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First WAC General



Elizabeth Hoisington

ANCC member Elizabeth Paschel Hoisington (November 3, 1918 – August 21, 2007) was one of the first two women to attain the rank of brigadier general in the United States Army, being so promoted on June 11, 1970.

During World War II the United States Army expanded opportunities for women beyond nursing by creating the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Hoisington enlisted in the WAACs in November 1942 and completed her basic training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. At the time, women were required to serve in units before they could apply to Officer Candidate School (OCS), so Private Hoisington went to a WAAC aircraft early warning unit in Bangor, Maine. The company commander recognized her talents and made her the first sergeant soon after her arrival. She later said that she then sought out the most grizzled male first sergeant she could find and asked him to teach her what she needed to know. She said that he did such a good job that when she reached OCS she never had to open a book.

Hoisington was commissioned in May 1943 as a WAAC third officer. When the auxiliary became the Women's Army Corps (WAC) a month later, its officers changed to standard army ranks, and Hoisington became a second lieutenant. She deployed to Europe, serving in France after D-Day. Hoisington continued her career after World War II and advanced through the ranks to colonel commanding WAC units in Japan, Germany, and France and serving in staff assignments in San Francisco and at the Pentagon.

Hoisington was appointed the seventh director of the Women's Army Corps on August 1, 1965, and served from 1966 to 1971. On May 15, 1970, President Nixon announced the first women selected for promotion to brigadier general: Anna Mae Hays, Chief of the Army Nurse Corps, and Hoisington. The two women were promoted on June 11. Hays and Hoisington were promoted within minutes of each other but because they were promoted in alphabetical order, Hays was the first woman in the United States Armed Forces to wear the insignia of a brigadier general. The Hoisington and Hays promotions resulted in positive public relations for the Army, including appearances on the Dick Cavett, David Frost and *Today* shows. Hoisington, who was noted for her quick smile and ebullient personality, also appeared as a mystery guest on the popular game show *What's My Line?*

Hoisington retired from the Army on August 1, 1971.