

AFEHRI File 19-10

**Research Materials/Source Documents
ENLISTED FIRSTS**

FILE TITLE: 1st Female CMSgt: CMSgt Grace A. Peterson

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PETERSON, GRACE A. "First Female CMSgt in USAF"

"The WAAC was born in the Spring of 1942; I entered that Summer and believe me I was one frightened enlistee. While being sworn in at a New York induction center, the clamor over the wisdom of women in uniform was at its height in the streets and in the press and needless to say, we were targets of considerable criticism, but, thank goodness, our spirits prevailed through the first stormy months.

First Sergeant on base" as she is regarded at this busy MATS installation, was born in New York City and reared at Harmon on Hudson, N.Y., where she attended Groton Harmon high school.

She recalls the first momentous day she entered the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps: "This was a time of decision both for me and the country," she said. "While the nation was fighting. A WAAC, 21, and a boot trainee, she was sent to the first WAAC training center hastily established at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. The inventive genius of those who prepared facilities to receive the first "females" into the military will forever command Sergeant Peterson's admiration.

"Except for those among us who were billeted in converted horse stables at this old cavalry base we had all the comforts of home. Our uniforms then were not as chic as they are today. I remember we were issued male OD coats (female sizes were non-existent) which on the shorter girls trailed in the snow. None of us needed mittens for the sleeves completely enveloped our arms."

Four weeks later, she was assigned as company clerk to the second WAAC training center at Fort Oglethorpe, GA., and in less than one year the "boot trainee" had risen to the rank of first sergeant.

To this date, Sergeant Peterson maintains the "boot" expression derived from the heavy brogan shoes she had her charges wore in those days. Dubbed "Li'l Abner," here size seven feet marched over 95 miles and drilled for 58 hours in those shoes with ^{more} than one class of basic trainees.

After experiencing the rigors of basic training and a tight academic schedule, first as a pupil and later as an instructor, the precedent establishing experience of the veteran of six months was considered too valuable to relinquish. She had, so to speak, found her niche in the Army...to greet and train the women volunteers who had followed her in steadily increasing numbers.

At this point in her career, Sergeant Peterson said "I was not only proud of my personal good fortune, but I felt an immense pride of my sex. Many of the volunteers we received - some a great deal older than myself - were college graduates and had established civilian careers but chose, instead, to serve with the armed forces during this period of crisis.

"And I think the record points out the calibre of service women performed during the war." Throughout the war years, Sergeant Peterson remained in the United States except for a period of duty at Ladd Field, Alaska. She was there during both VE and VJ days.

When in July, 1947, the Air Force became a separate and co-equal service, Sergeant Peterson, already a member of the Army Air Corps, said the natured thing to do at the time was to make the transition from Army to Air Force. So, in June 1948, WAC Peterson became Sergeant Peterson, Womens Air Force. Administratively, the WAF was born nearly 11 months later than the official Air Force birth.

Contrasting[†] with the historic moments she has experienced and helped to establish, Sergeant Peterson's career has been surprisingly consistent. After her first year, she has always served as a first sergeant and ~~she~~ has always been connected with the air transport service.

Within the NCO ranks she is, without dispute, the dean of the MATS women in blue. She said she could not reflect on her career and say: this was the highpoint! "Every day was an important day to me." Perhaps the highpoint in Sergeant Peterson's personal life came in January 1951 when she met her husband-to-be at Westover AFB, Mass. He has been recalled to active duty during the Korean conflict and assigned to base operations at Westover. In October 1955 after the 1611th Wing had moved from Westover to McGuire, they were married.

Among the "firsts" Sergeants Peterson has established besides her retirement this month are her promotion to the chief master sergeant grade in June 1960, the first women to be promoted to this new and highest non-commissioned officer rank. In 1958 she was among the first women to attend and graduate from the MATSNCO Academy.

In summarizing her career, Sergeant Peterson said, "I doubt if any women could have a more interesting, enriching career than that afforded me by the Air Force. I enjoyed every minute of it. I think all WAFs take pride in sharing with the men the duties and responsibilities inherent in military service."

HISTORY
OF
CMSGT GRACE A. PETERSON
FIRST WAF CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT

by: SMSgt Debra K. Erickson

BACKGROUND PAPER
ON
GRACE A. PETERSON
FIRST WAF CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT

CMSgt (ret.) Grace A. Peterson broke many of the military “norms” and social preconceptions from the time she entered the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1942 until the time she became the highest ranking female noncommissioned officer (NCO) to retire from the Women in the Air Force (WAF) in 1963. She achieved many “firsts” while she served her country as an enlisted woman, and for those alone, she deserves to be remembered. Considering that she achieved those “firsts” at a time when women who joined the military were expected to either find a husband and get out before their first enlistments ended or get out when their husbands returned from the war, she deserves to be admired. This piece of history will chronologically follow CMSgt (ret.) Peterson’s career, and at the same time, elaborate on her assignments and on some of the controversies concerning the women of those times, particularly during the World War II era. It all started with the fight for the establishment of the WAAC.

On 14 May 1942, the WAAC was established with the passage of Public Law 554. (12:45) Legislation for this law, sponsored by Congresswoman Edith Norse Rogers of Massachusetts, established the WAAC, a small group of women attached to, but not in, the Army. At this time, women were taken into the armed services in all branches principally to help alleviate the shortage of manpower in certain needed areas (particularly in clerical skills, but in other fields as well). Women’s “line” (nonmedical)

components of the services (each headed by a female director or adviser, her title varying from service to service) were established at this time. Although Congresswoman Rogers wanted to give women in the Army full, not auxiliary, military status, the country wasn't yet ready for that step. The WAAC was set up as a separate command entity, assigned to the Services of Supply, its units only attached for duty to the Air Forces and other stations where they were employed. (12:42) The establishment of the WAAC enabled 21 year old Grace A. Peterson (nee Ghiazza) to begin her military career.

Ms. Peterson was sworn in at a New York City induction center, then attended basic training in October 1942 at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. "Boot Trainee" Peterson's class was the second basic training class to ever be held at Fort Des Moines, the first ever WAAC Training Center to be established. (3:7) This old cavalry base converted to a WAAC training center was the first of its kind. The planners searching for facilities to train the WAACs had already attempted to find other accommodations: universities, small colleges, or resort hotels. However, those facilities were already being used to train the men. Fort Des Moines was finally selected because it was near the geographical center of the United States, had no major defense projects in the area, would present no race and color difficulties, had suitable utilities to handle expansion to 5,000 population, and already had room for 1,000 and suitable administration, supply, and recreation buildings. As an added bonus -- there were already nine large stables that could be converted to barracks. (12:36) Thus, Fort Des Moines was chosen, and the first basic training class began on 20 July 1942. (7:29) After graduating from Fort Des Moines' second four-week basic training class, Boot Trainee Peterson moved on to her first assignment, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

Fort Oglethorpe was the third WAAC Training Center to be established. It activated on 1 January 1943, with recruits scheduled to report the next month. (12:102) At Fort Oglethorpe, Peterson was first assigned the position of Company Clerk and then became a Training Instructor. Her duties included greeting and training the women volunteers who had followed her into the WAAC in steadily increasing numbers. Looking back on this time in her life, Peterson pointed out, "...many young women shared the same enthusiasm of the men to join up, but we had to fight, in a sense, for the right to do so. At the time, popular opinion was against women serving in the military." (3:7)

Although popular opinion WAS against women serving in the military, it was while Peterson was stationed at Fort Oglethorpe that the bill to establish the Women's Army Corps *in* the Army was finally passed and signed by the President on 1 July 1943. With the passage of that bill, the Army had 90 days to dissolve the WAAC. By 30 September 1943, all Waacs had to be enlisted or commissioned in the WAC, or discharged, for the WAAC would cease to exist. (12:220-221)

At the same time the fight to establish the WAC was occurring, many vicious rumors about WAC immorality were spread, dealing a severe blow to recruitment. The assumption was that women's military contributions could only take the form of sexual favors. Reports that the WACs were frequently drunk, sexually promiscuous, provided with contraceptives from the Army, and contradictorily, that hundreds of them were pregnant, circulated so widely that the President and Secretary of War were compelled to make a public defense of enlisted women. (12:191-218) Not daunted by public opinion, Peterson enlisted in the WAC and began to climb through the ranks.

Less than one year into her tour at Fort Oglethorpe, Peterson achieved the rank of First Sergeant. The rank structure of the 1940's was different from the current structure, the enlisted grades only reaching E-7. WAC personnel were eligible for grades commensurate with the duties they performed within the total allotment of grades allotted to the station where they were assigned. The following chart from the Army Air Forces (AAF) Regulation Number 35-44 depicts the WAC rank structure in 1945. (1:1)

3. Allotment of grades. WAC personnel are eligible for grades commensurate with the duties performed within the total allotment of grades allotted to the station.

a. The following ratings and strengths of WAC squadron enlisted administrative overhead personnel are provided as a guide. No mess personnel is included in the chart except position of mess sergeant:

<u>Detachment</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>50 to 150</u>	<u>150 to 250</u>	<u>250 to 350</u>	<u>350 to 450</u>	<u>450-550</u>
1st Sgt		1*	1	1	1	1
T/Sgt						1
S/Sgt	2	2	2	2	2	2
Sgt	1	1	1	1	2	2
Corp	1	1	2	2	2	2
Pfc			1	2	2	3
Pvt				1	2	2
Total	4	5	7	9	11	13

Note: * - Grade 3 for detachments with an assigned enlisted strength of less than 75; grade 2 for detachments with an assigned enlisted strength of 75 to 99; grade 1 for detachments with an assigned enlisted strength of 100 and over.

Now a First Sergeant, Peterson left Fort Oglethorpe to spend some time at Ladd Field (Fairbanks), Alaska. She was assigned there at least during V-E and V-J days in 1945. Although there are no specific details available about her duties in Alaska, she probably held the position of First Sergeant within a WAC "Squadron" since the WAC was maintained as a separate piece of the Army, and Sergeant Peterson was always a First

Sergeant after her first year of service. (3:7) Although the War Department never directed any arctic shipments of Wacs during World War II, interviews with participants of Wacs to this area revealed that the only arctic shipments were those made to Alaska and Labrador by the Air Transport Command (ATC), which staged, equipped, and shipped its own Wacs. (12:425) At Ladd Field, a Cold Weather Detachment had been established in 1942, and during the war years that followed, the Alaskan Wing of the ATC was engaged in ferrying aircraft to Russia along the northern route, amassing a vast amount of information concerning cold weather operations of men and machines in the Arctic. (6:1) Ladd Field was Peterson's first assignment with the Air Transport Command, the command she remained connected to the rest of her career. This is probably where she became a member of the Army Air Corps, later named Army Air Forces. (3:7)

Following her short stint at Ladd Field, First Sergeant Peterson served the Military Air Transport Service (MATS/redesignated from ATC on 1 June 1948 (9:578)) at Westover Air Force Base (AFB), Massachusetts, for eight years as the WAF Squadron's First Sergeant. (8:--) Since she was stationed at Westover AFB from 1947 to 1955, it's unclear exactly which unit she was assigned to: the 1600 WAF Squadron, which was active from 18 October 1948 through 1 July 1952, or to the WAC provincial squadron, Squadron G, of the 1600 Air Base Group, which was active from 1 June 1948 until unknown. (9:580-581) During her time at Westover AFB, a key United States jump-off site for supplies during the Berlin Airlift (1948-49) (9:578), two major events took place; one military -- the Air Force became a separate service in July 1947; the other personal --

6

she met her future husband, David F. Peterson, in January 1951. The military event enabled her to achieve her future “firsts.”

Although the Air Force became a separate and co-equal service in July 1947, Peterson didn't make the transition from the Army Air Forces to the United States Air Force (USAF) until June 1948 since the WAF was administratively born nearly 11 months later than the official Air Force birth. (3:7) Even though the law (Title 3 of the Women's Armed Services' Integration Act of 1948 (10:--)) didn't require it to do so, the USAF established an office of Director, WAF (headed by a female colonel), on 16 June 1948. Organizationally, Women in the Air Force were airmen -- rather than WAF airmen -- right from the very beginning because the USAF had a deep aversion to creating ANY separate Corps as the Army had. (7:122-131) Public law 625, the Women's Armed Services' Integration Act of 1948, required the “air-WACs” still on active duty to either go back to the Army (WAC), transfer to the USAF, or revert to civilian status. By the end of June 1948, First Sergeant Peterson was one of 1,433 enlisted women to sign on with the new Air Force. (7:133) It was probably at the time of this transfer to the new Air Force that “WAC” Peterson became Master Sergeant Peterson. (3:7) It was a good thing for her personally that she made the conversion and remained in the military -- since she met her future husband at Westover a few years later.

It was during the late 1940's and 1950's that 70 to 80 percent of enlisted women left the service -- most before their first enlistments were up. It was assumed women would marry and leave the service. During the hearings of the Integration Act in 1948, (Chief of Staff) Eisenhower matter-of-factly acknowledged that women's retention would naturally be lower than men's. “Ordinarily, the enlisted individual will come in and, after an

enlistment or two, they will ordinarily -- and thank heaven -- get married.” (7:162-163)

Sergeant Peterson was not one of those women. She married David in October 1955, seven months after she had transferred to her next (and final) assignment, McGuire AFB, New Jersey. (3:7)

After moving to McGuire AFB in March 1955, Sergeant Peterson helped activate the 1611 Air Base Group (ABG) WAF Squadron, just after MATS took over that base and assigned it to its Atlantic Division, known as the Eastern Transport Air Force (EASTAF). The Atlantic Division became operational at McGuire AFB on 1 June 1955. (5:4)

While stationed at McGuire AFB, Sergeant Peterson, sometimes along with her husband, achieved several “firsts.” The first occurred in February 1958. Master Sergeant Grace A. Peterson and her husband, Master Sergeant David F. Peterson, attended the MATS NCO Academy at Orlando AFB, Florida, where they became one of the first two husband/wife couples to graduate. (The other couple was in the same class.) (4:--)

When she sewed on Senior Master Sergeant the very next year, on 1 March 1959, SM/Sgt Peterson and her husband became the first husband/wife E-8 team in USAF. David had been a “first” just several months before when he sewed on the new enlisted grade, Senior Master Sergeant, in September 1958 -- one of the first group to be selected for the Senior NCO designation (2:1 and 8:--). Now it was Grace’s turn again.

Just over a year later, on 1 June 1960, SM/Sgt Grace Peterson achieved another first -- she became the first and only WAF Chief Master Sergeant in the Air Force. (11:1) This time, she beat her husband to the new rank by four months. Her 20-year career ended on 31 July 1963, when she achieved her final military “first” by becoming the first WAF Chief Master Sergeant, as well as the highest-ranking female NCO, to retire from the Air

Force. On this occasion, top officials of the 1611th Air Transport Wing attended her retirement ceremony to say farewell to this trailblazer. (3:1) She was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal from 1611th Air Transport Wing vice commander, Col Walter I. Bunker. (Attachment 1)

The presentation of the Air Force Commendation Medal finalized the military career of CMSgt (ret.) Grace A. Peterson, an enlisted woman who broke the military “norms” and social preconceptions from the time she entered the WAAC in 1942 until the time she became the highest ranking female NCO to retire from the WAF in 1963. She will be remembered and admired for surviving and prospering in the “man’s” military of her times. This chronology followed CMSgt (ret.) Peterson’s career, elaborating on her assignments and on some of the controversies of the times when she served her country. It will close with the words she used to summarize her career.

“I doubt if any woman could have a more interesting, enriching career than that afforded me by the Air Force. I enjoyed every minute of it. I think all WAF’s take pride in sharing with the men the duties and responsibilities inherent in military service.”

(3:7)

GRACE A. PETERSON, CMSgt, USAF

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Husband And Wife Team At McGuire Graduated From Air Force School

MCGUIRE AIR FORCE BASE—When Master Sergeant David F. Peterson, non-commissioned officer in charge of the Transport Control Center at McGuire Air Force Base was selected to attend the Military Air Transport Service NCO Acade-

my at Orlando, Florida, his wife, Grace, didn't mind. She went right along with him.

Mrs. Peterson didn't make the trip just to enjoy the Florida scenery while her husband was in school — she was also a student.

The husband-wife team — both master sergeants — were one of the first two couples to graduate from the Central Florida school for senior NCO's of MATS. In the same class with the Petersons were another couple, Mr. and Mrs. William V. Powers of Scott AFB, Illinois. The Powers also are both master sergeants.

Both couples were in last week's graduating class which saw 12 added to the already long list of MATS NCO's who have completed the school.

Grace Peterson is first sergeant of 1611th WAF Squadron Section. She came here from a similar position at Westover AFB, Massachusetts and has been in the service since 1943.

Her husband entered the service in May of 1941 and he came to McGuire in 1954 after a year in Keflavik, Iceland. Dave is assigned to the 1611th Air Transport Wing.

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Full House

2



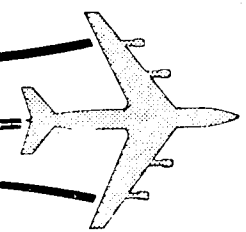
COMMENDATION MEDAL — CMSgt. Grace A. Peterson, first sergeant, WAF Squadron Section, receives the Air Force Commendation Medal from Col. Walter I. Bunker, 1611th ATW vice commander. Sergeant Peterson was presented the Commendation Medal during ceremonies conducted in her honor Monday. Sergeant Peterson retires this month after 20 years service. She is the first WAF E-9 to ever retire.



CATCHING UP with her husband, newly-promoted SMSgt. Grace Peterson of McGuire AFB, N.J., sews on her new stripes. The first sergeant of the WAF Sq. Section was among the first three WAF promoted in MATS during the current cycle. Husband, David, earned his eighth stripe last September as NCOIC of the base Transport Control Center at McGuire.

McGUIRE

AIRTIDES



U. S. Air Force — Aerospace Power For Peace

The Airtides is an unofficial newspaper, published weekly in the interests of personnel at McGuire AFB, an installation of the Military Air Transport Service. It is published by Times-Advertiser Printing Co., Pemberton, N. J., a private firm, in no way connected with the Department of the Air Force. Opinions expressed by publishers and writers are their own and are not to be considered an official expression by the Department of the Air Force. The appearance of advertisements in this publication does not constitute an endorsement by the Department of the Air Force of the products or services advertised.

3

Vol. 15, No. 29

Pemberton, N. J.

July 19, 1963

First of Her Sex

McGuire WAF To Retire, Highest Ranking Non-Com

By Capt. JOHN W. GOODSON
Wing Information Office

The Air Force will cross another milestone this month when WAF Grace Peterson, the first woman to achieve the rank of chief master sergeant also becomes the ~~highest ranking non-commissioned officer of her sex to retire.~~

Ending a career begun in October 1942, Chief Master Sergeant Peterson will perform her last open ranks inspection Monday. The WAF Squadron Section at McGuire will assemble in tribute to its first sergeant of eight years, and witness the presentation of the Air Force commendation medal to the ~~41-year-old trailblazer.~~

~~During the ceremony, her commander, Capt. Eleanor Garvin, and top officials of the 1611th Air Transport Wing including Wing Commander Col. J. B. Wallace and Air Base Group commander, Col. Robert J. Gende will express farewell in behalf of the Air Force and her many friends.~~

~~Sergeant Peterson will be officially entered into retirement status July 21, in ceremonies to be conducted at the base service club. She leaves the service to join the husband she outranks by four months, CMSgt David F. Peterson, recently reassigned from McGuire to the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D. C.~~

WAF Peterson, "the purtiest



CMSgt Grace Peterson

(Contin)

8

→ Husband-Wife E-8 Team

Mrs. Grace Peterson Achieves Same 'Top Kick' Rating As Spouse At McGuire AFB; They're First In U. S. Air Force

McGUIRE AIR FORCE BASE — With the awarding of the rank of Senior Master Sergeant (SM—Sgt) to Grace Peterson, First Sergeant of the Women's Air Force (WAF) Squadron at McGuire AFB, N. J., the first husband-wife E-8 team in the U. S. Air Force became a reality.

The attractive "Top-Kick" of the WAFS at McGuire, is the wife of SM/Sgt David F. Peterson, NCOIC of the Base Transport Control Center in the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) terminal here. He was promoted to the new enlisted grade in September of last year. The first group to be selected for the senior NCO designation, SM/Sgt. Grace Peterson, was one of 418 master sergeants who

Grace, daughter of Mr. Charles Ghizzza, 61 Nordica Drive, Harmon - on - the - Hudson, N. Y., entered the second Women's Army Corp training class at Des Moines, Iowa in 1942. Her first assignment was at Fort Ogletrope, Ga.

After a tour at Fairbanks, Alaska she went to Westover AFB, Mass. as first-sergeant of the WAF Squadron, and remained there for eight years. She has filled her present assignment for the past five years.

Met At Westover

David is the son of Mrs. Morgan Peterson of Boswell, Pa. He will have 16 years service in May. He met Grace when he was assigned to Westover in 1954, following a tour at Keyflavik, Iceland. They were married in 1955, after they were transferred to McGuire when MATS took over this base and assigned it to its Atlantic Division, now known as Eastern Transport Air Force (EASTAF) with headquarters here.

The career minded couple make their home in nearby Wrightstown, N. J.

Other master sergeants promoted to E-8, Senior Master Sergeant, during the March 1 promotion cycle were: William B. Crawford; Patsy Micacchi; Charles D. Mosher; James I. Anderson; John A. Mellick; Archie Stalcup; Augustus Riggs; Olin Simpson; Ronald O. Smith; Thomas E. Cottrell, and James H. O'Neill.

July 19, 1963

McGUIRE AIRTIDES

Page Seven

McGuire WAF . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

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"The WAAC was born in the Spring of 1942. I entered that Summer and believe me I was one frightened enlistee. While being sworn in at a New York induction center, the clamor over the wisdom of women in uniform was at its height in the streets and in the press and needless to say, we were targets of considerable criticism, but, thank goodness, our spirits prevailed through the first stormy months.

First Sergeant on base" as she is regarded at this busy MATS installation, was born in New York City and reared at Harmon on Hudson, N. Y., where she attended Groton Harmon high school.

She recalls the first momentous day she entered the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps:

"This was a time of decision both for me and the country," she said. "While the nation was fighting."

A WAAC, 21, and a boot trainee, she was sent to the first WAAC training center hastily established at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. The inventive genius of those who prepared facilities to receive the first "females" into the military will forever command Sergeant Peterson's admiration.

"Except for those among us who were billeted in converted horse stables at this old cavalry base we had all the comforts of home. Our uniforms then were not as chic as they are today. I remember we were issued male OD coats



LAST INSPECTION—CMSgt. Grace Peterson, center, WAF Squadron Section first sergeant, stands by as she makes her last inspection of WAF quarters with SM Sgt. Cora Wehmeyer, right, who will take over as first sergeant upon Sergeant Peterson's retirement July 31. WAFs being inspected are A2C Regina White, left, 38th Air Terminal Squadron, and A3C Eloisa Longoria, Officer Personnel.

(female sizes were non-existent) which on the shorter girls trailed in the snow. None of us needed mittens for the sleeves completely enveloped our arms."

Four weeks later, she was assigned as company clerk to the second WAAC training center at Fort Oglethorpe, Ga., and in less than one year the "boot trainee" had risen to the rank of first sergeant.

To this date, Sergeant Peterson maintains the "boot" expression derived from the heavy brogan shoes she and her charges wore in those days. Dubbed "Li'l Abners," her size seven feet marched over 95 miles and drilled for 58 hours in those shoes with more than one class of basic trainees.

After experiencing the rigors of basic training and a tight academic schedule, first as a pupil and later as an instructor, the precedent establishing experience of the veteran of six months was considered too valuable to relinquish. She had, so to speak, found her niche in the Army. . . to greet and train the women volunteers who had followed her in steadily increasing numbers.

At this point in her career, Sergeant Peterson said "I was not only proud of my personal good fortune, but I felt an immense pride of my sex. Many of the volunteers we received - some a great deal older than myself - were college graduates and had established civilian careers but chose, instead,

to serve with the armed forces during this period of crisis.

"And I think the record points out the calibre of service women performed during the war."

Throughout the war years, Sergeant Peterson remained in the United States except for a period of duty at Ladd Field, Alaska. She was there during both VE and VJ days.

When in July, 1947, the Air Force became a separate and co-equal Service, Sergeant Peterson, already a member of the Army Air Corps, said the natural thing to do at the time was to make the transition from Army to Air Force. So, in June 1948, WAF Peterson became Sergeant Peterson, Women's Air Force Administratively,

the WAF was born nearly 11 months later than the official Air Force birth.

Contrasting with the historic moments she has experienced and helped to establish, Sergeant Peterson's career has been surprisingly consistent. After her first year, she has always served as a first sergeant and she has always been connected with the air transport service.

Within the NCO ranks she is, without dispute, the dean of the MATS women in blue.

She said she could not reflect on her career and say: this was the highpoint!

"Every day was an important day to me."

Perhaps the highpoint in Sergeant Peterson's personal life came in January 1951 when she met her husband-to-be at Westover AFB, Mass. He has been recalled to active duty during the Korean conflict and assigned to base operations at Westover.

In October 1955 after the 1611th Wing had moved from Westover to McGuire, they were married.

Among the firsts Sergeant Peterson has established besides her retirement this month are her promotion to the chief master sergeant grade in June 1960, the first woman to be promoted to this new and highest non-commissioned officer rank. In 1958 she was among the first women to attend and graduate from the MATS NCO Academy.

In summarizing her career, Sergeant Peterson said, "I doubt if any women could have a more interesting, enriching career than that afforded me by the Air Force. I enjoyed every minute of it. I think all WAFs take pride in sharing with the men the duties and responsibilities inherent in military service."

**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL
TO
GRACE A. PETERSON**

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT GRACE A. PETERSON distinguished herself by meritorious service as First Sergeant, WAF Squadron Section, 1611th Air Base Group, McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey from 22 March 1955 to 12 July 1963. During this period, Sergeant Peterson helped activate the WAF Squadron and has successfully guided it to its many achievements resulting in honors for command inspections, base competitive programs, parades, and ceremonies. Due to her superior planning and outstanding management, the several physical moves of the WAF Squadron and the period of reorganization were transitioned without impairing the morale or effectiveness of the WAF airmen. She earned the admiration and respect of all her associates by her constant drive, her willing assumption of responsibility, and the unselfish contribution of her talents to the Air Force. Sergeant Peterson has reflected great credit upon herself, her command and the United States Air Force.