

VLF's NEWSLETTER

Why does the research take so long?

In our last newsletter we mentioned that the number of cases we were working had reached the 170 mark. Although we have completed several cases, more requests have come in to take their place.

Some of you have wondered why, at times, the research process takes so much time, so we will try to explain. All of our researchers are volunteers and have fulltime jobs—some very demanding jobs. However, we do have one “fulltime” volunteer researcher who puts in more than fulltime work hours. The workload for the VLF varies from day to day which includes:

- answering all email requests or responses to our questions/inquiries as well as correspondence to a variety of agencies;
- going through the regular mail, which may also include requests or needed documentation which we then digitize and log into the proper file.
- answering calls that may come in as late as 10 to 11 pm (West Coast).

Many times we need to request official documents on the client's behalf. These requests are made through various military or government agencies, and as many of you in the military remember...it's a “hurry up and wait” situation. When we do receive an answer, the information may not be located at that institution and we have to look elsewhere. Many people do not realize that much of the archival documents that we request are still on paper because the cost to have it all digitized would be astronomical. If that wasn't enough, a lot of the information is not cataloged, improperly cataloged or missing. Some of the documentation, unfortunately, was destroyed and not



President's Corner

Help us help you. On most cases, we will need a copy of your discharge form, DD 214 or War Department form for WWII case research. Also tell us if you have tried other agencies or organizations for research and what the results were for these various searches. We do not want to revisit the same searches that were carried out before unless new information is now available. We'll need copies of that information as well.

Most of our correspondence is through email, if you or the veteran does not use email, let us know and if there is a relative that can

just from the 1973 fire at NPRC in St. Louis. There have been instances where an entire unit's documentation or a large portion of it was inadvertently destroyed while still in the theater of operations or while returning it back to the U.S.

Finally, we prioritize our caseload. We have good number of research requests from WWII and Korean War, and because of their ages, we move them to the top of our list. Any veteran with a serious illness is also given priority. We hope our clients will understand.

So, we hope everyone can understand how, many times, the research is very labor intensive, which unfortunately makes the process slow. As we have stated to our clients, do not hesitate in calling or email us to see how we are progressing with your research. Unfortunately, we do not have the time to update everyone as we proceed. It is our goal to obtain enough funding to fill the roles of fulltime, paid staff to make our research process more stable and efficient. Until then, bear with us and be patient.

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accept emails for you. Of course, we use "snail mail", if there is no other way to send and receive information. When sending documentation, only send copies...no originals please.

If originals are sent, we immediately scan the items and send the originals back. Speaking of scanning or digitizing documents, we digitize everything regarding the cases and when a case is completed we make available a CD to our clients so that they have copies for safekeeping.

JE

Did You Know...



The U.S. Coast Guard created a women's reserve in November 1942. The organization was named SPARs. The acronym combines the Coast Guard motto and its English translation: Semper Paratus, Always Ready. A spar is used as both a nautical and an aeronautic term, interpreted respectively to a stout pole used as a mast, and a main structural member of a fixed wing aircraft. It does kind of translate to the support that these women gave to the Coast Guard, doesn't it!

Just as other women's reserve units, the SPARs were created to free men from service stateside to fight overseas.

The first director, Captain Dorothy C. Stratton, of Brookfield, MO, was the dean of women and an associate professor of psychology at Purdue University before taking on this historic command. Her list of medals and awards include the Coast Guard Legion of Merit medal and the American Theater and Victory Ribbons.

More than 11,000 women served between 1942 and 1946. Training began in Oklahoma and Iowa, then spread out to places such as Florida and New York. They were trained in military protocol, terminology, and insignias, parachute rigging, general store operations and pay disbursements, as radio and air traffic tower operators, medical and dental assistants and pharmacists. They wore both skirt and pant uniforms, they greeted the public, swabbed the decks, and repaired trucks and machines. They were teachers, draftsmen, firefighters,

electricians, and photographers. One of the least publicized and almost secret jobs was LORAN (long range to navigation). The job was to record measurements of radio signals from shore-based stations to be picked up by ships and planes helping to calculate their exact position. The Chatham, MA station was the only one commanded and operated by only females.

The U.S. Coast Guard Women's Reserve was inactivated in July of 1947, and reestablished in November of 1949 as the U.S. Coast Guard Women's Volunteer Reserve / SPARs. In 1950 enlistments were for 3 years on active duty in time of war or national emergency.

In 1973, legislation ended the Women's Reserve, integration began into the regular Coast Guard, and tours were for 4 years. When aviation was opened to women in 1976, all fields of the Coast Guard were now open to women. In 1977 the CGCs Gallatin and Morgenthau became the first mixed-gender crews afloat.

There were 2 United States Coast Guard Cutters named *Spar*. The first, WLB 403, was launched in 1943 and logged 17,000+ miles for oceanographic charting from 1981-1995. It earned the most "gold stripes" for excellence in operations and training in the Atlantic Fleet. It was decommissioned in 1997, sold for parts, and became an artificial reef off the coast of Morehead City, NC in 2004. The second was WLB 206, launched in 2000, is based in Kodiak, AL, and performs tasks such as search and rescue, ice-breaking, border security, and maritime environmental protection and law enforcement. Known as the "Aleutian Keeper," the cutter was named to honor the SPARs.

There were so many Coast Guard women who performed so many heroic missions and achieved very tough goals in both war- and peace-times.

SPAR, Seaman First Class Florence Ebersole Smith Finch, a Philippine-American, received the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Ribbon for undercover operations in Japanese controlled Manila in 1942. She was caught and imprisoned for 3 years. Finch enlisted as a SPAR in 1945 and was discharged after the war. She was awarded the Medal of Freedom in 1946 for her heroic efforts during World War II. In 1995 the Coast Guard honored her service by naming a building on the base at Sand Island, HI after her.

In 1978 Jeanette Roberts Burr became the first (uniformed) light-keeper since a civilian, Fannie Mar Salter, retired after 24 years, in 1947.

In 1981, First Class Storekeeper Mary Alice "Mike" Shaffer retired from the Coast Guard Reserve after 34 years of service. She was the last World War II-era SPAR to retire from the service, and possibly was the only former SPAR to leave in compliance with legal maximum age requirements.

In 1986, Kelly Larson became the first female Coast Guardsman to graduate from the Navy Rescue Swimmer School, and became the Coast Guard's first female rescue swimmer.

Although women had held command positions aboard the Coast Guard's WPB fleet from 1979, the crews were not integrated. In 1994, CGC *Monomoy* and *Pea Island* became the first fully

integrated patrol boats in the Coast Guard.

In June, 2002, Capt. Jane M. Hartley, USCGR, was designated as the Commanding Officer of Marine Safety Office Wilmington, NC, became the first woman in the Coast Guard to become Captain of the Port.

LT Carrie Wolfe and LT Olivia Grant became the first African-American female Engineering Officers on a "major" cutter when they reported aboard the CGC *Spencer* and CGC *Venturous* respectively in the summer of 2009.

If you served as a SPAR or know of someone who did, please let us know. We would be honored to hear from you.

Next time, read about the Army Nurse Corps.

References:

Wikipedia

U.S. Coast Guard official website

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The Thing about Being Unique

When I was approached with the opportunity to chase after funds via the mystical world of grant writing, I jumped at the chance to be a part of something that had, and still has, the potential to become something great. I thought, sure, how hard can it be? I'm an English major; I'm no William Faulkner by any stretch, but I can write. Let's do this.

It didn't take long to realize how utterly unique this grant-seeking foundation was. I would like to say that a *quick* search of www.grants.gov yielded a plethora of funding opportunities, but there is no such thing as a *quick* search on that site. I have sat in front of my computer for hours searching [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) for let's say: veterans, veteran research, military history research, historical research, and any variation of this list; heck, I even tried genealogy. Well, let me tell you, if this foundation did research on the effects of naval maneuvers in the Atlantic, causes of PTSD, veteran housing development or even liberation of Afghani women, we would be in like Flynn as the saying goes. But this is not the case. After several hours-long sessions, I felt a little like Alice, expecting to find a grant for research on the effects of hookah smoking on caterpillars—you're welcome Jefferson Airplane fans.

I will tell all the hawks out there to have no fear that our government is slipping on protecting this nation. The Dept. of Defense has a slew of grant opportunities that fund ways of keeping this country secure, particularly when it comes to radar defense. However, for a group of proud folks, trying to do what's right by our veterans, [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) has not yet panned out any nugget to chase after. The work we do simply does not fit what's being funded, but we're still searching. And believe me, nothing is off limits: corporate grants are all over the place—if your non-profit helps the environment, gets drug addicts off the streets, teaches inner

city children, or works with the disabled—corporations will throw money at you. But don't you dare tell them that you do research for veterans. Why, that's just not normal.

Fine, we're not normal, we're unique, but that only tells us that we have tapped into a need that was not being met by any other non-profit organization, and I'm good with that. Now, if only I could find funders for unique organizations....

LK

Thank You



We would like to thank some local organizations for their support. The first is TRP CPAs a firm of independent CPAs that not only provide accounting, but auditing, tax compliance, as well as management consulting services. They were very instrumental in ensuring our compliance with federal tax and non-profit issues during the foundation's creation. We highly recommend these professionals. They are located in Dunn, Fayetteville and Sanford, NC.



We also would like to recognize the Legion Riders of Benson Banner Post 109 who have shown their support of our organization, but more importantly support of our veterans by participating at several award ceremonies. The veterans, family members and friends welcomed and appreciated their attendance. They have become an integral part of our organization and we look forward to their attendance to the next event. We welcome other organizations to attend out next veteran's ceremony.

And last but not least, a huge thank you to Ashley Wiegand for her mad wood-working skills. Even with the daily grind of being a full-time caterpillar employee, Ashley found the time to build and contribute the beautiful set of Bag-Toss boards (aka Cornhole boards), currently being raffled off in the VLF's first fundraising raffle. We truly appreciate your generosity and your artistic talent.

