



RHUMB LINES

Straight Lines to Navigate By



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Women's History Month

"My goal throughout my career has been to just do my best. I was very fortunate to have served in positions in both aviation squadrons and on ships that gave me experience that would serve me well when more positions opened up for women."
– Rear Adm. Nora Tyson, Commander, Carrier Strike Group Two

[Women's History Month](#) originated in 1978, when Sonoma County, Calif., initiated a Women's History Week to coincide with the March 8 [International Women's Day](#). Then in 1981 Congress passed a joint resolution proclaiming a Women's History Week. In 1987 the [National Women's History Project](#) petitioned Congress to expand the celebration to the entire month of March. With this year's theme of "Our History is Our Strength," the nation commemorates the diverse contributions women have made and continue to make to our nation.

Rich History, Invaluable Service

Women became an official part of the Navy in 1908 when the [Nurse Corps](#) was established. With the passage of the [Women's Armed Services Integration Act](#) on June 12, 1948, women gained permanent status in the armed services. The first six women enlisted in the regular Navy July 7, 1948, and on October 15, 1948, the first eight female officers were commissioned. The first woman naval aviator was designated in February 1974, and women were [first assigned to selected non-combatant ships](#) in 1978. Opportunities were later broadened to include service in combatants and piloting combat aircraft following the repeal of the Combat Exclusion Law in 1994. Most recently, in April 2010, the Navy announced a [policy change](#) that allows women to serve on submarines.

Notable women in the Navy, past and present, include:

- The more than 80,000 [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service](#) (WAVES), including [Lt. Cmdr. Mildred H. McAfee](#), USNR, WAVES director and the Navy's first female line officer.
- [Rear Adm. Nora Tyson](#), the Navy's first female carrier strike group commander, who [took command](#) of Carrier Strike Group Two in July, 2010.
- Navy civilians Katrina Mansfield of NAVAIR, Burvis Robinson and Andrea Freeman of NAVFAC, and Voka Stokes of SPAWAR, recipients of the [2010 National Women of Color Technology All-Star Awards](#).
- LCDR Christina Dalmau, Naval Nuclear Power Training Command; LT Sarah B. Rice, Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Pacific; and CMDCM(SW/AW) Susan A. Whitman, USS Abraham Lincoln, winners of the [2011 Captain Joy Bright Hancock Leadership Awards](#).

Promoting Professional Development of All Sailors

Events highlighting the achievements of women this year include:

- [22nd Annual International Women in Aviation Conference](#), February 24-26, Reno, Nev.
- [Sea Services Leadership Association Women's Leadership Symposium](#), March 15-16, San Diego.
- [Federally Employed Women National Training Conference](#), July 18-22, Philadelphia.

Key Messages

- Women are a vital component of our Total Force and make indispensable contributions every day to our mission and operations.
- Today, 95 percent of Navy billets are open to women, with women permanently assigned to all ships, afloat staffs, naval construction force units, and aviation squadrons.
- To be an effective fighting force, credible to the nation it serves, the Navy must reflect diversity at all levels, including within top leadership.

Facts & Figures

- 53,000 active duty women and more than 10,000 female reservists are serving in the Navy, comprising 16.3 percent of the force. Nearly 50,000 women serve in a wide range of specialties as Navy civilians.
- Thirty-three active and reserve female flag officers and flag selects, and more than 50 female command master chiefs, are leading our Sailors today.
- A showcase of women in the Navy is available at <http://www.history.navy.mil/special%20Highlights/Women/Women-index.htm>.