

**TRANSCRIPT: INTERVIEW WITH  
FRANCOISE BONNELL  
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QUESTION: Women have been involved in every American conflict since the beginning. Can you elaborate on that?

FRANCOISE: I think the service of women to the country, in the military, has been extraordinary. And it does go back all the way to the American Revolution. It's been somewhat informal in the early years, maybe the first hundred, hundred and fifty years of American history. Their contributions, nonetheless, are equally as important as when they were finally put into uniform, which in the Navy is in World War I and then for the rest of the services in World War II. Their contributions over that time have differed, but they've always brought something to the conflict that, without them, that particular mission or that particular even would not have been as successful as it was.

QUESTION: We really don't have an understanding or an appreciation of women in combat all the way back.

FRANCOISE: Yes, absolutely right, especially World War II; but I think also, when it comes to women's history, people tend to look at things in terms of numbers. For example, you look at the 400 women in the Civil War who disguised themselves as men. The number is seemingly small compared to the millions of men that participated, as well as the 600,000 dead, etcetera. But really, it's not the numbers that's important, it is in fact the contributions, and in some cases the contributions of an individual by themselves.

QUESTION: What was the general opinion of women taking up arms during the Revolutionary War?

FRANCOISE: Well, I don't think necessarily it was a society that would have supported the idea that a woman had to take up arms against their enemy. But society at the time also had women in some cases doing somewhat manly types of jobs. In fact, in some of the cases, some of them were quite proficient with their rifles, their guns, not so much that they could join the military and go out and engage the enemy, but more so for their own protection, their own defense, and in some cases, their own livelihood, perhaps for hunting and those kinds of things. Most of the things that women did during the American Revolution did not necessarily require them to kill an enemy so to speak, but they did contribute significantly to the ability of, you know, the fledgling Nation to be able to fight for their independence.

QUESTION: What can you tell me about Prudence Wright's Guard?

FRANCOISE: Well, that's actually an excellent example of the kinds of ways in which women took up arms so to speak. Prudence Wright was a woman who lived in a small village, who was told that the British are advancing. And this is, of course, Lexington and Concord and they had pretty much figured out that the way in which the British troops would have to move, that they would go right through the town that she lived in. So she very quickly thought, well, what we need to do is keep the British from crossing through the town, the best place to do that is going to be at the creek, at the river where they would have to cross over the bridge, assuming that they didn't ford, you know, go around it in a different way. And so, she sent out the call and the

women who were left in the village, 30 or 40 of them, grabbed what they could, in some cases muskets and whatever coat or jacket could have been done up. Not convinced that they actually disguised themselves per se, but they went out to stand on that bridge, to keep the British from crossing, and successfully did so. In fact, took a handful of prisoners and was able to glean some important information about the British forces. And it's sort of that patriotism caught up in the defense of the Nation, I think, that demonstrates that ability of women to do what's necessary when they're called to do it.

QUESTION: Tell me about the practice of women disguising themselves in men's clothing during the Revolutionary War.

FRANCOISE: Disguising oneself as a man in order to join the military was not as common in the American Revolution as it was in the Civil War. The best-known case in the American Revolution is that of Deborah Samson. She disguised herself as a man and went for almost two years. She was not uncovered or discovered, in fact, Robert Shurtleff is what she had called herself instead of Deborah Samson.

QUESTION: What is Molly Pitcher famous for?

FRANCOISE: Molly Pitcher is a legend. In fact, this term Molly Pitcher comes from that idea that this is a woman with a pitcher of water providing aid to the men. But I've also found many examples of where the name Molly was given to a woman, such as Captain Molly, which is one of the Molly Pitcher stories, as well as Margaret Corbin. And so there has been a lot of debate in history in terms of who is Molly Pitcher. I think actually Molly Pitcher represents the full gamut of women in terms of the kinds of things that they did. Margaret Corbin, I think, is an individual we put her name on her, we know her history to be true, we know she was recognized by Congress. So in that sense, Margaret Corbin also comes to represent all of those women that we might call Molly Pitchers.

QUESTION: What is the legend of Molly Pitcher?

FRANCOISE: The one probably you're referring to is Sara Ludwig Hayes, who found herself side-by-side with her husband at the battle of Monmouth, and when the fort came under attack her husband was mortally wounded and she picked up his rammer for his cannon and began to fire from his position. She was nicknamed Captain Molly for that particular service. She was well known within the militia in that she served with her husband.

QUESTION: Who was Margaret Corbin and what did she do?

FRANCOISE: Margaret Corbin was married to a man by the name of John Corbin and they lived in the western portion of the state of Virginia, when the United States became independent. The militia came knocking, literally, and so John Corbin decided to join the fight. Where he was with this wife, meant that his wife had a choice. She could either probably stay or she could go. In the case of Margaret Corbin, I believe she didn't have so much of a choice because of her circumstances. She was out on what they would have called the frontier at the time, she had no family because they had immigrated, she didn't have any slaves or servants, so basically with her husband going off to war it meant that she would have been left alone with 60 acres to plow. So we know Margaret Corbin decided to go with her husband. And she, I think, becomes one of those women who, again, represent many many women who are nicknamed camp followers, who provided an incredible support to the military, doing a lot of what, you know, the Army wasn't

really capable of doing themselves at the time. And so Margaret Corbin will follow her husband, which was acceptable by the Army, as long as she didn't become a burden. She'll do things like cook, clean, forage for food, sew, nurse, and these kinds of things. Because she's following her husband, she will find herself somewhat unexpectedly in the heat of the battle, and that's what happens when they're at Fort Washington. Fort Washington is the upper part of New York City, in present day Harlem, and their fort comes under siege by the British and the Hessians on the other side of the river. Margaret Corbin, her husband's an artilleryman, is helping her husband as he loads the cannons and fires them, and in the midst of the battle he becomes mortally wounded. She looks at him, figures there's nothing she can do to help him, and so she bends over, picks up his ramrod, basically, and continues to fire from his gun. In the midst of this battle it's said that the Hessians and the British somehow knew that the gun she was firing from was pretty accurate, because it was one of the first guns that they hone their guns back in onto. The patriots lost that battle, and when the British came through the fort they found Margaret Corbin, believing that she was dead, and they left her basically for dead. Later on she was recovered by Americans and taken off to military hospital and ended up living for several decades after that. For that particular day's battle and the service that she provided, she was awarded by Congress half her husband's pension. And so that's why we really know that Margaret Corbin is a true story about an individual. But I don't think she's the only woman who might've had that story. And you can see the parallel between that and the Molly Pitcher, the Captain Molly Pitcher story of Fort Monmouth. I've often wondered if they just got confused.

QUESTION: Did women serve in combat situations during the Civil War?

FRANCOISE: Absolutely. Like the American Revolution, women found themselves in combat situations and in the midst of battle. Like the American Revolution, many of these women also were camp followers who would camp nearby as close as they could to where their husband, their father or brother might have been, and provided whatever service that they could in terms of nursing, laundry, and these kinds of things. Periodically they too would find themselves caught in the midst of this. Probably the women that found themselves in combat were those women who disguised themselves as men. And this happened both in the North and the South, both armies. The number is put at 400, we really don't know if that is a true and fixed figure or number, but many of these women joined for all sorts of reasons. Many times their families knew that they had joined and they had disguised themselves. A handful of stories indicate that when they joined, they joined the units in their area from where they lived. They often served side-by-side with some of their neighbors, literally, who eventually would've found out what they were doing and how they were doing that.

QUESTION: Do we know if women participated in some of the famous battles?

FRANCOISE: We know of several women who participated in the first battle of Bull Run, the very first battle in 1861 of the Civil War. Two of them would actually go on to become somewhat famous, as these women had disguised themselves. One was Sara Edmonds, she joined the northern army, the Union Army, and the other was Loreta Velazquez, and she joined the Confederate Army. Both of them survived the battle of Bull Run and would go on to fight in other conflicts. We also know of four or five individual women who served in the Battle of Gettysburg. This is known in part because, of course, they were discovered to be women after the battle was over. The Siege of Petersburg, Battle of Petersburg, there were women who disguised themselves and in one of the very last battles of the Civil War, Sailor's Creek, just

before the surrender by Robert E. Lee at Appomattox, they found a woman disguised as a man in the Appomattox River nearby. So these women have served, some of their stories were very well documented after the Civil War. A handful of them even wrote books. At first they were somewhat folk heroes, then they weren't looked upon very positively after the war, because what they had done was just so out of the ordinary that a lot of people just couldn't accept it.

QUESTION: Who was Harriet Tubman?

FRANCOISE: Harriet Tubman is perhaps best known as being a heroic individual before the Civil War in the antebellum era, who worked tremendously hard to shuttle slaves who had run away from the South into the North. And she did this in part because of her faith and also because she managed to work a network of people who would support these slaves as they were running away through what was called the Underground Railroad.

QUESTION: Who was Dorothea Dix, and what did she do?

FRANCOISE: Before the Civil War she worked in the nursing field so to speak. Her greatest passion was to help mentally ill people. When the war started she joined and wanted to figure out a way in which she could support the effort. Because of her skills, and because of her background and her very good organizational skills, she was put in charge of the nurses as sort of the superintendent of nurses for the Union Army. There was not an Army nurse corps, or any other nurse corps for that matter at that time. So really, she lays the groundwork for nurses to come after that, and works towards improving nursing, and the care that was being given to wounded Soldiers and often took care of the most egregiously wounded Soldiers.

QUESTION: How important were these women to the Civil War effort?

FRANCOISE: Nurses during the Civil War were very important. They played a critical role. In fact, at the time of the Civil War medicine was somewhat in its infancy in this country. There had been hospitals, but not regulated the way that they would be later. So oftentimes women who became nurses had a propensity towards caring for others, and they would want to do whatever it is that they could do to help the sick, the dying, or the wounded. So they were welcomed with open arms. Some of them were paid, some of them weren't. Dorothea Dix, for example, was not paid for her service in those four years of the Civil War. They became a critical function in terms of helping the men that came back from the battles survive from their wounds. The idea of changing the bandages, working in somewhat more of a sterile environment, all these things were things that were put forth by women working as nurses side-by-side with the doctors.

QUESTION: What can you tell us about Clara Barton?

FRANCOISE: Clara Barton is a remarkable woman. In fact, her work during the Civil War as the head of the field sanitation team did a lot for insuring the survivability of wounded men from the battles. She went from hospital to hospital all across wherever it was that she found them, inspected them, and basically taught people about sanitation, why you need to put a fresh bandage on a wound, or perhaps why their bed clothing, or their bed sheets need to be changed and those kinds of things. I also know certain circumstances, for example, at a hospital in City Point, Virginia, in Hopewell, in present day Hopewell, Virginia, and she worked closely with the nurses to try and educate them about field sanitation. They really became the go-to people for those things. Of course, Clara Barton also goes on to establish the American Red Cross, which

she is probably most famous for, which of course, will have enduring legacy in terms of its contributions to the country, as well as the military and certainly to those wounded from war.

QUESTION: What can you tell us about the only woman to date to ever receive the Medal of Honor?

FRANCOISE: The only woman to have been awarded the Medal of Honor in our Nation's history is Dr. Mary Walker. She was a contracted assistant surgeon for the Union Army. Going back a decade and a half before that, she's one of the very first women to enter into medical school. It was actually the medical school located in Syracuse, New York, and this particular medical school was one of the first to open its doors to women. She received her degree as a 13-week course, she paid \$55 per class that she attended. At the time of the Civil War in 1861, she tried to enlist but, of course, she was told, no, she couldn't enlist. So she said, I'll offer my services nonetheless and she actually ended up in field hospitals until about a year later the Army said okay, make this official, we'll make you an assistant surgeon in the Union Army. But she must have been a phenomenal woman in terms of her courage. She often times would find herself on some parts of the battlefield that some of her male counterparts wouldn't. In fact, she was taken as a prisoner of war by the Confederate Army at one point. The reason they took her is she had crossed over into the Confederate lines in order to take care of the Confederate Soldiers. So they grabbed her, thinking she was a spy, locked her up in Richmond, and a few months later ended up releasing her, at which time she went right back to doing what she was doing before. She was awarded the Medal of Honor.

QUESTION: Can you give me an overview of the nurse's service in the Spanish American War?

FRANCOISE: Well, the work of nurses in the Civil War really lays the groundwork for nurses in the Spanish American War. The military is in areas working and fighting that were unfamiliar and so very quickly it becomes evident that many men are succumbing to diseases, tropical diseases they hadn't been exposed to before. With the development of more formal nursing programs in the United States, the military is able to turn to the civilian world again, as they will many times, for women's support and draw nurses. There were male nurses also at the time of the Spanish American War, but many of them served on ships and they too succumbed to the diseases. But it's their work in the Spanish American War that lays the groundwork for the creation of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901 and the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908.

QUESTION: In WWI, there was a famous comment made about the Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, tell me about that.

FRANCOISE: The famous statement he made was free a man to fight, and actually this is a statement that will be used again in WWII. The Navy was the first to enlist women, as yeomanettes, and he had the foresight to realize that by using woman power, so to speak, it meant that they would be able to do those jobs that didn't require any combat or wouldn't put them in harm's way and thus be able to free up a man to fight so that they could be concentrated into combat zones and battles.

QUESTION: These first official Navy women were yeomanettes.

FRANCOISE: They were nicknamed yeomanettes but actually they were yeoman (F) for female. Many of the female yeomans or yeoman female did not like being called yeomanettes.

QUESTION: Tell me about the nickname for the women who served in the Army in France as telephone operators?

FRANCOISE: There's a special group of women, they were telephone operators who were requested by the Army, specifically to act as translators for the Army Expeditionary Forces headquarters in France. These women were brought into service, contracted, specifically because of those skills of being able to be a telephone operator as well as being bilingual. They were nicknamed the Hello Girls, again, not a term that they necessarily embraced but one nonetheless that has stuck.

QUESTION: Were they actually in the Army?

FRANCOISE: The women that served as Hello Girls were not enlisted in the Army. The Army wouldn't enlist women until WWII although the Navy and the Marines had already done that in WWI. They were contracted. When it was called for them they had to pass a test, mostly the physical examination, as well as capabilities, in other words, they were only going to take the best telephone operators. And they were given a small amount of money to purchase a uniform, which most of them made themselves and they were required to sign a contract. The contract read very much like an enlistment document because for many of these women when they came back from France, in 1918-1919, when they thought they had been enlisted, found out that they hadn't been. So, they didn't enjoy the rights and the benefits of their male counterparts.

QUESTION: There were some 21,000 nurses serving in WWI, many stationed overseas, where were they and why were they there?

FRANCOISE: As the American Expeditionary Forces were going into Europe to fight there were some 400 Army nurses. By the end of the War, over 20,000 will have served. Many of these nurses would be brought over with pre-established base hospitals, which was a system of medical care at the time, communities, hospitals, doctors volunteered, they often brought their own nurses with them, they established a base hospital much like the Civil War, some of them very close to the front lines, some of them in more established hospital physical buildings, which sometimes were simply chateaus that had been converted. And so, these women as their predecessors, faced very difficult times. They saw wounds that no one had really seen before because of the nature of that warfare and they served gallantly during that time.

QUESTION: What dangers did they face?

FRANCOISE: Nurses went where they were needed. So that meant sometimes as the troop trains of wounded came back, the healthy men would move forward and sometimes those trains also carried women who were needed for the purposes of their nursing capabilities close to the frontlines. It's not a known number how many served, but it is known that 3 or 4 of them in the course of their service near the frontlines were gassed with mustard gas at one point during the war. And, of course, that's a very debilitating experience. They might not have found themselves in trenches, per se. The areas that they worked often simply were dugouts, muddy. Artillery would have flown over the top of them, perhaps not at them necessarily, depending on where the bombardment came from, but a very difficult environment in which to work, both from a sanitary perspective as well from a mental perspective in the midst of all that.

QUESTION: What recognition did they receive for their service?

FRANCOISE: Nurses in WWI, like their predecessors from the Spanish American War, were often unsung heroes. Their service was appreciated, they were contracted and were somewhat well paid compared to what women might have been paid otherwise. They felt privileged to do what they did in part because of the opportunity not only to serve but also to travel in Europe, in particular in France. But when all was said and done, very quickly, that number went from over 20,000 to as few as 100. So very quickly, they were released from service, brought home, and went back to their ordinary lives as well as perhaps their nursing careers.

QUESTION: What about the black women serving, there weren't only white women?

FRANCOISE: That's correct. Most of the black nurses served in the United States. Although by-in-large because the Army, or because the military, was segregated that meant that hospitals were as well and that also meant that some people would be reluctant to help black wounded Soldiers. So many of the women that served as nurses back in the United States also served where there were large concentrations of black Soldiers. And a very large number of them died of the influenza, of course, because many of the nurses from WWI would be killed from contracting the influenza.

QUESTION: In WWII, the majority of women who served were nurses, typically where did the nurses who served overseas serve.

FRANCOISE: When the United States enters the war in 1941, even on the eve of the war, it becomes evident that there's going to be a need for a large number of both doctors as well as nurses. The Nurse Corps, both in the Army and Navy, as well as the Marines, will balloon from just 400 before the United States enters the war to over 30,000, perhaps as many as 40,000. They too will find themselves in the midst of the battles. It's a very dynamic and different war than WWI. This meant that wherever the military went, the Army nurses went with them off and on the ground. The Navy nurses were oftentimes on hospital ships. Some of them even remarked of being on these naval ships during the bombardments as they were nursing the wounded and dying and the sick, and next to them the ships, the destroyers were bombarding the enemy on the other side. We know that Army nurses, for example, and Operation Overlord, they had 10,000 of them stationed in England in preparation for the battle, in the invasion of France. They arrived four days after the D-Day invasion. So, just after the beachhead had been secured they landed, just as the men did, as the waves of men came days after the carnage of that particular battle and worked in field hospitals; there were no hospitals at that point established in any kind of permanency. They worked day in and day out, under extremely difficult circumstances. They were much the combatants as the combatants themselves were.

QUESTION: What can you tell us about the number of nurses who were killed in Italy?

FRANCOISE: There is a large contingency of nurses on the North African continent who would go wherever the Allied Forces would go. At the time of the invasion of Sicily in that particular campaign, nurses were sent almost simultaneously with their male counterparts. Sometimes once the beachheads were secure. Perhaps the most well known of this would be the nurses at Anzio Beach. Anzio Beach, like many of the battles, was unique because of its fierceness and the fact that it wasn't successful at first so it meant that the Allied Forces were pinned on the beachheads for days. The nurses that arrive in those beachheads were taking care of the wounded over a long period of time and were also subjected to the horrors of the battle and the battles themselves. Several of them were killed. Many of them were cited for bravery, they

were ordered periodically by the commanding officers to move or take shelter and they refused to, they stayed with the men that they were taking care of and for that they were cited for their bravery and were awarded the Silver Star.

QUESTION: Who was Charity Adams and what was the role of the women in the Six Triple Eight?

FRANCOISE: With some forceful voices on the outside of the military, in particular Mary McLeod Bethune, who is an advisor to both Colonel Hobby as well as a close individual to Eleanor Roosevelt, managed really to get the Army to accept African-American women. However, no more than 10% of the total number of women in the Women's Army Corps could be African-American. These women who served, Charity Adams perhaps one of the most renowned, nicknamed themselves the "10 per centers." They served with great pride. In fact, Charity Adams was a young lady in college nominated by her Dean to the Women's Army Corps to join. She's in that very first group of women at Fort Des Moines Iowa, 44 of the 440 were African-American women, she has excellent leadership skills, excellent organizational skills, and so, when it came time with the need after the D-Day invasion and when General Eisenhower called for a postal company to be sent over, the only thing that the Army could really respond with was an African-American WAC unit. But just as there had been with auxiliary status, black WACs were restricted from being sent overseas anywhere outside the continental United States. In fact, black WACs served where there were large concentrations of African-American male Soldiers. Nonetheless, there's a need and so it was answered. Charity Adams was handpicked, volunteered, promoted to the rank of Major. She hand selected 800 women, again, all volunteers, no one was forced to go, trained them for a good several months, mostly in the drill side of it, because she knew that they would be under a microscope and she knew that she would be standing up to a pretty forceful criticism of their use over there. And so she took the Six Triple Eight, as they're also known, first to England where they were in Birmingham, England for three or four months and then eventually arrived on the continent and then ended up in Rouen, France where they served. They faced a mountain of mail. It was months and months and months of backed up mail, warehouses filled, stacked, and we have pictures to the ceiling. Major Adams broke her unit into groups which they worked shifts seven days a week, three shifts a day, 24 hours a day and it was estimated that the mission that they had been sent on would probably take more than a year to straighten out. They were responsible for redirecting almost seven million pieces of mail and packages, not just to the American Army, but to all the forces that found themselves on the continent and they did so very very efficiently and proficiently. She comes back as a Major and is promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, the first African-American woman promoted in the Army to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and within a few months of that retires, leaves the service.

QUESTION: The impact on society.

FRANCOISE: The impact of women in the military in society will have a long lasting effect, as will the service of black women in WWII and the Women's Army Corps. When Charity Adams was selected to command the 68<sup>th</sup>, 88<sup>th</sup> Postal Battalion, she spent a great amount of time, as we understand, pondering what types of challenges that she was going to face. These challenges would have come from simply the rank that she wore, because there was a Lieutenant Colonel female white Women's Army Corps commander in Europe, who she would fall under, but perhaps her responsibilities would have called for a higher rank than major at the time. Knowing

that she was going to be under a microscope, she was very adamant at ensuring that the highest standards were met by the women, both in uniform and out of uniform, both on duty and off duty. At the same time she knew that it was important to keep morale high, so she was a very well liked individual by those that she commanded.

QUESTION: Did movies help or hurt?

FRANCOISE: The service of women in WWII is known to a certain extent, but probably not to the extent that it should be in terms of the history of our Nation. It is interesting that many films have been made over the last four or five decades about the service of Americans in WWII. But in many cases a lot of times that role of women, except perhaps for the nurses, has been left out. Again, it could be because of the numbers. But when the Women's Army Corps was established as a permanent part of the Army after 1948, there was a film made, it starred Rosalind Russell, it was a very famous 1950s movie star, the movie was filmed at Fort Lee, Virginia, and it's interesting because when you watch it, you realized that it wasn't an unfair depiction of women in the Women's Army Corps, in fact, Rosalind Russell was made an honorary WAC as a result of that film.

QUESTION: Talk to me about the role of recruiting posters.

FRANCOISE: The recruitment of women into the military in World War II was somewhat of a challenge. Because of the cultural norms at the time, many women did not find the idea of service in uniform as being attractive. Many of their male compatriots, both in uniform as well as perhaps a father or brother, did not think highly of that as well. So, the Women's Army Corps, the Navy as well, found themselves really challenged by recruiting. And so there was a huge recruiting effort undertaken by the War Department and the public relations division, which was in Washington D.C. They hoped through a campaign of publicities, or through the publicity campaign, that they would be able to convince Americans that it was okay for women to serve in uniform and also to convince the women themselves. Many of the recruiting posters that came out would depict a WAC in a WAC uniform that says, Good WAC, you know, as a positive statement. Another recruiting poster of the time says with a WAC and her two parents, this is my war too. You know, this idea that through the use of images, positive images that women could be convinced to join as well. There are also a lot of recruiting posters during that time period that were sponsored by corporations and companies. There are examples of Coca-Cola using three women in uniform to advertise their product. But it was good for the military as well. Not so much the free publicity, but more as by demonstrating the hand in hand between the private companies and the major war effort at the time as well.

QUESTION: The women depicted in these posters were in fact, women in uniform?

FRANCOISE: The posters that depict women in World War II were in fact women in uniform. This was very important, not just from a policy perspective, but also from a credibility perspective. Women were sought out. There was a group that went to recruit the women who would do the recruiting. These women were hand picked. They were sent to Washington D.C. to the public relations office to determined whether or not they would suit one particular campaign or another, and it also was based on geographical region where they might have come from, and then they would be painted and the poster would eventually be created.

QUESTION: What was the role of the WASP?

FRANCOISE: The Women Airforce Service Pilots, also known as WASP, are a great example of how women in World War II and really through the course of American history, are able to bring to the military skills in any which way they can. The women of the Women Airforce Service Pilots were women who had a love of flying, they already had pilot licenses, and so when it became evident that there was a manpower shortage, particularly both in training as well as flying, or ferrying the planes from the manufacturer to the air bases, this opportunity to use women was taken advantage of by the Army. Many women who became the WASP had been flying for years. Some of them had their own flying schools for women, in certain cases, so they saw this as an opportunity really to demonstrate what they were capable of, what women were capable of. In fact, the requirements to become a pilot to fly for the WASP, was more stringent than it was for their male counterparts. If you wanted to be a WASP you had to have 300 hours of flying time. For a male pilot, it was 100 hours. So, the women that were recruited as pilots were very proficient. The women in the training detachments towed targets behind them, which the men would then practice shooting with live rounds. The women in the ferrying department, they flew every single piece of aircraft in World War II, basically from the factory to the air bases and in some cases from one air base to the other, putting in thousands and thousands of man hours, pilot hours in this case, towards the war effort.

QUESTION: Tell us the story of the woman who went to Howard University.

FRANCOISE: Many women would benefit from their service in World War II, in part because of the G.I. Bill. And of course those are the educational benefits that were guaranteed to all of the service members from World War II. There was a woman by the name of Dovey Roundtree, and she was a WAC in World War II, a black WAC, she was a 10 per center and she had a plan for the use of her G.I. Bill, and that was to go to law school. When she went to the school to register, Howard University, Washington D.C., she was standing in line with all her male counterparts. She handed the woman behind the counter her paperwork, giving her the G.I. Bill, and the woman was dumbfounded because she questioned her as to whose it was. Well, how could this be yours? Dovey Roundtree she goes to Howard University and graduates with her law degree. Dovey Roundtree takes on a case of a young lady by the name of Sarah Keys. Sarah Keys had served in the Women's Army Corps and found herself in 1952 stationed at Fort Dix. She was going home so she boarded the bus in her uniform just as all the service members would do back then. When the bus pulled into Roanoke Rapids on the Virginia-North Carolina border Sarah Keys was asked to move by the bus driver to give up her seat for a white Marine. Sarah Keys refused to, she just couldn't understand why was she less important. She had a uniform on, and he had a uniform on. Of course she probably knew to a certain extent why. The bus driver called the sheriff, he came to the bus, arrested her, put her in jail overnight, fined her, which basically was a month's pay for the poor WAC, and the bus went on. When Sarah Keys father found this out he was very upset because he had purposely bought a bus ticket for her. On a bus that would not be subject to the Jim Crow laws. So when she called him and found out that she was in jail, he was pretty upset about that because he had bought what he thought was the right bus ticket. Well, Dovey Roundtree, also, of course, a WAC, hears of Sarah Keys story and she and another prominent black lawyer take on the case and sue the bus company. This particular case, as it winds its way through the courts, ends up at the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court rules that the Jim Crow laws could no longer be enforced on buses traveling from non-Jim Crow law states into states in which they enforce the laws. Basically, Dovey Roundtree's lawsuit, the Sarah Keys case, ends up redefining interstate travel on transportation, private transportation.

All of this happens, the court decision, several months before Rosa Parks. It says a lot. Sarah Keys agreeing to have the case taken on, Dovey Roundtree Johnson taking the case on, reflects the impact that military service, as WACs, had on them. We've served, we've supported our Nation's efforts, and now it's our time.

QUESTION: What can you tell us about the role of women in the Vietnam conflict?

FRANCOISE: There are many varying roles that women had in the Vietnam War, that is in the theater, in Vietnam. Probably the best known are of course the stories of the nurses of which there are some 9,000, male and female, but predominantly female nurses who served in that conflict. But there are a lot of other organizations, such as the American Red Cross, YMCA, who sent young ladies to Vietnam for morale purposes, for the purposes of serving. The USO tours is another good example. There's also another 900 women from the Women's Army Corps who were sent to Vietnam. In fact, one of the early missions for women, that is for American women, was to train the Vietnamese equivalent of the Women's Army Corps, and so a woman by the name of Betty Adams, Sergeant Betty Adams, was hand picked by the director of the Women's Army Corps, sent in 1964 to lay the groundwork for the women who would come in to Vietnam shortly thereafter, and also to begin the establishment of a Women's Army Corps training facility for the Vietnamese. This eventually would be buffeted by larger numbers of women from the Women's Army Corps coming over, but these women served different locations within Vietnam, predominantly in Saigon, at the headquarters for the American Army, or the American military in Vietnam. Many woman worked there in supply, maintenance, you know, typing, clerking, and those kinds of things as well. For those women like the WACs who found themselves concentrated in larger bases, they did not face the same threats as perhaps their nurse counterparts, but they did nonetheless get mortared periodically. There are several recounts of WACs having to get under the desk in the part of the building that was blown off and these kinds of things. But the Army Nurses, as in some of the previous conflicts, will find themselves closest to the intensity of the conflict, and the intensity of the battles.

QUESTION: In the 1980s, women were permitted to enter the service academies.

FRANCOISE: At the end of the Vietnam War we saw the end of the draft. So the movement to the all-volunteer force of all the branches of the military meant of course that there was, to a certain extent, a manpower shortage. And the record reflects the fact that there was a very large recruiting campaign by all the branches of the military to increase the number of women in their ranks. This is happening in the mid 1970s. It's an opportune time of course, because this is also the time period of the women's rights movement. Of course there was still some inequalities between the service of men and women in terms of what their benefits are, some of that will be worked through in the 1970s as well as some of the training requirements. But probably the most significant change that takes place that will catapult the military into a more gender-integrated institution is the opening of the military academies in 1976 directed by President Ford. When those women go in in 1976, there is still a Women's Army Corps, there's still the Women's Air Force, they're different branches. But opportunities are greater than they were before. By the time they come out in 1980, they are now joining a gender integrated military. Because we see the disestablishment of the Women's Army Corps, we see the removal of the barriers in the numbers in terms of recruiting. And also, we see an equalization of the positions and the types of jobs and the places that women can serve as well.

QUESTION: Women begin serving on ships.

FRANCOISE: Absolutely, they fly aircraft and are stationed overseas and now are allowed to take their families. They're not destined for shore duty in the length of their careers. So it means also that they become competitive. And of course, they're now competing against their male counterparts of which they didn't have to compete before. So it has its challenges.

QUESTION: What can you tell me about Rhonda Cornum.

FRANCOISE: With a large number of women serving in Operations Desert Shield Desert Storm, and serving in capacities they really hadn't served before it means that things will happen to women that perhaps all of society's not completely comfortable with, but certainly not something of the norm. There were several women, of course, who were killed by incoming scuds onto their units. Then there's a story of Rhonda Cornum who was a flight surgeon on a helicopter on a mission, of which, of course, that was a place that women now served. She was shot down. When she was shot down several of her fellow military members were killed, she wasn't. She was captured. So she becomes the first [women] prisoner of war since World War II. Her particular case, it's a little different. There were women in World War II who were taken as prisoners. The nurses of Corregidor, for example. But because they weren't seen as combatants by the enemy it meant that they actually were interned. They were not prisoners of war. But in the case of Rhonda Cornum, she was a full member of the military, of the U.S. military, in a combatant position, and so, there's a certain uneasiness of knowing what would happen to her as a result of that. One of the arguments against the full integration of women into the military was the argument about what happens when they become a prisoner of war. So, what she endured in that time period, which she's written a wonderful book, really demonstrates how the military as an institution has changed, but also how society to a certain extent, has accepted that. She certainly wasn't ostracized by people in the United States. If anything she was looked at almost as a hero. And rightly so, because of what she had endured.

QUESTION: You see images of women doing different things now.

FRANCOISE: There have been great changes in the role of women in the last ten years in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Women are doing jobs that they hadn't done before, but perhaps more importantly, they're doing them in such a way that they hadn't been asked to do them before. Regardless of which branch of the military, or the fact that so much of what the military does is joint, it means that you have women in all the branches who are being put into locations that one couldn't have imagined 20 years ago. Those positions mean that they're side-by-side by their male counterparts. They're taking on roles that have in the past predominantly been male oriented. There are roles and there are policies in place that sort of delineate where women should be and the kinds of things that they should be doing, but like everything else, the fact that this war doesn't have a rear area so to speak, it means that you're going to find women all over the battlefield in all of these different positions. And of course you're going to be putting them directly in harm's way. But there's an acceptance to that now, more so in our society than before. If you look at someone such as Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester, who was part of a Kentucky Army National Guard military police unit who worked on a team of nine others. There was no question that wherever that unit was going, she was going. Or whatever that particular team was doing that day, she would be doing. One of their jobs was to go up and down the supply routes to secure them for the transportation units. On a particular day in 2005, they come upon an ambush, and her team is ambushed as well. She, like all of her male counterparts, as they attest

to as well, did what they had to do in order to survive, and to complete their mission, and of course defeat the enemy. For somebody like Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester, or any of the other women who find themselves in these kinds of situations, they're not really thinking of themselves necessarily as a woman, but as a Soldier. And so this is very much accepted by their male counterparts. Would it make sense for her squad leader, Sergeant Nein, to say in the midst of the battle, oh, you stay here, sorry. We don't want you to be in combat. Of course not, because they all had an important role that they had trained with together as a team. Nonetheless, after she was awarded the Silver Star for direct combat action that raised the question again, what exactly is the role of women in the military, and where should they be on a battlefield. But so much of that has been redefined now, by the nature of the war in the last ten years.

QUESTION: It seems like the hurdles are just sort of falling away naturally.

FRANCOISE: Yes, much of the reason why the military changes is also based on need. Because if you look at the Female Engagement Teams of the Marine Corps that they used early on in Afghanistan, that now has been widely adopted by the Army. They're doing a very particular job that we might say is a combat multiplier. They're reaching out to a portion of Afghan society that their male counterparts can't. They have a very definitive job to do. But because it's become so important, and the value of the work has been noted, in a way they're laying the groundwork now for the changes to come. So, the change that's to come, for example, the opening of positions that have never been open to women before in the Army, or perhaps, the changes in the military occupational specialties that women can now enter into, for example, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle mechanic. That was a military occupational specialty closed to women. Why, because it meant that they would have to be on a particular place in a particular unit, which the policy said they couldn't be. We as a society have become a little more used to that. So in a way, it shows the progress of the institution, which is really changing to a certain extent on need. But now you have a society perhaps that accepts it, it's okay, but most importantly, you actually have women who want it, and again, it goes back to women given the opportunity to serve, they will. And as more is demanded of them, more women will step up to meet those demands as well.