(U)Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

(U)From Librarians to Leadership: Women at NSA

(U) In 1955, only three percent of the GS-14 and above population at NSA was female; in 1998 the percentage had risen to twenty-three percent. In 1955, the two highest ranking women at NSA were GS-15s. Today, women hold some of the most senior ranks in the Agency hierarchy. Times have changed as have the rights and responsibilities entrusted to women. In looking back across the fifty years of NSA's history, it is impressive how far women have come.

(U) During World War II, women moved into low-level supervisory positions, overseeing the work of both male and female employees. At the end of the war, unlike in some other industries, female cryptologists were not forced out of their jobs. With a significant number of individuals, both male and female, wanting to return to their peacetime occupations, almost all of the women who wanted remain in cryptology were able to. Further, within five years of the end of the war, outstanding wartime employees who had left, including Ann Caracristi, were recruited and hired back.

(U) Just because women were allowed to remain in the business did not mean that they significantly influenced the shape of the postwar cryptologic world. Women were conspicuously absent from the boards organizing what became the Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA) and then NSA. With the birth of AFSA, few women held positions of significant leadership. And those who did were in personnel or librarian-type positions; jobs traditionally held by women.

(U) During the 1950s women made subtle, but significant progress in expanding their roles at the new National Security Agency. There was one woman chief in the PROD organization, a group similar to the current SIGINT Directorate: Dr. Julia Ward. As chief of the reference section, Ward was the first woman to exert a great deal of influence over a wide variety of SIGINT targets. Others, like Dorothy Blum, began to enter technical fields previously considered men's territory. Blum was an early NSA computer scientist involved in developing computer programs and special-purpose devices to assist in cryptanalysis. In another instance, Juanita Moody moved into positions of increasing leadership in analytic organizations. This groundwork laid in the 1950s would lead to visible progress in the 1960s.

(U//FOUO) (U) As in the United States in general, the roles and rights of women at NSA in the 1960s

saw great expansion and change. By this time, Juanita Moody had risen to chief of the alpha-plus-one level organization responsible for the Cuban problem. During the Cuban missile crisis, she led the 24-hour-a-day effort at NSA and was frequently called upon to brief senior military officials and policymakers on the current situation. In 1964, ⬚ became the first woman to enter the NSA co-op program in its nine-year history. Also in 1964, ⬚ an NSA traffic analyst, was sent TDY to Vietnam, ending NSA's tradition of not sending women to "dangerous" corners of the world. Women like Carrie Berry and Velva Klaessy gained high-ranking positions in NSA offices in Second Party countries. Klaessy became the first female Senior U.S. Liaison Officer (SUSLO) when she was named to that post in Ottawa in 1970.

(U) In spite of these advances, the phantom of discrimination occasionally materialized with promotion and TDY/PCS opportunities. However, by the 1970s, women grew more likely to fight against such roadblocks rather than accept them. One courageous woman was Renatta Predmore. Upon discovering evidence that she had been denied a promotion because of her sex, she sued NSA -- and won. As part of the 1976 settlement of this case, NSA agreed to include at least one woman with equal voting rights on every NSA promotion board. A 1980 codicil required the male/female composition of promotion boards to be posted annually. For over twenty years, Predmore's efforts have helped ensure a fair hearing for women at promotion time.

(U//FOUO)

(U) The 1980s began with the appointment of NSA's first female deputy director, Ann Caracristi. Since that time, women at the Agency have continued to advance in rank both technically and managerially until today when there is feminine representation at all levels of NSA. Current outstanding female leaders include Barbara McNamara, Maureen Baginski, and Cathy Hanks (now retired). While the playing field is not perfectly level, it is significantly more even than it was at NSA's birth.

(U) Since the founding of NSA, women have gained more and more influence in the cryptologic operations in the United States, something they could only hope for fifty years ago. Some credit the Agency with being a very progressive place to work when it comes to opportunities for women. While this may have been true in some offices, looking across the Agency organizations, NSA appears to have been and remains today a reflection of American society at large.

[(U//FOUO)Jill Frahm, Center for Cryptologic History, 972-2893s, jefrahm@nsa]

DOCID: 3575742