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The acute shortage of agricultural workers led to using German prisoners of war on farms and ranches. Here POWs work in the fields of the Fort Hays Agricultural Experiment Station.

Affluence was a new experience for Kansas farmers who had their highest cash incomes in history during World War II. The $595 million they received in 1942, for example, was more than double the average for the years between 1936 and 1940. Increased farm income can best be comprehended in personal items. In the depths of the depression, farmers struggled to stay in business, lived on credit, and went without basic necessities. Some farmers made enough in World War II to pay income taxes and have the security of savings. They could escape crushing mortgages, add acreage to farms, and even afford higher quality vice—one farmer recalled that he was aware things were better when he could afford commercially-made hooch instead of bootleg.

Although old-fashioned methods lingered, farming was rapidly becoming more scientific and increasingly mechanized. The all-purpose tractor in use by 1940 is one example. Lighter and with greater power than earlier models, its pneumatic or rubber tires resulted in better traction, lower fuel consumption, fewer repairs, and gear ratios enabling highway speeds of between twelve and twenty miles per hour (compared with three miles per hour for horse teams). Proliferation of bigger and more efficient equipment specifically designed for tractors also increased cultivated acres with less labor and higher yields.

The rise of the custom combining industry was one consequence of the war. Combines were in short supply, and the government would not allow production on the scale needed. Some custom combining outfits had traveled the region before the war, but now a class of professional custom cutters followed ripening wheat from Texas to Canada. Still, technology could not offset the shortage of labor.[35]

By 1943 the government identified the "seriously depleted" farm labor supply as one of the country's gravest problems. Desperate farmers and ranchers scrambled for any available workers, and the search for labor solutions was among the most interesting of the Kansas home-front phenomena. Relatives and friends afforded willing farm hands, although not necessarily highly skilled. This volunteer labor source was essential, but farmers sometimes appeared ungrateful. L.E. Garrison stopped spontaneously after work to help with the wheat harvest on the A.S. Merrill farm. After a stint operating the combine, Garrison confided to a friend that Merrill complained, "I wasn't worth a damn—however, when I told him I was worth perhaps all he was paying me, he didn't have much to say."[36]

With women as the largest untapped labor source, the government (as it had successfully done in World War I) mobilized city women to replenish the dwindling

35. Thomas D. Isern, *Custom Combining on the Great Plains: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981).

36. L.E. Garrison to John Chain, July 3, 1944. Letter in the possession of Hannah Garrison.

supply of farm workers. Of the recruiting organizations nationwide, the most important was created in 1943 within the purview of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. County extension agents, with the cooperation of government agencies, colleges, groups and clubs, enlisted women in the Women's Land Army of America (WLA).[37] Approximately 360,000 women volunteered for farm work on either a permanent or regular part-time basis. Although making an effort to recruit city women, the WLA shifted its Kansas emphasis to women already on the farms.

As males departed from Kansas agriculture, farm wives and daughters assumed their jobs. Women inexperienced in outside work had to learn to operate heavy machinery, and those women who helped in the fields and with livestock before the war carried even greater burdens. In nearly every case, these duties were added to the already strenuous regimen of the typical farm woman. Consequently, the principal WLA aim was to instruct women on subjects from family nutrition to farm safety whereby they could deal efficiently with their additional chores.

Family and friends, however, seldom made up the total labor deficit. Youngsters who organized early in the war to collect scrap and baby-sit for mothers working in war plants also helped fill the labor void. Examples include the Boys Labor Brigade, which received time off from school to pick corn, and the Victory Corps at Topeka High, which released students from classes and gave course credit for performing agricultural labor. In 1943 farmers counted on the help of twenty-five thousand Kansas Boy Scouts.

The acute shortage of agricultural workers led to one of the most unusual episodes of the war—the use of German prisoners of war on farms and ranches.[38] POWs performed a variety of jobs including harvesting potatoes, dressing turkeys, milking cows, and shocking kafir corn; many Kansas farmers testified that the prisoners saved their crops. Kansans liked the polite, good humored, and industrious POWs who were grateful for the generosity and kindness of their unchosen employers.

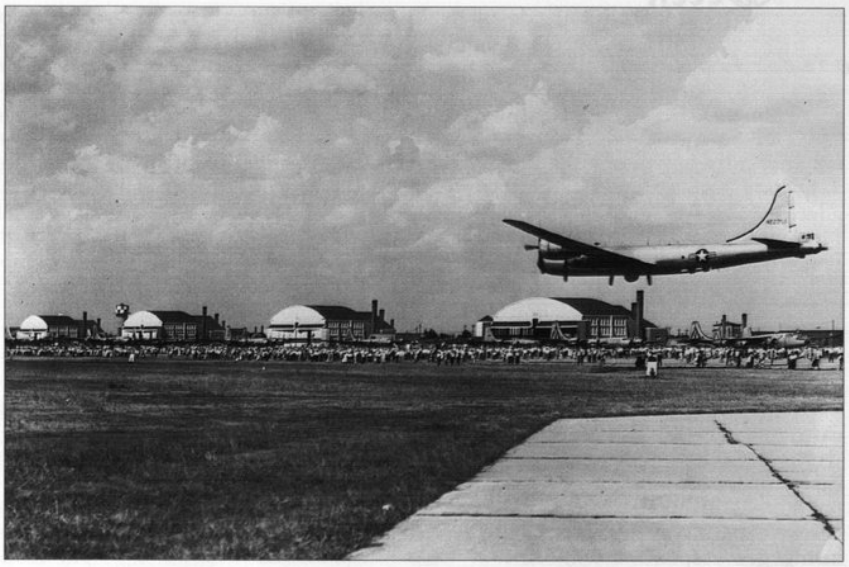
The experience changed the perceptions and attitudes of both groups. Kansans learned to judge the POWs on their individual qualities, and not on the grotesque philosophy of the nation they served. Prisoners received a practical lesson in democracy and often acquired a genuine fondness for the American way. Former POWs and Kansans still exchange recollections and news by mail, and some have visited each other. The return of former POWs to reaffirm friendships has even been the occasion of community celebrations. Imbued with the American dream, some prisoners returned to become citizens, raise families, and enjoy the freedom, opportunity, and vast open spaces that had impressed them as POWs.

The change that World War II brought to the farms of Kansas hastened an agricultural revolution that continues today. But change came not just to the farms of Kansas, but to the towns and cities as well. About 40 percent of the state's population was urban in 1940, but that increased to slightly above 52 percent as a consequence of World War II. Only 12 percent urban in 1940, Johnson County surpassed 70 percent by 1950. The huge urban population influx created enormous problems of both physical accommodation and social adjustment.

Of the small towns, one strongly affected by the war was Eudora, which found itself a neighbor of the rapidly expanding Sunflower Ordnance Works. Housing was constructed near the plant works, but Eudora was the closest town, and the Sunflower workers flocked there in search of recreation. In early 1943 a USO club was established with headquarters in the old opera house. The *Lawrence Journal-World* later reported that the building had no plumbing; nevertheless, luncheons and dinners were served successfully, even though "water had to be carried from neighboring restaurants." The club sponsored lectures, classes, parties, and held checker and ping-pong tournaments. Graveyard-shift workers were served meals when they came off at 7:30 A.M., and second-shift workers who left the plant at 11:30 P.M. could dance until 2:30 in the morning. At times, as many as three hundred people crowded the tiny hall. On occasion a USO orchestra, directed by Prof. Russell Wiley of the University of Kansas band, provided concerts. In June 1943 an expanded facility opened, but workers had begun to move out.

37. Caron Smith, "The Women's Land Army During World War II," *Kansas History* 14 (Summer 1991): 82-88.

38. Patrick G. O'Brien, Thomas D. Isern, and R. Daniel Lumley, "Stalag Sunflower: German Prisoners of War in Kansas," *Kansas History* 7 (Autumn 1984): 182-98. Local newspapers are often informative on POW camps in the vicinity. The interesting history of the camp at Elkhart, for example, can be traced in the *Elkhart Tri-State News*.



Much of the war effort focused on aircraft production. The revolutionary B-29 superfortress was manufactured by Boeing in Wichita and tested, as shown here, at the Smoky Hill Air Force Base in Salina.

A year later the club was closed, and its popular director, Alice Moe, was transferred to other duties. Before she left, the high school student body and faculty gave her a compact, and the city of Eudora presented her with a sapphire pin.[39]

Wichita became one of the main wartime industrial cities in the country. Rapid expansion of the aircraft industry was responsible for a spiraling economic boom. Compelled by government policy and lured by jobs and high wages, new workers from Kansas farms and small towns and the surrounding states engulfed the city, whose population nearly doubled during the war. Nowhere in Kansas was urbanization more obvious and of greater consequence. The population shift strained Wichita to the limit.

39. *Lawrence Journal-World*, June 17, 1944; *Topeka Capital-Journal*, September 15, 1985.

New York Herald Tribune writer Kunigunde Duncan described the

> "nightmare" of too many people in stores, on buses, at the bank, gas, water and electricity pay windows. It takes forever to get nothing done. There are too many traffic tangles and accidents, too few lodgings for airplane workers, too few seats in school rooms. There is increase in crime, and streets are now trash-laden. It is a headache to try to telephone.[40]

Inadequate housing was probably the severest problem. Appropriately called "hot-flops," boarding houses were common in which beds were always warm from being slept in in straight shifts. Paying generous rewards for leads on rentals, persons were grateful to find even wretched facilities. One Wichitan remembered that "old sheds and garages were converted for housing. Basements had one, two, or three apartments added. People just came from everywhere, and . . . put up with phenomenal conditions. . . . They just stuck it out."[41]

A partial answer to the housing problem was to build the new town of Planeview on the Kansas prairie close to Wichita. Planeview, a war housing project for Wichita Boeing workers, was completed in fifteen months and became the seventh largest city in Kansas. Planeview had forty-four hundred dwellings and twenty thousand residents, a million-gallon water reservoir, 117

40. Quoted in Craig Miner, ed., *The Wichita Reader: A Collection of Writing About a Prairie City* (Wichita: Wichita Eagle and Beacon Publishing, 1992), 94. Wichita received extensive national publicity on its growth problems and as a key defense manufacturer. Russell E. McClure, "Wichita Maps Program to Solve War Problems," *National Municipal Review* 31 (September 1942): 436-37, describes the city's blueprint for coping.

41. Gird interview.

Beech
BOEING

miles of sidewalks, parks, schools, playgrounds, and something new: the first shopping center in the Wichita area.[42]

The "miracle" community was a good example of institutional adaptation to wartime exigencies. Planeview's institutional practices were to reflect the particular and urgent needs of workers and their families. When convention interfered, it was disregarded. Schools, for example, completely revised schedules and activities and expanded operations to include day-care nurseries for children of working mothers. The Planeview experience was duplicated throughout Kansas and the country. War changed the needs of society, and institutions responded with new services and revised operations to mirror the new realities.

Wichita adapted to the population explosion, often with ingenuity. City traffic signals were set at thirty-two seconds to enable bigger sidewalk crowds to safely cross streets. The sewage-treatment plant was reconditioned to handle a population of two hundred thousand and the new housing developments and industry. Services such as restaurants, movie theatres, and bowling alleys never closed. Social adjustments were commonly more difficult than the physical. Although reflecting a "cross-section of America," newcomers wrenched the community life known by long-time residents, and they caused some grumbling.[43] Often just off of farms, the newcomers typically had few acquaintances, and they were unaccustomed to organized community life and group activity. Wichita, as well as many smaller towns with a similar problem, used existing institutions like schools to introduce the newcomers to neighbors, offer group events, or simply provide an opportunity to relax or pursue a hobby. Private enterprise also had its influence—Wichita even developed a nightlife, and one that threatened a Kansas tradition. Wichita historian Bill Ellington vividly recalled:

> Dance halls were just going full blast. I can certainly relate to a quite popular one called the Blue Moon out near where the Boeing plant is today. The Blue Moon, of course, had great bands, even Glenn Gray and Charlie Stivak occasionally. It was common to carry in a bottle of booze and place it under the table . . . everyone did it. As long as it wasn't visible, that was the understanding.[44]

Wichita's spasms were due to the precipitant expansion of the aircraft industry. Whereas only 3 percent of the city's population relied on the industry for their livelihood in 1939, the proportion jumped to one-half by 1943. Of Cessna, Beechcraft, and Boeing, the last was the biggest story. Its Wichita operations in 1940 were basically confined to the manufacture of Kaydet trainers. In 1939 the Army Air Corps notified airframe companies that it had a "superbomber" in mind and asked them to prepare estimates. The Boeing design won the competition, and the company built experimental models while it constructed a second Wichita plant ten times the size of the first to mass produce the bomber. Boeing engineers literally redefined principles in their field to create the B-29 "superfortress," which was called the most "perfect blending of harmonious parts ever achieved . . . in the science of aerodynamics." Built under tight security, Boeing delivered the first of more than sixteen hundred superfortresses in July 1943. The B-29 could fly faster, higher, and farther with a heavier pay load than any World War II bomber. More than four B-29s a day came off the Boeing assembly line at peak production. The Boeing work force jumped from seven hundred in 1940 to twenty-nine thousand in 1944.[45]

By 1943 thirty-one thousand women worked in the Wichita aircraft plants, many in jobs for which only men had earlier been thought suited. These women were mythologized in songs, movies, and posters as Rosie the Riveter.[46] They

42. A short description of the physical layout of Planeview is in "Streets, Utilities, and Community Facilities in a Large War Housing Project," *American City* 59 (August 1944): 73-74. An example of the Planeview accommodation to residents is in "Social Health and Physical Education," *Education for Victory* 3 (July 20, 1944): 19.

43. Phelps interview; Lula Reider, interview with author, March 17, 1987; Laura Newell, interview with author, May 5, 1992. Integration of the new population into Wichita is the subject of William H. Crawford, "Recreation in a Kansas Boom Town," *Recreation* 36 (February 1943): 637-38, 647-48.

44. Bill Ellington, interview with author, January 6, 1986.

45. John Zimmerman, *Aerospace: Wichita Perspective* (Wichita: Wichita Eagle, 1966), is highly informative. Produced by Wichita State University (1984-1985), *Oral History of Aviation and Wichita: The Thirties and War Years* is a video program of recollections. Copious literature is available on specific aspects of the Wichita aircraft industry, of which an interesting example is F.L. Novascone, "Aircraft Riveting and Assembling Course," *Industrial Arts and Vocational Education* 31 (March 1942): 102-4.

46. The topic of women during World War II has generated intense interest, sharp controversy, and voluminous literature. Standard accounts are Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982); D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War With America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Karen Anderson,

Due to the prevailing attitude of white society in the 1940s, African Americans endured segregation throughout the war. This USO center in Junction City was one of several in Kansas provided for black soldiers.

labored at drill presses wearing bib overalls and bandannas to defend America and win the war. Women adjusted quickly to the demands of new work. According to Cora Phelps:

> You'd see women who had never done anything but housework in their lives. . . . They got some training, and they were working right along with the men. An awfully lot of women were doing the riveting and that sort of thing. . . . I thought they did an awfully good job of converting to something that was totally strange.[47]

Many Rosies like Lula Reider and Laura Newell, one of the first three women hired in the Cessna machine shop, could not remember overt discrimination.[48] But Cora Phelps described the treatment of women as

> just about what it is now down underneath. Men were used to being heads of families. If there was a good job they got it. A lot of them resented the women, but they knew they needed them. But sometimes you'd be surprised at the individuals who backed up the women. Some believed that women ought to be able to earn money, eat, and buy clothes just like a human being.

In all accounts of women aircraft workers, receiving their first paycheck was a memorable event. Laura Newell's $18.56 check was two and a half times the amount she earned in a week as a waitress. They all testified that the experience changed them in both small and large ways: some acquired a preference for slacks even outside the factory, and others decided they would stay at work after the war. It was all part of the movement that helped change women's role in American society.

World War II spread Kansans to every corner of the world; it also brought tens of thousands of young men from every corner of America to learn the craft of war at Kansas military installations and colleges. They were usually ac-

Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981); Margaret Randolph Higonnet, et al., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). For contemporary and retrospective views of women in the defense industry, *see* Frank J. Taylor, "Meet the Girls Who Keep 'Em Flying," *Saturday Evening Post* 214 (May 30, 1942): 30-31, 57-58; Sherna Berger Gluck, ed., *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, The War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987). On Wichita specifically, *see Kansas City Star*, September 10, 1943; *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, July 28, 1985.

47. Phelps interview, August 1, 1986.
48. Reider interview; Newell interview.

corded Kansas hospitality. Of one town that had an air corps cadet unit stationed at the college, Orville Hoch testified that "the community went all out to make those boys welcome, and make their stay as pleasant as possible." As a consequence, "a great many of those boys came back, finished school, and some of them married, went into business, and are still here."[49] Military personnel and their families often became deeply assimilated, and sadness resulted from cutting close ties. While her husband was away in the service, Teresa DeLong lived in a building with four apartments, of which three were rented to the wives of cadets. "When any of their husbands marched down . . . to the Santa Fe station to be moved somewhere else," she recounted, "we'd all go and stand along the street and cry."[50]

Occasional strains in hospitality could be humorous. On February 27, 1943, Willard Brown, state senator from Emmet, Kansas, complained that bombers from the Topeka Air Force Base had dropped six bombs on his ranch, destroying a chicken house and frightening his hired hands enough that they threatened to quit. Learning the bombs were four miles off target, Willard asked the senate to pass a resolution against "poor marksmanship."

When the war began, Fort Riley was the principal Kansas training post. The fort had been nearly ideal in peacetime. According to the director of the U.S. Cavalry Museum:

> You talk to people who were here at that time, and it was really a nice place. You had a lot of good social activities on post as well as the surrounding area. You had the polo teams. . . . They played against the teams from Wichita, Kansas City, and Oklahoma. Of course, there was the weekly fox hunting event. I've talked to a couple of boys who were raised here in the thirties, and the only mounted troop in boy scouts was right here. The kids went riding twice a week on every Wednesday and Saturday. They had the best instructors in the world at the Cavalry School, and used Cavalry School horses.[51]

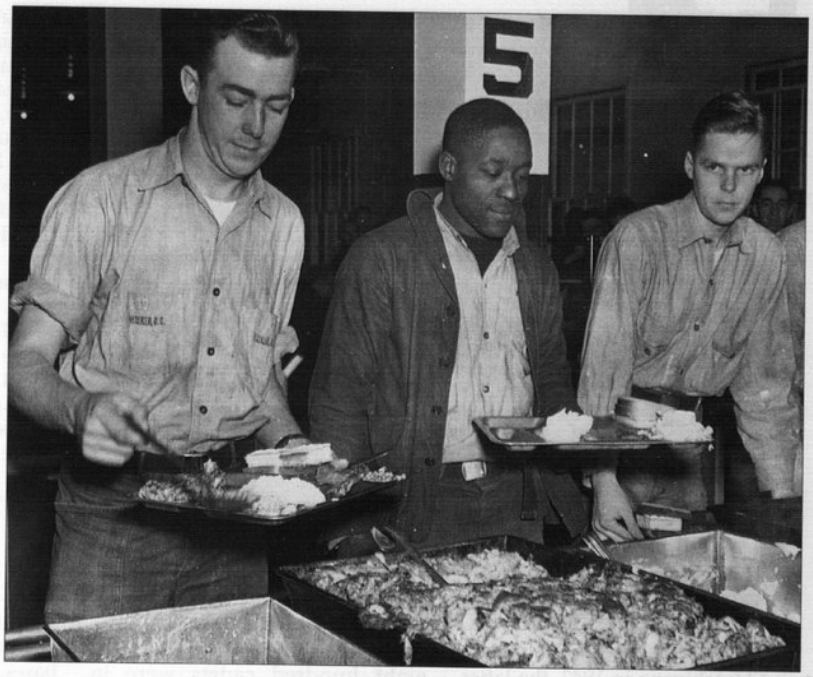
Fort Riley's horse cavalry dated back to the frontier when it was part of the onslaught against Plains Indians. By the eve of World War II, many believed that the cavalry had outlived its usefulness. With the cavalry still ingrained in military doctrine, however, army preparations for war in 1940 included expanding the cavalry by reactivating Fort Riley's Camp Funston from World War I. Construction was frenzied: "Every 45 minutes they'd have another building done. It was mass production; just throw them together; and if you dropped a nail or your hammer, don't worry about it, keep on going. They needed the buildings."[52] This base expansion was to accommodate twenty-six thousand additional troops, and nearby towns were staggered by ten thousand new civilian construction workers plus twenty-six hundred new families.

In 1940 the army reorganized the cavalry units stationed at Fort Riley into the Second Cavalry Division. It consisted of two white and two black regiments. The influx of both white and black troops into the fort presented an interesting case study in race relations both at the post and in nearby towns. Black soldiers had long been stationed at the fort, but now they arrived in large numbers. Among them was Joe Louis, world heavyweight boxing champion.

To provide recreation for the troops, black and white, USO recreation centers were set up at Fort Riley, near other Kansas military installations, and in the major cities, where they also served defense workers and student servicemen at local colleges.[53] All manner of local buildings were utilized, from municipal centers to the old Harvey House at Topeka, and most of the funds were raised by local donation. On October 1, 1941, the *Topeka Daily Capital* reported that Junction City had two temporary centers. The white USO was in the Municipal Auditorium, while a residence was "in temporary use for negro soldiers." By early 1944 forty-three USO centers in Kansas were serving 375,000 uniformed men and women each month.

One week after Pearl Harbor, Ezekial Ridley, a black teacher and principal with forty-one years' ex-

49. Hoch interview.
50. DeLong interview.
51. Terry Van Meter, interview with author, May 8, 1986.
52. Ibid. Voluminous information is available in Fort Riley clippings, 1855-1941, v. 1, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.
53. Local newspapers and clippings files in the Library and Archives Division of the Kansas State Historical Society have abundant information on civilian service organizations and recreational and social programs available to military personnel stationed in Kansas. A variety of facilities operated in the state. Victory Centers, for example, in Salina, Junction City and Topeka, which offered "moral and spiritual uplift" to men and women in the armed forces, are described in the *Topeka Daily Capital*, December 17, 1943.



Naval air stations were established at Olathe and Hutchinson in 1942. Here naval recruits line up for chow in the Olathe Naval Air Station mess hall.

perience in the Topeka public schools, organized a black USO with the support of the Topeka Citizens Committee of which he had been a member for several months. For more than a year, Ridley struggled along in a twenty-four-by-twenty-five-foot room on East Fourth Street, until he finally moved into a five thousand square foot two-story building at 112 Kansas Avenue.[54]

On November 15, 1942, the *Kansas City Star* described the social events of Fort Riley's Eighth Squadron of black troops, and the difficulties of providing them with appropriate companionship. The squadron decided to hold a dance at the fort, and "since Kansas had never had so many Negro lads in its midst, a question of finding the feminine contingent for the dance became the problem of the moment." Corp. Joe Louis had the answer: bring girls to Fort Riley from Kansas City, Topeka, Lawrence, Abilene, Junction City, and Salina. For this activity, Corporal Louis used some of his own money.

The dance was a huge success, and the girls from Salina invited the Eighth Squadron to the Booker T. Washington Center, "the hub of all Negro activities" in that city. Recruited for the occasion were "a hundred beautifully clad young women" from McPherson, Junction City, Great Bend, Abilene, Lyons, and Ellsworth—but still "the girls had to be rationed." The visit began with a parade for the entire town led by Louis carrying the American flag. A chicken dinner was provided and a dance followed. The whole affair seemed to be viewed as a commendable reflection of American democracy.[55]

It was evident by 1942 that cavalry would be unimportant in the war, and the Second Cavalry was disbanded. Most of the white personnel were transferred to the Ninth Armored Division, which was also stationed at Fort Riley. Black cavalrymen were assigned as stevedores in the African cam-

54. *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 26, December 20, 1942; *see* United Service Organization clippings, and "U.S.O. Council Meeting Minutes, Topeka, Kansas, [beginning] September 16, 1941," Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

55. *Kansas City Times*, October 1, 1941; quoted material from *Kansas City Star*, November 15, 1942; *see also* "Kansas At War: Part 3, At Ease," *Kansas History* 15 (Autumn 1992): 180, which provides information and images of other recreational activities.

paign. But even after the break-up of the Second, the Cavalry Replacement Center continued to operate for both horse and mechanized cavalry. The last horse officer candidate class graduated in 1944, although most of the later horse trainees ended up in pack mule units.

Shipping black cavalrymen to be stevedores in North Africa while white counterparts moved into tanks, and the difficulties of organizing black USOs reflected the prejudice of the day; nevertheless, the service of black soldiers in World War II was an important step toward the later civil rights movement to which Kansas would have contributed its share.

By 1943 the most important military training in Kansas was to meet the burgeoning needs of both the army air corps and the navy for flying personnel. Naval air stations were established at Olathe and Hutchinson in 1942, the latter mostly on land purchased or leased from Amish farmers.[56] Construction of the Hutchinson base was a particular trial for the little town of Yoder. D.M. Beachley's general store was unable to meet the demands of the construction workers, especially for cold soda pop: they consumed his monthly allowance in a single day. Missouri Pacific railroad agent E.J. Golden and his wife had managed the Yoder station by themselves for years; now they were supervising an army of helpers.

The base was first manned by fifteen-hundred enlistees recruited from Kansas and Missouri in ten days. As no housing was available, the men were billeted in Hutchinson at the 4-H buildings at the Kansas State Fairgrounds. Mattresses finally arrived, but only after a large shipment of pamphlets on how to play water polo. Food for the men was purchased from local merchants and cooked in borrowed pots and pans. After some rudimentary training for the recruits, the base was commissioned in an impromptu ceremony, with the twenty-seven officers in uniform and the enlisted men "in their cleanest civilian clothes."

Hutchinson had to adjust to both a new military base and the demands of a thriving local defense economy.[57] One woodcraft business, for example, became a primary subcontractor for the Wichita aircraft industry and employed a thousand persons. Besides the sailors and WAVE cadre stationed at the base, as many as eight hundred cadets were in training at one time. Generally cordial relations prevailed between the base and city, but problems were unavoidable. Friction resulted when Hutchinson laundries, unable to handle the volume of both military and civilian business, refused the navy top priority. The solution was to "Iron Your Own Shirt," a voluntary campaign that lowered demand on the laundries by elevating a mundane task to a patriotic act. In spite of early chaos, Hutchinson, which became the largest inland naval base in the nation, and Olathe produced more than eight thousand naval flying personnel by the end of the war.

But the big Kansas military story in World War II was the numerous army air bases that dotted the state at Coffeyville, Independence, Arkansas City, Winfield, Topeka, Dodge City, Herington, Great Bend, Liberal, Hays, Garden City, and Pratt where the first B-29 bound for the Pacific theater took off.[58] In size the Smoky Hill Air Force Base near Salina was the largest army installation in Kansas and was ranked as third in the nation. To speed up B-29 deployment to the Pacific, the army air corps tested the aircraft produced at the Boeing plant in Wichita and trained crews at the same time. These two tasks were Smoky Hill's great contribution to the Allied victory.

By 1944 the need for new military personnel was winding down, and all but a few of the air and land training bases began to close. Of World War II bases, today only Forts Riley and Leavenworth remain. The military installations had served the nation well in wartime; they would do the same for Kansas in peacetime. Some were converted (or reconverted) to municipal airfields; land was turned back to the Amish farmers; Walker Air Force Base between Hays and Russell became the subject of litigation as farmers demanded the opportunity to buy back their land, which had been found to contain valuable deposits of oil. Smoky Hill continued on for some years as Schilling Air Force Base, with missiles added, but eventually it closed. Today it houses the Kansas Technical Institute. Perhaps the most typically Kansas conversion of former airfields was

56. A handy summary is R. Douglas Hurt, "Naval Air Stations in Kansas During World War II," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 43 (Autumn 1977): 351-62. Both revealing and humorous on the base's early convulsions is the *Kansas City Star*, July 10, 1945.

57. The Reno County Museum has an excellent inventory of World War II materials and artifacts. Important information and viewpoints were obtained from Charles Steed, John Oswald, Mae Boggs, Lydia Streeter, and Velma Peoples, interviews with author, July 31, 1992.

58. A short description of each base is "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 25 (Summer, Autumn 1959): 129-57, 334-60.

Kansas was home to numerous military training bases. These WACS contributed to the war effort at Winfield's Strother Army Air Field.

at Pratt and Herington. Parts of the two bases, with their excellent underground drainage and eight to fourteen-inch concrete runways, were converted to cattle feed lots.

In August 1945 World War II abruptly ended with the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. Many Kansans have testified that they had no doubts then about using this terrible weapon against the enemy to save American lives, and time has not markedly altered their judgment.

Aside from the immediate and all too brief euphoria of victory, more than anything else World War II meant change to the people of Kansas. They emerged from war with a different economy, different social institutions, and at least to some extent, different ideas and attitudes. Change has always been the natural state of America, but compressing a generation of change into four short years strained the institutions and emotional elasticity of Kansans, probably even more than that of their fellow Americans. Yet Kansans met these challenges with resilience, perhaps as a consequence of the adaptability ingrained by the earlier frontier experience and the more recent trials of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl.

When the war ended in 1945, Kansans looked forward with confident optimism to the future, although the outlines of that future were still unclear. Like other Americans, Kansans knew that they had entered a new age. As one Kansas woman confided to a *Life* magazine reporter, "When I see a transport plane flying over my house and realize that it will be across the Atlantic in 14 hours more, I know the world is a lot smaller than it used to be, and that Kansas is no longer far from anywhere."[59] Still, Kansans believed strongly in the values inherited from the past; to preserve those values in a society transformed by war would be their next challenge. KH

59. "Kansas: Bill White's State is Wide-Open America," *Life* 16 (February 14, 1944): 87-95.

"The Forgotten Years" of America's Civil Rights Movement

Wartime Protests at the University of Kansas, 1939-1945

by Kristine M. McCusker

Eager to hear "The Panassie Stomp," "Basie Blues" and "Shorty George," the University of Kansas' junior prom committee managed to book one of the nation's most popular bands, the Count Basie Band, for the March 3, 1939, dance. African American students, excluded from KU dances, asked the dance committee and Chancellor Ernest H. Lindley to "be broad-minded and unbiased about the matter" and allow them to see one of their own. As a special favor, the committee and Lindley agreed to this one exception to custom. But on that special night, the black students were "crowded . . . into rooms above the main ballroom so that they might stew some more in their own humiliation," according to a student's letter to the school newspaper, the *University Daily Kansan*. "Wasn't it a most benevolent concession by the white masters," the student, Saul J. Grosberg, asked a week after the dance, "when they allowed the Negroes to listen in while one of their race was playing?"[1]

Soon after the Basie complaints in 1939, Chancellor Lindley retired after twenty years in that position. As his successor, the Kansas Board of Regents appointed Deane W. Malott. The regents hoped that Malott's business background (he was a former assistant dean of Harvard University's Business School and had worked for Dole Pineapple) would help put the university, still reeling from depression-oriented economic havoc, back on its feet. The regents also hoped his youth and

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1. *Count Basie Anthology* (Seacaucus, N.J.: Warner Brothers, 1990), 74, 38, 58; "Band Leader to Play Here Famous for Rapid Rise," *University Daily Kansan*, February 28, 1939; E. Jackson to editor, "Turn About is Fair Play," ibid., February 28, 1939; Saul J. Grosberg to editor, "Benevolent Concession," ibid., March 8, 1939.

Although the University of Kansas had been founded in 1866 as a "monument to perpetuate the memory of those martyrs of Liberty who fell" during the abolitionist battles of the Civil War, the school's white administration and students proved that racism widely existed on campus. They saw no contradiction between the school's antislavery traditions and the strict segregation of black students. During World War II students such as these on the KU campus began to recognize that while all races fought facism on the European fronts, minorities were not given full democratic citizenship at the university or across the country.

excitement at the challenge of running his alma mater would invigorate the university.[2]

However, among many students who abhorred racial segregation, Malott quickly became notorious as a "remote" "fuddy-duddy" who was "conservative" when it came to racial issues. In February 1941, for example, Malott's administration, following Lindley's paternalistic tradition, granted African American students two hundred dollars for their annual dance. Two black students, Eva Mae Brewer and Ralph J. Rodgers, wrote the *Kansan* to go "on record as not favoring [that year's] Negro Student Varsity Dance." The protesting students deemed the allocation inadequate compensation for their exclusion from other activities, namely "the right to participate in intramural athletics, the right to the use of the gymnasium and its privileges at convenient times, [and] the right to freedom of movement in the Union fountain." However, Brewer and Rodgers directly departed from Grosberg who protested black exclusion using the language of slavery, by asking not only "for what is ours by right," but also that the "shibboleths" of "democracy" be "convert[ed] into a living vital force" to end discrimination on campus.[3]

Protests by and on behalf of blacks in 1939 and 1941 were part of a long tradition at the University of Kansas. The university had been founded in 1866 as a "monument to perpetuate the memory of those martyrs of Liberty who fell" during the abolitionist battles of the Civil War. Built on top of Mount Oread in west Lawrence, the university was separate and distinct from the town and was a self-contained community unto itself.[4]

Campus protests arose in 1939 when African American students were excluded from Count Basie's concert at the University of Kansas.

In that "free state" spirit, the university accepted black Kansas students from 1870 onward, and in the 1920s it began accepting students from Jim Crow universities, such as those in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Missouri, that excluded blacks. From the first, however,

2. Clifford S. Griffin, *The University of Kansas: A History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1974), 435-57; *The Jayhawker* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1942), 203.

3. George Caldwell, 1940s ASC representative, telephone interview with author, May 17, 1992; James E. Gunn to author, May 26, 1992; Eva Mae Brewer and Ralph J. Rodgers to editor, *University Daily Kansan*, February 21, 1941.

4. Griffin, *The University of Kansas*, 21, 691.

KU's white administration and students proved that racism existed even in the abolitionist protests; they saw no contradiction between the school's antislavery traditions and the strict segregation of black students. The university excluded African American students from dormitories (they lived with black families in north and east Lawrence), many professors segregated black students relegating them to the back of their classrooms, and they were excluded from social activities and organizations—dances, band, glee club, and pep clubs.[5]

Ironically, parts of KU remained integrated during the university's early years. All students had athletic privileges such as use of the swimming pool. Sherman and Grant Harvey, the first black intercollegiate athletes at KU, played baseball in the 1880s while their younger brother Ed competed in track, baseball, and football in the 1890s. During these years too, the student restaurant was integrated and served black patrons who were excluded from white-owned Lawrence restaurants.[6]

When Chancellors Frank Strong and Ernest H. Lindley and athletic director and basketball coach Dr. Forrest C. "Phog" Allen revoked those few opportunities for blacks in the 1910s, and especially in the more racially conservative 1920s, black and white students as well as interested bystanders protested. Ed Harvey, for example, wrote Chancellor Strong in 1914 challenging the university's new unofficial policy of excluding blacks from varsity athletic teams. Students involved with the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations (YMCA and YWCA) complained to Chancellor Lindley when Phog Allen excluded black students from the university pool. Many students protested again in 1927 when Lindley segregated the student cafeteria after "black troublemakers" insisted on sitting uninvited with white students whose dominant numbers made their patronage crucial to the cafeteria's survival. Many white students abandoned the cafeteria until Lindley set aside one third of it for segregated black student seating.[7]

Objections to the establishment of these new barriers, although well meaning, were sporadic, individualistic, and formed no concentrated movement over a period of time. Chancellor Strong tersely responded to Harvey's 1914 complaint by stating that the university would do its "best to see that the athletics at the University are administered to the best interests of the University and of all concerned." Those best interests seemed to be served with the continued segregation of varsity athletics. The YMCA and YWCA secured "a number of affidavits from both Negro and white students to the effect that Negro and White students had simultaneously used the pool quite frequently" prior to the blacks' exclusion in 1924. They then criticized Lindley who "avow[ed] his support of the present athletic regime." Then in 1927, when Lindley "decided that we [cannot] support the cafeteria at the expense of the state," the YMCA and YWCA again complained, but to no avail.[8]

Outsiders also objected to KU's segregation. An article written by black KU alum Loren Miller appeared in the August 1927 issue of *The Crisis*, the influential periodical of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) edited by W. E. B. DuBois. Miller "bitterly indicted KU" administrators for the new restrictions they placed on black students. He also levied harsh criticism against black students at KU calling them "Uncle Toms" and "cowards" because they seemed willing to live within the new restrictions.[9]

Miller's article prompted an investigation of racial policies and practices at all Kansas universities by Emanuel and Marcet Haldeman-Julius, two prominent mem-

5. Larry M. Peace, *The Graduate Magazine* 7 (May 1909): 293-303; Raymond Nichols to author, October 30, 1991; E. H. Lindley to W. E. B. DuBois, December 11, 1930, Ernest H. Lindley Papers, University Archives, University of Kansas, Lawrence; Loren Miller, "The Unrest Among Negro Students," *The Crisis* 34 (August 1927): 187-88; Henry Werner, men's student advisor, to Lindley, December 3, 1930, Lindley Papers; Mary Bartram, "Our Jim Crow Laws," *The Dove* 6 (March 27, 1930): 2; "Fine Arts Faculty Denies Barring of Negroes From Participation in Campus Musical Organizations," *University Daily Kansan*, November 26, 1943.

6. Brady Prauser, "A Haircut and a History Lesson," *University Daily Kansan*, February 25, 1993; Ed Harvey to Frank Strong, January 15, 1914, Arthur L. Goudy to Strong, October 16, 1913, Lloyd E. Bailer to Strong, October 10, 1913, Frank Strong Papers, University Archives, University of Kansas; Lindley to DuBois.

7. Harvey to Strong; Miller, "The Unrest Among Negro Students," 187-88; "Negro Student Given Bad Break By Administration," *The Dove* 9 (October 24, 1934): 1; Dorothy Luxton, et al., to Lindley, May 20, 1927, Haldeman-Julius Papers, Leonard Axe Library, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kans.; Lindley to DuBois; Lindley to Mr. Herman, May 11, 1928, Lindley Papers.

8. EBS to U. G. Mitchell, October 17, 1927, Haldeman-Julius Papers; Marcet Haldeman-Julius, "What the Negro Students Endure in Kansas," *Haldeman-Julius Monthly* 7 (January 1928): 5-16, 147-59.

9. Miller, "The Unrest Among Negro Students," 187-88; Bartram, "Our Jim Crow Laws," 2; Lindley to Herman.

KU's YWCA and YMCA organizations supported equal rights for African American students. This YWCA campus group was photographed in the 1940s.

bers of Kansas' socialist community. In January 1928 they announced that the only regents campus with a more oppressive racial policy than KU was the Kansas State Teachers College at Hays which excluded African Americans altogether.[10]

Students wrote letters to the *Kansan*, but complained not about the segregation that the Haldeman-Juliuses had found. Instead, they and campus administrators like Chancellor Lindley indicted the Haldeman-Juliuses for an investigation that "did more harm than good" to the racial conditions that administrators, at least, admitted were worsening.[11]

Soon DuBois joined the chorus of protesters who scorned KU's racial policy, and in December 1930 he wrote Chancellor Lindley questioning racial restrictions on KU students. Lindley tried to assure DuBois that the "colored student was given full rights in the classroom and library," and he claimed that "in general, colored students [were] assisted just as whole-heartedly as any of the white students on our campus." At the same time, Lindley conceded that "the social conditions surrounding negro students [had] not improved, and if anything, [had] grown worse over a period of years."[12]

The weak and sporadic protests of the 1910s and 1920s proved fruitless. During most of the 1930s, students, distracted by the Great Depression, seem to have ignored problems of segregation altogether. But in 1941 Eva Mae Brewer's and Ralph Rodgers' comments reflected a change in American thought that began just before World War II—a change that emanated from the highest levels of government. To prepare Americans for the approaching world war, Franklin D. Roosevelt began creating his "arsenal of democracy" to "summon . . . the full moral strength" of the citizens of the United States. In a speech before Congress on January 6, 1941, Roosevelt introduced his "four freedoms"—freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom from want, and freedom from fear—freedoms, he suggested, the entire world should share.[13] By the time the United States entered the war, FDR had convinced many Americans that World War II was another war fought "to make the world safe for democracy."

Blacks and white liberals questioned why those four freedoms did not extend to African Americans. They recognized the classic "American dilemma" that Swed-

10. Haldeman-Julius, "What the Negro Students Endure in Kansas."

11. Lindley to Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, September 30, 1927, Haldeman-Julius Papers; J. M. B. to editor, *University Daily Kansan*, November 4, 1927, clipping in Haldeman-Julius Papers; Lindley to DuBois; James Weldon Johnson to Marcet Haldeman-Julius, October 19, 1927, Haldeman-Julius Papers; Werner to Lindley.

12. Lindley to DuBois.

13. Richard D. Heffner, *A Documentary History of the United States* (New York: New American Library, 1985), 286-97.

ish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal pointed out in 1944: the coexistence of democracy and segregation. This discrepancy was potentially harmful to the war effort because the United States' enemies could equate American racism and its tenets of white supremacy with German fascism. Reacting against this poignant irony, liberals, in historian Peter Kellogg's words, "sought to justify the integrity of America as a democratic organization" to the Allied community and to its citizens.[14]

Changing demographic patterns in the 1930s and civil unrest early in the war also directed liberals' attention to these enduring American contradictions. Black migration from the South to the North during World War I and in the 1920s created large blocs of voters in northern cities. Many of those voters deserted the Republican party during the 1930s because the New Deal, although segregated, addressed some of black America's economic problems. New Deal administrators' symbolic appointment of blacks to several administrative positions—for example, Mary McLeod Bethune's appointment as head of the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration—also encouraged blacks to vote Democratic. Race riots in Detroit and Harlem in the summer of 1943 proved politically embarrassing both at home and abroad. Clearly America's dilemma had to be resolved.[15]

African American service in World War II and employment in defense industries raised the expectations of both black veterans and civilians. Long denied the practical benefits of full citizenship and eager to build on the progressive gains of the New Deal, the African American community became more active in antisegregation protests in the early years of the war. For example, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened Roosevelt with a march on Washington unless the president issued a strong antisegregationist statement. To forestall any action that might convince the world America "did a good job of practicing what Hitler preached," Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 in June 1941. The order established the Fair Employment Practices Committee, an investigative board that researched African American complaints of discrimination in defense industries.[16]

The atmosphere was becoming conducive to civil rights protest against racial segregation both nationally and at the University of Kansas. In February 1942 Freeman W. Meyer, the son of a minister and a University of Kansas student, organized the KU branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). A Christian pacifist group, FOR's interracial committee decided complacence was not acceptable "when racial discrimination, a building stone of Fascism, is widely prevalent in our nation." An interracial group of students from FOR targeted one specific problem: segregation at the Memorial Union's restaurant. After investigating the problem, the group found that African Americans were restricted to two corner booths. Segregation at the fountain, a continuation of the policy that Chancellor Lindley implemented in 1927 for "economic purposes," offended FOR's interracial committee because it placed "dollars over democracy."[17]

FOR FREEDOM
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FOUR FREEDOMS

To Malott, who ordered the restaurant open during vacations because he knew white establishments around the campus excluded black students, the economic justification made sense. He too considered racial segregation to be paramount to the restaurant's financial success and thus dismissed FOR's concerns. He communicated those sentiments in a letter to the Kansas Board of Regents in March 1942. Describing FOR as a group of "well-meaning, but misguided, students" who were "zealous" but "ineffective in the community," Malott explained the white majority's opinion of racial segregation on campus. It was "normal," Malott wrote. Students complaining about segregation were the problem, not segregation itself.[18]

Raymond Nichols, the chancellor's executive secretary, identified Nazi propaganda, not campus segregation, as the reason for FOR's

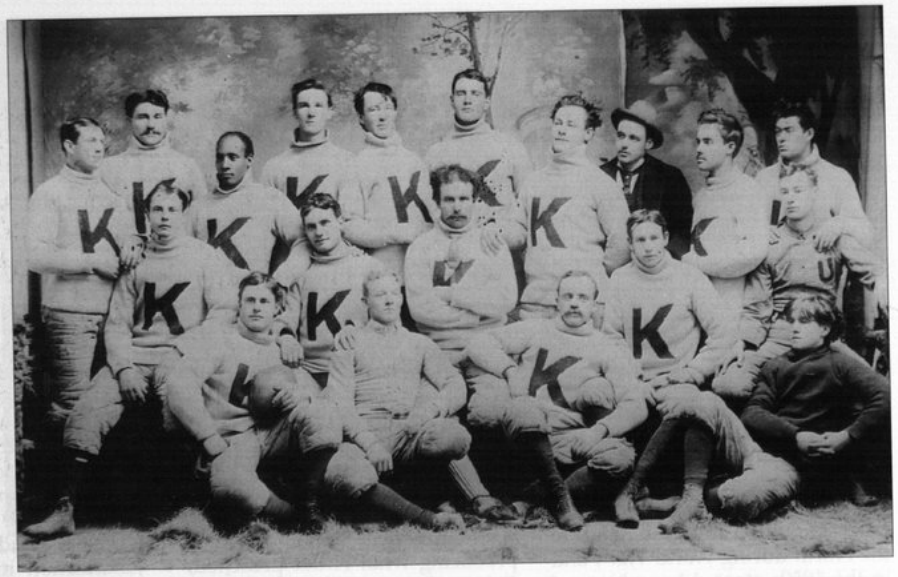
14. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944); Peter J. Kellogg, "Civil Rights Consciousness in the 1940's," *Historian* 42 (November 1972): 18-41; Richard Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the United States Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 115-23; Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War* (London: Paul Elek, 1976).

15. Kellogg, "Civil Rights Consciousness" 18-41; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the United States Armed Forces*, 115-23.

16. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War*, 2; Kellogg, "Civil Rights Consciousness," 23; Editorial, *University Daily Kansan*, March 27, 1944.

17. Freeman W. Meyer for the Inter-Racial Committee of the Fellowship of Reconciliation to Payne Ratner, February 4, 1942, Deane W. Malott Papers, University Archives, University of Kansas; Lindley to DuBois.

18. Malott to Hugo Brighton, Secretary, Board of Regents, March 2, 10, 1942, Malott Papers.



Prior to the 1910s when KU athletics became segregated, all students had equal athletic privileges. Ed Harvey, KU's first black football player, is photographed with the 1893 team.

In 1943 when the university housed navy V-12 training programs, the war became a part of daily life at KU. Increasing military presence heightened student awareness of campus segregation and called into question the university's selective brand of democracy.

daring protests. Black students accepted segregation, according to Nichols, and attacks on the "so-called 'race problem'" resembled "propaganda patterns of the Axis agencies" that "may [have] originated from Axis sources." Only Nazis, he wrote, could be so bold as to infiltrate KU and try to undermine the university's stable racial boundaries and consequently its commitment to the war effort.[19]

Although Malott and Nichols, acting on behalf of the university and its "traditions," had ignored FOR's demands, in the spring and fall of 1943 new challenges arose as the campus gained, according to the *Kansan*, a more military atmosphere. The war accelerated in 1943 and became more a part of daily life at KU. Proud of its war effort, the university housed navy V-12 training programs, and in February 1943 the army named KU as one place where its draftees would be trained. Of a total student population of 4,351 students, 1,150 men were enrolled in these programs. The war's draft also drastically changed the university's demographics as well as its social organizations. Since the war began, Chancellor Malott estimated that the university had lost 7 percent of its enrollment and therefore 7 percent of its potential income. Costs, however, remained virtually the same. The draft also affected participation in men's student organizations. The YMCA, for example, ceased to function from 1943 until the end of the war. The Big Six athletic conference "trie[d] to go ahead with football" but many of the football team's players were seventeen years old, classified as 4-F, naval trainees, or "whatnot." Basketball coach Phog Allen lost six players, two of them starters, in one army call for reserves in February 1943. One of those starters, standout Charley Black, had to get special permission from the army to play in the final championship games.[20]

The war's increasing presence and its democratic ideology motivated student groups and local organizations to adopt more liberal policies toward segregation. The *Kansan*, which lost at least two editors—news editor James Gunn and sports editor Chuck Elliott—that spring to the draft, recognized that fighting a war to make the world safe for democracy called into question the nation's and the university's selective brand of democracy. From 1943 through 1945, student journalists on the *Kansan*'s staff led the fight against segregation by educating the general student population. Segregation, they told their peers, was analogous to fascism, and KU "did a good job of practicing what Hitler preached." In an article submitted from his army post, James Gunn questioned "Who Fights for Freedom?" All races fought against fascism on European fronts, but only some of these crusaders for democracy enjoyed full democratic citizenship in America. "Speak up for the humanity of the Negro, the Mexican, the Jew, of their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," Gunn exhorted. Another cadet asked in a *Kansan* editorial, "What am I fighting for? What are you fighting for? Freedom! We fight for the freedom to live one's life as one chooses."[21]

Other *Kansan* editorialists echoed the soldiers' concern that segregation was among the gravest issues facing the United States. America needed a "new order" where "racial tolerance" was the resolve for a new year. College campuses were the places to start because "universities [had] always been centers for discussion, for liberal thinking, for leadership." In such a surrounding, the *Kansan* declared, the role of the student became critical because the student "of today will be the leader of tomorrow. He must be prepared for that responsibility, for upon him will rest the weight of the future of the world." Students must end racism on campus because, as world leaders, how could they "ever expect to get along with the other people of the world, much less guide them, while . . . [we] are so extremely intolerant of each other?"[22] This resolve encompassed the plight of Japanese Americans, who were excluded, among other things, from college

19. Nichols to author; Nichols to F.M. Harris, March 31, 1942, Malott Papers.

20. Malott to Brighton, February 2, 1943, Malott Papers; "Big Six Tries to Go Ahead with Football," *University Daily Kansan*, June 29, 1943; "Army Call Includes Six of KU Cagers," ibid., February 23, 1943; "Malott Announces 4351 Students Are Enrolled," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, February 2, 1943; "KU is Named as Army College," ibid., February 6, 1943; "Hill Column," ibid., February 13, 1943; "Student Soldiers Drop Out of Athletics," ibid.

21. Gunn to author; "*Kansan* Sports Editor, Chuck Elliott Receives Orders to Report," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, February 11, 1943; "Hill Column," ibid.; "Racial Tolerance is Resolve for 1944," *University Daily Kansan*, January 5, 1944; "Who Fights for Freedom?" ibid., December 14, 1943; "Cadet Says Soldiers Fight for Purpose," ibid., November 9, 1943.

22. Editorial, *University Daily Kansan*, March 27, 1944; "Today's Students Must Strive for International Viewpoint," ibid., February 4, 1943; "Racial Tolerance is Resolve for 1944," ibid., January 5, 1944. A search in the February and March 1943 issues of the *Lawrence Daily Journal-World* revealed no editorials or letters to the editor similar to those in the *University Daily Kansan*.

June Mack (top left), a member of Delta Sigma Theta, one of KU's black sororities, ran with the PWCL in 1943 and won a seat in the student senate.

campuses in Kansas and many other states.[23]

Recognizing different ways to challenge white racism, some African American students joined national civil rights organizations. One of those organizations, the NAACP, experienced a large membership increase: nationally it had 50,556 members in 1940; by 1946 that number had grown to 450,000. At the same time, the number of branch organizations jumped from 355 to 1,073. One of these new branches, the Lawrence NAACP, was organized in December 1942 by Rosa Sims and her husband, Rev. W. S. Sims. Their son Paul, a KU student, organized his fellow African American students into a NAACP's Youth Council, which led NAACP protests against segregation at the University of Kansas in March 1943. Petitioning Kansas Gov. Andrew Schoeppel, the Simses expressed their concern that "democracy and equality" were mere words when applied to KU's black students. Their complaints were specific:

1. That Negro Students are restricted to designated booths in the rear of the Memorial Union.
2. That Negro girls are prohibited from living in the Home Economic[s] Practice House.
3. That qualified Negro girls and boys are not allowed to live in the University residence halls.
4. That Negroes are not allowed to compete in either Varsity or Intramural athletics.
5. That Negro Students are not allowed to do the required teaching at the Oread High School.
6. That other discriminatory and segregational practices are endorsed and maintained by the administration of the University against Negro students.

The Simses demanded that the governor and the legislature "initiate an investigation of the entire system of Jim Crow and discriminatory practices against Negro students." If neither corrected the situation, the Simses would use legal action to eliminate "these unfair and un-American practices at the states leading education institution."[24]

Malott addressed the NAACP's concerns in a private letter to Governor Schoeppel. He explained that segregation in the union, "a custom . . . of many years' standing," had made possible "the two races living side by side without undue hardship." Responding to the NAACP's second complaint, Malott stated that white women lived in the Home Economics Practice House for several weeks at a time, practicing their homemaking skills. From the chancellor's perspective it was obvious that black women could not live in the house too; white women "live in close quarters, share two bedrooms and one bathroom together, and it is impossible to inject a negro into that situ-

23. Since issues of loyalty and patriotism as well as racial prejudice permeated the various state and national policies directed against Japanese Americans, their wartime experiences relative to Kansas colleges and universities fall outside the scope of this study. For examples of student protests, *see* "Not All American Citizens Are Free to Enter State Schools of KS.," *University Daily Kansan*, January 3, 1943; "Racial Discrimination is Unjust to Large Numbers of Nisei," *University Daily Kansan*, September 27, 1944.

24. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the United States Armed Forces*, 123; Petition to William Towers, House of Representatives, March 1, 1943, Malott Papers.

ation." Similarly, black students could not live in the residence halls because the "parents and students of Kansas are not ready to live in intimate contact with the Negro." For the same reasons, African Americans were excluded from participating in intramurals and teaching at the university high school. In addition, Big Six regulations required that varsity teams be segregated. Malott told Schoeppel he feared that "we are in for considerable trouble because they [black students] have become more aggressive of late." Not wanting to "rile the waters," he acquiesced to his perception of the white majority's prejudices.[25]

While the NAACP protested black segregation in all facets of campus life, some varsity track athletes specifically targeted segregated intramural and varsity track teams. In March 1943 Frank Stannard, a champion hurdler on the varsity track team who had won all-Kansas high school honors at Lawrence High School, and members of the intramural team "The Blanks" circulated petitions to allow Roger Whitworth, a black runner, to participate in the intramural track and field championship. Public protests, including the petitions and editorials in the *Kansan*, forced intramural officials to relent, and Whitworth not only participated but helped his team win the championship by nearly forty points.[26]

Stannard and several of his varsity teammates wanted Whitworth to run against other teams at the 1943 Big Six Indoor Track and Field meet in Kansas City, a move endorsed by the track coach. A "gentlemen's" agreement, however, among conference universities precluded Whitworth's participation. When the conference formed in 1927 and 1928, all members agreed to exclude blacks from varsity teams out of respect for Missouri and Oklahoma.[27] Racial intolerance and "separate but equal" doctrines kept these Jim Crow institutions 100 percent white. Athletic department heads at KU never questioned the policy. Phog Allen, basketball coach and athletic director when KU entered the Big Six, and current director E. C. Quigley were both against integration of KU's athletic teams because of their personal prejudices and for practical reasons. Varsity sports teams would have to work out two playing combinations, one for schools that accepted black athletes and one for those that did not. Neither were Allen nor Quigley liberal in their racial views, and neither was willing to allow blacks on their teams.[28]

In February 1943 student athletes protested that Whitworth, an American citizen soon to be fighting for his country, should be able to compete in the Kansas City meet. Other liberal students, "favor[ing] negro participation in the Big Six," petitioned W. W. Davis, KU history professor and Big Six representative. Since "Negro men are good enough to pay taxes and to serve in our armed forces," the petition stated "it [was] only fair, therefore, that they should be allowed to compete in intercollegiate sports." Davis met with other Big Six representatives and made a motion "against barring colored athletes from conference sports," according to *Kansan* editors, "but no one seconded the motion and it was shelved."[29]

The war's dramatic presence on campus also prompted some students to protest the Red Cross segregation of donated blood. Complaints began in April 1943 when two students protested in an angry letter to the *Kansan* editor: "this policy of the Red Cross . . . defeats its purpose of obtaining the greatest possible amount of blood donations . . . [and] contributes to racial discrimination by imitating the Nazi theory of the Aryan superman." A few others simply refused to donate blood to what they considered a racist process and organization. In response the *Kansan* wired the Red

25. Rachel VanderWerf, telephone interview with author, May 13, 1992. VanderWerf, wife of former KU chemistry professor Calvin VanderWerf and secretary of the YMCA in 1945, mentioned Malott's need to maintain a certain public stance in order not to anger either important alumni or the legislature. This stance included a publicly conservative position on racial issues. It should also be noted that the Lawrence NAACP papers mention nothing further concerning the complaints to Schoeppel and Malott; the petition itself did not appear in their papers but was found in Malott's papers. Microfilm copies of the Lawrence NAACP records from the Library of Congress are available in the Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

26. Glenn Kappelman to author, March 17, 1992; Frank Stannard to William M. Tuttle, Jr., telephone interview, October 1990; "Three Men Produce Margin of Victory," *University Daily Kansan*, April 11, 1943. In its "Hill Column," the *Lawrence Daily Journal-World* commented on the intramural results and the Big Six track meet but made no mention of the Whitworth controversy.

27. The universities in the Big Six were the University of Kansas, Kansas State University, University of Nebraska, Iowa State University, University of Missouri, and University of Oklahoma.

28. "Resolution Necessary for Repeal of Reactionary Ruling Never Passed," *University Daily Kansan*, February 26, 1943; Griffin, *The University of Kansas*, 661.

29. "Resolution Necessary for Repeal of Reactionary Ruling Never Passed"; "Whitworth May Be Entered in Meet," *University Daily Kansan*, February 23, 1943; Don Keown, "Jayhawk Jabberwock," ibid., March 11, 1943; "Students Favor Negro Participation in Big Six," ibid., March 12, 1943.

Cross national headquarters questioning its collection procedures. The Red Cross replied that, according to policy set by the military, it was deemed inadvisable to mix Caucasian and Negro blood indiscriminately and therefore "blood from Negro donors" was "so designated." The secretaries of war and navy said they enforced this policy because "whitemen in the army and navy prefer white blood." Sometime later, one incredulous writer wondered if a seriously wounded soldier "would waste his few conscious moments in demanding the case history of the blood about to be transfused in his veins to save his life."[30]

While students critically assessed Red Cross policies, other white student groups questioned the validity of segregation everywhere on campus. Women's political organizations led the charge—in word if not always in deed. The limited number of men on campus forced the creation of a new government: in April 1943 the Men's Student Council (MSC) and the Women's Student Government Association (WSGA) combined to form the All-Student Council (ASC). The ASC's new constitution contained a critical clause that stated "no regularly enrolled student shall in a discriminatory manner be denied the privileges of membership."[31]

30. Private LK to editor, ibid., January 27, 1944; Alex Roth and Colleen Poorman to editor, ibid., April 8, 1943; "Negro Blood Designated—Red Cross," ibid., April 15, 1943; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the United States Armed Forces*, 107. No archival materials on the Red Cross blood drives or on the controversy surrounding the segregation of blood are found in the University Archives, University of Kansas.

31. "Students Support New Constitution," *University Daily Kansan*, April 2, 1943; All-Student Council Constitution, Article III, Membership, *Rules Governing Student Life*, 1945, All-Student Council Papers, University Archives, University of Kansas.

Although Etta Moten, a 1931 graduate of the University of Kansas, never sang with the university's glee club, her outstanding talent earned her a starring role and great acclaim in the Broadway musical Porgy and Bess.

The ASC and both student political parties realized that African American integration was not only humane and democratic but a potent political tool as well. Campaign platform planks for the Women's Independent Greek Society (WIGS) and the Progressive Women's Cooperative League (PWCL), issued just after the ASC's creation, pledged both parties to "work for equality." These parties believed that not only should the new student council "represent and include every student interest group" and "work for the inclusion of colored students in all campus activities," but they insisted that "Negro students as members of the SGA (Student Government Association) and the Memorial Union should have equal rights and privileges in all campus activities and organizations." But while their objectives were good, their focus was narrow: neither coalition, for example, included any of KU's three black sororities. However, an African American woman, June

Mack, ran with the PWCL and won a seat in the student senate.[32]

In a letter to the *Kansan*, chemistry student Paul W. Gilles challenged the ASC and the women's political parties to desegregate all campus activities using the new nondiscriminatory clause. Gilles suggested that "the obvious place to start is at the Junior Prom." He added that "additional action on the other problems," namely the Home Economics Practice House and intramural sports must follow. His comments to the *Kansan* and petitions, probably started by concerned KU students resolving that "all students, regardless of race, color, or creed, [must] be included in all university activities, and that this policy [must] take effect immediately in connection with the Junior Prom," prompted the ASC to desegregate school dances in time for the April 12, 1943, junior prom.[33]

The ASC rechanneled its energies into new challenges after the desegregation of the dance. Peggy Davis, PWCL member and ASC president, appointed a committee in November 1943 to investigate allegations that the university's band and glee club omitted black students. The fine arts faculty vehemently denied that they refused African American participation in the department, pointing to the presence of a black violinist in the orchestra. However, when asked why no black students currently were in the band, the harried director replied that "none were good enough to make it." He admitted that the band had been segregated in the past because of white fears of "close body contact" between the races. He held up as proof against segregation policies, however, the previous year's two black members.[34]

Glee club director Irene Peabody, who also replied to the charges, claimed that "their [black students'] voices weren't good enough to make it and didn't fit in." No one thought to ask why Etta Moten, a 1931 African American KU graduate and star of the Broadway play *Porgy and Bess*, never sang with the club. Ironically, the fine arts department, eager to prove its open atmosphere and probably to forestall any more protests against black student exclusion, feted Miss Moten with a reception in her honor exactly one year later.[35]

Students at Kansas University in the 1940s combined the school's tradition of protest with World War II's rhetoric to challenge segregation on campus. In comparison with many other universities nationwide that segregated black students more severely or excluded them altogether, the University of Kansas' racial barriers were mild. However, the war challenged and changed many attitudes, and *University Daily Kansan* journalists led the charge against many forms of segregation. As they watched their friends leave campus to fight another war for democracy, these student journalists wrote polemical editorials to educate their peers that segregation was, for good Americans interested in democracy, akin to fascism. They published letters that attacked racial barriers on campus and in some cases started the challenges themselves. Black students, athletes, and campus politicians followed with protests of their own. Although it is difficult to assess how many students in the general population were actually involved in or at least sympathetic to these protests, students read the *Kansan* and elected ASC representatives who advocated an end to segregation on campus. Clearly, for many University of Kansas students, World War II was the catalyst to attack KU's version of the American dilemma. KH

32. "Women Political Parties Announce Platforms," *University Daily Kansan*, April 8, 1943; photo and caption, ibid., April 23, 1943. No archival materials on the PWCL or WIGS are found in the University Archives, University of Kansas.

33. Paul W. Gilles to editor, *University Daily Kansan*, April 8, 1943; "Councils Back Negro Rights to go to Prom," ibid., April 9, 1943.

34. "ASC Investigates Negro Omission from KU Musical Organizations," ibid., November 24, 1943; "Fine Arts Faculty Denies Barring of Negroes From Participation in Campus Musical Organizations," ibid., November 26, 1943; VanderWerf interview.

35. "Etta Moten to Be Guest of Honor at Reception," *University Daily Kansan*, November 20, 1944; *The Jayhawker* (1931), 186.

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UNCLE SAM WANTED THEM TOO!

Women Aircraft Workers in Wichita During World War II

by Judith R. Johnson

World War II created unique employment opportunities for women. The demands of the war required vast numbers of skilled workers in defense industries. As in other areas of the country, women in Wichita, Kansas, entered the work force in greater numbers than ever before. This article explores the types of jobs that women in Wichita held, the challenges they faced, and the impact that experience had on their lives. While this account is specific to a given place, patterns emerge in these women's stories that correspond to the accomplishments and expectations of women across the United States during the war.

On Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, Wichita residents opened the pages of their local newspaper to find an article portraying their hometown as a "twenty-four hour city." The story described how the three major aircraft manufacturers in Wichita had recently added a third shift of workers. In response, grocery stores, bowling alleys, and restaurants had extended their normal hours to accommodate the unusual situation. As Wichita geared up and worked round-the-clock on defense orders, it was not uncommon for a worker to eat dinner at 8:00 A.M., or for others to compete in interfactory and city bowling league matches at 5:00 A.M. Some workers reported at midnight to one of the six schools that the aircraft factories or national government operated. At that time, more than fourteen thousand people, mostly men, worked in the aircraft industry.[1] The lightheartedness of the newspaper article, sprinkled with boosterism for the city of Wichita, contrasted sharply with the readers' moods later that day as they heard

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1. *Wichita Eagle*, December 7, 1941. The three aircraft companies are Boeing, Beech, and Cessna.

The demands of World War II required vast numbers of skilled workers in defense industries and thus created unique employment opportunities for women. As men entered the military, the nation faced a shortage of workers. Women quickly were recognized as an untapped potential work force. Responding to the nation's call, many women left their homes, schools, and offices to become riveters, welders, or workers in skilled jobs that previously had been denied them. In this 1944 photograph, Helen Volmer (right), who was interviewed for this article, works as a turret lathe operator at Beech Aircraft Corporation.

the first reports of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Whereas the emphasis of production in the aircraft plants previously had centered on supplies for the Allies, the focus now shifted to national defense as the United States joined the war against the Axis.

Government officials began a major effort to increase war production. For Wichita that meant a huge jump in aircraft construction, which required a large and skilled work force. At the same time, the nation faced a shortage of workers as more men entered the military. Almost at once, the government recognized and turned to the nation's women as an untapped potential work force. In responding to that call, many women left their homes, schools, and offices to become riveters, welders, or workers in skilled jobs that previously had been denied them.

Recent investigations demonstrate that the experience had a profound impact on women then and later in their lives. Until the 1970s historians tended to ignore this topic. Since then studies have explored the participation of women in the war effort, particularly women in California, Oregon, and Michigan. Few studies, however, have focused on Wichita, Kansas. As more local studies appear, a clearer picture of the total effort yields a greater understanding of the wartime era. Similar to the experiences of women in other areas of the country, women in Wichita momentarily escaped traditional, gender-based employment as they surmounted barriers to their entry into skilled trades.[2]

The end of the war in 1945 brought a halt to these changes as women were forced to return to jobs as secretaries or clerks with reduced incomes and in many cases less challenge. Those women, however, who had worked in defense industries retained a sense of pride and an awareness that the experience had broadened their worlds and had enhanced their confidence.[3] The stories of female workers in Wichita confirm that conclusion.

Interviewed fifty years after the fact, these women vividly recalled the tension and excitement of the era. Still living in the Wichita area, many women quickly responded to a notice in the *Wichita Eagle* to participate in a study that explored their experiences. During the spring and summer of 1992, more than twenty-five women agreed to discuss their wartime work. They welcomed the opportunity to tell their stories, cooperated fully, and provided greater insights to the overall wartime effort on a personal and local level. These interviews usually lasted more than two hours, and from them some common themes surfaced. One was the women's surprise at the interest in their stories, coupled with a bemused curiosity as to why it had taken historians so long to investigate or study their experiences. Another theme reiterated by these women was the financial independence they gained. Overall, the tone of the interviews reflected a sense of accomplishment, pride, and patriotism in their contributions to the war effort. Several brought mementos of the war years to the scheduled interviews; especially helpful were their paycheck stubs, copies of newspaper articles, and photographs.

The entry of those women into the wartime work force was stimulated by the efforts of the War Manpower Commission. In early 1942 the federal government announced plans to offer mass training programs in Wichita to prepare workers for building airplanes. The commission specified that women who applied had to be high school graduates between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five. Single women with dependents, or married women with their husbands in the service could sign up for the program. Although the reasoning was unclear, the requirements also stated that the female applicant had to be under five foot two inches in height and weigh no more than 135 pounds.[4] In newspapers and on radio, the call went out for women to sign up for war work. By the first week of February 1942, more than seven hundred women had placed their names on a waiting list to attend the National Defense Training School. The school occupied a

2. Sherna Berger Gluck, "Interlude or Change: Women and the World War II Work Experience: A Feminist Oral History," *International Journal of Oral History* 3 (June 1983): 93; Ruth Milkman, "Redefining Women's Work: The Sexual Division of Labor in the Auto Industry during World War II," *Feminist Studies* 8 (Summer 1982): 341; Amy Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities: Women Shipyard Workers in Portland and Vancouver During World War II and Reconversion* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 106; Jane Rhodes, "Women in the Aircraft Industry During World War II," *The Territorial* 10 (May/June 1990): 28; Sheila Tobias and Lisa Anderson, "What Really Happened to Rosie the Riveter? Demobilization and the Female Labor Force 1944-47," MSS Modular Publications, Module 9 (New York: 1974), 4.

3. D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 150-61; Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, The War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 16-17; Chester W. Gregory, *Women in Defense Work During World War II* (New York: Exposition Press, 1974), 193.

4. *Wichita Eagle*, January 7, 9, 1942.

With the United States' entrance into World War II, Wichita experienced a huge jump in aircraft construction. Thousands were employed in the city's defense industries. This scene at Beech is representative of the boom in mass production also experienced by Boeing and Cessna.

building, owned by the local board of education, on North Waco Avenue in downtown Wichita. Established in late 1941, it offered courses in sheet metal work, blueprint reading, and woodwork.[5] At first, mostly men from Wichita and the surrounding area attended the school, but once the United States entered the war, an increasing number of the students were women.

Among those who signed up after the attack on Pearl Harbor was Virginia Cole Hagg. She had worked as a traveling saleswoman for the Palmolive Company after graduating from high school, but she quit when she heard of the Japanese attack. Motivated by a sense of patriotism and a desire "to do her part," Ginny applied for admittance to the training school after reading about it in the newspaper. Once accepted, she attended classes eight hours a day and learned how to drill and rivet bolts on airplane wings.[6]

Another who signed up was Roseva Babcock Lawrence, who came to Wichita with her father from Hutchinson soon after the country entered the war. While he was immediately admitted to the school, Roseva's name was placed on a waiting list. Financial necessity required that she work; the only employment she could find, however, was as a cleaning girl in private homes. In the evening she studied with her father, and in doing so, Roseva learned the size of rivets, the drill bits, and other aspects of sheet metal work before she enrolled in the school. When her father got a job at Beech Aircraft Corporation after graduation, Roseva started at the school, which at that time had two shifts. Because she had studied with her father, Roseva was able to complete the course in about four weeks rather than the usual six. She remembered that as a final project, all students had to cut out a five-point star. Since she had already figured the calculations with her father, she finished the task well ahead of the others. When she graduated from the school in April 1942, Roseva was the 10,001 student to complete the training successfully. But she was only twenty years old, and single women at that time had to be twenty-one to work in the plants. While she waited, she needed a

5. Ibid., February 5, 1942; "Proceedings of the Wichita Board of Education," Journal I, October 6, 1941.

6. Virginia Cole Hagg, interview with author, March 19, 1992.

job. Within a month Roseva was hired at Beech as an X-ray technician.[7]

Although they did not know one another, Roseva and Aletha Jeffries Johns started training at about the same time. Aletha was in a class with both men and women, but she never finished because Beech called her to work. There she ran a large, stationary riveting machine that she operated with a foot pedal. A young man about to be drafted trained her for the job.[8]

By January 1943 the War Manpower Commission reported an acute labor shortage in Wichita. The local Office of Civilian Defense organized an appeal to persuade unemployed women to join the war industries or to take jobs in order to release other workers for the military. At the same time, the state labor department in Topeka announced that women and minors could work up to fifty-four hours a week when needed. By this time the height and weight requirements for women had been dropped as unrealistic and unnecessary. Despite the elimination of the restricted hours, traditional business practices and societal attitudes about women in the workplace remained constant throughout the war. Nevertheless, the government and industry continued the call for more workers.[9]

Boeing Aircraft was one of the manufacturers directly affected by labor shortage. Consequently the company advertised on radio and in newspapers for more women to help in the war effort. Boeing suggested, however, that not just any woman or man would do. Rather the worker had to be able-bodied, hard-working, cooperative, and able to stand the stress of high-speed aircraft production.[10]

Boeing officials still were not completely sold on the idea that women could effectively and competently perform jobs that men usually held. Even though a government report revealed that out of nineteen hundred war occupations, only fifty-six were unsuitable for women, Boeing seemed hesitant to embrace changes that the national emergency created.[11] For example, Boeing claimed that many women could not withstand the rigors of a full day in the shops, and officials complained that safety practices were new to many female employees. Company spokesmen remarked that it was hard to convince a woman that she should cover her carefully-coiffed head or remove her wedding band, and should wear slacks or industrial uniforms even if they were distasteful to her.[12] Ramona Schlater Snyder, however, later recalled that when she went to work at Boeing in 1942, she wore slacks because her lead man and crew chief did not want women in skirts or dresses that would distract male workers. At first uneasy with her new attire, Ramona quickly adapted to slacks because they were more comfortable and allowed greater protection and mobility on the job.[13]

Still concerned about women's stamina, Boeing initiated a physical fitness program for its female workers in early 1943. Believing that most of the new workers were former housewives unaccustomed to the strenuous work in factories, Boeing officials envisioned the program as a way to prevent fatigue that was sure to arise during the long days. This program was short-lived; the women regarded it as unnecessary because they performed adequately on the job, and the program placed more demands on their time.[14]

Nevertheless, women throughout the United States were absent from their jobs more often than were men, not because they lacked stamina, but because of all the other chores they performed as working mothers and wives. The daily responsibilities of running a home and managing a family took its toll as women had to find time for marketing, cooking, and general housework after their long shifts at the plants.[15]

Katherine Abraham, married and the mother of four children, went to work at Boeing in January 1943. Forty years old at the time, she was no stranger to work outside her home. She started on the third shift, but when the company went to two extended shifts, she began work at 5:00 P.M. and sometimes did not get off until 5:00 A.M. Her husband and oldest daughter who both worked the earlier shift took care of the younger children, but Katherine always prepared dinner for the family before she left for work. While she remembered she was tired throughout the war, she did not have to face the problem of child care that others did.[16]

7. Roseva Babcock Lawrence, interview with author, June 1, 1992.
8. Aletha Jeffries Johns, interview with author, June 17, 1992.
9. *Wichita Eagle*, January 10, 1943; George Trombold, Boeing Aircraft Company, interview with author, July 24, 1992; Jack Evans, interview with author, June 17, 1992.
10. *Wichita Eagle*, January 10, 1943.
11. Ibid., February 27, 1943.
12. Ibid., January 10, 1943.
13. Ramona Schlater Snyder, interview with author, March 19, 1992.
14. *Wichita Eagle*, January 11, 1943.
15. Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, 132-33.
16. Katherine Abraham, interview with author, March 4, 1992.

Roxie Olmstead became part of the women's work force when she took a job at Beech in 1944. She is pictured here with her husband, Dick, a few days after their wedding, May 2, 1944, in Wichita.

Wichita elementary school principals were among the first to call attention to the need for child-care facilities in the city. By May 1943 the federal government operated four day-care centers near the large housing projects constructed close to the aircraft plants. An earlier survey conducted by the family security committee of the community welfare council reported that one mother out of seven with children in intermediate and high schools was employed.[17] Leona Morgan, a press brake operator at Boeing, maintained a home for her two daughters, helped in her mother's home, and car-pooled sixty-eight miles a day to her job. After work she canned most of her own food and took care of more than a hundred chickens.[18]

17. *Wichita Eagle*, March 27, 28, May 9, 1943.
18. Ibid., September 12, 1943.

In the spring and summer of 1943, the call for more workers continued. City officials shortened workers' training time when they initiated a sheet metal class for girls enrolled at East High School. When these young women graduated in May, they could immediately begin work in the aircraft plants. The state officials' main concern, however, was a shortage of agricultural workers. An appeal to teachers to help with the harvest failed because many had taken jobs in aircraft plants. During that summer the problem became so acute that Beech, Boeing, and Cessna released 186 women and 832 men to sign up to work in the fields.[19]

Although none of the women interviewed worked in agriculture during the war, they all agreed that it was a citizen's patriotic duty to work. The message they heard over and over was to do their part for the war effort. All the women firmly believed that their jobs in the plants helped win the war. Many had husbands, brothers, or friends in the military; defense work such as building an airplane, or working in an office, was definitely one way to bring the soldiers and sailors home sooner.

Purchasing war bonds offered another means of contributing to the national effort. Every aircraft company had a program to allow automatic deductions from paychecks to buy bonds. Edith Mae Malcolm, a sheet metal worker at Boeing, bought two one-hundred-dollar bonds every month "to help her sons come home from the war."[20] Beth Wyrill Jantz had $18.25 deducted from each paycheck, while Vada Park earned recognition as a champion bond

19. Ibid., April 11, May 29, July 11, 1943.
20. *Wichita Eagle*, September 21, 1943.

buyer by purchasing three hundred dollars above her usual contribution.[21]

Not all women employed in national defense worked in aircraft plants. Some took jobs in the traditional clerical area. For example, Roxie Frans Olmstead graduated from high school in 1942, at the age of sixteen, and wanted to work. Since she had taken a commercial course in school and was too young for the factory, she found a clerical job in downtown Wichita. In the fall of 1944 she went to Beech, mainly because the pay was much better. By that time she was married and her husband was in the navy. As part of her job, she went to different sections of the plant to collect rejection slips. This activity took her to many areas of Beech twice a day, and her co-workers frequently gave her nickels for the candy machines along her route. Since sugar was rationed during the war, sweet snacks were in short supply. Sometimes, Roxie recalled, she was lucky enough to reach the machines just after the vendor had filled them. Needless to say, this made Roxie a very popular employee.[22]

In her office, Roxie primarily worked with women, although all the supervisors were males. That never created a problem, she said, except for one of the younger men's annoying habit of eavesdropping on the women's conversations. Whenever he approached, Roxie and her friends spoke in what she called "Alfalfa talk" in which they added the letters "il" to the first letter of a word and placed an "f" in front of the second letter. The young man never quite figured out what they were doing. Whether or not their game stemmed from resentment or boredom remains questionable; Roxie admitted only that it gave her and the other female workers some amusement at the time.

Of all the women employed in the aircraft industry during the war, few served in administrative positions. Fifty years after the experience, the women recalled a clear yet subtle gender-bias in the plants. In most cases the crew chiefs and lead men were older and experienced males, beyond the draft age. No one thought much about it because, as Helen Olmstead said, that was the way things were then. At Boeing, Doris Massey Buchner's experience challenged the prevailing attitude. While in high school before the war, Doris petitioned the principal of her school for permission to enroll in the male-dominated drafting and woodworking classes. When she went to Boeing for a job in June 1942, they placed her in an assembly section where her drafting skills were immediately put to use. In an office on the second-floor balcony overlooking the huge plant, Doris was one of two women. The other workers were men who, Doris claimed, did not know what to do with her, so they tended to ignore her. Eventually Doris was promoted to inspector for the wing tips and tunnels of the B-29s. She remembered the other woman, also an inspector, asked Doris to wear her hair on top of her head to give the appearance of greater height. An inspector represented power and authority, and being a woman, Doris needed to project a forceful image. Although she appreciated the increased salary of an inspector, Doris knew that a woman's position of power was temporary because of the war; when the conflict was over, men would resume control.[23]

Racial discrimination also prevailed. Few black men or women worked in the shops, except as janitors. "What a prejudiced bunch of people society was in those days," Helen Olmstead reflected.[24] One black woman who worked as a riveter was Julia Scott Nelson. Born and raised in rural Oklahoma, Julia learned of job opportunities in Wichita in 1943. After her arrival in the city, she immediately began training at the defense school on Waco Avenue. Upon graduation, she joined her sister who already had a job at Boeing. Although she recalled that some tension existed between her and a young white woman, Julia retained her natural dignity and met the opposition with intelligence and poise. By the end of her first summer on the job, the two women had developed a compatible and comfortable relationship.[25]

Meeting women from other areas of Kansas and the nation was a common experience during the war. It was the first time she became aware of regional differences, reported Donnalea Keown Haynes. While employed at Beech she met and worked with many women who had come to Wichita because of available jobs. She noticed different habits and customs,

21. Beth Wyrill Jantz, interview with author, June 12, 1992; Vada Park, interview with author, June 8, 1992.

22. Roxie Frans Olmstead, interview with author, March 16, 1992.

23. Helen Olmstead, interview with author, July 23, 1992; Doris Massey Buchner, interview with author, June 18, 1992.

24. Helen Olmstead interview; Karen Tucker Anderson, "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II," *Journal of American History* 69 (June 1982): 84.

25. Julia Scott Nelson, interview with author, August 28, 1992.

Twin sisters Vada Park (left) and Vera Sims, defense workers at Beech, were residents of Planeview, a housing project that developed during the war to accommodate Wichita's enormous work force.

but emphasized that they were not offensive, just unfamiliar to her.[26] During breaks in the workday and at the end of a shift, many women socialized together. For those who worked the night shift, getting together for a meal at a local restaurant offered relaxation after work. Each aircraft company had an extensive recreational program for its workers. Activities included baseball, basketball and softball teams, parties sponsored by different sections, and holiday dances. Many of the women joined the USO after undergoing a screening process to verify their integrity, wholesomeness, and character. Others went on dates to the Blue Moon, a popular nightclub, to dance. Some even continued their friendships after the war was over.[27]

The war's conclusion in August 1945 brought an abrupt end to the jobs women held. In one month Boeing laid off fifteen thousand workers, many of them women.[28] The sudden unemployment, however, came as no surprise; government and industry emphasized from the beginning that women were hired "for the duration." No one anticipated an easy transitional period or that women would readily accept a return to traditional jobs. As early as January 1943, the *Wichita Eagle* ran a cartoon entitled "Somebody else let a Genie out of a bottle once too." The cartoon depicted a woman going to work with her "own man-sized pay envelope" in her overalls' pocket. A man in the background, standing in the doorway wearing an apron and holding a broom, said, "But remember, you gotta come right back as soon as the war is over!" Her reply was, "Oh Yeah?"[29] As if to reinforce that idea, in June 1943 Gov. Andrew Schoeppel of Kansas suggested that because of all the newcomers in the work force, a drastic change in the social order was a definite possibility. At the same time, the American Legion Auxiliary challenged the idea of women employed in industry and declared that women with children belonged at home and had no business in the workplace.[30]

In August of that same year, Arthur Brown, a nationally-celebrated illustrator, claimed that after the war women would blossom as more feminine than ever. Brown suggested that it was natural for women to want jewelry, clothes, and pretty things for the home. Yet he cautioned that their wartime

26. Donnalea Keown Haynes, interview with author, June 15, 1992.
27. *Plane Talk*, Wichita, February 6, 20, 1943; Jantz interview; Snyder interview.
28. *Wichita Eagle*, August 19, 1945; Trombold interview.
29. *Wichita Eagle*, January 24, 1943.
30. Ibid., June 15, 1943.

experiences probably had given women a new self-confidence and independent strength that had been unrecognized before they entered the factories.[31]

A survey by the Wichita Chamber of Commerce in the spring of 1944 confirmed Brown's expectations. From the pool of skilled and semiskilled male and female workers, 91 percent planned to stay on the job for the duration and 17 percent planned to leave Wichita after the war. Of the women surveyed, 35 percent desired to become housewives, 6 percent preferred sales work, and 2 percent considered teaching as an option when the war was over. But a full 26 percent wanted to continue in factory or shop work.[32]

In 1945 the *Wichita Eagle* editorialized that employed women's attitudes would be a factor in the readjustment of labor in peacetime. After recognizing women's contributions, the writer noted that it was presumed they would be anxious to return to their homes at the first opportunity. He also said that the idea they might object to quitting had apparently occurred to no one. Surveys in several other industrial areas of the country had disclosed that a great majority of women intended to stay on their jobs rather than return to their kitchens. Yet returning veterans also were entitled to jobs. A situation might emerge where men would be receiving the government dole while women held down the jobs men wanted. Even so, the writer claimed, the simple argument that a woman's place was in the home and that she should be willing to return to her babies and her dishes failed to resolve the issue. If a woman insisted on working for wages, no law could prevent her from doing so. He concluded that the war might have emancipated women from household drudgery to a greater extent than anyone realized. Finally, he noted that private industry and the government had already begun to plan for postwar employment in mid-1944.[33] After VJ Day, however, the question of women's place in industry became a more pressing issue.

By August 1945 cutbacks in defense contracts were already evident in Wichita. The state manpower director estimated that within six months, more than 140,000 workers in Kansas could expect to lose their jobs. He predicted that 50 percent of the female workers would return to their housekeeping duties and be glad to do so. "This," he stated, "would be especially true when they found the honeymoon of high wages over."[34]

Indeed many women changed jobs or left the work force at the conclusion of the war. The situation in Wichita reflected national trends. Of the twenty-five women interviewed, nineteen were married before, during, or immediately after the war. The majority recalled the relief they felt when they left the work force and began what they then considered normal lives as housewives. For example, Vada Park and her twin sister Vera Sims were both very happy when their jobs were terminated. Their unemployed status meant they could join their husbands who had recently been released from the military. Aletha Jeffries Johns was one of the first laid off at Beech, but that made her happy since her husband had enough points for early discharge.[35]

Two married women who left their jobs at the end of the war specifically stated that their husbands did not want them to work. Roseva Lawrence reported that her husband, Joe, said no wife of his would ever work. Donnalea Keown Haynes' husband felt the same way; she agreed because she wanted a family. While other women never explicitly cited their husbands' opinions, one commented that "society looked down on women who worked outside the home."[36]

Beth Wyrill Jantz was among those who were self-dependent for a livelihood. She left defense work and found a job as a cashier at J.C. Penney in Dodge City. Helen Volmer who operated a lathe that made rivets, bolts, and casings at Beech, worked until VJ Day and then left because the men were coming back. "All the talk," she said, "both inside the plant and in the newspapers encouraged women to give up their jobs for the returning veterans." Thus, while she thoroughly enjoyed her work, she felt a subtle obligation to turn her job over to a man. Because she was unmarried and needed an income, Helen eventually found a job, with a severe reduction in salary, as a secretary in an insurance firm.[37]

Ardis Rutherford Sowards was one of the few women interviewed for this study who stayed in the aircraft industry after the war ended. Ardis, who had been a freshman at the University of Wichita when the war began, had worked

31. Ibid., August 1, 1943.
32. Ibid., April 16, 1944.
33. Ibid., June 23, 1945.
34. Ibid., August 18, 1945.
35. Vera Sims, interview with author, June 8, 1992; Park interview; Johns interview.
36. Lawrence interview; Haynes interview; Snyder interview.
37. Jantz interview; Helen Volmer, interview with author, March 20, 1992.