

Remarks by CAPT Rosemary B. Mariner, USN (Ret.)
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Thank you Gen. Daley and all of you for attending tonight, including the Women Research and Education Institute, the Alliance for National Defense, and the President of the Naval Historical Foundation, VADM Robert Dunn. I also wish to add my thanks to General Electric for hosting this event and to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, with her superbly professional staff. This museum is a true national treasure that continues to educate and encourage all Americans to look to the skies and beyond.

This year we celebrate the 100th anniversary of naval aviation. Naval aviation's story is one of epic proportions, full of innovators, heroes, mavericks, insiders, outsiders, and a host of other characters, all united in their love of flying. What sets it apart from the rest of military aviation is that naval aviators fly from ships at sea.

This year also marks another important milestone; the 20th anniversary of the repeal of the laws that prohibited Navy and Air Force women from flying in combat. However, Congress did not just wake up one morning in 1991 and decide it would be nice to have girl fighter pilots. The history of how these two anniversaries overlap is the subject of my remarks tonight: The Fight to Fly at Sea.

In 1973 the Navy was the first service to open their pilot training to women, followed by the Army six months later and the Coast Guard. The Air Force opened flight training in 1976; the Marine Corps not until 1994. I had the great fortune to be one of the first eight women selected for this program. Also from the first group with us tonight is the Navy's first helicopter pilot, retired CAPT Joellen Drag Oslund, USNR (Ret.).

So, from the old to the new. For those of you fortunate enough to have viewed the superb movie "Speed and Angels," you should recognize the young woman in this slide, LT Meagan Flannigan, on the cover of Pilot Magazine.

On first glance, you might not realize the different worlds these images represent. One is of me as a LTJG, taken in 1976, in front of an A-7E at NAS Cecil Field. The other, taken in 2010, is of Meagan beside an F-18 Hornet. Flight gear hasn't changed much in 34 years; the F-18 replaced the A-7 over 20 years ago. The difference is in what you *don't* see; Meagan is an experienced navy fighter pilot. I, at this point in time, was not allowed aboard a ship unless in civilian clothes, on leave, and accompanied by a male officer. Heaven forbid land aboard one.

The quest for the full integration of women in naval aviation parallels the quest for the full integration of the airplane into the Navy. Naval history is full of conflicts between Reformers and the Old Guard, replete with internal bureaucratic struggles and external battles featuring coalitions of young naval officer activists, supportive admirals, members of Congress, along with prominent civilian elites.

The story of women in naval air starts with America's entry into WWI. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels observed that naval reserve law did not say that a yeoman had to be a man. As a result, almost 12,000 women were enlisted as "Yeomen (F)" signing the same Reserve contracts as their male counterparts. Many of these women served in the Bureau of Aeronautics, including supporting the first transatlantic flight in 1919.

Despite the real prospect of war in the late 1930s, many senior naval officers were adamantly opposed to including women in mobilization planning. Although the Navy Nurse Corps had a permanent place *with* the Navy, the Old Guard drew the line there. The brilliant exception was naval aviation, which pushed hard for the creation of the Women's Naval Reserve in 1942, better known as the WAVES.

During WW II, enlisted women in naval aviation entered non-traditional fields such as control tower operator, aircraft mechanic, plane captain, and gunnery instructor. Eighty WAVE officers were designated air navigators; Navy nurses served as flight nurses. By war's end over 25,000 WAVES had served in naval aviation alone.

The other WW II flyers crucial to our story tonight were the Women Air Force Service Pilots, better known as the WASP.

From 1942-1944 over 1000 women flew virtually every army aircraft in inventory -- from P-51s to B-29s-- as civilian pilots under the direction of the Army Air Forces. They served as ferry pilots, maintenance test pilots, and performed miscellaneous duties such as towing aerial targets. The first American woman to fly a tactical jet was a WASP.

The WASPs are deservedly well known today; President Obama awarded them the Congressional Gold Medal in 2009. The story of their demise is less well known.

In early 1944 the WASPs got caught in the cross fire of a "culture war." Gen. Hap Arnold, the head of the Army Air Forces, wanted to militarize the WASP. However, the War Department wanted all women in the WAC. Despite these internal disagreements, in 1943 legislation was introduced make the WASPs part of the AAF. Meanwhile, civilian male instructor pilots in the Civilian Pilot Training program were losing their jobs as Army requirements changed. Eyeing the WASPs' stateside flying jobs, CPT instructors actively lobbied Congress to give these positions to men.

The result was devastating. Instead of becoming part of the AAF, the WASPs were summarily disbanded on 20 December 1944 and sent home with two weeks notice and no military benefits. All their service records were classified and sealed for 35 years. They were even ordered to turn in their “Santiago Blue” uniforms. Many of these women never flew again. And American women did not fly in the military as pilots for almost thirty years.

Not until 1977 were the WASP awarded military status so they could receive veterans’ benefits, --and only after a two year fight in Congress with the help of Gen. Arnold’s son, Col. Bruce Arnold USAF, and Senator Barry Goldwater.

While the WASPs were sent packing in 1944, the future use of women in the peacetime military was also debated. Once again, naval aviation strongly supported the incorporation of women in the Regular Navy and Naval Reserve.

The Women’s Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948 was ground breaking legislation. For the first time in U.S. history, women were allowed to serve as full members of the Regular and Reserve armed forces on a permanent peacetime basis. In the case of the Army, Congress placed no statutory restrictions on the assignment of women. The same was not true for the Navy and newly created Air Force.

Despite the testimony of senior naval officers, the powerful chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, Carl Vinson, wanted legal restrictions on Navy women. As he put it, “just fix it so that can’t go to sea at all.” This was the resultant language.

You can see in the slide that by law women in the Navy and the Air Force “may not be assigned to duty in aircraft while such aircraft are engaged in combat missions” nor in the case of the Navy “may not be assigned to duty on vessels of the Navy except hospital ships and naval transports.”

The law also placed significant restrictions on the number of women and their promotions, including a 2% ceiling and limiting women to the highest permanent rank of O-5. It also made it easy to discharge women for pregnancy.

This was no glass ceiling; it was an armor-plated one.

Thus, from 1948 to the early 1970s, a woman contemplating making the Navy a career—staying for 20 years to attain retirement-- had a difficult choice. Unlike men, she was expected to give up parenthood (and practically speaking, marriage) for what amounted to table scraps of a career. Not surprisingly, only a very few dedicated women were interested. This was what we young whippersnappers uncharitably called the “WAVY-NAVY.”

The 1970s and Naval Aviation

Everything changed in the 1970s. Besides extreme opposition to the Vietnam War, American society was in the midst of a social revolution. The Women's Liberation Movement was in full force and the newspapers were full of "first female" stories. It was an exciting time for a young girl to come of age.

The person directly responsible reopening naval aviation and pilot training to women was the Chief of Naval Operations, ADM Elmo Zumwalt, Jr.

In his autobiography, ADM Zumwalt gave three main reasons for turning to women: a less than 10% first term reenlistment rate, the end of the draft, and the impending passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. A WW II veteran, he knew that the WAVES had served in numerous non-traditional jobs. The Navy, as all the services, was facing a manpower crisis. While the Vietnam War was ending, the Cold War was not. The Navy needed to recruit and retain intelligent and technically competent sailors at a time when the country was at its anti-military peak.

As political scientist Judith Steihm put it, in WW II women in the military freed men to fight on the front lines. At the end of the Vietnam War, women replaced men who wanted to remain civilians.

In November of 1972 the Navy announced that it would open flight training to women and was looking for volunteers. In early January 1973, the Navy release the names of eight women selected to train as pilots.

In a burst of publicity, our adventure started in flight training. Barbara Allen Rainey, Judith Neuffer Bruner, and Jane Skiles Odea were already commissioned and started flight training in March 1973. Upon receiving our commissions, Anna Maria Scott, Joellen Drag Oslund, and myself reported to Pensacola in May. Along the way, two of the original eight were dropped from the program.

In general, the women went through the same program as the men, but with some important exceptions.

The first dealt with that old bug-a-boo: physical standards. The supposed logic was that if women could not do the same number of chin ups as men, they weren't strong enough to fly airplanes. It wasn't enough that women had been flying since the dawn of aviation, including the WASP in WW II, or that the Soviets had had three squadrons of women flying in combat during that same war, --including several aces. Not to mention the first female in space. By this time, the airlines had hired women.

The next big difference was concerning what type of aircraft we trained in. In those days the Navy divided flight training into three different “pipelines;” jets, props, and helos. The women were told, incorrectly, that since all jet aircraft were combat aircraft, we could not train in the jet pipeline regardless of our grades. It was not until 1982 that the full jet pipeline opened to female flight students.

The second “exception” concerned carrier qualification.

In early 1973 all Navy student pilots were required to carrier qualify as a prerequisite to earning their wings. Citing the “combat law”, the Navy ruled that landing a training airplane aboard a training aircraft carrier, the *USS Lexington*, constituted “assignment to a combat vessel.”

For the first time as a group, the women decided to question the system and submitted a letter request for permission to carrier qualify. We were politely turned down. (By the time I reached this point, CQ had been eliminated all together in the prop pipeline.)

In fact, letter writing became an important tool in our limited arsenal. First, it got our requests on record and made sure the entire chain of command was aware of our situation. They had to endorse the letter. If some middle manager was doing his own thing contrary to Navy policy, top management learned about it. We also provided an “advance copy to” the most senior addressee, --that way our letters didn’t get lost.

Not until 1979 did the first woman carrier qualify, in a C-1. To do so, LT Donna Lynn Spurill had to transfer from the west coast to the east coast to because a certain admiral didn’t want women flying from “his” ships.

Another major difference concerned our first assignments. Men with top grades took orders to fly in “warfare” specialties. Regardless of our flight grades, women were sent to “support” squadrons, --orders that men at the bottom of the class received and did not have a career path to command.

On February 22, 1974 LTJG Barbara Rainey became the first designated female naval aviator in a highly publicized ceremony at NAS Corpus Christi with orders to fly C-1s in a west coast transport squadron. The following week, LT Judy Neuffer became the second female navy pilot, with orders to fly P-3s in the famous “Hurricane Hunter” squadron. The rest of us finished within six months.

Jane Odea took orders to fly C-130s in a transport squadron based in Rota, Spain. Joellen Oslund was sent to fly CH-46s out of NAS North Island; Anna Maria Scott to flew H-3s out of NAS Norfolk. In June 1974 I reported to Fleet Composite Squadron TWO, NAS Oceana, to fly the S-2 --a squadron that primarily flew the A-4C/L *Skyhawk*.

A 1975 incident captures the attitudes of some of our fellow male aviators in these early days. In September, Naval Institute *Proceedings* published an article entitled “The Female Naval Aviator: A Free Ride?” by LT Richard P. Shipman. Calling us “waviators,” (the tone went downhill from there) Shipman charged discrimination against men because women, while getting equal pay, were not doing equal work. Accusing us of being grounded on a monthly basis, he pointed out that because women were prohibited from flying off carriers, this meant that females didn’t have to endure arduous sea duty, --a major reason men got out of the Navy. Pointing out the logical consequences of keeping women ashore, he predicted that if the Navy significantly increased the number of females, eventually they would take the shore jobs that men coveted coming off of sea duty. Sounding eerily like the CPT pilots’ charges against the WASPs, Shipman concluded that “waviators” should be sent home, now!

Guess who I was scheduled to fly my annual instrument check flight with?

As things turned out, Dick Shipman was actually a pretty nice guy and I passed my check flight. The reality was that Dick was on target regarding the fundamental unfairness *to men* of the combat exclusion laws. Unless women went to sea on the same basis as men, there could be no equality.

The story of my transition to the A-4 illustrates how progress was made in those days and how important the support of male aviators was to women’s opportunities.

First and foremost, I was blessed to have as my first Commanding Officer, CAPT Ray Lambert. Skipper Lambert was one of a handful of black naval aviators in those days, having flown primarily the A-6 Intruder.

Shortly after I reported, Skipper Lambert called me into his office for a career talk. The first thing he said was I was going to have problems because I was short, --not much I could do about that. (He was a big man and could use his size to intimidate.) He then pulled out his bottom desk drawer and showed me a list of every black naval aviator, from ensign to admiral, on active duty and retired. This was my introduction to how black men networked extensively to protect their careers and each other.

Next, I was warned to reject all attempts to create female “ghettos”, --some kind of female career path separate from the rest of naval aviation. Under no circumstances should we accept a “female chain of command,” --which allowed the normal chain of command to avoid accountability. He told me that the Navy’s only three star black admiral at the time, VADM Samuel Gravely, had warned his fellow flags if the Navy ever attempted to create an all-female ship, he would break his silence and speak out against it. While VADM Gravely had not personally served on the Navy’s predominately black

ship in WW II, the *USS Mason*, he understood the folly of segregation. The message was clear: separate is never equal.

Over the years, these were my guiding principles when dealing with the issue of gender integration. Gender-neutral became the key phrase.

Lambert was faced with another problem; he had too many prop pilots and not enough jet pilots. The decision was made to transition the junior-most prop pilots to jets, of which I was one. The guys' orders for jet transition training were approved two weeks later; mine got lost. It took a crusty fighter pilot named CDR Chuck McGrail, the head of the junior aviator assignment shop, to make my jet transition happen. I finally received my orders in mid-1975.

The late Chuck McGrail, who later became a Rear Admiral, was a whirl-wind force in opening assignment opportunities to early female aviators. As the head detailer, his motto was "it is easier to seek forgiveness than ask permission." This was a winning tactic in the bureaucratic world of naval personnel. Bless his soul!

While things were going well for me, circumstances were far more difficult for the women assigned to squadrons that primarily flew support missions at sea. Barb Rainey, originally assigned to fly the C-1—a Carrier Onboard Delivery aircraft—wasn't allowed to get any where near a carrier. Fortunately, her squadron also flew transport jets and she ended up flying the T-39-Sabreliner. For helicopter pilots, the situation was even worse.

One of the true heroes of the fight to fly at sea is Joellen Oslund. She hadn't been in her squadron very long when it became apparent that there was little she could do. Jo wasn't allowed to even hover above the deck of a ship anchored in San Diego bay.

In November 1976, four enlisted women filed a class action lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in Washington D.C. challenging the constitutionality of 10 USC 6015. Joellen and two other woman officers (LCDR Kathy Bruyere—one of Time Magazine's 1976 Women of the Year--and LT Susan Rhiddlehoover) decided to join the lawsuit.

Needless to say, suing the Navy was not career enhancing. I was asked to join, but chickened out, --things were going good for me and I didn't want to upset the apple cart.

It was apparent that if the Navy didn't act, the courts would. While the lawsuit wound its way through the process, naval aviation again took the lead. At the Chief of Naval Personnel's direction, CDR McGrail's office drafted proposed legislation to permit women to deploy aboard noncombatant ships and to serve "temporary additional duty" (180 days) aboard combatant ships. Eventually this language became part of the FY 79 defense bill.

On July 27, 1978 District Judge John J. Sirica ruled 10 USC 6015 unconstitutional, giving the Navy some 90 days to appeal. In the meantime, Congress passed the defense bill thus amending 10 USC 6015, making the court ruling irrelevant. Navy women could now go to sea legally as noncombatants.

Before we leave the 1970s, there is one more critical issue of the fight to fly at sea: motherhood.

Before women entered flight training, there were a series of lawsuits and Supreme Court decisions that started to equalize how military women and their dependents were treated. However, the key issue that remained was the policy of involuntary discharge for pregnancy. Not until 1975 did Navy policy change so that women could combine parenthood and a naval career, --just like male officers always had.

It was Jane O'Dea that pioneered the combination of motherhood and flying for the rest of us. Jane was flying the C-130 when carrying her first daughter, which as she later remarked, fortunately had a large cockpit. Her second daughter logged over 100 hours of T-34 time. Jane went on to have a very successful career in the VQ (tactical communications) community. Today, Jane is a proud grandmother. Her story and many others are profiled in a forthcoming book by retired Navy CDR Linda Maloney, herself a combat aviator, titled "Military Fly Moms."

By 1979, approximately 33 women had been designated naval aviators and the Navy was training 15 a year. Naval flight officer training was slated to open the following year and women were routinely serving as flight surgeons. Navy women worked in transport and support squadrons around the world. The major accomplishment of the 1970s was opening noncombatant sea duty to women.

The 1980s.

Ah, the 1980s. Besides great music, big hair, and even bigger shoulder pads, this was the decade Navy women proved their commitment to career, including shipboard duty and long deployments. Yet progress in the 1980s occurred in a series of forward and backwards steps.

In late December 1979, the Navy announced that the first female helicopter pilots were scheduled to deploy aboard a support ship, the *USS Kalamazoo*. Then in February 1980, the fleet commander announced that he had cancelled their deployment. It took several years for female pilots and aircrew to routinely deploy to the Mediterranean Sea, and later the Indian Ocean, on support ships.

Tragically, Barb Rainey (who had come back on active duty as a reservist flight instructor) became the first female aviator killed in an aircraft mishap in 1982. So unlike

the publicity surrounding her winging ceremony, the news of her death was carried on page 32 of the Navy Times.

As the Navy expanded towards 600 ships in the early 1980s, the number of enlisted women increased accordingly. However, in 1986 as the armed forces began to downsize, things went dramatically south. Some 2000 aviation maintenance shore billets were outsourced to private contractors. The result was that the Navy closed almost all aviation ratings to enlisted women who hadn't completed an A School.

Also that year, the Navy changed the designation of Mobile Logistics Support Force to *Combat* Logistics Support Force; a seemingly blatant attempt to keep women off these ships by redefining "combat" with a pen.

By 1987, the Navy's apparent attempts to close the door on enlisted women in aviation caught the attention of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. It was DACOWITS that convinced the Secretary of Defense and Congress to reign in the Navy. DACOWITS played a key role in advancing women's opportunities, legislative repeal, and oversight of what was going on in the fleet.

The mid-1980s were also the start of my political awakening. The cancellation of the *USS Kalamazoo* deployment, despite clear Congressional intent, was the first straw. Reclassifying the MLSF ships was the final one. Many of the best women had gotten out in sheer frustration. This wasn't about protecting women or combat readiness. As I saw it, the people involved said no because they just plain didn't want women at sea, --and were allowed to get away with it.

In 1983 I had the opportunity to meet with ADM Zumwalt on the question of how to change all this. He pointed out that the law had to go. Congress passed the law and Congress could repeal it, but don't expect the Navy to take the lead. It was too convenient for military and civilian leaders to justify discriminatory policies by blaming the Congress and hiding behind law. It was up to Navy women to make it happen, --but how?

Well, before I discovered flying, I was a history buff, so I hit the books. Military history is full of "case studies" that served as a map of what is required for significant change to occur in a highly traditional institution like the Navy. I was drawn to two particular examples.

The first concerned Brig. Gen. Billy Mitchell's crusade for an independent air force versus Rear Admiral William Moffett's vision of naval aviation. The overriding goal of Moffett and his disciples was full integration of the airplane into the battle group, including an offensive combat role at sea. Very few naval aviators wanted a separate shore-based force, and certainly not under Billy Mitchell. RADM Moffett was the ideal

insider “change agent” who worked well with Congress and took advantage of Mitchell’s propensity to overshoot.

The second “case study” concerned racial integration of the armed forces. The patterns of racial discrimination and segregation were almost exact parallels to what women had experienced, including combat exclusion, “2%” ceilings, and institutional racism. This was not a pretty story, with racial violence breaking out at the 20-year point during the Vietnam War.

There was another important pattern I observed. Congress was most likely to enact legislative change during a 6-month window following the end of a war. Much longer than that, the window closed because people want to forget the war and move on.

The first step was to organize. In the mid-1980s female naval aviators joined the Women Military Pilots, (later changed to Women Military Aviators, Inc.) With this move, female aviators expanded into a “joint network” of WASPs, Air Force, Army, Navy, and Coast Guard women pilots, and their extended families.

Despite setbacks, the 1980s were a period of advancement for women in naval aviation. In 1984 enlisted women were assigned to shore-based VP squadrons. The VQ tactical communications community—a shore based warfare specialty—was opened to women. Women flew the mail (before email), delivered supplies to ships around the world, and provided Soviet-style electronic warfare simulations for deploying battle groups. Gradually the CLSF ships reopened to women. Colleen Nevius became our first female test pilot; Trish Beckman our first female test navigator. Lucy Young served as an aggressor pilot and instructed students in dog fighting and bombing. By 1989, over 400 women had been designated naval aviators with 248 on active duty.

The 1990s.

The 1990s started with some 40,000 American women going to war (again), only to come home to the crossfire of another culture war. It also saw the end of the Cold War and the resultant “peace dividend” which eliminated many of the flying jobs women held. And, by 1993, the “fight to fly at sea” came to a victorious conclusion.

The catalytic event was Operation Desert Storm.

In the highly televised war, the nation saw first hand what the military had known for many years, --that country could not go to war without women. It also saw that combat exclusion laws and policies did not protect women from becoming POWs or killed in action. Women aviators could get shot at; they just couldn’t shoot back.

Following the liberation of Kuwait, the 102nd Congress held hearings on the Gulf War that included questions concerning women's performance. The six-month window had opened.

In April 1991 the House Armed Services Committee took up the issue under the leadership of the Chair, Les Aspin. After amendments to the FY-92 Defense Authorization bill by Representatives Pat Schroder and Beverly Byron to repeal the aviation combat exclusions passed unanimously, the action turned to the Senate.

To give you a sense of what was going on with women pilots at the time, this is an interview that aired nationally on CNN following the House vote:

On June 18, 1991 the SASC Subcommittee on Personnel conducted a series of hearings on the issue of women in combat aviation. The most effective witnesses were the Service Chiefs, who testified across the board against changing the law.

Air Force Chief of Staff General Merrill McPeak had the best quotes. Calling his views "personnel prejudice" he responded to a question by Senator William Cohen, stating that even if a woman were better qualified than a man, to the detriment of readiness, he would still pick the man over the woman.

On July 9, 1991, the SASC rejected the House version of the Defense Authorization bill, meaning they opposed repeal.

Senator William Roth, a Republican senator from Delaware, decided to act. He offered an amendment to the Defense Authorization bill that would repeal the combat aviation laws. Senator Ted Kennedy agreed to co-sponsor. Unfortunately, the Secretary of Defense would do nothing to support repeal. Unless women acted, repeal would die in the Senate.

The women aviators were not going to allow what happened to the WASP in 1944 happen again. The call went out across the female military aviators' network: Take leave, bring your uniform, and come to Washington to tell your story.

Male and female aviators—enlisted aircrew, active and reserve, old and young--from all the services joined with representatives from numerous organizations, including DACOWITS and the National Women's Law Center, set up shop in Senator Roth's office. The Hon. Carolyn Becraft (with WREI at the time) and a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), was the head political strategist. Barbara Largsksy, President of the WASP, was there from the beginning. WASPs in their Santiago Blue uniforms turned out in full force to support their professional heirs. Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Jean Holm shared her expertise and encouragement. The

President of the Association of Naval Aviation, retired VADM William Lawrence, was tremendously supportive.

Accompanied by civilians who talked about legislation, military personnel simply told Senators and their staffs what they had been doing for 20 years, including their service in the Gulf War.

All this came to a climax on July 31, 1991 when the FY 92 Defense Authorization Bill was up for a floor vote. After a three hour debate, Senator Sam Nunn, the Chair of the SASC, moved to table the Roth-Kennedy Amendment, --a move to kill it. Instead, in an overwhelming show of bipartisan support, the Senate voted 69-30 in a roll call vote not to table and then passed the Roth-Kennedy Amendment on a voice vote with an even greater margin. *The combat aviation exclusion laws were repealed!*

Of course, the vote did not end the matter. Even though President George H. W. Bush signed the bill into law in December of 1991, the Defense Department did not move to open combat aviation to women. Instead, the following months were full of acrimonious debates complicated by a presidential election year and the emerging Tailhook Scandal, -- an event that took place months after the law was repealed.

The consequences of the post-Cold War drawdown were also forcing the issue. The squadrons where women flew were being decommissioned. The Air Force announced it was eliminating 800 training command instructor pilot jobs, -T-38 seats women had held for years. Navy women jet pilots were told that if combat aviation didn't open up soon, they might as well get out. Female military aviators were being driven out of tactical aviation.

There is a good fighter pilot story from this time frame worth telling. On April 18, 1993 DACOWITS held their spring conference in Washington D.C., hosted by the Air Force. The opening session was chaired by Gen. Merrill McPeak, who gave his standard remarks and then opened the floor to questions. Immediately hands went up from a row of young, attractive female aviators. Knowing he would lock on the good-looking gals first, Navy LT Kara Hultgreen stood up and he took her question. She asked him why he needed to wait for the Secretary of Defense to open combat aviation when Congress had repealed the law two years ago? Gen. McPeak answered by saying he thought it was a mistake to put women in fighter and bombers, and then talked about unit cohesion. Kara came right back at him.

At first it looked like the general was going to dress the LT down, but then he reversed and became philosophical, mentioning that his feelings "didn't fit Aristotlean logic."

A few questions later, Gen. McPeak called on another naval aviator, F-18 test pilot LCDR Lori Melling Gattuso. In a precise way, she began "You say that it is unit cohesion that

makes you oppose women in tactical aviation squadrons, correct?” He briefly affirmed her premise. She continued “And you had men and women flying together in tanker and transport squadrons, including AWACs aircraft, during Desert Storm. Did you have a problem with unit cohesion in those squadrons?” Hesitating, he answered “Not that I’m aware of.” “So” she finished “*why do you think that your fighter pilots are any less professional than the rest of your male pilots?*”

Fox Two. Gen. McPeak started to ramble—something about not having to experience a thing to know that it is evil—going into a burning building, etc. There, in front of DACOWITS and the press, Gen. McPeak spun out of control.

However, Gen. McPeak is a good fighter pilot and lived to fight another day. Several weeks later, when combat aviation was opened, he beat out the Navy in the public affairs arena by having the first big press conference, --making it look like the Air Force was training female fighter pilots before the Navy.

Finally, on April 28 1993 now-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin held a major press conference --with the service chiefs standing behind him-- announcing that he was directing the services to open combat aviation to women and ordering the Navy to draft legislation to repeal the remaining portion of the law. *The fight to fly at sea had finally been won.*

Of course, this was just the start of another chapter in naval aviation. The story of women’s integration in combat aviation is not mine to tell, I’ll leave that to those who lived, and continue to live, it. However, the good news is that twenty years later we have a female carrier battle group commander, RADM Nora Tyson, our first female Carrier Air Wing commander, CAPT Sara Joyner, and naval aviation is as ready as ever to defend the nation. Today *it is the service chiefs* who push to open new fields to women, like the Navy’s recent decision to open submarines.

Finally, none of the progress I described would have happened without the support of men. The late VADM William Lawrence used to like to define a radical feminist as a father with a daughter at the Naval Academy, --he should know, he was both Superintendent and his daughter Wendy, the Navy’s first female astronaut, graduated from Annapolis. (Admiral Lawrence has a ship named after him, DDG-110.) Whether these men thought of themselves as feminists is debatable, but their support on matters both large and small, meant they risked ridicule if not their careers. They made a critical difference at a time when “politically correct” meant “no women.”

Just some of the men that I’d like to recognize tonight include ADMs Zumwalt and Stan Arthur; VADMs William Lawrence, John Lockhart (VA25 fleet airplane), Dick Seymour (both Lockhart and Seymour headed the Naval Air Systems Command, which embraced

women in the RDT&E and AEDO communities), the late RADMs Chuck McGrail and Carl Sieberlich (lighter-than-air pilot, pioneered ASW off carriers), and the many commanding officering –mine and others—who as true professionals did the right thing by all their personnel, including women. (I’ll even thank Gen. McPeak for his honesty!)

As has always been the case, the U.S. Navy has many challenges in front of it. The current generation of naval leadership is well aware of this and rising to the challenge. There will be future battles between the Old Guard and the Reformers; what was once unimaginable will become the familiar. Change not for the sake of change, but to better defend and uphold the U.S. Constitution, in accordance with our oath of office. With the help of great institutions like the National Air and Space Museum to inform and inspire us to “boldly go where no one has gone before”, I am hopeful that the next one hundred years of naval aviation will see the concept of a new “Star Fleet”-- an *interstellar* force for good—become a reality.

Thank you.