

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
U. S. COAST GUARD
STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT COMMANDER REBECCA MONTGOMERY
ON THE PROPOSED MEMORIAL TO HONOR WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION'S
TASK FORCE ON LIBRARIES AND MEMORIALS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
20 MAY 1985

MR. CHAIRMAN, I AM PLEASED TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH YOU AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED MEMORIAL TO HONOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS WOMEN HAVE MADE TO THE ARMED FORCES, IN PARTICULAR THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD.

I AM PRESENTLY SERVING IN THE RESERVE TRAINING DIVISION OF THE OFFICE OF READINESS AND RESERVE, U. S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS. SINCE RECEIVING MY COMMISSION IN 1974, I HAVE SERVED AS A MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OFFICER IN CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS, AND ON THE STAFF OF THE ELEVENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT COMMANDER. MY LAST ASSIGNMENT WAS AS DEPUTY GROUP COMMANDER OF COAST GUARD GROUP, MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN.

WOMEN FIRST ENLISTED IN THE COAST GUARD RESERVE IN 1918. IN 1942, THE COAST GUARD WOMEN'S RESERVE WAS FORMED TO RELIEVE COAST GUARDSMEN OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES AND FREE THEM FOR BATTLE. THIS RESERVE COMPONENT WAS KNOWN AS THE "SPAR's", AN ACRONYM FOR SEMPER PARATUS, ALWAYS READY. THE END OF WORLD WAR II SAW OVER 10,000 ENLISTED AND 1,000 OFFICER WOMEN SPARS. ALL WERE EITHER DISCHARGED OR RELEASED FROM ACTIVE DUTY. IN 1949, THE SPAR's WERE REACTIVATED AND WOMEN WERE ASSIGNED CLERICAL AND SUPPLY DUTIES TO SUPPORT THE KOREAN CONFLICT. IN 1973, 14 USC 762 ENDED THE WOMEN'S RESERVE AS A SEPARATE BRANCH WITHIN THE COAST GUARD RESERVE. THIS LAW AUTHORIZED WOMEN TO TRAIN AND SERVE IN EITHER AN ACTIVE OR INACTIVE STATUS AS INTEGRAL PARTS OF THE COAST GUARD.

IN 1976, THE COAST GUARD ACADEMY WAS THE FIRST SERVICE ACADEMY TO ENROLL WOMEN. IN 1978, ALL RESTRICTIONS WERE REMOVED FROM TRAINING, ASSIGNMENT, AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN. WOMEN ARE NOW ASSIGNED TO EVERY TYPE OF COAST GUARD UNIT, INCLUDING COMBATANT VESSELS, ISOLATED LONG RANGE AID TO NAVIGATION STATIONS, AIR STATIONS, SEARCH AND RESCUE STATIONS, AND MERCHANT VESSEL INSPECTION DUTIES. TWO WOMEN SERVE AS COMMANDING OFFICERS OF COASTAL PATROL BOATS. COAST GUARD WOMEN COMPRISE 6% OF OUR TOTAL ACTIVE DUTY FORCE, 2.9% OF THE OFFICER CORPS, AND 6.8% OF THE ENLISTED RANKS.

THE COAST GUARD'S SERVICE TO MANKIND HAS MANY EXAMPLES OF WOMEN FACING THE CHALLENGES OF THE SEA. IN APRIL 1979, SEAMAN INA TOAVS WAS AWARDED THE COAST GUARD MEDAL, OUR HIGHEST PEACETIME HEROISM AWARD, FOR HER PART IN RESCUING AN UNCONSCIOUS FISHERMAN FROM THE SURF AT BODEGA BAY, CALIFORNIA. BUT SERVICE AND DEVOTION TO DUTY ARE NOT WITHOUT A PRICE. IN JANUARY 1982, LIEUTENANT (JUNIOR GRADE) COLLENE A. CAIN, WHILE SERVING AS CO-PILOT ON AN HH-52 HELICOPTER, WHICH WAS ENGAGED IN A HAZARDOUS SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION IN HAWAII, WAS KILLED WHEN THE HELICOPTER CRASHED.

THE U. S. COAST GUARD, AS AN ORGANIZATION, AND I PERSONNALLY, SUPPORT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MEMORIAL TO HONOR WOMEN VETERANS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES. THESE WOMEN, LIKE THEIR FELLOW SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN AND MARINES, HEADED A CALL TO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY, TO PAY ANY PRICE WITH PRIDE AND SELFLESSNESS.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THAT CONCLUDES MY PREPARED STATEMENT. I WILL BE HAPPY TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS THE COMMITTEE MAY HAVE.