in the service.

Throughout the war, Opal and her husband, Ross, were visited by friends. She remembers when one fellow that was in their wedding came home:

Our daughter was about three or four years old by this time when he came. I had taught her the Pledge of Allegiance. She stood up and said that Pledge of Allegiance for him. He was so amazed that that little tot could say that great big Pledge of Allegiance.

At the end of the war, the male teacher she replaced came home. She was terrified that he'd take his job back. Luckily for her, he went back to school so he could teach high school. Her job was safe and she continued her teaching career as a married woman.



QUESTIONING Why?

Why did women work during World War II?

Was it for patriotic reasons like the recruitment campaigns suggested?

Or was it for other reasons like economic advancement or personal satisfaction?

Maybe it was a combination of reasons.

Well, let's find out from these 12 women who worked during the second World War.

I did do volunteer work for patriotic reasons. During the time I worked in the bank, they needed volunteers to work at night in the Aircraft Warning Service. Young girls my age who volunteered would work from midnight to 6:00 a.m. two nights a week, assisting in the identification of any aircraft that came into the area. It was in connection with the army in downtown LA. Then we would go to work at 8:00 or 8:30 the next morning after working all night. That was done for patriotic reasons.

- *Thelma Babcock*

There was a need for work and [the high school students] wanted to be a part of it. They had older brothers or sisters in the action. They wanted to be supportive. Many things they could do, especially in a rural area where there's a lot of farming work to be done.

- *Velma Call*

Economic . . . My reasons were purely economic.

- *Mariam Babcock*

You have a lot of responsibility, especially a widow woman, a lone woman. My children had to be taken care of, and I'd bought a little home. It had to be paid for. I had to get a job somewhere. I know that's what I was thinking about when I left there. I got a job in a restaurant working in the kitchen. Hot hard work. Heavy lifting. It was a lot harder than working in the shipyard and a lot less pay.

- *Gladys Belcher*

My reasons were purely economical.

- *Thelma Babcock*

Instead of working alone all the time, like you did in domestic work, I was always with a bunch of other women. We had lunch together, we helped each other with our jobs. It was sort of a comradly thing, and it was very nice. Also, we rode back and forth with each other, so we made many new friends that you don't when you're working in an isolated job by yourself.

- *Margaret Wright*

I wanted to be a nurse. That was right in the area of the Depression. . . We didn't have the money [so] that I could go to nurses training. . . They needed \$100 for uniforms and that kind of thing. We just couldn't come up with that money. . . My high school Superintendent came over to my folks and said, "I think your girl would make a good teacher. I'll pay her tuition if you consent to her going to Carbondale to school." So, I did. Therefore, I had a means of making a living and making money. It wasn't the fact that we had to have it, but it was what I was prepared for and I liked to teach. So, I did.

- *Opal Nave*

My husband came home and said . . . "I just lost my camp director and [I have] a [day-care] person sitting upstairs in my apartment. Will you direct our camps?"

- *Janet Murray*

When it became evident that a woman, a married woman, could teach, a lot of married women went back to teaching. They could afford to leave their families.

- *Opal Nave*

Ever since I can remember, I either wanted to be a teacher or a nurse. . . History was always in my thoughts ever since I was in grade school. . . It just fascinated me.

- *Frances Alexander*

I had a daughter in 1940. I was out that [school] year. Then, my mother lived in the home with us. She was there to take care of the baby, so there was no reason why I shouldn't teach.

- *Opal Nave*

I got into intriguing situations because somebody would call my husband and say, will you go on such and such a committee? "Well, I don't have time so why don't you call Janet."

- *Janet Murray*

I always wanted to be a teacher from kindergarten on. I came home from school and played school.

- *Louise Lange*

I did quite a bit of substituting still. My husband didn't want me to take a full-time job, but I wanted to. He was very much opposed to that. We did farm pretty heavily. I was the gopher.

- *Velma Call*

We were going to get in on the ground floor and be welders for ever and ever. It was almost an art, as well as a skill. It was a very beautiful kind of work. At the end of the day I always felt I had accomplished something. There was a product. There was something to be seen.

– *Lola Weixel*

I just think I wanted to work for the money. We needed it with two children. I just liked to work. I've always liked to work. I started working when I was in the ninth grade and I think I worked until 1970 when we sold our store.

– *Helen Wilson*

I took the job because, number one, I needed work; number two, I'd had bad experience in jobs before where I hadn't felt any pride in the kind of work I was doing; number three, there was a war on and the people were all enthused about helping out in every way they could.

– *Lyn Childs*



HELEN WILSON

Helen recalls the day that war was declared. She heard it over the radio on a Sunday evening around 6:00. She and her husband had their bridge club over that night. Everyone came in, talking about it. People were excited.

Both Helen and her husband worked at Phillip's Petroleum. Helen worked in the Research Department of the library. She was fortunate, her husband didn't have to go to service. His job exempted him from the draft. He was needed to work in the oil company. She always had the fear that the restrictions would change and he'd have to go. That never happened.

She had two young children at the time that needed to be taken care of all day. She recalls:
I real lucky. There was a woman that lived next door to me that took care of an old, old woman and that took care of the children for me." She said that there weren't any day-care centers at that time.



THE IDEA SURVIVES

The United States government thought that it could persuade the public to willingly participate in wartime efforts. They thought that this could be accomplished without the use of paid advertisement.

Great Britain, on the other hand, knew from experience how important it was to utilize all available sources of propaganda in a time of crisis. Great Britain advised the United States government that “while fixing the ‘will to win’ spirit . . . that spirit must be translated into a sense of individual responsibility. . . Wisely, [their own] campaign was kept clear of the material appeal which is much less effective than that of service to the country in wartime.” (Honey, 130) Our government disregarded this advice and still did not seek the aid of advertisers. Instead, advertisers eventually sought out the government.

When the war began, the advertising industry faced possible extinction. Advertising was hit hard during the Depression, but was making a strong comeback when the war in Europe began. Unfortunately, “advertising, unlike the other mass media, was not principally an entertainer or informer but a seller of goods, and some aspect of its marketplace character made it exceedingly uncomfortable in a war situation.” (Fox, 10) This is mainly due to the fact that advertising had always focused on selling goods, which during World War II became practically nonexistent.

As the war began, many industries made contracts with the government and converted their factories to the production of war goods. Other consumer industries were seriously crippled by the restrictions placed on such materials as rubber, lead, and gasoline. Advertising firms’ clients found themselves with little or nothing to sell to the general consumer.

Through a desperate attempt, advertisers joined together to convince their clients and the government just how powerful their resources could be in selling the war. They founded the War Advertising Council (WAC) in November 1941, to save the industry and to sell an “idea.”

Advertising became a matter of economics to businesses on two levels. First, companies were becoming increasingly profitable. As profits went up, so did income taxes. Rather than giving their money to the government, businesses wanted to put their profits to use for their own future benefit.

This is where advertising became important. According to President Harry S. Truman, the Treasury Department allowed “the cost of advertising . . . [to be] charged by the advertisers on their books as an expense before profits, thus reducing the amount of profit on which federal income taxes are payable. This means that much of the advertising is indirectly paid for by the government.” (Wood, 448)

On a different level, companies desired to keep their names in the spotlight as much as possible until normal selling operations could be continued. However, different types of companies needed to employ different tactics. All, however, attempted to associate their names

with patriotism and victory.

Businesses involved in cosmetics, beauty supplies, canned and prepared foods and others who still provided consumer goods advertised their products as usual. But, they did include many references to the war effort, many of which were completely unfounded and unrelated to their products. Stories of absenteeism, loss of loved ones, and the importance of buying war bonds were intertwined within the selling of items like lipstick and carrots.

Then there was the:

Well known firms, which had little or nothing to sell because of shortages of goods or conversion to war production [who] kept their names alive by using liberal space to tell of their postwar plans, urge conservatism of material, and promote the war "drives." (Mott, 185)

This type of advertising became known as Institutional advertising, advertising that sold an "idea" not a product.

Altogether, companies with 75-100% of the ads supporting government campaigns no longer produced consumer goods. They had begun producing products for the government under war contracts. These ads sold the war, what the post-war era would bring, and their company's contribution to the war effort.

After being convinced that "the minds of men are the target to be attacked by the bullets of phrases," and "to influence what people think and feel and believe is considered fully as important as to back a hostile army" (Ogburn, 123), and that advertising could provide the means to this end, the government gladly welcomed the offered help. It is important to remember that all parties in this venture were willing participants who volunteered their services. Advertisers provided the link to the public, the government inadvertently supplied the funding, and businesses urged the public to support the war.

All in all, "advertising self-consciously came to promote a coherent view of what the war was all about, why the United States was involved in it, and what the significance of an American victory would be." (Fox, 101) Ads played on people's hopes and fears. "Propaganda is the distinctive instrument which manipulates not only the symbols by which people think, feel, believe; it worked with threats and promises to affect people's hopes and fears. It shapes human aspirations to what should happen and human expectations of what will happen." (Lerner, 1) It affected opinion, provoked action, provided worth and meaning to people's lives, and basically controlled millions of people.

This is what the government wanted to accomplish on its own. That is, before it realized what advertiser James Webb meant when he said that "we have within our hands the greatest aggregate means of mass education and persuasion the world has ever seen" (Honey, 31), they wanted to do it by themselves without any exterior help.



WAR ADVERTISING COUNCIL PROPOSAL:

20

Advertising can make people realize what Total War means.

It can convince the entire nation that there must be no bystanders in this war.

It can convince the country that every business and every family has a job to do.

It can paint the ghastly results of what will happen to America if we lose this war.

It can make people accept the terrific sacrifices that are coming, because it can make them understand why these sacrifices must be.

It can put zeal and fire needed to wage this war successfully into the heart of almost every American soldier, every American worker, every American business man, every American man, woman, and child.

It can make clear that in total war the fighters are not only those in the armed forces, those in our industrial plants, but all the members of every family--in EVERY HOME.

And that not until every home is ORGANIZED will the United States be fully organized for total war.

It can tell the story simply, clearly, and get the job done quickly.



FRANCES ALEXANDER

22

Frances taught U.S. History in high school. When the United States entered the war, some of her friends dropped out of teaching to work in war industries or join the military. She, too, thought about joining the Navy (WAVES). She decided to continue teaching for three basic reasons. First, she didn't want to end up at a secretarial job. Second, she thought it probably would be more strenuous than she should physically undertake. Third, she felt that she could do more good for her country if she continued teaching history and government.

Frances recalled that, "the Monday after Pearl Harbor we had a big assembly. . . The kids came to school, we did what we were supposed to do. There was always the tension of everybody." Frances knew what it was like to lose a student to war.

Before she taught high school and before the war, she had taught in the junior high school. So, by the time the war came, she had already had most of the students before. There were 19 boys that she had taught who lost their lives. "They were all good students. Nineteen of them. . . of course, the ones that I had over a period of years. . . students I had taught at one time or another."

THEY WERE My STUDENTS

24

Two teachers, Frances Alexander and Louise Lange, remember the overwhelming anxiety of their students in their last years of high school. They remember the boys who were lost. They remember their visits and letters. They remember their students who died during World War II. They remember the smiles, the laughter. They remember with sadness.

The Monday after Pearl Harbor we had a big assembly . . . the kids came to school, we did what we were supposed to do. There was always the tension of everybody.

– *Frances Alexander*

The boys, it was always in the back of their minds. And, especially if you had a boyfriend who was involved, the girls were anxious about it too.

– *Louise Lange*

I . . . remember that when they first started conscription, as they called the selective service, that we were the ones that had to register the men. Just get their names and addresses and ages and a few fundamental facts. They'd try to tell us all the things that were wrong with them, their bad backs . . . we had no control over it. . . If you have ever seen the picture of the men looking for their draft numbers on the courthouse wall . . . well, we were the ones that got all of those names, which then the draft board assigned numbers to and published there on the courthouse wall.

– *Louise Lange*

Numerous ones, as soon . . . as they graduated, volunteered. . . I'm sure that many of them in their last year, that was in their minds very much. It had its affect on the whole school—their friends, girlfriends, concern of families and teachers.

– *Frances Alexander*

I had taught my first year in high school in Charleston. Then I came to Mattoon and taught in junior high school. By World War II, I was teaching in the senior high school. So, there were a lot of kids that I had in the junior high school. During the war, there were 19 boys that I had taught who lost their lives.

– *Frances Alexander*

I remember especially this one boy, graduated 1942. He was one [who] right away volunteered. . . I always heard from him. He used to send me letters and stuff. I had a picture of him in his uniform. He was one of my favorite students. He was a wonderful boy. I remember the morning . . . he died and was killed in '43. It was on Easter Sunday . . . two of our planes collided. It was one of those friendly fire, accidental.

– *Frances Alexander*

It was a problem because the senior boys [and] to a certain extent the girls, they always had their minds on how long do I have? Will I get to graduate? I remember, for instance, the President of the senior class about along '44, might have even been '45, came in one day just at the end of the school year and said, "Well, I've got to go such and such a date." I said, "But Johnny, just tell them you can't go. You're the President of the senior class and you've got to do things at graduation." He looked at me and said, "Miss Lange, you sound so serious. You certainly don't believe what you say." Of course, I didn't. This was the kind of thing where he was just grabbed a couple of weeks before graduation. He really had some functions to perform at that point.

– Louise Lange

After they got into training they often would come back and visit a little bit and tell what they were experiencing. There was always an interesting one once in a while. One of my boys came back. He had gotten involved on the atomic bomb project. . . and he said, "I'm telling you some things I can't tell in public because I know you won't understand a bit of it." Very complimentary, but I understood because I didn't understand what he was talking about.

– Louise Lange

There was another one I remember so much. . . He was a tailgun. . . Well, I guess we don't know, he was missing in action. I guess we assumed he had been killed. But, he was showing me how his boots were the kind you could slip right out of. He said, "I'm telling you some things I don't tell my mother because she would be worried." I kind of always felt that he brought the war more closely to me than anybody else. He said, "Don't you worry Miss Lange, we'll take care of you." Just very personal about the whole thing.

– Louise Lange

That was one of the things I remember best, is their letters and their visits and their anxiety, all the way through

– Louise Lange

A number of them didn't come back. Some of the very finest of our boys. . . He was always kind of disjointed. He'd come bounding in the room. All he'd have to do was come in the room and everybody would start to laugh. He would anger me and I'd start to scold him. "Awe now Miss Lange, smile for me." I would just break up. I couldn't be serious with him. . . I thought the world of him, but he sure did give me a bad time.

– Louise Lange

They were all good students. Nineteen of them . . . of course, the ones that I had over a period of years. . . students I had taught at one time or another.

– Frances Alexander

One interesting thing, one boy that I had in class, was in the service, was home on leave. He was driving to Champaign or someplace. He was killed in an automobile accident. So, it wasn't all wartime death.

– Frances Alexander



LOUISE LANGE

Louise taught American History to juniors and seniors at Bloomington High School throughout the war period. At that time, women were still paid less than men. She recalls that:

At that point, women were paid less than men here. I remember, it was right about the end of the war, when the women from Bloomington High School got a little rebellious. We refused to sign our contracts unless they equalized the pay. We had quite an argument about that. The administration would say that they could ask the men to do more things than they could ask the women to do. Well, what they asked them to do, maybe, was to take tickets at football games. But they didn't ask them to have these clubs and manage this social affair and all these things. We were doing just as much. Well, then they'd say, "Well, the men have families to support." We'd say, "Some of the women have families to support, parents particularly." We argued. In the end, they did not give in. The last day at the last hour we signed our contracts. We really had them worried.

From 1939 to 1942 Louise earned \$1,710 per year. It wasn't a good salary, but it was enough to live on because prices were kept low. In the middle of the war she received a \$300 raise. By the 1944/1945 school year, she was making \$2,100 with a Master's Degree. After the wage hold was released, her salary did go up. In fact, she did get a \$700 raise near the end of the 40s.

More importantly, Louise remembers the boys that were lost in the war. Everyone was always worried about how much time they had left. Some were called to service just before they were supposed to graduate. For instance, the 1944 senior class President was called to service just a few weeks before graduation.

Her students would keep in touch after they left. That is one of the things she remembers best – their visits, their letters, their anxiety – all the way through.



IT'S A MATTER of CLASS

29

Wartime fiction became acutely concerned with the portrayal of women when the Magazine War Guide was established. The Magazine War Guide outlined specific objectives that the government wanted stressed, possible ways in which those objectives could be accomplished, and approximately when to employ those tactics. This publication was distributed to magazines all over the country through the Magazine Bureau, a government agency. For the most part, magazines cooperated with these guidelines, especially in relation to the female recruitment campaign.

Even differences between social classes could be detected in the way in which government issues were portrayed in fiction:

Because popular writers and advertisers had to appeal to a mass audience, the strategies they followed for mobilizing the female work force tell us a great deal about what the audience, particularly women, [valued] and how those values were meshed with themes the government wanted stressed. (Honey, 61)

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

Read largely by white, middle-class women, *The Saturday Evening Post* was a popular magazine during the 1940s. It romanticized middle-class ideals long before the war in Europe broke out.

Pre-war fiction in *The Saturday Evening Post* negatively portrayed working women. Attractive women gave up their careers for love, whereas unattractive women sought to maintain a career, leading unfulfilled, unhappy lives without male approval. In fact, a woman's only source of happiness was shown to be found through marriage and motherhood.

With the advent of war and the *Post's* willingness to cooperate with government desires, the portrayal of female characters shifted according to newly implemented social standards. It was now okay for women to work, even for married women to work. Older, middle-aged women were expected to work and work in traditionally male fields. Also, day-care facilities were occasionally represented as positive environments for children, making a choice between work and family obsolete; women could have both and be happy.

Under these new conditions, the heroine possessed certain characteristics. First, "the war worker often served as an object lesson in how the proper citizen ought to be behaving. She should tolerate unpleasant conditions, gladly sacrifice her own comfort, and love her country unreservedly." (Honey, 81) Self-sacrifice is a necessary quality. She was required to put both her country and her man before her own needs. Her patriotic efforts were constantly emphasized and always rewarded with romance.

The female heroine was an attractive woman whose war-minded efforts were rewarded with male approval. The "transformation of an ordinary or flippant young woman into a hardworking patriot who wins the love of a soldier through her steadfast dedication to the

war effort.” was the basic storyline of numerous stories. (Honey, 98)

Interestingly, what male approval was based on was intended to improve the image of the female war-worker. It was not just her physical characteristics that made her attractive, it was also the way she could handle it all. She was stepping into a man’s shoes and taking charge of the situation. Women were depicted as competent, successful, and assertive. They were independent and deserving of love.

Writers took their attributes and added romance to mundane war life. For instance, car-pooling, to conserve gasoline, could turn into a love affair. However, writer John Cawelti knew that they could not “write a successful adventure story about a social character type that the culture cannot conceive in heroic terms.” (Honey, 109) That is why they chose female characters who were successful, glamorous, attractive, and independent, placing them in exciting war jobs rather than lower-paying service jobs. Also, to comply with government directives, stories featured women in labor-short industries, glamorizing their jobs.

The majority of the *Post*’s fiction that highlighted factory work was printed between March 1943 and June 1944 during the heavy recruitment campaigns. During that time, 68% of the stories’ main characters were women.

TRUE STORIES

True Story was one of several Confession (Pulp) magazines that catered to the dreams and desires of America’s working-class women. It was known as a “confession” magazine because its fiction stories followed what was called a confession formula.

The formula led the heroine on a long trail of sin, suffering, and repentance. Generally, “the heroine is victimized or violates norms of behavior, suffers the consequences, learns a vital lesson about life, and vows to live by the lesson she has learned.” (Honey, 141) Before the war, the confession formula usually contained very sensational storylines, including subjects like abortion, adultery, rape, pre-marital sex, artificial insemination, homicide, and suicide.

Then the war started, Pulp magazines like *True Story* were eager to cooperate with government objectives. Dorothy Ducas, chief of the Magazine Bureau, agreed that “persons of inferior education on the lowest economic level are the most in need of understanding the true issues of the war” (Honey, 43)

In order to achieve government goals, *True Story* had to tone down the more sensational aspects of its fiction. The government wanted the war worker to serve as an example to follow. Therefore, she should not be shown in compromising situations.

The confession formula was further modified to produce a more positive image of working women. “Within the traditional confessions framework of self blame, punishment for

self-assertion, reliance on a male rescuer, and fulfillment through self-abnegation to a greater cause, whether that was home or country.” (Honey, 166) *True Story* gave its support to working women. These Characteristics attributed to the heroine are very similar to those in the *Saturday Evening Post*.

The difference lies in how the female perceives the heroine. In *True Story*, the fiction gave seemingly truthful accounts of “real” people. Readers saw women like themselves escape poverty, gain respect from the community, and win male approval through war work. Pulp heroines, like their real counterparts, gained “a new sense of pride in [themselves] and [their] origins.” (Honey, 159) They were told, showed, and believed that everybody, especially low-status American women like themselves, were defenders of the country and were important.

These emotion-filled stories were mainly printed from July 1943 to August 1945. In between these dates, a total of 136 articles, stories, editorials, and fillers were printed in 13 Pulp magazines. However, some writers found it difficult to follow the new guidelines. Therefore, some of the government’s goals were undermined. For instance, the glorification of motherhood and homemaking sporadically appeared throughout the war. Also, women were still frequently portrayed as followers, not as leaders.



THE DAMES OF FAME

With the coming of the war, the movie industry had to alter its practices and methodologies. To begin with, the loss of actors to the service left many leading roles to the women. Also "civilian morale was kept up by a heady mixture of commodities, romances, musicals, dramas, or any combination of all four, adapted to war themes" (Jeavons, 114)

These war themes encouraged females to participate in both military and defense efforts. The movies were geared toward the concerns of women on the home front who "comprised two-thirds of the wartime audience, and movies provided models of women who, like their counterparts in real life, undertook male responsibilities and learned to survive on their own." (Hartmann, 190)

The characteristic heroine of the movies closely paralleled the heroine of the fiction stories. First, in the movies she sacrificed her own goals to support those of the war, creating "inspirational characters from whom no gesture of courage or patience or underlying fidelity was considered excessive." (Haskell, 192) Second, they were attractive and available, possessing one salient feature such as lips, hips, legs or breasts. Lastly, they win the love of their man through their dedicated work and sensual features.

A new character created during the war was the military woman, fighting, loving and dying behind enemy lines. These films saluted the courage of combat nurses. They make military life appealing and exciting to the audience. Of course, the combat nurse was pictured as an extremely attractive person.

To lessen male characters' dis-ease with the female's new role, several tactics were employed. For example, women fought for men, not with men and they threatened men's lives, not their male egos. Another way in which the movies accomplished this was through, "the proliferation of women—broad, dames, and flavors, hard and soft center as a Whitman's sampler—as way of not having to concentrate on a single woman's stature by siphoning her qualities off into separate women." (Haskell, 208) This way, the heroine was not a real person, making her needs unnecessary to address.



MEMORIES . . .

35

Of course you weren't supposed to know when they were shipping . . . [my brother-in-law] was traveling with his equipment. He called his to meet him someplace. We got a telephone call saying, "You don't know where we are, but Eleanor's alright." So, they had a night and he managed to get to the boat before it went. But, we kept having people call, "Do you realize he's A-W-O-L?"

- *Janet Murray*

I had another brother-in-law . . . going into the Red Cross. His wife had come up here for the last day. He found out when he was going, so he went A-W-O-L with his wife for 24 hours.

- *Janet Murray*

My sister. . . her husband was sent out of the country in the middle of the summer before Pearl Harbor to set up radar stations, which were very hush-hush. . . Every night before she went to bed she kissed his picture. . . My mother came out and took her home. She was pregnant. . . The tension of having her husband overseas. She was so apprehensive of anything happening to this baby that her husband had never seen. . . If she got ill everybody was in a panic. She never saw her father until she was three and a half. . . Here is a war weary father. . . He meets his wife, who he hasn't seen for three and a half years. . . Then, my mother took Peggy, age three and a half, over to meet this tense man and wife that had been separated. . . This baby, the father is rough.

- *Janet Murray*

We had another fella in our community that had such bad knees, he had a way to go to walk. They took him in the service and he worked in a laundry. He always laughed and said that he worked in the laundry and they put a woman out in maintenance with the mechanics to repair trucks and flat tires and things of that sort. But it was because of his ability to get around. He just couldn't get around.

- *Opal Nave*

He was telling one time about how he was called to help in the kitchen. He had a great big, tall coffee pot. He was going down the line with all these soldiers, pouring coffee and pouring coffee right along. Every time he'd get about four people ahead, the boy would holler back and say "Awe, this coffee is awful, It's awful. It's awful." The whole side of the table. He couldn't imagine. It smelled good and it was given to him by the kitchen. He said he got down to the last one and he had to turn it up pretty high to pour it and a bar of soap knocked the lid off the top. So, no wonder it tasted bad.

- *Opal Nave*

We went on war time, as they called it, February 8, 1942. It was the same as daylight savings' time. So in February, when you're going to school around eight o'clock in the morning, it was black as could be. Dark, just like the middle of the night. I can still remember that eerie feeling. I thought I might as well be out at four o'clock in the morning, going to school.

- *Louise Lange*

A lot of these kids got jobs, part-time jobs. They would go to work right after school. In fact, I had them working on a local history project where they had to go to the historical museum to get their material. One of the times they would go, of course, would be right after school. They couldn't go because they had to go to work. I had to abandon the project because too many of them were going to work after school.

– *Louise Lange*

One of the interesting cases... we got involved in... Her boyfriend was in camp down somewhere in the Southern part of the United States... but she ran off and went down there to visit him. Her folks didn't know where she went. We had to locate her. I don't know whether he was pleased to see her or not with his training schedule. That was a lot out of the ordinary... I think they did finally marry after he got out of the service.

– *Velma Call*



Double Duty

38

People wondered who would take care of the daily household tasks if women, especially housewives and mothers, entered the work force. One legislator ventured to ask, "Who will do the cooking, the washing, the mending, the humble homey tasks to which every woman has devoted herself; who will rear and nurture the children?" (Winkler, 51) The answer to his question was the women. The same women who did these tasks before would continue doing them throughout the war period.

The American woman's "double duty" was begun. Women worked their shifts and came home to unfinished household chores. There was children to be fed, shopping to do, and clothes to iron.

Some women had help from their families. For example, Opal Nave, a teacher, split household tasks with her mother. While Opal worked, her mother would watch the children. Her mother also took care of the laundry and most of the cleaning. Opal took care of the shopping, the cooking, and the sewing. Another woman, Helen Wilson, a worker at Phillips Petroleum, said that her husband helped with the, "general care of the children and just general housework," however, he did not cook.

Most women, like Velma Call, did not receive much help from other people in their families. She recalls that she "did have his moral support. He was too busy with his own crops and his own things to even take care of the children or do any of the cooking."

Some women didn't even have a husband to turn to for help. Wanita Allen remembers that, as a single, working mother you had to, "rush, rush, rush, until you [got] through with everything--[got] dinner over with and [got] your washing out and [ironed] a few pieces and [tried] to clean up your house - by the time I got to bed it was almost time to get up in the morning. It just got to be too much."

Others, who weren't married yet, had a different type of "double day"--the two-job day. Thelma Babcock was one of those women. During the day she worked at a bank. The bank expected its workers to volunteer for the war effort. So, she did. She volunteered two nights a week after work. This is what her days were like:

During the time I worked in the bank, they needed volunteers to work at night in the Aircraft Warning Service. Young girls my age who volunteered would work from midnight to 6:00 a.m. two nights a week, assisting in the identification of any aircraft that came into the area. It was in connection with the army in downtown LA. Then we would go to work at 8:00 or 8:30 the next morning after working all night.

I would work during the day and those particular nights when I volunteered I would come home and sleep after dinner. Then, at midnight an army truck would come and pick us up and take us to the place downtown where we worked. Then we would go to work the next day right from there. We got

off at 6:00 and we would rest for a while if we wanted to.

No matter how they experienced it, wartime double duty was physically exhausting. Women were working full-time, sometimes longer. They were taking care of the children and keeping the household going. Sleep was often minimal, starting their days early and finishing them late. Janet Murray is one woman who experienced and did it all. This is how she explained her typical days during the war.

In town, I had to get up and get these two children off. I would take Sue while her father took the other one over to the bus. But, there was a problem picking children up and delivering them.

We had to teach [our oldest daughter] to ride on the New York city buses from East Harlem up across Harlem. People can't understand how we were ever able to do it, but they never were bothered. She got along alright. She had to get on a bus at 104th Street, which went up to 125th Street and then across 125th Street, which was the center of Harlem. Then, on a corner there, she had to change to a bus that took her up to Broadway and back up to 120th Street.

I would get Sue ready and then take her to Kindergarten. . . by taking [the] 3rd Avenue bus down to 86th Street. Then walk four blocks over, leaving her at school, then come back. Then, maybe have a student to interview or whatever other field work. Sometimes I had a committee meeting. So, I took her along. [I] fed her and she went along wherever the committee meeting was, by whatever bus. Then we'd get back home.

[My husband] didn't have much time. He helped when he could, but at that stage. . . I fell asleep before the children did. Susie was very awful. She'd come in and poke me. "Mommy, may I do so and so?" I'd see her the next day doing it. "What in the world are you doing?" "You said I could."

[One night] I came out of dinner and ran across a bunch of our staff, sitting around. They said, "Can you imagine what it's like for these mothers . . . ? Do you realize they have to get up in the morning, get breakfast, feed their children, bring them over here. Then, they go to work all day. Then, they come pick them up and they come home and they have to get supper. Then they have to wash the dishes and then they may have to wash the children's clothes so they can go to school the next day. Can you imagine what that's like?" I said, "Well, let me tell you this. I get up and I get two children off to school. . . when I go home tonight, I still have to wash my breakfast dishes and I still have to iron a dress for Sue, so she can go to school tomorrow."

But it was just too complicated and I was just getting too exhausted. I felt I had to give it up.

What happened was I got so involved in volunteer work at the church and other things that when I went back to work I met somebody when I was out in the park, walking the dog, that said, "Ah, you look so rested Janet." I said, "Yes, I'm working again."

During the war, wage-earning women devoted 34 hours a week to housework. (Hartmann, 1968) This was drastically less time than non-wage-earning women who devoted 56 hours a week to housework. (Hartmann, 1968) The difference is attributed to the time available for such work.

Household tasks were also more difficult and time consuming because of the shortages of civilian goods. Conservation of material made it difficult or impossible to buy new appliances or other products that would make housework easier. Recall that Opal Nave did the sewing for her family. She recounts:

One thing that affected me was at the close of the war. I wanted a new sewing machine. I had sewed on a machine that my dad had got in 1912 when he and my mother got married. . . I said to my husband, "I just have to have a new sewing machine, but I bet we can't get one because of the scarcity of material." So, we went to Centralia to the Singer sewing machine place. I asked the man if he had any sewing machines. "Yeah," he said, "I got a lot of sewing machines. Come on back." He set up eight or ten sewing machines and I got a new Singer sewing machine. I'll remember that for a long, long time.

The long hours, inconvenient hindrances, and extra work all led to the exhaustion of the female labor supply. Many were not able to handle both work and family well. For some, the recruitment slogan "for the duration" meant "as long as she can last."

MARCELLA ALVERSON

42

Marcella heard about Pearl Harbor over the radio. At the time, she was teaching History at William Penn in Chicago, Illinois. There were 3,000 students attending William Penn at that time.

She recalls helping register men for rationing stamps. They would close down the schools for a day or two. The teachers would come in and collect all the necessary information from people. She remembers a morning in 1941 when she had to stand on Madison Avenue in Chicago, waiting for a bus at 5:00 a.m. to register people at 7:00 a.m. at school.

Marcella's typical day began at 9:00 a.m. in the classroom, but was far from over. After school, she volunteered at the Draft Board. She worked there from 4:00 to 11:00 p.m. on weekdays and came in on Sundays. They found her teaching education to be extremely helpful, therefore, they gave her a lot of responsibility. She mainly worked with the gasoline rationing.

She volunteered at the Draft Board for a total of five years, from 1941-1946. She recalls that not many people wanted to volunteer her first year there, however, by the second year, women wanted to help with the war effort and many more volunteered. Marcella said that volunteering became the thing to do.

In 1943, Marcella tried to enlist in the Navy. Unfortunately, several things worked against her. First, by 1943 she was too old to be anything but an officer. Second, the Navy needed teachers the year before, but not then. Third, she was over educated for most available positions. Therefore, Marcella was not able to join the Navy and she continued her teaching career.



DUAL Vision

44

Society quickly adjusted to women's new role as worker because the image advertising created did not stray too far from traditional values. All of Rosie's riveters were portrayed simultaneously on two levels. One advocated and praised participation. The other emphasized and stressed specific feminine qualities.

On one level, advertising placed great significance on the female war worker. First, she was expected to work for patriotic reasons. Second, she was strong enough to replace a man. Third, she was quite capable, like the pioneer woman, of keeping everything on the home front running smoothly in the absence of men. This meant that she had to successfully tackle two jobs--home and work--at once. Fourth, the female worker symbolized freedom and represented what the American way of life was all about--family and community life.

Advertisers tried to downplay other possible motivators for women to work like economic, personal satisfaction, dissatisfaction with housework, loneliness, desire for independence, or excitement from challenging work, while emphasizing women's patriotic commitment. The government wanted "more than just favorable compliance. [They wanted] zeal, enthusiasm, and individual initiative that [would] raise the standard of the whole effort. [They needed] Home Front Heroes." (Honey, 109) By focusing on the patriotic efforts of war workers, personal benefits were hidden. At the same time, the importance of participating in the war endeavor was greatly magnified.

Rosie the Riveter became a national heroine, fighting for freedom. Her job on the home front was just as important as the soldier's on the front-line. Overnight, "the woman worker had become a first-place citizen whose contribution was recognized by everyone as indispensable to national survival." (Chafe, 148) Propaganda was then "aimed at 'the man behind the man behind the gun.'" (Lerner, 1) Such headlines as "Soldiers of Service," "Soldiers Without Guns," "Secretary of War," and "Her Biggest Job is War" were above photographs or drawings of women on the job. Her status was elevated and it was often said that it was up to the women to decide if Americans would live free or as a slave.

Now, the war worker couldn't be just any girl. She had to be strong enough, dependable enough, dedicated enough, and tough enough to fill the shoes of a man. After all, she was required to perform skilled, traditionally male jobs with little training. She had to prove herself in a male world where, according to advertising, her success meant victory or defeat. If she did well, America would win the war. If she wasted materials, was absent from work, or inadequately completed her job, America as everyone knew it would be on the verge of elimination. Her complete effort was crucial to national survival.

Rosie proved she could do it all. She could work as hard as a man in a man's job and still keep up the home. Often, she was compared to the pioneer woman, who, while her husband went off, had to take care of the children, the house, the animals, and the crops and fight off Indians and Outlaws until he came back.

Finally advertisers chose her, the working woman, to represent what America was fighting for. She was working and the soldier was fighting to protect her way of life. "It is women who [asserted] the myths of community . . . who [proposed] a world of children and homes and porches and kitchens and neighbors and gossip and schools," all of what the familiar American value-system was based on. (Wood, 42) She was the epitome of what America was, should be, and would be after the war.

Yet, on a different level, advertisers kept the working women very close to their traditional role as woman. First, she was expected to sacrifice her own wants and desires for the benefit of her country. This is just a new context for the feminine self-sacrificial role for the benefit of the family. This hid the benefits women received from working in male fields. Second, women were reminded time and time again that their new positions in society were only temporary. Third, jobs were reassessed, not women. Fourth, her femininity was greatly stressed as an important if not necessary feature in every woman. Finally, by equating women with American values, advertisers made women symbolize the white, middle-class, patriarchal family.

Through depicting woman as only working out of duty to their country, it undermined her position. She was seen as merely a helper rather than a worker. She relinquished her own rights as an individual to serve someone else, whether it was her country during war or her husband during peace. In essence, she was still confined to the traditional female role as supporter, but was found in a new context.

This characterization of the female worker masked the more advantageous aspects for seeking war work. If she was still seen as only a helper, she wouldn't be interested in the higher wages, more satisfying work, or independence that male fields offered. All she was doing was assisting her man and her country win the war so that she could return to her prior role as home maker.

It was continually asserted that women would return home after peace. Campaigns often used the phrase "For the Duration" to signify that working women's new role was strictly temporary. Women were hired, knowing that they would be replaced by veterans when the war ended. They were dependents, men were providers. Therefore, their services would only be necessary as long as there were no providers out of work. Since their only motivation to work, according to advertisements, was to help win the war, there would be no reason to continue working when the war was won.

Another way in which women were tied to the home was how employers reassigned job value to fit within women's traditional role. Women weren't really doing men's work after all. They were simply completing similar tasks as they would at home. Many comparisons were drawn between housework and factory work. To cite some examples; cutting sheet metal was the same as cutting a dress, spotwelding was like sewing, a drill press was as easy to operate as a juice extractor, stamping and piling parts was similar to cutting cookies, and ordering parts was compared to shopping at a bargain center. These parallels kept women's abilities

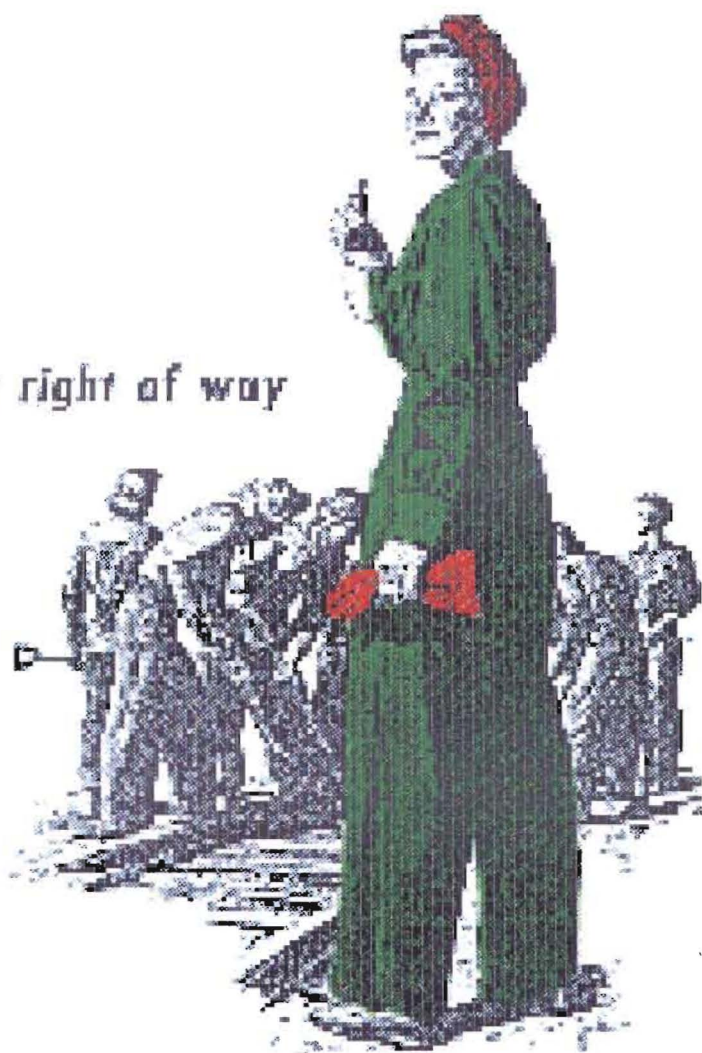
subordinate to those of men, not equal to them.

Society showed a great fear that women would not be as feminine as they were before the war if they did the same work as men and wore male clothing. Advertisers put those fears to rest by focusing on the sensuous, sexual, and attractive attributes of female workers. They even went as far as to assert that war work often enhanced the positive feminine characteristics in a girl. The media's stress on personal appearance can be shown in this excerpt of a *Life* article:

Now, at day's end, her hands may be bruised, there's grease under her nails, her make-up is smudged and her curls out of place. When she checks in the next morning at 6:30 a.m. her hands will be smooth, her nails polished, her make-up and curls in order, for Marguerite is neither drudge nor slave but the heroine of a new order. (Anderson, 61)

Remember that this feminine beauty was also fighting to restore American society. She was fighting to return to the dependent housewife and mother, fighting so her husband could once again be the sole provider. She was fighting for familiarity and safety found within American values. She supported the family, community, and society. She was the vulnerable, innocent wife who could be counted on to stand tall and fight like a man. However, it was the wife, the mother, the homemaker that was standing up for freedom not the woman, the individual, the citizen. Advertising made sure of that.

ANGELS *guard our right of way*



**Words Used to Describe
Women During
World War II
48**

Adventurous

Angel

Attentive

Capable

Citizens

Cooperate

Dedicated

Delicate

Dependable

Dependent

Domestic

Efficient

Energetic

Feminine

Fighter

Guardian

Helper

Heroine

Homemaker

Important

Indispensable

Industrious

Innocent

Ladylike

Militant

Mothers

Nurturer

Patriotic

Reliable

Respected

Sexual

Skillful

Soldiers

Stoic

Strong

Subordinate

Supportive

Symbols

Tough

Vulnerable

Wives

Womanliness

Workers

Youthful



VELMA CALL

Before the war and before she got married, Velma taught school. During the war she only did substitute teaching instead of working full-time for two reasons. First, at that time, "if you were married while you were teaching, your contract was invalid. Now, warrant, if they liked the teacher, they could make a new contract." Second, her husband disapproved of her working full-time.

Velma showed some interest in the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). There was an air base not too far from where she lived:

I would have loved to fly a plane and go up there. Some of my friends did, but I had two small children. My husband didn't approve of that either, so I didn't do it. I used to watch them fly over our place when they were training.

Instead of joining the WASPs, Velma got involved in Civil Defense. They helped the rationing boards, provided transportation to blood-drives, and prepared places for refugees in case Chicago, St. Louis, or the air base were attacked. She lived in the center of these three points.

Velma remembers another interesting story about a woman in town:

One of the church organist's grandson was in the airforce. She insisted always on playing *On a Wing and a Prayer* at church services. So, she and the minister had a few difficulties. He didn't think that was a religious song. . . She played it anyhow. She'd wait until they were leaving. . . She played that song every Sunday.



WHAT WE Did & Did Without

52

The American public needed to conserve practically everything—food, raw materials, energy, clothing—during the war. Janet Murray recalls that “everybody was trying to do everything that they could to help in whatever way they could to fight the war.” This not only meant boys going into service or women finding jobs. This also meant people going out of their way, making daily sacrifices to conserve the country’s resources. People did many special things to accomplish what they could.

Food was a major resource that was heavily rationed during the war. Many people grew or raised their own food to lighten the food shortage. “Victory Gardens” sprung up all over the country. Granted, these gardens were like any other garden with the exception that advertising placed significant meaning on them. They were directly tied to victory. The more food Americans grew on their own, the more food soldiers would have to eat, gain energy from, and fight the Axis until Victory came.

Some people grew Victory Gardens because they enjoyed it. Opal Nave and her husband did:
We were big gardeners. We raised a lot of our own food. We enjoyed gardening in the first place. We had a good garden spot. We raised a lot of food. My mother canned and canned and canned, because everything we had, we didn’t have to buy.

Others, like Helen Wilson’s husband, were encouraged to do so by their employers. Many companies made a big deal about how they were contributing to the war effort and what their employees were doing to help. Helen remembers that “everybody at Phillips had a victory garden.”

Still, some people did more to help conserve food. Many people grew their own chickens, both out of and in town. Velma Call lived on a farm where before the war she raised only one batch of chickens. During the war “red meats were rationed, poultry wasn’t . . . and [she] raised three batches of chickens through the summer instead of one.” In town, this was more difficult. Helen’s husband had to put some shelves and wire up in the garage. She said “that’s the way you could raise chickens in town. He’s raise 50 at a time and then he’d put them in the freezer. That was a war effort thing to help wit your food.”

Efforts were made to conserve raw materials, too. Car-pooling helped conserve both gas and rubber. By sharing rides, people’s tires were not worn out as fast and not as much gas was consumed. Also, since gas and tires were rationed, car-pooling was a way to get by with the limited amounts allowed. This is how people in Opal Nave’s community got by:

We had to drive six miles to school and back each day. We had trouble getting a tire sometimes. . . Ross’s sister lived in the community and she would drive a week and then I’d drive a week or a month at a time, whatever. We’d take turns. Then there was some people in our town that worked at the shoe factory. . . They rode in with us and they’d come home with Ross at night when he’d come home at night.

Louise Lange, an U.S. History teacher, talked about how energy conservation was nothing new in the schools:

Well, we were coming out of the Depression so we still knew how to economize. We were supposed to be conserving during the war anyway. I know that when we had discussions we'd turn off the lights. . . . Our lights were set that we could turn them on half of the room. So, the window side didn't get any lights and the other side did. We would try to be economical like that.

Today, many people don't think of blood as an important resource during a war, but it is and was. Blood drives were set up all over the country to help save wounded soldiers. However, it was not possible to set up a facility in every city or every town. This is where Velma's work with Civil Defense came in. There was not a blood drive set up in her town, but she was responsible for providing transportation on certain days of the month to the nearest location for any volunteers.

The government needed help collecting information for the rationing board. Because of their education and skills with working with people, the government chose teachers to register people for rationing stamps. Louise Lange recalls a particular story when:

The teachers were asked to . . . register people for rationing. They closed the school for a day or two days. We would register people. I remember registering businesses for commercial sugar like restaurants and bakeries and things like that. I can remember the man who ran [a bakery] downtown. He happened to be our next door neighbor. I said "You use so much sugar now. Now, you are not going to be able to have that much sugar." "But," he said, "we have to have it. We bake our own pies." I said, "I'm sorry." But, of course I wasn't doing the rationing, but I had to get the information from him as to what he had. I said "I'm sorry, but I just know you're not going to get that much sugar." They'd just close the schools and use the teachers as the staff.

Louise did receive some benefits from being a teacher. She said that it was hard to get certain kinds of food during the war, but she got some help in obtaining items. She thought back to what some of her students did:

A few of my kids kind of got the idea that they worked in grocery stores as stockers or checkers or something. They'd bring stuff to school. They'd have, maybe, some jello. That was very hard to get, or sugar would be hard, anything sugary or sweet would be difficult to get. Bananas, that was a real prize to get bananas. . . . A few of them, near the end of the war, got onto the idea of bringing things like that. I thought that was rather interesting and rather thoughtful of them, too. I don't know whether they thought they were getting brownie points. They weren't. At least it was thoughtful of them.

Velma was affected in a different way by the food rationing. Her husband would hire hands to help with the farm work. Before rationing stamps were issued, Velma fed the hired help their lunches. After rationing, only the men who would give her some of their food stamps would be fed lunch. "The ones that didn't, brought their lunches or went home." That is just one example of the changes that occurred because of rationed food.

Another product that was rationed was shoes. Velma remembers that "the shoe ration was very difficult when you've got children because they outgrow shoes so fast." Many people got together with other families with children and handed shoes down from one family to the next. Many times, the shoes were almost like brand new because the first child outgrew them so quickly.

Being a teacher, Opal was constantly on her feet. One interesting incident she remembered:

I know shoes were quite a problem because we had to have good, comfortable shoes, being on our feet all day and that kind of thing. We found a Naturalizer Oxford at Centralia that we all liked so well because they were so comfortable. . . . It was real funny that the kids noticed that we were all wearing the same kind of shoes. They said, "Do teachers have to wear those shoes?" But it was for the comfort that we had them, not that we had to wear them.

Even with rationing stamps, there just weren't things on the shelves. People, like Helen, hunted all over for particular things they wanted. Helen smoked at the time and would have to stand in line just to buy cigarettes. She would go from grocery store to grocery store just to find some.

Some people were not as diligent as Helen. Instead, some people cheated to get what they wanted. Although Velma says that there really wasn't much cheating, what there was of it would be brought in front of the Civil Defense Board:

Piddly stuff you might say. You got some people using fraudulent stamps. . . You did get a lot of stealing of rationing stamps. People's car gas was rationed. They would leave their stamps in the glove compartment in the car and get them stolen. Things like that. You never knew whether they were really stolen or whether it was a way of getting extra gasoline stamps.

By the end of the war, companies were reconverting to consumer goods and products were once again available. Many people took advantage of this long awaited for situation and bought new appliances. Opal will always remember replacing her mother's 1912 sewing machine with a brand new Singer sewing machine. Materials to build the sewing machine were scarce during the war, but were plentiful in the end.

In addition, many new consumer products were tested in the military. Velma recalls that

"Corningware was discovered. It was hard enough to take the heat on the planes and [then]. . . of course Corningware could stand heat in your oven." Many of the new products made life more convenient.

So the people of America put forth their best efforts and endured the war hardships in order to enjoy a better, more enriched life later. They did and did without for a brighter American future of plenitude.



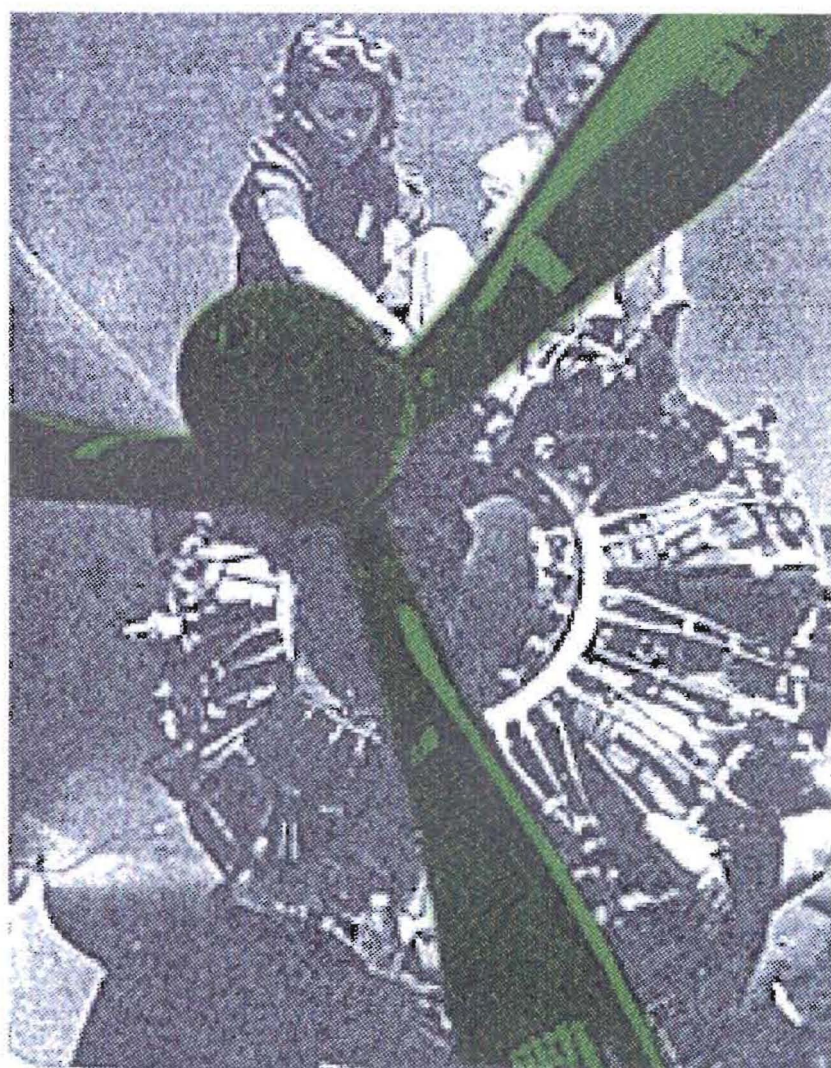
MARIAM Babcock

Mariam worked at several places during World War II. The first place was a furniture factory's office, doing some typing, accounting and other secretarial tasks.

Next, she worked for North American Defense Plant, an airplane manufacturer. There, she did a variety of things, including some secretarial work. Also, she did some airplane spotting and was on the board that would release balloons that would go up in defense if attacked. She scheduled the army escort of planes to ships to be sent overseas and worked on the contracts for the lend/lease program with England. The time the convoys were to be shipped was entirely secret.

After switching jobs several more times, she went to work for Western Airlines. This is after she had applied and was accepted to the Women's Airforce Service Pilots. WASPs performed several services, including towing target planes for men to shoot at and ferrying planes over to Europe. Mariam had learned to fly just before the war prior to the grounding of civilian planes.

Unfortunately, approximately one month before she was to leave, the entire WASP program was cancelled. They believed that women were not strong enough to fly the planes. The expense of learning to fly on her own deterred Mariam from pursuing her dream.



ON THE Job

59

IMPROVEMENTS

Employers, some more than others, did attempt to make women more comfortable in the workplace to a certain degree. Early in the manpower crisis, the Women's Bureau insisted that factories provide restrooms, adequate toilets, cafeterias, good lighting, and comfortable chairs for female employees. For the most part, management consented.

Additional improvements were made by some factories like longer rest periods, improved ventilation, improved health and accident facilities, implementation of safety regulations, protection of machines, and mandatory dress codes consisting of overalls, slacks, and goggles. Much rarer were such special concessions as day-care facilities, credit unions, and car-pooling networks.

In order to compensate for female workers' general inexperience and lesser physical strength employers had to reengineer their production processes. First, they quickly trained the women in a series of short courses limited to the tasks they were needed to perform. These tasks were made easier. Complicated steps were broken down into component parts to be performed separately.

Secondly, employers invested in conveyor belts, automatic elevators, mobile cranes, electronic push buttons, and lighter tools to reduce the strength required. To compensate for women's smaller physical size machine heights were lowered and required arm-reach was reduced.

Further efforts were made to help females adjust to their new environment. For instance, many companies began hiring female supervisors for their female workers. They felt that women were more likely to share their concerns and problems with other women. In addition, more counselors, especially female counselors, were employed to help deal with the problems experienced by working women at home and at work. In an attempt to lessen discrimination on the job, the counselors were also used to help male workers adjust to the presence of women.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Although war plant conditions did improve during the war, war plant atmospheres were usually very tense. Discrimination against and harassment towards female workers could be found at the company, the management, the supervisor, and the co-worker levels.

For starters, female employees were only trained for the immediate task at hand. Unlike their male counterparts, they were not required, or given the option, to go through an extensive training period in which they would learn several additional skills. This practice was founded in part on the urgent need for workers and in part on the belief that women were only temporary workers and would not need to use any other skills than absolutely necessary. However, companies did show a keen interest in how their female workers were managing

their life. Often, "women's sections of union and employer publications included advice on homemaking, personal appearance, and relationships, notably those involving men." (Anderson, 60) Emphasis on those personal issues deemphasized women's role as worker.

Many female workers complained of petty harassments that further alienated them from management. One 1944 complaint stated:

Management is engaging in a vicious and deliberate campaign to induce women to quit by transferring them from one department to another, by assigning women the least desirable jobs, and by an unceasing psychological drive to harass women out of the plant.

Other women recall how their every move was under surveillance. Ruth Wolf remembers how difficult it was to get permission to go to the washroom:

They timed us so we could not go to the washroom. At first, we did not even have a restroom—then finally they built one for us. But if the foreman saw you going down those steps more than once or twice in a morning, he'd say, "Why are you leaving that job?"

Women's nerves were put to the test, working under male supervisors. When the person who was supposed to train them wanted them gone, jobs were made more difficult to complete correctly. Anne Swenson was fired from her war job. Her male supervisor would purposefully hinder her capability to see what he demonstrated so that she would be incapable of completing the job correctly. She got so nervous when she had to do something that she fell apart and spoiled stuff.

Male workers had several reasons to object to working with women. First, during the war, a man's job was to fight in the front-lines. Therefore, the men left at home already had feelings of inadequacy. It did not help their spirits that women were now doing the same job as them.

Second, men were infuriated by the privileges women gained. "Men who had prepared for jobs with years of apprenticeship resented women benefiting from the high wages and good working conditions for which men had so long struggled." (Hartmann, 63) They were envious of women's gains like longer rest periods, more desirable shifts, and newer restroom facilities.

Third, men were unable to view women outside the roles of housewife and sexual object. They claimed that their wives would be jealous and that the presence of women would be distracting. All too often, "Whistles and catcalls followed the women as they attempted to do their jobs." (Anderson, 47) The tension can be seen through the words of a Boeing mechanic:

You'd think those fellows down there had never seen a girl. Every time a skirt would whip by up there, you could hear the whistles above the riveting, and I'll bet the girls could feel the focus of every eye in the place.

Such sexual harassment was all too common and extremely unbearable, testing every nerve in a woman's body.

Equal Pay

Equal pay was a rather large issue during World War II. However, the debate did not focus on equality in the workforce. Employers and government agencies paid attention to the wage variance only when lower wages for women threatened male jobs.

The problem rested on two levels. First, if companies equalized male and female wages, traditional role barriers would be lowered. Paying equal rates legitimized females working in non-traditional fields, deemphasizing the temporariness of the situation. Second, if women were paid less than men, returning soldiers' wages and jobs were threatened. Employers would be tempted to offer lower wages to returning veterans, knowing that they could employ capable women for less money.

To retain higher male wages after the war, the government mandated, but didn't enforce, equal pay for women replacing men on the job. A small technicality in this which showed the government's disinterest in the position of women in the workplace was that the government's mandate did not include equal pay for women who replaced other women in traditional female fields. Likewise, five states, where 1/4 of all female workers resided, enacted their own laws concerning equal pay in order to sustain future male wages.

When the government restricted wage rises, the National War Labor Board issued General Wage Order No. 16 in November 1942. It stated that employers could "equalize the wage or salary rates paid to females with rates paid to males for comparable quality and quantity of work" (Kessler-Harris, 289). Again, this did not address wage rates in traditional female fields. Employers were given the perfect opportunity to avoid paying women more. They just had to claim that women were not producing comparable quality or quantity that their male counterparts were producing. For one reason or another, equal pay for women was not achieved during the war.



JANET MURRAY

63

Near the start of the war, Janet tried to steer clear of working and volunteering. She, her husband, and their two daughters had just moved into the Settlement house her husband ran. She felt that it was important to be with her children at all times in that kind of situation.

However, Janet was never one to stay uninvolved. Soon, just to name a few of her activities, she was part of several volunteer groups, was sitting on several committee boards, was running the day-care camp at the Settlement house, was in charge of the female volunteers, and was supervising female student social workers.

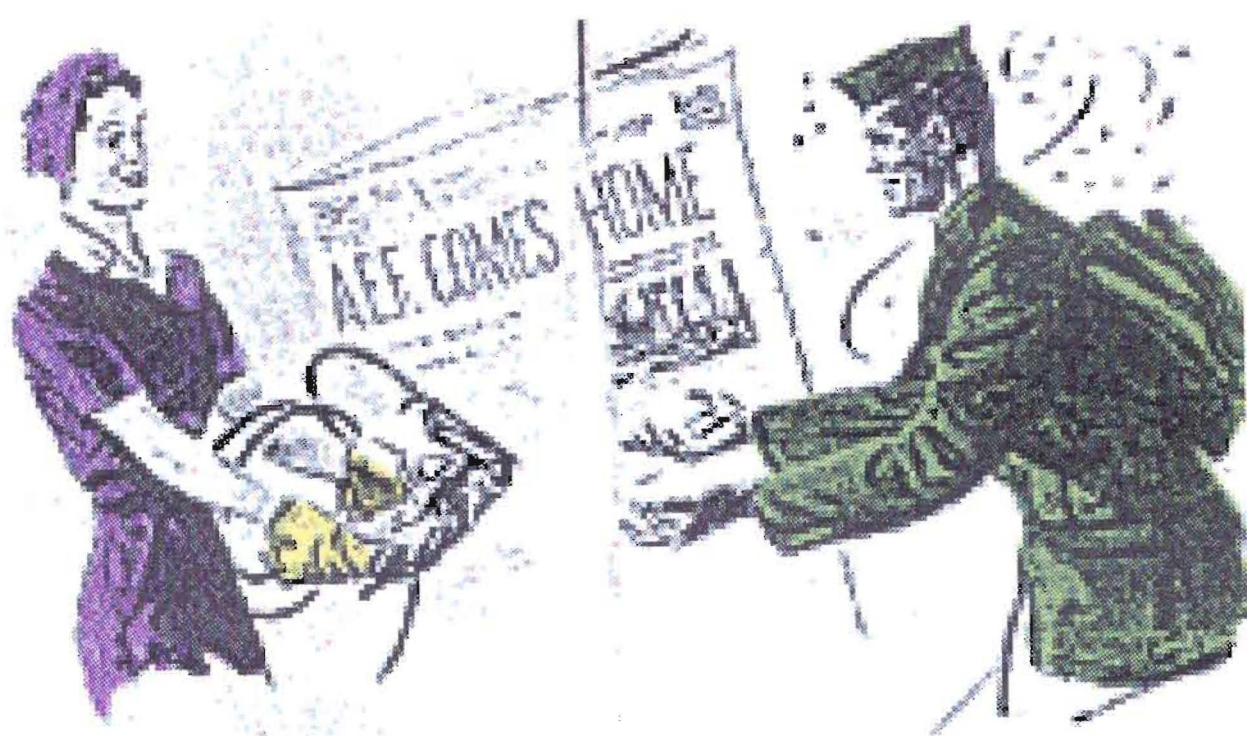
She recalls a particular problem she faced while supervising the college students:

We found terrific pressures on our young women, the college women, in terms of all the men were away. . . I couldn't get older teenagers. My handymen were 15 year old. . . I found out that my college juniors and seniors were going out with these boys and had had some affairs with them . . . Other camp directors had some of the same problems in terms of this terrific sex drive for girls, chasing younger men because others weren't available.

Both Janet's and her husband's schedules were so busy that dropping off and picking up their children at school was quite a problem. They had to teach their oldest daughter how to ride the New York city bus system. People still can't believe how they managed that.

Actually, the only time Janet and her husband were able to get away from work, day or night, was to go to a movie. Otherwise, their dinners, children's baths, and sleep were interrupted. Someone always needed them to do something.

Janet got so busy that she finally told her husband, "I'm going to be indispensable until I quit. And I'm saying right now I'm quitting, because I have to have this last year or so with the children." Even though she did cut back her activities, she never did completely stop working.



THAT'S OPINIONABLE

It is not easy to forget the propaganda of two decades even in the face of a national emergency such as a great war. Women themselves doubted their ability to do a man's job. Married women with families were loath to leave their homes; society had made so little provision for the thousands of jobs that a homemaker must tackle. And when they finally come into the plants, the men resent them as potential scabs.

- *Theresa Wolfson, economist*

During the war years, you had to work a double job, you had to work hard and cook dinner and clean house, pick up children, everything.

- *Clovis Walker, shipyard worker*

There's no place to relax. We even eat our lunches standing up at a corner across the street. We wash our hands in troughs, and if we want to smoke we have to go off the grounds or down into the tunnels. . . it's sort of like being in the army.

- *Boeing worker*

Jobs were not safe. Women were "too delicate" to go to war or do dangerous things, but they would let us be blown up sifting gunpowder. Every last one of us who worked in that department was a woman, and it was very, very dangerous.

- *Margaret Wright, munitions worker*

We like our girls to be neat and trim and well put together. It helps their morale. It helps our prestige too.

- *Personnel manager of a plant*

A woman must not go berserk over the new opportunities for masculine clothing and mannish actions "or else she would forfeit her femininity and thus her happiness."

- *Seattle Times article*

The first responsibility of women with young children, in war as in peace, is to give suitable care in their own homes to their children.

- *Manpower Commission, 1942*

If a woman had a husband and a family and all, they still thought the woman's place was in the home. She could knit and she could do the jobs like I did.

- *Velma Call*

Maternal employment would result in unsupervised, under fed children ripe for the "breeding grounds [of] delinquency."

- *National Association of Day Nurseries*

Women must bear and rear children; husbands must support them.

- *Willard Waller, Barnard Sociologist*

Woman's duty was to her species. If we are to have an adequate birthrate, we must hear less talk about woman's rights and more about their duty to the race. The plain fact is, women do not produce children under the conditions of freedom and equality that have existed in the United States since the last war . . . usually the career of a brilliant woman is brought at the cost of an empty nursery. The price is too high.

- Willard Waller, *Barnard Sociologist*

You know, during the war they [were] telling you to work dishes that you cook quicker and get on to work. Now, they were telling you how to cook dishes that took a full day. There were more articles in there about raising your children. They never did mention that, you know, before the war.

- Margaret Wright

[Women] just had no more drive to be ladies [after the war]. I can remember saying, "they want to wear beautiful lounge coats."

- Janet Murray

Most of the women at that time were not strong enough to handle the aircraft. It took the strength of a grown man to fly

- Merwin Babcock, *pilot*

I think they prepare women psychologically for whatever role the society wants at the particular time for them to play. After losing so many men, America wanted babies. And we wanted babies. That's ok. But we gave up everything for that. We gave up everything.

- Lola Weixel, *welder*

Women are working only to win the war and will return to their home duties after the war is won. They will look on this period as an interlude, just as their men who have been called to service will consider military duties as an interlude. The women are like Cincinnatus, who left his plow to save Rome and then returned to his plow. Women will always be women.

- Betty Allie, *State's Women's Compensation Official*

Government and industry must not assume that all women can be treated as a reserve group during war only, nor should those who wish to stay in the labor market be accused of taking men's jobs . . . any easy assumptions that a great number of women will return to their homes is to be seriously questioned.

- *Women's Advisory Commitment*

No society can boast of domestic ideals if it utilizes womanpower in a crisis and neglects it in peace.

- *Women's Advisory Committee*

To take for granted that a woman does not need work and use this assumption as a basis for dismissal is no less unfair than if the same assumption were used as a basis for dismissal of a man.

- *Woman's Advisory Committee*

War jobs have uncovered unsuspected abilities in American women. Why lose all these abilities because of a belief that "a woman's place is in the home." For some it is, for others not.

- *A Worker*

"If [women] are capable, I don't see why they should give up their position to men. . . the old theory that a women's place is in the home no longer exists. Those days are gone forever.

- *Female Steelworker*

[Women will] be better wives and homemakers [through factory work]: they'll know how tired a man is when he comes home.

- *Fred Crawford, head National Association of Merchants*

We all noticed that women were working more, but it didn't bother me at all. I just started competing with them.

- *Merwin Babcock, pilot*

[The veterans] were changed. The war changed them. Of course, their age would, too. They really matured over there.

- *Velma Call, Civil Defense*

It didn't affect me at all. I don't think it bothered anybody else either. They just came back, found a slot, and started fitting into it.

- *Merwin Babcock, pilot*

It wasn't like a dance in the opera. The men came home beat up, the men came home with problems. They gave them free ads in the newspapers looking for jobs, but it was pathetic.

- *Lola Weixel, welder*

As swiftly as in a dream, the image of the American woman as a changing, growing individual in a changing world was shattered. . . Her limitless world shrunk to the cozy world of home.

- *Betty Friedan*



THELMA BABCOCK

Thelma was a secretary at Citizens' National Trust & Savings Bank in Los Angeles, California at the start of the war. She was encouraged by the bank to volunteer a few nights a week. So, she helped identify aircraft at the Aircraft Warning Service two nights a week from 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. She describes the work that she did:

Each person would be assigned to a particular part of the Los Angeles area.

It was done in a room with a huge map that showed the whole area. As the target came into my particular area, I picked it up from the girl next to me and moved it across the area until it went into another area and it was picked up there from another person.

It was a large table with people sitting all around it so the whole area was watched that way. It was all over seen by army officers on a balcony that went all around the room. All men watching housewives and working women answering phones.

Later, she worked for a short time at Kingman Army Air Field as a secretary in the Adjutant General's office before she got married and stopped working. Her husband, Merwin, was overseas, flying disabled aircraft back to base. Thelma never went back to work.



HE'S BACK

71

Focus on Him

With the coming of peace, veterans were on their way home. They needed jobs. America wanted a stable economy. Society wanted familiarity. These, among other reasons, all put pressure on women to return to their homes. People believed that if women worked there would not be enough jobs for men. Since men were the providers of the family, the economy would be in danger. Also, the war had brought so many changes that the American people wanted the “old days” back. They wanted dad to work and mom to stay home—the typical middle-class, patriarchal, American family.

There were advocates of women working. Women were capable and competent workers. There should have been enough jobs available for men and women to work if they chose. They argued that some women were providers for their families. Many single mothers, who lost their husbands during the war, needed to work. Women wanted to work and were willing to fight for it. They were, however, up against very stiff competition and discrimination. Many who stayed in the workforce accepted lower-paying, lower-status jobs.

As peace drew nearer, a change in advertisements could be seen. Women were seldom featured in war jobs. Instead, they were shown as secretaries, as nurses, as teachers, as diner waitresses, and especially as housewives and mothers. Ads focused on reassuring veterans that their jobs were waiting for them. There really was “little doubt that women [would] be required to leave their jobs at the end of the war to permit the return of men to their jobs as they [were] released from the armed forces.” (Honey, 26) The recruitment campaigns during the conflict had stressed that the situation was temporary. Well, their time was up.

The country was concentrating on the long-term needs of male workers, disregarding those of women. The nation “assumed responsibility for veterans’ economic well-being, and this, too, contributed to a disparity in status between men and women.” (Hartmann, 25). The Selective Service Act gave Veterans seniority over wartime workers, making employers bound by federal law to rehire veterans. Since women were the last hired, they were the first fired.

Go Home

Advertising quickly shifted from convincing women to work to persuading them to go home. Three aspects of wartime advertising facilitated this process. First, they were only recruited “for the duration.” Second, their femininity was retained as they performed masculine jobs. Third, feminine self-sacrifice was the motivation for women to return to customary roles.

During the war, the war worker, stepped out of the home to help serve her country and save her man. When that was accomplished, she was expected to once again move out of the way so that her man could have his job back:

The coming of peace will work no unemployment hardships on you. You women, have been employed because the armed services called your husbands, brothers,

or sons.. Each serviceman will get his job back when the war is won. And you women and girls will go home, back to being housewives and mothers again, as you promised to do when you came to work for us. If all industry would adopt this simple policy, there would be no serious postwar problems of unemployment.

- *Bill Jack vs. Adolph Hitler, March of Dimes Newsreel*

Leaving her war job to return home was shown as her reward for a job well done. Media implied that most women would stop working if given the chance. Ads praised women who voluntarily left their jobs, while they began a vicious attack on women who continued working, whether they were working out of need or choice was not the issue. They were supposed to leave so the men could have their jobs.

The focus on the peacetime consumer economy portrayed women as consumers—not producers. Postwar prosperity depended on patriarchal, white, middle-class, single-income American families. Working women threatened the stability of this “ideal” family. She was taking a husband’s, a father’s, a provider’s job and financial security away from him and his family.

Public opinion reflected the same concerns as advertising. It was a “widespread conviction that working women would quietly and willingly withdraw from the labor force to make way for male job seekers.” (Anderson, 161) This belief was based on women’s basic nature. Their ability to be what is considered to be women, as Betty Allie, State Women’s Compensation Official asserts:

Women are working only to win the war and will return to their home duties after the war is won. They will look on this period as an interlude, just as their men who have been called to service will consider military duties as an interlude. The women are like Cincinnatus who left his plow to save Rome and then returned to his plow. Women will always be women.

Society once again supported a one-wage-earner family. People believed that the women belonged at home and that the soldiers needed to be the breadwinners. In fact, public opinion surveys indicated most Americans “believed in perpetuating a sharp division of labor between the sexes.” (Chafe, 177) Women who continued to work against social demands were accused of being their husbands’ rivals. They were not, however, really given a chance to become worthy adversaries.

Employers in heavy industry laid women off at the highest rates than any other industry. This area also had the lowest quit rates. In addition, this area was where women made the largest gains, which required the most changes in social attitudes. With society once again supporting traditional female roles, heavy industry held no future for women workers. Ada Habermehl remembers “one afternoon just before the war ended they laid off 108 of us. You never heard so many women crying in all your life.” (Frank, 19)

Employers not only fired women, they also discriminated against them in hiring practices. "Women expected loss of jobs to veterans with high seniority, but they didn't expect trouble finding other jobs or keeping the seniority they gained." (Frank, 20) Older, married, and black women found it extremely difficult to find new employment. This was because employers reinstated age requirements and restrictions on married women.

Federal law guaranteed to servicewomen most of the benefits offered to servicemen. However, "the discrimination experienced by ex-servicewomen [was] derived from the assumption that women were economic dependents, not supporters." (Hartmann, 44). Hiring officials frequently did not recognize servicewomen's reemployment rights and often hired men with less seniority than the women had. Gladys Belcher recalled:

I knew the job would terminate when the war was over, so I went to school after work for four hours so that when I got out of there, I could get a job welding. They were needing welders at Mare Island (navy shipyard). So I took my card and all my credentials and I laid my papers on the desk. He said, "If you was a man, we'd hire you, but we can't hire you, you're a woman."

That was just how it was. Nothing else needed to be said.

WE CAN STAY

Not everyone believed that women should just go home. To some, the old theory that a woman's place was in the home no longer existed. The war had "uncovered unsuspected abilities in American women. Why lose all [those] abilities because of a belief that 'a woman's place [was] in her home.' For some it [was], for others not." (Chafe, 178) Women should not have to give up their positions to men.

The Woman's Advisory Committee was a strong backer for women's right to work. WAC realized that "prospects for job security and other new job opportunities after the war [were] as important to women as to men," something that the nation ignored. WAC also pointed out the absurd assumptions made by employers:

To take for granted that a woman does not need to work and use this assumption as a basis for dismissal is no less unfair than if the same assumptions were used as a basis for dismissal of a man.

Even though women were not able to keep their skilled, high-paying jobs, they did not disappear from the workforce as many had anticipated. Instead, there was a redistribution of women into other fields. These new positions were often less attractive and offered much less money than women's former war jobs.

The fields that wanted or accepted female workers included non-durable goods and service

positions. Typewriter companies encouraged clerical work. Other ads encouraged nursing, teaching, and waitressing.

Some women continued to work because they just wanted to work. Others worked out of economic necessity. Many women who worked before the war for economic reasons, continued to work after the war for the same reasons. Others, had families to support because their husbands did not return from the war. They had children that need to be fed and clothed. They needed to work to survive. This was why Gladys Belcher accepted a less desirable job:

You had a lot of responsibility, especially a widow woman, a lone woman. My children had to be taken care of, and I'd bought a little home. It had to be paid for. I had to get a job somewhere, somehow. I know that's what I was thinking about when I left there. I got a job in a restaurant working in the kitchen. Hot, hard work. Heavy lifting. It was a lot harder than working in the shipyard and a lot less pay.

She was not alone in the struggle to provide for her family. Employers just assumed all women were dependents. They refused to take into consideration that women like Gladys needed a job as much as any man.



DOROTHY FUNSCH

76

When the war broke out, Dorothy was dissatisfied with her job at a bank in Chicago. At the time, she didn't know what to do. There were recruitment campaigns everywhere and one of her friends, Barbara Krandal, was going to enlist in the Navy. After discussing it with her parents, she decided to enlist with her friend.

The night before she had to go to Chicago for her physical, she was visiting family relations on their farm. Their dog bit her in the leg. Needless to say, she was required to have a second physical and prove the dog did not have rabies.

Dorothy was called to service in September. She spent one month in boot camp at Hunter College, New York. Then, she was given her choice of assignments. She could either take a clerical technician position or a hospital core position.

She wanted to do something besides clerical work, so she trained for one month in Texas for the hospital core before she was transferred to California. They took one look at her past clerical experience at the bank and sent her right to the hospital's records office. However, she didn't mind after witnessing what the other women were required to do. They worked 14 hours a day in the wards.

Her hours were much lighter, leaving more time to see California. She recalls one evening in Santa Cruz when she was dancing the Polka with a sailor. Lawrence Welk was there and watched them dance.

Some of the things she did in the Records office included keeping track of when soldiers came back, when they were discharged, or where they were sent. She issued new ID cards and tags when soldiers lost them. Also, she personally typed over 400 honorable discharges.

Dorothy reached the rank of 3rd classman, equivalent to a low-class sergeant. She recalls that you had to study and take a test to move up in rank. Sometimes, they made the test really easy, other times really difficult. It just depended on when you took the test.

She served in the Navy for 27 months. The war in the Pacific ended in August. She was discharged in December. She said that it was only "for the duration," and that she was ready to go home.

Your
Baby
or
Your
Job



Photo © 1992



YOUR Baby OR YOUR Job?

78

"Your baby or your job?" was a rhetorical question addressed to women at the end of the war. It did not need to be answered. Society, backed by advertising, had already made the only acceptable choice for all women—"your baby."

During World War II, women represented America, symbolized society, and were the heroines of the family. Both, "during and after the war the importance of women being supportive and subordinating their own goals to the requirements of family and society was emphasized." (Anderson, 177)

America wanted mothers, not career women. Willard Waller, a Barnard sociologist, explained what society expected of women:

Women's duty was to her species. . . If we are to have an adequate birthrate, we must hear less talk about women's rights and more about their duty to the race. The plain fact is, women do not produce children under the conditions of freedom and equality that have existed in the United States since the last war. . . Usually the career of a brilliant woman is brought at the cost of an empty nursery. The price is too high.

The price was too high for who?—should be the correct question. The women were paying the price for being the national heroine of the family. They had to give up their independence, their aspirations, their high-paying jobs, their satisfaction in a job well done. They had to sacrifice it all for what was considered to be their "duty," not their choice. Lola Weixel is one woman worker who sacrificed it all:

I think they prepare women psychologically for whatever role the society wants at the particular time for them to play. After losing so many men, America wanted babies. And we wanted babies. That's ok. But we gave up everything for that. We gave up everything.

Women were expected to do more than just give proper care for their children at home. They played a "primary role in veterans' readjustment to family life." (Hartmann, 112) They were required to hand over their jobs to the returning soldiers. Wives were expected to ease their husband's adjustment to civilian life, be sensitive and responsive, show tenderness and admiration, be submissive, and adjust their own needs to their husbands'.

Women who chose not to follow the mandates of society were publicly ridiculed. They were shown as destroying the stability of the family. Working mothers "were critically portrayed in the popular culture as selfishly and willingly causing divorce, juvenile delinquency, crime, and other problems affecting the postwar population." (Frank, 95) She became the scapegoat for all of society's ailments created by war.

Divorce rates soared after soldiers came home. Society blamed this on working women.

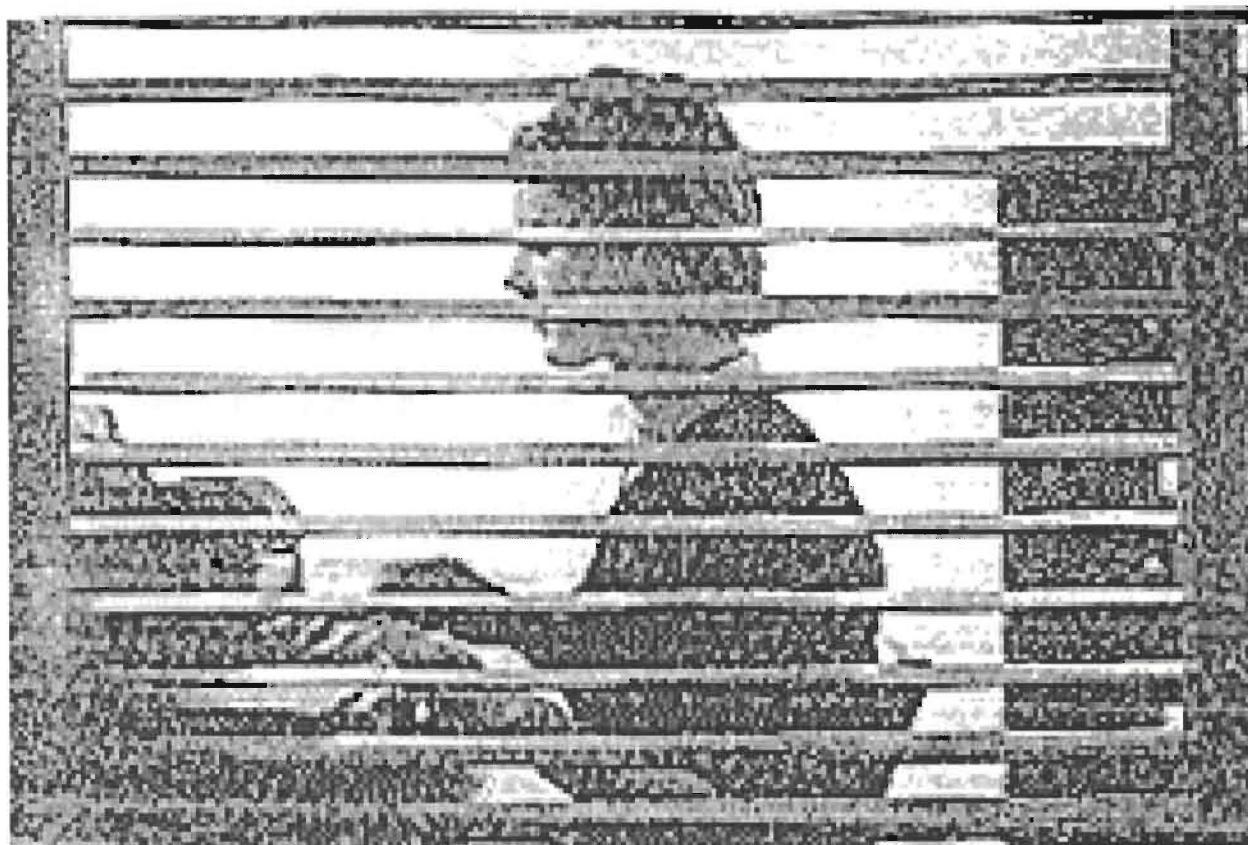
They weren't submissive enough. They didn't give up their independence to be dependent on their husbands again. They no longer stayed in their proper place. They did not, therefore, adequately care for their husbands' needs. They did not help their husbands readjust to civilian life, causing marriages to fall apart. Ads never mentioned that many divorces were caused by the inability of veterans to readjust to society. They came home with problems. Problems that disrupted the family. Yet, it was always the woman's fault for not catering to his needs.

Adverse effects on children of working mothers were a major issue addressed by advertising. Ads began to show unhappy children of working mothers. The National Association of Day Nurseries believed that "maternal employment would result in unsupervised, underfed children ripe for the breeding grounds [of] delinquency." (Weiner, III)

The chain of children's problems stemmed from their mother's neglect. Working mothers did not give their children enough love and did not spend enough time with them each day. It was popular belief that "the regular removal of a mother from the home for even part of the day . . . interfered with the attachment process and snapped important bonds between mother and child that were crucial for the formation of trust, stability, and cognitive development." (Weiner, II5)

Part of this neglect included leaving their children at home by themselves until they returned from work. These children were known as "latch-key" kids. With little or no supervision, these kids contributed to the rising incidents of juvenile delinquency. From 1941-1944 high school enrollment across the nation dropped by more than one million students. Also, the juvenile crime rate rose, especially in theft, property damage, and sexual misconduct.

All of these problems were shown to be caused by working mothers. Again, nothing in the advertisements was mentioned about the effect the absence of children's fathers had on children. It was the mothers fault according to advertising and according to society.



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** An additional 31 books were consulted and reviewed for background information—conditions before and after World War II, additional topics not covered under this subject during World War II, and sociological and psychological aspects of advertising and propaganda—to aid in the understanding of and the context in which the aspects of the researched topic occurred.

Jennifer Bowman
September 10, 1993
Research Honors Proposal

How Advertising Reacted to and Influenced Social Demands Placed on Women During World War II.

When social views change, advertising must make adaptations. Likewise, society's beliefs are influenced by the messages conveyed through advertisements. A time of war brings about many social changes that advertising must react to. For example, during World War II, social demands on women varied greatly from the time preceding to the time during to the time immediately following the war. When America joined the war, women entered the work force, taking over traditionally male positions. Advertising techniques shifted in order to support and influence the new social opinion concerning the role women were allowed to play during wartime. However, when the boys came home, so did the women. Men took control of their former jobs as women returned to the household. Society changed its views back to the belief that women belonged in the home. Once again advertising had to make adjustments to keep up with the changing demands of society.

I will be researching the popular magazines and newspapers during World War II, focusing on the articles and ads aimed at the female audience. Also, I will study books and articles written on the role women played during World War II and on the advertising techniques used to promote the war effort. In addition, I will conduct personal interviews with women who were of working age during World War II to see what influenced their decision to or not to enter the workforce. This will be done in an effort to find out how much influence advertising had on society's beliefs as compared to how much influence social demands had on advertising techniques. I will compare and contrast the different techniques, strategies, and focus of articles in magazines and newspapers during the time women were working for the war effort as opposed to those employed after women returned to their homes. I will present my findings in written form and also in a visual presentation of which the format will be chosen for the information to be displayed appropriately.

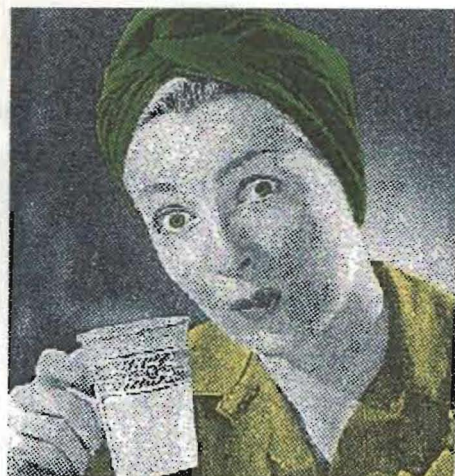
I expect to find that advertising techniques and strategies played a very influential role in the decision process for the working age women of the time. Since during a time of war, the entire society is dependant upon the media to keep them updated on what is happening at the war front, women would have been exposed much more frequently to the headlines of the papers. Also, I expect to find a very small change in the techniques used to persuade women to enter the workforce as opposed to the techniques used to influence women to return home. The difference between the advertisements will mainly show up in their content, not their format.

1924

ADVERTISING REALITIES



Home Front Propaganda Aimed
at Women During WWII and After.



War Advertising Council Proposal:

“Advertising can make people realize what Total War means.

It can convince the entire nation that there must be no bystanders in this war.

It can convince the country that every business and every family has a job to do.

It can paint the ghastly results of what will happen to America if we lose this war.

It can make people accept the terrific sacrifices that are coming, because it can make them understand why these sacrifices must be made.

CONVINCED



SOLDIERS *without guns*

It can put zeal and fire needed to wage this war successfully into the heart of almost every American soldier, every American worker, every American business man, every American man, woman, and child. It can make clear that in total war the fighters are not only those in the armed forces, those in our industrial plants, but all the members of every family — in EVERY HOME.

And that not until every home is ORGANIZED will the United States be fully organized for total war. It can tell the story simply, clearly, and get the job done quickly."

— Wood, p. 446

Organized



Media portrayal of women war workers: Young, white, middle-class. Entered workforce with patriotic motives. Eagerly left to start families and homemaking.

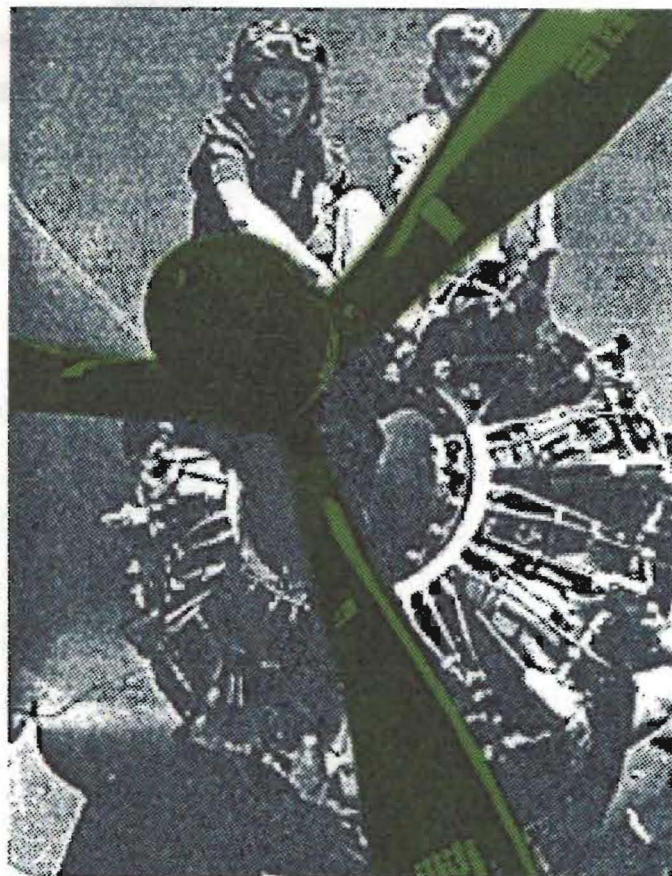
— *Harvey, p. 19*



*Is she chained
to your desk?*

**“Government propaganda films
and posters recruiting war workers
for factories were aimed only at
white people.”**

— Frank, p. 49



“She was expected to work for patriotic reasons and to support the war effort of the men in her life.”

— Weiner, p. 119

Supported

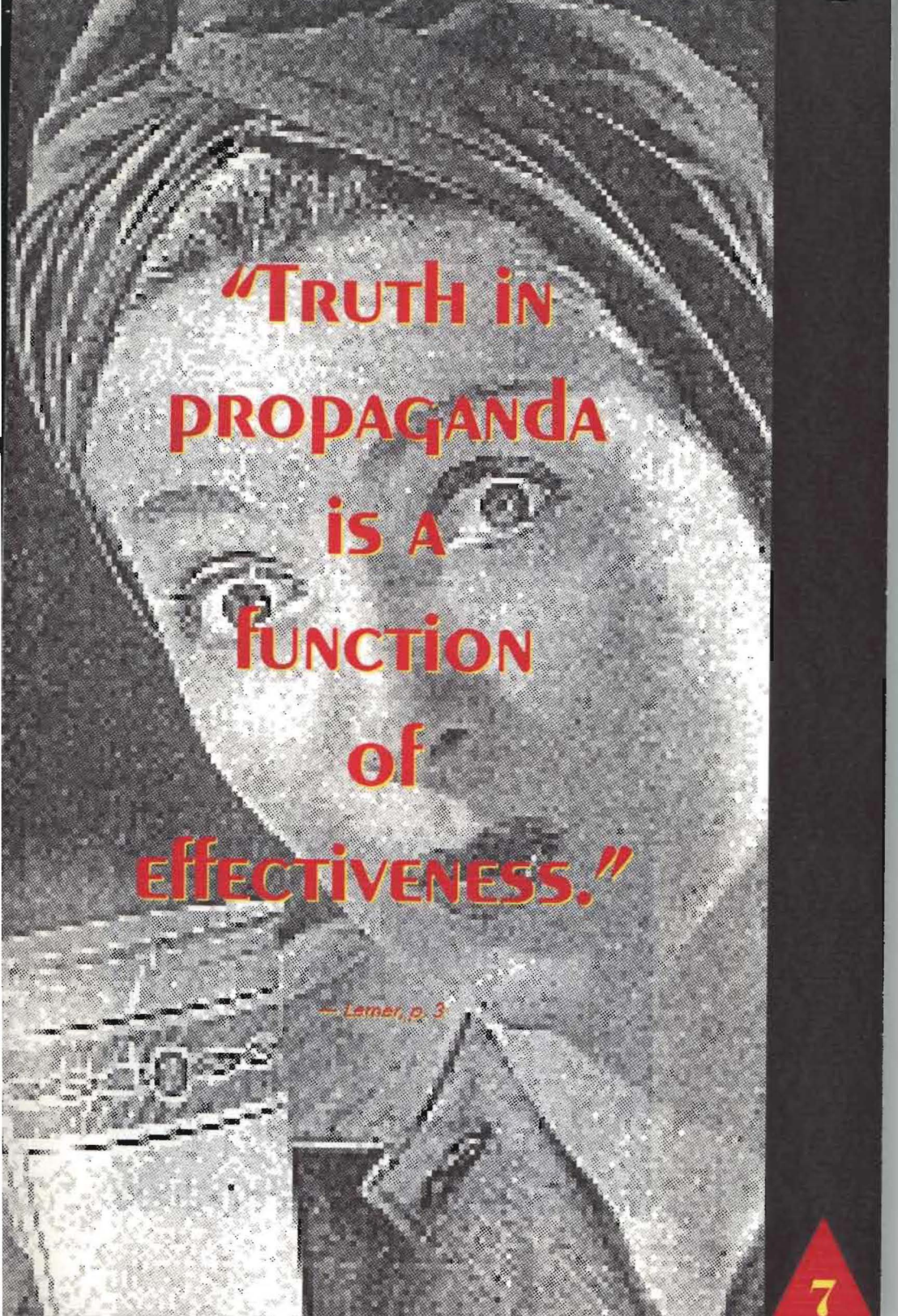
SECRETARY OF WAR:



“As women moved into the public sphere, they were reminded that their new positions were temporary, that retaining the traditional feminine characteristics was essential, and that their familial roles continued to take precedence over all other.”

—Hartmann, p. 22

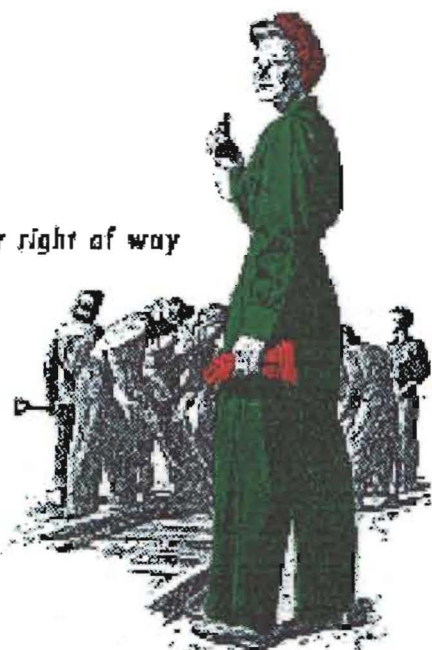
Reminded



**"TRUTH IN
PROPAGANDA
IS A
FUNCTION
OF
EFFECTIVENESS."**

— Lerner, p. 3

ANGELS guard our right of way



“The woman worker had become a first-class citizen whose contribution was recognized by everyone as indispensable to national survival.”

— *Life*, p. 140

Recognized

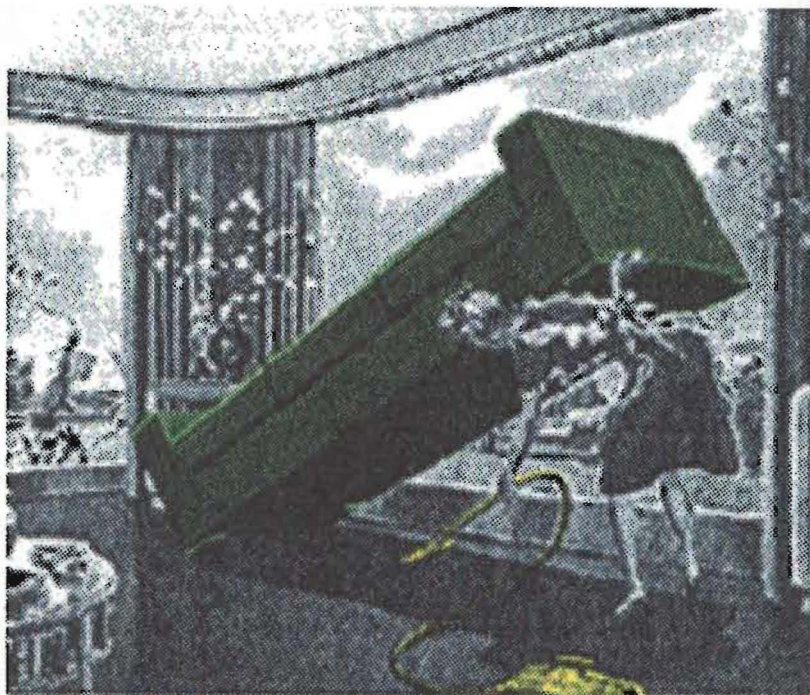


Aimed

Here's a gun that shoots planes—together!

Propaganda: “Aimed at ‘the man
behind the man behind
the gun.’”

—Lester K. Born



"Magnesium makes the day's work lighter"

“Viewed above all as wives and mothers, and their own concerns were more firmly rooted in the family.”

— Hartmann, p. 16

Adjusted



“Americans adjusted to women’s new prominence in the public realm because that position was defined in terms which denied the erosion of cherished social norms.”

— H. S. GARDNER, p. 32

When the wounded come home

“The citizen must be convinced that, unless he [or she] cooperated, he personally will pay a penalty, either through loss of the war or through loss of something precious to him — his son in the armed forces, his political rights and social privileges, his future freedom.”

— *Chavez Lake Chiriqui, 1942*



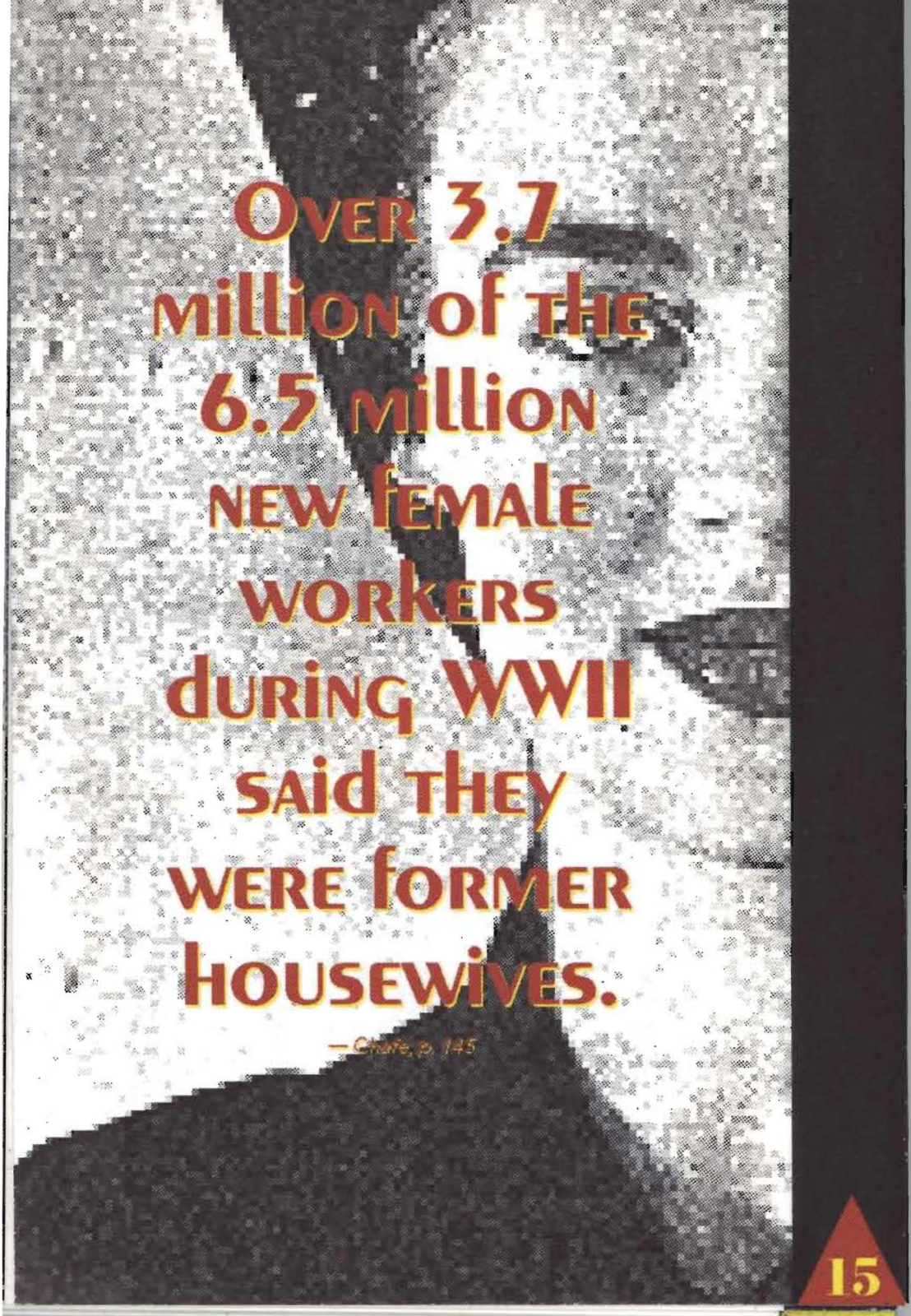
Inspired

Two models of American women
inspired people

“The guardian of the hearth,
who represents vulnerability,
spirituality, and nurturance.”

“The tough fighter who can
work beside men as an equal.”

—Honey, 1975



**OVER 3.7
million of THE
6.5 million
NEW FEMALE
WORKERS
DURING WWII
SAID THEY
WERE FORMER
HOUSEWIVES.**

—Chare, p. 145



GIVE BACK THEIR JOBS

“She was just as strongly expected to gratefully trade in her factory goggles for an apron at war’s end.”

— *Weiner, p. 110*

goin'
I'm straining
bullers ...
not grease



“A drill press, he tells us,
can be operated ‘as easy as
a juice extractor.’”

— *Frank*, p. 92

Right — for a Bomber Girl

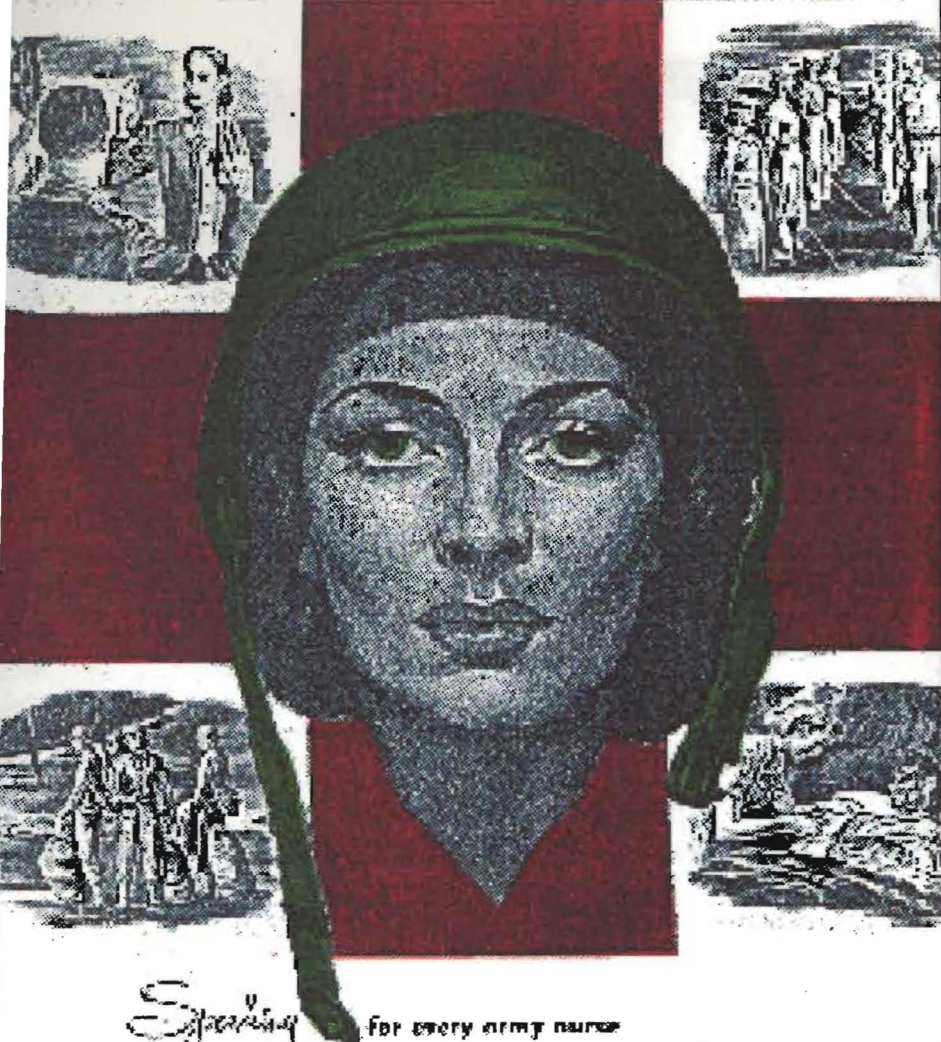


Right — for a Boulevard



“For the first time in their lives,
many workers worked in a safe,
clean, and pleasant environment.”

— *Chate*, p. 143

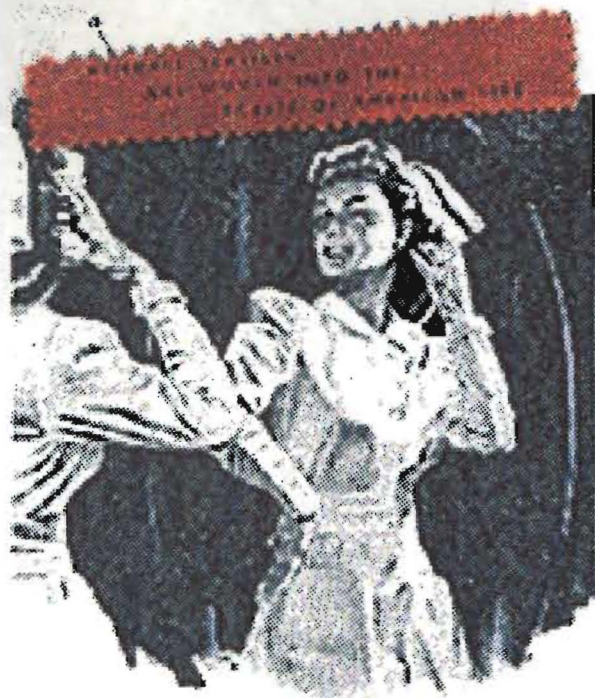


Spreading for every army nurse

“WAC publicity sought to impress the public that WACs were, ‘just as feminine as before they enlisted,’ that, in fact, they developed ‘new poise and charm.’”

—Hartmann, p. 41

Impressed



Good looks ... and good service

"Now, at day's end, her hands may be bruised, there's grease under her nails, her make-up is smudged and her curls out of place. When she checks in the next morning at 6:30 a.m. her hands will be smooth, her nails polished, her make-up and curls in order, for Marguerite is neither drudge nor slave but the heroine of a new order."

— *Life* Article (Anderson, p. 61)

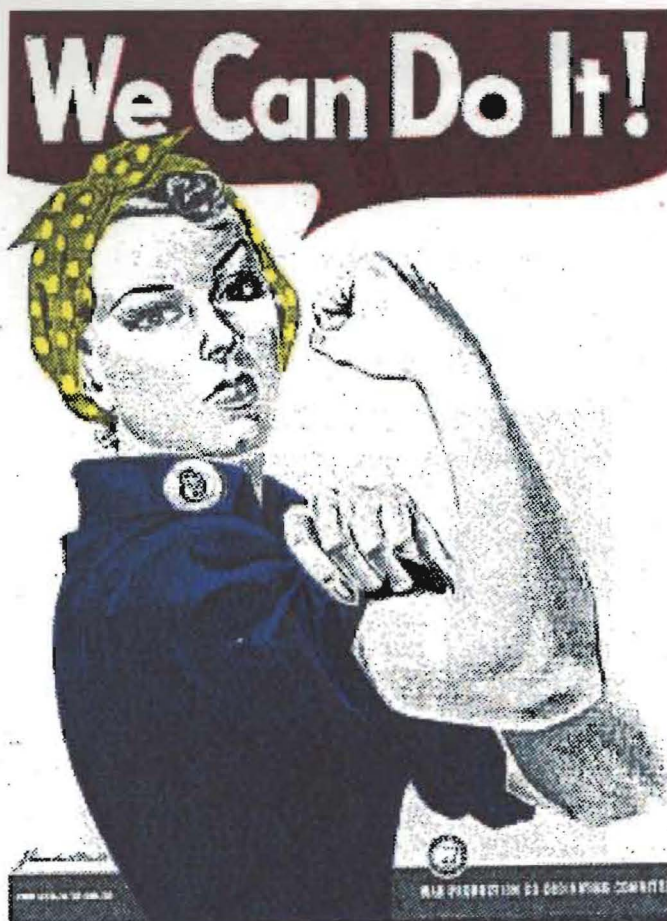
Polished

HER BIGGEST JOB
IS WAR



Women, “were reliable, tough, efficient, guardians of the home front, seeing to it that society functioned smoothly in the absence of men.”

—Honey, p. 110



“It is for the women of America
to say whether America shall live
slave or free.”

—Honey, p. 52

Said



ADVERTISING:

"IT SELLS
THE
MUNDANE,
BUT INVOKES
THE
FABULOUS."

— Bernard Shaw

RETURNED



*This is what
I'm working for*

FOR THE CAPTAINS HOME SERVICE AND THE WOMEN...

“Women are working only to win the war and will return to their home duties after the war is won. They will look on this period as an interlude, just as their men who have been called to service will consider military duties as an interlude. The women are like Cincinnatus, who left his plow to save Rome and then returned to his plow. Women will always be women.”

— Betty Allen, State Women's
Compensation Office (Frank, p. 11)



When it becomes a souvenir...

“After the war, women who continued to work outside the home were critically portrayed in the popular culture as selfishly and willingly causing divorce, juvenile delinquency, crime, and other problems affecting the postwar population.”

— Frank, p. 95

Christmas together... Have a Coca-Cola



...welcoming a fighting man home from the wars

“In the postwar period, popular culture reassured those women who resumed their traditional place, while its dominant messages discouraged those with aspirations in conflict with the traditional sex-gender system.”

— Hartmann, p. 205

Discouraged

Your Baby or Your Job



BY
GRETTI PALMER



“Women’s duty was to her species... If we are to have an adequate birthrate, we must hear less talk about women’s rights and more about their duty to the race. The plain fact is, women do not produce children under the conditions of freedom and equality that have existed in the United States since the last war... Usually the career of a brilliant woman is brought at the cost of an empty nursery. The price is too high.”

— Willard Weller, *San Francisco*
Newspaper Article (Frank, p. 76)

Existed

*Just a good plain
cook - that's me*



“Public opinion again reflected the feminine mystique and turned to support the concept of a one wage-earner family and the domestic ideology.”

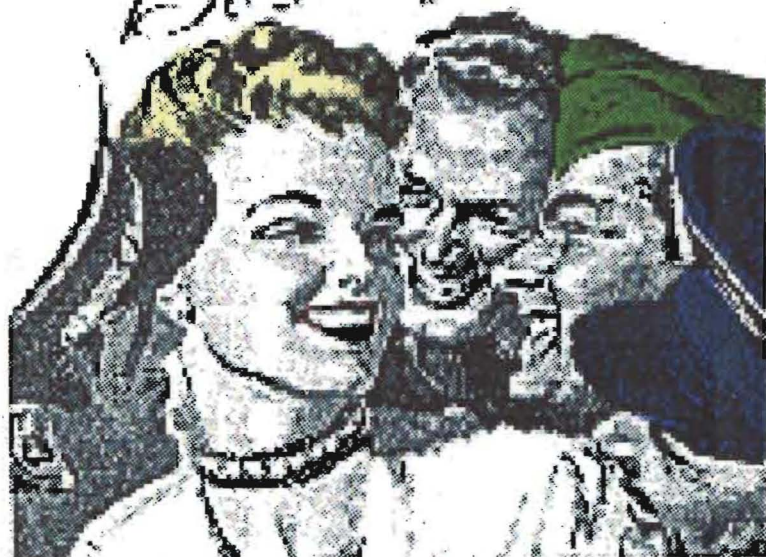
— *Wings*, p. 115

Reflected



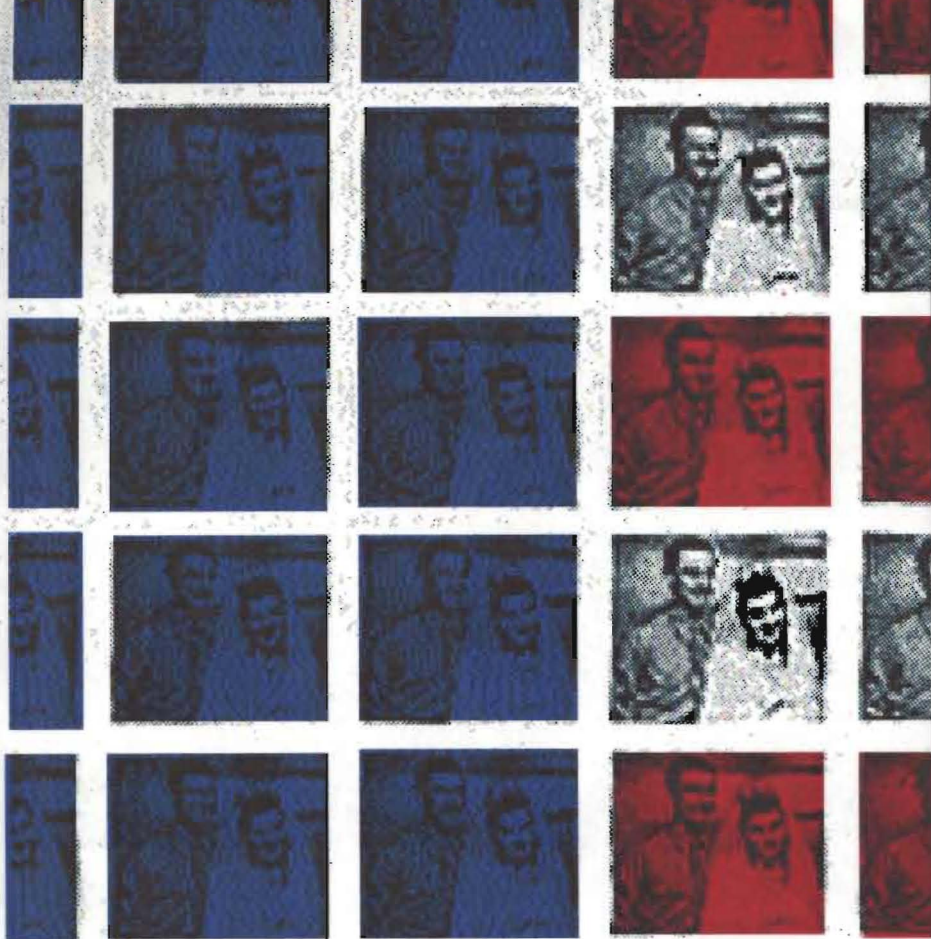
GO YOUR BEST... AND

Be At Your Best



Ads, “based on guilt over not meeting female responsibilities to men, with those arousing fear of male disapproval and alienation.”

— *Harvey*, p. 126

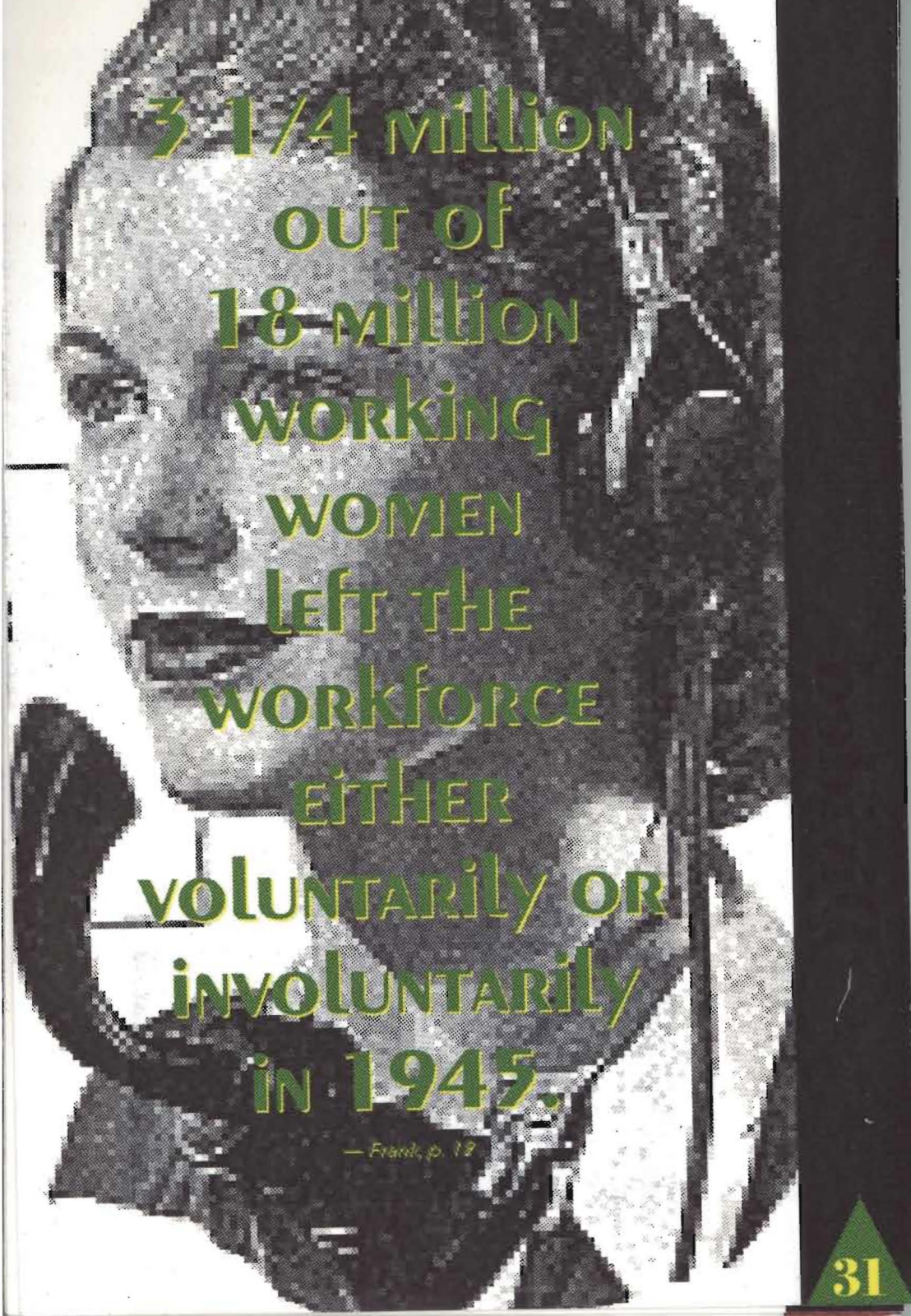


home-maker market

“Women must bear and rear children; husbands must support them.”

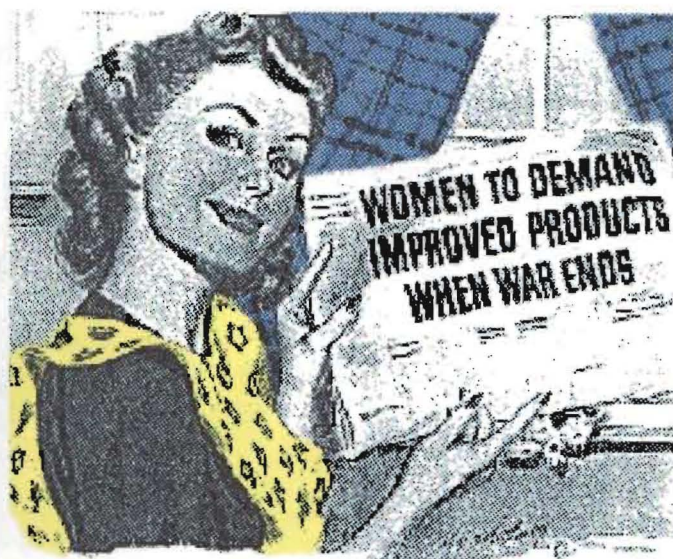
— Willard Walter, Barnard Sociologist
(Chafe, p. 176)

Supported



3 1/4 million
OUT OF
18 million
WORKING
WOMEN
LEFT THE
WORKFORCE
EITHER
VOLUNTARILY OR
INVOLUNTARILY
IN 1945.

— Frank, p. 19



"That's One Thing We ALL Agree On"

“Women's primary instinct
'has been, and still is, to cherish
their greater interest in the
protection of the home, the family,
and the community.”

— Government Publication (Hearst, p. 110)

cherished

Mother, when will you stop being needed?



“The first responsibility of women with young children, in war as in peace, is to give adequate care in their own homes to their children.”

— Manpower Commission, 1942

(Weiser, p. 173)

CARED



What's Become of Rosie the Riveter?

“We have within our hands the greatest aggregate means of mass education and persuasion the world has ever seen.”

— James Webb Young, *Advertiser*
(*Honey*, p. 31)

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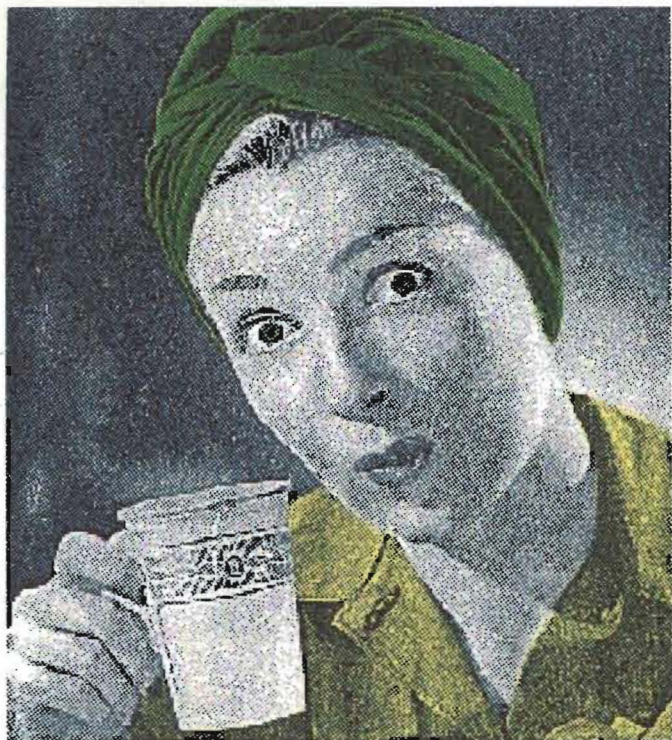
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REALITIES OF ADVERTISING



Home Front Propaganda Aimed
at Women During WWII and After.



“When communication seeks to persuade — i.e. when it operates as propaganda — it manipulates symbols to shape attitudes that will condition (facilitate or constrain) the future behavior of its targets.”

— Lerner, p. 1



What's Become of Rosie the Riveter?

“The presumption is that advertising is determined to undermine the sexual revolution. It neutralizes feminism by depicting women with a new sense of assertion and aggressiveness, but still confined to a household environment.”

— D. Warren, *Commercial Liberation*
(Berman, p. 54)

Discriminated



“That the women were often non-white family breadwinners and the victims of discrimination by employers and co-workers also escaped notice in newsmagazines.”

—Franklin, p. 22



“Racism was a divisive force that weakened the nation at a time when all hands were needed to guide the country to safety.”

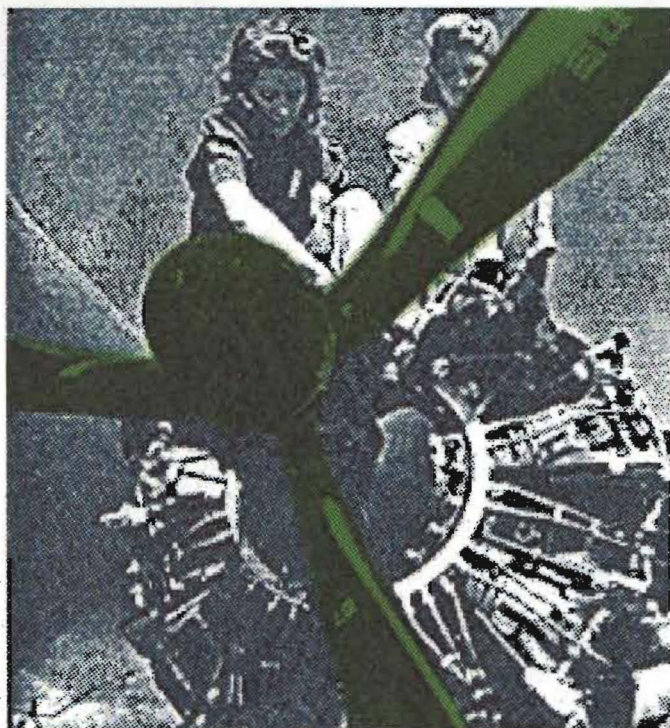
— Honey, p. 56



Here's a gun that shoots planes—together!

“More forceful view was that women took jobs out of duty, not because they would benefit from them personally.”

—Honey, p. 55



“Instead of working alone all the time, like you do in domestic work, I was always with a bunch of other women. We had lunch together, we helped each other with our jobs. It was sort of a comradely thing, and it was very nice. Also, we rode back and forth with each other, so we made many new friends that you don't when you're working in an isolated job by yourself.”

— Margaret Wright (*Frank*, p. 68)



**“A strategy
of truth...
is not
synonymous
with
honesty.”**

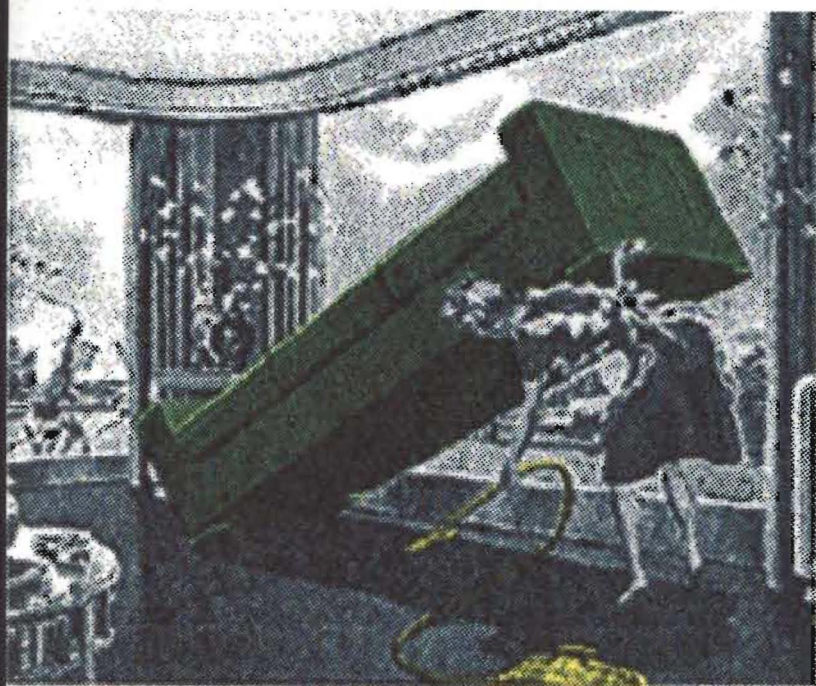
—Lerner, p. 2



*Is she chained
to your desk?*

“That women worked and had previously worked outside the home to support their families, and that they jumped to take war production jobs because they offered better pay and sometimes more meaningful work went largely unrecognized.”

— Frank, p. 52



"Magnesium makes the day's work lighter"

“During the war years, you had to work a double job. You had to work hard and cook dinner and clean house, pick up children, everything.”

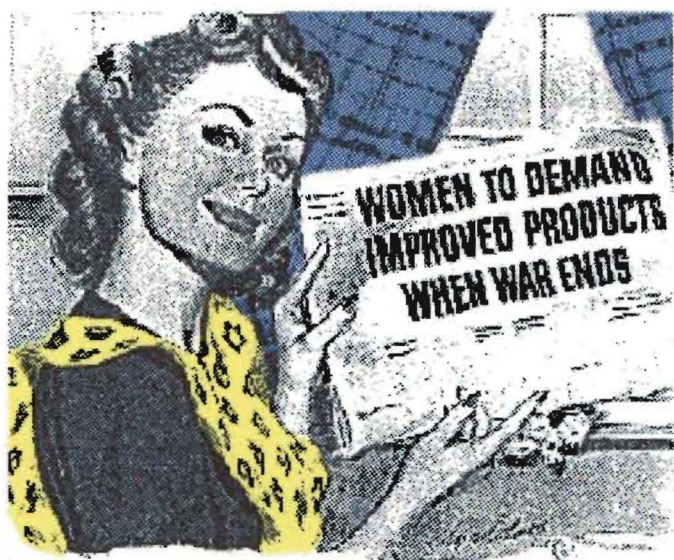
*— Clovis Walker, Shipyard Worker
(Frank, p. 85)*



**You Know the Minuteman..
Now... Meet the Missus**

“Rush, rush, rush, until you get through with everything — get dinner over with and get your washing out and iron a few pieces and try to clean up your house — by the time I got in bed it was almost time to get up in the morning. It just got to be too much.”

— *Wanita Allen, Foundry Worker
& Single Mother (Frank, p. 68)*



"That's One Thing We ALL Agree On"

Women's domestic tasks :
More burdensome due to
government restrictions,
rationing, and war production.

— Hartmann, p. 212



SOLDIERS *without guns*

What undermined the positive views of women:

- Identification of working women with country blurred distinction between traditional and non-traditional female roles and hid benefits to women working in male fields.
- Selfless role conflicts with self-actualization.

Family was a symbol of unity and represented all American values. Women were the heralders of peace and their traditional role was reinforced by strong nostalgia for familiar life.

— Honey, p. 213

Right ... for a Border Line



Right ... for a Bourgeois



“The glorification of the housewife, the stress on femininity, the emphasis on romantic relationships, the warnings about careerism, all indicated ambivalence about or opposition to changes in women’s activities and life-styles.”

— Hlatky, p. 203



Good looks ... and good service

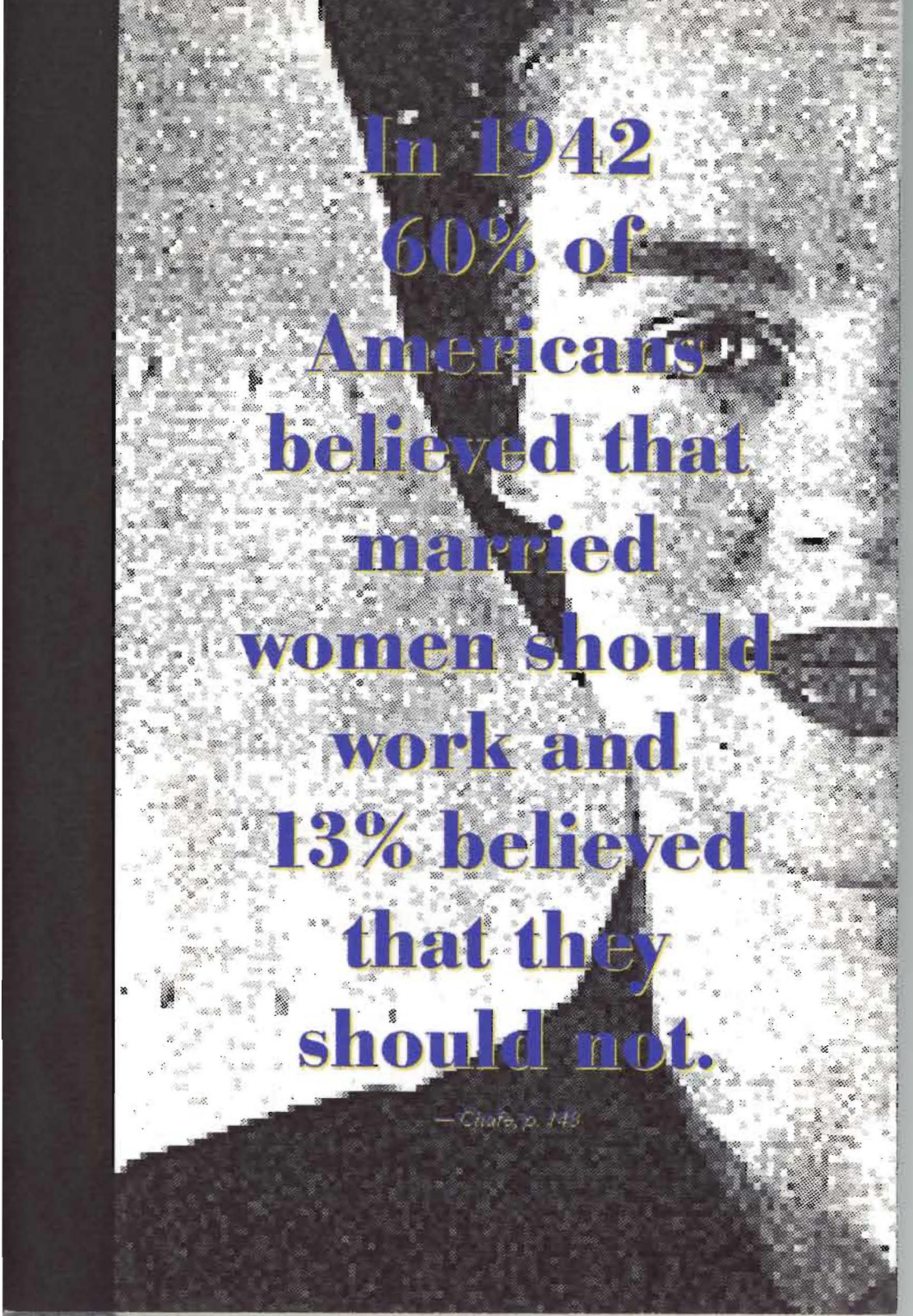
Three limitations on
women's new roles:

Only "for the duration."

Retention of femininity as they
perform masculine duties.

"The eternal feminine
motivations behind women's
willingness to step out of
customary roles."

— Hartmann, p. 23



**In 1942
60% of
Americans
believed that
married
women should
work and
13% believed
that they
should not.**

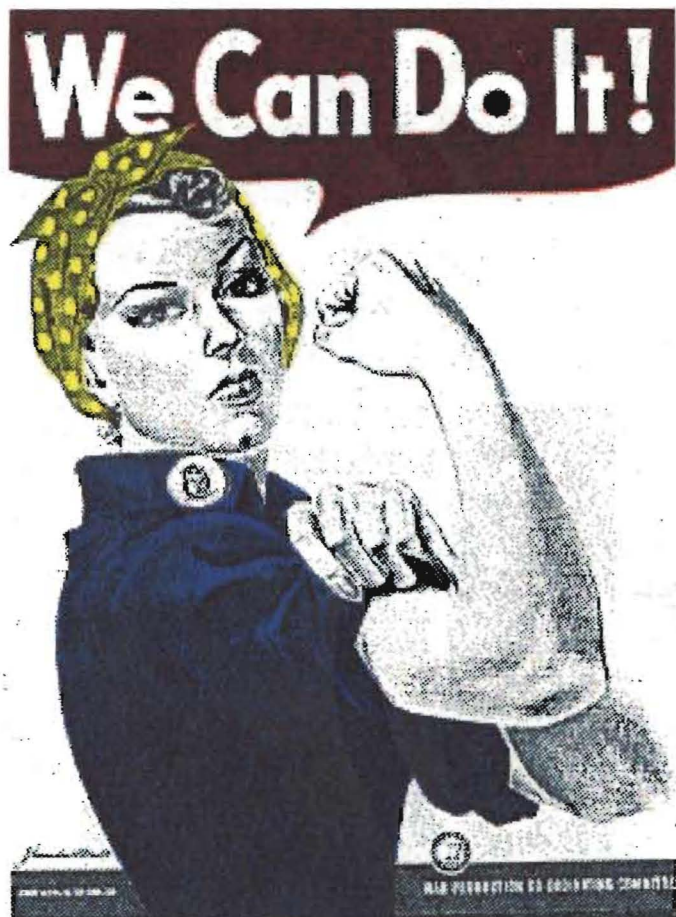
—Chafe, p. 143

SECRETARY OF WAR!



Propaganda: Aimed at women's traditional role as helper rather than a new role as worker.

Help out for the duration.



Reassessment of jobs, not of women (jobs able to be performed by women).

—Hobby, p. 128

I'm straining
bullets . . .
not grease



“Jobs were not safe. Women were ‘too delicate’ to go to war or do dangerous things, but they would let us be blown up sifting gun powder. Every last one of us who worked in that department was a woman, and it was very, very dangerous.”

— Margaret Wright, Munitions Worker
(Front, p. 63)

Highlighted

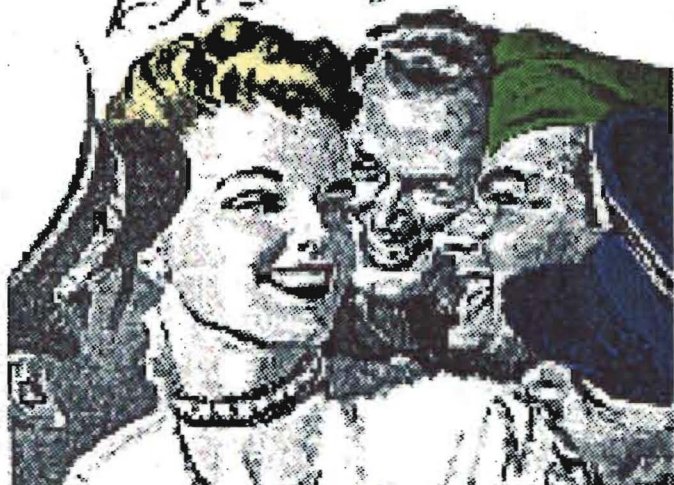


Player profiles in publicity releases highlighted domestic skills like sewing and baking and pointed out such feminine physical features as smallness, blond hair, 'saucy' noses, and 'gorgeous smiles.'



DO YOUR BEST... and

Be At Your Best



“You’d think those fellows down there had never seen a girl. Every time a skirt would whip by up there, you could hear the whistles above the riveting, and I’ll bet the girls could feel the focus of every eye in the place.”

— *Boring Mechanic* (Anderson, p. 47)

ANGELS *guard our right of way*



“Propaganda frequently emphasized women’s patriotic commitment, an appeal only slightly removed from the traditional stereotype of feminine self-sacrifice.”

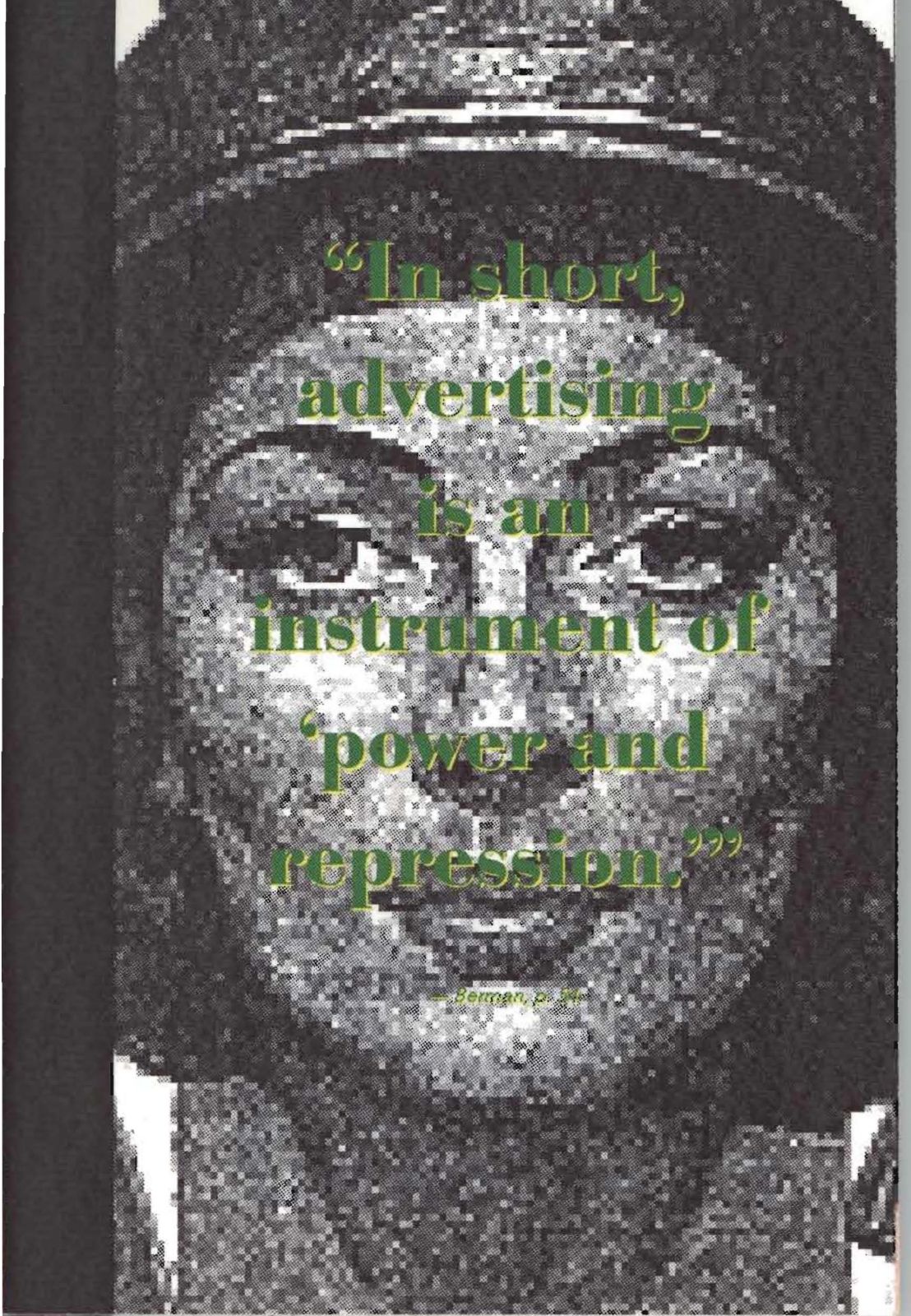
—Frieda S. D.

HER BIGGEST JOB
IS WAR



“The emphasis was not on women’s right to be treated fairly and judged as individual workers but on their heroic service to the nation, a duty that required self-sacrifice and putting the welfare of soldiers above one’s own desires.”

—Honey, p. 31



**“In short,
advertising
is an
instrument of
‘power and
repression.’”**

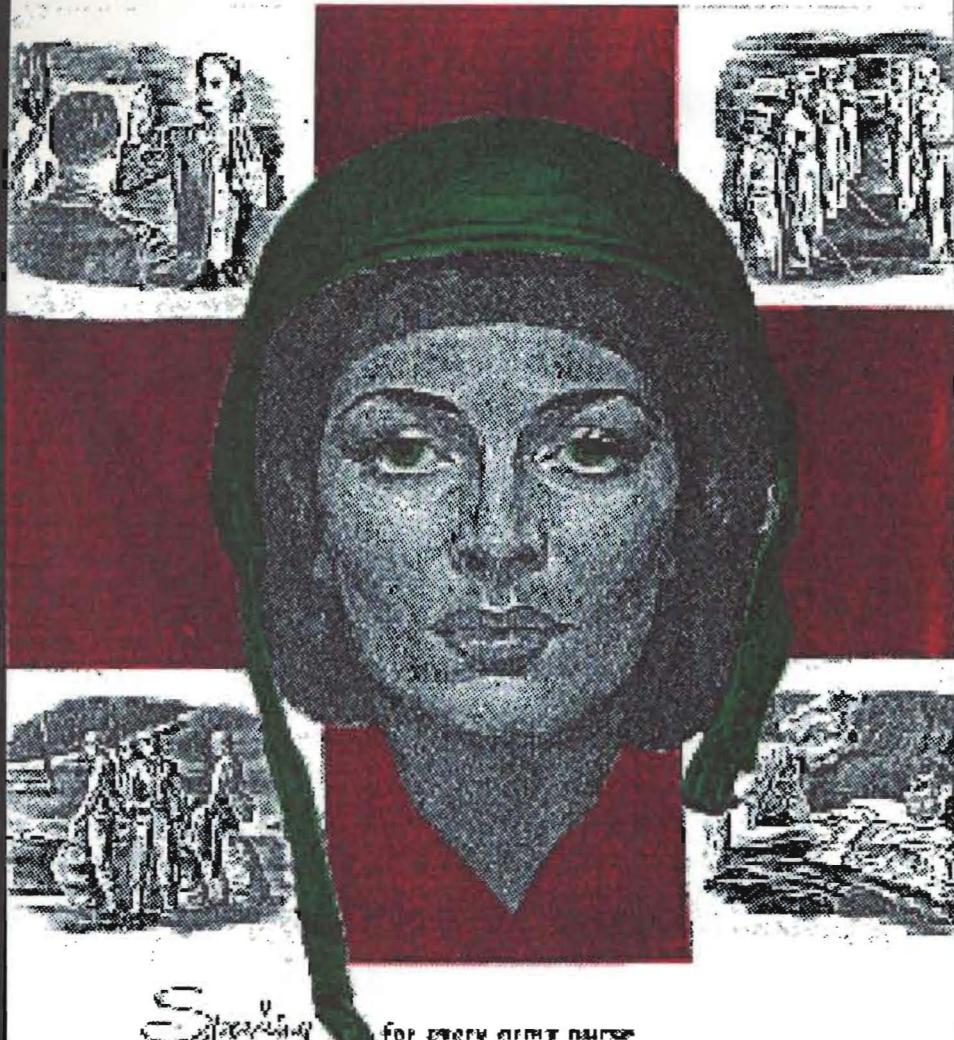
—Berman, p. 34

*Just a good plain
cook - that's me*



**“No society can boast of domestic
ideals if it utilizes womanpower in
a crisis and neglects it in peace.”**

*— Woman's Advisory Council
Speeches, 1931*



Sisterhood for every army nurse

“The discrimination experienced by ex-servicewomen derived from the assumption that women were economic dependents, not supporters.”

—Hermann, p. 44

Experienced

Your Baby *or* Your Job

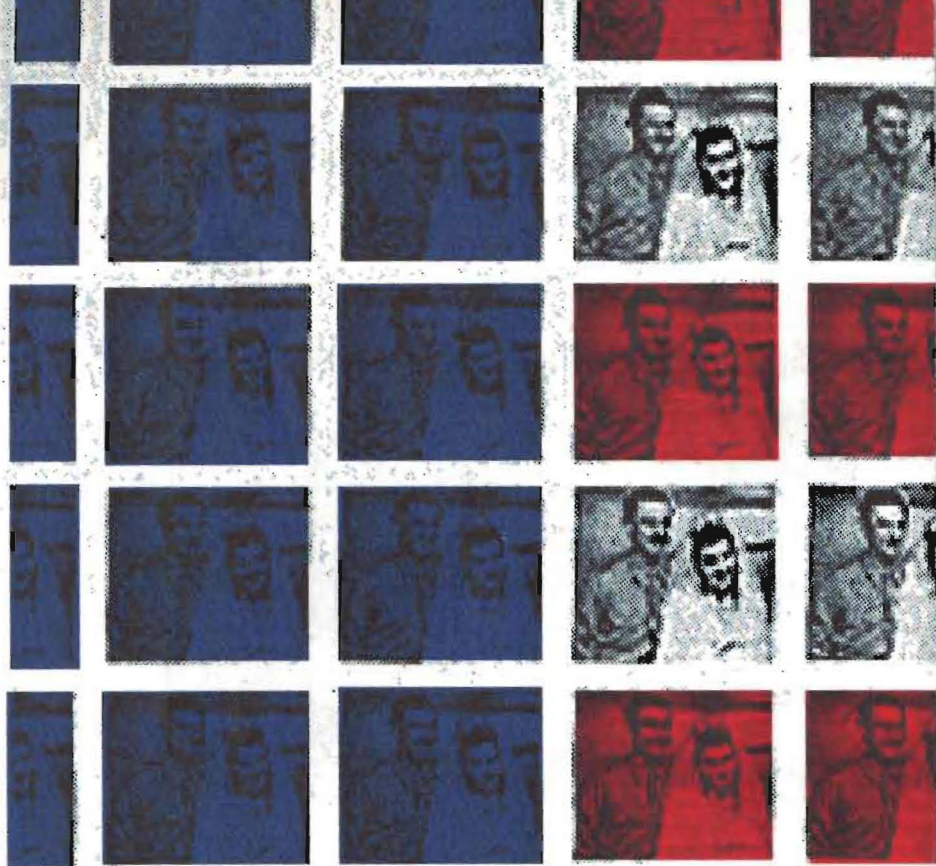


BY
GRETTA PALMER



“I think they prepare women psychologically for whatever role the society wants at the particular time for them to play. After losing so many men, America wanted babies. And we wanted babies. That’s ok. But we gave up everything for that. We gave up everything.”

— (old interview) *Woman Power*, p. 86



home-maker market

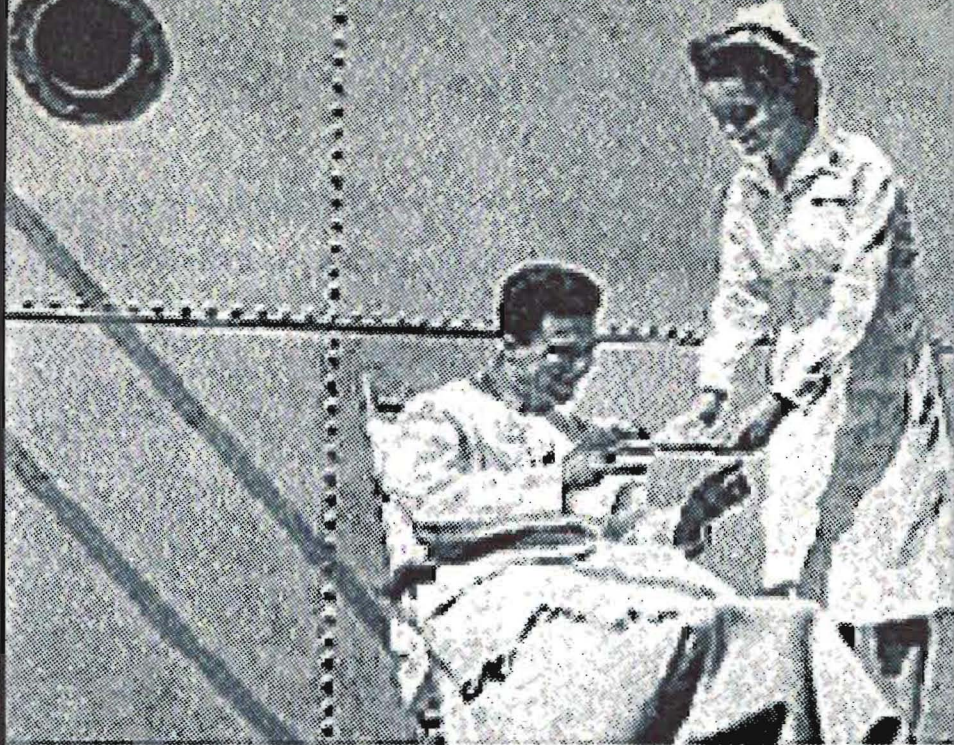
“While guilt was manipulated during the war to encourage women to work harder at their jobs, guilt was used after the war against women who worked outside their homes, whether they did so by choice or by necessity.”

— Frank, p. 96



“The position of women in the postwar economy was further undermined by the widespread conviction that working women would quietly and willingly withdraw from the labor force to make way for male job seekers.”

— *Resurgence*, p. 147



When the wounded come home

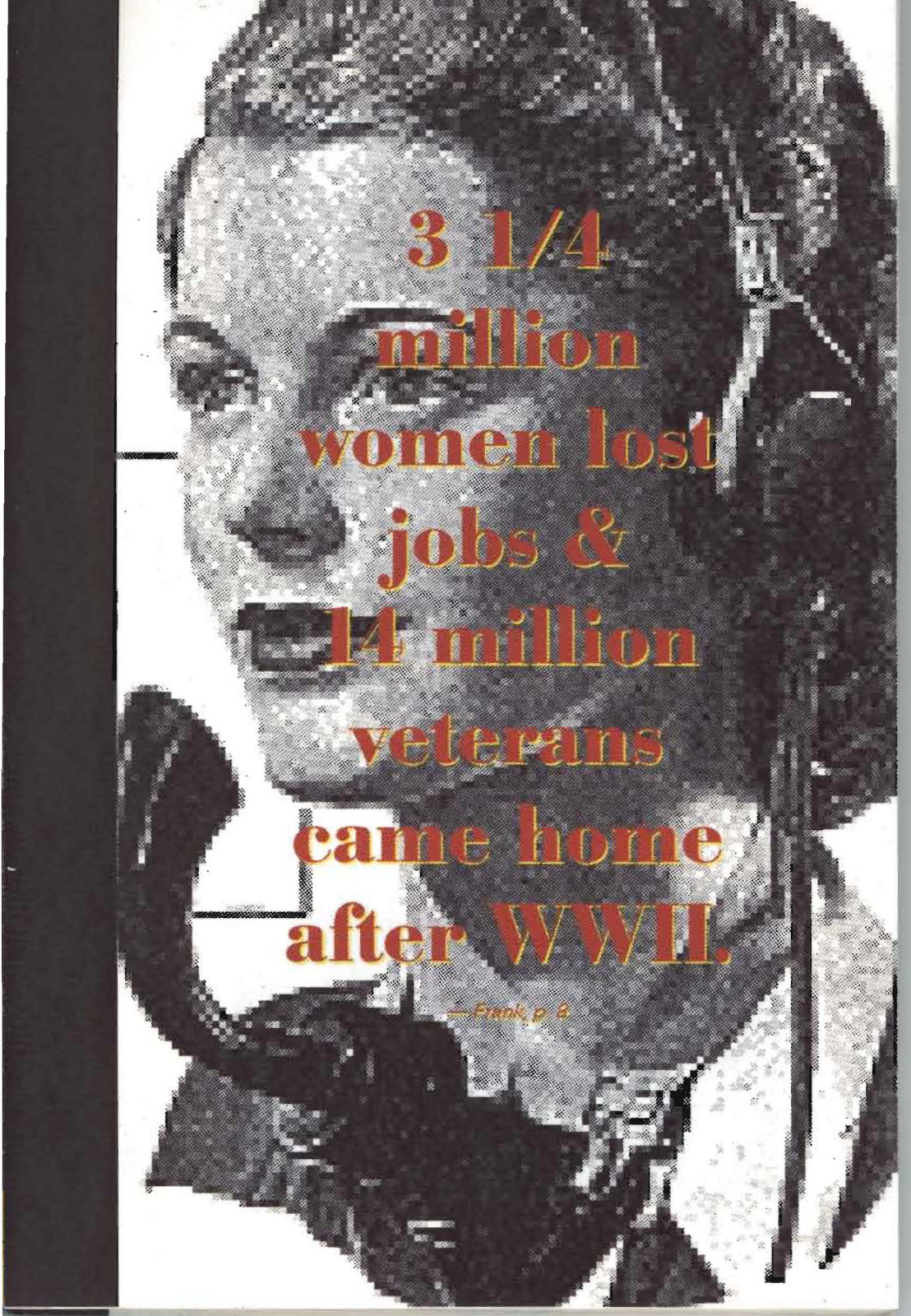
It wasn't like a dance in the opera. The men came home beat up, the men came home with problems. They gave them free ads in the newspapers looking for jobs, but it was pathetic.

Mothers, when will you stop being mothers?



“Government and industry must not assume that all women can be treated as a reserve group during war only, nor should those who wish to stay in the labor market be accused of taking men’s jobs. Any easy assumptions that a great number of women will return to their homes is to be seriously questioned.”

— Honey, p. 28



**3 1/4
million
women lost
jobs &
14 million
veterans
came home
after WWII.**

—Frank, p. 8



When it becomes a souvenir...

“Thus while women lost some of their better-paid war positions, they did not disappear from the labor market as some had anticipated.”

— Chafe, p. 181



*This is what
I'm working for*

FOR THE STRONGER HOME FRONT WE LIVE UP HERE.

“Desire to restore old patterns of economic responsibility was motivated by fear of recession.”

— Chafe, p. 177

Christmas together... Have a Coca-Cola



...welcoming a fighting man home from the wars

“As swiftly as in a dream, the image of the American woman as a changing, growing individual in a changing world was shattered... Her limitless world shrunk to the cory walls of home.”

— Betty Friedan (Weiner, p. 113)

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