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More Than a Uniform: A Navy Woman in a Navy Man's World

Winifred Quick Collins, Herbert M. Levine

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In 1942, four days after Congress passed a law allowing women to serve as commissioned officers in the military, Winifred Quick Collins joined the Navy. In her role as Personnel Director of the Midshipmen's School at Smith College, she developed procedures for the classification of the 6000 women officer candidates who reported for duty during the ensuing year. She continued to help shape the Navy's personnel policies for women during the next twenty years, working alongside such celebrated Navy leaders as Chester Nimitz, Bill Halsey, George Anderson, Arleigh Burke, and Hyman Rickover.

Overcoming a troubled and poverty-stricken childhood to eventually win top college scholarships then head a jobs program during the Depression, Collins made it to the top of every ladder she climbed. As a pioneer among female commissioned officers, she was in a unique position to observe not only how Navy women overcame discriminatory obstacles, but also how the Navy came to depend on women as an essential component of its standard operations.

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