

Before I get started, I wanted to say that while I'm honored to be chosen to be the guest speaker today, in my mind, I'm not the first person that I would've chosen to speak today. There are other women that I know and served with who would've been way better choices, but they don't live here, so you're stuck with me. However, I wanted to do this because I often feel that women, especially women veterans, are often an overlooked demographic and that's something I want to try to rectify today.

Also, Happy 246th Birthday to the USMC!

Good morning, for those of you who don't know me, I'm Jennifer Hampson and I'm currently the Branch Manager of the Ione and Metaline Falls Libraries, along with being a wife to a guy named Jeremy (also a Navy vet) and a mom to Rowan, Brock and Grady. I've been asked to be here today because I served in the US Navy as a Hospital Corpsman from 1994-1999. I would like to thank Mrs. Lithgow, faculty, students and the Selkirk School District for hosting the Veterans Day Concert.

So, this current adventure started a couple of years ago, after the last Veterans Day assembly and Mrs. Lithgow asked me if I would like to speak at the next year's assembly. If I remember correctly, I gave some sort of strangled "maybe" as a reply and she promptly said, "Well, you didn't say no, so I'll ask you again!" Covid saved me from public speaking last year, but Mrs. Lithgow has an amazing memory and did indeed ask me again. So, here I am and here we go.

My Navy adventure began in June of 1994 at the Recruit Training Center in Orlando Florida. After almost 10 weeks of boot camp, I had finally made it to Pass and Review (graduation) day. After the ceremony was over, those that had family visiting got to go with them for the day, while those of us who didn't, got to have lunch

with all of the Company Commanders, higher enlisted and officers of the base. I was seated by one of the Masterchiefs of the base, which I thought was pretty cool, thinking that we're going to get some sort of motivational sea stories or whatever. Well, he started talking about how he felt that women had no place in the military because of our weaknesses and so on. Unfortunately, a few of the newly minted male sailors sat there and hung on his every word, while all of the female sailors looked at each other in disbelief.

Welcome to the Navy.

However, as a Masterchief, he would have been in the Navy at least 25-30 years at that point, so he had had the opportunity to serve with more than a few women over those years, and I know that many of them were probably pretty darn good at what they did. Unfortunately for him, and others with his mindset, women have been in and around the military for millennia, but today, I'll just stick to statistics that speak to American women in the service.

Starting with the American Revolution, women served as battlefield nurses, water bearers, cooks and even carried out sabotage missions. The War of 1812 saw women serving as nurses aboard ships, and my personal favorites, we start to see women successfully disguising themselves as men to serve in military regiments during the Mexican War and into the Civil War.

One woman, by the name of Elizabeth Newcom enlists in Company D of the Missouri Volunteer Infantry during the Mexican War (1846-48) under the name Bill Newcom. She marches 600 miles from Missouri to the winter camp in Pueblo, Colorado before she's found out and discharged.

During the Civil War (1861-65), women are still not allowed to officially serve in the military, but that didn't stop them from providing casualty care and nursing to Union and Confederate troops at field hospitals. And again, there were women on both sides of the conflict that would disguise themselves as men so that they could serve. A notable fact about the Civil War was that it saw the only woman in American history to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1866 and her name was Dr. Mary Walker. However, because she wasn't actually in the military, Dr. Walker was stripped of the award in 1917, just a couple of years before she passed away, but she refused to give it up. After petitions from her descendants, President Carter reinstated the award to Dr. Walker in 1977.

Side Note: the MOH was first presented in 1863 (158 years ago) and has been awarded 3,512 times, and out of all of those awards, Dr. Walker is the only woman on that list.

During the Spanish-American War in 1898, Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee suggests that nurses be allowed to serve under contract to the US Army, and before the war ends, over 1,500 nurses are assigned to Army hospitals with 20 of them giving their lives in service. Dr. Newcomb-McGee was appointed to the position of Acting Assistant Surgeon General, making her the first woman to ever hold the position. She was also instrumental in drafting legislation creating a permanent Army nurse corps.

During the course of WWI (1914-18), 21,480 Army nurses serve in military hospitals in the US and overseas. The Army also recruits and trains 233 bilingual telephone operators to work near the frontlines in France. The Navy enlists 11,880 women to serve

stateside in shore billets to release sailors for sea duty. And, more than 1,476 Navy nurses serve in military hospitals stateside and overseas. The Marine Corps enlists 305 women Reservists to allow men to go fight overseas and the Coast Guard has two women that serve during WWI. More than 400 nurses died in the line of duty during WWI, the majority of them from contracting the Spanish Flu.

WWII (1941-45) saw a noticeable increase in women joining the military. More than 60,000 Army nurses serve stateside and overseas. 67 Army nurses are captured by the Japanese in the Philippines in 1942 and are held as POWs for over 2 ½ years. *(There's a book about this called "We Band of Angels")* The Women's Army Corps has over 150,000 women serve throughout the war and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots are organized and fly as civil service pilots.

The Navy recruited women into its Navy Women's Reserve, and before the war is over, more than 80,000 women fill shore billets in jobs from communications, intelligence, supply, medicine and administration.

The Marine Corps creates the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in 1943 and the Coast Guard establishes their own Women's Reserve. By the end of WWII, more than 400,000 American military women serve at home and overseas.

During the Korean War (1950-53), servicewomen who had joined the Reserves following WWII are involuntarily recalled to active

duty. Over 500 Army nurses serve in combat zones and many more are assigned to hospitals in Japan. Navy nurses serve on hospital ship and Air Force nurses serve in Japan and as flight nurses in the Korean theater.

During the Vietnam War, more than 265,000 American women serve in the military, with approximately 11,000 of them serving in SE Asia, mostly as nurses. Numerous women served in nearby countries like Japan, Guam and the Philippines. Guerilla warfare made it impossible to stay safe behind the lines and women also suffered battle injuries. Army Corps Nurses worked closer to the frontlines, while Air Force nurses participated in MEDEVAC missions and Navy women served on hospital ships off of the coast of Vietnam. By the end of the Vietnam Conflict, 8 service women lost their lives.

The Persian Gulf War in early 1991 saw the largest deployment of female military members in US history. More than 37,000 women were in the Persian Gulf. Army and Marine women served in combat and service support units. Navy women served on hospital, supply, oiler and ammunition ships. On shore, Naval women served in construction battalions, fleet hospitals, air recon squadrons and many support billets. Air Force women served in support billets as well as in tanker, transport and MEDEVAC aircraft. All USAF C-130 squadrons in theater had women maintenance officers.

During the Persian Gulf War, 5 women were KIA, 21 Wounded in Action and 2 were taken as POWs.

Our most recent conflicts, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, saw women move into roles normally reserved for men. Since this conflicts abrupt ending earlier this year, it's hard to find exact or current statistics on how many women served. *Hint: It was a lot!* However, there were 160 US female service members who gave their lives and you can find their pictures and stories online.

So, that was a lot of information to throw out in a short time, and my intent wasn't to bore you, but to show you that women have always been serving and we will continue to serve, no matter what your personal opinion on women in the military is, or even the opinions of a salty old Masterchief.

My final nod is to the women in our own community who have served. We are business owners, professionals, friends, mothers, grandmothers, sisters and wives all around you. My challenge is that if you see one of these women; please take the time to acknowledge their service and sacrifices. I apologize now for any names that I may have missed in my discount detective work.

Michelle Grant, US Army, Military Police, 1988-1992

Candace Ellsworth, USAF, Nurse, 1997-2003

Sharon Bartlett, USAF, Recruiter, 1979-2001

Sara McIntosh, US Army, 1989-1991

Kristina Kiss, US Coast Guard, SAR (97-00) and Yeoman (00-05),
1997-2005

Melissa Chapman, USAF

Monica McMackin, US Navy, Sonar Tech, 1998-2002

Jennene Duncan Ring, US Army, 1977-1980

Pam Zimmerman, USAF, Jet engine mechanic on the SR-71
Blackbird spy plane, 1986-1990

Kimberly Petrich, US Navy, Boatswains Mate, (served on a sub
tender) 1992-1996