

THE SKIRTED SOLDIER

By Charles Collins Aldridge

I am a WAAC.
 I am a Soldier in Skirts.
 Don't laugh, Mister. It is no laughing matter.
 I wear the uniform of my country
 Because my country is at war.
 I'm no super-patriot. Millions of
 Young men have laid aside pencils,
 Typewriters, golf clubs to shoulder guns,
 To fight, to bleed....and to die
 That this great United States of America
 May remain free.
 There's Joe and Pete and Herbert and Al
 and George.
 They were told their country was in peril
 and
 They did something about it.
 Why should I sit back in ease and let Joe
 and Pete
 And George fight my war for me?
 However you add it, subtract it or multi-
 ply it,
 It is my war, too. Not just Joe's war
 Or Pete's or George's.
 Those grand fellows -- fellows I know
 and love --
 Did not have to be told twice that their
 country
 Was in grave danger -- just once.
 Neither did I.

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"Goodbye, sir, I'm off to join the WAACs
 "You can find another stenographer."
 "Goodbye, children. You'll have a new
 teacher....
 "I'm going to join the WAACs."
 "Store these dishes and chairs for the
 duration,
 "And rent the house. I'm off to join
 the WAACs."

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I swamped the recruiting station.
 I got in the sergeant's hair, the Captain's
 hair,
 The colonel's hair.
 "Are you sure you know what you're
 doing, Lady?"
 Asked the sergeant, the captain, the
 colonel.
 "This is no tea party, no glamour parade."
 "Glamour be....Excuse me, sir. What I
 mean is
 "There's a job to do.
 "And I can do it."
 The sergeant, the captain and the colonel
 Threw up their hands in utter dismay
 And total disbelief.
 But they signed me up. And they handed
 Me a one-way ticket to Fort Des Moines.

* * * * *

So you went to Fort Des Moines and
 They gave you a gold bar for each
 shoulder?
 NO! Mister, NO!
 They didn't give me ANYTHING....
 Except shots in the arm, and
 An Ill-fitting uniform, and
 Gigs opposite my name, and
 Blisters -- big raw blisters -- on my
 feet.
 I EARNED those gold bars....the hard
 way.

* * * * *

'Tom-Shun!
 Did you ever stand at attention
 And have your nose start to itch.
 And just keep on itching and itching
 Till you thought sure it would itch off?
 Well I did.
 Did you ever march and march and march
 Till your arches screamed in pain
 And your blistered heels cried out in
 mortal agony?
 Well I did.
 Did you ever have an innocent, unsuspec-
 ting
 Brain into which suddenly were hurled
 headlong
 The intricacies of Mess Management,
 Army Administration, Property Account-
 ability,
 Close Order Drill, Army Courtesy,
 Physical Ed, The Punitive Articles of
 War,
 And Discipline, Yes Sir, No Sir, Yes
 Mam,
 No Mam? Well did you?
 Well I did.
 Mister, I earned those gold bars.
 And this military bearing.
 And this sharp salute.
 Oh Glamour, where art thou?
 Oh Colonel, you knew whereof you spoke!

* * * * *

But today I am a WAAC.
 A Third Officer, if you please.
 And I'm equipped to do a job.
 That job is an Army job. They won't
 Let me shoot the Japs and the Nazis.
 But any other Army job they want me
 to fill
 I'll fill.
 I'll bake the Army's bread, make its
 pies,
 Peel its spuds, watch its skies.
 I'll clean its barracks. I'll drive
 its trucks.
 I'll whip its bounding, impertinent
 jeeps....
 Answer its phones, write its letters
 And file ten copies neatly away....

I'll do ANYTHING.
 I am ready. I am trained.
 If I'm needed in England, Iceland,
 Australia, Alaska, Egypt,
 The Solomons, Madagascar,
 Mitchell field or Fort Sam Houston....
 There will I be. Prepared, eager, alert.
 Yes, Joe and Poto and George and Herb
 You may go into battle now
 And not be entirely alone....I, too,
 Will be serving. It is really my war
 now
 Just as it is your war.
 And Joe and Poto and George and Herb
 I want you to know this:
 I am proud to the last fiber of my body..

To the deepest misty recess of my spirit
 That I am privileged to wear the uniform
 Of my country.
 Proud that I am privileged to have a
 part
 In making history.
 Proud that I am privileged to play a
 role,
 However small,
 In this grim, necessary struggle to
 keep
 Our country a land wherein we may
 Live, love and worship God
 Any way we please.

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Mister, if you'll pardon me.
 I have work to do.
 I am a WAAC.