

Red Cross: Results of Service

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HST 499: Senior Seminar
June, 7 2012

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Over sixteen million service men and women served in the United State's effort during World War II in the armed forces and volunteer organizations. Roughly 7.5 million of them joined the Red Cross.¹ In the aftermath of the Great Depression, members of the Red Cross came from all walks of life from rich to poor, in efforts to help the service personnel of the United States and its allies, and in some cases those they were fighting. They heeded the call of service for a variety of reasons, from seeing and experiencing new lands, seeking out their independence, serving their country, and helping those in need due to the war. Serving as a woman was distinctly different than serving as a man but both drew on humanitarian characteristics driven to help others. Both groups were influenced by their service.

The material which historians use to study the past is both expanding and being lost or not recorded at all. Before our digital age, where massive amounts of records can be created and kept in various forms with little effort, many accounts of common people were never created or kept. Outside of letters and diaries, it was common for information of the elites to be kept while those who were less important had far less ability or reason to keep records until recent decades. Because of the finite nature of resources of non-influential individuals, a small collection of primary and secondary literature will be the focus of my research. In trying to understand the reasons and effects of joining the ARC for those who did not leave records, I will use a group of biographies, oral histories, diaries and letters to come to a vicarious understanding of ARC members. Using these sources I will help bridge the gap of missing information regarding the reasons and results of joining the ARC during World War II.

¹ American Red Cross, "World War II Accomplishments of the American Red Cross," *Museum*, <http://www.redcross.org/museum/history/ww2a.asp> (accessed may 3, 2012).

The Red Cross had its origins in 1860 an appeal by Henry Dunant to the Genevan Society for Public Utility. He hoped to form voluntary aid societies that would help supply and train nurses to offset the deficiencies of the official army medical services. The voluntary aid societies would help the grievously wounded soldiers that were seemingly abandoned.² Dunant's vision was inspired during the Crimean War involving several European powers. Like most wars it was massively destructive and bloody, but due to the lack of medical technology and staff or volunteers; the dead, dying, and wounded were left almost wholly to fend for themselves. After battles the warring parties of the Russian Empire and an alliance between the Empires of the French, British, Ottoman, and the Kingdom of Sardinia "could do no more than carry away a fraction of the survivors on mule-back or on springless carts. . . and others were abandoned wounded and dying."³ In 1860 the European powers were prepared to pay attention to the care of wounded soldiers. The Red Cross was born in Geneva, Switzerland when five Geneva men, including Dunant, set up the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded, later to become the International Committee of the Red Cross. The International Red Cross and its counter part the Red Crescent were founded in 1863 by Henry Dunant. The American Red Cross was founded in 1881 in Washington, D.C. by Clara Barton, who was also the first president of the agency. The American Red Cross stemmed from Clara Barton's service with the military during the American Civil War after visiting Europe and hearing of the Swiss-inspired International Red Cross Movement.⁴

² Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland, and the History of the Red Cross*, (New York: Carroll & Graf Pub, 1999), 13.

³ Sanda Bossy, "The International Red Cross." *International Journal* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1952): 204-212. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40197733> (Accessed may 18, 2012), 205.

⁴ William E. Barton, *The Life of Clara Barton: Founder of the Red Cross*, (New York: The Riverside Press, 1922), 7.

The American Red Cross (ARC) received its first congressional charter in 1900 and a second in 1905. Preceding World War I the ARC introduced its first aid, water safety, and public health nursing programs. As World War I broke out the ARC grew rapidly with its chapters going from 107 in 1914 to 3,864 in 1918 and membership grew from 17,000 to more than 20 million members. The ARC staffed hospitals and ambulance companies and recruited 20,000 registered nurses to serve the military and helped combat the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918. Between World War I and World War II the ARC focused on service to veterans and expanded its programs in safety training, accident prevention, home care for the sick and nutrition education.⁵

The ARC was responsible for a variety of jobs during World War II: the medical support of the United States and its allies, the entertainment and recreation of American service personnel, and the acquisition of blood for the wounded. Jesse O. Thomas describes what the ARC offered to the soldiers in his article on the Red Cross, noting that “it was the policy of the ARC to extend the services and facilities of its club, hospital and recreation program to any person in Government uniform. . .if the soldier wants amusement he can find it to suit his taste. There are game rooms, a library, music room, and lounge.”⁶ Thomas A. Guglielmo describes the efforts of the ARC to supply blood during World War II. “From early 1941 through the end of the war, the ARC collected blood from millions of donors across America; a dozen laboratories processed it into

⁵ American Red Cross, “A Brief History of the American Red Cross,” Museum <http://www.redcross.org/museum/history/brief.asp> (Accessed June 2, 2012).

⁶ Jesse O. Thomas, “American Red Cross Services to the Armed Forces,” *The Phylon Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (3rd Quarter 1945), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/272497> (Accessed June 2, 2012), 273 & 276.

substitutes called plasma and serum albumin; and the military then shipped these substitutes, and whole blood as well, to service personnel fighting overseas.”⁷

With a century of organization there has been a substantial amount of historical work on the subject. There are numerous biographies, books on the founding of the International Red Cross and American Red Cross, autobiographies and narratives of the lives of the founders Henry Dunant and Clara Barton, and much interest in the organization itself and its overarching encounters and impacts. But very little analysis has focused on why people join the Red Cross and how their service may have impacted their lives, particularly during wartime.

The scholarship of participants and other historians traverses the experiences of the organization, glorifies its founders, praises it for its humanitarian efforts, and condemns it for shortcomings. This scholarship shows the degree of pursuit of medical assistance and equality by its founders and by much of its members. But it also shows the importance of understanding that the ARC is an organization tied to the military and the government. Because of this link to the government and military, the ARC’s chief responsibility is to serve and assist the armed forces. This inherent characteristic makes the ARC follow guidelines and policies of the government that are often not first to come to mind when thinking of the ARC. During World War I it was the duty of the ARC first to serve the United States Army, and secondly the sick and wounded. The duties of the ARC included: securing transportation, supplies, machinery, and labor.⁸ Up to World War II and throughout it the ARC struggled with segregation in its ranks and in the blood

⁷ Thomas A. Guglielmo, “Red Cross, Double Cross: Race and America’s World War II—Era Blood Donor Service.” *Journal of American History* 97, no. 1 (June 2010), 63.

⁸ Ednyfed H. Williams, “The Red Cross and Its Work over There.” *Fine Arts Journal* 36, (May 1918), 4-16, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25587554> (Accessed May 18, 2012).

it collected. With segregation still going strong in America it was possible to exclude African American donors as well. It was not until later in the war, after a wave of protest and a growing demand for blood that African American blood donors were accepted but only on a segregated basis. The system of segregated black blood continued throughout the war and after.⁹ The issues and struggles that blacks had with segregated blood were similar to the problems they faced with the segregated military and society at the time. It was not until 1950 that the ARC leadership voted to discontinue marking racial designations on the official medical records of blood donors.¹⁰ Guglielmo presents a side that has been mostly over looked when dealing with the Red Cross due to its charitable nature.

Ednyfed H. Williams examined the ARC during World War I to show the direct actions the ARC had in France, working with the soldiers there as well as the French charitable societies already in place. He posed questions about the conditions of the region and how the people of France were affected by the war, and what the Red Cross did in association with the societies already working in France. Williams explained that the Red Cross was not the first of organizations to provide assistance in Europe during World War I. "It is no exaggeration to say that there was a society in existence for every form of hardship arising from the war."¹¹ Williams praised the ARC for its contributions during World War I as much of the historiographic content does, but he was sure to credit the other organizations that were in place and assisting in the war effort as well.

Jesse O. Thomas wrote on the ARC's involvement in World War I, but Thomas' goal in his article was to explain the deeds of the ARC in association with the Salvation

⁹ Guglielmo, 64.

¹⁰ Guglielmo, 82.

¹¹ Williams, 5.

Army, Knights of Columbus, Young Men's Christian Association during World War I to supply entertainment and recreation to soldiers on American soil. His interest focused less on the feats of the ARC as an organization as a whole, and more so the smaller actions of group projects or how the ARC helps soldiers throughout their career. His research showed the assistance given to troops in acquiring family aide, comfortable quarters and amenities of American-style food, and laundry.¹²

Historians David Forsythe and Judith Lee look at the transnational nature of the Red Cross organization, the Red Cross' ability to mobilize, how it evolved and how it continues to develop as it learns from assisting in previous disasters. The Red Cross is able to supercede its nation-state boundaries due to its obligations of humanitarian and disaster assistance.¹³ Forsythe was asking what is the nature of the Red Cross as a transnational movement [who it is, what it does, how it acts]; the resources of the movement; and its overall impact on world politics."¹⁴ Forsythe gives the example of the Red Cross being a transnational organization noting; "in pre-independence Cyprus in the 1950s, the ICRC obtained its first access to detainees by permission of local authorities; London was not consulted,"¹⁵ thus going outside the authority of its governmental bounds. Lee similarly explained the transnational nature in how the Red Cross mobilization requirements expand to meet the needs of disaster relief from local chapters to additional personnel outside ARC headquarters.¹⁶ This view of the Red Cross is not an overly common depiction of the Red Cross but arose with the transnational movement in

¹² Thomas, 276.

¹³ Judith Lee, "Coordination of Health Relief: American Red Cross" in *Humanitarian Crisis: The Medical and Public Health Response* ed. Jennifer Leaning (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1999), 249.

¹⁴ Forsythe David P., *The Red Cross as Transnational Movement: Conserving and Changing the Nation-State System* in *International Organization* Vol. 30 (The MIT Press 1976), 609.

¹⁵ Forsythe, 614

¹⁶ Lee, 249.

the later part of the 20th century and lends an understanding of the intricacy of the organization. Generally scholarly research has left out the question of the individual nature of Red Cross service. This may be because the organization overshadows the individuals, and scholars feel that biographies are enough, but biographies, letters, and diaries can help to answer this question.

Margaret Miline-Robinson, my grandmother on my father's side joined the ARC after working at the Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington Kaiser Shipyards with her sister. She was a social worker and a nurse with the ARC and was given the opportunity to get transferred to Hahn Air Force Base near Los Angeles and she thought it would be interesting to go to California since she had never been there before. The known story and information of her interactions, how her service with the ARC influenced her, and her experiences throughout the war are unknown to us and perished along with her. For these reasons I wanted to try to understand her time vicariously through those who did leave records. To do this I used primarily Violet A.

Kochendoerfer's biography of her service with the WACs and ARC during World War II, *One Woman's World War II*. Born in the 1920s, growing up in Minnesota Kochendoerfer spent her spare time at the YWCA. Kochendoerfer spent three and a half years serving in the war. In her time she witnessed C-47s of the 315th Troop Carrier Group take off with paratroopers bound for France on D-Day, along with being with the 82nd Airborne when the American Division crossed the Elbe to rendezvous with the Russians.¹⁷ At the age of twenty-six Kochendoerfer spent eight months with the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in 1943. In March of 1943 Kochendoerfer was assigned to radio school in Kansas City.

¹⁷ Violet A. Kochendoerfer, *One Woman's World War II*, (The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 1.

During July 1943 while waiting to be permanently assigned a duty, it was announced that the WAAC was to become the Women's Army Corps, and women were given the choice of enlistment for the duration or discharge. Kochendoerfer chose to be discharged, and later joined the ARC.¹⁸ In early 1944 Kochendoerfer was shipped to Britain to await her assignment for a club. In June 1944 she opened her first club at the Spanhoe Airdome in Midlands, England where she remained until early 1945. In February 1945 she was sent to Paris, France to open a new club and sent to various towns and finally Berlin after the German surrender.¹⁹ Kochendoerfer's autobiography gives an in depth view of a woman's experience with the ARC during World War II that helps fill the gaps I am addressing.

The other sources I use in slightly less detail, but they still provide an important view of ARC experience. William G. Robbins' analysis of Monroe Sweetland's service with the ARC in the South Pacific, "Okinawa 1945: Monroe Sweetland and American Prisoners of War." Monroe Sweetland was a pacifist--minded man, born 1910 in Salem, Oregon who served in the South Pacific and had "a profound and fundamental belief in the principles of democracy, a long-standing abhorrence of racism, and a steadfast devotion to social and economic equality."²⁰ After boot camp in Washington DC, he was sent to Honolulu for his ARC assignment. After being shipped out from Hawaii he worked with ARC in the South Pacific where he finally ended in Okinawa. An oral history interview performed by Rutgers University of Norman Towar Boggs II described him as an upper class man who grew up in France and Woodstock New York. As a young

¹⁸ Kochendoerfer, 28.

¹⁹ Kochendoerfer, 93.

²⁰ William G. Robbins, "Okinawa 1945: Monroe Sweetland and American Prisoners of War." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 112, no. 3, (Fall 2011), 356.

man he became supervisor and field director for the ARC, he was first a member of the National Youth Administration (NYA), which was an agency created by the New Deal whose purpose was to help educate and find work for young Americans, and shortly after Boggs became part of the permanent staff for the ARC until he retired in 1975.²¹ Along with Kochendoerfer's autobiography I used two collections of letters and diaries belonging to; Mary Hoagland, a Recreational Director sent to New Guinea, Sally Swiss, and Billie Doan in Marilyn Mayer Culpepper's *Never Will We Forget: Oral Histories of World War II*,²² and Emily Yellin's *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II*.²³

Up until December 7, 1941 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the United States was technically a neutral party in the war. In the early years of the war the United States and private parties sold and sent supplies to Europe, but being a nation of immigrants and struggling with the Great Depression it maintained its neutrality. After declarations of war were given to the Japanese and received from the Germans the United States was involved in the Pacific and in Europe including major events such as D-Day, the push to Berlin, and the island--hopping in the Pacific.

Men and women volunteered for the ARC during World War II because of a wide range of personal motivations. Many men joined the service and volunteer organizations to fulfill the societal stereotypical pressures of manhood. Their service showed that they

²¹ Norman Towar Boggs II, "Rutgers Oral History Archives," interviewed by Shaun Illingworth and Matthew Ramsay (New Brunswick History Department, 2003), <http://oralhistory.rutgers.edu/component/content/article/30-interviewees/interview-html-text/701-boggs-ii-norman-towar> (Accessed May 18, 2012).

²² Marilyn Mayer Culpepper, *Never Will We Forget: Oral Histories of World War II*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2008). 19. Culpepper does not list dates in some cases.

²³ Emily Yellin. *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II*, (New York: Free Press, 2004).

were providers and protectors, and secured their masculinity.²⁴ Other men and women volunteered in response to the urge to help their country and the needy. The ARC was the chief provider of relief supplies for the civilian victims of conflict.²⁵

Women in the branches of the military during World War II had opposition from the public and from within the military, primarily because it went against traditional notions of womanhood. Military nurses and those in the ARC endured far less stigma and backlash for the fact that nursing was considered a feminine job. This was true to the degree that men were not allowed to be military nurses during World War II. The women of the ARC were able to escape some of the negative feelings about women in uniform because they conformed, to a degree, to traditional ideas of feminine nurturing and support that military women did not.²⁶

Occupations and job opportunities were connected to gender, so naturally men and women had different expectations and opportunities placed upon them. Susan Hartmann describes men's and women's job dichotomy: "throughout the twentieth century, [not discounting previous times] occupations had been sex-linked and men and women did not usually compete for jobs."²⁷ Most men prepared for combat roles or potential combat roles in the Army and the Army Air Corps, Navy, and Marines either through enlistment or through the draft. Those in the field of administration and doctors that did not join the medical corps typically joined the ARC. Women had fewer opportunities and almost never combat roles, in the Women's Army Corps and service

²⁴ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, (Oxford University Press, 2006), 223.

²⁵ "World War II Accomplishments."

²⁶ Yellin, 167.

²⁷ Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 18.

with the Navy as WAVES, and the ARC. Prior to World War II women had few options to serve during wartimes opposite of men. During wars they were still directly linked to military concerns but working as nurses, cooks, seamstresses, and laundresses as unpaid volunteers or civilian employees. World war II opened up many new possibilities for women to serve including Women's Army Corps, Women's Auxiliary Navy Corps, Women's Airforce Service Pilots, Marine Corps Women's Reserve, the Coast Guard, Army Nurse Corps, Navy Nurse Corps, and the ARC. While the ARC was not a new organization to join that was previously unavailable before World War II, it was one of the options that millions chose to partake in. Men did not have such an issue as far as opportunities of branches to join, moreover their biggest setback was typically not being able to qualify for military service due to their physical abilities.²⁸

The United States government produced vast quantities of propaganda to support the war effort. Some targeted at men to enlist, others asked citizens to help ration supplies and send goods to the war machine. Propaganda directed women to do their part, were typically involving domestic activities; rationing food or substituting foods, buying war bonds, and supporting the troops. Hartmann notes: "Government propaganda stressed women's critical importance in the war effort, and the new government controls imposed restraints on the economic choices of men and women alike."²⁹ Almost all young able-bodied men enlisted in the service or were drafted, leaving women to fill their places in jobs previously unattainable by them. These jobs, often for only the duration of the war, offered women with family responsibilities new opportunities. But for women with fewer constraints, service with the ARC or similar branches of service was a way to do their

²⁸ Yellin, 168-175.

²⁹ Hartmann, 15.

part. And while still under guidance of field directors or hospital supervisors, they had some new freedoms and responsibilities in this service.

Another reason that service in the ARC was attractive to women was the higher status it offered. Many of the military positions attainable by women were very low ranking if they had a rank at all. On the other hand members of the ARC had an equivalency rank of captain, which meant they were to be treated as officers. Violet Kochendoerfer did not have a background in music or drama that the ARC application she filled out was asking for. Instead she was looking forward to the opportunities the organization presented, and was accepted despite her lack of experience. She explains in her biography *One Woman's World War II*, the benefit of a higher rank for transport became clear when she and the other ARC members drew the officer's sun deck for their trip from New York to Britain. She learned that the WACs were beneath somewhere in the hold, and she was glad she joined the ARC.³⁰

For others the ARC was a vehicle to advance themselves, both career and how they viewed themselves within society's norms. Susan Hartmann, author of *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*, referred to the impact of women directly serving the military. "For these women service became a means to individual development and self-fulfillment."³¹ This appears to have been a common feeling for many women involved with wartime service. The traditional family lifestyle up to this time period did not invite many new experiences outside the expected gender roles. Joining the ARC for women was not a massively progressive step in many regards. An important job for them was to attend not only to the sick and wounded but also to

³⁰ Kochendoerfer, 37.

³¹ Hartmann, 43.

entertain servicemen back from the front or on leave. This was not a far stretch from family and care giving roles they were expected to fulfill back at home. Like their counterparts picking up wartime factory jobs in the states, the women of the ARC were expected to keep up their feminine appearances. Hartmann explains for the women that had wartime occupational roles, which applies to the women of the ARC, women were to retain their femininity, and that traditional feminine characteristics were essential. Photographs of women war workers emphasized glamour to remind everyone that beneath the overalls and grease stains remained a true woman, feminine in appearance and behavior.³²

With the millions of men enlisting to fight, some women felt they had a responsibility to their country just as much as men did, and others joined up seemingly bound by conscience after having friends enlist in different branches of services. Posters, recruiters, pride, and the romance of military uniforms all served to attract young women into the services.³³ The ARC was a choice of service for women that assisted the war effort while it provided some opportunities that seemed less restrictive than the opportunities in the newly-converted war factories, the family unit, and the domestic professions typically associated with women's work at the time.

During this era going to college to further ones ability to become a professional or find a career was not expected of both sexes. It was largely common for women that did attend college, to go to college on the basis of getting an "Mrs. degree." An Mrs. degree implied that the women would go to school in hopes of finding a husband, and once finished with school would settle down and focus on the family unit and become a

³² Hartmann 23.

³³ Culpepper, 19.

homemaker.³⁴ None of the military services required a college degree, but the ARC did. Every woman in the ARC was college-educated.³⁵

Kochendoerfer did not necessarily set out to go to a school that encouraged independence, she went to Reed College in Oregon at the suggestion of an acquaintance and because she had family living in Portland and was looking at schools in Oregon. Reed at the time was a small liberal arts college known for being a pioneer in progressive education, and priding itself on teaching students to think for themselves.³⁶ It was this kind of mentality that was not the societal norm in the 1930s and 1940s. Being an independent woman was not something many outwardly strove for due to social pressures. After college she headed home to Minnesota briefly and took a job at the J.R. Watkins Company, something she never wanted to do. She described it as the job for those who stayed put after high school in comfortable office jobs.³⁷ She had a different way of thinking, of viewing the world and perpetuating a progressive manner of living and thinking that may have been started or developed at Reed. In this simple declaration of what other young women she knew did after high school she showed the type of personality that pushed people like her to pursue opportunities like the ARC.

It's a common aspiration for most people to want to travel and vacation in different parts of the world, typically relaxing or enjoyable places. Many young men and women who joined the ARC wanted to see and experience new areas of the world. The chance to travel to distant lands and experience new things was interesting and enticing. With the Great Depression consuming the decade preceding World War II, it was not

³⁴ Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America*, (Yale University Press, 1985), 83 & 150.

³⁵ Yellin, 175.

³⁶ Kochendoerfer, 2.

³⁷ Kochendoerfer, 34.

uncommon to have not traveled far from home unless searching for a job. One young woman named Billie Doan was not old enough to go overseas because the ARC only sent women 21 and older overseas, so she worked state side in Miami. She regarded it as “an opportunity to move out in the world and learn something about it.”³⁸ Joining the service or the ARC offered a chance to go overseas, and as Kochendoerfer imaginatively explained it, “the vision of possible overseas duty was enticing.”³⁹ Kochendoerfer was sent to Britain in early Spring of 1944, while there on ARC duty she had time to briefly see a few sites and experience things that a lower class American coming out of the Great Depression could seldom experience outside these circumstances. There she saw London and the famous campus university of Cambridge.⁴⁰ She was soon shipped to her base where she was basically dropped off, given instructions to start a club, and thrown to the wolves. Regardless of the lack of guidance and instruction, this was an opportunity for independence and to have little oversight from ARC organization managers or officials. She was simply instructed to open a doughnut dugout club, the vision, management, and direction in style was left up to her. She hired and managed a crew, which taught her managerial skills, and hopefully skills that she could use outside of the war.

The duties of the men and women who joined the ARC varied greatly from administrative jobs, to those of doctors and nurses, to being hostesses and entertainers for military service men. The ARC was not restrictive in accepting women only, but it was comprised of far more women than men. From 1939 to 1946 the ARC enrolled 212,000 nurses and certified half of them to the military. Of those enrolled, 71,000 women actually served, representing a total of over 90 percent of all the nurses in service to the

³⁸ Yellin, 169.

³⁹ Kochendoerfer, 34.

⁴⁰ Kochendoerfer, 47.

military during the war at home and overseas.⁴¹ This number does not include women who were not trained as nurses and only represents a portion of ARC membership. Most men who were part of the ARC were doctors and administrative workers. Their women counterparts undertook the responsibilities of nurses, clerical and administration jobs, recreation coordinators, and to open and run clubs and canteens. Nurses often provided recreation for servicemen as well.

The responsibilities of the ARC volunteers on the home front were quite different from those who went overseas. This generally involved rolling bandages, of which about 2.5 billion were produced, assembling some 1.4 million food packages for prisoners of war, along with creating local evacuation plans and care kits for soldiers. Outside of these activities a large number of volunteers worked at the multitude of blood banks that were scattered across the country.⁴²

In many aspects their jobs and responsibilities were what may seem the simple task of raising spirits or morale. Emily Yellin describes the precarious position women, who were often referred to as Red Cross Girls, were in. “The idea that college-educated women, twenty-five and older, were called ‘girls’ and were sent overseas to serve coffee and doughnuts and to organize dances may strike many people today as a misuse of their skills and mischaracterization of their value.”⁴³ But at the time, joining the ARC was an opportunity for adventure and challenges never before available to women.

This aspect of adventure was an important lure for women joining the ARC. It was the only organization besides the USO entertainment troupes that sent large groups of women overseas without stern regulation of military service. The United Service

⁴¹ “World War II Accomplishments.”

⁴² Yellin, 168.

⁴³ Yellin, 175.

Organizations (USO) was a private non-profit organization whose mission was to lift the spirits of America's troops and their families.⁴⁴ Mary Hoagland, for example took it upon herself along with her staff in the Christmas of 1944 to spread Christmas joy for the wounded soldiers in the hospital in New Guinea. Gaining the staff and local support to make 1000 red stockings, turning the antiseptic ward into a snowy New England scene, snowman, and a Christmas pageant. In a brief oral history from the book *Never Will We Forget: Oral Histories of World War II* she explained that as a result, for a short time peace instead of war prevailed.⁴⁵ The duty and privilege of ARC workers was to provide the small things that bring people out of tough times and experiences, and allow them to remember family and friends, and to distance themselves from the war. These nurturing and supportive traits can be tied to the deep-rooted traditional roles women had played outside of the war, but these duties created a lasting impression that went beyond the domestic home life.

Another ARC woman, Sally Swiss, hailing from Saginaw, Michigan joined the ARC after several of her friends had volunteered to serve with the organization. Either feeling left out, or not wanting to disappoint people, she said she joined up, "feeling conscience-bound to do what she could for the war effort."⁴⁶ Days before leaving she learned that at the request of the military, she was assigned to the club department in Hawaii, serving at three different stations on Oahu. At the request of the military she was to assist in establishing and operating on-base service clubs similar to stateside USOs. Often supplies were scarce because during wartime a large amount of materials were needed for the war effort. Because of the scarcity of materials, decorations and supplies

⁴⁴ USO, *About Us*, <http://www.uso.org/the-organization.aspx>, (Accessed may 18, 2012).

⁴⁵ Culpepper, 31.

⁴⁶ Culpepper, 30.

for clubs and canteens were often hard to come by. The ARC women quickly learned the importance of being eager, patient listeners. Culpepper explained in her book *Never Will We Forget: Oral Histories of World War II*, each GI had a story to tell—about himself, his home, his family. The stories were often similar but the willingness and expectations of conversation on women was synonymous.⁴⁷

Men as a whole had very different responsibilities and duties within the ARC than women did. As women were typically placed in nursing, clerical roles, ran clubs or served and entertained service men, men were ushered into doctor, administrative, and field director roles. As an ARC member Norman Boggs spent fifteen years with the Army. Boggs was a field director and administrative worker at Fort Monmouth, Dow Air Force Base, which is now Bangor, Maine, and Camp Edwards. In Boggs' oral history interview with Rutgers University he described that during his service with the U.S. Army and ARC he learned that different chapters of the ARC had different weaknesses or strengths and could get a man sent home from the war if an administrator such as Norman believed in their cause or need to get home. This was one of the ways that Boggs personally helped single individuals as opposed to the war machine in general. He described this here, "Later on in life, I really knew that I could get a man home if I believed in his problem, but I had to be careful and use good judgment in doing this."⁴⁸ In most cases this was a temporary leave and not permanent. He explained the difficulty or situation that was created when an issue arose that army men requested help with:

I had become acclimated to realize that the Army was how they were, and I would say that if you worked with the Army, you have to believe in their mission. You can't work with the Army [unless you accept that] and we had some people during the war who felt that . . . the Army was

⁴⁷ Culpepper ,30.

⁴⁸ Boggs.

the enemy. ... You were there to help men cope with the problems of the Army and, unless you believed in their mission, you couldn't help them. You can't help people whose lifestyle you don't believe in. . . . It's just not possible and I realized that, having worked with the young men who came out of the lower echelons of society, sometimes, that they had some problems. These were legitimate problems that had to be solved and they came, many of them, from cultures which were alien ... to the United States in a way. They were Italian, they were Polish. In those days, they were very (foreign?); their families hardly spoke English. . . . I had learned to handle these things.⁴⁹

Boggs's service with the ARC was very much connected to the Army, this connection of the two was quite disorganized and inefficient, as he described. His earlier work with the ARC and NYA prepared him for assisting these young army men and gave him the experience to understand and try to relate to their issues so he felt he could or should help them. Boggs's service along with his opportunities and attempts to help Army personnel can be viewed as maintaining or building his masculinity or simply aiming to help people. His decisions whether or not to assist enlisted men in their efforts can be viewed as Kimmel suggested were linked with traditional expectations that a man would be a provider and protector. It would be easy to see the connection of being in a patriarchal role and providing help to those he saw fit or worthy at the time. His motives for helping the Army men could very well be much less self interested and purely wanting to assist in their plight.

The outcome and effects of their wartime service on the individuals that joined the ARC are in ways connected to the things that drew them to join initially. But many times it was the small experiences with GIs on base or in passing that made lasting impressions.

The men and women, but particularly women joining the ARC during World War II did not have an aversion to romance or dating or even settling down and having a

⁴⁹ Boggs.

family. But they did feel they had a job to do, a patriotic duty and a drive to help the displaced, wounded, needy, downtrodden peoples during the war. Just as million heeded the call to fight for their country, the men and women of the ARC took on the care of those individuals, in many cases both ally and enemy. Their experiences often in daily routines sometimes brought about life changing realizations and changes. For example spending her ARC service as a Recreational Director in New Guinea often with home sick patients, Mary Hoagland felt: “Those two years were two of my most satisfying. I accomplished what I wanted to and they made me want to volunteer the rest of my days.”⁵⁰

Monroe Sweetland was offered a field director’s position by the ARC, just as Boggs was. This was part of the ARC expanding its global commitments to fulfill its congressional mandate which was, “to provide aid to the sick and wounded of armies in time of war, and to act as a medium of communication between the people of the United States of America and their army and navy.”⁵¹ Men who volunteered for the ARC were often given positions as field directors, to supervise the other volunteers under them, typically women. While this perpetuated the scenarios similar to traditional gendered workplaces in the United States it was also part of underlying power structure of the ARC. While the ARC was an experience that offered some opportunities to break out of the patriarchal power structure the male leadership positions quelled this to a degree.

Like Boggs, Sweetland often opted to be near the action, perhaps in an attempt to fulfill his expectations of manhood and masculinity, or perhaps because he felt he could be of most use to those in need in areas of combat. He was given a choice of jobs and

⁵⁰ Culpepper, 31.

⁵¹ Robbins, 358.

chances to transfer stations several times with the ARC in the Pacific. Several times he chose dangerous assignments, including Operation Iceberg at the invasion of Okinawa.⁵² His choices can be interpreted in different ways, and perhaps his choices to be near combat were altruistic or subconscious. Either way his choices reflect both the societal pressures, and the humanitarian nature he seemed to have.

Later in the war Sweetland was transferred to Okinawa where he helped receive liberated prisoners of war at the war's end. As the conflict was coming to a close in the Pacific most POWs of the Japanese were moved from outer island camps to camps in the interior of Japan's main island Honshu like the Roku Roshi Camp in the mountains. It was at this camp that Sweetland, along with other ARC workers and liberators helped the 22,494 Recovered Allied Military Personnel, or RAMPs. The RAMPs were American, Dutch, British, Australian, and some were Filipinos.⁵³ In Okinawa, hearing the stories from the RAMPs, Sweetland wondered how the stories and accounts of these liberated POWs would influence the post-war opinion of the Japanese. This was also where his own opinions of the Japanese and his service took shape. It was under the circumstances of liberating POWs that Sweetland witnessed allied POWs cope with the feeling of revenge and ARC members helping the likewise displaced Japanese. Most people were familiar with stories of Japanese being brutish overloads that were merciless and only beat and tortured their prisoners. But it was important to know that there were helpful and humane Japanese as well. Sweetland illustrated this in his manuscript "Hatred, Limited." While at Okinawa he heard several accounts of Japanese officers or medical personnel protecting or helping prisoners. It was in this small way that Sweetland helped to stabilize

⁵² Robbins, 359.

⁵³ Robbins, 361-362.

and create a slightly less cruel depiction of the Japanese in World War II and is one example of how ARC workers often tried to help mend the many kinds of wounds from the war.

Men were not the only ones to be put in dangerous situations. Personnel shipped to London and other areas of Britain were regularly threatened by the Nazis. Rosemary Norwalk, a nurse in Britain, explained in her biography *Dearest Ones: A True World War II Love Story* that she landed in Britain after D-Day in 1944 to be threatened with the rest of England by the V-1 and V-2 rockets with no real early warning systems.⁵⁴ Violet Kochendoerfer depicted the scenarios they witnessed that kept them worried and drinking scotch in London, “the buzz bombs hit so close they blew out doors where we were staying, and plaster and glass were falling all around.”⁵⁵ It was common in both theaters of battle to keep women away from combat situations but women still made it up to the front lines from time to time. Sometimes women Red Cross personnel were allowed to go up to the front lines and fox holes, if only to deliver coffee, doughnuts, and to raise the morale and cheer up the men.⁵⁶

While in Britain in the summer of 1944, shortly after opening the Doughnut Dugout club for the GIs stationed there, Kochendoerfer met a man who left a lasting impression that changed her view of her job. On base were hundreds of men who all looked very alike, wearing raunchy fatigues and fatigue hats smashed on their heads. She ran into a man coming to unload supplies whose wife back in the States was leaving him and selling their home, and he knew there was nothing he could do about it. She recalled,

⁵⁴ Rosemary Norwalk, *Dearest Ones: A True World War II Love Story*, (New York: J. Wiley, 1999). 35.

⁵⁵ Kochendoerfer, 67.

⁵⁶ Yellin, 167.

“he was hitting bottom, he made me realize that inside each of those fatigues I saw around the base could be one often lonely, hurting human being. It made a great difference in how I saw the guys and saw my job.”⁵⁷ It was easy enough to get caught up in running a club and having men and planes come and go nonstop, but love and relationships were made and shattered during the war. This simple, brief interaction opened her realization to the plight of so many men that offered their service. Kochendoerfer, too, found a love interest in Germany but like so many of the relationships that were ignited in the service, discharges and new stations split many apart. For Kochendoerfer her five-month relationship felt like a trial marriage, but both understood the situation and were braced for its end.⁵⁸ Most of the young women who volunteered, keeping up with the notion of pushing the bounds of society’s pressures, waited on marriage until after their service. As an example Sally Swiss returned her engagement ring before volunteering and shipping out with the ARC to the Pacific. Their time during the war was one of few times that ARC women had the chance to make a mark for themselves on their own, and many chose to take it. After the war, as the baby boom showed the explosion of families being created it was again time to settle down, but not before taking their time to experience uncommon parts of life first.⁵⁹

For some, the new opportunities and the experiences they had in the ARC were much more fulfilling than their lives back at home. Arriving home, Kochendoerfer recalls her feelings: “Finally I was back in my hometown. I’d called so many places ‘home’ in those three and a half years that after the initial excitement of seeing my family and friends and being a center of attention for a short time, coming back to Minnesota was a

⁵⁷ Kochendoerfer, 60.

⁵⁸ Kochendoerfer, 204.

⁵⁹ Hartmann, 213.

let down.”⁶⁰ They had been introduced to so many new things, and being always on the go, and having hundreds of new people from different walks of life coming and going adjusting back to normal life was a shock. Friends from the war exchanged correspondence sharing the realization of how little they felt they had in common with the people back home. For many women, the shift back to civilian life left them with a hunger for dates with army men, as “fellows who weren’t even in the army were perfectly ghastly.”⁶¹ The decision of what job to pursue was tough, and this was especially true because many jobs that were available to women were “only for the duration.” For Kochendoerfer and others their experience in the war, while it was exciting and invaluable, was like an alternate reality. Kochendoerfer took a temporary job with the Veterans Administration in a hospital in the Midwest. After nine months of working with women volunteers and planning programs with other volunteer organizations she realized it was not for her. It “resurrected old feelings about the artificial life I needed to shed in getting back to reality.” The artificial life was over and she had to prepare for the future, wherever it might lead.⁶²

Service in the ARC meant something different to each individual, but it was also a shared experience that only those who were there understood. They shared something personally and deeply significant that was impossible to describe to those who had not experienced it. Kochendoerfers noted: “It’s a pride, yes but not power or patriotism, it’s a secret sharing of a gift given to those who shared a war and came home. Something we shall cherish the rest of our lives.”⁶³ Though she never married, she felt she had more

⁶⁰ Kochendoerfer, 205.

⁶¹ Kochendoerfer, 205.

⁶² Kochendoerfer, 206-207.

⁶³ Kochendoerfer, 207.

significant relationships with men than most married women. She was not referring to promiscuity, but rather she felt she shared a rare kind of intimacy, a relationship of emotional and intellectual self vulnerability that helped her deal with and survive the war, and in some cases its lasting effects.⁶⁴ For Billie Doan she felt her part was just to make things easier on the men serving. She explained after serving in India, “I didn’t feel like I was saving the country, but I am incredibly proud of what I did. That’s what I had to give and it was necessary.”⁶⁵ She made life more bearable for the men overseas and away from home.

For Monroe Sweetland, participating in wartime relief and support, coupled with the views that most Americans held toward the Japanese and the military seems to have made a lasting impression on him. The reception the American troops and the American Red Cross gave to the evacuees had obviously warmed the hearts of the allied prisoners.⁶⁶ Sweetland understood that there were good and not so good allied prisoners in the POW camps and there were bad and decent camps as well as captors. The implications weighed heavily upon Sweetland. The understanding that both sides had individuals that were viscous or helpful allowed Sweetland to see that both sides were in need of help and that the Japanese were just as human as him.

After the war years the paths of the subjects of this research along with the greater body of ARC members differed greatly. Later in life Violet Kochendoerfer became a member of the clergy. In the late 1950s after spending time with the VA hospital in the Midwest and in New Mexico she trained for the Unitarian ministry. She graduated with a certificate of completion from Starr King School for the Ministry after three years, never

⁶⁴ Kochendoerfer, 211.

⁶⁵ Yellin, 169.

⁶⁶ Robbins, 372.

having attained an undergraduate degree. In 1962 she was retroactively given a graduate degree, and later attained a Master of Divinity degree while serving in churches from all over the United States and Canada.⁶⁷ Monroe Sweetland went into politics and became a member of congress and a senator in the Oregon legislature and a newspaper publisher. He spent a total of ten years as a Democratic Oregon legislator.⁶⁸ As a legislator he focused on expanding educational opportunities for Oregonians, helping turn Portland State College into a university, and sponsored legislation to lower the voting age from 21 to 18.⁶⁹ Mary Hoagland's years as a recreation director in New Guinea gratified her greatly. After her time with the ARC in World War II she spent the remainder of her years working as a volunteer for hospice.⁷⁰ Hoagland's experiences in New Guinea influenced her actions to volunteer in her post war life. Whether this is the case for most ARC members I cannot determine. Sweetland's public service after the war suggests him being influenced by his service. A correlation can be made from his time in Okinawa and with the Oregon legislature that he wanted people to have a fair chance in life.

While the story of my grandmother's time with the ARC is missing from our family, the ambitions and opportunities to see new areas whether domestic or abroad, along with occupation and job opportunities, encompassed by a willingness and duty to help others seems to be a common held interest in many young men and women during World War II. Understanding a bit more the relationships men and women during the war in the ARC helps to fill in the gaps. Their choices to volunteer are tied both to their own

⁶⁷ Kochendoerfer, 211.

⁶⁸ William G. Robbins, "Monroe Sweetland" (1910-2006)," The Oregon Encyclopedia. Available at: http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/sweetland_monroe_1910_2006_/ (Accessed May 21, 2012).

⁶⁹ Portland State University, "Monroe M. Sweetland Endowed Community Leadership Scholarship." <http://www.pdx.edu/ogs/sweetland-scholarship> (Accessed May 18, 2012).

⁷⁰ Mary Hoagland in Culpepper, 31.

desires and personal characteristics, as they were to perpetuate or loosen the bonds of society.

Men and women appear to have volunteered for the ARC to both fulfill societal pressures and expectations, as well as to push the bounds of society's norms. Managerial skills, furthering their occupational skills, independence from their family unit, and exploration are all pointed to or implied by the volunteers of the ARC. Whether lasting or fleeting especially in regards to women, a sense of independence and authority was created in many scenarios. While it would be nice to consider or think that people volunteered for the ARC solely on the basis of helping the displaced and needy of the war, there were intrinsic benefits for the volunteers as well. The self-gratification of helping others is included in this as Mary Hoagland found out in that New Guinea hospital. Easing the loneliness or suffering of those during the war was a gift earned and passed along by the volunteers of the ARC. Decades after her experiences with the ARC in the 1990s, Violet Kochendoerfer reflected on her service, trying to convey her experience as a woman during the war. "As a woman, I'm thankful to have been included by the military as a complementary part of the last 'Good War.' For all of us it brought great deep community and pride of country—something today's baby boomers and youth have not had the privilege to experience."⁷¹

⁷¹ Kochendoerfer, 210.

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