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Friendly invasions: civilians and servicemen on the World War II American home front

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Dissertation

**FRIENDLY INVASIONS: CIVILIANS AND SERVICEMEN ON THE WORLD
WAR II AMERICAN HOME FRONT**

by

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DEDICATION

For Tessa.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation challenges the idea that the United States “home front” in World War II escaped the violence and disorder visited upon overseas cities by military forces. It examines American “liberty ports”— from San Francisco and Los Angeles to New York and Boston— where millions of GIs and other Allied servicemen took leave and liberty. Emboldened by the privilege of their uniforms and near immunity from civilian laws and authorities, these troops caroused, fought with locals, rioted in the streets, and assaulted women. A near constant presence in many large ports and transportation hubs, servicemen effectively occupied entire urban districts, routinely provoking civil-military conflicts. Though many historians imagine that most troops spent the war abroad, in fact many of them remained stateside for the duration. Before the spring of 1944, when preparations for D-Day accelerated, 65-75% of all soldiers were stationed domestically. 25% of the U.S. Army’s forces never left the country at all. Friendly invasions and other occupations by troops not only impacted places such as Britain, France, Germany, Australia, and Japan; they fundamentally reshaped American cities and civilian life as well.

To solve a number of manpower and training problems, U.S. military officials encouraged and inculcated in their recruits an aggressive, heterosexual masculinity that mocked civilian life as effeminate and weak. Many GIs embraced this vision of soldiering and took advantage of the military's lenient stance toward "blowing off steam" in boom towns and liberty ports. Fist fights with civilian men, pursuing and cornering women, and rampant drunkenness went mostly unpunished as the Armed Forces struggled to mobilize for a two-front war. Nearby women faced many dangers, but they also found ingenious ways of defending themselves. Meanwhile, local politicians and businesses struggled to protest the militarization of their neighborhoods, even while doing their part for the war effort. This wartime militarization of civilian American life is a crucial but almost entirely forgotten factor in the rise of the military as a key institution of American society, as well as the postwar "civil-military divide."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
INTRODUCTION: REIMAGING THE AMERICAN HOME FRONT.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: MAKING THE MILITARY MAN.....	21
CHAPTER TWO: TAKING LIBERTY.....	80
CHAPTER THREE: WOMEN FACE THE UNIFORM.....	145
CHAPTER FOUR: THE MILITARIZED CITY.....	200
EPILOGUE: POSTWAR INVASIONS AND OCCUPATIONS.....	265
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	288
CURRICULUM VITAE	304

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: "American Transoceanic Supply, 1942-1943"	82
Figure 2: "Army Passenger Traffic in the United States, 1941-1945"	85

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDT	<i>Chicago Daily Tribune or The Chicago Tribune</i>
DBG.....	<i>Daily Boston Globe or The Boston Globe</i>
LAT	<i>The Los Angeles Times</i>
NACP	National Archives II, College Park, Maryland
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NYT	<i>The New York Times</i>
SFC	<i>The San Francisco Chronicle</i>
TCD	<i>The Chicago Defender</i>
TNA	The National Archives of the UK
TWP	<i>The Washington Post</i>

Introduction: Reimagining the American Home Front

On August 14th, 1945 American troops stationed throughout the Pacific Rim—in places like Manila, Chungking, and Okinawa—huddled around shortwave radios as President Truman announced the surrender of Japan and the end of a brutal and merciless island hopping campaign. Soldiers and sailors celebrated by firing bright, orange tracers in the air and careening through the streets in jeeps, wild with euphoria that they would no longer face a deadly invasion of the Japanese mainland. Other troops formed conga lines and jubilantly sang “Don’t Fence Me In.” The impromptu fireworks shows, joyriding, and celebrations, however, quickly turned violent. In one Pacific “liberty port,” where troops took furloughs and leave, some ten thousand uniformed men poured into the downtown streets as local civilians and police watched from their now stranded cars and sidewalk corners. The city crackled with the near constant barrage of firecrackers like “a battery of machine guns.” Quickly running out of booze, troops hurled bottles and bricks through department store display windows, looting alcohol, jewelry, and other merchandise. Drunken rioters overturned cars, set them ablaze, or transformed them into battering rams to crash through shop fronts. Some climbed atop their vehicles and reenacted the Mount Suribachi flag raising. Civilians and GIs brawled in the street, as longstanding tensions between the occupiers and the occupied boiled over into violence. Soldiers and sailors also cornered women, tearing their dresses, kissing them forcibly, and sometimes beating their escorts. GIs, one woman recalled, “were pulling girls’ pants off and sailing them down the

street.” Men were “kissing, and practically raping, everybody.” At least six rapes did occur. Rivalries between the services also led to one marine savagely beating an Army private with his bare fists, leaving him to die on the sidewalk.

The chaos lasted for two more nights before military and civilian authorities conceded that the situation “appeared to be getting out of hand.” A combination of MPs and local police formed a phalanx and slowly cleared the streets. Hospital workers struggled to cope with the enormous number of injuries and cases of alcohol poisoning. Three days of “peace riots” brought at least eleven deaths, over a thousand injuries, and tens of thousands of dollars of property damage. When the police failed to investigate the numerous victims of rapes, one incredulous health director asked, “What do they think we examined at the hospital last night—ghosts?” In the following months, city and military officials launched an investigation, but no one was charged or court-martialed. The Grand Jury scrutinizing the riots argued that “when large numbers of young men realize that they are freed from war they are prone to celebrate overzealously.” The Army’s intelligence summary admitted that the conduct of personnel “was generally riotous” and that “women were assaulted,” but dismissed the situation as a “temporary emergency.” The mayor, when asked about the riot and unremittent levels of crime “gazed off into space” and merely responded that the police and Navy “did a good job when they took over.”¹

¹ Sources differ over whether eleven or thirteen people died. For the previous two paragraphs see “Victory Reports Around the World: U.S. Fighting Men Lead Wild Celebrations at Japs’ Surrender Offer,” *Life*, August 20, 1945, 38-38A; “Boisterous Celebrants Loot Bay City Stores,” *LAT*, August

This was San Francisco at the outbreak of peace. New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. also endured elevated incidents of drunkenness, sexual assault, and riots committed in celebration of the end of World War II. Yet scholars have overlooked the status of stateside ports as important military hubs, continuing to imagine that carousing and violence by servicemen only really occurred abroad. Troop crime plagued American cities throughout the war, and civilians—especially women—lived with many of the same dangers and fears felt by the residents of occupied cities overseas. Women’s groups, businesses, politicians, and police struggled to come to terms with servicemen’s impact on their cities and frequently protested and fought the military to regain local control. But soldiers proved stubbornly immune to effective oversight from civilian authorities, and sometimes even military ones.²

This dissertation recovers the long forgotten history of American “liberty ports”—cities in the continental United States that were profoundly impacted by military mobilization, because they became destinations for millions of sailors and

14, 1945, 6; “Riots End Liberty for 100,000 in Navy,” *NYT*, August 16, 1945, 6; “Riots and Looting Mark Bay City’s Celebration,” *LAT*, August 15, 1945, 1; “Photo Caption to Waves Pillow-Fight,” *Life*, August 27, 1945, 24; “Navy Clears Bay City Streets Following Riot,” *LAT*, August 16, 1945, 8; *LAT*, August 15, 1945, 1; “‘Peace’ Rioting,” *SFC*, August 17, 1945, 1, 6; “The People” *SFC*, *This World* magazine insert, August 19 1945, 5; For death of Army private and Army report see “Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 86,” August 18, 1945, 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 9th SC., Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, box 78, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; Grand Jury quote is taken from Brooke L. Blower, “V-J Day, 1945, Times Square,” 85, in Brooke L. Blower and Mark P. Bradley, eds., *The Familiar Made Strange: American Icons and Artifacts after the Transnational Turn* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); Health director and mayor quoted in Gary Kamiya, “S.F. Whitewash Covered Up ‘Peace Riots’ at End of WWII,” *SF Gate*, August 22, 2015, <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/S-F-whitewash-covered-up-peace-riots-at-6458585.php>.

² *Life* provided a rosy overview of other V-J Day incidents. “Victory Celebrations,” *Life*, August 27, 1945, 21-27.

soldiers. It explores a handful of the most important hubs for troops—cities like New York, Boston, Norfolk, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles—focusing on the relationships and conflicts that developed between servicemen, civilians, and the authorities charged with policing them. An analysis of these urban centers overturns the common view of the home front as a protected place, unscathed by the violence embroiling the rest of the globe. Indeed, soldiers effectively occupied many American cities. Sixteen million men served in the military, passing through towns near training camps, cities along transit lines, and embarkation ports at the coasts. During the war over three million servicemen moved through New York alone. Though many historians imagine that most troops spent the war abroad, in fact many of them remained stateside. Before the spring of 1944, when preparations for D-Day accelerated, 65-75% of all soldiers were stationed domestically. 25% of the U.S. Army's forces never left the country at all. Liberty ports became international zones of trade and entertainment, where GIs sought alcohol, sex, and other excitements during their furloughs. And these were not simply American spaces. The presence of Commonwealth, French, Dutch, and Chinese servicemen further complicated attempts by municipal and military officials to police nightlife and crime. An analysis of this unexamined history can change the way scholars understand the home front, civil-military relations, and World War II itself.³

³ For percentage of men in stationed domestically, see "Strength of the Army Reports," 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 8th SC, Box 78, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945 (RG 389) NACP; For New York's numbers see

The history of the GI most often centers on the drama of combat, culminating at such locations as Pearl Harbor, Bataan, Anzio, Normandy, and Iwo Jima. Popular histories, memoirs, and films follow a common arc: young, naïve, slightly scared teenagers, farmers, and factory workers join the Army and leave home for exotic and dangerous locales abroad, where they soon endure their first harrowing experiences of combat, quickly form bonds across ethnic and geographic lines, and eventually become a cohesive unit of hardened, resourceful veterans. In this narrative, the soldier's arc mirrors that of the nation as a whole: a young, rising America stumbles at first, but soon rises to overcome its supposed prewar isolation to offer liberation, leadership, and democracy across the globe. The “good war” account necessarily locates troops outside the U.S., where they stand as liberators and saviors for a world broken by the horrors of fascism and imperialism—our boys in uniform become a new light to an old world in need of an American Century.⁴

Chester Wardlow, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Movements, Training, and Supply* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990), 100, 332; For total troop numbers see Michael Adams, *The Best War Ever* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 70.

⁴ For examples of this type of combat history, see Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne: From Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001); Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998); Robert Leckie, *Delivered from Evil: The Saga of World War II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987); Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 2001). Films have also been critical in defining the usual history of the combat soldier. For the most influential films, see *Sands of Iwo Jima*, dir. Allan Dwan (1949; Republic Pictures) and *Saving Private Ryan*, dir. Steven Spielberg (1998, Amblin Entertainment). For works that cut against this romantic narrative of the combat soldier see John Ellis, *Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II* (New York: Scribners, 1980); Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); D. Clayton James and Anne Sharp Wells, *From Pearl Harbor to V-J Day: The American Armed Forces in World War II* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995); William I. Hitchcock, *Bitter Road to Freedom: The Human Cost of Allied Victory in World War II Europe* (New York:

The public is understandably drawn to making the combat soldier the central figure in wartime histories. Anyone who has read a memoir like Eugene Sledge's *With the Old Breed* recognizes that extolling the sacrifices of servicemen is not meaningless pabulum or mere government propaganda. Those who fought and those who died deserve to be remembered. To truly understand the experience of the vast majority of troops, however, the combat soldier's story can only reveal so much. Estimates vary on how many troops actually saw combat—one military study estimated that fewer than 10% did—but less than half were ever in a combat zone. Far more spent the war in the service of logistics and transportation, or a vast bureaucracy that managed huge swaths of new property, paychecks, and the healthcare of millions. Service personnel outnumbered combat troops 27 to 1 according to one estimate. But all dealt with the daily privations and annoyances of a regimented life. Since few could realize their identity as military men by storming a beach or flanking along a hedgerow, many did so instead by exercising the privilege of the uniform while taking leave. Carousing in bars, cornering and chasing women, and beating up the guy not in uniform quickly emerged as a compelling marker of what it meant to be a soldier.

Free Press, 2008). For histories that examine and challenge the “good war” myth see Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: The New Press, 1984); Adams, *The Best War Ever*; Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); John Bodnar, *The “Good War” in American Memory* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2011).

Indeed, servicemen used the direct and stark contrast of civilian life to accept and lionize their status as military men.⁵

A number of recent studies have revealed the enormous disruptions caused by such GI carousing abroad from Australia, China, and Okinawa to Britain, France, and Germany. Rape, assaults, petty crime, and casual violence became all too common hallmarks of American liberations and occupations. In Commonwealth nations, the phrase “overpaid, oversexed, and over here” served as a shorthand for explaining GI behavior. By 1942, for example, Brisbane played host to a growing contingent of American personnel, which soon erupted into conflicts between Yanks and Australian troops vying over women and the town’s increasingly scarce goods such as cigarettes. “The Australians had grievances and they had very solid reasons to be aggrieved,” recalled one

⁵ For combat troop numbers and service to combat personnel ratio see Adams, *The Best War Ever*, 70, 97. For a selection of the most influential combat memoirs see Eugene B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* (New York: Presidio Press, 1981); Robert Leckie, *Helmet for my Pillow: From Parris Island to the Pacific* (New York: Random House, 1957); Chuck Tatum, *Red Blood, Black Sand: Fighting Alongside John Basilone from Boot Camp to Iwo Jima* (New York: Berkley Caliber, 2012). Histories of American GIs initially portrayed servicemen as fundamentally ordinary and somewhat provincial men transformed by the war into heroic and romantic vanguards of the American Century. When the home front did receive attention, these histories emphasized a vision of patriotic women and families sacrificing and working as they waited for noble soldiers to return victorious. This good war narrative faced mounting criticism in the 1980s, with Studs Terkel and Paul Fussell producing popular works that challenged this entrenched mythology. Soldier memoirs like Eugene B. Sledge’s *With the Old Breed* partly set the stage for these criticisms, as veterans were given more authority to criticize their own actions. See Sledge’s *With the Old Breed*. See the aforementioned Terkel, “*The Good War*” and Fussell, *Wartime*. Academic works include Adams, *The Best War Ever* and Bodnar, *The “Good War”*. Historians such as John Dower developed these criticisms, demonstrating that combat was characterized by brutality and moral ambiguity for all sides, American included. See Dower’s influential *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986). Also see the early works by Saburo Ienaga like *The Pacific War, 1931-1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan’s Role in World War II* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). Mark Selden’s work was also critical in challenging the established view of the atomic bombings. See for example, edited with Kyoko I. Selden, *Atomic Bomb: Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1989).

officer, “The Yanks had everything—the girls, the canteens and all the rest of it—and our blokes were completely ostracized in their own city.” Tensions eventually boiled over in November, leading to the two-day Battle of Brisbane in which the city’s blackout restrictions had to be lifted just to restore order. In Sydney, women stepped out into the darkened streets wielding “hatpins, bag needles, spike files, penknives, cayenne peppers, scissors, or weighted torches” as they watched for “any brown-out Casanova who makes a nuisance of himself.” In Britain, Americans caused similar disturbances from London’s Piccadilly Circus—where Yanks raced to find the women called “Piccadilly Commandos” for some “vicious debauchery”—to smaller coastal towns like Weymouth used as staging grounds for the D-Day invasion. Across the channel in France, troops arrived as liberators and armed tourists, but also as persistent threats to local women and civilians. And in China, the Philippines, Okinawa, and Japan, servicemen thirsting for sex and drink provoked recurring conflicts that threatened both local and international relations well into the postwar era.⁶

⁶ For Battle of Brisbane see Peter A. Thompson and Robert Macklin, *The Battle of Brisbane: Australians and the Yanks at War* (Canberra, Australia: BWM Books, 2000); For Sydney quote see “Sydney Girls Arm: To Deal With ‘Romeos,’” *The Cairns Post*, May 8, 1942, 1. Blower also discusses this in Blower, “V-J Day, 1945, Times Square,” 74; For Piccadilly quotes see Neil Tweedie, “How our Piccadilly Commandos had the GIs Surrounded,” *The Telegraph*, November 1, 2005, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1501961/How-our-Piccadilly-Commandos-had-the-GIs-surrounded.html>; For “armed tourists” in France see Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); Several works have been particularly influential in driving scholars to examine the consequences of America’s military presence abroad. See Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (London: Pandora, 1989); Katherine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); and Beth Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994). Also see David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (New York: Random House, 1995). Reynolds was preceded by works like Juliet Gardiner, “Over Here”: *The*

The American home front, understandably, has long been regarded as separate and shielded from these overseas stories. Historians, of course, have taken stock of a number of conflicts in the wartime United States. Japanese internment, race riots, and a wide variety of labor disputes mark the most visible signs of a turbulent age. Women moved into the defense plants in

GIs in Wartime Britain (London: Collins & Brown, 1992). Also see Sonya Rose, "Girls and GIs: Race, Sex, and Diplomacy in Second World War Britain" *International History Review* 19.1 (Feb. 1997), 146-60 and Jenel Virden, *Good-bye Piccadilly: British War Brides in America* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996). For works on American soldiers in Australia and New Zealand see Anthony Barker and Lisa Jackson, *Fleeting Attraction: A Social History of American Servicemen in Western Australia During the Second World War* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1996); Harry Bioletti, *The Yanks are Coming: The American Invasion of New Zealand, 1942-1944* (Auckland: Century Hutchinson, 1989); Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989); Michael McKernan, *All In: Australia During the Second World War* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1983); John Hammond Moore, *Over-Sexed, Over-Paid, and Over-Here: Americans in Australia, 1941-1945* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1981); Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under, 1941-1945: The American Impact on Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford, 1985). For postwar Germany see Maria Hohn, *GIs and Frauleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002) and Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). For France see Roberts, *What Soldiers Do* and Roberts, "The Price of Discretion: Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and the American Military in France, 1944-1946," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 115, No. 4 (2010): 1002-1030. For Japan see Sarah Kovner, *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan* (Palo Alto: Stanford, 2012); Mire Koikari, "Rethinking Gender and Power in the U.S. Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952," *Gender and History* 11.2 (1999). For Okinawa see David Tobaru Obermiller, "The Okinawan Struggle over Identity, Historical Memory, and Cultural Representation," *The Japan Foundation Newsletter*, Vol. 27 No 3-4, 12-16. For China see Zach Fredman's gripping dissertation "From Allies to Occupiers: Living with the U.S. Military in Wartime China, 1941-1945," (dissertation, Boston University, 2016). For the long effects of the American presence at Subic Bay in the Philippines see the documentary *Left by the Ship*, directed by Emma Rossi Landi and Alberto Vendermmiati (2010: PBS, 2011). For Puerto Rico see Katherine T. McCaffrey, *Military Power and Popular Protest: The U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002). For Trinidad see Harvey R. Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For the issue of "war brides" see Susan Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances: Foreign War Brides and American Soldiers in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2010). Other major studies include: Hohn and Seungsook Moon, eds., *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War II to the Present* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe During World War II* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Peter Schrijvers, *The Crash of Ruin: American Combat Soldiers in Europe During World War II* (London: MacMillan, 2001); Schrijvers, *The GI War Against Japan: American Soldiers in Asia and the Pacific During World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

unprecedented numbers, finding both new levels of independence and fulfillment, but also workplace harassment and hazardous conditions. Popular images circle back again and again to notions of wartime women as Rosie the Riveter, worried family members, or doting lovers waiting for a sailor's kiss or a letter from abroad. But almost all of these stories feature civilians amongst themselves—the home front exists apart the war front. Soldiers and sailors remain absent from this landscape, or only make brief cameos in events like the Zoot Suit Riots.⁷

⁷ World War II historiography is now filled not only with military and political histories of the “war front,” but also an extended literature on the “home front.” Scholars have used the home front to discuss civil rights, labor, women's history, and governmental power. Classic home front accounts include the work of scholars like John Morton Blum and Richard Polenberg, who emphasized extensive social change, cultural shifts, the effects of government propaganda, and the experience of minority groups. See John Morton Blum, *V was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976) and Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972). Also see Polenberg's earlier but less influential anthology, *America at War: The Home Front, 1941-1945* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968) and Geoffrey Perrett, *Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph: The American People, 1939-1945* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1973). Historians like Dominic Capeci and political advocates like Michi Weglyn stand out for making the home front part of a longer civil rights narrative. Examinations of the Detroit and Harlem race riots, Internment, and the Double V Campaign directly challenged the assumption that the home front was a peaceful oasis from the war, free from social conflict. For early examples of histories that began examining race on the home front see Lee Finkle, “The Conservative Aims of Militant Rhetoric: Black Protest during World War II,” *Journal of American History* (1973) 60, #3 pg 692–713; Dominic J. Capeci, *The Harlem Riot of 1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977); Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976). For more recent studies see Eduardo Obregon Pagan, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.*; Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Dominic J. Capeci Jr. and Martha Wilkerson, *Layered Violence: The Detroit Rioters of 1943* (Jackson, MS: The University Press of Mississippi, 2009). For the historiography of women on the home front see William Chafe's early work, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972). More refined studies followed: Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); Beth Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place*; D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); John Costello Love, *Sex, and War: Changing Values, 1939-1945* (London: Pan Books, 1986); Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda During World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Margaret Higonnet, et al., (eds.), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World*

These assumptions, however, have led to a set of misleading claims that Americans on the home front uniquely avoided the effects of war. “The continental United States had escaped the plague of war, and so it was easy enough for the heirs to believe that they had been anointed by God,” mused the writer Lewis H. Lapham in 1979. David M. Kennedy’s *Freedom from Fear* echoes Lapham’s often quoted sentiment, concluding that “beyond the war’s dead and wounded and their families, few Americans had been touched by the staggering sacrifices and unspeakable anguish that the war had visited upon millions of other people around the globe.” Compared to horrors like fire-bombing, the Blitz, and essentially anything that occurred on the Eastern Front, Americans did of course escape the plague of war. But civilians in American stateside ports, stopover cities, and boom towns shared far more experiences with those living in war-touched cities abroad than yet recognized.⁸

War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict (New York: Routledge, 1984). For a history of gay men and women during the war see Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: The Free Press, 1990). For more recent gender histories see Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon, *Hollywood’s South Seas and the Pacific War: Searching for Dorothy Lamour* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012); Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Marilyn Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* (New York: NYU Press, 2007); Meghan K. Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses During World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). For an examination of why sexual violence may be employed during war see Ruth Seifert, “The Second Front: The Logic of Sexual Violence in Wars,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 19 (1996), 35-43.

⁸ Lewis H. Lapham, “America’s Foreign Policy: A Rake’s Progress,” *Harper’s*, March 1979, 43-84. Lapham quote appears in works like Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1984), 8; David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 856. For more recent examples of works that mostly exclude servicemen from the “home front” see David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II*

The home front has served too much a foil for the way troops behaved abroad. In Mary Louise Robert's *What Soldiers Do*, an examination of the often poor behavior of American troops liberating France, the U.S. military is depicted as protecting "American families from the spectacle of GI promiscuity while leaving French families unable to escape it." These histories often rely on the idea that when soldiers encountered a foreign land, they became convinced that pursuing and even forcing themselves on women could be justified by that country's exotic traditions and loose morals. In Normandy, Roberts notes, GIs "made sex the defining element of French civilization," which they ultimately

(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); Allan M. Winkler, *Home Front U.S.A.: America During World War II*, 3rd edition (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2005); John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996); Kenneth Paul O'Brien and Lynn Hudson Parson, (eds.), *The Home-Front War. World-War II and American Society* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 1995); Paul Casdorph, *Let the Good Times Roll: Life at Home in America During World War II* (New York, Paragon House, 1989); Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne, 1982). Even recent studies of gender and sexuality on the home front depict GIs as mostly separated from their "sweethearts" and relying more on images and memories than direct connection. See Ann Elizabeth Pfau, "Miss Yourlovin: GIs, Gender, and Domesticity during World War II" (dissertation, Rutgers University, 2008). This dissertation is also an e-book through Columbia University Press. Several urban histories take the common perspective of making soldiers minor players or mostly absent from the home front. See for example, Robert G. Spinney, *World War II in Nashville: Transformation of the Homefront* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998). Some works, however, have adeptly analyzed how war disrupted urban areas. See, for example, Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and Roger W. Lotchin, *The Bad City in the Good War: San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Diego* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003) which makes a brief mention of V-J day riots. For a longer view of the economic transformation of the west coast see Roger W. Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). For a longer view of urban militarization see Lotchin (ed.), *The Martial Metropolis: U.S. Cities in War and Peace* (New York: Praeger, 1984). For a differing view to Johnson and Lotchin see Gerald Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). For other WWII urban histories that include some discussion of troops see Lorraine Diehl, *Over Here! New York City During World War II* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010) and Kenneth T. Jackson, *WWII & NYC* (New York: New York Historical Society, 2012). For a look at a boom town see Catherine A. Lutz, *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

characterized as “primitive and oversexed.” Again and again, Roberts and other historians return to the idea that the military exported both servicemen and sexual assault, while leaving the folks back on the home front safe from the revelry and violence that accompanied invasions and occupations. “The US military protected the ‘virtuous’ American woman back home at the expense of the French prostitute,” Roberts explains. In reality, an American woman “back home” in Boston had little more legal recourse than the French woman in Le Havre. While valuable work has been done on uncovering the government’s and military’s obsessive campaign against venereal disease—and the women who were treated inhumanely because of it—most stories of women and troops on the home front center on teary eyed goodbyes and love separated by an ocean.⁹

But the GI was not away at all. For many people, especially those living in coastal cities, the military presence exerted a huge influence on everyday life. Servicemen were neither absent nor a peripheral concern, but rather central figures who dictated the often discordant rhythms of the wartime city. Whether it be women taking a route home that circumvented areas well-trafficked by troops, business owners struggling to keep bar fights and brawls from destroying their establishments, or civilian men avoiding amusement zones for fear of being heckled or assailed, civilians of all kinds were forced to make adjustments to daily lives suddenly impacted by the war.

⁹ Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 4, 20, 190; For VD campaigns see Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes*.

The following chapters tackle the problems of liberty ports from different, perspectives in turn. Chapter one, told from military authorities' point of view, unpacks the nuts and bolts of mobilization, capturing the desperate, makeshift nature of the transition from peacetime to war. In 1939, the U.S. military confronted over twenty years of poor funding, dilapidated infrastructure, and a severe lack of tradition. In Washington, the Roosevelt administration battled regular protests and widespread skepticism about the necessity of a draft. Mobilization barely lurched forward as the first selectees arrived in half-constructed camps. Bewildered and resentful of Army regulars, their commanders, and FDR himself, morale plummeted so quickly that officers feared their men might mutiny. The standard tactics to produce group cohesion and *esprit de corps* proved futile, so military officials began to come to terms with the physical, intellectual, and morale limitations of those who made up the draft pool and sought instead to build loyalty to the armed forces and buck up troops by inculcating a new kind of martial masculinity that emphasized physical aggression and sexual prowess. This barracks culture celebrated obscenities, virility, and a rough, aggressive heterosexuality. Draftees came to identify civilian life as effeminate and impotent. Some officials worried about the growing animosity towards civilians that became baked into this worldview as men made forays back into the civilian world to hit the local boom towns near their camps and forts, get drunk, and chase girls. Complaints from local communities soon began to pour into commands. But most military authorities ultimately supported

this form of swaggering masculinity because it yielded a renascent morale and camaraderie among their troops. Facing a dire two-front war, the concerns of civilians would be set aside.

This new barracks culture and unofficial code of conduct made soldiers and sailors less likely to respect civil or military authority while on leave. Chapter two explores the experience of being in uniform from servicemen's points of view as they pursued vices, often with impunity, in embarkation ports and while on furlough. Rapidly expanding networks of railways and shipping routes propelled enormous numbers of men into lively hubs and liberty ports where they clamored for "dangerous fun." Emerging from train stations, taxis, subway cars, and nearby wharfs, sailors and soldiers discovered exotic cities with an almost infinite selection of pleasures and amusements far from where they grew up. Men swarmed taverns, saloons, peep shows, and dance halls in search of alcohol and women. Civilian men—contradictorily seen as both epicene weaklings and as sexual threats—made easy targets for bullying and street fights. Small fist fights regularly blew up into riots and brawls that police forces struggled to put down. The most common targets, however, were girls and women who endured wolf-whistles, aggressive advances, sexual assault, and even occasionally murder at the hands of soldiers, sailors, and marines.¹⁰

¹⁰ "Dangerous fun" from Pearl Schiff, *Scollay Square* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc, 1952), 48.

Initial attempts to strictly enforce the military's legal code caused a number of unanticipated problems. Brigs filled with a seemingly endless stream of drunk and disorderly men. Some troops discovered that committing enough petty crimes might result in dishonorable discharge, and regarded that as a possible escape from the military, potential death abroad, and an opportunity to pick up lucrative defense work that offered better wages than soldiering. Recognizing this perverse incentive and an ongoing manpower crisis, military leaders mostly gave up on enforcing good behavior. Civilian police soon learned that they, too, held no real authority to arrest or try servicemen for crimes committed in port, even when a civilian was the victim. The Armed Forces, in a series of explicit and understood agreements, placed men in uniform outside the jurisdiction of civilian law. Command essentially granted military men extraterritorial and extralegal privileges, even as their pursuit of vice and good times taxed the infrastructure of liberty ports and the welfare of their inhabitants. Military Police and Shore Patrol proved little more effective than municipal cops. Troops openly despised both forces, regularly rebuffing their instructions and even attacking MPs and SPs. All of this culminated in the San Francisco Peace Day Riots and other V-J Day celebrations across the country, during which troops openly rioted and assaulted civilians in the streets.

Chapter three turns to women's complicated motives and strategies when interacting with men in uniform. The large numbers of American, Commonwealth, and other foreign troops moving through stateside ports created significant

problems for local women, and many frequently complained about servicemen's aggressive demeanor. Even as women directly protested to the military that they were forced to "run the gauntlet," they found ways to negotiate the dangers of life in port. Some devised tactics for navigating the city, others fought back, shared strategies for avoiding street harassment, and petitioned to civil and military officials (while attempting to avoid actually criticizing the war effort). Yet others dated servicemen, lusted after them, or fell in love. Servicemen's wives explored strategies for maintaining their marriages while preemptively identifying the new men who might pose a threat. Women lived contradictory romantic lives—troops were both highly visible predators and their most available chance at a relationship, or protection from other men in uniform. Romance novels, advice columns, and diaries brimmed with discussions of how to pick "the right soldier"—the one who would take you somewhere exciting like Coney Island, but wouldn't get "wolfish." A reliable escort could guarantee a relatively safe passage through the city and even a fun night out. Too often though, women discovered escorts and dates could turn rough, coercive, and violent. Finally, some women found ways to take advantage of the predictable whims and weaknesses of troops. A whole range of girls and women actively ran scams, hold-up schemes, and robberies specifically targeting inebriated sailors and soldiers lured in by the promise of a good time.

Chapter four investigates how the presence of servicemen militarized cities and the lives of civilians. Furloughed troops strengthened and extended

red-light districts, undercut urban renewal attempts, and transformed neighborhoods and areas like Boston's Scollay Square and New York's Coney Island into military bastions. This chapter also explores reactions and strategies pursued by civilian businesses, urban reformers, and municipal authorities. For some, particularly businesses in the liquor trade, the military presence brought money and opportunity. Local businessmen sought to exploit this new customer base, catering to the liberty economy with vice-filled venues and services. Yet proprietors walked a tight rope—selling liquor and hosting establishments for potential "pick ups" was lucrative, but these activities also invited scrutiny from the Army-Navy boards that sometimes banned troops from such locations. Local politicians meanwhile fielded protests from women, civilian men, business groups, and religious figures concerned about the breakdown of order, and they struggled to appease their constituents while maintaining cordial relations with the military officials stationed in their midst. For park officials like Robert Moses, police chiefs, and mayors like Fiorello La Guardia, the war resulted in an aggrandizement of military control of the city. The military seized this opportunity, declaring a wide legal purview that made troops essentially immune from civilian oversight, while also making a significant number of civilians subject to military law. This chapter therefore details the strategies these officials pursued as the military annexed city property, legal power, and introduced lax policing standards. In the end, however, municipal authorities held little power to stop or resolve conflicts when confronted with the powers of the military hierarchy.

World War II cemented the rapid amalgamation of federal power, which had first gained a foothold in World War I. Bursting with new agencies, raking in more taxes, and making greater demands upon citizens, the federal government became a leviathan that demanded a reorientation of civilian life towards serving the demands of the state. While couched in soothing intonations and the comforting setting of fireside chats, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt consistently promoted the idea that civilians ought to serve and support a widespread militarization of American life. This rise of executive authority, government bureaucracy, and military power is well chronicled.¹¹

Yet Americans did not experience the expansion of federal and military authority solely through taxes, propaganda, war bonds, and labor restrictions. Many also encountered it in the form of sailors and soldiers commandeering the everyday places where they lived their lives. Their streets, bars, parks, and trains regularly filled with such “friendly invasions,” as one writer put it in 1944. This visceral, embodied military presence prompted bitter conflicts over who should

¹¹ Two key works stand out on the amalgamation of federal and military power during wartime and the consequences for those on the home front. For World War I see Christopher Capozzola’s *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of Modern American Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). For World War II see James T. Sparrow’s *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For additional works on how the war affected federal power and citizenship see Fred J. Cook, *The Warfare State* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1962); Allan Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Knopf, 1995); Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999); Robert Westbrook, *Why We Fought: Forging American Obligations in World War II* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2004); Paul A.C. Koistinen, *Arsenal of World War II: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1940-1945* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004).

control public space, who held jurisdiction over servicemen, and what sacrifices could be tolerated in service of the war. As once dominant municipal authorities increasingly buckled to ascendant Army and Navy authorities, the war drove a vast amalgamation of military power in American life. While these conflicts unfolded, women navigated the perilous streets, alleyways, and train cars, attempting to sort the decent men from the wolves. But the story of liberty ports also reveals the limits of that ballooning military authority. The American GI remained a recalcitrant individual unwilling to abide the demands of civilian norms, military discipline, or indeed, even the law.¹²

¹² "Friendly invasions" from Alexander Feinberg, "Soldiers Tour City in Vain for Rooms," *NYT* (New York City, NY), August 6, 1944, 1.

Chapter One: Making the Military Man

By the end of World War II, over sixteen million Americans would serve in the Armed Forces throughout a massive global network of ports, cities, towns, bases, and encampments. In early 1939, however, approximately 330,000 troops mostly waited in docked ships and decaying World War I cantonments as the Phoney War became real across the oceans. The U.S. may not have been the isolationist slumbering giant depicted by many histories, but its military—particularly the ground forces—had suffered a serious decline in numbers, infrastructure, and tradition since the Great War.¹³

While scholars have previously examined this story of the draft and training, they have yet to analyze how military mobilization planted the seeds of conflict between servicemen, civilians, and women on the home front. The draft, military buildup, and training system played a major role in fostering the chronic poor morale, policing, and discipline that stretched across the services. Years of underfunding and makeshift repairs left the military far behind in its preparations as it scrambled to muster an Army. Lacking an efficient training infrastructure and, at times, mutinous troops, military authorities channeled the draftees' anger and aggression towards civilian centers. The sexually aggressive masculinity inculcated amongst draftees devalued the lives and welfare of civilians. Troops

¹³ For more on the myth of pre-World War II isolationism see Brooke Blower, "From Isolationism to Neutrality: A New Framework for Understanding American Political Culture, 1919-1941." *Diplomatic History*, 38.2 (April 2014): 345-376; For total troop numbers see Michael Adams, *The Best War Ever* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 70. For 1939 numbers see The National WWII Museum website: <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/ww2-by-the-numbers/us-military.html>.

found that performing this masculinity became the most readily available way to demonstrate the superiority and privilege being a GI while trapped in a military system they despised. Their first adventures outside the training camp taught servicemen how to act when they ultimately reached liberty ports. San Francisco's Peace Day Riots were born in the initial excursions and carousing that military men learned in the barracks and in the towns adjacent to training centers.¹⁴

Fighting for Conscription

Among the world's great powers, the U.S. was perhaps the least prepared to fight. Despite the conflagration engulfing Asia, Africa, and Europe, proponents of a peacetime draft faced political infighting, protests, and a general sense that the American public would never support a program that stole young men away

¹⁴ Three key histories focus on the way the U.S. used war and mobilization to equate citizenship with serving the state. Christopher Capozzola's study of World War I remains a highly influential examination of how the state used coercive voluntarism: *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of Modern American Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Benjamin Alpers's work demonstrates how military service was reclassified as "an extension, or even fulfillment, of one's civilian existence," rather than a burden: "This is the Army: Imagining a Democratic Military in World War II," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Jun., 1998), 129-163. Finally, James T. Sparrow extends Capozzola's argument about civilians serving the state to World War II, while assessing how servicemen became "first-class citizens" in *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Lee Kennett's *G.I.* remains the definitive portrait of the American soldier and a key source on mobilization: Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987). For other works on military and economic mobilization see George Q. Flynn, *The Mess in Washington: Manpower Mobilization in World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979); Flynn, *The Draft, 1940-1973* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); Maury Klein, *A Call to Arms: Mobilizing America for World War II* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013); Paul A. C. Koistinen, *Arsenal of World War II: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1940-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Waldo Heinrichs, *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Entry into World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity during World War II* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004); Steven J. Taylor, *Acts of Conscience: World War II, Mental Institutions, and Religious Objectors* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009).

from their families and workplaces. Sensing the lukewarm, if not hostile attitudes of many Americans towards mass conscription, President Roosevelt announced his support for “universal government service for every young person” on June 18, 1940. Rather than explicitly calling for a draft, the President compared the proposal to the Civilian Conservation Corps while praising the value of “discipline” and fostering “a toughness of moral and physical fiber” in American youth. Opponents of conscription and FDR seized upon his attempt to disguise the draft as another New Deal program, with Alf Landon—Roosevelt’s opponent in 1936—noting the use of “weasel words” that obscured the call for “compulsory military training.”¹⁵

Roosevelt’s proposal soon took shape as the Burke-Wadsworth Act, also known as the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. The bill called for the registration of over fifty million men between the ages of eighteen to sixty-four. The Army would be allowed to select—Selective Service officials despised the term “draft”—up to 900,000 men aged twenty-one to thirty-five who would serve no more than one year during peacetime. It was a small step towards building a viable armed forces. Military leaders and the Roosevelt administration privately confided that years of poor funding, a non-existent munitions industry, and mismanagement had left the U.S. Army behind countries like Spain, Belgium, and Switzerland. Key military figures like General John J. Pershing—leader of the World War One Expeditionary Forces—mounted a public offensive and sold

¹⁵ UP, “President Plans Military Draft,” *LAT*, June 19, 1940, 1.

Burke-Wadsworth as a measure that would “promote democracy by bringing together young men from all walks of life” and “might well be the determining factor in keeping us out of war.” Army officials also reported the abject failure to recruit men voluntarily to either the National Guard or regular Army, almost begging the Senate Military Affairs Committee to push Burke-Wadsworth through.¹⁶

Pershing’s comments—statist language clad in an appeal to democratic virtue—attempted to stymie the two major criticisms of compulsory military service: First, that it would bring the U.S. closer to war, and second, that it would foster anti-democratic or fascistic ideas amongst American youth. In May 1940, three hundred City College of New York students, anticipating the push towards a draft, protested a ROTC demonstration with signs proclaiming “To Hell With War.” Following the introduction of the Burke-Wadsworth bill, religious organizations mobilized to denounce the draft not only for its failure to exempt priests and members of religious orders, but also because they believed it threatened the fundamental values of the nation. Methodist leaders protested directly to Senators on the Military Affairs Committee, while also releasing fiery statements to the major papers. Boston’s Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam and other church leaders declared that the conscription bill was an “un-American

¹⁶ “Seeks Authority to Order Year’s Training for All Units, Reserves,” *TWP*, July 30, 1940, 1; Carlyle Holt, “What Shall We Call Them? Draftees?-Selectees?-What’s the Matter With ‘Soldiers?’,” *DBG*, December 4, 1940, 13; For officials despising selective service term see Kennett, *G.I.*, 4-5; For poor state of U.S. Army see Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 23; “Pershing, Conant Back Training Bill,” *NYT*, July 4, 1940, 9.

and an undemocratic proposal, springing like a mushroom from swamps of unjustifiably hysterical fear. It constitutes a weak, unintelligent proposal to take up slack in unemployment, and by its folly is doomed to defeat real democracy and tends to prepare the way for war.” The draft—rather than a pragmatic antidote to decades of chronically low military funding and manpower—was seen as “an insidious infection of the free life of a democratic people [that] apes totalitarian conscription.” Oxnam concluded by insisting that if Congress passed the draft, they would end the American tradition of individual liberty by resorting “to the Nazi and Fascist forms which brought totalitarian Europe to its present tragedy.” Catholic bishops and archbishops joined the Methodists, proclaiming that emergencies should not be used to justify totalitarian measures. Assailing the administration’s claims about the necessity of preparation, the bishops warned that the supposed danger posed by the situation in Europe did not justify the draft. A California conference of churches similarly condemned Burke-Wadsworth because it failed to meet the “basic principles of democracy.”¹⁷

Students, mothers, and other concerned citizens soon took to the streets throughout the country to stop the passage of Burke-Wadsworth. These protests often employed theatrical methods designed to create a public spectacle worthy of press coverage. In late July, three people dressed as mummies marched

¹⁷ For more on the use of democratic appeals to reinforce the goals of the state see Sparrow, *Warfare State*. “4 Students Seized at Military Drill,” *NYT*, May 18, 1940, 8; “Church Leaders to Protest Bill on Conscription,” *CDT*, July 11, 1940, 13; “High Catholic Leaders Blast Conscript Bill,” *CDT*, July 19, 1940, 10; “Church Opposes Military Plan,” *LAT*, July 20, 1940, 2.

through downtown Boston with messages proclaiming “Don’t Be a Mummy, Speak for Peace,” scrawled on their bed-sheet costumes. In Los Angeles, the American Peace Crusade paraded with placards denouncing conscription, while two students posed as a newly married couple flanked by two grieving mothers. Some 1200 protestors crowded into Turner’s, a boxing and wrestling arena in D.C., to hear “speakers throw verbal lefts and rights at the Burke-Wadsworth conscription measure” and call for Capitol Hill marches and vigils. The next day, D.C. police dispersed several hundred protestors, fighting and arresting leaders like Methodist Rev. Owen Knox. The Democratic and Republican offices in New York were surrounded by picket lines filled with youth carrying signs that exclaimed “Conscription is a Blitzkrieg against democracy.” Congress saw a thousand protestors sing “Ain’t Gonna Study War No More.” One member of the Peace Mobilization Society began screaming “American conscription is American fascism” from the House gallery before being removed. Three thousand members of the National Maritime Union violently protested in New York City, but not before publishing a resolution that framed compulsory conscription as a fascistic measure backed by a Big Business clique. Socialist presidential candidate Norman Thomas agreed that peacetime conscription embodied totalitarianism, telling the House Military Committee that the draft was “Hitlerism without Hitler.” Others wrote to their papers to register their disdain for both the draft and Roosevelt’s desire to support Britain. “We are not at war with anybody,” wrote one critic of FDR, “England, on the other hand, declared war against

Germany and is being attacked. This Nation has gone stark-mad through fear engendered by President Roosevelt." The U.S. ought to stay out of "Europe's power wars" and advocates of preparation for war "must have a guilty conscience to be shrieking about the Hun goblins."¹⁸

Perhaps the most notable protest featured 200 angry mothers, a waste paper dummy, and a maple tree. On August 22nd, in the sweltering heart of D.C.'s summer, "a fleet of taxicabs drew up near the Capitol steps and began disgorging loads of grim faced women." Startled police watched as the women dragged "what appeared to be a man on the end of a rope," an effigy of Senator Claude Pepper (D-FL), one of the key proponents of the draft. The day before, Pepper had, according to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, told mothers assembled to protest the draft legislation to "go home and mind their own business." One hundred yards from their taxicabs the protesters found a maple tree, swung the rope over a branch, and began hauling the man up into the air, chanting "We're hanging Claude Pepper to a sour apple tree, so our sons and husbands live on and be free." As a crowd of nearly 500 assembled to heartily applaud the hanging, police arrived and declared, "You women can't do this here." A chorus of women replied, "Who's going to stop us?" The Congress of American

¹⁸ "Draft Foes Carry Peace Message to Public Via Bed-Sheet Signs," *DBG*, July 30, 1940, 2; "Peace Pickets Protest Draft," *LAT*, September 6, 1940, 3; "Draft Bill Fight Staged In Turner's Arena Ring," *TWP*, September 5, 1940, 13; "Demonstrators on Draft Arrested," *DBG*, September 6, 1940, 17; "Young Pickets Here Protest Draft Bill," *NYT*, September 15, 1940, 33; For "American conscription" and "Ain't gonna study..." see Kennett, *G.I.*, 4; "House Chiefs Expect Fight on Plant Draft," *TWP*, September 1, 1940, 4; "Draft Evader Penalties Set by Senators," *LAT*, July 27, 1940, 1; Eugene Hudgins, "Letters to the Editor: Anti-British," *TWP*, August 20, 1940, 6.

Mothers—a group that claimed 10,000 members nationwide—had organized this vivid protest against conscription. Police and passerby who attempted to stop the spectacle faced insults and defiance from the assembled women. As debate continued in the House and Senate, six women in widow's veils watched from gallery as a silent warning about the potential consequences of passing Burke-Wadsworth.¹⁹

The draft's proponents faced stiff opposition, with legislative sessions sometimes devolving into petty recriminations and insults. At an August 6th session, pro-draft Senator Sherman Minton (D-IN) accused anti-draft Senator Rush D. Holt Sr. (D-WV) of coming from a “slacker family” that lacked patriotism and courage. Holt replied by charging that “Senator Minton is not in shape to be on the floor,” and defending his claim that he would always be opposed “to this alien doctrine of conscription, and the conscription program, which did not come from America, but came from foreign shores, and was incubated in the banks and law firms of New York City on Wall Street.” Outbursts from spectators led to threats of clearing the galleries while Senator Holt was reprimanded for his language. Tensions also grew in the House where FDR's allies limited debate on Burke-Wadsworth to two days in spite of vigorous protests from Republicans. On

¹⁹ “Mothers Hang Pepper Effigy on Capitol Hill,” *CDT*, August 22, 1940, 6; Kennett, *G.I.*, 4.

September 5, hostilities worsened as two congressmen engaged in a fistfight on the House floor.²⁰

To counter the public backlash, protests, and political opposition, the draft's proponents mobilized to make their case in the press while also taking advantage of the dire situation in Europe. Roosevelt called in powerful Republicans like New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia to speak in favor of Burke-Wadsworth, as well as prominent industrialists such as Owen D. Young. Educators from the National Education Association issued statements in favor of integrating compulsory military training into schools and colleges, although they disapproved of a full year of military service. Prominent journalists like Walter Lippmann published in support of conscription. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, Lippmann assailed Senator Robert Taft (R-OH) for criticizing the value of training and conscription: "These Senators are in flight from the realities and are taking refuge in sheer wishfulness....If the emergency demands this much military power which we do not possess, the overshadowing concern of responsible statesmen ought to be to think up ways of hastening the process of developing this force." Chief of Staff George C. Marshall likewise understood that without a peacetime draft, the Army would remain unable to counter German or Japanese aggression. A week before France fell to Axis forces, Marshall spoke on both the complacency that existed in the United States as well as the challenges ahead,

²⁰ Frank L. Kluckhohn, "Clash on Draft: Holt Attacks Sponsors of Bill Who Met Here at Harvard Club," *NYT*, August 7, 1940, 1; "House Cuts Draft Debate; Hundred Million for Planes," *DBG*, August 31, 1940, 1; For fistfight see Kennett, *G.I.*, 4.

making a subtle call for the draft: "We have been accustomed to liberty, but after the next few days nobody knows or can say what kind of world we shall be living in." Leaders like General Pershing and Chief of Staff Marshall were joined by other veterans like Colonel W.A. Graham who called universal training "not only wise but very necessary" especially given how long it would take to train a whole new army. Colonel Graham also dismissed the opposition "from religious and political objectors, from pacifists, cowards and Communists, from Liberty Leagues, and others of that ilk, and, alas, from frightened mothers, wives and sweethearts" while couching conscription as a fundamental American tradition with its roots in the 1792 Militia Act. FDR's allies smartly passed military spending bills before tackling conscription, giving them the argument that men would be needed to use the already purchased equipment and vehicles.²¹

In all likelihood, however, the deteriorating fortunes of France and Britain moved more officials towards passing Burke-Wadsworth. Five days before FDR officially called for conscription, Paris fell to the Wehrmacht. One week after the President's announcement, France surrendered to Nazi Germany leaving Americans stunned. As various congressional committees met to discuss the peacetime draft, the Battle of Britain intensified. Secretary of War Henry Stimson seized on the dangerous setbacks in Europe in his recommendations to the

²¹ "Draft Evader Penalties Set by Senators," *LAT*, July 27, 1940, 1; "Educators Urge Forced Military Drill in Schools," *CDT*, July 3, 1940, 23; Walter Lippmann, "Today and Tomorrow," *LAT*, August 20, 1940, A4; For Marshall's quotes see Joseph Alsop and Robert Kinter, "America's Top Soldier," *LAT*, December 29, 1940, G10; Col. W. A. Graham (Retired), "Compulsory Military Training," *LAT*, July 27, 1940, A4; "Age Limits in Draft Bill Set at 21-30," *LAT*, August 1, 1940, 1.

House Military Affairs Committee on August 1st. He warned that “in another 30 days Great Britain may be conquered and her fleet come under enemy control. Across the Pacific there is a powerful Japan in sympathy with Italy and Germany. We’ve got to very radically revise our prejudices about our first line of defense.” The appeal quieted some of the objections to an unprecedented peacetime mobilization of men, and the administration continued to gather support. By September the Luftwaffe began bombing London. One supporter of conscription noted that each day of the London Blitz bought Burke-Wadsworth “a vote or two in the House or Senate.”²²

On September 14, 1940, the House and Senate approved Burke-Wadsworth by a 2 to 1 margin. Protests, nevertheless, continued. Peace Mobilization League members picketed outside the White House, urging the President to veto the measure. The “anticonscriptionist” wing of the Senate held a public post-mortem led by Senator Burton Wheeler (D-MT) who warned that military training would poison American boys. “You mothers of America,” proclaimed Wheeler, “they say to you they will take your sons and train them to be young brutes. They will teach them that the Ten Commandments are wrong. You will have a country of Al Capones. You will have a country where robbery

²² “Age Limits in Draft Bill Set at 21-30,” *LAT*, August 1, 1940, 1; Supporter quoted in Kennett, *G.I.*, 3.

will run riot.” For the most part however, Americans accepted registration and the draft as measures justified by the looming Axis threats.²³

The morning of October 16 marked the beginning of registration-day, a massive undertaking that eventually saw over sixteen million men being processed by a million volunteer workers throughout the nation. Reports indicated a mostly smooth process even with the long lines and late hours for workers. The vast majority of men reported to their registration centers, though many struggled when filling out their registration card. Often, it was the first federal form they had ever seen. Protests at New York’s Union Theological Seminary and in the Southwest among Native Americans did little to disrupt the day. By this point most American men at least accepted the validity of compulsory service, with Gallup finding that 76% of boys and young men did not object to military service. One father of a selectee remembered the uncertainty and concern as he walked with his son into the local schoolhouse for registration: “What will happen to freedom and democracy when my son and a million like him are militarized?” But he soon came to see American conscription the way the Swiss saw their compulsory service, as a guarantor of freedom, democracy, and masculine honor. “My son is going to be a soldier,” the father explained, “And I felt a surge of pride.” Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Hershey, the executive officer at draft headquarters, issued a radio speech declaring that “anyone who watched

²³ John G. Norris, “Signature of Roosevelt Due Quickly: 4,500,000 Will Be Trained in 5 Years; Age Limits Fixed At From 21 to 35,” *TWP*, September 15, 1940, 1.

these Americans at the places of registration must have sensed a great surging pride, for America's manhood was parading through those places of registration today, America's youth upon whom the Nation depends for preservation."²⁴

"Over The Hill In October"

Despite the administration's victory with Burke-Wadsworth, the relatively smooth "R-Day," and Hershey's proclamations, military leaders understood just how unready they were to process and train the initial 900,000 men allocated by the Selective Service Act of 1940. Chief of Staff Marshall faced a wide array of problems as he attempted to essentially build an army from scratch. Before registration, the U.S. army totaled less than 170,000 regulars. The miniscule National Guard reserves lacked training and tradition. Marshall was likely even more concerned by the dearth of corps troops that specialized in skills like mortars, antiaircraft gunnery, logistics, and most notably tanks. The problem of integrating green recruits into the insular "Old Army" of professional soldiers loomed as well.²⁵

Marshall began by directly tackling these supply and training problems, as well as challenging the crippling traditionalism of other generals. Colleagues warned that he was "courting disaster," but Marshall proceeded to reassemble disparate units into divisions and pushed manufacturers to deliver needed

²⁴ For more on federal forms, tax expansion, and the way people interacted with the federal government, see Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 122-125; John G. Norris, "Duty Forced On Us, Roosevelt Tells Selects; Few Protest," *TWP*, 1; Kennett, *G.I.*, 7; Benjamin Russell, "The Swiss Make it Work:...How Selective Service Builds Democracy...," *LAT*, November 17, 1940, J8.

²⁵ Joseph Alsop and Robert Kinter, "America's Top Soldier," *LAT*, December 29, 1940, G10.

equipment. He also organized a humiliating public demonstration of the Army's woeful state prior to the introduction of Burke-Wadsworth, likely on purpose. In May 1940, Marshall mobilized seventy thousand troops for war games along a mock war front in Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas. Over the next few days, the Army's supposedly hardened regular troops performed maneuvers through mud, swamps, brush, and challenging hills, moving nearly 150 miles a day as they pretended to assault machine gun nests, break opponent lines, and take down enemy aircraft. Families and the press gathered to see the spectacle, but anyone who watched was left with little doubt as to how poorly the military might perform in a real war. Over the course of a week, 12 soldiers died in accidents, almost 400 suffered injuries and illness, and huge numbers of equipment and machinery failed. Later on, two flight crews totaling eleven men died when their bombers crashed. Civilians on porches and rooftops also witnessed the folly of generals unwilling to abandon cavalry. In one instance, two hundred mounted horses charged an armored brigade, slashing and firing at the unfazed tanks. *Time* noted, "Against Europe's total war, the U.S. Army looked like a few nice boys with BB guns." Marshall had, nevertheless, won the day. He proved that Army needed dedicated funding and manpower, while cavalry leaders were forced to confront the superiority of armored divisions. "It was a successful experiment," he said, "It showed us our shortcomings, and I think it convinced Congress that the Army needs these little demonstrations regularly." After the maneuvers Senator

Henry Cabot Jr. (R-MA) echoed Marshall: “The fact remains that our Army today is not what it ought to be.”²⁶

With the loss of France, Britain on the brink, and the draft in place, Marshall finally had the political capital he needed to begin the process of modernizing the decentralized and dilapidated Army camp system. During America’s violent westward expansion, the Army relied upon small, but numerous posts dotted throughout the countryside to project power and support cadres. Reliance on this system however, left only one true division. Marshall conceded to the *Los Angeles Times* that the remaining army was made up of “mere hodgepodes of unrelated small units.” Camps and units lacked the basic necessities of modern armies like artillery, firearms, logistics support, and basic transport. Many Representatives and Senators, however, staunchly opposed any attempts to modernize this outmoded camp system. Each post, camp, and fort provided consistent jobs, purchase orders, and men with disposable income to districts suffering through a depression. Congressional resistance to centralizing the camp system meant that training remained inefficient and commanding officers lacked experience with troop movements. Initial mobilization plans called for troops to drill and assemble in public buildings, parks, and fields within major cities. But with conscription proceeding quickly, Marshall and the War

²⁶ For Marshall’s perspective on the maneuvers and “It was a successful experiment” see Joseph Alsop and Robert Kinter, “America’s Top Soldier,” *LAT*, December 29, 1940, G10; For May 1940 maneuvers and *TIME* quote see Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 48-53.

Department pushed a crash program of expanding and building new camps and forts. Though he faced the ire of politicians who feared the loss of a local camp, Marshall began surveys of huge swaths of land.²⁷

Marshall, the Corps of Engineers, and the Construction Service also confronted a legacy of poor funding and mismanagement since World War One. At their height, the WWI Army cantonments could house 654,786 soldiers, but many of these training areas featured temporary housing that had fallen into some level of disrepair. From 1920 to 1938, the Construction Service suffered what it called “the lean years” or “the famine years.” Funding for maintenance and construction plummeted while a Brigadier General heading the Quartermaster Corps took control of the construction division. The General was selected on the basis of seniority, lacked an engineering background, and proceeded to ignore the suggestions of his more knowledgeable subordinates. The Army clustered some of its funds on a few new camps, but mostly focused on an increasingly dire battle against rot and dilapidation. Some of the Corps’ talented engineers resigned in disgust and left for more lucrative private sector work. The Army saw a brief reprieve in 1924 after troops on Governors Island were forced to forage driftwood from the bay to repair buildings. The *Times* put the story on the front page, and other articles emphasized the poor living conditions soldiers experienced. Congress appropriated more money for

²⁷ Joseph Alsop and Robert Kinter, “America’s Top Soldier,” *LAT*, December 29, 1940, G10; Kennett, *G.I.*, 42-45.

construction and repairs, but funding collapsed once again with the Great Depression. From 1934 to 1936, the Construction Service received 14% of the appropriations they estimated they would need for adequate repairs and maintenance. With international tension rising, FDR agreed to authorize a massive spike in construction spending of \$65 million. But even the backing of the President was not enough to break the deadlock, as the Army's internal dysfunctions and turf wars surfaced. Brigadier General A. Owen Seaman—described in the Army's history of the Construction Service as “peppery and unpredictable”—refused to take the funds and called in a number of political favors accumulated from his nearly four-decade military career. The exasperated Chiefs of Staff broke protocol and chose to humiliate Brig. General Seaman by promoting a colonel to the head of the division. The colonel accepted the funding and the Construction Service started to play catchup.²⁸

Marshall and the Construction Service considered several factors in their decisions of where to purchase land and where to build the new training centers. The Army sought some cold weather locations in the North, but most of the new camps required a warmer climate, and cheap, undeveloped land. The forts and training areas would need space for different maneuvers, as well as access to water, roads, and rail. Marshall also aimed for each base to be located near a city that could provide recreation. Several states and their members of Congress

²⁸ Lenore Fine and Jesse A. Remington, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services, The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1989), 42-56.

made aggressive bids to attract the incoming military dollars, though others strongly opposed the Army's presence near their communities. Most of the new camps and major expansions took place in the South or Southwest where units could avoid freezing conditions, train in mixed terrain, and perform large maneuvers that might stretch over several states. The most important forts and camps clustered in the states of the former Confederacy. Fort Benning, located in Western Georgia, became the biggest Army base, housing 95,000 while spanning nearly 200,000 acres. Originally a basic training camp established a month before the end of World War I, Benning was built up into an infantry training center. Camp Shelby, another expanded World War I site, rivaled Benning in population (86,000) and its location in Southern Mississippi allowed access to the Gulf Coast and inland marches across Alabama's coastal plain. Artillery boomed at the long ranges of Fort Bragg, outside Fayetteville, North Carolina. To the south, infantrymen trained at Fort Jackson outside Columbia, South Carolina. Additional training centers like Camp Hood (Texas), Camp Clairborne (Louisiana), Camp Blanding (Florida), and Fort Knox (Kentucky) all handled tens of thousands of draftees, and contributed to the expansion of the military throughout the South. Major installations outside Dixie included Camp San Luis Obispo near Morro Bay, California, Fort Dix in central New Jersey, and

Fort Lewis outside of Tacoma, Washington. The Navy focused on expansion of its Great Lakes training center near North Chicago.²⁹

While the land was mostly cheap, surveyors, contractors, and quartermasters faced a number of difficulties during construction. Some tracts turned out to be flooded, lacking water supply, or consisted of nothing but swampland. Time was short though, and Marshall ordered his engineers to push on. Other obstacles proved more troublesome. In 1940, the lumber market experienced a serious shortage, threatening to leave the Army paying exorbitant prices while failing to meet construction demands. The Construction Service managed to break this bottleneck by instituting a whole new system of purchasing lumber. Marshall and his subordinates likely faced an impossible task, but many draftees would still find themselves arriving in unfinished camps well into 1942.³⁰

While Marshall's much needed rebuilding program offered some cause for optimism, the draft's first selectees faced poor training and a chronic lack of *esprit de corps*. Part of the problem was born out of insufficient veteran leadership in training camps and forts, as well as rivalries between the new guys and the old hands. Green troops found little help or guidance from the Army regulars, who often saw the "number men"—their term for draftees—as soft,

²⁹ Kennett, *G.I.*, 44-45; Lenore Fine and Jesse A. Remington, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services, The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States*, 131.

³⁰ Kennett, *G.I.*, 43, 46; Lenore Fine and Jesse A. Remington, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services, The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States*, 131, 213-216.

stubborn civilians playing soldier. One sergeant of the Old Army argued that the conscripted men did not “know what the Army meant to me—security and pride and something good....Putting on that uniform not only meant that for the first time in my life I had clothes I wasn’t ashamed of, but also for the first time in my life I was *somebody*.” Draftees, as the sergeant recalled, “came in bitching about this and that, regulations, the food, a cot instead of an innerspring mattress, barracks instead of private rooms.” Conscripts despised many of the regulars for a clannish obsession over rank, procedure, and the “cult of the uniform.” Regulars also tended to haze and humiliate the draftees, denying them the use of the Post Exchange (PX) or forcing them to dig trenches for no reason.³¹

Beyond these antagonisms, most bases proved unable to process the new trainees or to provide the most basic equipment. Although the War Department initially set bold directives such as “There will be no compromise with quality,” deficiencies in the training process quickly emerged. With a chronic shortage or even absence of equipment like ammunition and mortars, draftees spent their days doing near endless calisthenics, close-order drills, or tedious manual labor, but learning little of combat or specialized skills. One senior training officer pinned the chronically poor instruction on the lack of experience of most officers: “Hell, you can’t expect an officer to be any good if he only has as much training at the enlisted men.” Non-commissioned officers would

³¹ Capt. M. M. Corpening, “Lack Veterans to Rush Training of Draft Army: Recruits Arriving Too Fast to Be Absorbed,” *CDT*, June 16, 1941, 4; Kennett, *G.I.*, 80-81.

occasionally argue and berate senior officers, disrupting the assumed hierarchy and command structure. Unskilled and untrained lieutenants—usually the leaders of platoons or companies—sometimes embarrassed themselves, losing the trust of their men. In one instance, a lieutenant maneuvered his men into a danger area during war games, leading the umpire to declare that his company had been destroyed by “friendly artillery.” When the lieutenant complained that “it’s our own artillery,” the umpire responded “It is, but your own shells will kill you if they hit you.” Another lieutenant repeatedly lost his way while orienteering his company through the woods, leading him to claim that the ground had an unusually high iron content. One Army colonel publically criticized these training failures, noting that an Illinois division “has been in camps for months, but has not had the services of a single military instructor.” The colonel concluded by grimly warning that “valor without military education only means suicide....If our boys should be recklessly thrown into battle with only the kind of training they have been receiving, they would be destroyed.” Privates largely agreed with one stating, “The papers are always talking about how good the morale is and how ready the Army is for battle. The hell it is!”³²

Marshall and the brass became alarmed at the chronic insubordination and mutinous behavior that spread among the selectees. Conscripts openly

³² Carlyle Holt, “Quality First, Army’s Plan to Build Fighting Force,” *DBG*, October 27, 1940, B31; “This Is What The Soldiers Complain About,” *LIFE*, August 18, 1941, Volume 11 Number 7, 17-18; “Col. M’Cormick Says U.S. Army Unfit For War: Contrasts Training with Germans,” *CDT*, August 17, 1941, 1.

resented the military's hierarchy and the insularity of life in rural military camps, publically complaining to family, congressmen, and the press. *LIFE* even published damaging remarks from troops that captured their frustration and refusal to submit to military society: "To hell with Roosevelt and Marshall and the Army and especially this Goddamn hole," said one draftee fed up with camp life. A commissioned report by Arthur Sulzberger and Hilton Railey of *The New York Times* confirmed that the enlisted man "is questioning everything from God Almighty to themselves." More disturbingly, officers reported being threatened and sworn at by their men. Railey wrote to Army leaders that officers lived in "physical fear" of the soldiers they supposedly commanded. The draftees often displayed blatant disregard for rank when they refused to salute an officer—a cardinal sin in the Old Army. Failure to salute could bring hefty fines or punishments like a twenty mile run, leading one soldier to write to *Yank* that "the principles we are fighting for are being destroyed before our very eyes." GIs and sailors also resented their superiors because of military policies on dating. Only officers were officially allowed to date the nurses, secretaries, and other women who staffed military buildings, prompting accusations from soldiers—and some women—that the military hierarchy was keeping women for themselves. Draftees' distrust of their superiors abounded in rumors that camp meals were

laced with saltpeter as they slept. This was apparently a military conspiracy to lower libido, making men more compliant and docile.³³

The draftees moved into near open rebellion in July 1941 when FDR and Marshall announced that the promised one year of military service would be extended indefinitely and that troops might be stationed outside the Western hemisphere. Beyond resenting the regulars, officers, and poor training conditions, draftees felt as though they were being asked to make great sacrifices while the rest of the country enjoyed the economic windfall of war production. Roosevelt and Marshall argued that the U.S. faced a great national peril, but with Pearl Harbor still four months in the future, men languishing in dusty camps bereft of equipment could see little reason for an extension of their service. Meyer Berger of *The New York Times* suggested that men did not necessarily lack the willingness to serve, but instead lacked incentive. One draftee wrote to Arthur Krock—also at the *Times*—asking why Roosevelt did not “tell us the details of this national peril?” Another group asked why they should “have to stay beyond the year prescribed in the Act when labor gets nearly everything it wants by strikes and violence and escapes the risks of Army service?” Other troops were less diplomatic, saying to *LIFE*, “So Roosevelt will get our jobs back? The hell he will! I’ve already been told that I can’t have my job

³³ *LIFE*, the *NYT* report, and *Yank letter* quoted in Kennett, *G.I.*, 68-70, 84-85; For dating policy and resentment see Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 132; Saltpeter conspiracy in Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 37.

back.” Protest mail from draftees and civilians flooded Capitol Hill, giving anti-interventionist forces the evidence they needed to rebuke the administration and military. Senator Robert Reynolds (D-NC), citing the torrent of protest letters, deemed Marshall’s proposal to extend the service length and area of operations no different from a declaration of war. Senators Wheeler and Taft claimed to be receiving over a thousand letters a day, many from draftees opposed to the extension of service. One infantry company from Camp Livingston in Louisiana sent a petition to the Senate declaring, “Prolongation of our service would be an actual breach of contract and certainly a blow to our morale. We feel that we have shown our patriotism for our country and now it is no more than fair that the other young men within our great country be asked to do their part....Many of our families are in dire need of help.” Fearing reprisals, these draftees asked not to be identified but insisted that they represented ninety percent of the camp. Privately, Marshall warned other generals and FDR about these negative press reports and how they might further exacerbate the morale crisis.³⁴

Platoons and companies that made public protests faced reprimands and reprisals from commanding officers infuriated at what they saw as mutinous behavior. A Fort Meade Quartermaster company instigated a small crisis after its Army officials learned of a telegram the men had sent to Senators Wheeler and

³⁴ Arthur Krock, “‘Flank Attack’ is Used in Draft-Army Change,” *NYT*, July 20, 1941, E3; Meyer Berger, “American Soldier—One Year After: A First-Hand Report on the Present State of the Civilian Who Went to Camp Last November to Train For National Defense,” *NYT*, November 23, 1941, SM3; “This Is What The Soldiers Complain About,” *LIFE*, August 18, 1941, Volume 11 Number 7, 18; Willard Edwards, “Public Protests on Longer Draft Term Jar Capital,” *CDT*, July 13, 1941, 1, For Marshall’s concerns see Kennett, *G.I.*, 68.

Taft. Though the draftees did not “begrudge the sacrifices we have made for our country” and promised to be willing to even make “the supreme sacrifice of our lives,” they questioned Marshall and Roosevelt’s claim that “we are in grave danger from aggression.” Instead, they argued that “the present emergency exists in the minds of war mongers in Washington and not in the actual state of affairs,” before going on to explicitly “condemn the acts of the administration leaders.” For the Army and Fort Meade’s adjutant, the telegram was a stunning public display of disloyalty and a violation of an Army regulation that prohibited “efforts to procure or influence legislation affecting the army.” One commander threatened draftees who protested to senators with a court martial while others declared they would pursue the highest limits of disciplinary action. Some men responded by threatening to desert, while others chalked the letters O H I O—“Over The Hill In October,” meaning leaving or deserting the Army after a year’s service was complete—on walls, pieces of equipment, and vehicles. In one camp, a *LIFE* reporter found that fifty percent claimed they would desert, forty percent “rue[d] the day they got in the Army,” and the final ten percent wished to transfer to a different branch of the military. Of the 400 men interviewed, only two wished to stick it out in the Army. Many lamented that they struggled to manage outstanding debts or prevent their families from being evicted while they drained swamps, dug ditches, and cut grass. Railey confirmed that the vast majority of troops were familiar with this damaging *LIFE* report, and almost every man told him the situation was far worse than *LIFE*’s depiction. Marshall and the FDR

administration, though weakened by the protests and in-fighting, managed to salvage an eighteen-month extension of service for draftees and reservists, though they were forced to concede a \$10 monthly pay raise. Low morale continued to plague the draftees, leading now General Hershey to complain that the situation would improve “if some of the parents would just leave them alone.” Draftees, however, maintained that the Army’s uncaring treatment of its men left them few choices when deciding between serving or deserting. “I was willing to sacrifice one year but I can’t afford more,” one infantryman said, “You can’t even see your wife....One of the fellows asked for leave to go to his wife when she was having a baby. When they turned him down he went AWOL. What would you do?”³⁵

Expanding the Draft

Only the horror of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor could solve the political problems plaguing the military. Draftees commonly complained about lacking a sense of purpose while in training, but much of that evaporated as the Pacific fleet sank and smoldered in Hawaii. Fighting spirit was high and the old battles over the draft and service length were now over. Men increasingly accepted the Rooseveltian language of service and sacrifice for the coming total war. Draftees and veterans interviewed by field workers assisting folklorist Alan Lomax blended

³⁵ Arthur Sears Henning, “Court Martial Threat Hurlled in Fight to Retain Draftees,” *CDT*, July 21, 1941, 1; “Soldiers’ Relief From Debt Urged,” *LAT*, August 13, 1940, 4; Richard Turner, “Senate Votes 2 ½ Year Draft, \$10 Pay Boost After One Year,” *DBG*, August 8, 1941, 1; “70,000 Per Month Will Face Draft, Says Gen. Hershey,” *DBG*, August 20, 1941, 13; “This Is What The Soldiers Complain About,” *LIFE*, August 18, 1941, Volume 11 Number 7, 17-18; For Railey see Kennett, 70.

nationalism with an almost savage desire for revenge. “It’s our duty as a nation to defend it and whip the aggressors,” one man explained. Another asserted that the US would have to “take over the Western Hemisphere...we’re going to have to police the world.” Men flocked to recruiting stations “fighting mad,” and most waited for hours in the cold. The Navy elected to keep its offices open 24/7 as lines of over 2000 volunteers snaked around city blocks. “It was the greatest wave of patriotism I have ever seen,” said one official. Other interviewees emphasized a personal desire for vengeance. Recruit Charles L. Gilley gave up his \$100 weekly salary, put off his marriage, and signed up for likely combat duty in the Marines. He hoped to avenge his Marine brother Ernest, who he feared had already perished in the Japanese capture of Wake Island. Men fantasized about murdering Japanese diplomat Saburo Kuru—“I’d a killed that son of a gun”—and suggested that hunting season on the Japanese had begun: “no bag limit, kill as many as you want.” One veteran speaking with draftees promised that “I’m going to fight with hate in my heart. What’s in me, what’s in my veins, I’m going to kill, slaughter.” The *Times*’ Railey argued that the selectees of 1940 suffered from poor morale because they were “a football team in training but without a schedule of games.” For the moment, the military no longer needed to manufacture motivation. “We were furious,” recalled one veteran, “No one’s

gonna come in our country. We immediately went to the marine recruiting headquarters.”³⁶

Five additional registrations took place after the first in 1940. After 1942, registration became a continuous process. One in ten Americans served in the armed forces between 1941 and 1945, with twenty percent of all men entering the military. Ten million men were drafted and another 6 million men and women volunteered. The fate of many young men would be determined by their local draft board. The government created 6,000 draft boards around the country, with World War I veterans and local eminent civilians like “judges, postmasters, and men of prominence” deciding who received exemptions. Some women’s professional groups protested the exclusion of women from these boards, but failed to change the policy. Beyond their failure to include women, the boards often took a discriminatory view towards conscientious objectors, homosexuals, and African Americans. One board member explained that his board had encountered several conscientious objectors “but we’ve always managed to talk them out of it.” Military authorities brought in psychiatric examiners to find and exclude gay men, even though many wished to serve and commanders later acknowledged that gay troops became critical and effective members of the Armed Forces. These psychiatrists’ methods lacked tact or subtlety: they simply

³⁶ Several quotes from Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 55-65; For Gilley see John G. Norris, “Volunteers Swamps Recruiting Offices,” *TWP*, December 8, 1941, 10; “Volunteers May Fill Up Draft Quota,” *TWP*, December 9, 1941, 10; Railey quote from Kennett, 70; “We were furious” quote from Terkel, 254.

asked if the potential draftee was a homosexual, had ever had a same-sex sexual experience, masturbated about men, or if they liked girls. Though a trying act for some self-identified gay men, many simply told the draft board that they liked girls. In the South, African Americans rarely served on any draft boards. Nationwide, draft officials and military leaders regarded African Americans as unsuited for combat roles, often failing to draft black men.³⁷

Many boys feared that they would not be selected, and those with medical issues or physical handicaps often attempted to hide conditions that might disqualify them from service. Part of this desire came from a traditional sense of masculine duty. But men also faced community pressure, a tactic honed in WWI by groups like the Order of the White Feather. Any young, apparently healthy male civilian who remained at home could be ostracized and despised as a draft dodger, an especially alienating fate in small towns. Members of the public expressed consternation and outrage when Joe DiMaggio was rejected for poor eyesight. After receiving numerous complaints about athletes being declared unfit for service, the War Department began “taking the boxer out of the ring and the ball player off the diamond, regardless of his potential value to the service, to satisfy public opinion.” Following their mental and physical examinations—and the long wait for their letter—men gathered to compare draft numbers. Very few

³⁷ Elizabeth Mullener, *War Stories: Remembering World War II* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 35-36; “Women Protest Draft Board Ban,” *LAT*, October 9, 1940, 5; For attempts to screen out gay men see Allan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 22; Also see Kennett, *G.I.*, 6-31 for an in depth overview of draft boards.

attempted to flee, though one inductee threw heavy chairs and damaged a room before running down the street where he was tackled by “two husky nomcoms.” Men nevertheless often confessed to the dread of leaving their families and girlfriends, while also expressing the excitement of leaving local communities for unfamiliar big cities before shipping across the Pacific or Atlantic. The last ritual of leaving was the bittersweet sending off party where family and friends gathered for a ceremony that combined elements of the coming of age rite and a funeral.³⁸

Planners were pleased with the efficiency and seemingly democratic quality of draft boards. Processing, assessing, and drafting millions of men while avoiding disruptions became a much needed success in the U.S.’s plodding steps towards mobilization. Yet the new influx of manpower only exacerbated the poor training conditions that the initial selectees criticized. Roosevelt and the Chiefs of Staff now moved on to an even larger challenge of equipping, training, and supplying a still unprepared military lacking skilled officers and infrastructure. Facing this crisis of an ineffective standing army and the definitive entry of the U.S. into the war after Pearl Harbor, the military moved to a training system that aimed to rapidly indoctrinate the supposedly individualistic and recalcitrant American civilian into military society. Ideally, men would quickly shed their

³⁸ “Plans for Army Draft Set Up in Minute Detail: Can Have Men in Uniform Month After Word ‘Go’,” *CDT*, July 25, 1940, 7; Burton Lindheim, “Draft Board Drama: Behind the Numbers of the Army Lottery Are...,” *NYT*, May 18, 1941, SM14; Kennett, *G.I.*, 8, 15-16, 31; “His Smashing Draft Protest is Futile; in the Army Now!,” *CDT*, October 15, 1941, 10;

civilian loyalties, submit to military discipline, and reform themselves into fighting units. This conception of discipline and *esprit de corps* was a holdover from WWI and the federal government's push to inculcate coercive voluntarism among civilians and soldiers alike.³⁹

“Their Own Particular Ordeal”

Arriving at induction stations, draftees readied to leave their private lives for training, war, and possibly death. Most were awkward, poorly dressed, and carrying items they would never need and would be quickly abandoned. They formed misshapen lines and waited for the troops trains or buses to take them to austere reception centers like Fort Dix in New Jersey, where they lingered days and sometimes weeks to be assigned to a training camp or fort, and then later, a unit training center. Most would also undertake specialized training in a subsequent location before moving to a port of embarkation. The average trainee made 6 to 7 moves before reaching port.⁴⁰

Arriving in camp, draftees often felt disoriented and intimidated by the rough conditions and unwelcoming regular troops. After days on the trains or buses, non-coms forced the sleep deprived men into the often muddy camp roads demanding that they close ranks. Watching the “calf-like marching gait” of green

³⁹ For coercive voluntarism see Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You* and Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 69.

⁴⁰ Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *United States Army in World War II: The War Department, Global Logistics and Strategy, 1943-1945*, Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1968), 13-14; Meyer Berger, “American Soldier—One Year After: A First-Hand Report on the Present State of the Civilian Who Went to Camp Last November to Train For National Defense,” *NYT*, November 23, 1941, SM3.

troops, regulars would yell “Hello, suckers!” or as marine E.B. Sledge recalled, “You’ll be sorreee.” Others jeered that the recruits ought to “look out for the hook,” referring to the coming smallpox and typhoid injections. “The recruits,” wrote one reporter at Camp Wheeler, “look about as military as a bunch of sightseers at Radio City with a guide.” Draftees soon received identification tags, shoes, uniforms, and the aforementioned inoculations before crawling into the barracks. Settling into the rough cots, men found themselves “in an alien world.”⁴¹

The first thing inductees noticed was the dirt. It was everywhere and ever present. In reception centers and camps, recruits faced an endless battle against dust, grime, soot, mud, and filth. At Fort Benning and other posts, troops claimed mud and dust somehow managed to coexist. Superior officers demanded tents be kept clean, but soldiers recalled that “no matter how often we swept, the broom could always collect a large pile of dust from that one square floor.” The coal fired stoves used to heat the tents created piles of ash and spread soot. Many stoves were installed but never actually worked. A lack of good firewood meant that living trees were chopped down and green wood was fed to the fire, producing higher levels of eye-stinging smoke and soot. Men walked through muddy pathways pocked with discarded paper and cigarette butts. Fort Dix

⁴¹ Meyer Berger, “American Soldier—One Year After: A First-Hand Report on the Present State of the Civilian Who Went to Camp Last November to Train For National Defense,” *NYT*, November 23, 1941, SM3; E.B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2010), 8; Elizabeth R. Valentine, “This Is How We Make a Soldier,” *NYT*, August 29, 1943, SM8; Kennett, *G.I.*, 34, 39.

featured streets and fields filled with “khaki-colored mud as sticky as fly paper.” Latrines required near constant cleaning, though one recruit lamented that mud and paper quickly caked the floor leaving it unclean again. Men on K.P. (Kitchen Patrol or Kitchen Police) recalled the seemingly ineradicable grease that coated every pot and surface. Hastily constructed huts filled with the “heady scent of fresh pine board and tar paper,” while barrack tents howled with gusts of wind. Long marches took place “in scorching heat, in bitter cold, in rain or snow” and in the night where one man grasped the belt of the man in front of him “to keep from getting lost in the darkness.” Sledge recalls sleeping in extra gear to combat the cold. In Texas, men told of mosquitos so spoiled that they would check a GI’s tags for blood type before biting. Though conditions improved over the course of the war, many draftees arrived in camps described as “little more than great stretches of waste land,” places where “dried top soil blew into mouth and ears with every wind.” One Indiana recruit lamented the environmental hazards and physical exhaustion of living in a military post: “I cannot picture everything clearly for you for I cannot send you a box of Texas dust to pour liberally over your whole body. I cannot send you a long, hot road and a fine set of blisters or a pair of heavy G.I. shoes to be broken in.” Another recalled the “all pervading barrenness” and a sense that his camp existed “in a constant state of erosion.”⁴²

⁴² Ross Parmenter, *School of the Soldier: An Essay in the Form of a Memoir* (New York: Profile Press, 1980), 27, 38; Kennett, *G.I.*, 44, 49, 54; Bill Downey, *Uncle Sam Must be Losing the War* (San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press, 1982), 30; Marhsall Newton, “Sticky Mud Halts Fort Dix Training,” *NYT*, December 17, 1940, 21; H.I. Brock, “Our Forty-Eight Best States: E Pluribus Unum Has a New Meaning for...,” *NYT*, March 14, 1943, SM9; Sledge, *With the Old Breed*, 11; Meyer Berger, “American Soldier—One Year After: A First-Hand Report on the Present State of

Life in camp became defined by the fight against discomfort, loneliness, and boredom. Few would become combat soldiers and many never approached a combat zone. The vast majority suffered through what outpost soldier Ross Parmenter called “their own particular ordeal.” Troops “sweated and froze in some of the dirtiest weather, and, though they were spared danger, they did not have excitement and movement to offset loneliness, separation, hardship, and monotony.” The separation from the direct experience of combat left many men without “the sense that their sacrifices were justified because what they were doing was vital.” Continued equipment shortages left many draftees throwing stones instead of grenades or continuing the construction of their unfinished camp or fort. The training infrastructure was only truly completed by 1944, and Army officials later admitted that “the machine was a little wobbly when it first got going. The men knew it. The officers knew it. Everybody knew it.” Teaching improved after the Army and Navy produced some combat veterans with practical advice. Until then, instructors took a “pay-attention-you-fuckers” lecture style. Many reception and training areas simply received far too many recruits each day, leading to backlogs in processing, distributing, and training. At times, men were quarantined in the barracks for days following the outbreak of a disease or death of a trainee from sickness. Recruits became quite familiar with the phrase “hurry up and wait.” Paul Fussell, veteran and cultural critic, cited

the Civilian Who Went to Camp Last November to Train For National Defense,” *NYT*, November 23, 1941, SM3.

Leonard Woolf's image of "endlessly waiting in a dirty, grey railway station waiting-room" as the best way to capture the "negative emptiness and desolation of personal and cosmic boredom" found in wartime. Many discomforts, he explained, were "the inevitable inconveniences of military life: overcrowding and a lack of privacy, tedious institutional cookery, deprivation of personality, general boredom."⁴³

Petty injustices, "sadism thinly disguised as necessary discipline," and authoritarianism combined to form what Fussell identified as "Chickenshit." Troops recognized Chickenshit as any behavior that made "military life worse than it need be" or as some trivial, but painful demand that had contributed nothing to victory. Chickenshit was being forced to dig a trench for a latrine when the camp already had a functioning sewer system. Chickenshit was not being allowed to wear an overcoat "at reveille when it is freezing, but which you will be required to wear during the sweltering afternoon." Chickenshit crystallized the stifling low-level authoritarianism baked into military training that made men aware of how little freedom and control they exercised over their lives. The irony of entering an authoritarian organization to defend the four freedoms did not go unnoticed. Some of the more intellectual draftees found the lack of choice liberating: "I was freed from even the most elementary decisions as to what to

⁴³ "Strength of the Army Reports," 319.1 (Weekley Intelligence Summary) 8th SC, Box 78, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; Parmenter, *School of the Soldier*, 22; Kennett, *G.I.*, 46, 49; "Tests Rushed to Determine Cause of Soldier's Death," *LAT*, December 2, 1941, 10; Fussell, *Wartime*, 76,80.

wear or eat.” Most, however, found themselves confronting “the Will of the Army,” a force that gave a “strange power to all those in authority, so that an ignorant drill instructor, or an uncouth corporal, who had been made barracks chief, could order us around and we had to submit or be punished.” One returning veteran argued that training created “dictators who mold the thoughts and actions of men under their leadership. The trend of this kind of leadership is to create class distinctions by making the leader king and the followers slaves.” The Army’s caste system incentivized Chickenshit, while fostering an intense desire for personal liberty and comfort outside of the military. Quoting Napoleon, an Army colonel observed that “misery is the best school for a soldier.” For some men, misery continued far past this early training period. In 1943, soldiers at Camp Hood telegraphed the Military Police division claiming they were “being treated more like dogs instead of soldiers” and that the German POWs on site lived in far better conditions. Officers endlessly beat trainees and ignored one soldier suffering appendicitis. “Are we still in America,” asked the private, “Or are we over in Japan or Germany?”⁴⁴

The War Department eventually decided that having troops performing a slog of menial jobs like KP, cooking, operating phones, distributing mail, stoking fires, and sweeping streets was perhaps not the most efficient use of each unit’s

⁴⁴ Fussell, *Wartime*, 80; Kennett, *G.I.*, 54, 80-81; Parmenter, *School of the Soldier*, 25, 38-39, 91, 109; E.E.H., “Voice of the People: Army Training,” *CDT*, January 28, 1945, 14; Walter Duranty, “A Challenge to All Americans,” *NYT*, May 16, 1943, BR3; “Private John Rivers to Military Police Division,” November 20, 1943, 250.1 General #1, Box 65, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal Files 1941-1945, 250 to 251, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

limited training time. In March 1941, the Department started to increase the number of civilians employed by the Army from 215,000 to 1,400,000. These civilians would step in to free up soldiers for more direct training in their specified duty. While this idea made sense in principle, the Army actually ended up paying these civilians \$35 a week, whereas soldiers were only paid \$30. Even though soldiers also received free food, clothing, and housing, the disparity in raw weekly salary did little to alleviate the common idea among draftees that civilians were managing to get rich while shirking duty. Men stuck in the Army accused civilians of “pseudo-patriotism,” and many draftees became disgusted with the money they imagined war workers might be making: “This rubs a soldier the wrong way. They don’t like to see civilians getting credit....We are at war, and everybody should do his duty, whether in the Army or not. They are getting \$90 or \$100 (per week) for the work they are doing.” This pay gap became just another slight that made men hate both civilians and camp life even more.⁴⁵

In addition to these indignities and problems, African Americans also suffered mistreatment and violence fueled by the racism of white officers and civilians. The black press covered several notable incidents where horrible conditions essentially forced the soldiers to go absent without leave (AWOL). In Bastrop, Louisiana, several privates fled to Chicago after enduring a spate of “sadistic brutality” administered by white officers. A series of beatings, humiliations, and

⁴⁵ “Civilian Workers to Free Soldiers from Camp Jobs,” *DBG*, March 20, 1941, 1; Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 212, 224.

rumored murders followed an incident in which a white officer and soldier objected to the presence of five African-American draftees taking leave in town. The consistently violent and demeaning handling of black troops ensured that they went AWOL at over twice the rate of white soldiers.⁴⁶

Besides generally receiving more violent punishments, worse living conditions, and disdain for the emerging Double V campaign, black draftees also faced the pervasive fear of interracial sex that accompanied their presence near civilian communities. The *Afro-American* reported one Birmingham man's promise that "no white man down here goin' to let his daughter sleep with a n—, or sit at the table with a n—, or go walkin' with a n—. The war can go to hell, the world can go to hell, we can all be dead—but he ain't goin' to do it." Given the Army's decision to buildup training centers across the South, the numbers of northern African Americans drafted, and the dearth of available recreation, Marshall had created a powder keg. Southerners understood that the military influx would challenge the established white supremacist sexual order. The *Afro-American* noted that the talk of white Southern men always returned to the "threatened rape and the sanctity of Southern womanhood." Future incidents outside the South suggest reporters would have heard similar concerns if they had asked white men in cities like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, or Boston.

⁴⁶ "Cavalry Troopers Tell of New Army, Police Brutality," *TCD*, September 13, 1941, 1. For AWOL rate comparisons see "Summary—Statistical Analysis of Apprehensions," August 14, 1944, 251.2 General #1, Box 66, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 251.2 Gen. to 251.2H, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

Throughout the training period and the war, violent shootouts, riots, and lynchings were sparked by interracial sex, real and imagined. Though revoked by the War Department, one captain's order went so far as to make all interracial sex—including consensual relationships—punishable by death.⁴⁷

All of the discomforts, injustices, and recurring boredom drove both black and white draftees to commit small acts of insubordination. Resistance to the partnered forces of authoritarianism, conformity, and Chickenshit occurred in the way draftees walked and the way they dressed. Europeans consistently noted the ragged, discordant marching style of American troops, as well as their disregard for a neat uniform or polished shoes. General Dwight D. Eisenhower noted to Marshall how American companies looked like “armed mobs,” while General George S. Patton attacked Bill Mauldin's cartoon grunts for their sloppy, unshaven appearance. Troops also used publications like *Yank* to mock the privileges given to the upper castes of the military. One recruit wrote in to declare, “I'll sweat for my country, but here is one private who is never going to mop any sergeant's floor, even if it costs me six months' confinement.” Men could also employ what Fussell called ‘rumor-jokes’’: essentially a short story that undercut superiors and offered a fantasy of rebellion. One rumor-joke featured General Patton dressing down a man for failing to come to attention. After

⁴⁷ For such incidents, see also chapter two. *Afro-American* report quoted in Jane Dailey's “The Sexual Politics of Race in World War II America” in Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck (eds.), *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 151-154, quote on 151.

Patton's lengthy tirade, the man shoots back, "Run along asshole, I'm in the Merchant Marine." In another telling, a major screams at a man in a dirty uniform. The man replies: "Fuck you, buddy. I just came in from town to fill the Coke machine."⁴⁸

Men quickly learned that their best chance to rebel against the restrictions and order of military life came while outside the base. The most famous conflict between draftees and command became known as the Yoo-Hoo Affair in July 1941. Troops traveling in supply trucks drove past a Memphis golf course and spotted a number of girls playing in shorts. Deciding, as the *Boston Globe* described it, to "manifest their high-spirited free-born American independence about the Army uniforms they wore," the soldiers proceeded to yell lewd remarks and cat-call after the women. As the men continued to "yoo-hoo" and roll down the street, Lieutenant General Ben Lear happened to be playing on the golf course. Lear was a "regular of regulars," a tough former cavalry sergeant who valued the rugged discipline and tradition that defined the Old Army. He resented the yoo-hooing soldiers' willful disregard for the standards of conduct while in uniform and their treatment of the women. Lear chased the men down and approached them, though he did so in his golfing attire. As he confronted the draftees, they began mocking the General who they mistook for an elderly golfer. After retrieving his General's stars, Lear found the men and punished them with a fifteen-mile march through ninety-seven-degree heat. Privately, the brass worried

⁴⁸ Kennett, *G.I.*, 82-83; Fussell, *Wartime*, 90.

that the incident epitomized the recurring discipline and morale issues facing many commanders.⁴⁹

Lear and the War Department soon received a deluge of civilian complaints after the story was publicized. The General was unrepentant, insisting that “loose conduct and rowdyism cannot be tolerated.” Lear believed in the dignity and honor of duty and the uniform—“drugstore cowboys” and undisciplined troops yelling at women had no place in military. But to the public, the soldiers seemed to be nothing more than rambunctious boys being punished, as one woman put it, by a “mean old general.” Others asserted it would be rude *to not* cat-call the women. One editorial asked, “How would the girls have felt if our dynamic Army has passed in silence? For shorts are not designed to be ignored....Young ladies have a right to expect the enthusiasm and loyalty of the boys who are defending the American way of life.” But some women maintained that “their uniform doesn’t give them a right to jeer and whistle at girls. They were not gentlemen to do so and I think they should have been punished.” On one issue, women interviewed by a reporter commonly agreed: “all soldiers yell at girls.” And, as one warned, “when there is only one or two boys calling ‘yoo-hoo’ that’s an entirely different matter and then a girl can’t be too careful.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Louis Lyons, “Tough Gen. Ben Lear Is on a Tough Spot: Nonmilitary Nation Like United States Gets Excited When a Big Mogul of the Army Cracks Down on Selectees Who Yoo-Hoo at Girls,” *DBG*, July 13, 1941, C1; Westbrook Pegler, “Fair Enough,” *LAT*, July 14, 1941, 1A; “Didn’t Know He Was the General,” *NYT*, July 15, 1944, 14; “Yoo-Hooing Soldiers Defended, Gen. Lear Criticized in House,” *TWP*, July 10, 1941, 1; Kennett, *G.I.*, 67.

⁵⁰ Though one congressman asserted that one punished man was “lying prostrate and near death,” the camp’s commanding officer denied this and said the injuries were actually a broken rib, one headache, and “three gastronomical disturbances.” “Army Orders Lear to Explain

Congress soon put pressure on the War Department to punish Lear, while House members called for an investigation. Representative Paul Kilday (D-TX) accused Lear of seeking “revenge rather than disciplinary action.” Lear later telegraphed an explanation of his decision to discipline the soldiers, further stating that “I am responsible also that members of the Second Army treat the civilian population with respect and consideration.” The War Department eventually closed the investigation, backed Lear, and pleaded with the public and Congress to avoid “further hullabaloo,” though the incident inspired at least one musical number and a film script titled *Private Yoo-Hoo*. Nevertheless, the Yoo-Hoo Affair continued to plague Lear’s career nearly two years later, with one Senator delaying action on his rank unless the General retired. “I think those soldiers were given shameful treatment,” said Senator Bennett Clark (D-MO), “and I still resent it.” When Lear returned to the U.S. after his service in the European theater—where he played a crucial role in logistics and reinforcement policy—over two thousand GIs greeted him with “an earthshaking chorus of ‘yoo-hoos.’” Lear said nothing and “looked sternly ahead.”⁵¹

Though depicted as a fairly silly curiosity, the Yoo-Hoo Affair established a precedent that dissuaded military officials from appearing to punish men for

Discipline of ‘Yoo-Hoo’ Troops,” *TWP*, July 11, 1941, 11; “Didn’t Know He Was the General,” *NYT*, July 15, 1944, 14; Kennett, *G.I.*, 67; Earl J. Wilson, “Girls OK ‘Yoo Hoos;’ Say It’s Only Natural,” *TWP*, July 12, 1941, 22; “Brief Note on Shorts,” *NYT*, July 17, 1941, 18.

⁵¹ “Yoo-Hooing Soldiers Defended, Gen. Lear Criticized in House,” *TWP*, July 10, 1941, 1; “Yoo-Hoo Incident Ends: War Department Backs Lear in Disciplinary Measures,” *NYT*, July 18, 1941, 11; “‘Yoo-Hoo’ Number Wins Laughter,” *LAT*, October 3, 1941, 17; Louella O. Parsons, “Caviar for General!,” *TWP*, August 11, 1941, 9; “‘Yoo Hoo’ Case Delays Action On Lear’s Rank,” *CDT*, May 13, 1943, 7; “G.I.’s ‘Yoo Hoo’ Cheer Welcomes Gen. Lear Home,” *LAT*, July 21, 1945, 5.

behaving poorly towards women and civilians. Pressure from politicians and civilians—driven by a sense that servicemen should be allowed a bit of fun— incentivized military officials to ignore the growing problem of violence and disorder in cities located near camps and forts. Australian war correspondent Alan Moorehead captured the almost limitless tolerance and praise Americans levied on soldiers: “Every stop in the propaganda organ had been pulled out wide in praise of the American soldier. There was religious fervor in the phase ‘our boys,’ and while you could criticize everything on earth, even the most hardboiled columnist or politician would never dare to question the skill or courage of the American soldier.” Outside of camp then, troops were offered a space divorced from military control, where civilians countenanced increasingly aggressive behavior.⁵²

“What Rabbit Ever Slew a Wolf?”

Despite these early conflicts, logistical problems, and training failures, draftees soon found themselves forging a military identity distinct from civilian life, though perhaps not the disciplined military identity envisioned by Command. Through the common hardship of basic training, troops came to see military service as an indication of superiority to a feminized civilian world. Draftees also sought a reprieve from the authoritarianism and Chickenshit that defined training. Leave and liberty in nearby towns and cities offered a space where men could be empowered and rewarded for their service, while also performing a kind of

⁵² Moorehead quoted in Kennett, *G.I.*, 94.

swaggering, violent masculinity. These initial experiences outside of camp created and crystalized group bonds amongst wildly different troops, while also setting expectations of how they ought to behave in liberty ports.

Camp life and basic training brought men into a world that produced its own language, rituals, and hardships. The training camp was initially uncomfortable and strange for the majority of recruits, but learning the language of the barracks offered a path into the military world and a way of categorizing and understanding the dynamics of life in the service. Whether it be “bullshitting,” gambling on crooked card games, or telling the dirtiest story, draftees discovered shared rituals of belonging. An Army study later identified the “slack times of the day and in the barracks at night” as the space in which men formed bonds and a common worldview: “It is in gossiping, carousing, smoking, and playing that consensus emerges as to who can talk, who has sound judgment, and who is a fool, who is reliable and who is untrustworthy, who gets into trouble and who stays out.” Men identified different characters in their units like the loudmouth who answered too many officers’ questions, or the brownnoser who committed the disgraceful sin of trying to please the officers. The goldbrick made sure to do as little work as possible while the sad sack—short for sad sack of shit—was worse because he tried, but failed to do anything of use. A Flatpeter was more charming, in that he was “so stupid and awkward as always to be stepping on, or stumbling over, his own penis.” Draftees also developed a “sociology of the obscene” and a vernacular that reveled in taboo and seemingly every possible

iteration of the word “fuck.” This “Army Creole” or “Army Pidgin” allowed men of different regional, educational, and ethnic backgrounds to speak a common language and build a sense of belonging in the military. Army researchers concluded that “when a soldier begins to use the Army vocabulary and slang without deliberate choice, and when a situation automatically evokes the correct attitudes, he has unwittingly acquired the rules and regulations whether he knows it or not.” Contemporary psychologists identified the transgressive language as “an aggression against all those who accept the taboo-in this case the entire civilian environment” or as a “defiance against the patriarchy under which the soldier grew up.” Sociologists agreed, arguing that “the soldier was a morally irresponsible fellow, given to hedonistic vices and afflicted with a strong contempt for civilians.”⁵³

Draftees unable to fit into the barracks’ vision of masculinity or incapable of completing the training became identified as belonging to the feminized civilian world. Each company produced trainees labeled as “weaklings,” “shaky kids,” and “mama’s boys.” These men were bullied, failed to complete training exercises, and given a blue discharge that stripped them of veteran’s benefits and sent them back to the shame of civilian life. Brawny, forceful heterosexuality

⁵³ For Army Study quoted in Kennett, 61; For the sociology of the obscene and barracks characters, see John Robert Elting, Dan Cragg, and Ernst Deal, *A Dictionary of Soldier Talk* (New York: Scribner, 1984) and Kennett, 61; For “flatpeter” see Fussell, *Wartime*, 91; For psychologists’ view see Irving L. Janis, “Psychodynamics of Adjustment to Army Life,” *Psychiatry*, May 1945, 171 and Kennett, 62; For sociologists’ view see “Sociologists Find Soldier is no Hero,” *NYT*, April 28, 1940, 32. For a fascinating breakdown of gambling in the armed forces see John Desmond, “Help for G.I. Suckers,” *NYT*, October 10, 1943, SM14.

became equated with the service itself. Soldiers even began calling those given undesirable discharges “blue tickets” or “blue discharges,” and these epithets became increasingly synonymous with boys who were “crazy,” “cowardly,” or “queer.” One psychiatrist argued that “sissy” draftees would be “subject to ridicule and ‘joshing’ which will harm the general morale and will incapacitate the individuals for Army duty.” An Army study concurred, explaining that “even the man who, without homosexuality, is so effeminate in appearance and mannerisms that he is inevitably destined to be the butt of all the jokes in company, should be excluded.” Troops uninterested in participating in the sexual obsession and aggression of the barracks failed to fit the mold of a true military man. Indeed, a good soldier was also a sexually aggressive one ready to demonstrate his “swaggering masculinity.” Some gay draftees nevertheless found ways to cope with their “heterosexualized” lives, with same-sex relationships and the intimate, even erotic, bonds of buddy relationships allowing for what psychiatrists saw as a “disguised and sublimated homosexuality.”⁵⁴

Command, in its search for some form of contagious morale and comradery amidst a disorganized and haphazard mobilization, quickly embraced this version of troop aggression and virility. Major figures in the military’s

⁵⁴ For weaklings, shaky kids, and mama-boys see Kennett, 64; For blue charge, psychiatrist’s quote, and Army study, and coping strategies see Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 20, 37-38, 139; For more on the way this swaggering masculinity was equated with the full benefits of GI service see Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) and “Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Social Citizenship under the 1944 G.I. Bill,” *The Journal of American History* 90 (December 2003), 935-957.

leadership explicitly endorsed this vision of masculinity as an integral element of a recruit's training. General Patton observed, "A man who won't fuck, won't fight." A 1941 Navy review of "essential qualities to be instilled in the draftee" made a more academic case for the same idea:

[Men] cannot, they must not, be mollycoddled, and this very education befits nature, induces sexual aggression, and makes the stern, dynamic type we associate with the armed forces. This sexual aggressiveness cannot be stifled. Imagine, if you can, an army of impotent men....The Mongol hordes, who conquered all of Asia and most of Europe, recognized this fact too: "He who is not virile is not a soldier. He who lacks virility is timid, and what rabbit ever slew a wolf."

The *US Infantry Journal* concurred: "A certain reversion to the primitive is not undesirable." This "barracks culture" combined violence and heterosexual sex, driving men to "play rough" with women—in short, to be a "wolf." It was Teddy Roosevelt's *Strenuous Life* in full force. Popular films and stage musicals like *The Fleet's In* (1942) and *Iceland* (1942) as well as songs like Joan Merrill's "You Can't Say No To a Soldier," and cheesecake pin-ups all reinforced this vision of government approved coercive heterosexual sex. Civilian adoration of "our boys," as seen in the Yoo-Hoo Affair, further insulated troops from criticism. This emphasis on swaggering masculinity proved a departure from World War I, especially when it came to gay men. During the Great War, gay men might be rejected from service for previous stints in prison or sanitariums, or possibly for physiological disorders, but not because they simply exhibited "homosexual personalities or tendencies." Now with shifts in psychology and the military's emphasis on manly aggression, Army mobilization regulations included a new

order that differentiated homosexuals from “normal people,” while also setting guidelines for identifying and rejecting gay men. Officials noted that “effeminacy in dress,” “feminine bodily characteristics,” and “sissy” boys would need to be eliminated from military service, so as to maintain a high level of morale.⁵⁵

Marshall may have harbored reservations about this emerging “wolfish” culture—as seen in his later private concerns about troop behavior in port and on transports—but he likely realized little could be done to undercut a mostly organic identity that helped men bond. Commanders also grew to value any kind of camaraderie and morale that might be developing among draftees, even if this camaraderie was not the highly disciplined culture envisioned by planners. The Army’s “brass hats” and morale branch accepted Napoleon’s injunction that morale far outstripped physical condition when determining battle effectiveness. They worried that if bad morale took hold in the barracks, it would spread like a contagion. “Mental dry rot,” explained a captain, “is as astonishingly infectious in an army camp because men live so close together.” Commanders were happy to tolerate roughhousing, filthy humor, pranks, and bullying of sad sacks and shaky

⁵⁵ Patton quote from Carlo D’Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 925-6fn42; Navy Review quoted in John Costello, *Love, Sex, and War: Changing Values, 1939-1945* (London: Collins, 1985), 115; *US Infantry Journal* from Costello, 120; For shift in treatment of gay men see Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 12-13, 19-20; See also Henry Elkin, “Aggressive and Erotic Tendencies in Army Life,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol 51, #5, March 1946, 408-413 and Talbert Josselyn, “Sailor’s Ashore,” *Collier’s*, December 1, 1945, 26-33. For the earlier history of this wolfish masculinity, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), E. Anthony Rotundo’s “Manhood in the Twentieth Century” in *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), and Michael Kimmel, “Muscles, Money, and the M-F Test: Measuring Masculinity Between the Wars” in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

kids if it produced group cohesion and *esprit de corps*. Witnessing a boisterous, energetic company marching down the streets of Fort Meade, an officer remarked, “That’s it, that’s morale. When soldiers are still full of beans after eight hours of drill and manoeuvres they have morale.”⁵⁶

Men who made it through training and then returned home on furloughs often remarked that they now felt irrevocably separate from the civilian world. One soldier wrote, “I found that I could not even wear one of the civilian suits which hung in the closet of my room; the gesture would have been painfully empty, and a futile retreat; in a time when reality was decked in olive drab.” War Department surveys of American soldiers confirm these letters and anecdotes, with only 17% responding that they felt more at ease among civilian men. Soldiers also believed that “the Army makes a man out of you” with 53% strongly agreeing and another 27% granting “there may be something to it.”⁵⁷

While this creation of a military masculinity produced greater cohesion and morale amongst soldiers, it also drove men to see themselves as separate and superior to civilians. Troops reserved particular antipathy for “feather merchants” or civilians enjoying high wages and access to women at home. Soldiers

⁵⁶ Meyer Berger, “Morale,” *NYT*, May 25, 1941, SM10.

⁵⁷ For “I found that...” see Robert Welker in Howard Peckham and Shirley Snyder, eds., *Letters from Fighting Hoosiers* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana War Commission, 1948); 46% responded that were more at ease among soldiers, while 43% responded that they felt about the same among both groups. For polling see “The American Soldier in World War II: Planning Survey 5: Attitudes Toward Civilians,” Samuel A. Stouffer, USAMS 1942-PS05, War Department, Army Service Forces, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1921-2008, Record Group 330, NACP [retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/620483>]. Also see Samuel A. Stouffer, *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life*, 2 volumes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949).

regularly and publicly complained that civilians were “concentrating on their individual selves instead of on winning the war.” Men with deferments for critical war time work were dismissed as “slackers” and likewise envied for their unimpeded enjoyment of the comforts of civilian life. In public, soldiers would harass and heckle men not in uniform, calling them “4-F bastards.”⁵⁸

Soldiers satirized civilian life as soft, luxurious, and almost foreign. “A Soldier’s Guide to the U.S.A.” captured the extent to which military men felt separated from—but also envious of—the rhythms and comforts of civilian life:

They wear a strange kind of uniform called civilian suits....They eat a strange assortment of foods such milk (direct from cows), fresh fruit (like peaches, plums, and bananas), fresh eggs (with the shell) and fresh meat....These people speak a different language from the one in vogue over here. For instance, at the dinner table, instead of shouting, “Throw over that d—n salt,” they say, “Would you please pass the salt?”...They behave like “human beings.”⁵⁹

Yet, troops also feared and despised civilian men as sexual threats, with some becoming “the most feared enemy of all.” Marines directed their envy and hatred towards “Jodie...the butt of all military wrath and yet a sort of international hero at the same time.” Jodie, short for “Joe-the-Grinder” represented all the 4-F men “grinding away on top of all the women back home.” Soldiers obsessed over this mythical character “who could pick over our love-starved women as though they were Brussels sprouts.” Army psychologists (and enemy psychological warfare divisions) quickly noticed that the fear of “the woman left behind” haunted

⁵⁸ Kennett, 78; “From a Soldier to Civilians,” *CDT*, September 21, 1942; Terkel, 121.

⁵⁹ Pfc. Jerome B. Skalka, “A Soldier’s Guide to the U.S.A.,” *NYT* (New York City, NY), August 6, 1944, SM10.

servicemen. “Jilted G.I. Clubs”—with its theme song of “Somebody Else Is Taking My Place”—sprung up originally in Texas and later in other theaters to comfort men who received “Dear John” letters. Several camps spread “Keep ‘Em Happy Clubs” for soldier girlfriends, asking that they refrain from writing about their dates with other men in their letters. Army researchers became fascinated by the soldier’s obsession with sex and infidelity, noting that fears of civilian men “stealing” women at home drove a desire to reaffirm his own masculinity and sexuality when outside of camp.⁶⁰

Military affiliation effectively engendered an in group-out group mentality that drove soldiers to devalue civilian life and property before they even arrived in port. This dynamic produced disastrous results when combined with the sexual obsession of camp life and what would prove to be inadequate policing in places where troops went on liberty in unprecedented numbers.

Women too, clearly sensed that they had social and sexual obligations to men in uniform. Women themselves argued that they ought to place men’s interests above their own. Even women’s rights advocates like Margaret Culklin Banning asserted that women “have as serious effect on the moral of the armed forces” and that “men’s happiness depends on women, even more than does their pleasure.” Women’s advice authors claimed that women ought to excuse

⁶⁰ Quotes on “Jodie” from Bill Downey, *Uncle Sam Must be Losing the War*, 25; Clubs similar to the Jilted GI clubs developed throughout the various theaters of war. Kennett, 76.; Elkin, “Aggressive and Erotic Tendencies in Army Life,” 411; John Cornell, “Southland Soldiers: News and Chatter of Army Camps,” *LAT*, July 28, 1941, 7.

the misbehavior of soldiers: “Don’t forget that this whole business is a great, dull, dangerous, heartbreaking trial. The life of a soldier is one of deprivation and peril.... Feel sorry enough, at least, to understand him—and to forgive him completely if he fails to act with all the storybook gallantry of Bulldog Drummond.”⁶¹

Before Pearl Harbor and early during the war, draftees generally lacked exciting locales and opportunities to meet “nice girls.” Towns near training centers had yet to boom, leaving men on leave with little to do but drink. One private lamented that “the boys here hate the Army. They have no fighting spirit except among themselves when they get stinking drunk.” Morale suffered because the towns and cities near camps lacked any “recreation infrastructure,” leaving men with nothing to do. The *Times* reported that because the camps had “sprung up overnight,” local communities quickly became inundated with soldiers, just “as army ants swarm over a crust.” The trainees at big training centers like Fort Knox and Fort Bragg outnumbered the citizens living in local towns 40 to 1. *LIFE* recorded soldiers’ complaints that “when they go to the nearby cities they are shunned by the citizens and find it impossible to meet nice girls. Since many of them come from good families, they resent being treated as outcasts.” Many ended up simply wandering “along the highways in dejected groups, eager for

⁶¹ Robert Westbrook, “I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James’: American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II,” *American Quarterly*, 42. 4 (December 1990); Banning quote from Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith (eds.), *American Women in a World at War* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1997), 10; Women’s advice quote from Ethel Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1942), 123.

sport and friendly civilian contact, with none to be had.” Others “clustered in bewildered and uncertain knots on street corners in towns overrun with their kind.”⁶²

The women who would talk to soldiers would do so “for a dollar and up.” Camps that lacked a lively nearby “boom town” attracted prostitutes with their own trailers, ready to take men away in “chippie wagons” or “brothels on wheels” garishly outfitted with “lush red velvet draperies and cushions.” These “machine-age camp followers” joined the cavalcade of prostitutes, scam-artists, gamblers, and bootleggers waiting to cash in on the “motorized vice” boom. Red-light districts also flourished, with the American Social Hygiene Association explaining, “Pay-day for soldiers, sailors, and marines is looked to with anticipation by practically everyone in the racket.” Congress, reacting to reports of a VD epidemic, gave power to adjutants and commanding officers to identify brothels and crooked hotels so the FBI could intervene. A House Resolution also made it illegal for “trailer women” to bring any person into a vehicle. Given the poor state of morale and recreation, most commanders chose to ignore congressional pressure unless VD affected their manpower. After Pearl Harbor, however, Marshall prioritized building camps and forts close to cities and towns that might serve as a recreation area for men on liberty, partly as an effort to cut VD rates. The morale branch also set up seven recreation camps stretching from

⁶² “This Is What The Soldiers Complain About,” *LIFE*, August 18, 1941, Volume 11 Number 7, 18; Meyer Berger, “Morale,” *NYT*, May 25, 1941, SM10.

New Orleans to Panama City, Florida along the Gulf Coast, with recreation areas in Georgia and the Carolinas to follow. Here, the Army offered chartered fishing trips, baseball games, guided walking tours of historic districts, and chaperoned river-boat dances with women from the YWCA. Meyer Berger—a shrewd journalist unafraid to report on the crimes committed by servicemen—argued the recreation camps had become the “perfect morale builders” and a useful counter to the growing flesh trade. These seven camps, however, could only host 4000 men in total and they only operated on the weekends. Even if these camps operated at perfect efficiency, they would be able to serve at most 14% of the soldiers in the Army in 1941. Most weekends for the vast majority of men would be spent in the boom towns and juke joints.⁶³

Draftees essentially learned how to behave in liberty ports in their first excursions outside of basic training. Carousing with fellow soldiers constituted, as one GI put it, “our first step into manhood, as we termed smoking, drinking, and chasing girls.” Sex, liquor, and fighting also offered an escape both from military life and the stresses of training, while bringing raw boys into manhood. Most servicemen first experienced these excitements while on leave in the numerous “G.I. Towns” and “good-time towns” near military training camps.

⁶³ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 128-129; Kennett, *G.I.*, 44; Meyer Berger, “Morale,” *NYT*, May 25, 1941, SM10; By June 1941, 1,460,998 men were in the Army. By 1942, 3,075,608 were in the ranks. See “Strength of the Army Reports,” 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 8th SC, Box 78, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP and Mark Skinner Watson, *United States Army in World War II: The War Department, Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington D.C.: United States Army, 1991), 16.

Before their first time on liberty, new recruits participated in “bull-sessions” where they talked about “women and other fantasies” or listened to the stories of more seasoned draftees who promised the delights of liberty. One marine recalled, “We envied the men who were already out of boot camp and had enjoyed their first liberty. They told stories about fine-looking girls.” Another marine, who “knew all about it,” declared that the women “say straight out, ‘Come on up and get some, Marine....Want some pussy, Marine?’” Hearing these stories, one recruit remarked, “Man, I can just taste that pussy now.” Walter Bernstein, then a soldier, captured how entire towns could become devoted to fulfilling the desires of draftees based at Fort Benning: “The principal industry of the small town of Phenix City, Alabama, is sex, and its customer is the Army....The town is at least eighty percent devoted to the titillation and subsequent pillage of that group it affectionately calls ‘Uncle Sam’s Soldier Boys.’” Before shipping out, soldiers might slip off to towns like Paso Robles, California where they, as one Corporal described it, “spent the night wallowing in what passed for vice,” getting drunk on “too many alleged whiskey-coke,” and harassing waitresses.⁶⁴

Few politicians were willing to tackle this emerging problem of drunkenness in these towns, and the War Department, Army, and Navy all rejected calls for regulation of servicemen’s drinking. Only Senator Joshua Lee

⁶⁴ For “sex, liquor, and fighting” see Richard Courchene, *Hell, Love, and Fun* (West Point, Montana: Self Published, 1969), 7; For bull sessions and marine stories see Bill Downey, *Uncle Sam Must be Losing the War*, 23; Walter Bernstein, *Keep Your Head Down* (New York: Viking Press, 1945), 32; Kennett 77-78; Corporal’s story from Corporal Thomas R. St. George, *C/O Postmaster* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1943), 1.

(D-OK), allied with prohibition groups, put forth a proposal to ban liquor sales in and near Army camps. The various services often set up chaperoned dances in an attempt to offer men contact with women in a more regulated environment. Yet even these dances could turn rowdy, provoking protest from civilians. One concerned pastor from Elizabeth, Pennsylvania wrote in after learning that “2000 to 4000 girls will be secured as dancing partners for men in the armed services.” The pastor objected not only because officials would not be able to verify the character of the women, but also because the dances might put morally upstanding women “into the arms of young men who are unfit for them to associate with.” The pastor warned the plan was “moral dynamite” because he knew the quality of the men in the service. Civilians organizations that planned chaperoned dances—and saw them as a lesser evil compared to boom town vice—also admitted that “there is a real problem connected with the operation of dances and many people have objected to them.” Other civilians filed careful letters of protest noting their concern over “the liquor, prostitution, and other harmful practices near our cantonments” and requested federal funds for improved recreation services. The Office of Civilian Defense, however, insisted that “it is expected that adjacent communities will cooperate by providing facilities beyond the boundaries of the camps.” Privately, the War Department and its

associated offices wondered what could be done to alleviate what they called “the morale problem of small communities near Army camps.”⁶⁵

Carousing in good-time towns offered more than simply “smoking, drinking, and chasing girls.” Draftees could be a wolf and a soldier when they hit “the Strip.” They could be powerful, bold men worthy of respect, fear, and amorous adulation. Though not as important as this confirmation of militarized masculinity, troops also sought the opportunity to forge bonds with their fellow trainees. One GI acknowledged the juxtapositions and diversity he found through the service: “A large number of Americans I met in the Army amazed me by their differentness. I had not known their like before, nor have I met them since.” Training produced a bizarre mix of companies, and men sought opportunities that would bridge these gaps. Drinking and pursuing women became a kind of company ritual that cemented the wolfish fantasies sprung from the barracks. Even more critical though, men were able to “get away from the Goddamn Army.” No matter how many recreation halls, post dances, or USO shows commanders set up, draftees preferred the liquor-soaked slats of a boom town bar or a dusty main-street where girls could be found. Far from the control of hard-ass officers,

⁶⁵ Edward Ryan, “Mothers Ask Safeguards for Teen-Age Draft Group: Protests May Bring Provisions for Schooling, Training of 18-19-Year-Olds,” *TWP*, October 21, 1942, 1; “M.G. Dickinson to Archie Edwards,” February 20, 1941, “C.D. Giaque to Frank Bane,” March 3, 1941, “Frank Bane to C.D. Giaque,” March 12, 1941, and “Johnathan Daniels to Lewis Polster,” March 20, 1942, 250, Box 86, National Headquarters: General Correspondence, 1940-1942, 250 to 250, RG 171 Records of the Office of Civilian Defense, NACP; “A Few of the Many Things All America Does for the Men in Uniform through War Camp Community Service,” (No date, before April 30, 1941), 250 National United Through Apr. 30, 1941, Box 86, National Headquarters: General Correspondence, 1940-1942, 250 to 250, RG 171 Records of the Office of Civilian Defense, NACP.

away from the Chickenshit, and outside the mud-strewn camps that functioned as cities separate from the rest of the world, men found a reprieve from military oversight. Away from the eyes of commanders and officers, “the soldier characteristically felt supremely ‘free’ and sought to release his impulses and feelings,” explained an Army sociologist.⁶⁶

The Army and Navy, however, understood and tolerated this idea of “blowing off steam” to different degrees. Initially, the Army believed it would face greater levels of troop crime, compared to the Navy. Americans saw the Navy as more prestigious and desirable with ample opportunity for travel and adventure. Naval recruiters quickly capitalized on this perception with the slogan “Choose While You Can.” The Navy also “predrafted” preferred candidates into their cadet programs while poaching others from Army recruitment lines. The Navy did not even take drafted men until late 1943, relying instead on the wealth of volunteers. As such, the Navy’s manpower pool was understood to be more fit, educated, young, skilled, and morally upright. A similar dynamic allowed the Marines and Army Air Forces (AAF) to select the best candidates. In contrast, the Army lacked the prestige and romance of the Naval service, the bravery of the Marines, or the adventure of the AAF. The Army’s subsequent analysis acknowledged that the other three services “had the character of hand-picked organizations.” Infantry

⁶⁶ Arthur Bartlett, “Best Outfit in the Army: Ask Any Soldier. He’ll Tell You What it is....And Here is the Man Behind the Answer,” *LAT*, July 6, 1941, H4; Kennett, *G.I.*, 60, 77, 79; Samuel T. Williamson, “Soldiers May be Drafted—But Not Made,” *NYT*, August 11, 1940, 85; Anthony H. Leviero, “The Making of a Soldier,” *NYT*, February 9, 1941.

draftees suffered from poor fitness and deficient education compared to their rival branch. Infantrymen were shorter, lighter, less intelligent, and less educated compared to other Army services. The Army's own postwar study opened by admitting that the ground forces suffered from an "inferior quality of the human raw material." The Army also received the bulk of draftees who already suffered from venereal disease or had committed a felony. Lobbying by the American Prison Association pushed the War Department to accept former prisoners. This decision by Selective Service to let in drunks, criminals, and those with STDs did little to dispel the popular view of the Army as "a haven of misfits." Two months before Pearl Harbor, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* passed on reports of "mollycoddled" soldiers in New York who exhibited poor discipline, spent their time loitering in the streets, and "seemed definitely inferior to the enlisted personnel of the navy." Army officials, accordingly, faced far fewer illusions about the moral sobriety of their recruits. And yet, both branches would quickly discover that these expected differences in behavior disappeared as Army and Navymen took leave and liberty in stateside ports. They also learned the potential pitfalls of the wolfish behavior that men developed in the barracks and in boom towns.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Kennett, 17-22, 79; Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, *United States Army in World War II: The Army Ground Forces, The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1991), 3-5; "American Prison Association letter," November 26, 1940, 000.5 Criminology-Crimes, Fraud, Box 3, National Headquarters: General Correspondence, 1940-1942, 000.5 to 01, RG 171 Records of the Office of Civilian Defense, NACP; Acts to Permit Probationers to Enlist in Army," *CDT*, January 10, 1942, 10; "Civilians in Uniform," *CDT*, October 7, 1941, 12.

Chapter Two: Taking Liberty

By 1942, troops filled the streets, ports, buses, and train stations of liberty ports, while army bases and expanded naval yards brought a military presence into the everyday lives of civilians. This liberty port network, and the U.S.'s emerging two-front war, required a massive support structure and manpower. Because most depictions of the war ignore this network so far from the combat zones, many fail to realize that the vast majority of American men in uniform were stationed in the United States throughout the war. Many of the sixteen million total servicemen would make their way through liberty ports multiple times for leave and liberty. Millions of Allied sailors and soldiers likewise passed through American ports, seeking various delights. This statistical reality undercuts the idea that poor behavior was caused by combat stress or as a response to brutal conditions. Indeed, the majority of men never saw combat. Troops acted poorly far before they ever fired a bullet or a shell at the enemy.⁶⁸

The military housed soldiers and sailors in and around the city, creating new camps and ports of embarkation while refurbishing old ones and setting up floating cities of liberty ships and freighters in coastal harbors. Bases like Fort Hamilton near Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights in Brooklyn and Roosevelt Base on Terminal Island in Los Angeles gave soldiers immediate access to the city

⁶⁸ For troops numbers see Michael Adams, *The Best War Ever* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 70. As previously stated, estimates vary widely on how many troops actually saw combat. Less than half were ever in a combat zone and one military study estimated that less than 10% of all troops participated in combat. See Adams, 70.

center, while other camps like Vallejo's Mare Island operated bus and rail services to bring sailors on leave into San Francisco and Oakland.⁶⁹

Soldiers and sailors generally received one or two days of overnight liberty per week in secure Allied areas, including mainland locations. No more than 25% of the crew or unit were supposed to be granted furloughs at a time, but commanders usually ignored these rules. Before leaving, the men lined up for uniform and card inspection, though many managed to duck inspection or sneak out of camp by crawling under the perimeter fences. While on leave, they were required to wear their uniform, carry a liberty card, and report back to base on time. Shore Patrol and Military Police were charged with regulating troop behavior and arresting insubordinate men. If arrested, the soldier was to be returned to the Navy yard, base, or ship, rather than the municipal jail. Commandants and commanders retained the power to determine liberty and leave policy for men under their command, and they used this power to both motivate and punish recalcitrant individuals.⁷⁰

Liberty Port Networks

⁶⁹ Chester Wardlow, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Movements, Training, and Supply* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990), 113.

⁷⁰ For men taking liberty without permission see, for example, Courchene, 10. Others found ways to sneak women and "other contraband" back in: Bill Mauldin, *Willie and Joe Volume One* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2008), 187; For liberty procedures see "Thirteenth Naval District Order No. 8-41," July 14, 1941, P-18 1 Leave, Liberty and Absence folder, Box 347, 1st Naval District, Commandant's Office, General Correspondence "District Files," 1941 (RG 181) NARA, Waltham; Also see Mark R. Henry, *The U.S. Navy in World War II* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002) and "Liberty Parties-Inspection of," September 6, 1943, P 18-1 Leave, Liberty, and Absence 1943, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant's Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181), NARA, Riverside.

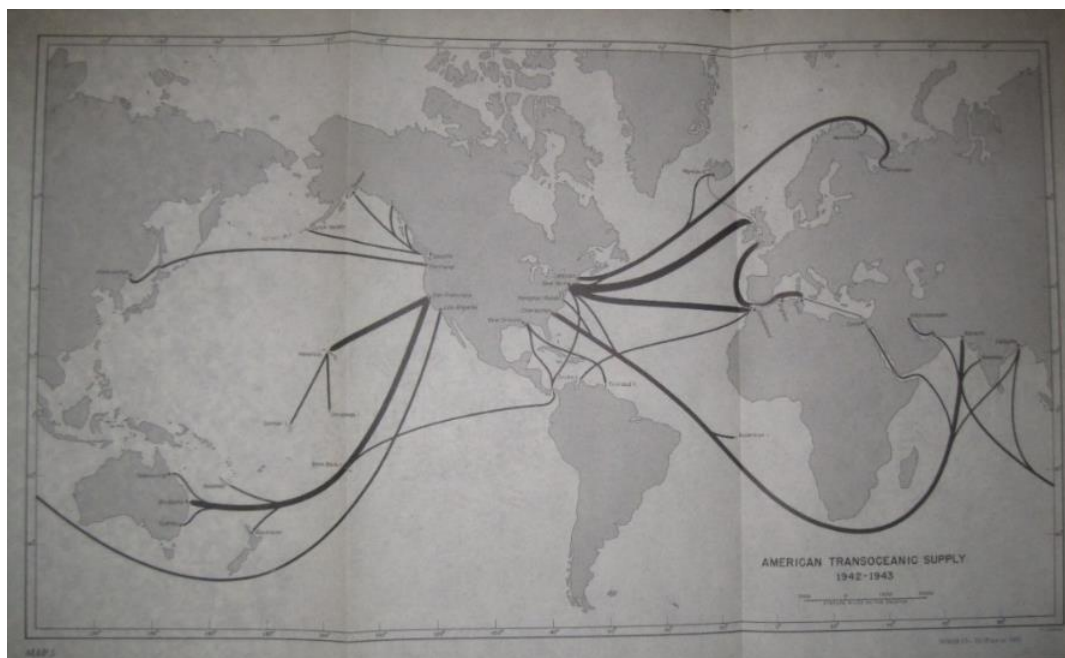


Figure 1: American Transoceanic Supply, 1942-1943⁷¹

Transportation networks and destination determined when and where sailors and soldiers took leave and liberty. Although several air and sea routes moved troops throughout the world, three primary transportation networks linked liberty ports together: The Atlantic route, the Caribbean route, and the Pacific Route.⁷²

The main Atlantic route connected four key ports of embarkation: New York, Boston, Norfolk, and Charleston. Even before Pearl Harbor, New York was the world's largest and busiest port, with 3.2 million troops, their supplies, and 63

⁷¹ Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *United States Army in World War II: The War Department, Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1955), 349.

⁷² This is an amalgamation of several different transportation hubs—such as the Mediterranean/North African route, Central African route, Western Pacific Route, Central Asian Route etc.—but it captures the overall movement of troops and materiel, while also demonstrating which liberty ports saw the highest levels of human and commercial traffic.

million more tons of materiel passing through the maze of docks and shipyards during the war. New York, as the central hub for the Atlantic, received from sub-ports while feeding other sub-ports. Troops poured out of New York's harbor en route to Northern Europe and the Mediterranean. They departed from Hampton Roads at Norfolk, too, the second most important Atlantic port and a sub-port of New York until 1942. Ships hauled nearly 13 million cubic tons of crucial supplies and over 760,000 passengers chiefly to Africa and the Mediterranean through this industrial weigh station. At the same time over 760,000 passengers and 9.5 million cubic tons of materiel funneled through Boston—also governed by New York's commandant until 1942—on their way to along the Northern Atlantic line of Newfoundland, Halifax, Greenland, and Iceland. Charleston housed many of the army hospital ships, while also serving multiple destinations.⁷³

New Orleans stitched the Caribbean network together, linking smaller ports like San Jacinto, Mobile, Galveston, Jacksonville, and Miami, as well as the American territorial ports of Panama and San Juan, Guantanamo, the leased British ports in the West Indies, and Brazilian ports like Natal and Sao Paulo. These smaller ports were fed by larger inland hubs like Dallas, Houston, and Memphis. Nearly 175,000 passengers and 8,000,000 cubic tons of cargo passed through New Orleans' waters on their way south. Americans explored west

⁷³ Wardlow, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Movements, Training, and Supply*, 100, 332. Philadelphia and Baltimore were ports in this network as well, primarily serving New York and Norfolk respectively. Also note that these numbers do not include some Allied materiel shipping and that passenger numbers do not include all Allied troops moving through these ports. For more information on transportation networks see Joseph Rose, *American Wartime Transportation* (Boston: Crowell, 1953).

Santurce and the nightlife built up next to the Isla Grande naval base in San Juan, before setting off for North Africa, Cape Town, or the Mediterranean via the South Atlantic. Panama served as the key transshipment point for the Caribbean network. Men destined for North Africa and Europe drank and caroused in Cristobal's red light district in the Canal Zone before departing. Ships slated to travel the Pacific expanse crossed the canal and docked in Panama City for leave and refueling.⁷⁴

San Francisco and Los Angeles anchored a vast Pacific network stretching from Alaska to Panama and the Philippines. San Francisco and the greater East Bay sent men and materiel to all areas of the Pacific as the major west coast transshipment point, handling about half the traffic of New York—making it the second most important port in the U.S. and the most significant in the Pacific theater. Los Angeles formed the other primary port, with B-24s and flying boats from the San Diego sub-port crowding the decks of the city's bustling docks. 217,000 people transferred through the port on their way to the Western and Southern Pacific, but not before "slumming" in barrio clubs or catching the peep shows in San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter. Seattle supplemented these two cities' output, while setting up the shipping lanes to Alaska and Western Canada. At first a sub-port of San Francisco, and later fed by Portland and Prince Rupert,

⁷⁴ Wardlow, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Movements, Training, and Supply*, 100, 332.

by 1942 Seattle brimmed with manufacturing shipments and sojourning sailors, with 12 million cubic tons of cargo and 580,000 people shipped during the war.⁷⁵

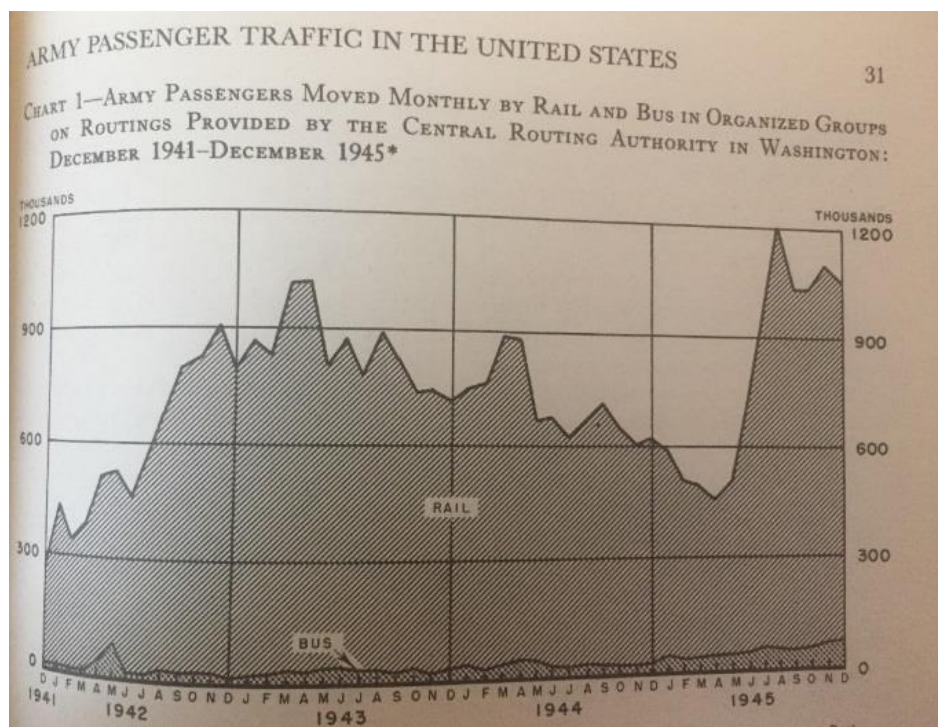


Figure 2: Army Passenger Traffic in the United States, 1941-1945⁷⁶

These port networks were connected by a vast internal rail infrastructure which aimed to quickly ship troops, workers, and freight via America's heartland. While the armed forces occasionally utilized buses and trucks, rail remained the predominant form of transport for man and materiel. Chicago notably grew as both a key zone of rail traffic and as the home to the Navy's main training center. Army officials selected Chicago as the central artery for all rail traffic because of its location and an already well-developed railway system that featured a large amount of trackage, office space, and a capable receiving platform that could

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 31.

readily process the constant truck deliveries. Chicago's Junction Railway location near the Quartermaster Depot allowed for quick communication and coordination between railyard, receiving platform, and substations. As the primary consolidating station, Chicago received incoming shipments from all over the country, broke these carloads down, and then moved the reconsolidated trains onto their ultimate destination. Train platforms overflowed not only with seemingly endless tons of war supplies and lines of flatcars, but also with a true menagerie of eager servicemen, migrating war workers, and wives and families following soldiers. In total, Chicago consolidated nearly half the total freight shipped throughout the war, making it a routine stopover point for soldiers, sailors, and civilians shuttling about the country for lucrative war work. Substations and smaller consolidating stations quickly developed to supplement the overwhelming traffic flooding Chicago's tracks. Midwestern and heartland cities like Detroit, Cleveland, Minneapolis, and St. Louis emerged as the most important regional substations—pivotal points that fed Chicago and then redirected the traffic flowing outwards. This mass expansion of rail traffic brought servicemen into contact with Americans outside the coasts, as troops packed into already crowded railcars or sought diversions in stopover cities with the inevitable train delays.⁷⁷

“A Soldier's Three Desires”

⁷⁷ Ibid., 306-310.

Most servicemen gravitated toward three things upon hitting port: women, alcohol, and brawling. Civilians were tasked with providing each. As their furlough periods approached, men obsessed over passing inspection and spent nights together reading letters from “favorite girls” and planned where to find “some very attractive girls.” New recruits envied men who had already experienced the excitements of liberty, and they listened eagerly to stories of what awaited them. All thoughts came back to “women, women, and women and more women and liquor” and “sally[ing] forth in search of gin and sin.” Soldiers reminisced about the cheap beer and the women on Coney Island’s beaches while others wrote of all “the pretty girls” in Manhattan. Army officers noted the common view of a soldier’s three desires: “a woman, a drink, and a dollar left over.” A sergeant’s poem put it more bluntly: “A soldier’s the sort/For rape and slaughter/Not fit to escort a patriot’s daughter.” These violent impulses extended to fighting with “4-Fs” and “Jodies.” Some men thought of scrapping with civilians as both good fun and a duty bestowed by the uniform. Then Army grunt LeRoy Neiman explained, “We headed out to the fancy midtown bars and restaurants in military uniform just to show the slackers and café society toffs that we were real men on a real mission, while they were just weasels.” If coercing and assaulting women constituted a kind of sexual domination then fighting with civilian men formed a corollary form of domination.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ First quotes see Wilbert L. Walker, *We Are Men: Memoirs of World War II and the Korean War* (Chicago: Adams Press, 1972), 10-12; Barrack’s story quote see Bill Downey, *Uncle Sam Must be Losing the War* (San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press, 1982), 23; Quote on “women, women,

Liberty ports provided spaces where men could fulfill multiple desires, often in the same spot. Troops flocked to bars, beaches, parks, cafes, transport stations, nightclubs, dancehalls, fleshpots, grindhouses, “blind pigs” (undercover cabarets), brothels, peepshows, and crooked hotels. Existing red-light districts like San Diego’s Gaslamp Quarter flourished, Chicago’s Gold Coast was reborn, and Times Square was revived after hard times during the depression as a worldclass amusement zone. Yet servicemen did not solely head to these most famous haunts. Newly flourishing vice quarters prompted joint civil-military crackdowns on the trade in an effort to stop an epidemic of venereal disease and underworld crime. But these moves unintentionally drove soldier traffic and cash to the Pike in Long Beach, San Francisco’s Mission District, Central Park, and Coney Island. These areas, which catered to both working and middle class patrons, came to fully embrace the vice economy, offering seedy and dangerous delights to furloughed soldiers while changing the reputation of these neighborhoods for decades to come.⁷⁹

Going AWOL

For many men, the temptation of pleasures in the city—and an escape from the military—proved too enticing. Despite the threat of being court-

and women...” and “A soldier’s the sort” in Costello, 115, 122; LeRoy Neiman on “gin and sin” and brawling in *All Told: My Art and Life Among Athletes, Playboys, Bunnies, and Provocateurs* (Guilford, CT: Lyons, 2012), 28-41; Coney Island quote from Milton Bracker, “Beaches in Africa Offer Few Girls,” *NYT*, August 22, 1943, 10; Pretty girls in Manhattan quote from Tildon B. Houston, “Sailor Meets City—and Applauds,” *NYT*, June 13, 1943, SM6; A soldier’s three desires quote from Sgt. Al Hill Jr., “A Soldier’s Three Desires,” *LAT*, February 21, 1944, A4.

⁷⁹ “Blind pigs” taken from Courchene, 7.

martialed, soldiers and sailors attempted to “extend” their leave by “straggling,” meaning they returned to their base or the naval yard hours late or even days late. These men were considered absent over leave (AOL) and identified as stragglers, while those who left duty without permission were classified as absent without leave (AWOL). Troops absent after 30 days would generally be labeled deserters, a far more serious offense that worsened rampant manpower shortages and caused delays as ships and units struggled to fill missing positions. Absenteeism—often used as a catchall term for straggling, AWOLism, and desertion—seemed to peak in 1942 and 1943, though the military never truly eliminated the issue. Sailors and soldiers tended to straggle or go AOL when they arrived in liberty ports for leave and furloughs. Here they could find unrivaled entertainment and opportunities to escape the dull regimentation of military life.⁸⁰

Army and Navy archives, as well as contemporary newspapers, feature enormous numbers of reports highlighting straggling, criminal AWOL troops, desertion, and concern among military authorities about this unshakeable problem. Civilian newspapers generally attempted to either shame deserters or to point to AWOL men who had become criminals and betrayed their military

⁸⁰ “Disciplinary Proceedings,” September 1, 1945, box 178, [Restricted] P13 Misconduct and Discipline Restricted [2 of 2] THRU [Restricted] P14 Appointment #2, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT)/(Red 7), Entry #P 110 Confidential and Restricted General Administrative Files, 1945-1945, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP; “Naval Offenders Including Deserters and Stragglers—Procedure for Handling,” March 31, 1945, box 178, [Restricted] P13 Misconduct and Discipline Restricted [2 of 2] THRU [Restricted] P14 Appointment #2, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT)/(Red 7), Entry #P 110 Confidential and Restricted General Administrative Files, 1945-1945, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP;

duty. The *New York Times*' profile of Mess Sergeant Thomas Flynn offers a typical public portrait of the criminal AWOL soldier. After deserting his post in Pennsylvania, Flynn stole three pistols and hitchhiked to the Bronx. There he attempted to assault a woman in her apartment, before being arrested. Other deserters left the military to "turn Fagin," as the *Chicago Daily Tribune* described it. Two AWOL signal corps privates began running a gang "of juvenile purse snatchers and car thieves," "sitting in stolen cars and pointing out women victims to their youthful conspirators." Other absentee servicemen were caught when their souvenir bazooka shell exploded in their hideaway apartment, or when their theft of over a hundred crates of cheese was discovered.⁸¹

Some attempted fantastic and foolish escapes, like Richard Lee Bailey. On August 6, 1944, Bailey stole a plane from Williams Air Field in Arizona. Bailey presumably planned to fake his own death by crashing the plane into the ocean, while parachuting to safety. With the plane's gasoline nearly depleted, Bailey dropped the plane to 1000 feet and then aimed it towards the approaching sea. He leapt out of the plane, released his parachute, and landed in a small field in Mexico. As his stolen plane crashed off in this distance, Bailey gathered his knife, gas mask, a Luger pistol, candy bars, and other supplies. He soon met a

⁸¹ For examples of military archival AWOL/Deserter reports see RG 389, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 251.2 General #1, box 66; For the Flynn story see "Army Deserter Seized, *NYT*, July 24, 1942, pg 22; For similar examples see "Police Seeks AWOL Soldier in Slaying of Serviceman," *TWP*, February 3, 1944, pg 1 and "'3-State Crime Wave' Captured; Open Phone at Hold-Up Trips Him," *NYT*, October 20, 1942, 1; "2 AWOL Soldiers Called 'Fagins' in Gang Roundup," *CDT*, January 10, 1943, 13; "Bazooka Soldier, AWOL, Found, *NYT*, September 15, 1944, pg 21; "AWOL Soldier Gets Year for Cheese Theft," *CDT*, February 20, 1946, 9.

presumably bewildered Mexican family that found him after the “landing.” Bailey spent the next three weeks hiding in the mountains and tiny Mexican border villages, before contracting an illness and getting arrested by the Mexican police, who then returned him to an US Army envoy at Nogales. Many more absentee men, however, avoided police notice and found ways to disappear into liberty ports, further alarming the military’s command.⁸²

Attempts to clamp down on absenteeism became a highly influential test case for different modes of policing, eventually leaving most military authorities to conclude that little could be done to change the behavior of servicemen. Initially, military commanders—particularly Naval commandants and older Army officers—attempted to strictly enforce the rules governing liberty. Men who returned to ship late or drunk would be thrown into solitary with only bread and water. Sailors who went AWOL or deserted could be dishonorably discharged and possibly given prison sentences, though commandants preferred to levy a 30-day stay in the brig. They might also see a decrease in rank or rating, and therefore, pay grade. Other officers revoked future liberty privileges. In November 1942, the War Department notified all forces of Executive Order No. 9267, which suspended the limitations on punishments for AWOL troops. Secretary Henry Stimson intended the order as “a deterrent to the alarming increase in the number of such offenses and to make it possible in aggravated cases to impose

⁸² “Statement of Richard Lee Bailey,” August 22, 1944, box 66, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 251.2 B, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General) NACP.

punishment.” Those who routinely straggled or became deserters were likely to face time in prison and expulsion from the military.⁸³

Here though, the armed forces once again encountered the dangers of unintended incentives. By demonstrating that if a serviceman would be discharged if he went AWOL or straggled enough, men discovered a way to leave the military and avoid ever facing the threat of combat. Chronic stragglers might enjoy their extended liberty time while avoiding the privations of regimented life, eventually get booted from the military, at worst serve a short prison term, and then likely pick up a more lucrative war industry job. Trials by court-martial for absenteeism also imposed an administrative burden on the Army and Navy bureaucracies and commanders. Military authorities soon recognized that rampant alcoholism and the average servicemen’s disdain for the military would make AWOL and straggling policies, as well guidelines governing good behavior on shore, totally unenforceable.⁸⁴

⁸³ “Leave and Liberty,” December 20, 1941, P-18 1 Leave, Liberty and Absence folder, Box 347, 1st Naval District, Commandant’s Office, General Correspondence “District Files,” 1941 (RG 181) NARA, Waltham; “Boston. Memo on Navy employees,” July 16, 1941, P-18 1 Leave, Liberty and Absence folder, Box 347, 1st Naval District, Commandant’s Office, General Correspondence “District Files,” 1941 (RG 181) NARA, Waltham; Thirteenth Naval District Order No. 8-41, July 14, 1941, P-18 1 Leave, Liberty and Absence folder, Box 347, 1st Naval District, Commandant’s Office, General Correspondence “District Files,” 1941 (RG 181) NARA, Waltham; Stragglers from Ships of the Support Force, October 17, 1941, P-13 Discipline folder, Box 340, 1st Naval District, Commandant’s Office, General Correspondence “District Files,” 1941 (RG 181) NARA, Waltham; “Measures to Forestall Desertions and to Rehabilitate Deserters,” March 29, 1943, 250.4 General, box 65, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250 to 251, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

⁸⁴ Surveys confirmed that many men wished to avoid combat. Kennett, G.I., 113, 133; “Measures to Forestall Desertions and to Rehabilitate Deserters,” March 29, 1943, 250.4 General, box 65, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250 to 251, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

Confronted with a collapsing manpower pool, brigs full of drunks, and lengthy court-martial trials, military officials moved to revise policies on furloughs as well as guidelines on good conduct beginning in the fall of 1942. The early war's wave of absenteeism drove the Army and Navy to set up policies that discouraged court-martials while giving tacit approval of criminal behavior in liberty ports. Commandants began by establishing offices devoted to returning stragglers to their ships while official guidelines recommended minor sentences or no punishment for drunkenness, absenteeism, or disorderly conduct on liberty. The welfare of civilians proved a secondary concern to war goals, as the Navy and other military branches asserted that "discipline is not designed to reform officers or enlisted personnel nor to pass judgment on their morals. It is designed to maintain the efficiency of the Service." While Navy discipline circulars set up some minor punishments for infractions like assault and indecent exposure, commandants emphasized that these punishments were "intended as a guide only, and is not to be interpreted as limiting in any way the discretionary powers vested by law in Commanding officers." Chief of Staff Marshall echoed this in November 1942, warning commanders that "reliance on courts-martial to enforce discipline indicates lack of leadership and faulty command." Marshall declared the high court-martial rate "unsatisfactory" and "far too high," and then explained

that the court-martial “should be resorted to only when adequate disciplinary action cannot be provided by other means.”⁸⁵

Even the official punishment guidelines reflected a prioritization of military efficiency over civilian welfare. For example, while troops who stole military property faced a dishonorable discharge, those convicted of being drunk and disorderly did not. In early 1943, Secretary of War Stimson followed up on the previous executive order that erased limitations on punishments for AWOL men by tacitly admitting that the policy of harsher punishment had backfired. This follow-up order to all Commanding Generals and port of embarkation commanders warned that the removal of limitations on punishments for absentee troops “must not, however, be construed as encouragement for an unwarranted increase in the number of trials by general court-martial.... Trial by general courts-martial must not be resorted to unless there is no other appropriate remedy.” Many officers took this to mean that drunken men, stragglers, and those gone

⁸⁵ The key memorandums on crime and shore leave include the measures first conceived in “Secretary of the Navy Restricted Letter, File P3-1 (400226) B, July 19, 1940. These measures were expanded upon and reinforced in the “Principles of Discipline” memos. For the first quote see “Statement of Principles of Discipline for Women’s Reserve,” which despite its title, contains important regulations on male behavior and crime. “Statement of Principles of Discipline for Women’s Reserve,” December 14, 1942, P-13 Discipline folder, 1 of 2, Box 422, 1st Naval District, Commandant’s Office, General Correspondence “District Files,” 1942 (RG 181) NARA, Waltham; see also “Bureau of Naval Personnel Circular Letter No. 165-42,” November 27, 1942, P-13 Discipline folder, 1 of 2, Box 422, 1st Naval District, Commandant’s Office, General Correspondence “District Files,” 1942 (RG 181) NARA, Waltham; For quote on “intended as a guide only” see “Eleventh Naval District Circular Letter No. 104-42,” October 5, 1942, P 13 Misconduct 1942 (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; For Marshall see “Discipline and Courts-Martial,” November 10, 1942, 250.4 General, box 65, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For Stimson follow-up see “Measures to Forestall Desertions and to Rehabilitate Deserters,” March 29, 1943, 250.4 General, box 65, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

AWOL need not be punished, leading one dutiful Shore Patrol officer to eventually complain that sailors expected “little or no punishment and feel they have committed a more or less harmless prank for which they may only be reprimanded.” Despite these complaints, district officials ultimately praised the relaxing of disciplinary procedures and speedy trials with Los Angeles’ commandant noting “this substantial improvement already has resulted in a tremendous saving of man power for the war effort.” Officers were effectively incentivized to avoid prosecuting their men for their misdeeds. Indeed, commanders who court-martialed too many men could be accused of failing to exercise sound leadership by high command. In adjusting discipline and punishment, the military succeeded in easing the burdens of court-martial panels and port brigs while also improving their manpower shortage.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, over-leave and desertion remained a continuing, if somewhat reduced problem throughout the war. Writing at the end of 1943 while docked in San Francisco, Rear Admiral Wilder D. Baker seemed resigned to the reality that no policing strategy would ever prevent men from going AWOL: “Our trouble seems to boil down to the fact that too many men are willing to be thrown out of the navy, or at least to take chances on that punishment.” Baker knew that

⁸⁶ For theft example see “Disciplinary Proceedings,” September 1, 1945, box 178, [Restricted] P13 Misconduct and Discipline Restricted [2 of 2] THRU [Restricted] P14 Appointment #2, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT)/(Red 7), Entry #P 110 Confidential and Restricted General Administrative Files, 1945-1945, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP; For shore patrol officer quote see “Naval Personnel-Absent Over and Without Leave-Lack of Information Concerning Seriousness of Offenses,” January 19, 1944 P 13 Misconduct (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; For final quote see “Speedy Trial of Summary Court Martial Cases,” September 12, 1944 A17 Law and Justice (RG 181) NARA, Riverside.

court-martialing and imprisoning stragglers and deserters would only preserve a path for men to escape military service by committing a non-violent crime. Yet, the Navy's new policy, which effectively offered deserters clemency to return to their post, created another perverse incentive. When absentee sailors rejoined their ships, their shipmates noticed they had escaped punishment. Baker noted that his own ship experienced a spike in absentees after the return of four Bluejackets who had their desertion convictions set aside, and he cited "inadequate punishment of flagrant offenders" as one of the key reasons for continued issues with over-leave. The fleet finally saw an improvement in absentee rates after they granted longer leave and liberty periods in 1945, suggesting that insufficient leave time contributed to men to abandoning their posts.⁸⁷

Yet these legal adjustments effectively granted extralegal and extraterritorial privileges to servicemen: they were no longer bound by civilian law or policing, or for that matter, outmoded codes of moral sobriety. Nor did they expect serious punishment from a military desperately scrambling to catch up in a two-front war. Absenteeism, drunkenness, "skirt-chasing," and harassment of

⁸⁷ For continuing problems of over-leave and desertion see "Rear Admiral Wilder D. Baker to Vice Admiral J.K. Taussig," December 7, 1943, box 272, [1944-1945] P12 to P13 Religion and Misconduct and Discipline THRU P 16-1 Strength and Distribution Personnel, Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet (CINPAC)/(Red 107), Entry #P 89 Confidential and Secret Administrative Files, 1943-1945, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP; "Officers and Men Absent Without Leave and Absent over Leave on Returning Landing Craft," February 16, 1945, box 178, [Restricted] P13 Misconduct and Discipline Restricted [2 of 2] THRU [Restricted] P14 Appointment #2, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT)/(Red 7), Entry #P 110 Confidential and Restricted General Administrative Files, 1945-1945, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP.

civilians effectively constituted military sanctioned spoils of war, not just against foreign civilians, but their own. Improvements in the absentee rate and reductions of court-martials became linked to giving servicemen more time in liberty ports with fewer restrictions on their conduct. Infantrymen even began to re-designate going AWOL as “after women and liquor” or “a wolf on the loose.”⁸⁸

“Blind Asshole Drunk”

Troops arrived in liberty ports ready to get drunk, exacerbating already growing problems of sexual assault, prostitution, and vandalism. Men often hit the bars near the dockyards before moving on to the red light districts and honky-tonks. Before reaching port, or while on the street, sailors reported “loading up” in preparation for a weekend of liberty. Whether it be beer, whiskey, moonshine, bathtub gin, wood alcohol (that sometimes blinded sailors), swipe (“an ad hoc distillation of sugar, canned fruit, potato peelings, and other such ingredients”), or torpedo juice (torpedo fuel mixed with apple juice or grapefruit), soldiers found ways to get “pie-eyed” and drink “themselves into unconsciousness.” The Navy actually began adding croton oil—“an explosively powerful purgative” that burned the mouth, throat, and abdomen, sometimes killing men—to the torpedo fuel, though sailors found ways to safely distill it.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ For appropriating AWOL term see Brooke Blower, “V-J Day, 1945, Times Square,” 78, in Brooke L. Blower and Mark P. Bradley, eds., *The Familiar Made Strange: American Icons and Artifacts after the Transnational Turn* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015);

⁸⁹ Courchene, 4; Mike Ostlund, *Find 'em, Chase 'em, Sink 'em: The Mysterious Loss of the WWII Submarine USS Gudgeon* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2006), 88-89.

Other soldiers began looting whiskey and alcohol from medical supplies, stealing as many cases as possible and then hiding the bottles in cargo holds. Some enterprising GIs even began selling the whiskey to fellow soldiers at black market rates. Others snuck booze onto trains or purchased it at stops, leading to whole cars becoming drunk and disorderly. This propensity for soldiers to get drunk at rail stations and layovers consistently resulted in delays and missed trains. The military's failure to identify or condemn alcohol abuse when drafting and selecting men drove some of these excesses. Hungover men appearing for a draft inspection received no disapprobation from inspectors and one psychiatrist determined that "the indulgence of the Army was particularly marked in the case of alcoholics." British officers remarked that American soldiers were "drunk all day" and GIs reported that they "got blind asshole drunk every chance we got." Subsequent medical studies confirm that World War II veterans suffered significantly higher death rates because of alcoholism compared to non-veterans.⁹⁰

Drinking became so problematic that Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall wrote to Provost Marshal General Allen Gullion —the head of Army

⁹⁰ "Pilfering of Whiskey Cargo," September 20, 1943, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250 to 251, General #1, Box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For train drinking see "St. Paul Train Report" and San Francisco Train Report," February 3, 1945 and April 3, 1945, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250 to 251, General #2, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General) NACP; For Army's permissiveness to drinking see Kennett, 26; For last two quotes see Fussell, 102; C. Dennis Robinette, Zdenek Hrubec, and Joseph F. Fraumeni, Jr., "Chronic Alcoholism and Subsequent Mortality in World War II Veterans," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 1979 109 (6): 687-700.

policing—regarding alcohol abuse among soldiers in November 1942. Marshall began by referring to the recurring issue of “soldiers drinking on trains,” and then went on to acknowledge the “touchy problem in the matter of drinking elsewhere, especially in cities where enlisted men congregate during the week-ends.”

Marshall’s main concern appeared to be the civilian enmity created by the rampant drunkenness and violence of his men, admonishing Gullion that “it is essential that the mounting wave of criticism and resentment be stopped.”

Months later though, commanding officers received notice that “many reports continue to reach the War Department relative to drinking and misconduct of military personnel on public carriers and in towns and cities adjacent to posts, camps, and stations.” The Inspector General and General Gullion demanded that commanding officers require their men to “correct defects in conduct, dress, and military courtesy,” though they offered no specific methods of how commanders might accomplish this. Officers faced a formidable task to reduce drunk and disorderly conduct in port. Command had already discouraged the use of dishonorable discharges, court-martials, and confinement, as these punishments all resulted in manpower loss. Outside reductions in rank and levying extra duties, commanders could revoke liberty privileges. Once again though, Naval protocol warned that “loss of liberty becomes a more onerous punishment when opportunity for liberty is very limited.” Indeed, losing liberty could spur waves of absenteeism and desertion if men began to feel homesick or “cooped up.” This

web of contradictory military policies left officers with no effective method of preventing poor conduct and performance caused by drinking.⁹¹

Some district naval commandants made attempts to curb drinking early on to limited effect. In July 1942, Miami's Rear Admiral James L. Kauffman and Brigadier General Ralph Wooten unilaterally decided that all places serving beer and liquor in Dade county would be forced to close at midnight and at 1 a.m. on Sunday. Military authorities explained to *Variety* that "it is imperative that these measures be taken because of the increasing difficulty in controlling drinking among service personnel." They proceeded to openly admit that the sheer numbers of men coursing through Miami had left only a scattered number of MPs and Shore Patrol struggling to keep the peace. Notably, Miami's command included civilians in the ban, explaining that were civilians allowed to continue drinking, morale would collapse and troops would feel this was "discrimination in favor of the civilians." The order ultimately did little to shelter Miami from the disruptions brought on by excessive drinking. A March 1943 profile of Miami in the *Boston Globe* explained that "the Army and Navy have taken over" and that the swarms of uniforms had "profoundly change[d] things." Bars and liquor stores

⁹¹ "G. C. Marshall to General Gullion," November 17, 1942, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250.1 General #1, Box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; "Misconduct of Military Personnel," February 19, 1943, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250 to 251, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; "Disciplinary Proceedings," September 1, 1945, box 178, [Restricted] P13 Misconduct and Discipline Restricted [2 of 2] THRU [Restricted] P14 Appointment #2, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT)/(Red 7), Entry #P 110 Confidential and Restricted General Administrative Files, 1945-1945, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP.

still did a regular trade, shops catered more and more to selling GIs “cheap and tawdry stuff,” and streets swelled with singing men.⁹²

The “GI Gauntlet”

Most ports of call featured well-known red-light districts, openly catering to the drives of servicemen. American-controlled areas like San Juan, Trinidad, Bermuda, and the Panama Canal Zone emerged as desired stops for men on transshipment routes, specifically for their vice zones. In Colon and Panama City, American sailors mixed in the wild, colorful, and dangerous streets filled with vendors, prostitutes, barmen, foreign soldiers, and taxi drivers calling out the names of brothels like “La Case del Amor.” For one Naval officer, it was “the tropics, maturity, and the Fall of Man simultaneously.” In “the honky-tonk main street of Panama City lined with bars,” amidst the cacophony of competing jukeboxes, men could buy “cameras, silk hose, liquor, handbags decorated with the stuffed heads of baby alligators, bracelets of Mexican silver, and jade supposedly from the Orient.” Packs of servicemen hurried off the docks after the canal trawl, drinking their way through Ancón’s open-air taverns to El Chorrillo’s sweltering cabarets. Along the way, they picked up “pictures made of butterfly wings, or coconuts...or red bananas, or bottles of rum” from the peddlers and hawkers dotting the streets. At nightclubs, men danced with hostesses, watched

⁹² A similar ban was implemented in San Francisco, to little effect. For the Miami midnight liquor ban see “Army, Navy Issue ‘Toughest’ Curbs To Miami Night Clubs; New Curfews,” *Variety*, July 8, 1942, 45; William H. Clark, “Servicemen Have Given Miami a Strong Home Town Atmosphere,” *DBG*, March 14, 1943, C37.

stripteases, and listened to music as women “shook [their] giant naked breasts” in their faces. As sailors with “red faces” and “unfocused eyes” stumbled through the night, prostitutes beckoned from flung open shutters. Military Police and Shore Patrol made no effort to stop the vice trade, but instead transported passed out and inebriated men back to their ships in time to make the crossing. Privately, the Army conceded that MPs remained ineffective in the Caribbean due to poor training and the lack of Spanish speaking officers.⁹³

Yet Panamanians and other populations in American controlled ports did not just passively accept the U.S. military’s use of their cities as pleasure zones. Civilians in the city saw opportunities to exploit visiting soldiers, while others found ways to actively challenge the military’s domination. Some Panamanians—including the local police—beat and robbed drunk personnel, while others profited off the vice trade. Civilian groups organized protests aimed at expelling troops from liberty ports. Riots and other disturbances involving servicemen and civilians made major newspapers throughout the period, and reflected active resistance against the American presence on the ground. Often, the violence could be traced back to nightlife, women, and liquor. Troops and MPs in Colón were injured when “a free-for-all in a cabaret spread to the street.” Later, in Natal, Brazil sailors sparked “a quasi riot” when a drunken crew of nearly three hundred

⁹³ Robert Edson Lee, *To the War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 54-57; “Report from Theaters of Operation on Military Police Subjects,” September 24, 1942, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 319.1 General, 319.1 (Caribbean Defense Command) Gen, Box 72, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

“annoyed” and “seized” several women, provoking a “general brawl” that had to be put down by police and firemen wielding fire hoses. These brawls and riots, and the general comportment of Americans in port, fueled anti-American sentiment and possibly contributed to Panama’s decision to expel the Army’s defense bases after protests by civilians.⁹⁴

One might suspect that Caribbean ports afforded American troops a kind of anonymity, that it was their foreign location and racial hierarchies that allowed for the suspension of normal moral codes. The same kind of raucous, violent hedonism, however, could be found in U.S. mainland ports. New York City, for example, emerged as the world’s busiest and most popular liberty port during the war, and the most desired place for men trying to find a girl before shipping out. For many men it was “Last Stop, U.S.A.,” the key Atlantic hub of transshipment and transfer for soldiers, sailors, and marines of every Allied nation. Entering Brooklyn Harbor amidst the fog, recurring clanging bells, and freighters, men could see “the most beautiful sight in the world... Manhattan floating on the water.” And in “the Crossroad of the World,” servicemen gathered to see the center what of English transplant Alistair Cooke termed “Tijuana on the Hudson,” crowded with servicemen surging through the dimly lit streets. Seeing the hordes of Bluejackets, GIs, and Merchant Marines, Naval officer Robert Edson Lee wrote, “Virgil and Dante saw nothing more spectacular in Hell than those hundred

⁹⁴ Edson Lee, *To the War*, 54-57; “U.S. Soldiers Hurt in Panama Riot” *NYT*, May 5, 1941, 2; “U.S. Sailors in Brazil Riot,” *NYT*, December 20, 1945, 5; “Panama Says No,” *NYT*, December 28, 1947, E2; “Troops Pulled Out,” *NYT*, December 24, 1947, 1.

thousand servicemen circling Times Square endlessly walking, continually replaced. Desperate, lonely, forlorn, but certain to find there the excitement for which they had gone to war.”⁹⁵

Times Square functioned as both the center for liberty activity in New York and a central hub for civilian transport, once again bringing troops and civilians into contact on the ground. In the Broadway sector, women filling wartime jobs and visiting civilians confronted a sea of colors intermixing with “the red pompons of French Navy caps mingling with the bright blue collars of the British seamen, the somber khaki of America, Australian, and Canadian soldiers.” But this was not a peaceful, romantic meeting of the Allied cause, nor was Times Square the center of well-ordered spectacle and international consumerism that it is today. Instead, Time Square’s appeal lied in its suspension of civic virtue and raucous celebration of wolfish aggression. Just like overseas staging grounds, it was a militarized zone, where each week millions of soldiers could get drunk in dank taverns, carouse and fight, catch a peepshow, and then chase women through the dimout streets of the wartime city. “Canteens, above-the-street dance halls, shooting galleries, bars, [and] honky-tonks” dominated “the mecca of the pleasure-seeker, the curious, the odd, and the homeless.” In this aggressive mix

⁹⁵ Richard Goldstein, *Helluva Town: The Story of New York City During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2013),55-56; Alistair Cooke, *The American Home Front, 1941-1942* (New York: Grove Press, 2006) 281; Edson Lee, 47-48.

of violent masculinity and frontier spectacle, servicemen provided Times Square with the “greatest boom in its history.”⁹⁶

In Times Square, women, the *Times*' Meyer Berger noted, ran “a kind of GI gauntlet,” navigating the American, British, and French servicemen “forming the nightly stag lines” as they ogled the “girls and women surging toward Forty-second Street subway stations.” Cops warned women to “look out for them Coney Island wolves,” but police ultimately did little to prevent the “wolf whistles,” stares, and physical intimidation that greeted women as they made their commute. Pauline Kael remembered that soldiers picked up “techniques they saw in the movies”: “If you were walking down the street and a guy in uniform tried stop you and you weren't interested...they tried to make you feel guilty for not wanting to go to bed with them.” Indeed, consent did not usually factor into a servicemen's approach. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox received direct complaints about drunken troops “bullying civilians and frightening women and children” while Times Square women protested that “sailors call you the vilest names if you ask them to leave you alone.” Even pregnant women could not escape “being insulted and chased right up to our very door.” Women often found little recourse for this chronic pattern of harassment, threat, assault, and rape. In the early hours of the morning, Berger observed one woman with “a damaged

⁹⁶ For the first and last quote see “Times Sq. Is Enjoying Its ‘Greatest Boom’ As Civilian and Military Visitors Fill Area,” *NYT*, October 28, 1943, 25; See Brooke L. Blower, “V-J Day, 1945, Times Square” in *The Familiar Made Strange* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 75-79; Canteens and Mecca quote from Meyer Berger, “Times Square Diary,” *NYT*, September 3, 1944, SM16.

right eye,” repeating to herself, “He hit me, he hit me.” “But she’s alone,” Berger notes, “No one stops her. No sympathy.”⁹⁷

For servicemen though, Times Square, and New York itself, became a place to break sexual and racial taboos, while consummating the identities they forged in training. After beginning the night by pouring “raw whiskey down our throats,” one sailor found himself “in an orgy. I kissed, my God, I kissed a hundred women, two hundred women in an hour....I kissed a gorgeous Negress....I fondled breasts. Somebody screamed, and we chased the prettiest girls up and down....We staggered away, our lips a raw mass of cold sores for days to come—badges, envied by all the others on the ship.” These temptations proved too much for some Allied soldiers, and New York quickly became a major AWOL point for British, Canadian, French, and Chinese sailors, leading American civil and military police to launch missions aimed at tracking these international deserters down.⁹⁸

At times, New York and other stateside cities struggled to house the huge numbers arriving on furloughs despite the efforts of volunteer and religious organizations to offer housing, apartments, and dormitories to men taking liberty. Many hotels refused to give enlisted men rooms, driving them to sleazy

⁹⁷ Berger, “Times Square Diary”; Terkel, 124; Knox Memos and SP reports, P13-2 Conduct—Offenses folders, HQ, Third Naval District, NARA, New York.

⁹⁸ Edson Lee, *To the War*, 49; “Instructions for Reporting Detention of Canadian Absentees” and “Apprehension of French Absentees,” May 22, 1944 and May 4, 1944, 251.2 General #1, box 66, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 251.2 Gen. to 251.2 H, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; “37 Chinese Sailors Held,” *NYT*, April 13, 1942, 4.

establishments or the street. The *Times* noted that members of the “friendly invasion of soldiers, sailors, and marines”—and the women they were with—could be found sleeping on benches and crowding the park walkups of Fifth Avenue and Central Park West. Others, after carousing in Times Square, holed up in bus stations and subway terminals. On hot nights, troops openly slept in Central Park despite Mayor La Guardia’s order to close it at midnight. The *Times* noted that “it would require a small army to make the order fully effective.”⁹⁹

Gay soldiers—and men who identified as “straight” but enjoyed homoerotic experiences—also took to liberty ports for dancing, carousing, and sex, even though they remained the disproportionate focus of policing and vice squads. Like other servicemen, gay troops smartly followed the lists of bars that had been declared out of bounds by the MPs, vice boards, and Command. By quickly changing out of their uniform and into “civvies,” men could find a blacklisted gay bar hopefully without attracting the attention of MPs. Large public areas like Central Park offered an ideal space for cruising too, though MPs also began cracking down on well-known meeting spots. Police also focused on raiding drag shows and burlesque theaters, though wartime gay life in the military can hardly be characterized as nothing but crackdowns. Indeed, gay GIs and men interested in homoerotic encounters regularly found and “adopted”

⁹⁹ Gorham, *So Your Husband's Gone to War!*, 114; Alexander Feinberg, “Soldiers Tour City in Vain for Rooms,” *NYT* (New York City, NY), August 6, 1944, 1. La Guardia occasionally opened up the park for sleeping in the summer, though troop behavior did not seem to be affected by his decrees.

previously “straight” taverns and clubs, remaining there even when they faced opposition from civilian and police forces. In other instances, gay servicemen found established spots like Carroll’s bar in D.C., where government employees cruised for military men. Carroll’s maintained established traditions and codes of conducts that made it a reliable and safe spot to pick up a guy in prewar years. But just as heterosexual troops turned on civilians and made nightlife more aggressive, the gay servicemen in Carroll’s sometimes bucked the bar’s longstanding customs, became drunk, and then violent towards the civilian clientele. Waitresses warned their regulars about troublesome troops, but many civilians ultimately departed for less dangerous establishments.¹⁰⁰

In Los Angeles, sailors found a more decentralized sprawl of vice as they made their way from the Navy Yard and Terminal Island into the nightlife of Long Beach, downtown LA, or Hollywood. Main Street and East Fifth Street in Los Angeles, San Pedro’s South Beacon, and Long Beach’s West Pike and Ocean boomed with servicemen looking to drink and maybe “buy a piece of ‘ass.’” Bluejackets and Army grunts also took advantage of LA’s proximity to the fleshpots and amusement zones across the Mexican border. Los Angeles, San Diego, Tijuana, Tecate, Mexicali, and Ensenada effectively formed a single stretch where soldiers could tour the taverns, brothels, and bars. Locals

¹⁰⁰ Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 123.

suggested that visiting servicemen pursue the “good neighbor policy by going to Tijuana in quest of liquor.”¹⁰¹

While some soldiers viewed the border towns as spots for carousing, others identified the border crossing as the ideal spot to go AWOL. Mexico and the United States lacked an official agreement regarding the return of deserters, leading Mexican authorities to demand compensation for cooperation. Army administrators acknowledged their relative lack of leverage and advised Commanding Generals negotiating extradition of absentee soldiers “to avoid any possibility of controversy with Mexican authorities who, it must be understood, are under no obligation to enter into such agreements.”¹⁰²

The American vice traffic sometimes strained relations between the U.S. military and the Mexican government. After a night of drinking, an American corporal was shot by a Mexican policeman while drunkenly driving away from a Tijuana cabaret, leading to recriminations and demands for justice from both sides. In Reynosa, the first stop for Texan troops hopping the border, intoxicated sailors and soldiers were regularly arrested by the Mexican police “for anything

¹⁰¹ “Taverns and Bars-Out of Bounds,” (No Specific Date, likely August) 1942 P8-5 1940 11 ND (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; “Special Investigation Report of T/4 Hugh Nelson and Pvt. Lcl. John Hollinger” July 17, 1942, P8-5 1940, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; “Statement of T/4 Pvt. Lcl. Robert Upton and Pvt. LCL. Charles Rolfe” July 10, 1942, P8-5 1940, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA Riverside; Lee Shippey, “Lee Side o’ LA,” *LAT*, November 26, 1943, A4.

¹⁰² “Apprehension of Deserters by Mexican Authorities,” “Return of Absentees to Military Control from Mexico,” and “U.S.W.D. Policy to Deserters and Soldiers AWOL in Mexico, October 10, 1944, July 21, 1944, May 25, 1944, 251.2 General #1, box 66, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 251.2 Gen. to 251.2 H, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

from arguing with a taxi driver about an exorbitant fare to an assault on a Mexican, and are almost invariably fined the amount of money in their possession.” The Army attempted to declare Reynosa’s prostitution district off limits, but because the Mexican Army enforced these regulations, soldiers “understood that for a sum...this restriction is waived.” The Army eventually formed joint American-Mexican police forces to patrol Juarez and Reynosa in an effort to control “prostitution, liquor, and high prices.” Despite these attempts to police the stag trade, soldiers quickly became accustomed to having women, no matter the law or regulation in place.¹⁰³

Across American liberty ports, women “both young and old”—often working late into the night—were approached by men in uniform. When told “NO,” one woman wrote, sailors would “call me the most vulgar names.” Other servicemen would “hide and wait for ladies passing on their way home,” catcalling and following after them, “which makes it very unpleasant and unsafe—as these men seem to disregard a persons[sic] age and make the same advances to both young and old.” At the Pike in the Long Beach Amusement Zone, criminality among naval personnel ran unchecked as “thousands of usual visitors have been driven from the beaches and pleasures” as “hordes of drunken

¹⁰³ “Illinois Soldier is Killed by Mexico Police,” *CDT*, May 12, 1941, 24; “Camp Callan Soldier Slain; Policeman Held at Tijuana,” *LAT*, May 12, 1941, 9; “Weekly Intelligence Summary, 1 September 1945 to 10 September 1945,” September 10, 1945, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 8th SC., Box 78, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; “Conduct of Military Personnel in Vicinity of El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico,” April 15, 1944, 250.1 General, box 65, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250 to 251, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

sailors, running wild, insulting and man-handling women” claimed the area as their own. Male civilians escorting women “have been beaten insensible” while “trying to protect their families from the moronic desires of these hoodlums.” “Irate husbands,” one civilian remarked, “may have to kill a few of these gangsters before proper action is taken.” On trains and railways, women often could not avoid the advances and attention of soldiers, some of whom spent these trips becoming drunk and disorderly, so much so that they assaulted train conductors and porters. Few authorities then, seemed able to effectively challenge the privileges engendered by military service.¹⁰⁴

Soldiers and sailors regularly engaged in a practice later labeled “prowling” by Pearl Schiff, a novelist who lived in a liberty port. Describing the mindset of the sailors, she explained that “you prowled the Square and took your time, seeing what the evening had to offer.” This generally meant groups of servicemen stood at high traffic areas, like busy street crossings, bus stops, and subway stations, assessing the women and girls passing by. Men would give women “the eye,” a mix of seductive glances and outright leering. Wolf whistles, aggressive come-ons, and chasing after a girl might follow. Servicemen, Schiff

¹⁰⁴ “Protest Letter to Admiral in Command 11th Naval District,” March 8, 1944, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; “Protest Letter to the Commandant,” February 19, 1944, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; “John L. MacNamara to Admiral L.J. Hiltse,” September 21, 1946, P8-5 Protests, Petitions, and Complaints 1946 Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; Murray Schumach, “It’s the Old Coney—With War Overtones,” *NYT*, July 4, 1943, SM8; “Statement of Jillson, Edward T. Regarding Conditions Aboard Southern Pacific Train,” December 8, 1944, P 18-1 Leave, Liberty, and Absence 1944, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside.

wrote, debated which girl to pursue and hoped to avoid “committing yourself to a profitless evening with a girl who soaked up your liquor like a sponge but gave nothing back when squeezed.”¹⁰⁵

Some in the military hierarchy acknowledged the unchecked mistreatment of women occurring in liberty ports throughout the country, but they often found ways to ascribe the problem to a tiny minority of scoundrels rather than admit how widespread this behavior had become. After witnessing the violent carousing in Hampton Roads that had previously disturbed General Marshall, Rear Admiral David McDougal Le Breton admitted that “some men appear to believe that because they are in the military service they are privileged to molest women in public places and to insult and disregard the rights of civilians who are not wearing the uniform.” Generals in the Army offered similar warnings about the rampant lawlessness defining wartime life in liberty ports.¹⁰⁶

Le Breton was an old hand—an experienced Naval lifer dedicated to the service who genuinely believed in the idea of being a gentleman officer. This ideology informed his declaration that “the conduct of these men brings the entire

¹⁰⁵ Pearl Schiff, *Scollay Square* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1952), 25, 48.

¹⁰⁶ “Misconduct of Service Personnel,” January 1, 1945, box 178, [Restricted] P13 Misconduct and Discipline Restricted [2 of 2] THRU [Restricted] P14 Appointment #2, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT)/(Red 7), Entry #P 110 Confidential and Restricted General Administrative Files, 1945-1945, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP. Other commanders periodically issued very similar proclamations, to little effect. See for example, Lieutenant General Brehon Somervell’s warning that “adverse criticism of the discipline and soldierly bearing of the members of the Army has been received in the War Department. This criticism results from observations of Army personnel not only in cities, public conveyances and other public places, but also in our posts, camps and stations.” “Brehon Somervell on Discipline,” July 14, 1942, 250 Discipline, box 193, Office Management Division Decimal File, 1920-1945, 246.8 Enlisted Personnel—Allowances of to 250.1 Morals and Conduct Vol. 1 (Entertainment), RG 247 (Chief of Chaplains), NACP.

Navy into disrepute and should be a matter of serious concern to all decent, self-respecting men in the Naval service.” Given the range of offenses cited—swearing, insulting women and civilians, destruction of civilian property, assault, highway robbery, and manslaughter—Le Breton surmised that the Navy was losing respect and confidence of the public, who increasingly saw nothing but “disorderly and rowdy conduct in public places.”¹⁰⁷

While the Admiral chose to step up Shore Patrol efforts, issue stronger punishments, and encourage a culture of more gentlemanly behavior during stays in stateside cities, he failed to recognize how the Navy’s culture of swaggering masculinity and anti-civilian tribalism fueled enlistees’ criminal behavior. Instead Le Breton blamed the port’s troubles on “criminals, gangsters, and other undesirable persons of bad character” who had unfortunately found their way into the service. Here, the Admiral ignored the fact that the Navy generally had its pick of the best recruits and did not rely on the draft like the Army did. Hampton Roads’ struggles with crime and sexual assault also began in 1942, when the Navy was generally filled with disproportionately educated, middle-class sailors. Criminal behavior then, could not be simply attributed to poor education or a dearth of men raised in “good homes.” Instead, each service saw the effects of a training system that emphasized virile masculinity and disdain for

¹⁰⁷ “Misconduct of Service Personnel,” January 1, 1945, box 178, [Restricted] P13 Misconduct and Discipline Restricted [2 of 2] THRU [Restricted] P14 Appointment #2, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT)/(Red 7), Entry #P 110 Confidential and Restricted General Administrative Files, 1945-1945, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP.

civilian life combined with a policing and legal framework that incentivized using civilians to relieve stress and have a rollicking good time.¹⁰⁸

Brawling

Servicemen performed their superiority to non-military men in the city by engaging in fist-fights and brawls. Male civilians, thought of as “4-Fs” and “Jodies,” were often targeted, usually with no consequences. Fighting with civilians asserted the soldier’s dominance over other males, as well as spaces like Times Square. On many nights, reporters watched as “soldiers, sailors, and civilians exchanged blows” while servicemen vandalized property, but MPs rarely arrived to make any arrests. Storeowners expected riots and vandalism whenever an election or New Year’s Eve brought masses of servicemen to Times Square, boarding up their storefronts and windows to avoid theft and vandalism. Stories of sailors murdering civilians in local hotels cropped up while civilian police and sailors openly skirmished in bar fights. In New York and elsewhere, soldiers drinking, stealing cars, and joyriding remained an unchecked problem that created a sense of helplessness amongst civilians.¹⁰⁹

Men sought out establishments that became known for the consistent brawling. On San Diego’s Mission Beach boardwalk, soldiers, marines, and civilians could scrap in hard-edged bars like the Casino Café, where

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ “Rowdies in Times Square” *NYT*, June 11, 1943, 21; “Dies After Row with Sailor,” *NYT*, August 13, 1944, 19; Meyer Berger, “Roosevelt Crowd in Times Square Quiet, Very Young, Middle-Aged,” *NYT*, November 8, 1944, 7.

management made no effort to stop drunken fights that lasted 30 minutes at times. Nearby civilians lodged formal complaints against the chronic “fighting and profane language,” soldiers using their yards “as a toilet,” and intoxicated servicemen sleeping on their property. One resident saw these carousing men and the bars they frequented as “a menace to the welfare of my wife and family.”¹¹⁰

Brawls could quickly transform from low level street fights into massive riots that put soldiers, civilians, and police forces into deadly confrontations. In August 1942, over 1200 people crowded themselves into the ballroom of the Elks building in Cambridge, Massachusetts for a Thursday night dance. As the servicemen, women, and civilians danced and intermingled, a fist fight broke out between a GI and a civilian over a woman. As they fought, a cacophony of insults, fists, and screaming overtook the hall as the fighting spiraled out onto the dance floor. Men broke bottles, smashed windows, and readied knives. A police matron attempting to reestablish order was punched in the eye and knocked to the ground. Witnesses saw a soldier thrown from a balcony, plummeting 15 feet onto his head. He soon disappeared from view as the combatants on the dance floor trampled him. Joint Shore Patrol and civilian police squads stormed into the building, and the brawl-turned-riot spread out into the nearby streets. After police

¹¹⁰ Special Investigation Report of T/4 Hugh Nelson and Pvt. Lcl. John Hollinger” July 17, 1942, P8-5 1940, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; “Statement of T/4 Pvt. Lcl. Robert Upton and Pvt. LCL. Charles Rolfe” July 10, 1942, P8-5 1940, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; “Complaint of Rex A. Smith” July 9, 1942, P8-5 1940, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside.

arrested the instigators, the crowd turned against them, brawling with the SPs and municipal cops. Army MPs soon joined the resurgent riot, and the police only quelled the melee by firing tear gas into the crowd. Brawls that escalated into riots remained consistent spectacles throughout the war in newly militarized ports, and they continued to harm relations between soldier, civilian, and police.¹¹¹

Civil challenges to military authority and privilege, as well as enforcement of “Chickenshit” regulations, could also prompt brawling. Troops knew municipal cops held little authority over them while in port, leading to fights when civilian police attempted to encroach upon the *de facto* legal privileges granted by the uniform. The “Battle of Astoria” in New York—a 90 minute bar fight between scores of sailors and policemen witnessed by 400 spectators—started when officers demanded liberty passes and identification cards. The sailors rallied to the cry of “so this is democracy!” and began “the free-for all.” Glass panels were smashed, stones were thrown at policemen, civilians joined in the fray, and scores were injured. Although the sailors were in violation of liberty regulations and openly assaulted police officers, the magistrate presiding over the case chastised the police: “A bar and grill at 1 o’clock in the morning is likely to

¹¹¹ “Fight Over Girl Starts Dance Hall Riot: 15 Jailed, Scores Hurt in Cambridge,” *TCD*, August 15, 1942, 2. For other examples see “Riot is Started as Soldier and Civilian Fight,” *CDT*, August 6, 1943, 19, “Servicemen, Civilian Clash in Lynn, One Hurt and Soldier Held,” *DBG*, July 21, 1943, 3, Enoc P. Waters Jr., “Inside Story of Arizona: Blame Girls for Fatal Battle,” *TCD*, December 5, 1942, 1, and “Soldier Is Shot, 2 Policemen Hurt in So. End Fracas,” *DBG*, May 10, 1944, 1.

become inflamed at the slightest provocation. I cannot understand the physical force used by the police in arresting these defendants.”¹¹²

Servicemen’s targeting of civilian men could cause whole cities to be declared out of bounds, as happened in Sacramento when “mounting trouble between sailors and civilians that culminated in a riotous fight.” Here, 25 sailors insulted and then attacked a smaller group of civilian men including a Mexican-American prize fighter. City officials warned that “friction between sailors and civilian young men had been increasing” with earlier brawls at a Chinese restaurant where belligerent sailors clashed with waiters who “fought with hot soup,” scalding one of the men.¹¹³

Liberty ports also often transformed the nature of brawling. Previously, GIs and sailors allowed their rival service identities to provoke fights between them. These inter-service brawls could be massive, with one street fight involving over 150 sailors and marines just outside of Seattle. But when faced with Allied troops taking leave in stateside cities, American troops increasingly began to fight these interlopers along national lines. In Bermuda, “a bewildering potpourri of fighting men” including American sailors, British Navymen, Scottish Highlanders, Free French out of Tahiti, and other Commonwealth conscripts congregated in the same bars after long ocean trawls. In an area where rum was cheaper than beer, international punch-ups proved inevitable. One story claimed a bar fight began

¹¹² “Tavern Wrecked as 3 Policemen Battle Civilians, Sailors in Astoria,” *NYT*, April 9, 1945, 1;

¹¹³ “Sailors Barred at Sacramento After Rioting,” *CDT*, July 28, 1944, 9.

after an American sailor and British merchant man began exchanging insults. "To hell with your king!" said the American. "To hell with Babe Ruth!" replied the Brit.¹¹⁴

British and American men suffered perhaps the poorest relations. These brawls were partly sparked by sexual jealousy and competition. British soldiers and sailors abroad carried the burden of rumors and recriminations. Many had heard of all the Yanks in the UK supposedly reducing British wives and sisters to prostitution. British soldiers also resented the higher pay, better food, and access to beer that US servicemen enjoyed. American troops, for their part, despised the potential competition for women they saw in British men. Many believed they were about to ship out to face potential death and desired a woman as compensation for this sacrifice. British sailors seen with American women were sometimes targeted by groups of American troops. This competition over women soured inter-Alliance cooperation.¹¹⁵

Even the British and American political and military leaders ultimately clashed over unequal legal treaties. While the British assented to American merchant marine and sailors in the UK and Commonwealth territories being tried by US courts, the Americans made no such concessions for British sailors found to commit crimes in the US. The American forces additionally demanded that

¹¹⁴ "Weekly Intelligence Summary," September 29, 1945, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 9th SC., Box 78, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; William Fulton, "Troop Rivalries Keep Bermuda Police on Alert: British and U.S. Sailors Engage in Brawls," *CDT*, September 2, 1941, 7.

¹¹⁵ Fussell, 39.

none of their troops ever be tried by a UK court. The British Admiralty bristled at a clearly unequal legal system, but generally cooperated with the American demands. Relations between American and British troops eventually became so poor that British command instituted a program aimed at training American and British recruits together in order to avoid inter-Alliance conflicts. Prominent Bostonians responded to street clashes by creating a "Union Jack Club" for passing British sailors aimed at keeping them out of rowdy spots and to stop them sleeping on the Boston Common. Nevertheless, British sailors did end up meeting American women and marrying them. Some British servicemen deserted in places like Brooklyn to marry, while Australian merchant marines found wives in Los Angeles and took them as war brides back to Sydney.¹¹⁶

"Tell Your Troubles to the President"

¹¹⁶ For unequal treaties see "Offences by Merchant Seamen in Foreign Countries," TNA: WO 32/10645 and for an example of a British sailor tried in an American civil court see "Head of the British Advisory Repair Mission to The Secretary of the Admiralty on Alfred Thompson," May 26, 1942, ADM1/12036; For US rejecting UK attempts to try American sailors see "Disciplinary Status of U.S. Troops in South Africa," June 29, 1942, 250.1 General #1, Box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; The Joint American-British training program was called the "Inter-Attachment Scheme." Here, UK and US Army forces trained together in Northern Ireland and other home command zones in an attempt to avoid the conflicts that had developed over the course of the war. They also asked British men about their views of Americans. See "The Army Council: Inter-Attachment of British and American Army Personnel in the United Kingdom: 1944, TNA: WO 32/10268. For British jealousy over American access to women see "Minutes of a Conference held at the Home Office on the 16th April, 1943," TNA: WO 32/10267. For Union Jack Club see Nat Burrows, "Union Jack Club for Naval Men of Britain Opens Here Tomorrow," *DBG*, November 7, 1941, 9; For British deserters marrying American women see "Amnesty-ruling for Deserters now residing in (U.S.A) in TNA: WO 32/15261. For the Australian-American war bride example see "Aussie Sailor Wins Bride in Beach City," *LAT*, October 20, 1945, A3. For Australian women that became American war brides see *Overseas War Brides: Stories from Women the Women who Followed Their Hearts to Australia* (East Roseville, N.S.W.: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

Military officials readily understood the primary causes of trouble on leave and liberty, with one Naval official listing “drank too much,” “detained by civilian police,” and “couldn’t keep away from girls” as key factors. Following General Marshall’s complaints about the behavior of soldiers in 1942, General Gullion—head of Army policing—likewise identified “intoxication,” “disturbing civilians,” and “general obnoxious disorder” as deeply troubling signs of “an apparent lack of discipline in the Army as a whole.” Gullion made a number of requests and recommendations. First, the Army should greatly increase the number of Military Police in key liberty ports, towns near bases, and on trains. Second, he wrote to the International Association of Chiefs of Police asking civil police across the country to “arrest and confine all military personnel for drunkenness” before turning them over to the nearest military station. Gullion finally attempted to institute better policing by threatening the Commanding Generals. “Misconduct of military personnel, especially outside the confines of military reservations,” he explained, “is an indication of poor leadership, training and esprit de corps and of the failure of officers to carry out their responsibilities.” Those who failed to promptly correct this chronic misbehavior would face “disciplinary measures.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ “Naval Offenders and Their Treatments by Lt. Comdr. Richard A. Chappell” April-June 1945 Issue of “Federal Probation” A17 Law and Justice, NARA, Riverside; “Conduct of military personnel on all public carriers.” “Misconduct of Military Personnel Resulting from Drinking,” and “Allen W. Gullion to International Association of Chiefs of Police,” April 12, 1942, November 23, 1942, November 21, 1942, 250.1 General, box 65, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250 to 251, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

Gullion's words were sharp, but he lacked any real way to back up his implied threats. The military's policing problem did not result simply from a lack of effort among commanding officers and police. Both military and civil policing remained ineffective for a number reasons outside the lazy explanation of poor leadership.

First, the War Department believed that recurring manpower problems made devoting more (and better trained) men to policing an impossible request. After Gullion made demands for more MPs and patrols, the War Department admitted that "the number of military police in all categories is below the number allotted," but maintained that the Army would not accede to an expansion of MP units because of concerns over manpower: "It is obvious that as the Army increases in size, the vital question of manpower must increasingly influence decisions....Assignment of additional personnel to duties which are not closely associated with the support of combat units in active theaters must be kept to a minimum." Even as the number of combat and support troops grew—and therefore the number of men taking liberty increased—the War Department refused to make proportionate increases in police forces. A report in August 1942 made an even more desperate case, noting that MPs were already short over 17,000 officers, and would ideally need 26 additional battalions, a 41% increase in the total number of MPs. With only 45,000 officers—some of these men were dedicated to internal security efforts at defense plants and thus did not contribute to urban order making—attempting to police over 3,000,000 GIs, the Military

Police were operating at under half their target strength in manpower. By January 1945, MP numbers in the continental US stood at 90,000, though the Army's total personnel also grew to over 8 million, leaving the Provost Marshal General with a continued shortage of men.¹¹⁸

Rather than addressing their men's alcohol abuse or increasing patrols to prevent street harassment and rape, Joint Army-Navy boards used military and civilian policing to focus on preventing venereal diseases, attacking homosexuality, and investigating black and other non-white servicemen. Any area of the city or business could be placed "out of bounds" if it was thought to be spreading VD, rendering it theoretically inaccessible for servicemen (though these lists often told troops exactly where to go). In centering their policing efforts on VD, the military redoubled its commitment to maintaining manpower while allowing soldiers to engage in a few "port sins." But this also drove more and more soldiers into areas with civilian women uninvolved in the sex trade.¹¹⁹

Both the Shore Patrol and the Military Police lacked tradition, morale, funding, and the backing of higher-level commanders. Indeed, some ship captains bitterly protested when their men were held for drunkenness and

¹¹⁸ "War Department to General Gullion, Military Police Assigned to Public Carriers," September 24, 1942, 250.1 General, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For August 1942 report see "Determination of the Requirements of Military Police Units Necessary for the Internal Security of the United States," August 7, 1942, 320.2 General #1, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, box 79, NACP; For January MP numbers see "Strength of the Army Report," January 31, 1945, 320.2 Strength of the Army, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, box 80, RG 389, NACP.

¹¹⁹ For more on Vice boards see the P Vice files and P Misconduct files. Also see Costello's chapter "Jagged Glass" in *Love, Sex, and War: Changing Values, 1939-1945*.

carousing, demanding an explanation for the loss of morale and manpower. When Los Angeles' Shore Patrol attempted to enforce alcohol and location restrictions, a skeptical Vice Admiral wrote in asking senior officers to legitimize the policy. A 1942 Army commissioned study of personnel problems in the MP corps argued that the whole force suffered from "unqualified personnel," and explained that it was seen as a place to dump "useless individuals." One inspector remarked, "The most frightening situation is personnel—the first thing referred to at all posts was personnel." By the war's end, few improvements had been made and Army Command continued to receive complaints from Generals that they could not obtain qualified and well-trained MPs. Major General James L. Collins asked that the Chiefs of Staff move to concentrate the scant MP resources in "cities that are centers of population having a large impact on military personnel," but this proposal was scuttled. Other commanders pleaded that they required "additional military police badly," and warned of "tremendous headaches" should the War Department ignore their requests. Consistently understaffed and given unremarkable trainees, the MPs continued to be cast as underpowered misfits. Jokes abounded claiming that color-blind draftees were made MPs and tasked with directing traffic. Another joke featured an illiterate MP telling a speeding colonel's wife that "you're damn lucky, ma'am. If I could write I'd give you a ticket." Civilian women joined in openly mocking officers as they

pass them on the sidewalk, calling them “flatfoots,” implying they could not hack it in the infantry.¹²⁰

Servicemen thus held little respect for Military Police and Shore Patrol. Each force struggled to effectively assert control and authority over unruly men, many of whom outright refused to obey the commands of a police force from a different branch. GIs like Bill Mauldin saw MPs as matriarchal figures determined to impede any kind of liberty activity. In one of Mauldin’s *Star Spangled Banter* cartoons, a scowling MP waving his baton is analyzed by three GIs. When one asks, “Whaddaya s’pose makes an M.P. become an M.P.?,” another answers, “They want t’keep us boys innercent—it the mother instinct.” A 1943 War Department report, “What Soldiers Think About Army Branches,” revealed that soldiers despised the MPs. The average grunt identified MPs as having “the least amount of work to do” and “the least dangerous jobs,” while also seeing the corps as the least liked branch and the branch least important to winning the war. Some commanding officers chastised the casual disrespect shown to the corps, and feared the sometimes violent disdain GIs displayed towards law enforcement. One brigadier general—noticing a growing number of “incidents

¹²⁰ “Vice Admiral J. K. Taussig to Commodore S. F. Heim,” November 25, 1944, P18-1 Leave, Liberty, and Absence 1944 Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; “Study of Personnel Problems in the Corps of Military Police,” April 30, 1942, box 1185, Military Police Division, Military Police Board Reports, 1942-1947, MP Bd Rpt’s # 1 to 17, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; “Major General James L. Collins to Brigadier General Joseph F Battley,” June 23, 1945, 370.093 General, box 111, Administrative Division, Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 370.093, RG 389, NACP; “Lt. Colonel Charles Meyers to Major General Archer L. Lerch,” September 1, 1944, 370.093 General, box 111, Administrative Division, Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 370.093, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For MP jokes and “flatfoot” see Sergeant Lloyd Shearer, “A Night with An M.P.,” *NYT*, December 6, 1942, SM 23.

indicative of an attitude of disrespect toward military and civilian police, and toward military and local law”—cautioned that soldiers were showing “contempt for the requests and orders of military police.” This was leading to “violence committed upon the persons” of MPs. Naval files burgeon with reports of sailors cursing out Shore Patrol officers or assaulting them. Other officers reported being surrounded after attempting to make an arrest, with troops grabbing at their pistol. Army reports describe grisly accounts of soldiers ganging up on isolated MPs and savagely beating them.¹²¹

Some Shore Patrol Commanders like Clarence Fogg seemed genuinely concerned with the levels of crime, drunkenness, and, as a Naval report put it, “the accosting of women” in the Los Angeles area. But how could undermanned patrols enforce the rule of law when naval protocols informed them that “arrest should not be resorted to where corrective measures will suffice?” The authority and effectiveness of military policing rapidly diminished over the course of the war, with officers coming to accept their lack of control in liberty ports. Even as civilians protested to the military that women were forced to “run the gauntlet” and civilian men had to “stand idly by to the abuse and humiliation of their

¹²¹ Mauldin, *Willie and Joe Volume One* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2008), 25; Kennett, 85; “What Soldiers Think About Army Branches,” April 30, 1943, 461 General #2, box 125, Administrative Division, Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 461 to 463.7, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General) NACP; “Disrespect Toward and Acts of Violence Against Military Police; Misconduct Outside Military Reservations,” June 21, 1945, 370.093 General, box 111, Administrative Division, Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 370.093, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For officer being surrounded see “Sailors Barred at Sacramento After Rioting,” *CDT*, July 28, 1944, 9; For MP assault see “MP Assault Report,” June 8 1945, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250.1 General #1, Box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

women,” little was done to bolster military policing. Instead, “patrols,” one civilian seethed, “advise the victims they are under orders to NOT stop these boys.”

Other MPs abused their power to coerce women for sexual favors. Several women told *The Chicago Defender* that MPs “bully them into affairs with them, sometimes on threat of ‘taking it out’ on their soldier boyfriends or husbands.”¹²²

Civilian police departments, gutted by the draft that took veteran policemen into military service, held even less power over servicemen. The police effectively lacked the ability to hold and charge troops except for vice violations (prostitution, homosexuality) and the most serious of felonies (such as murder, vehicular homicide, or arson). War department policy, as well official police bulletins, called for troops to be turned over to military authorities, if detained. Soldiers knew municipal cops held little authority over them while in port, leading to brawls when civilian police attempted to encroach upon the legal privileges that came with service. In a memo to district police officers, Long Beach’s Police Chief acknowledged the bleak situation: “There is a growing resentment against police officers in general by enlisted personnel of the armed forces and...this resentment is rapidly being crystallized. This could, and may very easily develop into serious difficulties and consequences for individual officers, as well as for the department personnel in general.” The Chief then went

¹²² Bureau of Naval Personnel Circular Letter No. 165-42, November 27, 1942, P-13 Discipline folder, 1 of 2, Box 422, 1st Naval District, Commandant’s Office, General Correspondence “District Files,” 1942 (RG 181) NARA, Waltham; “John L. MacNamara to Admiral L.J. Hiltse,” September 21, 1946, P8-5 Protests, Petitions, and Complaints 1946 Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; Enoc P. Waters Jr., “Inside Story of Arizona: Blame Girls for Fatal Battle,” *TCD*, December 5, 1942, 1.

on to warn of a complete breakdown of relations with the military and “extreme problems” that would make “work more hazardous.” Finally, he implicitly called for officers to employ leniency in dealing with the military as “these are trying times.” These arrangements extended to all liberty ports, giving servicemen extralegal and extraterritorial legal privileges within American territory.¹²³

Race in Liberty Ports—Houston, Chicago, Detroit, LA, Harlem

Reconstructing the wartime lives of African-American servicemen remains a far more difficult task compared to the well-documented experiences of white military men. Military, police, and civic records were all written and documented by whites. Aside from a few notable black newspapers, most crime beats were covered by white journalists informed by the era’s prevailing racism. Publishers provided far more opportunities for white combat soldiers to publish memoirs and journals, further exacerbating the dearth of African-American sources. Rape accusations and convictions—and subsequent lynchings—against black troops were commonly used as a tool to enforce white supremacy. The Army’s weekly intelligence summaries commonly dedicated whole sections to the “racial situation” and “negro crime,” and these reports are suffused with blatant racism. The administrative division of the Military Police kept detailed records of individual incidents involving black soldiers and assessed the degree of “racial

¹²³ “Procedure Regarding Arrest and Release of United States Army, Navy, Marine, Coast Guard, and State Guard Personnel,” *Daily Police Bulletin*, August 17, 1943, A17-6 Agents, Legal Matters, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; “Walter H. Lentz to All Officers,” October 1, 1943, A17-6 Agents, Legal Matters, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside. RG 389.

agitation” occurring in each command area. Once again, these accounts lack the perspective of the soldier and their claims of crime cannot be independently corroborated. African-American servicemen also likely felt pressure to not publicize their activities in liberty ports. While white soldiers could safely recall fond memories of carousing in Times Square or cruising along Mission Street, individual black veterans were held to the impossible standard of representing the moral character of all African-Americans. Reminiscing about bawdy adventures in port had to be excluded in favor of the rhetorical power of the Double V Campaign. Historians are thus left with few sources, most of which were written by whites.¹²⁴

Nevertheless, some indications of how black servicemen navigated liberty ports and other stopover cities exist. Like white troops, black men exhibited similar desires for women, alcohol, and an escape from the regimentation and authoritarianism of military life. Black Marines lusted after “fine-looking girls” and “hot-coeds” offering “pussy.” Old hands taunted new recruits upon arrival by asking them, “Didja bring your sister?” One marine being “razzed” by older troops for wearing a zoot suit responded by boasting about his access to nightlife: “Y’all jealous ‘cause I seen the city an’ y’all h’aint.” Black servicemen echoed white troops’ obsession with liberty, describing it as a chance “to get back to

¹²⁴ Numerous weekly intelligence summaries can be found in RG 389, Administrative Division, Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 319.1 Weekly Intell. Summary, boxes 76-78, NACP. The individual incident reports are found in RG 389, Administrative Division, Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 322 General #1, box 81, NACP.

civilization.” Unlike their white counterparts, however, black troops journey into liberty ports required an uncomfortable train ride in “the standing room only aisles of the Jim Crow Special.” Despite the inequalities in travel, both white and black military men spent their liberty in pursuit of similar goals. Bill Downey, a black marine, remembers his first night in D.C. as a “search for easy women.” Time on long train rides was spent playing poker, enjoying “bullshit sessions,” and “talking about women.” Black troops took particular delight in waving to women “who had not been indoctrinated with racism.” These women waved back and “when they saw our black faces and Marine uniforms they yelled like cheerleaders.”¹²⁵

In stark contrast to white troops, African-American servicemen regularly faced harsh and violent treatment from both military and civilian police forces. The uniform often protected white troops from police action even when they acted in the most profane and repugnant ways. But when black men put on the uniform, they became an even greater target for cops eager to enforce the white supremacist order (and perhaps to exercise their own power and masculinity in a time where police were despised and disempowered). Yet it was more than just the combination of the light olive uniform and black skin that so incensed whites. Black troops taking leave in cities became the ultimate threat because they were—for that brief period of leave—outside the total control of their white commanders. Knowing that these men would possibly be looking for both liquor and women only exacerbated the fears of white police, civilians, and military

¹²⁵ Downey, *Uncle Sam Must be Losing the War*, 23,25,137, 153.

authorities. Liberty ports quickly emerged as significant conflict zones between black servicemen and whites, and attempts to prevent black troops from enjoying the urban nightlife fueled a number of riots and violent incidents throughout the war.

African-American servicemen on leave committed three sins in the eyes of whites. First, their performance of military identity in public could be seen as unpatriotic. Using the war and military service to gain greater freedom and access to major urban areas struck whites as disloyal and exploitative behavior. Second, black troops were seen as sexual threats to white women, but also as sexual competitors for black women desired by white men. Third, groups of black servicemen moving through liberty ports threatened both the *de facto* and *de jure* segregation of many urban spaces. Police, military, and urban officials responded by issuing a whole new set of wartime segregation policies, while also employing violent tactics aimed at terrorizing black troops taking leave. The conflict and brutal hatred that black servicemen faced, however, not only drove racial antagonisms within metropolitan centers, but also made African-Americans more cognizant of how amusement and access to public space could become key political battlegrounds.¹²⁶

From the beginning of the war, civilian and military police forces seemed to find common cause in threatening and harassing black troops taking leave. In

¹²⁶ James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 186.

early 1942, Houston city cops and military police entered bars and taverns in the “the heart of the Negro section of [the] city” to taunt and insult the assembled black soldiers. The combined police told them that “they were ‘niggers’ and that as long as they remained in the South they would be ‘niggers’ and would be treated as such.” Soldiers replied that they were not “‘nigger soldiers’ but were American soldiers.” One of the cops responded, “You are a nigger soldier if I say so,” before threatening to kill them. The police began arresting the men and charging them with “inciting to riot.” Upon release the next morning, the cops warned one of the soldiers that “he would be arrested everytime he came into Houston.” He was arrested later that night for remaining in the city. Other GIs reported being forced to exit restaurants, receiving demands that they remove their hats when speaking to whites, and suffering beatings with billy clubs. One claimed to have almost been blinded after being struck with by an officer. Major Smith, the head of military policing in Houston, defended the conduct of Houston cops, maintaining that the police could treat black soldiers “in any they wished.” The Major went on to claim that when black soldiers entered the city, they were under “the authority of city law,” a marked contrast to military commanders who frequently asserted the supremacy of military law for white troops. *The Chicago Defender* and NAACP concluded that “a campaign of terror and intimidation is being waged against Negro soldiers by civilian and white military police in this area,” and they directly protested to the war department’s “Negro advisor” Judge William Hastie. Such an early action to harass and arrest black soldiers suggests

a deliberate strategy amongst the police to prevent any black troops from even attempting to go to Houston during their leave and liberty. Local commanders likely collaborated in this scheme when they took ammunition and firearms away from black companies, fearing armed troops entering Houston prepared to confront the racist police forces. Nevertheless, the *Defender* reported that “Negro soldiers have brought arms and ammunition to defend themselves if things get too hot for them in Houston.”¹²⁷

The War Department investigated the situation and the claims of John H. Thompson, the author who wrote the *Defender* piece. Thompson warned the Army about the lack of black MPs who might be able to more effectively police black servicemen, while also noting the consistent police brutality that defined GI-police interactions and the numbers of black northerners apparently unaccustomed to such virulent segregation. The specter of riots loomed in the mind of Thompson, who recalled the Red Summer riots of 1919 and advised that “the present day soldier which we see here, is not taking the abuse the white people are placing on them.” If Houston did not learn to “respect the United States uniform even though it is worn by a Negro,” then the danger of riots would continue to grow. “These soldiers have told me and other newsmen,” Thompson advised, “that they are not going to stand for a lot ‘foolishness’ by whites as long

¹²⁷ John H. Thompson, “Texas Police Insult, Arrest Race Soldiers,” *TCD*, February 14, 1942, 1; “Investigation of Negro Situation in Houston Area,” March 14, 1942, 291.2 General, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 251.26 to 300.6, Box 68, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

as they are in uniform.” Though the War Department acknowledged some of the abuses of Houston’s police force and advocated for improved recreation for black soldiers, the report mostly justified the prevailing principle of simply segregating the black divisions. The report’s author concluded that “negro training camps should be widely distributed throughout the country....In other words, suppose that negro camps are placed in Arizona or New Mexico and are not located adjacent to cities or towns having a substantial negro population.” A recurring lack of black MPs only exacerbated the tensions.¹²⁸

While police commanders in Houston attempted to simply prevent any and all black troops—even black transport drivers delivering important supplies—from entering the city, Chicago’s authorities sought to redouble the hypersegregation which defined the city’s North-South divide. However, they reinforced the city’s racial order in an unexpected way. In July 1942, a Navy lieutenant commander declared that much of Chicago’s South Side would be declared off-limits for white sailors. Black business owners received notice that they were to bar any white sailors from their establishments. Shore patrol officers soon moved in to enforce what the *Defender* labeled an extension of Jim Crow. The SPs began forcibly ejecting white sailors from well-known South Side nightspots like the DeLisa. White sailors carousing at the Rhumboogie responded by nearly rioting when

¹²⁸ “Investigation of Negro Situation in Houston Area,” March 14, 1942, 291.2 General, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 251.26 to 300.6, Box 68, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For an example of riots occurring due to a lack of black MPs see “2 Soldier Riots in Tallahassee,” *TCD*, October 14, 1944, 11.

“Shore police attempted to invade the night club.” Whites would only be allowed to frequent White City, an amusement park that had long been segregated, and they were required to reach this fun zone only by public transportation. A local NAACP branch attorney explained that the order effectively blocked all white sailors from South Side’s streets, shops, and nightlife. The NAACP and *Defender*—both fervent supporters of black business that stood to lose significant revenue from this action—argued that the order was a form of “discrimination based on race or color” against whites. They also rejected the unstated, but intended effect of the order to reinforce the *de facto* ban on black sailors from the North Side. This policy of keeping black troops contained within the city’s “negro section” became standard policy in other Northern cities as well. For example, in New York, black servicemen were expected to remain in Harlem, despite its lack of recreation. In Ohio, black infantrymen argued they were kept from enjoying liberty because of a burdensome workload: “The mistreated colored servicemen,” wrote one GI, “is discriminated, segregated, ridiculed, misjudged and frowned upon. He is given, in most cases the hardest dirtiest work in the service and during his spare time, if he has the energy left to go to town, he is confronted with the same treatment.”¹²⁹

¹²⁹ For an overview of hypersegregation see Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, “Hypersegregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas: Black and Hispanic Segregation along Five Dimensions,” *Demography* Vol. 26, No. 3 (August, 1989), 373-391; “Navy Sets Up ‘Jim Crow’ Area in Chicago,” *TCD*, July 25, 1942, 1; For Harlem and Ohio situations see “Weekly Intelligence Summary, 5th SvC,” July 28, 1945, 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 5th SC. Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 5th SC., Box 77, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

Naval authorities in Chicago framed the ban as an effort “to protect Negro women from being approached by white sailors.” Lieutenant Commander Lowe even explicitly stated, “We are trying to protect Negro womanhood from approaches of white sailors.” Did Chicago’s naval commanders genuinely care about the welfare of South Side’s black women? That explanation seems dubious. The Navy, however, might have recognized that competition over women between white and black men would likely create fierce episodes of racial violence. In the Army’s Weekly Intelligence Summaries, officers consistently posted reports that “attempts by white soldiers to date Negro women is creating resentment among Negroes.” These reports acknowledge instances of white MPs and enlisted men accosting and making advances towards black women, prompting their black servicemen escorts to physically defend them.¹³⁰

Even the rumor of an interracial transgression could be enough to provoke city-wide violence in key wartime centers. Detroit played witness to the power of race and rumor in June 1943. Although scholars continue to debate the long-term causes of the Detroit Riot—the predominant explanation centers on the city’s deterioration of public services and housing, as well as overcrowding—the conflict between black and white was sparked by rumors of military men committing acts of racial violence. In the summer’s heat, white Detroiters spread

¹³⁰ “Navy Sets Up ‘Jim Crow’ Area in Chicago,” *TCD*, July 25, 1942, 1; “Weekly Intelligence Summary, 4th SvC,” August 11, 1945, 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 4th SC. Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 4th SC., Box 77, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

wild rumors of black men who “slit a white soldier’s throat and raped his girlfriend,” while Detroit’s African-American residents passed on stories of white sailors throwing a black woman and child off a bridge into the Detroit River. Investigators later dragged the river, but discovered no bodies. When the riot began though, stories of interracial conflict involving servicemen formed key parts of the narrative. Brawling, looting, and firefights soon spread outward from Belle Isle Park as black Detroiters, white sailors, and police—and later soldiers—battled for three days, leaving 34 dead, hundreds wounded, and the U.S. Army occupying the shattered streets. Only a day before Detroit’s riot, black and white troops had exchanged gunfire at Camp Stewart in Georgia after a white man was accused of assaulting a black soldier’s wife, leaving four dead and many wounded.¹³¹

Questions over who could control access to both women and public spaces—and the way rumor could inflame existing tensions—would be repeated in Los Angeles with the Zoot Suit Riots, as well as Harlem’s riot over a black MP shot by a white policeman. For five days in June 1943, white marines and sailors went to war against the Mexican-American zoot suiters and pachucos in the streets of Los Angeles. Reacting to the zoot suit uniform—with its gleeful disdain

¹³¹ For an analysis of how rumor impacted the riots see Marilyn S. Johnson, “Gender, Race, and Rumors: Re-examining the 1943 Race Riots,” *Gender and History* 10, 2 (August 1998); For a short overview see Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 228; For Detroit’s rumors see Patricia A. Turner, *I Heard It Through the Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 51; “Detroit Calmer; Troops on Guard,” *TWP*, June 23, 1943, 1; “23 Killed; U.S. Army Rules Detroit,” *DBG*, June 22, 1943, 1; Alfred E. Smith, “Wartime Rioting History Repeats: Will the President Speak Out?,” *TCD*, August 28, 1943, 8; For Georgia incident see “Army Race Riots Grow! 4 Killed, 16 Wounded in Dixie Clashes,” *TCD*, June 19, 1943, 1.

for wartime regulations and challenge to the servicemen's uniform—and the perceived threat of young, non-white men competing for women, LA's military men stormed into the city to repeatedly and ritualistically beat the zoot suiters, strip them, and then tear their suits apart. Hordes of servicemen and civilian spectators watched as they marched through Main Street with liquor and clubs at hand. Troops chanted, "We'll destroy every zoot suit in Los Angeles County before this is over." Eventually, the Navy issued a temporary ban on sailors entering Los Angeles for liberty. Newspapers and officials mostly blamed the zoot-suiters, and city officials claimed they would be more vigilant in keeping juveniles off the streets at night. The *LA Times* concluded, "Those gamin dandies, the zoot suiters, having learned a great moral lesson from servicemen, mostly sailors, who took over their instruction three days ago, are staying home." Weeks later in Harlem, the *Defender* reported that a white policeman's possibly unlawful attempt to arrest a black woman blew up when a black MP attempted to intervene by striking the cop. The policeman then turned and fired on the MP. As news of the MP's death reached Harlem, reality quickly fused with rumor. Locals heard that a cop killed a black soldier in front of his own mother—a false narrative that nevertheless captured just how little value white officials placed on the lives of black men who served their country. Crowds formed, windows were shattered, fires blazed, and riot squads rushed in. By the end of the night, six citizens lay dead and hundreds were wounded. Riots, fights, and protests would continue throughout the war, as black military men fought for access to the

privileges of liberty ports and black communities strived for greater access to the freedoms the U.S. claimed it was fighting for.¹³²

V-J Day

The mythic view of wartime romance and a safe home front was ironically founded on perhaps the most dangerous instance of troop crime in liberty ports: V-J Day. San Francisco's Peace Day Riots—almost completely unknown to both academics and the public—proved the most destructive and deadly, but other liberty ports experienced similar outbreaks of coerced kissing, assault, and looting. The War Department anticipated that victory over Germany and Japan would likely bring dangerous revelry to American cities. The Department requested that the Army and Navy augment their police forces in advance of the celebrations, and asked military authorities to lobby governors and other state officials to implement a 24-hour ban on the sale of alcohol. While the report spent considerable time worrying about the possible reactions of Japanese-Americans and “the colored races,” it also recognized the “large numbers of military and naval personnel [who] will be on leave, pass, or furlough, particularly in the metropolitan areas.” “It is possible,” the Department noted, “that the actions of

¹³² For the Zoot Suit Riots see “Riot Alarm Sent Out in Zoot War,” *LAT*, June 8, 1943, 1, “Zoot Suit War Grows; Army and Navy Act,” *CDT*, June 9, 1943, 1, “Zoot Suit War Runs Course as Riots Subside,” *LAT*, June 12, 1943, A, “Zoot Suiters Learn Lesson With Servicemen,” *LAT*, June 7, 1943, A1, “Los Angeles Barred to Sailors By Navy to Stem Zoot-Suit Riots,” *NYT*, June 9, 1943, 23; Also for ZSR see Eduardo Obregon Pagan, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suit Riots, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), and Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 228-237; For rumors in Harlem see Turner, 52; For report on Harlem see “6 Dead in Harlem Riot,” *TCD*, August 7, 1943, 1 and “Harlem Normal Again After Wild Rioting,” *TCD*, August 14, 1943, 8 ; For examples of continued conflicts see “Police Kill Negro Soldier in Arizona,” *TWP*, July 12, 1942, Charley Cherokee, “National Grapevine,” *TCD*, October 14, 1944, 13; and “Three Jailed After Soldier, Civilian Fight,” *TCD*, July 17, 1943, 1.

such personnel during an impromptu celebration might react to the detriment of the service as a whole.” The Army also prepared some troops for riot duty and readied the auxiliary military police. The War Department’s report accepted that disorders and riots were likely, and vowed that the burden of policing would fall on local cops and state guard forces. In this sense, the memo was both a plan for preparation and a way of preemptively shifting blame to state governments.¹³³

In Boston, Army officials wisely moved to confine all soldiers to bases for two days after learning of Japan’s surrender, though some GIs managed to sneak out of camps. Store owners, now well aware of the dangers of carousing sailors, hurriedly boarded up their shop windows to prevent vandalism and looting. Boston’s Police Chief mobilized all 2000 municipal cops, while calling in auxiliaries and MPs. Nearby Cambridge, Medford, and Falmouth banned all sales of alcohol for 24 hours. The Navy was less cooperative, giving liberty to sailors in New England’s naval district. Bars and liquor stores in Boston shipped in huge quantities of liquor to profit off the coming celebrations, though perhaps these proprietors also realized that servicemen would loot the booze if it was not willingly provided. By night, Boston’s downtown turned “into a joyous madhouse” as “pent-up tension...exploded like a giant firecracker.” 750,000 people coursed into downtown Boston with “soldiers and sailors dominat[ing] the throngs” to

¹³³ “A Plan to Aid in Maintaining a High Standard of Discipline in the Armed Forces after the Defeat of Germany,” No date, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 370.01 Demobilization to General #2, box 109, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General) NACP.

celebrate “a dozen New Year’s Eves rolled into one.” Car horns, church bells, Chinatown torpedoes, and fire sirens blared out across Tremont, Washington, and Boylston. In Southie, mobs of people marched out into the streets banging dishpans. Huge bonfires blazed throughout the Common, Public Garden, and the North End, while hundreds of sailors climbed and joyrode fire engine ladders. The bars and taverns became packed with overload crowds while each man spilling onto the street “had a bottle containing his favorite beverage.” Bostonians rolled beer kegs and barrels of wine onto street corners, as the city enjoyed the delirious “bedlam” that came with peace.¹³⁴

“When the excitement really got under way,” one *Globe* reporter noted, “servicemen—and again sailors seemed to dominate the picture—began the interesting game of trying to kiss every pretty girl they saw.” Compelled mass kissing of women became the hallmark of V-J Day across the nation, with every sailor being “entitled to at least one kiss.” Well into the second day of “tumult,” the *Globe* reported “Sailors still kissing girls as holiday roars on.” Servicemen sometimes demanded more than a simple kiss. At “the orgy of kissing” around Tremont and Boylston, sailors were reported picking up girls, tearing off their skirts, and then waving their prizes like flags. “Uncooperative” women who refused to be kissed were grabbed by “exuberant sailors” and then “flung” into

¹³⁴ “Army to Confine N.E. Soldiers to Bases V-J Day,” *DBG*, August 14, 1945, 1; Seymour R. Linscott, “Boston Becomes Bedlam of Jubilant Demonstrators,” *DBG*, August 15, 1945, 1; George McKinnon, “Touring in Police Car: Delirious North End, Lights Bonfires in Streets, Yards,” *DBG*, August 15, 1945, 3.

the Common's frog pond as the men chanted, "No kiss, then kerplunk!" Women familiar with the behavior of furloughed soldiers who "sort of got out of hand" knew to avoid certain areas. Alison Arnold, the *Herald* society editor recalled that "young ladies were more or less advised to keep away from Scollay Square." Civilian men and servicemen also fought throughout the region. In New Bedford, civilians and soldiers exchanged blows in the city center, sparking a riot involving 100 people. State Guardsmen, police, and Shore Patrol armed with bayonets and tear gas managed to restore order after two hours of fighting in the streets. Throughout the Boston area, several died and hundreds were injured throughout the raucous "victory whoopee."¹³⁵

In Los Angeles, thousands of "gobs, G.I.'s, gyrenes, [and] Coast Guardsmen" took to the downtown streets for "street kisses" as the "growing roar of sirens and whistles" marked the Allied victory. "Masses of humanity" overflowed into Pershing Square and Main Street intermixing in the confetti snow and "the carnival spirit." Autos were smashed by the surging crowds of servicemen, while liquor stores were busted open before police could arrive. Other men began "jerking trolleys from the wires" sparking fires. Throughout the night, fights broke out between men and "servicemen kissed every pretty girl they met." Key thoroughfares were blocked by raging streetfires fed by the "paper

¹³⁵ Seymour R. Linscott, "Boston Becomes Bedlam of Jubilant Demonstrators," *DBG*, August 15, 1945, 1; Leonora Ross, "Joyous, Friendly Crowd Surges Through Streets," *DBG*, August 15, 1945, 18; "Boston Keeps Up Victory Whoopee," *DBG*, August 16, 1945, 1; Arnold quoted in Roy Hoopes, *Americans Remember the Homefront* (New York: Berkley, 2002), 134; "Riot in New Bedford Halted by State Guard and Shore Patrols," *DBG*, August 17, 1945, 1.

strewn the streets.” Altogether, 8 people died—mainly in traffic accidents—and hundreds were treated for injuries ranging from gunshot wounds to firecracker burns. The police, who marshaled their entire force after learning of Japan’s surrender, took a “good-natured” approach to the celebrations, allowing drinking and coerced kissing, while trying to prevent “robberies and drunk-rollings.” They, and other police forces, having seen the disorder and violence committed by servicemen during the war “contented themselves with the philosophy: ‘It could have been worse.’”¹³⁶

Despite the violence, rioting, and sexual coercion that marked V-J Day, and all the wartime chaos in liberty ports that had preceded it, only one scene has managed to gain a foothold in most Americans’ memory of the home front: Alfred Eisenstaedt’s “Kissing Sailor.” For the public, it became a romantic token of postwar America’s relief and promise as it moved from “the Good War” to the Cold War. Yet the photo actually captures a drunken sailor, George Mendonsa, forcibly accosting and kissing a dental nurse running the gauntlet which women faced on nightly basis in wartime ports. Eisenstaedt’s series of photos reveal her attempts to struggle free of his control and prevent her dress from being yanked up by the man overpowering her. Greta Friedman, the woman in the photo, recalled “I couldn’t speak. I mean somebody much bigger than you and much stronger, where you’ve lost control of yourself, I’m not sure that makes you

¹³⁶ “Street Kisses and Embraces to Servicemen Order of Day,” *LAT*, August 15, 1945, 7; Art Ryon, “Word of Peace Brings Bedlam in Los Angeles,” *LAT*, August 15, 1945, 1; “Los Angeles Rests After Victory Celebrations Night,” *LAT*, August 16, 1945, A1.

happy.” In another interview she maintained, “It wasn’t my choice to be kissed. The guy just came over and grabbed!”¹³⁷

Over 2,000,000 crowded into Times Square and another 500,000 marched to Coney Island, with police making no effort to stop the groups of sailors and soldiers moving in. Men strung up effigies of Hirohito and Hitler and crashed the “champagne parties” on Broadway’s bars and dance halls. *PM*’s man called it “the wildest, loudest, gayest, drunkest, kissingest hell-for-leather celebration the big town has ever seen.” Police stood by, as “showers of confetti and streamers fell in abundance,” watching the “service men exact[ing] kisses from strolling girls as tribute for their part in the victory.” Indeed, “kissing became a popular and public pastime” with sailors taking firm hold of nearby women. One woman, seized by a kissing soldier, yelled, “I’m Married! I’m Married!” The “gob” replied, “Well tell your husband this is with the compliments of the Third Division.” One nurse who “wanted to be part of the celebration” soon found herself “retreat[ing] into the next opening of the subway” because of “amorous sailor[s].” The *Times*’ Alexander Feinberg reported, “one girl, her lipstick smeared, marched down the street indignant. ‘They don’t ask a girl’s permission—can I kiss you?—they just grab,’ she said.”¹³⁸

¹³⁷ For interpretations of the photo see Lawrence Verria and George Galdorisi, *The Kissing Sailor: The Mystery Behind the Photo that Ended World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 3-4 and Blower, “V-J Day, 1945, Times Square,” 72-73; The photo is continuously recreated, see Sewell Chan, “62 Years Later, a Kiss That Can’t Be Forgotten,” *NYT*, August 14, 2007, [http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/14/62-years-later-a-kiss-that-cant-be-forgotten/?_r=0](http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/14/62-years-later-a-kiss-that-cant-be-forgotten/?_r=0;).; Friedman quoted in Blower, “V-J Day, 1945, Times Square,” 80.

¹³⁸ Alexander Feinberg, “All City ‘Let’s Go,’” *NYT*, August 15, 1945, 1; “N.Y.’s Celebration Is Gayest of All Time,” *PM*, August 15, 1945, 14-15; “V-J Day Revelry Erupts Again With Times Sq.

Over the next two days the fire brigades struggled to put out the 275 fires burning throughout the city. The hospitals overflowed as 6 people died and nearly a thousand suffered injuries. Servicemen looted liquor stores, brawled, and reveled in the streets. All the while, women and other civilians, as they had throughout the war, attempted to negotiate the presence of military men in port.

Its Focus," *NYT*, August 16, 1945, 1; "City Takes a Holiday," *New York Post*, August 15, 1945, 5; "It's Still On," *PM*, August 16, 1945, 10; "N.Y.'s Celebration is Gayest of All Time," *PM*, August 15, 1945, 8, 14-15; "Festal Mode," *TWP*, August 16, 1945, 8.

Chapter Three: Women Face the Uniform

In a wartime environment defined by the upending of law and growing problems policing all the newcomers swarming into cities, women were often left to protect themselves, even as they increasingly left their homes for work and other activities. Constant risks and even mortal dangers lurked when military men came to town. Every trip out, every step on the street threatened to become a humiliating ordeal or frightening trial. But in the wake of the disorder troops often created, women also took advantage of the changes visited upon urban hubs of production and transit. Wives, workers in the flourishing defense industries, enlisted WACS and WAVES, or con-women and others profiting off the vice trade—all experienced life in liberty ports as a contradictory time defined by the immense danger, but also sometimes the new possibilities, posed by servicemen.

Military mobilization created whole new economic, sexual, and social opportunities for the women who flocked to defense plants for work and downtowns for fun. Even housewives uncovered ingenious ways to enjoy the town, and seize greater control over their lives. The Army's WACS (Women's Auxiliary Corps) and the Navy's WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service) discovered that like their male counterparts, they could leverage their military privileges to carouse and avoid consequences. B-girls—short for bad-girls or bar-girls—and con-women developed innovative ways of exploiting the ubiquitous drunk serviceman, and they contributed to a liberty port

economy that fed off the government wages of the military and armament industries.

This expansion of opportunities for women does not negate the fear, harassment, and violence that so many experienced. But in examining the negotiations, responses, and tactics undertaken by women in these hubs, historians can gain a far more complete portrait of their lives on the home front. The history of American women during World War II is filled with narratives about liberation in the defense factory, bittersweet goodbyes, and U.S.O. dances. Other stories depict how women became targets of the government's obsession with venereal disease. Those histories are not wrong. They miss, however, what the war worker did with her money, or how women worked to find romance in a period of unchecked rape, and how wives managed a marriage separated more by time and jealousy than distance. For many women, the war was not just a story of working and waiting. It was also a time to take part in a mixture of rebellion, accommodation, experimentation, and repression that brought women into direct contact and conflict with American and Allied servicemen.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Some of the key works on women and sex on the American home front: Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); John Costello, *Love, Sex, and War: Changing Values, 1939-1945* (London: Pan Books, 1986); Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Margaret Higonnet, et al., (eds.), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1984); Marilyn Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* (New York: NYU Press, 2007); and Meghan K. Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses during World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). Marilyn S. Johnson's portrait of wartime Oakland also offers a look into how defense work transformed a

“Uniform Crazy”

Despite a growing reputation for aggressive conduct, sailors—and to a lesser degree, GIs—were seen as exciting and desirable. Pearl Schiff’s bestselling and scandalous portrait of wartime Boston, *Scollay Square*, offers a compelling and detailed look into how women saw men in uniform as rugged, sexy, and powerful. The novel focuses on Beth, a respectable woman from upper-class Beacon Hill, and Jerry, a rough, hard-drinking sailor taking furlough in Boston’s cheap amusements quarter of Scollay Square. When Beth first meets Jerry she immediately gazes at his “impressive shoulders, wide and muscular under that taut fabric of the blouse” and his towering, 6-foot stature. Beth also notices another sailor looking marvelous in “his trim naval lieutenant’s uniform. His body was lean and well-proportioned, his skin a healthy tan.”¹⁴⁰

Other genres reinforced similar themes and images. Musical comedies like *Two Girls and a Sailor* (1944) depicted Navymen as attractive and charming, but also as “racy, sly, and wistful.” Popular films—many adopted from stage musicals—like Victor Shertzinger’s *The Fleet’s In* (1942), H. Bruce Humberstone’s *Iceland* (1942), Gene Kelly’s *On The Town* (1944 musical followed by a 1949 film), George Sidney’s *Anchors Aweigh* (1945), and Hal Walker’s *Sailor Beware* (1952) featured sailors as handsome, hopeless

city’s economy, space, and amusements for laborers, including new female war workers. See Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹⁴⁰ For shoulders quote see Pearl Schiff, *Scollay Square* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc, 1952), 8; For quote on naval lieutenant see Schiff, 102;

romantics, but also coy and possibly lonely, longing for a girl. Other women hoped for the kind of liberty-born romance captured by Judy Garland and Robert Walker in *The Clock* (1945). Some likely found such romance in real life.¹⁴¹

More often though, troops were depicted as tough paragons of masculinity—physically intimidating, but also warm and comforting because of this macho presence. In Schiff's *Scollay Square*, Jerry's imposing stature is both threatening and reassuring at the same time. Small actions like Jerry placing his sturdy arms around Beth's small waist to steady her against a harsh gust of wind slowly build the sense of strength and security Beth associates with the uniform. Schiff regularly describes Jerry's tough, weathered hands wrapping around Beth's tiny hips and roughly pulling her towards him for an embrace or kiss. For Beth, his tight, even forceful grip becomes "strangely comforting." Jerry's forearm tattoo—Josephine, a nude dancing girl that he makes move with each clench of his fist—becomes a physical symbol of his virility and association with the taboo. Beth enjoys "the easy way the blasphemies rolled off his tongue. After all, he was a sailor." But a sailor's appeal could also come from the rare instances of vulnerability and loneliness that women perceived in moments of intimacy. Women routinely lusted after the deep, colorful eyes of servicemen which might betray their softer side. When Jerry softly brushes Beth's hair, she stares into his brown pupils and watches as "the flames in his eyes bobbed and curtsied at her." After Beth tells Jerry of her paraplegic soldier brother, his voice becomes "kind,

¹⁴¹ Bosley Crowther, "The Screen in Review," *NYT*, June 15, 1944, 16.

gentle, full of understanding.” Unlike the civilians in her life, Jerry can understand the perils of combat and how it can destroy a man and his family. The military man then, was not just a brawny, sexy hunk, but also a reassuring and empathetic figure.¹⁴²

Perhaps the most unsettling, but recurring theme of wartime romance, is the desire of women to have their military dates take charge or even force them into sex. For the first two months of their relationship, Beth refuses to go all the way even as Jerry increases the amount of pressure and physical force. As the sexual tension builds between Beth and Jerry she thinks to herself, “Oh God. I want him. I wish he’d force me so I wouldn’t have to decide.” At other times Jerry kisses Beth “fiercely, angrily.” When they have sex for the first time, Beth dreamily remembers “upon her body his hands had been strong and uncompromising, breaking down resistance.” After this first instance of rough, forceful sex, Beth throbs “with desire for the feel of his skin and the taut muscles under it and the outline of bone under that.” Another character, Emily, enjoys a similar dynamic with the sailors she picks up, playing a game of consent and power. After a night of drinking and flirting, Emily reveled in the sense of power she had “to carry things just as far as she wanted and to stop them where she wanted.” She could happily let “a sailor rub up against her in a doorway” with the safety of knowing that she could still say no and escape. This game was

¹⁴² For steadying Beth against gust of wind see Schiff, 9; For description of hands and grip see Schiff, 20; For description of tattoo and blasphemies see Schiff, 17-18; For eye quote see Schiff, 13; For description of voice see Schiff, 15.

“exciting, intoxicating, dangerous fun.” This desire for a strange kind of consensual force or aggressive seduction may have been a strategy that women employed to overcome social and religious pressure to avoid premarital sex or casual encounters. If the man simply overpowered his date, then she would be blameless for the subsequent moral transgression. These desires fall into the “rape fantasy” genre or perhaps more accurately, the “forced seduction fantasy” that first appeared in the romance novels of the Victorian era, continued with the “bodice ripper” category of pulp fiction, and then became even more popular in the 1970s after the publication of Nancy Friday’s *My Secret Garden*.¹⁴³

The uniform drew women in precisely because it could mean so many different and contradictory things at the same time. For some, the man in uniform promised grand passion. He was an exotic lothario ready to sweep a woman off her feet. One of Schiff’s female characters spends time fantasizing about “that intense, dark sailor lounging near the subway entrance.” Another longs for a chance romance with a wholesome boy next door, or “the shy blond kid” who made a clumsy, but charming advance.¹⁴⁴

Many women echoed the themes of novels and films when they confessed to being “uniform-crazy” and to lusting after “the handsomest thing you ever saw

¹⁴³ Beth’s “Oh God” quote from Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 85; For “fiercely, angrily” see Schiff, 131; For “upon her body” and “with desire for” see Schiff, 155-156; For Emily quotes see Schiff, 48. For an overview of the literature on rape fantasies and forced seduction see Joseph W. Critelli and Jenny M. Bivona, “Women’s Erotic Rape Fantasies: An Evaluation of Theory and Research,” *The Journal of Sex Research*, Vol 45, No. 1 (Jan.-Mar., 2008), 57-70.

¹⁴⁴ For quote on “dark sailor” and description of wholesome and shy kids see Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 48.

in his uniform.”¹⁴⁵ Civilian groups, such as the War Camp Community Service (WCCS), a secular aid organization, worried about “the problem of the young girl” in the vicinity of soldiers and sailors and hoped to persuade women to be more careful around servicemen, all the while tacitly admitting that little could be done to adjust the behavior of the draftees. With the surge of thousands of men into sleepy communities near bases, WCCS members argued, women and girls would succumb to “the lure of the khaki.” Seeing uniformed men, these young women would become “thrilled to pieces” and so excited that she could not be trusted to her own “chaperonage.” The WCCS explained that the attractive, friendly woman believed “everything in uniform is a hero to her,” but then cautioned that in reality “everything in uniform is not a hero” and the men would be “quick to offer advances.”¹⁴⁶

Despite these admonitions and potential threats, many young women and girls eagerly sought out dates with troops. Appearing before a Senate subcommittee, Dr. William Healey, a children’s mental health expert, emphasized that “the adolescent girl quite normally tells herself that a serviceman, for instance, is entitled to all the pleasures she can give him before he goes off to war.” One 17-year-old girl from New York admitted that “you read and hear much

¹⁴⁵ For “uniform crazy” see Jean Bartlett in Studs Terkel, *The Good War* (New York: The New Press, 1984), 246; Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 78-79; For “handsomest thing” see Malvina Lindsay, “The Gentler Sex: Man on Furlough,” *TWP*, November 20, 1943, B2.

¹⁴⁶ For WCCS see “A Few of the Many Things All America Does for the Men in Uniform through War Camp Community Service,” (No date, before April 30, 1941), 250 National United Through Apr. 30, 1941, Box 86, National Headquarters: General Correspondence, 1940-1942, 250 to 250, RG 171 Records of the Office of Civilian Defense, NACP.

about young girls walking arm in arm with sailors and soldiers,” and that the public blamed the girls for “promiscuous sex relations, venereal disease and pregnancy.” Another girl argued “many girls go out with a soldier or sailor just because of the excitement of it. But most of the girls run away if the guys try to get fresh.” But several other girls disagreed that these youthful dates of servicemen maintained such control. One teenage girl explained “many of the girls don’t realize what they are doing because they are taken into bars and given drinks, and most of them never had any liquor before. Then they get drunk and before they know it they are doing something they would not be likely to do otherwise.” A Baltimore boy suggested that the police start actually cracking down on bars that served these girls and he asked, “Why don’t the Army and Navy instruct sailors and soldiers to stop leading girls astray, to stop taking advantage of the silly, stupid ones who fall for their line and think it’s glamorous to be a Victory girl?”¹⁴⁷

The Army khaki or Naval blue sometimes reminded girls and women of husbands, brothers, or fathers, drawing them to potentially risky dates. Spending time with a uniformed man offered an opportunity to comfort one’s “husband by proxy.” But uniforms were also standard issue—something mass produced and given to men mobilized by the millions. which encouraged women to see the GI as a classless, regionless totem of security and state sanctioned romance. The

¹⁴⁷ For Dr. Healey’s comments see “Parental Neglect Blamed for Rise In Delinquency,” *TWP*, December 1, 1943, 1; For quotes from teenage boys and girls see Dorothy Gordon, “As the Youngsters See Juvenile Delinquency,” *NYT*, August 6, 1944, SM16.

serviceman's anonymity also provided women a soft escape or semi-departure from the moral and religious norms of their communities. Precisely because military men were often on the move, they held the promise of short and sweet relationships or even casual sex. After such a fling, the soldier or sailor could simply disappear back into the crowds of khaki and blue.¹⁴⁸

Women sometimes banded together to “adopt” a “lonesome” sailor—an image popularized by musical and films—by sending him pictures and letters. The Navy even went so far as to warn “well-meaning but misinformed...Juliets of unknown vintage” that most sailors were not suffering from “lonely hearts.” These proclamations could not tamp down female fascination with uniformed men. In 1944, 2,500 “Miss Manhattans” flocked to “dance and jitterbug” with “GI Joes” and “shy” sailors “on a moonlight patch” in Central Park. Papers wrote up page-one stories like “‘Cinderella’ Finds Her Bill the Sailor,” where a down-on-her-luck girl, lost in the city, found a kind, handsome sailor to marry her. By the end of the column, “she was the happiest girl in the world.” Some young women, taken in by the “lure of the uniform,” would end up assisting their beau’s misbehavior. At Fort Jackson’s hospital in South Carolina, young women began sneaking alcohol into wards filled with recovering soldiers. They concealed the liquor in handbags and packages and, claimed an angry mother, could not stop “running after the soldiers.” One young nurse’s aide—after being warned about her troubled and

¹⁴⁸ For “husband by proxy” see Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 76-77.

irresponsible soldier boyfriend—thought, “He was a soldier. He could not be anything but a marvelous, magnificent human being.”¹⁴⁹

Some simply enjoyed the opportunity to sample men with a chance for fun and romance. Dellie Hahne, a substitute teacher, stated that “a young woman had a chance to meet hundreds of men in the course of one or two weeks, more than she would in her entire lifetime, because of the war. Life became a series of weekend dates.” Going out during wartime meant heading “into bars and drinking,” and romancing troops, a near civic duty, made this activity more acceptable for women. Others remembered going to a nightclub to see a “striptease,” or getting “mixed up...drinking and running around.” Workers said that they “wanted to live...wanted to dance...wanted to go out.” Some spent too much time “drinkin’,” leading them to take No-Doz tablets or to nap in the bathroom for 15 minutes during their shift. At Lockheed, young women workers almost revolted when the social clubs closed because of electricity shortages. The GI or sailor about to depart also proved a recurring temptation for married

¹⁴⁹ “Twelve Chicago Girls Adopt a Lonely Sailor!,” *CDT*, February 1, 1944, 5; “Most Sailors Not Lonely, Navy Warns All ‘Juliets,’” *NYT*, August 16, 1942, 9; Dellie Hahne in Studs Terkel, *The Good War* (New York: The New Press, 1984), 117-118; “Service Men Dance in Park Moonlight,” *NYT*, June 29, 1944; “‘Cinderella’ Finds Her Bill the Sailor,” *TWP*, November 13, 1941, 1 (Other headline: “...Happily Ever After: Bill the Sailor and Josephine Who Slept in Subways Will Wed”); “Anonymous Communication to War Dept of the Army,” January 26, 1943, 319.1 (M.I.D.) General (Military Investigation Division), Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 319.1 (M.I.D.) General (Military Investigation Division), box 73, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For “He was a soldier” see Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 78.

women, and some fantasized about getting “*toujours gai*” with a comforting, but roguish officer.¹⁵⁰

Many war workers seized opportunities to transgress sexual boundaries and enjoy their chance to date multiple men. While this willingness to see multiple men may have driven troops to be more aggressive and possessive, women found ways to take advantage of the situation. One riveter remembered all the “boots” she could meet in Portland, OR, remarking, “Gee, there was no lack of knowing men, for goodness sakes. I was right at the source of supply—and whoopie! You’d wade in barefoot and have a great time.” Another single woman remembered that she had “boyfriends in the service” and wrote to “three or four different fellows” using the same letter. Because troops were only present for short periods of leave, one worker explained that she would “concentrate mostly on what could be done” and resist getting tied down to one man. Servicemen often attempted to marry girlfriends or get them to promise to marry when they returned. Yet women demonstrated a willingness to ignore these demands. Margarita Salazar McSweyn rebuffed constant pleadings from her service boyfriend: “We would see each other and he would pressure me to get married. Then I wouldn’t see him and I’d see other fellows, and he’d see other

¹⁵⁰ Dellie Hahne and Peggy Terry in Studs Terkel, *The Good War* (New York: The New Press, 1984), 117, 114; Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 15; Gorham offers similar advice on managing temptations while dancing in *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 79.

girls and he'd go his merry way....He knew that I was going out, but he also was doing it, so why not?"¹⁵¹

The quick turnover of troops meant that encounters could be brief, pushing women to meet more men. One worker described this dynamic saying, "Most of the fellows that I knew, by 1943 were gone in three days or in a week. I mean they were just gone! The next thing you'd get a letter with just a PO number." Other women, like Marilyn Renner of Iowa, worried that too many men were marrying abroad, dooming her and others to "spinsterhood and lives of loneliness." Writing to *The Sydney Daily Telegraph*, she asked that they do all they could "to prevent marriages between United States soldiers and Australian girls." Women in coastal centers of production, however, did not suffer similar absences of available men. Jean Bartlett—who started seeing sailors and soldiers in the Bay Area at age 14—described how she went "through fifty or hundred" servicemen, eventually failing to "keep track of what they looked like. They were just coming through this revolving door of my life." Bartlett claimed to be "engaged fourteen times" and later reflected that "the war absolutely ruined me. The more men I had, the more my ego was fed. I had no attachments at all."¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Betty Jeanne Boggs, Margaret Salazar McSweyn in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 113-114, 87-89, 139-140, 143.

¹⁵² Juanita Loveless in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 113-114, 87-89, 139-140, 143; Jean Bartlett in Studs Terkel, *The Good War* (New York: The New Press, 1984), 242-247; "Soldier Weddings in Australia Hit," *LAT*, August 23, 1942, 5; Gorham also acknowledges the war's boredom and potential fun that can be had with men in *So Your Husband's Gone to War!*, 71.

The war also meant that women would get a chance to meet men from outside their neighborhoods and social circles, and even indulge in the exotic. Allied soldiers could be particularly tempting. Women quickly found sport in trying to distinguish one uniform from another. “In the metropolitan war centers like New York, San Francisco, New Orleans, Toronto, Montreal, the gamut of uniforms is bewildering,” explained one married woman, “On their streets of a fine Saturday afternoon one can see the uniforms of Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Free French Navy, airmen of the Royal Norwegian Air Force and the Royal Netherlands Air Force, Dutch Marines from Java, six-foot Polish officers with orange tabs and their curious square-cut caps.” Women shared sodas, dated, and married Australian merchant marines, with the *Los Angeles Times* declaring, “Australian lads who lost their lovely lasses to Yankee doughboys find at least a measure of consolation—one of their number has claimed a pretty American girl as his bride.” Women expressed a particular preference for Scottish troops: “When you get into the tartans and kilts of the Scottish regiments the thing becomes a whirl, although you’d give your eyeteeth to have your beau show up in kilts and a balmoral, so outrageously handsome would it make him look.” Observers in marriage license bureaus recalled the “occasional flash of red” which “indicates a French seaman,

his pompommed, cap-topped presence proof that a strange country and a strange language are no bars to romance.”¹⁵³

Other women used the U.S.O.—United Service Organizations—to pursue their own desires. Most U.S.O. hostesses were in their late teens and early 20s, unmarried, and quite often looking to meet men. The military fingerprinted each hostess and demanded personal references. Romance was officially discouraged, but women routinely went out with soldiers and married them. One hostess explained, “I’m supposed to be doing this for patriotism, but frankly I’ve never had so much fun in my life.” “Center girls”—essentially the Servicemen’s center’s equivalent of U.S.O. hostesses—flocked to the clubs so they could chat, dance, and flirt with men from all the Allied forces. One center girl, Lois Brown, scoffed at “the idea that girls go to the center for purely patriotic reasons.” Instead, she did it to have “a good time—she loves to dance and it’s fun following the lead of a boy from Brooklyn who does the Lindy Hop, a coast guardsman from Michigan who waltzes, or a sailor in the Queen’s navy who does some strange gyration akin to the Lambeth Walk.”¹⁵⁴

Women sometimes mimicked the tactic of “treating” that turn-of-the-century working-girls used to buy a good time. Here, a girl or young women hoping to see a film, head to an amusement park, go dancing, or get a drink

¹⁵³ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 173-174; “Aussie Sailor Wins Bride in Beach City,” *LAT*, October 31, 1945, A3; “War is Powerless to Halt Romance as Business at Marriage Bureau Booms – Husbands in Uniforms,” *NYT*, June 19, 1943, 10.

¹⁵⁴ “Job in Service Center? It’s Fun for Girls,” *CDT*, March 7, 1943, NW1; Eleanor Stierham, “They Want to Dance...,” *LAT*, May 9, 1943.

offered the implied promise of romance or sexual favors in exchange for the man footing the bill. Rather than rotting away at home, the women in Schiff's *Scollay Square* reason that they ought to enjoy the pleasures of the city. One character figures "if she wanted to see a movie she got a feller to take her. So if he slipped a hand under her sweater to make it worth while, what the hell? At least she was out of the house. At least she was having fun."¹⁵⁵

Servicemen's wives also found fun and temptation, defying established social norms and encroaching boredom. Wives remembered being "blighted [by] evenings with bores" and "crazy to get out and around with a man of your choice." War wives argued that they now existed in a social netherworld: "We woman are neither wives nor widows and are therefore a kind of social nothings," wrote an Army wife, "We are the abandoned wives and the world expects us to stop living and lie quietly on the shelf until our men come home and dust us off." Many women agreed that remaining cooped up would be impossible. Though married women would likely face the whispered rumors and disapproving glances of neighbors, many still went out. One servicemen's wife wrote that "the neighbors sit behind their curtains with field glasses to see who goes in and out of the home." Middle-class wives in big cities also found value in a world without husbands. Full control of the pocketbook and a need to be self-reliant could be fulfilling. "Majordomos without portfolio, they pay the bills, pay the insurance, pay

¹⁵⁵ For treating idea see Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 65.

the taxes,” wrote Nancy MacLennan in the *NYT Sunday Magazine*, “They mix the cocktails for a party, draw the Extra Man at dinner. Alone, they name the baby.” These women found work, new circles of friends, and education at lectures, exhibits, and plays. MacLennan concluded, “The lonely wife admits she is becoming more ‘capable,’ more ‘resourceful.’”¹⁵⁶

Providing entertainment for troops constituted a state-sanctioned way for young women and wives to interact with men who were not their husbands. Guides advised wives to volunteer at the local U.S.O., though unmarried women were still imagined to be more suited for the role. Married women also joined hobby clubs and recreation committees charged with organizing troop entertainment. These committees charged wives with “trying to get the unattached girls attached to the timid boys,” while also giving them opportunities to dance themselves. To mitigate the idea that dancing with other men constituted a dangerous temptation, guides preached confidence and a feeling of security in one’s marriage. Dancing with troops was additionally thought of as a useful preventative measure. If wives could dance and entertain men in a well ordered and supervised U.S.O. event, they would avoid more tempting situations and proposals. Boston’s hostesses found that conga lines and jitterbugging with

¹⁵⁶ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 70, 71, 78; “Why Army Wives Crack Up,” *CDT*, August 27, 1944, 16; “Wives—But Without Husbands,” *NYT*, April 26, 1942, SM14.

scores of marines and sailors was regarded as perfectly acceptable provided it was overseen by well-established neighborhood organizations.¹⁵⁷

When military men hit port, they brought fun, dancing, dating, even romance and sex. But, as many women quickly discovered, they would also bring challenges, anxieties, and dangers.

“So Your Husband’s Gone to War!”

Wives’ attempts to maintain their marriages offers an instructive view of how liberty ports both constrained and expanded women’s social lives. Although only 8% of women were actually married to servicemen, these “war wives” exercised an outsized influence on the politics of infidelity and debates about women’s roles on the home front in general. Ethel Gorham—writer of *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!* (1942), one of the most influential guides for war wives—told their story. She became a kind of Emily Post for the middle-class war wife, dispensing advice on appearance, letter writing, and travel, while also issuing cheerfully worded warnings about the dangers posed by wartime city streets. Her guidebook, full of interviews and field observations, offers a rare look into the predicaments of military wives.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 43, 70-72, 78; Robert Allen, “500 Servicemen, 600 Girls Dance at Block Party,” *DBG*, September 4, 1942, 1.

¹⁵⁸ 8% number from Michael Adams, *The Best War Ever* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 70; Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 13; Ethel Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1942); Major papers recommended Gorham’s guide to war wives: Hope Ridings Miller, “If Your Husband Has Gone to War, or May Go Soon, You’ll Bleed Some of Ethel Gorham’s Advice,” *TWP*, September 24, 1942, B7; Peggy Capron, “For Wives of Service Men: *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!* By Ethel Gorham,” *NYT*, October 4, 1942, BR20.

Wives tried to use liberty and furlough visits—the “Week-End Marriage”—to maintain the health of their partnerships and the loyalty of their husbands. Because women never knew how many of these visits they might get, they placed immense importance on making them perfect occasions. Gorham counseled her readers that the short furlough presented “a kind of microcosm of your marriage,” an opportunity “to gather up all the loose ends of your life and try to knit them together without dangerous stitches that may one day run.” Though wives saw this as much more than a simple opportunity to have sex, friends and acquaintances often reduced these visits to nothing more. Gorham asked if other wives had been “embarrassed by people who drool and leer when they hear you’re to see your husband?” Too often, wives were “made to feel like the forthcoming participant in a Polish wedding ceremony where all the family and friends remain close by to cheer the bride right into her marriage bed.” This constant gossip and planning, however, offers a reminder that troops never fully left—leave and furloughs remained a recurring part of life on the home front.¹⁵⁹

Preparing for leave and furloughs formed a key activity in the lives of war wives. Maintaining one’s beauty and appearance became critical. Women seemed to understand that their husbands would romanticize their appearance while in the barracks, and this heightened the pressure to “wow” the furloughed husband. As men endured the petty annoyances and dangers of military life, many coped by describing the beautiful “girl he left behind.” After weeks

¹⁵⁹ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 102-103.

obsessing over a wife's beauty, the husband's mental image "suffered no chapped skin or excess weight or frowsy hair." Soldiers failed to account for the hardships of the home front and would not "excuse a sloppy figure or broken nails or a scalp in search of stimulation." "What a glamorous creature you would be," Gorham concluded, "if you only looked half as pretty as the man at the front remembers you."¹⁶⁰

Guides advised that a poor appearance or a decline in beauty regimen could drastically increase the potential of infidelity. Wives were warned that they would need to look enchanting if they hoped to pass the "once-over." Staying fit required vigilance as it would be the first thing a husband noticed. "Fat is the most obvious disfigurement," noted Gorham. Woman's columnist Antoinette Donnelly offered similar advice. She warned that since their husbands had left, wives had begun to gain weight, failed to maintain their nails, and grown lazy. She counseled war wives that "if you neglect your appearance, there will come a time you may regret it....A good motto to keep before you is: 'When he comes home, he's going find a more attractive women. So help me!'" Pressure mounted when wives saw that their husbands were now slimmer, fit, and dashing in their uniforms. If women didn't "want to be taken for the dowdy elder sister, or even—heaven forbid—for his young-looking mother, you'll have to follow a regime to compensate for his." Women ought to wear something familiar rather than chic—something he could easily remember from the days before the war. A lasting,

¹⁶⁰ Gorham, *So Your Husband's Gone to War!*, 146.

beautiful image was the main bulwark against a husband falling prey to temptations in port. The burden of keeping husbands happy and faithful fell on the wife, but they also needed to avoid coming across as jealous.¹⁶¹

Even with a successful week-end marriage, wives and girlfriends sometimes experienced recurring fears, loneliness, and anxiety. When husbands left to serve, wives realized the strains that would be put upon their marriages. From the moment the draft notice arrived, women reported a simultaneous dread and desire to ignore the coming change. Thinking about the inevitable departure of their husbands was like “the contemplation of death,” according to Gorham.¹⁶²

Beyond the threat of losing their husband to grievous wounds, capture, or death, wives reported an encroaching loneliness and sense of abandonment. *The New York Times* called them “the loneliest women in America.” Wives feared a daunting “lonely and endless” daily routine. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that “wives argue they’re lonely, and no doubt many of them are, lonelier than they ever were.” Yet women’s writers warned wives to avoid boredom, and even blamed them for their feelings of loneliness. “What is loneliness, continued loneliness?” asked Doris Blake, “It’s a self-centeredness, inertia, the will to victimize oneself.” Wives ought to pursue “work, study, and personal advancement....They may not cure loneliness, but they remove the sharp edges of it.” Besides, some wives argued, husbands moving into service had to take on

¹⁶¹ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 146, 156, 115, 108; Antoinette Donnelly, “Wives of Men in the Service: Keep Beauty,” *CDT*, October 22, 1942, 26.

¹⁶² Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 2.

“the strain of a new environment,” “the discomfort of sharing your privacy with a thousand others,” and “the tastelessness of official food, official clothing, official lock step.” “If you’re going to feel sorry for anyone,” Gorham concluded, “you ought to feel more sorry for your husband than you do for yourself.”¹⁶³

Loneliness created temptations, as did time away. Both husbands and wives confronting the intransigent reality of a war often came to see it as a time of hiatus. For sweethearts, infidelity, and fears of infidelity, flourished. Troops feared the “Dear John” letters and male civilians who might be trying to take their place at home, and sometimes violently deterred or punished unfaithful conduct. At the same time, they obsessed over the other women they imagined would be waiting for them when they hit town.

Indeed, even as military husbands fantasized about carousing in port, they issued warnings to their spouses. An Army Chaplain declared, “Any service man’s wife who is playing around here with another man is about the lowest thing I know. And about the next lowest thing I know is that man who plays around with her.” Before departing, one Navy Ensign told his fiancée, “I don’t want you going out with other men.” In Brooklyn, a sailor with the Merchant Marine—“prompted by jealousy”—fatally stabbed his wife, sister-in-law, and others after she failed to answer his questions about her faithfulness. Civilian men likewise forcefully and sometimes violently opposed affairs. One husband viciously stabbed his wife

¹⁶³ “Wives—But Without Husbands,” *NYT*, April 26, 1942, SM14. Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 53, 123; Doris Blake, “Lonely Wife Should Find Work to Do,” *CDT*, January 31, 1944, 15; Doris Blake was the byline for women’s advice columnist Antoinette Donnelly.

after she confessed her love for a soldier. He then knifed the soldier attempting to save the wife. Women also condemned unfaithful wives. Opera singer Grace Moore recommended that each adulterous women “should have her head shaved forthwith as a mark of shame and disgrace.” She went on to blame these women for “driving their men into the arms of women of Europe.”¹⁶⁴

Government officials also raised the specter of wives who in their infidelity, proved themselves disloyal to both their husbands and the war effort. Agents of the state used social pressure, but also judicial and legislative power to punish women suspected of adultery. Presiding over a petty officer’s divorce case, Circuit court Judge Julius H. Miner declared that unfaithful wives sinned against both their husbands and the military, damaging both morale and morality: “In time of war it is wicked and ignoble that the wife of a man in military service should invite illicit association of another in our fighting forces. She thereby undermines the morale of her husband and corrupts the morals of her paramour.” Labeling these women “nonessential wives,” the Judge railed against those women who “demoralize the home front and impede the prosecution of the war. National welfare demands their divorcement.” Beyond granting more divorces, other officials tried to use shame and even prosecution to prevent “the disillusionment of the returning soldier” who found “his wife living with another man.” One States

¹⁶⁴ Doris Blake, “Lonely Wife Should Find Work to Do,” *CDT*, January 31, 1944, 15; Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 59, 123; “Two Women Slain, Police Hunt Sailor,” *NYT*, July 10, 1944, 17; “Woman Slashed, May Die, Soldier Cut, Husband Held,” *DBG*, November 29, 1943, 12; “Unfaithful Wives Of Soldiers Stirs Grace Moore’s Ire,” *TWP*,” July 29, 1945, 2;

Attorney—railing against the “dark side of the civilian picture” and “the cheater wives” who had yielded to “moral weakness and cupidity”—declared that he would criminally prosecute adulterous wives to deter “these unsavory situations.” “Flagrantly fraudulent wives” would also face “public disapproval and punishment...through the initiative of the State.” House Representative Dewey Short went on to declare that immoral women were “marrying soldiers” and that “harlots [are] free to run around while drawing [dependency benefits] from a boy they hardly know.” Rumors swirled that these wives might be taking advantage of the tax exemptions granted to military spouses. A Congressional Committee demanded that the Army investigate suspected “wayward wives” and determine their faithfulness. The Army opposed the demand as the measure might lead to an exacerbated epidemic of soldiers questioning their wife’s’ fidelity.¹⁶⁵

Wives experienced a mix of dread, pressure, and resignation when contemplating their husbands’ potential infidelities. During the war, the marriage rate slumped as the divorce rate nearly doubled. Women, especially brides who met their grooms on furloughs, expressed anxiety over what their husbands might be up to outside of camp or the city dockyard. Women were told that “you’d be a foolish wife to ask your husband what he does with those leaves of his when he can’t get home.” One wife recalled that even when her husband went on

¹⁶⁵ “Judge Assails Philandering by Sailor’s Wife,” *CDT*, December 15, 1943, 13; “Faithless Wives,” *TWP*, August 12, 1945, B4; “Soldier’s Wife May Use \$1,200 Tax Exemption,” *CDT*, February 16, 1944, 18; “Army Opposes Move to Check Wives’ Morals,” *CDT*, October 2, 1943, 13.

leave, he was liable to “run around with other soldiers who are free.” A 21-year-old bride declared, “If a marriage weathers this, it’s fool-proof.” Another young furlough bride hoped only that if “my husband comes back even remembering me....I suppose our marriage has a chance. But when I think of those Southern lullubelles down in Georgia where he’s stationed my blood runs cold.” Gorham noted that “the young wife down in Georgia is probably shivering over what the Yankee girl is going to do to her darling.” Despite this obvious double standard, guides asserted that women ought to excuse the misbehavior of soldiers given the stresses and dangers of war. Wives also despaired when civilian husbands, now raking in generous wages in defense plants, spent “their time in beer joints drinking and carousing with the women they have met on their jobs.” These women contemplated tolerating husbands who went “out with a cutie” and spent “\$25 or \$30 on showing her a good time.”¹⁶⁶

Beyond the difficulties of maintaining a marriage and dealing with real and imagined infidelity, women also confronted new men in their lives. Here, wartime expectations about female propriety and duties became more byzantine and even contradictory. While troops and the broader public—especially newspapers—condemned “wayward wives” unfaithful to the man fighting abroad,

¹⁶⁶ For divorce and marriage rate see Randal S. Olson, “144 Years of Marriage and Divorce in 1 Chart,” Randal S. Olson, June 15, 2015, accessed August 1, 2017, <http://www.randalolson.com/2015/06/15/144-years-of-marriage-and-divorce-in-1-chart/>. Olson pulls data from CDC reports.; Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 74-75; Mary Day Winn, “Will War Weddings Last?,” *LAT*, September 12, 1943, G4; “Wives—But Without Husbands,” *NYT*, April 26, 1942, SM14; Dorothy Dix, “No One Can Help Woman When Prosperity Changes Husband,” *DBG*, August 27, 1943, 9.

wives were also expected to entertain servicemen and even go out with male acquaintances. This mandate provided wives opportunities to explore the nightlife of the city, but also created new dangers when men attempted to take advantage of unaccompanied women.¹⁶⁷

Married women made efforts to prepare themselves to fend off threats from both troops and civilian men, who saw the “lonely wife” as a vulnerable target. “Don’t think there won’t be any men,” warned Gorham, “You can be cross-eyed or bowlegged or hide your light under a bushel at night—but you’ll find a cross-eyed man to follow you, a bowlegged one to phone you, a blind one who will petition you in Braille. Especially if you’re ‘alone.’” Civilian men seemed to target married women more than soldiers and sailors, as married women were less likely to frequent the entertainment zones favored by enlisted men. Civilian men also had more access to married women as their neighbors, social acquaintances, and increasingly, their co-workers. The lonely wife became a figure of temptation for these men. She was simultaneously available and unavailable, in need and forbidden: She gave the wandering male a chance to vainly act like a “gallant” gentlemen, comforting a supposedly melancholy woman in need of masculine support. Instances of men taking advantage of distraught women could be particularly devastating, especially when wives who were taken advantage of then found their local community condemning them. Lamenting that

¹⁶⁷ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 10; “Soldiers’ Wives’ Hobby Club is Just the Thing,” *TCD*, March 13, 1943, 16.

“no one seems to care what happens” to war wives, one Army wife’s editorial declared that she was “sick of all the furrow-browed finger shakers. We are a desolate, desperately lonely, bewildered, grieving, weeping group of women.”¹⁶⁸

Married women attempted to identify men who might be “wolfish,” but often failed to guess which former friends, new acquaintances, or servicemen would ultimately become aggressive or lascivious. There were men seeking to use women, one woman lamented, “And the most unexpected ones they turn out to be too. Why is it that all the towers of virtue, the monuments of sobriety, the ideal husbands and fathers turn out to be the garter-snappers, the stray pinchers, the wolves?” Husbands’ friends could be the most flagrant offenders. Wives reported a standard narrative: It would all start with a social gathering and a suggestion of dancing or dining, or perhaps the theater. After a few outings, wives discovered that the male companion dropped his friendly act for a lustful one. One wife said, “I was so used to being friendly and unsexed with my husband’s men friends I had forgotten that that wasn’t the way of life. It had been so gay too’—she sighed—‘going out for a bit. Why couldn’t he have left it that way?’” Wives sometimes despised the burden placed on them to placate coercive men, but most agreed that little could be done to change this double standard. They were usually left with little more than intuition.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 70-71; “Why Army Wives Crack Up,” *CDT*, August 27, 1944, 16;

¹⁶⁹ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 72, 74.

Despite instances of fun and independence, women understood they needed to be vigilant about the potential dangers posed by both civilian men and troops. Yet many still placed responsibility and blame upon themselves if their date became amorous or forceful. Gorham cautioned fellow wives that “it takes two to make a bargain,” so they should not “blame everything on the man if a nice casual date goes moaning low” and “then whine and weep because men are beasts.” Both experienced couples and furlough brides were counseled to not “try it with temptations,” or let their loneliness lead them to a lapse in faithfulness. Guides like *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!* and social pressure demanded that a wife place fidelity and loyalty above these temptations, even if her husband could not be asked to do the same. Here, World War I loomed large. Wives acknowledged that the Great War ruptured marriages, resulting in many divorces. If wives were not faithful it would be “the woman who takes it on the chin.” Other wives ruefully noted that the press and society seemed eager to criticize “army wives abandoning children, running around nights, and in general conducting themselves as the fuddy-duddies say they shouldn’t.” Married women needed to diligent, careful, and shrewd when maintaining their marriage and dealing with new men. Gorham offered these wives a final, key aphorism: “But now it’s other times, other customs, and the wolf only takes the hindmost.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 76-80; “Why Army Wives Crack Up,” *CDT*, August 27, 1944, 16; For divorce statistics and wartime bumps in divorce rate see Randal S. Olson, “144 Years of Marriage and Divorce in 1 Chart,” Randal S. Olson, June 15, 2015, accessed August 1, 2017, <http://www.randalolson.com/2015/06/15/144-years-of-marriage-and-divorce-in-1-chart/>.

Women's columnist Doris Blake gave similar advice to unmarried young women to learn their "escort's marital status." She and others warned that married men would pose as single, and their easiest prey was "the inexperienced young girl who may innocently enough meet this shatterer of her dreams." Married men on the move would be strongly tempted "to deny their marital ties, or ignore the subject entirely, when meeting young women." Fears of infidelity also populated women's fiction. Books like *Sailor's Star* (1944) centered on Navy wives rushing to New York, only to find their sailor husband entranced by a new woman. Ultimately, women expected poor behavior from their husbands, even as men enforced a double standard when it came to fidelity. "Let your blood run cold," wrote Gorham, "But don't imagine he remains pure as the driven snow to match your own temperature. Men aren't made that way, but they certainly expect women to be." Women were advised they ought to forgive husbands these "peccadilloes" while noting that wives should not expect husbands to "forgive any of yours should you ever commit them."¹⁷¹

"Assault with Intent to Please"

Aside from the threats of new men in their lives, women confronted new challenges in booming wartime metropolises. Finding adequate living quarters, managing lascivious male co-workers, and safely traveling through the city constituted the daily privations of life in liberty ports.

¹⁷¹ Doris Blake, "Girl Workers: Learn Escort's Marital Status," *CDT*, February 28, 1943, F6; Fanny Heaslip Lea, *Sailor's Star* (New York, Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1944); Gorham, *So Your Husband's Gone to War!*, 74-75.

Taking a defense job, despite its wages and promise of greater independence, often required women to relocate to places close to troop bases, transports, and fun zones. Yet the sheer number of troops staying in the city during weekends and furlough periods drastically reduced the number of available rooms. Housing became scarce and expensive in many metropolitan areas, pushing women into crumbling, dingy, or unfinished apartments in rowdy, unsafe neighborhoods. Workers sometimes resorted to moving from hotel to hotel: “You could only stay in a hotel for X amount of days and you had to move. This was a wartime thing.” Even if workers could find housing through their company, there was little guarantee of a completed apartment. Marie Baker, a worker in the empennage department at North American, discovered that her brand new \$46.50 a month apartment in Redondo Beach lacked both lights and a stove, leaving her to heat soup on an electric percolator or buy hamburgers at the pier.¹⁷²

Yet compared to other housing arrangements, a missing stove and lighting was little to complain about. Early in 1942, the Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labor called on local organizations and state governments to “improve living conditions for women workers snared in the maelstrom of migrating peoples surging into defense industries.” In boom towns and west

¹⁷² Barbara Klaw’s *Camp Follower* in Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith (eds.), *American Women in a World at War* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1997), 132; “Soldier’s Wife Works,” *DBG*, November 26, 1943, 12; “Service Men’s Wives Praised,” *NYT*, February 14, 1944, 16; For “you could only stay” see Juanita Loveless in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 134; Marie Baker in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 231.

coast industrial centers, women faced “housing and general living conditions” that were “appallingly below desirable standards” with five to six women sharing one room or two to three sharing a bed. By 1944, little had changed. The *Women’s Bureau Special Bulletin* listed “the lack of adequate housing, recreation, transportation and child care facilities” as endemic to industrial areas, causing “discontent, absenteeism, turn-over, and other production saboteurs.” Even though women were earning “good money,” landlords stated that they disliked female tenants, in part, because they “entertain more, especially men friends.”¹⁷³

Even military wives struggled with housing, since, as one recalled, “property owners do not like to rent to military personnel.” Upscale hotels, too, began refusing to serve enlisted men, leaving one husband to apologize for taking his wife to a boardinghouse “where all the sailors are staying.” “If only I had known what I was going to be up against,” his wife said, “It would have made things easier. You plan so for such a week end; you buy a new hat, new perfume, new dress. And when you see the kind of place you’re dumped in you feel that much worse than if you had known.” Many decent and even shabby hotels were claimed early because of the huge numbers of servicemen passing through ports. Women were also advised to look out for potential threats beyond

¹⁷³ Adelaide Handy, “Housing Sought for the Women in Defense Jobs,” *NYT*, January 11, 1942, D4; “The Women Counselor in War Industries: An Effective System,” *Women’s Bureau Special Bulletin No. 16, February 1944* quoted in in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 240; “Women Face Bias as Room Tenants,” *NYT*, April 22, 1944, 10.

just enlisted men: "There's the lecherous clerk who would pinch your behind if he could reach over the counter. There's the seedy house detective who almost does." Little could be done to avoid these ramshackle hotels and rundown boardinghouses. Gorham suggested to "come prepared for the worst accommodations and do what you can to forget them." In New York, hotel associations put out pleas for couples to avoid the rush for rooms on Saturday or plan in advance. Traveler's Aid even suggested that couples who owned homes and apartments in New York might house servicemen and their wives on the weekends.¹⁷⁴

Work could be also difficult and demanding, leaving some women with little time or energy for anything outside of the job. Part of the daily drudgery included male co-workers harassing or propositioning them. War workers dealt with men asking if they were married, with one male co-worker saying, "All the good looking girls around here are." Even when told that they were married, and no, their husband was not in the in the Army, men responded, "Well, let me know if he goes....I'll see you don't get lonesome." Other women struggled against stereotypes that defense workers were "frivolous" or "gum popping, silly, flowers in our hair" or women who went "roaming the streets looking for soldiers." "It's not true," said one factory laborer, "By the time you got out of work, you were so

¹⁷⁴ Barbara Klaw's *Camp Follower* in Litoff and Smith (eds.) *American Women in a World at War*, 132; Gorham, *So Your Husband's Gone to War!*, 113-114; "Hotels Ask Help of Soldier's Wives," *NYT*, March 5, 1943, 12; Chapin Hall, "What Goes On?," *LAT*, April 27, 1942, 7.

damned tired you didn't want to do anything. In my case, the first thing I wanted was a bath."¹⁷⁵

Adding to the burdens of housing and work, simply traveling through liberty ports could become a dangerous proposition. The immense numbers of troops moving through cities made transportation a taxing and sometimes hazardous challenge. Gorham described trains as "crowded, noisy, often held up" and as a space where "the war is brought home" by "so many men in uniform, going, coming, on the move." Sailors and soldiers took up whole sections, crowded into sleeper cars, and filled the smoky aisles making passes as women tried to squeeze by. Given the difficulties of travel, marriage advice author Mary Day Winn recommended that women should not even attempt to follow their husbands as they moved about the country. By 1942, the War Department realized that poor discipline on both civilian trains and troop transports required a bolstered MP presence. One report acknowledged that more MPs "have been placed on public carriers to solve the many problems created by hundreds of thousands of men in the armed services traveling under orders or on furlough." Nevertheless, women still faced "misbehavior" and disorder while traveling. Bill Mauldin's servicemen cartoons captured these scenes with soldiers leering and propositioning women on transports. Chief of

¹⁷⁵ Sarah Killingsworth in Studs Terkel, *The Good War* (New York: The New Press, 1984), 114; Peggy Terry in Studs Terkel, *The Good War* (New York: The New Press, 1984), 109; Juanita Loveless in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 137-138, 141.

Staff George Marshall acknowledged “soldier drinking on trains” as a recurring issue, demanding a solution to this lack of discipline that threatened civil-military relations. In November 1942, Marshall wrote to the Army’s head of policing to complain that he was “still receiving reports of drunken soldiers on trains,” as well as poor MP performance. Marshall even received direct complaints from a woman and her daughter traveling on a train “filled with drunken soldiers who molested her to the extent that she and another lady were forced to ask civilians to sit with them as protection from the soldiers.” Marshall went on to tersely note that “Military Police were on the train but apparently did nothing.”¹⁷⁶

Women’s safety, too, was imperiled on city streets. War workers reported being attacked and assaulted, especially late in the night. Chicago’s Phyllis Blair, for example, one “slight and attractive war worker” was hit over the head with a brick and assaulted by an unknown man, dying later on. Her attacker, like many others, followed her when she left her factory job after midnight. Her fellow workers told police that “she had previously complained about being followed when on the way home.” Other young workers reported similar instances of male assailants striking them and then attempting “to molest” them. Soldiers often managed to commit multiple attacks without repercussions. Private Edward

¹⁷⁶ Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 112-114; “What Goes On?,” *LAT*, April 27, 1942, 7; Mary Day Winn, “Will War Weddings Last?,” *LAT*, September 12, 1943, G4; “Instructions for Military Police on Railroad Trains (Not Troop Trains) and in Railroad and Bus Terminals and Stations, 1943,” Administration Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250.1 General, Box 65 (RG 389), NACP; Bill Mauldin, *Star Spangled Banter*, March 14, 1941 in Mauldin, *Willie and Joe Volume One* (Seattle: Fangraphics Books, 2008), 33; “Memorandum for General Gullion, from Marshall,” Administration Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250.1 General, Box 65 (RG 389), NACP.

Green was arrested five to six times in Atlanta before being transferred to New York for guard duty in the city. There, he mugged and raped multiple women in Gramercy Park and Brooklyn late at night, before slashing a woman's sailor escort with his bayonet and assaulting her in Madison Square Park at 3 a.m. Many experienced the kind of startling, seemingly random episodes of violence visited upon Alberta Burgett of Boston. Leaving the Old Howard Theatre in the servicemen dominated Scollay Square, an Army sergeant "grabbed her, pushed her into an alley, and choked and beat her when she resisted him." On Los Angeles' Hollywood Boulevard, women described similar instances of men stalking them while walking or exiting streetcars before attempting to rape them. Some women, like Fanny Christina Hill, avoided "gallivanting" because of the dangers that came with it: "I knew how to get around, and I knew how to stay out of danger and not take too many chances." Another women testified that her newfound experience as a welder had given her the strength to fend off an attempted rape.¹⁷⁷

Brazen assaults like these took place at an alarming rate throughout the war. After the rape and strangling of Jessie Strieff—a young D.C. female worker—Eleanor Roosevelt urged young women in cities to "go home early, or with a reliable escort" and to "accept no favors from strangers or casual

¹⁷⁷ "Hunt Assailant of War Worker on North Side," *CDT*, August 1, 1943, 21; "Robbery Motives Seen in Murder of Girl Worker," *CDT*, August 3, 1943, 12; "Soldier is Seized in Park Rape Case," *NYT*, June 12, 1943, 28; "Cambridge Soldier is Charged with Chorus Girl Attack," *DBG*, April 20, 1944, 20; "Two Women Report Attacks," *LAT*, August 14, 1945, A2; Hill in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, 35; "Woman War Welder Fights Off Attacker," *NYT*, January 20, 1945, 24.

acquaintances.” Roosevelt also cautioned against going out with men “until assured of their good character” and that “if a girl drinks at all, it should be done with well-known friends.” By 1945, Chicago’s crime commission declared a “war on rapists” in response to an explosion in the number of rape cases caused by the “lowering of moral standards because of war.” Attacks like these, and a general fear of nighttime assaults, may have lead labor leaders like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn to demand “special transportation for night shifts.” Early on, the National Council for Women demanded “women patrol officers” who would “protect girls in defense centers.” Yet, many continued to live with the regular, omnipresent fear of being attacked without warning while conducting the most mundane activities or walking home. Even worse, was the sense that a rapist’s uniform would save them from prosecution or punishment.¹⁷⁸

Many who were attacked never found justice or recompense. The papers became especially infatuated with cases involving young, white, middle-class victims, and those cases stood a far better chance of receiving a full investigation. Women of color in particular found that a white assailant’s uniform and race granted extraordinary cover for their actions. In Detroit, furloughed Coast Guardsman Mike Stephanchenko attacked and raped a 23-year-old black

¹⁷⁸ “First Lady Warns Defense-Job Girls,” *NYT*, June 18, 1941, 23; “War on Rapists Mapped as Sex Crimes Mount,” *CDT*, August 17, 1945, 5; Flynn, *Women in the War* in Litoff and Smith (eds.) *American Women in a World at War*, 18; “Women Lay Plans for Post-War Era,” *NYT*, October 25, 1941, 20. In fact, if a troop was put on trial, they almost always wore their uniforms and as many medals as they could. Prosecuting attorneys even argued that a uniform could unfairly sway female jurors. See “Women Convict Soldier Who Led \$16,150 Robbery,” *CDT*, March 4, 1943, 18.

mother. Stephanchenko grabbed her from behind and dragged her into a field obscured by tall weeds. “See these hands,” he told her, “I’m the maniac of the neighborhood and I’ll kill you.” After he raped her twice, she managed to escape to a friend’s home. Despite living near the scene, confessing to having drunk over eighteen beers that night, and extensive physical evidence, the all-white jury found the guardsman not guilty. After the verdict was read, the Judge admonished the jury, saying, “You’ve made a serious mistake.” The wife and her husband wept in the courtroom.¹⁷⁹

Even in Pearl Schiff’s wartime romance *Scollay Square*, the female characters initially enchanted by handsome, virile sailors eventually learn the dangers that came with these romances. As the novel progresses, Jerry—Beth’s sailor love interest—cannot break out of the endless cycle of drinking, fighting, and sex. When Beth attempts to end the relationship, the tight grip she once associated with a reassuring strength becomes a threat. Jerry refuses to break off the relationship, picks her up, and flings her onto a bed. Beth protests, “This is rape,” but Jerry merely agrees, “Sure. Assault with intent to please.” Schiff concludes the scene by noting, “When he let himself out of the apartment, she was lying face down on the bed crying silently into the pillow.” The other female protagonist, Emily, is likewise assaulted by a Bluejacket: “He hit me....He got me

¹⁷⁹ For example of more concern for white, middle-class women see “2 Women, Girl Attacked by Sex Criminals,” *CDT*, September 6, 1943, 19; “White Sailor Cleared of Rape Charge,” *TCD*, November 21, 1942, 4. This pattern of exoneration for servicemen followed a fairly standard pattern, especially when the victim was poor or non-white. For one notable exception in Bermuda see the following article: “Life for White Soldier in Rape of Negro Woman,” *TCD*, January 9, 1943, 4.

up to a room and he took off his clothes and he hit me. He kept hitting me with his fists. He *enjoyed* hitting me.” Schiff, a Bostonian in her twenties during the war, captured what many women were unable to ever speak or write.¹⁸⁰

“Listen Little Lady”

Some of this violence occurred because of the revulsion against feminine and civilian life tacitly condoned, even encouraged, during military training. Because Command routinely failed to check crimes that ranged from drunkenness to harassment to rape, men understood that violent carousing was essentially a sanctioned way of releasing pent-up pressure and stress, while also exercising military privilege. Given the manpower crisis, flagrantly poor police numbers and training, and the legal privileges granted to men in uniform, women were mostly left to fend for themselves. Of course, understanding the endemic harassment, assault, and rape that occurred on the home front requires more specific explanations.

Troop aggression may also have been a response to newly independent and financially self-sufficient women, particularly war workers. Women working relatively lucrative jobs in defense plants could take home more income than the average GI or Bluejacket, upending traditional power relationships. One riveter Helen Studer stated that “people didn’t know what to do with their money when they were making so much,” while another claimed to have “six or eight checks laying in my dresser drawer that I hadn’t even cashed.” Betty Jeanne Boggs, also

¹⁸⁰ Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 256, 258-259.

a defense plant worker, agreed. She could “buy everything: my shoes, lingerie. The more I worked, the more clothes I bought. I could go out and blow my whole pay in one day if I wanted to.” Because wartime rationing put limits on consumer goods, women, like servicemen, often directed their disposable income towards plentifully available entertainment and nightlife. Gorham recommended to working wives that “the whole city is yours, depending on how much money you both saved for the excursion, and you can do pretty much as you always have when you’ve gone big-city gallivanting. You’ll find you get somewhat more for your money in amusement than you did before.” Black workers, however, were warned in *The Chicago Defender* “not to indulge in reckless spending.” Seeing women reaping greater rewards because they chose to upset social norms may have disturbed servicemen, who after all, were supposed to be symbols of strength and power. Confronted with the question of how a military man could be the epitome of strength when he did not even earn as much as the women next to him at the bar, some may have lashed out at these female threats to their machismo. Psychologists, doctors, and military officials argued that the new economic and social opportunities afforded to women drove a postwar epidemic of “wife-beating.” These officials “placed a good share of the blame on the wives” and called on them to be “very tolerant and understanding” of this domestic abuse and control of their lives.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Loveless, Studer, Salazar McSweyn, and Boggs all in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 138-139, 189, 85, 113; Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 119-120; “Warns Workers Not to Spend All They Make,” *TCD*, May 22,

Women were also compelled to tolerate the abuses of servicemen as part of their patriotic duty. Over and over single women were reminded of their key role in boosting and maintaining servicemen's morale. "Suddenly, single women were of tremendous importance," said one young worker, "It was hammered at us through the newspapers and magazines and on the radio. We were needed at USO, to dance with the soldiers." Propaganda especially drove women to see dancing, dating, and romancing soldiers and sailors as a wartime duty, one that young women later acknowledged had exercised "a tremendous influence" on their lives. "Listen little lady, it's the order of the day/Issued by the highest of authority/Fellows in the service simply can't be turned away/You know that defense must get priority," instructed one characteristic popular song by Joan Merrill. "Patriotically inclined" women were advised to "get out your lipstick and powder" before dancing with a sailor or soldier. "You can't say no if he wants to dance," Merrill explained, "If he's gonna fight he's got a right to romance." On the radio, in magazine shorts, and in films, women recalled a recurring narrative: "The central theme was the girl meets the soldier, and after a weekend of acquaintanceship they get married and overcome all difficulties." Young workers felt immense pressure to marry men on leave and liberty, even when they did not love or even like them: "I met my future husband. I really didn't care that much for him, but the pressure was so great....The pressure to marry a soldier was so

1943, 8; "Be Tolerant, Understanding to Avoid Beating, Wives Told," *TWP*, December 28, 1945, 1.

great that after a while I didn't question it. I have to marry sometime and I might as well marry him." Women who did not meet this kind of prescribed political obligation were seen as failing to live up to the duties of a citizen in wartime.¹⁸²

Even as military commanders privately exchanged escalating worries about the lack of discipline among their men while in liberty ports and fielded protest from female citizens, they also moved to scapegoat women as a threat to their men and the entire war effort. For government officials, women's sexuality was a disturbing force that posed a danger to the health of the Armed Forces. It could only be contained by a vigorous legal and policing regimen aimed at destroying vice and venereal disease. By the end of the war, accusations of prostitution and promiscuity began to lose real meaning. A U.S. Public Health Service physician even developed the portmanteau "patriotute" to describe a woman who both was both patriot and prostitute. For officials, it became far too easy to dismiss women's concerns and protests as sob stories or the excuses of promiscuous girls. One official equated prostitution and venereal disease with treason, pushing the Army-Navy Vice boards to attack female bodies as a source of infection. At the same time, the military's campaign for men to engage in safe sex became a tacit incitement for men to prove themselves sexually.¹⁸³

"Wolves in Friend's Clothing"

¹⁸² Dellie Hahne in Studs Terkel, *The Good War* (New York: The New Press, 1984), 117-118; Joan Merrill, "You Can't Say No To A Soldier," *Iceland*, Written by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren, 1942; Robert Westbrook, "'I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James': American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II," *American Quarterly*, 42. 4 (December 1990).

¹⁸³ For an overview see Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes*, 1-10.

In major cities across the country, women prepared for the wide range of threats that came with mass mobilization. Most soldiers and sailors did not perpetrate outright assaults. But many engaged in other kinds of coercive, “wolfish” behavior. They catcalled, leered, followed, or became aggressive when a date did not become something more. A typical instance of harassment took place in Norfolk, when a soldier repeatedly made advances towards a woman watching a film at the cinema. The woman was not physically harmed, but neither was the soldier arrested for his behavior. Gorham warned women to guard themselves from “wolves in friend’s clothing.” She also recognized that men in uniform would become more aggressive on streets “where women are appraised and approached via the once-over and yoo-hoo techniques.” “One general cannot stop the traditional sport of fifty million Americans,” she wrote, “and when American men get into a masculine groove they sharpen their eyes and give the girls the once-over as they go by.” *Good Housekeeping* published guides for women as they attempted to navigate a city populated by “stag parties”: “Don’t overdress...wear simple clothes...If you want to avoid whistles and caustic comments on your excursion...thread your way along quietly.” Stags are jovial as a rule,” the author warned, “Cast a couple of warm glances in their direction and, presto, they’re ready to move in on the party—ribald jokes, liquor, and all.” Above

all else, women should “be inconspicuous and dignified” in order to avoid unwanted attention.¹⁸⁴

Given the lack of policing and freedom accorded to men in the service when off base, some women sought out a decent military man to protect her. This need to find a reliable escort may have also driven women to see multiple men in case one was unavailable. The First Lady, as previously mentioned, suggested the necessity of a reliable escort, but offered few guidelines of how to obtain one. Doris Blake acknowledged early in 1941 that women would soon lack a “steady escort” and that the problem of choosing new escorts “really boils down to one of intuition.” Women often lacked a totally reliable soldier to choose, forcing many to pick between going it alone or taking their chances with a somewhat rough GI that could ward off less savory interlopers.¹⁸⁵

In 1942, Catholic priest and writer Daniel A. Lord explained the escort role in starkly military terms: “That word is used to designate the cruisers that protect a line of merchantmen during a war. The job of an escort is to protect that which is being escorted.” “What,” asked Lord, “would you think of an escort cruiser that suddenly started to try to sink the ship it was sent to protect?” Wartime made sorting out the protector from the “wolf” increasingly difficult. “Modern young men,” according to Lord, increasingly argued that “if she lets me get away

¹⁸⁴ “Weekly Intelligence and Security Summary,” August 22, 1945, 319.1 General #3, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 319.1 General, box 72, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; Gorham, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 146; *Good Housekeeping*, September 1943, Volume 117, Number 3, 40, 160.

¹⁸⁵ Doris Blake, “Problem of Beauless Girl Needing Escort,” *CDT*, January 10, 1941, 16; Gorham offered similar advice in *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, 77.

murder, then it's her responsibility" and that men sought to "find out as soon as possible how much a girl will let you get away with." Other young men suggested that "If a girl says, 'No,' pretend that she has said 'Yes,'" and that if an escort "paid for the girl's evening, she ought to be willing to pay you back...by permitting you familiarities." Moving unaccompanied through the city was likely more dangerous than taking a chance on a military man as an escort. Still, intuition only went so far when assessing a man's character. And with the movement of millions of troops throughout liberty ports, women found more men who believed that "chivalry is a fine thing in poetry, but has no place in a taxicab."¹⁸⁶

Women in liberty ports, however, did not passively accept aggressive conduct or attempted assaults. Imogene Stevens, an Army Major's wife, gained a minor celebrity after shooting and killing a sailor "in an 'aura of sex recrimination, beer, and window smashing reprisals.'" Late in the night, the "beautiful and socially prominent" Mrs. Stevens heard some noise and noticed the absence of her neighbors. She made her way next door and confronted two sailor brothers enjoying their liberty. After demanding to know why the two intoxicated servicemen were there, an argument ensued and the two brothers assaulted Stevens, ripping her clothing and leaving her with bruises and scratches on her throat. Stevens pulled out her pistol and fired upon one of the sailors three times, as the other fled. Although initially put on trial for manslaughter, the prosecutor eventually agreed that the evidence supported Stevens' claim of self-defense. As

¹⁸⁶ Doris Blake, "Escort Role is That of a Protector," *CDT*, January 22, 1942, 17.

the war went on, many women decided that their best chance of self-defense was in arming themselves. At Terminal Island in Los Angeles, “prompt, unpleasant surprise overtook a 21-year-old Navy coxswain who tried to bite the hand that fed him a Christmas dinner—and found it held a gun.” Edna Olson, a 54-year-old mother of a sailor, described as “diminutive” with “graying hair” invited a young Bluejacket to her home. Upon arriving, the sailor produced a .45 service automatic and demanded the family’s car and cash. Olson “marched to a closet and seized the family .38-caliber revolver” and then “won a brief battle of nerves” after the sailor fled the showdown. After posing with the pistol for the papers, Olson declared, “Do you think I’d let that young whipper-snapper take our car when we worked so hard to get it?” Those who fought off attackers though, risked prosecution. In San Diego, a Navy wife shot and killed a sailor—not her husband—who accompanied her home after midnight. “A fight developed in the house” and the wife seized a rifle from the sailor, firing two bullets and mortally wounding him. At her arrest, the wife attempted to demonstrate her patriotism and avoid prosecution remarking, “I have a friendly feeling for all servicemen because my husband is in the Navy.” She nevertheless faced a murder charge.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ “Woman Held in Sailor’s Death,” *LAT*, June 30, 1945, 2; “Piano Playing Sailor Slain; Woman is Held,” *CDT*, June 25, 1945, 7; “Mrs. Stevens Free in Slaying Sailor,” *NYT*, October 18, 1945, 23; “Woman Foils Sailor’s Try at Robbery,” *LAT*, December 29, 1945, A1; “Woman Held In Shooting of Sailor at San Diego,” *LAT*, August 7, 1942, 12; “Woman Jailed as Sailor Dies of Gun Wounds at San Diego,” *LAT*, August 10, 1942, A13.

Women also dealt with attempts to push them into prostitution, another flourishing industry in wartime. Sarah Killingsworth, a black worker in Long Beach, recalled that during wartime she faced “so many opportunities go wrong.” Waiting for the bus, prostitutes would approach and tell her, “We got good jobs. You could make as much money in one day as you do in a month.” Killingsworth explained that “they’d go out and date these white fellas and spend the night with ‘em.” Other prostitutes worked “a red-light district in San Bernardino, where the soldiers would go.” Many of them “were married, very attractive women” whose husbands acted as their “pimps.” Other women remembered pandering attempts in nightclubs. One young woman accused a couple of pressing her to join “the largest and best call house in Los Angeles” where she “would entertain no one but film executives and celebrities, earning as high as \$400 a week.” The recruiters promised “easy money and jewels” when luring to women to work “as a call girl.” Law enforcement became so concerned about prostitution among war workers that they directed women’s counselors to begin investigating prostitution recruitment occurring in factories. Susan Laughlin, a counselor at Lockheed, began spying on women in the restroom after “the FBI had word of a certain woman who was recruiting for the camps, for the girls to go up and sleep with the men.” “I had to catch her at it,” Laughlin remembered, “And I did.” Most workers,

however, found ways to avoid what Killingsworth called “selling my body for a few dollars.”¹⁸⁸

“Spawning Ground of Evil”

Though the fears of military and federal officials over promiscuity and “patriotutes” was unrestrained and ultimately harmful to many women, the vice trade boomed on the home front. When men hit port, they left their ships and rail cars with full pocketbooks and desire. For GIs and sailors from “podunk” towns, the liberty port could be a revolutionary experience. These men and boys desired sex above all else, and this desire drove the economy and geography of vice.

Men flocked to the bars and saloons. Most of these establishments at least took on the façade of a café or bar in an attempt to avoid policing from the military or civilian vice squads. Other establishments became “water joints,” or bars that had already had their liquor licenses revoked as trouble spots. Enterprising operators developed “breakfast clubs,” which opened as the regular bars closed, beckoning in troops for liquor served surreptitiously. In saloons and soda shops like the Stag Café, the Victory Canteen, Ye Olde Winery Club, and Shanghai Red’s, attractive B-girls waited to part servicemen from their spending cash. Men could buy the girls liquor, or more likely soft drinks, which they could then spike with rotgut. In exchange, the B-girl offered a kiss, a wandering touch,

¹⁸⁸ Elizabeth Hawes, “Women War Worker,” *NYT*, December 26, 1943, SM9; Dorothy Dix, “Women’s Beauty Burden Grows Heavier with War Activities,” *DBG*, March 16, 1943, 17; Sarah Killingsworth in Studs Terkel, *The Good War* (New York: The New Press, 1984), 115; “Woman Tells Attempt to Make Her Call Girl,” *LAT*, August 9, 1941, 16; Susan Laughlin in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 250.

or perhaps more. The drinking establishment profited, while the B-girl received a cut and a drink. Other young women—single girls, defense workers, and lonely wives—sometimes populated these cafes and clubs, hoping to meet a dashing Navyman or a bold GI. Cafes and bars with B-girls also brought the desires of servicemen into direct conflict with nearby civilians. This mix of alcohol and swaggering masculinity meant competition for women could be fierce—and men did not take rejection from their female acquaintances lightly.¹⁸⁹

Military and civilian authorities quickly recognized the potential for crime and exploitation in the rough taverns and heady fleshpots of Main Street LA, Times Square, and San Francisco's Mission Street. If not contained, both the war effort and the safety of the home front might be jeopardized. Yet these authorities did not focus on preventing drunken brawls, vandalism, or troops assaulting women. Instead, both commanders and municipal officials identified women as the great recurring threat to the furloughed serviceman. This partly led to the crackdown on prostitution and a demonization of some women as nothing more than a threat to spread venereal disease.¹⁹⁰

But many women were a threat. Even in an environment that incentivized soldiers and sailors to commit crimes and prey on vulnerable women, B-girls,

¹⁸⁹ Richard Courchene, *Hell, Love, and Fun* (West Point, Montana: Self Published, 1969), 14; "Taverns and Bars-Out of Bounds," (No Specific Date, likely August 1942) P8-5 1940 11 ND (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; "Elimination of B-Girls Sought by Government Authorities" *LAT*, August 22, 1942, A14; "City, Army and Navy Patrols Battle Racketeers Who Prey on Servicemen" *LAT*, January 27, 1946, A1; "Crime Against Military Personnel Becomes Flourishing Business," *LAT*, January 19, 1945, A1.

¹⁹⁰ See Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes*.

con-women, scam-artists, and female gangs were ready to take advantage of inebriated men and their flush pocketbooks on payday. Rather than passively submit to the coercive and sometimes violent impulses of military men, many civilian women actively exploited servicemen carousing the burgeoning entertainment zones. Los Angeles became a port plagued by “murder, robbery, shootings, bunko games, drunk ‘rollings,’ the spread of venereal diseases among combatant servicemen granted leave...and general hoodlumism.” Military authorities publically decried the “feminine bar flies, thieves, degenerates, and habitual criminals” who made service personnel loaded with back pay their “natural prey.”¹⁹¹

The Army’s head of policing sought to ban B-girls almost immediately. “When is a bottle of pop dangerous to the Army and Navy?” asked *The Los Angeles Times*. When it was served by one of the “harpies of Main St,” apparently. Employing crackdowns, raids, and the revocation of liquor licenses, municipal and military authorities attempted to drive the B-girls from their usual haunts. But these techniques were often ineffective. How could you tell a B-girl from another young woman? And what should an officer do if the soldier drunkenly objected to the women’s arrest? Usually the girls just moved to a new café or water-joint, directing the flow of vice traffic into areas of Los Angeles beyond South Main Street, including downtown and Hollywood. They also developed new methods. As the men poured out of their ships, B-girls beckoned

¹⁹¹ “Crime Against Military Personnel Becomes Flourishing Business,” *LAT*, January 19, 1945, A1.

to passing uniforms from “photographic studios.” Luring the men into a ramshackle storefront, the B-girls promised to pose with them for a 25-cent photo. After a few shots and perhaps a kiss, the men soon discovered the photograph cost much more.¹⁹²

Other women participated in robbery schemes that directly targeted GIs and sailors. Many worked in pairs, running various routines that exploited men’s desire for drink and sex. One pair of young women picked up pairs of sailors as they arrived at the docks, bar-hopped with them and then suggested a ride in their car. The women would then knock the drunken men out and make off with hundreds of dollars of back pay. Young women also worked with older women and wives as part of a “mother-daughter” combination. The pair would invite a soldier “to a private home for chicken dinner.” Once in the car, the mark received “a bump on the head and a missing wallet.” Girls in the West End of Boston committed similar robberies. One British sailor reported losing \$1500 after being lured into a darkened apartment hallway by a blond and brunette he met in a café. As he stepped into the hallway, a male accomplice—a common third member of these teams—grabbed his throat while the women searched his pockets. Sailors could be stabbed to death after following a female “pickup” home. Teenage girls, including a 13-year-old who called herself “Queen

¹⁹² “Elimination of B-Girls Sought by Government Authorities” *LAT*, August 22, 1942, A14; “New B-Girl Ban Approved” *LAT*, September 11, 1940, A2; “City, Army and Navy Patrols Battle Racketeers Who Prey on Servicemen” *LAT*, January 27, 1946, A1; “Griffith Charges Soldiers Rooked,” *LAT*, April 12, 1944, 1.

Dorothy,” even ran “crime clubs” that broke into department stores to sell watches and jewelry to sailors in Boston’s Scollay Square. In Staten Island, the *Times* profiled “two blond ‘glamour girl’ burglars, who apparently have invaded another field of male activities in wartime.” In D.C., women sometimes posed as women’s police bureau agents, demanding to see the ID cards and wallets of sailors because of some fabricated infraction. They would then claim to take the wallet back to the receiving station, making off with the cash. Back in Los Angeles, two blond sisters who worked in defense factories doubled as holdup girls. After making dates with sailors who they met in cocktail parlors, they invited the men outside where they received a beating and a liberation of their earnings. Los Angeles authorities estimated that Army and Navy men visiting the city had lost nearly \$100,000 to robberies in just one year. “It’s just the same old story,” remarked Shore Patrol Commander Fogg, “Money is plentiful and there are enough crooked men and women after their share of it to make our job tough.” Yet, officers also admitted that “it is the serviceman, in many instances, who is to blame for his predicament, and victimization,” because they chose to frequent the crooked establishments.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ “City, Army and Navy Patrols Battle Racketeers Who Prey on Servicemen” *LAT*, January 27, 1946, A1; “British Sailor, Lured by Women, Attacked by Man; Loses \$1500, *DBG*, October 3, 1943, B19; “Police Arrest 5 Boys, Girls; Smash West End Crime Club” *DBG*, December 23, 1945, D2; “Two ‘Glamour Girl’ Burglars Get \$1,000 Loot in Staten Island Home” *NYT*, October 10, 1942, 17; “Police Helped Woman Take Sailor’s Wallet” *TWP*, June 3, 1945, R5; “Two Women Accused of Dating for Holdups,” *LAT*, October 17, 1943, A3; “Crime Against Military Personnel Becomes Flourishing Business,” *LAT*, January 19, 1945, A1. For sailor stabbing see “Crime Against Military Personnel Becomes Flourishing Business: Shore Patrol’s Records Show Rise of Menace,” *LAT*, January 19, 1945, A1.

Nationwide, officials worried that the war was becoming a “spawning ground of evil” for girls and women. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover consistently used the press to warn the public of “the alarming upswing in crime among women and girls,” and to publish regular annual jumps in both arrests and offenses. In just one year, the FBI recorded a nearly 50% surge in the number of girls arrested. Women’s police bureau officials declared the girl-gangs of Washington D.C. to be “the true counterparts of the Werewolves and the Forty Thieves.” Armed with knives and razors, these girls were not the “‘gun molls’ of the cheap movies and magazines,” but rather “truly criminal, well on the road to professional standing.” They “hover at night waiting and watching for a soldier or sailor,” cautioned a women’s police captain, “Rolling drunks is one of their elementary accomplishments.” Academics made similar claims. Sociologist Elizabeth K. Norton suggested that though the war prompted “a new stimulus to emancipation—even including economic equality,” this transformation would be “dearly bought.” Dr. Norton advised that in wartime “feminine behavior that would once have been described as vicious became respectable or was at least condoned.”¹⁹⁴

WACS and WAVES

¹⁹⁴ “Spawning Ground of Evil,” *TWP*, July 24, 1943, 1; “Women 11% Less Honest” *NYT*, March 14, 1942, 17; “Sharp Crime Rise Shown for Girls,” *NYT*, March 21, 1943, 16; “FBI Crime Report Reveals 49.9% Jump in Girl Arrests,” *TWP*, March 6, 1944, 3; “Sociologists Find Soldier is no Hero,” *NYT*, April 28, 1940, 32.

In contrast to war wives, workers, and even these con-women, female members of the military often experienced a fundamentally different dynamic with servicemen. While military men generally viewed civilian women as prizes, or objects of pursuit, WACS and WAVES could be seen as belonging to the military, rather than being members of the female sex. Military sources are limited, but what exists suggests many male soldiers treated their female counterparts as fellow carousers. They shared a common tribal belonging, one that was forged through the shared experience of training, as well as the uniforms that set them apart from the civilian world. Female troops even got military tattoos in hard-edged martial zones as a way to cement their bond to the Armed Forces. So when WACS and WAVES took leave in the big coastal cities and inland waypoints, they often acted like male troops: drinking, swearing, cruising through juke joints and taverns, and mocking the authority of the police.¹⁹⁵

Like male soldiers, MPs reported instances of female troops becoming drunk and belligerent on trains. In one example, a female first Lieutenant on the train from Nashville to New Orleans was reported for “using loud and profane language; drinking to excess; creating a disturbance.” The male MP proceeded to treat her with the same deferential, even obsequious manner used when approaching male offenders. After repeated requests to desist and produce identification, she pulled rank and stated that she “did not have to obey the

¹⁹⁵ For tattoos see Barbara Brooks, “WAVES and WAACS Are Being Tattooed,” *DBG*, April 25, 1943, C1.

orders of enlisted men.” Similar incidents occurred when female and male troops went out carousing together. On Memphis’ Union Street, several MPs confronted three WACS, a marine, a sailor, and an Army captain who were drunk and disorderly. The MP’s report specifically identifies the women as the most belligerent and pugnacious. Swearing, drunk, and with their uniforms disheveled, the assembled personnel were creating a scene that “did attract the attention of people passing by.” They repeatedly ignored the MP’s requests, and asked what right the police had to tell them to do anything. The WACS’ male counterparts attempted to get them to go back to base, but the women refused. One WAC struck out at one of the officers, while another accused the ranking MP of being a “damn shavetail”—meaning an inexperienced officer—and that all he had was “brass” to be back him up. They continued to mock the MPs, calling them “chicken,” “bitches,” and “yellow.” Increasingly agitated, one of the WACS swung at and then kicked an MP sergeant in the groin.¹⁹⁶

Much has been made of the hostility that soldiers directed toward female enlistees, and the hateful rumors they spread about them, but all of this behavior, from the drunk and disorderly behavior in an urban locale to the disrespect for MPs and fighting, demonstrates WACS mirroring the behavior of servicemen.

¹⁹⁶ Several cases appear in MP Misconduct Reports involving WACS and WAVES. See “Misconduct Report for 1st Lt. Mary Hodges Parsons,” October 12, 1945, 319.1 Weekly Intell. Summary, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 319.1 Weekly Intell. Summary to 320.2 Bolera Mission, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), box 78, NACP; “Statement of 1st Lt. Wayne H. Allen and other MPs,” August 27, 1945, 250.1 General #3, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 250 TO 251, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

Indeed, servicewomen occasionally managed to invoke the privilege of the uniform to either escape punishment or to leverage power to beat an unfair charge. A contingent of African American WACS at Fort Knox used the respect garnered by their military position to essentially force a white civilian police officer to resign after he struck one of them. Even civilian observers drew more similarities than differences between male and female sailors. For example, profiles of Coney Island depicted sailors and WAVES essentially as equals, making no distinction when describing their domination of the park. In other instances though, male servicemen, especially officers, used their power to abuse female troops. A San Francisco Naval lieutenant was reprimanded for repeatedly breaking into the WAVES barracks in an attempt to solicit sex. In Tampa, a corrupt Army captain coerced a WAC to have sex with him in exchange for a promotion to the rank of sergeant. Thus, in the end female troops did not escape the sexual violence visited upon civilian women.¹⁹⁷

Though the wartime lives of WACS and WAVES substantially differed from other American women, they nonetheless capture the contradictory dynamic of the military's effect on liberty ports. Men and women could be both allies and

¹⁹⁷ For the severe challenges and hostility that some female troops faced, as well as the efforts to control female sexuality (and screen out lesbians and working-class women) see Leisa D. Meyer, *G.I. Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); "Weekly Intelligence Summary 5th SvC," August 11, 1945, 319.1 (Weekly Intelligence Summary) 5th SC, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 319.1 Weekly Intell. Summary, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), box 77, NACP; Murray Schumach, "It's the Old Coney—With War Overtones," *NYT*, July 4, 1943, SM8; John Martin, "Shangri-La of Joe Doakes," *NYT*, August 13, 1944, SM16; "Brief of Report of Investigation," July 17, 1945, 333.4 (710th M.P. Btn.) Gen, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, 333.5 to 333.9, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), box 85, NACP.

adversaries, though often the real relationship lay somewhere in between. In the war within the war, many women could not avoid the suffering caused by the military's sanctioning of rampant assault and harassment. And yet others leveraged these disruptions to produce a new range of movement and opportunity within liberty ports.

Chapter Four: The Militarized City

Writing in 1990, Mike Davis envisioned Los Angeles as a dystopian metropolis not unlike the brutal fortress cities of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* or John Carpenter's *Escape from New York*. Beginning in the 1960s, the rise of "megastructures and supermalls" brought about the destruction of public space with the help of a police and private security apparatus dedicated to middle class demands for "increased spatial and social insulation." This "militarization of urban space," Davis argues, ended the democratic ideal where classes could mix in the lost "paradise of free beaches, luxurious parks, and 'cruising strips.'" Davis specifically identifies Mayor Fiorello La Guardia's New York City and LA's 1940's downtown as exemplars of the Olmstedian tradition of heterogeneity and democratic space. Los Angeles, New York, and other liberty ports certainly featured more mixed public spaces and less corporate urban planning. But just because a space was more democratic, does not mean it was not also militarized.¹⁹⁸

World War II brought about the first true wave of urban militarization. Cities were transformed not just by the presence of millions of servicemen, but also by the military's annexation of property, policing, and regulation of businesses. Civilian and military leaders sometimes cooperated, but often argued over who should have control. Religious leaders, anti-vice organizations often

¹⁹⁸ Mike Davis, "Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space," in Michael Sorkin's (ed.) *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 154-180.

with roots stretching back to the Victorian era, and business groups joined the fray, seeking to shape local policies on issues like curfews, out of bounds zones, and policing. The streets of World-War II American cities in the path of millions of conscripts certainly featured the dynamic and vibrant life Davis romanticizes. However, their streets also fostered bitter civil-military conflicts and drove the growth of military power in urban America. Civilian life itself experienced its own militarization as well. Civilians responded to the friendly occupation by America's men in uniform through a mix of cooperation, accommodation, profiteering, and protest, though many found themselves powerless to stop the military's control of liberty ports.

“The Crossroads of Hell”

In booming ports like Boston, servicemen revitalized and expanded red-light districts, creating whole new sexual networks that brought martial masculinity into everyday life. Each city frequented by troops on furlough or en route to training grounds or combat zones had at least one quarter where men could hit the taverns, cafes, bars, cabarets, and brothels for booze and B-Girls, dope and “well stacked” prostitutes. Hotels with “special offers” and bellboys connected to the flesh trade proliferated. The reinvigoration of red-light districts produced both cooperation and conflict between troops, businesses, anti-vice crusaders, “slumming” civilians, politicians, and military authorities, all of whom sought to determine the order and character of these spaces. Transformations like these capture how major port hubs became occupied cities where civilian life

and economy was defined by the presence and behaviors of soldiers flooding the streets.¹⁹⁹

Boston's history of catering to the sailor on shore leave began long before World War II. In the 1850s, ships released their crews along the original water front, sending them onto Anne Street, home to a host of criminals, swindlers, and prostitutes. Rushing out with their wages and "pent-up desires," the sailors crowded the bordellos, burlesque theaters, gambling houses, "rat pits," and "jilt shops" where the bar staff ran scams and robberies on drunken patrons. Men surging out from Dock Square lost themselves in the blood-sport, drinking, and whoring without much fear of the police, who dared not send lone officers into those "vicious highways." Richmond Street in the North End became known as the Black Sea, another center of sin and "slumming," where both sailors and wayward students could place bets on ratting—how fast could a dog kill twenty rats released into a pit?—or find a girl in one of the combination dance hall-brothels flourishing near the wharfs. Vice squads and moral reformers periodically raided these "streets of sin," but Boston's economic transformation into a center of finance generally proved more effective in driving out the purveyors of drink and flesh.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ "Well-stacked" description from Courchene, *"Hell, Love, and Fun,"* 14.

²⁰⁰ Anne Street is also sometimes termed Ann Street. Today it is North Street. For overview of Anne Street and Richmond Street (Black Sea) see George Weston, *Boston Ways: High, By, and Folk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 182-184.

During World War II Scollay Square emerged as a rival to Times Square for revelry and risky fun. Originally a cow pasture, then host to a quartet of grand hotels, Scollay had become “a disreputable slum” by the early 1900s. During and after World War I, with the great expansion of the Charlestown Navy Yard and the battleship fleet, sailors thronged the Square, searching for last minute amusements before their ship departed. Still, the Square of the 1930s remained a classic red-light district, full of any kinds, from the Brahmins to the down and out. Troops taking liberty blended into, rather than dominated, the scene. World War II changed this as Bluejackets swarmed in not only from the Navy Yard to the North, but also from the new South Boston Naval Annex. The Square’s businesses capitalized on the cycles of pay days and benders, and the sector was soon ruled by military law and servicemen’s whims. By 1945, this rush of sailors would transform Scollay Square into a projection of the Navy’s power into the heart of Boston and a central hub for civil-military conflict.²⁰¹

Before troops even arrived in Boston, most knew about Scollay Square. It developed an almost mythological appeal conveyed in apocryphal stories. In one tale, Marines holed up on a Pacific island mark their bivouac with a sign reading “Scollay Square.” In another story, two ships sailing the Atlantic approach one another and begin sending a flurry of wigwag flag signals. The message is quickly translated and read back as “How are things on Scollay Square?” Civilians recalled GIs wandering down Washington Street and asking, “Hey bud,

²⁰¹ For background on Scollay Square see Weston, *Boston Ways*, 184-186.

where's Scoll—," but before they could finish the question, they were already receiving directions.²⁰²

For Boston's citizens, the Square could be many things. Boston mothers employed it as a warning against immoral conduct, telling their teenage daughters that too much lipstick and waggling of hips would damn them to being a streetwalker in Scollay. But at the start of the war, all kinds of people, not just those wearing Navy blue, went there. High school boys and undergrads treated it as a kind of coming-of-age rite, frequenting the notorious block for "burly distractions." Some underage boys recalled burying themselves in big winter jackets to hide their youthful appearance, and then affecting a deep voice when trying to purchase a ticket to see a striptease. Harvard students—and some professors—ventured across the Charles River to visit the premier burlesque theater, The Old Howard Athenaeum (nicknamed The Old Harvard). Before graduating as a Crimson man in 1940, JFK was rumored to have fallen in love with one of the strippers named "Peaches Strange." Even women from the city's elite Cabot family visited and remembered the "nice, healthy looking girls" performing stripteases. "There was no special class that went there," insisted one of the Square's film projectionists, "You'd see the affluent, you'd see the poor,

²⁰² Pearl Schiff, *Scollay Square* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc, 1952), 1; *Boston: The Way it Was* (Boston, MA: WGBH/PBS, 2000), VHS.

and you'd see all in between." An African-American woman agreed, asserting "it was everyman's place."²⁰³

Officially, Scollay was only one city block in the serpentine streets of Boston. The actual Square featured a small number of establishments including theatres, "dine-and-dance spots," restaurants, a tavern, two cinemas, a pharmacy, penny arcade, bowling alley, tattoo parlors, shooting galleries, and a liquor store. Patrons understood, however, that Scollay also enveloped the surrounding streets, including businesses like Joe and Nemo's on Cambridge Street, known for its hotdogs. But even describing Scollay as a red-light district fails to capture how novelists, visitors, and reporters thought about it. Boston's Pearl Schiff, author of the scandalous and best-selling romance *Scollay Square*, saw the area as "a mood, a rhythm" or "a catchy tune with dirty lyrics." A GI also identified the area as synonymous with the obscene, the dirty, and the shocking. "Scollay Square was the closest thing to a four letter word that you could've had," he put it. The district offered a place to "escape into make-believe" where someone might "drink and make love and let the world go to hell." Scollay offered a bit of make-believe for everyone. For the man on liberty, it was an escape into "an almost infinite choice of pleasures." For the Harvard crowd and Beacon Hill

²⁰³ Apocryphal stories regarding marines, passing ships, and Boston mothers from Pearl Schiff, *Scollay Square* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc, 1952), 1; Quote on directing GIs, information on high-school, college boys, Harvard men, quote from Cabot woman, projectionist quote, and African-American woman's quote from *Boston: The Way it Was* (Boston, MA: WGBH/PBS, 2000), VHS.

elites it provided a titillating brush with “the earthy kind.” Respectable women might enjoy a night of rowdy fun without risking their social standing.²⁰⁴

Both sailors and civilians originally came for the many varieties of burlesque. The Old Howard was “Boston’s Temple of Burlesque” and wartime audiences regularly packed the 1500 seats. Originally famous as the site of William Miller’s non-ascension into heaven, the Howard found fame in the years between the World Wars with the signature stripteases of Ann Corio, a queen of the genre. By World War II, Corio was making movies, but many other striptease artists took her place. Even without Corio, the war produced regular audiences for the burlesque routines offered by the Howard, with signs proclaiming “Always Something Doing.” Others theaters featured “fan-dances,” with scantily-clad women seductively waving huge, white feather fans, covering and uncovering skin to music. Visitors also sought out the tassel-dancers at the Crawford House, where one act featured a woman who could rhythmically move her breasts so that each tassel would swing in the opposite direction. Punters would cat-call and yell from the audience, “Take it off!” to which the performer gamely replied, “I can’t take that off. I’ll catch a cold!”²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ For description of Scollay Square and its surrounding area see Weston, *Boston Ways*, 187 and Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 2-3; For Pearl Schiff quotes see Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 3,86. GI quote from WGBH’s *Boston: The Way it Was*; “Make believe,” “drink and make love,” and “infinite choice of pleasures” quotes from Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 62, 24, 73, 48.

²⁰⁵ “Boston’s Temple of Burlesque” and additional information on The Howard from Stewart H. Holbrook, “Boston’s Temple of Burlesque,” *American Mercury*, April 1944, 411-416; For more on Corio see “Lives Lived Well And the Lesson That They Teach,” *NYT*, January 2, 2000, and WGBH’s *Boston: The Way it Was*; For fan-dances and tassel-dancers see WGBH’s *Boston: The Way it Was*.

But in time, the war transformed Scollay into a more militarized, hard-edged, dangerous place, far less welcoming to civilians. Shore Patrol officers, who increasingly replaced city cops, were soon “everywhere, their gaitered legs and belted waists with the small businesslike clubs swinging at their hips, investing them with authority” Schiff recalled. Civilian men who did not join the service learned to avoid the Square. Women and girls, who were not prostitutes congregating to capture military dollars, charted alternate routes through the city and carefully scanned the avenue when exiting the nearby subway station.²⁰⁶

Wartime Scollay was defined by its sights, smells, and sensations. “Jack Ashore” understood, as one historian put it, that “Scollay Square, like the ladies who frequented it, was best seen in the evening.” Furloughed sailors were greeted by the blazing electrical bulbs of café signs and the penny arcade’s neon tubes that “glowed with jewel-toned brilliance of ruby, emerald and sapphire.” When sailors and women stumbled out of the gin-joints and saloons, jukebox music filled the street, before going silent again as the door slammed shut behind them. The air was heavy with the mix of sauerkraut, vomit, smoke, and pungent cologne. Visitors and observers uncovered rhythms that dictated movement and actions within the Square. At the beginning of the night, Schiff observed a “slow shuffling tempo” as day-drunks, bookies, and horse-players lounged in the streets. As the women and girls hit the Square at dusk, sailors poured out from taxis, subways, and side-streets, and the tempo began to build. Cat-calls,

²⁰⁶ Shore patrol quote from Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 8.

obscenities, and raucous laughter formed a kind of soundtrack, while men increasingly threw fists at each other. Homeless men, derided as “stewbums” and panhandlers by troops, begged for cash as men hunted for a girl. The “grand finale” occurred when the cafes, honky-tonks, and dance halls ejected their patrons out into the wide avenue late at night. Then, sailors fought over women, and women fought over sailors. Shore Patrol frantically attempted to keep the peace and clear the zone. Some departed near dawn in taxis for crooked hotels, others left for the Common “where the ground is hard but free.” More settled for doorways and sides of buildings, where car headlights briefly illuminated a flurry of hands, mouths, and thighs. By early morning, the quiet was interrupted only by a scattered giggle, cry, or smashed bottle.²⁰⁷

Businesses capitalized on the near constant military traffic and burgeoning war worker populations. Street hawkers and shops began catering to servicemen’s various desires for trinkets and mementos associated with their time in the service. Many sold large, heavy rings that sailors wore on their middle fingers. As an alternative to more noticeable and illegal brass knuckles, the rings worked well as both a masculine accessory and as a fighting implement. Each ring featured a huge plate of metal placed on top of the band and imprinted with the faces of women or “wild west” Indian warriors. After a brawl or scuffle, men might find these designs stamped into their faces and skin. Photo studios, similar

²⁰⁷ First quote from Weston, *Boston Ways*, 187; Scollay’s lights described in Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 5; Smells taken from Kaufman, “From Scollay Sq. tattoo parlors to Combat Zone porno films,” 25 and Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 3; Tempo section from Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 3-4, 28.

to ones featuring B-Girls in LA, offered a place for sailors and women to capture a keepsake of a wartime romance. The Rialto Theatre explicitly catered to sailors by screening films into the early morning hours. Sailors explained that “Boston is like a morgue at one o’clock,” so many would hole up in the Rialto until dawn. Night-shift workers joined them to watch vampires attack “some Hollywood cutie” and to “sober off before going home to the wife.”²⁰⁸

Scollay’s tattoo parlors were dominated almost entirely by GIs, marines, sailors, and men from the Coast Guard—often called “coasties.” The Square’s main parlors were all owned by members of the appropriately named Liberty family. Edward “Dad” Liberty and his sons Ted, Frank, and “Lefty” ran a cluster of studios. Amid the myriad of colors, designs, and insignias spattered across tattoo shops’ walls, sailors picked from “ships and girls, in memoriam and religious motives, patriotic emblems, pirates, cupids, Mickey Mouse, and such mottoes as ‘one home, one flag, one girl.’” Many went for their service’s emblem, a visual commitment to their new lives as military men. Ted Liberty, the barrel-chested son, explained that “servicemen comprise the biggest number of our customers and nowadays they go in more for military emblems and sentimental motives, in contrast to the old-timers who were apt to favor female forms.” Paying cash in advance, coasties and Bluejackets pointed to the tattoo’s desired location, received a quick shave with the aid of a “murderous looking straight razor” and a

²⁰⁸ For quotes and information on rings, as well as photo studios, see Weston, *Boston Ways*, 187; For quotes and information on the Rialto see George McKinnon, “Edict Ends Hub’s All-Night Movie: Little Scollay-Sq. House Was Refuge of Night Owls,” *DBG*, February 22, 1945, 17.

“sturdy forearm.” After a dash of Vaseline, the tattooist placed the stencil and used lamp black to outline the design. Then, like a swarm of tiny bees, the needle danced across the skin, stinging the ink fifty times a second. Besides being a boon to civilians like the Liberty family, getting tattoos together offered servicemen a shared experience of pain and camaraderie.²⁰⁹

Sailors idolized Scollay’s full embrace of vice and the power they exercised in the district. In Schiff’s *Scollay Square*, a sailor extols Boston because it cherished “the tradition of its narrow streets, and set aside its widest thoroughfare for drinking and whoring.” While other cities might hide their red-light districts “on mean back streets far removed from the wide pleasant avenues of respectability,” Schiff wrote, Boston’s hub for fun had become the home for the military man on leave, “the beer joints were his children.” Other troops sentimentally remembered it as “gay, raucous, and uninhibited,” a spot to escape the war and make full use of the privilege of the uniform. As the end of the war approached, officials even announced plans to cordon off Scollay Square and designate it as the official V-E Day celebration zone.²¹⁰

City officials and civilians, however, began to see the growth of military specific businesses as proof of Scollay’s descent into iniquity. Many denounced this shift as “a disgrace to Boston” while using whatever municipal power they

²⁰⁹ For quotes and information on tattoo parlors see Barbara Brooks, “WAVES and WACS Are Being Tattooed,” *DBG*, April 25, 1943, C1.

²¹⁰ “The tradition of its narrow streets,” and “the beer joints” both from Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 28, 220; “Gay, raucous, and uninhibited” from Weston, *Boston Ways*, 189; “Scollay Square Reserved for V-E Day Celebrations,” *DBG*, March 30, 1945, 17.

had to counter the spillover of crime and hedonism that had overtaken the Square. In 1942, Boston police issued a 10 p.m. curfew order for both Scollay and the Common, with city cops, Shore Patrol, and Military Police sweeping both areas for any “girl or man in uniform.” Police Commissioner Joseph F. Timilty’s board on wartime vices cleverly invoked a previous Park Department ordinance to clear the Common and surrounding areas. Commissioner Timilty also assigned more police to the Common and streets near Scollay in an attempt to crack down on “young girls in those places.” Though Timilty couched the curfew and step up in police presence as a response to the “teen-age girl situation,” he also explicitly mentioned that “thousands of servicemen are here over the weekends,” suggesting he viewed them as a part of the problem. Though the curfew did not last, city bureaucrats found other ways to curb what they saw as Scollay’s descent into depravity. The Boston Licensing Board employed health checks to close down unsanitary establishments. Occasional citywide blackouts forced temporary business closures, though many establishments failed to dim their lights until compelled to. Despite these efforts, the area’s nightlife grew increasingly difficult to control. Even one soldier from Massachusetts began to despair when he heard of Scollay’s changing reputation from a bawdy “bright-light district” into something more sinister. Writing to the *Globe*, the soldier explained that Scollay was no longer “safe for a service man to take his mother through.” Feeling “burned up by the things I hear about it,” stories from sailors made the Boston GI “flatten a few guys to convince them that Boston isn’t a

cheap city for bums.” On his own furlough, he noted seeing “a lot of things that disappointed me” and warned that Scollay was “ruining the reputation of the city.” He demanded that “the authorities” do something to check the stories that spread throughout the Armed Forces.²¹¹

Boston’s Watch and Ward Society—an anti-vice group that would sometimes raid offending businesses and haul performers to jail—increasingly worried about the way sailors were expanding Scollay’s reach and worsening its reputation. Originally founded as the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice, the group had won several victories in their campaigns against drinking, gambling, and prostitution, including shuttering the Old Howard for a brief period. The war undid many of their gains and the society feared that the new military presence had introduced far worse threats to the morality of the city and its citizens. Members decried Scollay as “a sink of sin” and they despaired when it became apparent that their crackdowns resulted in publicity that drew sailors to the very establishments they hoped to close. A Boston judge said Scollay had become the “crossroads of hell,” while radio star Fred Allen depicted it as a “burial ground not listed in guidebooks.” Under the onslaught of wartime mobilization, and with the streets filled with Navymen, Boston’s Watch and Ward

²¹¹ “A disgrace to Boston” from Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 28; For Boston Common/Scollay curfew and step up in police presence see “Boston Common Deserted Before 10 P.M. Curfew,” *DBG*, July 10, 1942, 1 and “Scollay Square, Common Get More Policemen,” *DBG*, July 2, 1942, 9; For Licensing Board actions see “Scollay Square Grill Closed on Complaint of Health Officials,” *DBG*, April 12, 1943, 9; For dimouts and blackouts see Louis Lyons, “Big Blackout Success,” *DBG*, April 1, 1942 and Janet Jones, “Boston Hasn’t Grasped Meaning of Dimout, Col. Sullivan Finds,” *DBG*, June 19, 1942, 2; For Boston GI letter see “Letters to the Editor: Stories of Scollay Sq. Disturb Boston Boys,” *DBG*, March 19, 1944, 16.

could do little to slow the Square's growth in revenue and danger, and their operations within Scollay soon dwindled.²¹²

“Shangri-la of Joe Doakes”

While the sailor invasion of Scollay Square made the block an area unwelcoming to civilian interlopers, the war also sparked a growth of servicemen amusement zones into new areas beyond the old boundaries. Although Central Park and Coney Island never truly rivaled Scollay's worldwide reputation among the services, both areas became defined by their military visitors. This mass influx of troops presented a formidable challenge to some of the most powerful city officials in America. Even the legendary “master builder” Robert Moses saw his urban renewal efforts dashed when servicemen arrived.

By the 1920s, both Central Park and Coney Island had slid into disrepair and disrepute. No longer the testament to middle class sensibilities and proper conduct its makers envisioned, large sections of Central Park had become unkempt and neglected refuges for drunks and the homeless. Moses confronted a real crisis when he took control of the park in 1934. The mall was marked by “dust holes,” potholed walks, paths “covered in dung,” heaps of trash, and rows of dead trees. At the Central Park Menagerie's animal houses, the park stationed

²¹² For Boston Watch and Ward Society see Salvatore M. Giorlandio, “The Origin, Development, and Decline of Boston's Adult Entertainment District: The Combat Zone,” Master's Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, January 15, 1986, 11-12 and New England Watch and Ward Society Records, 1918-1957, Bound Volumes, 1927-1957, Box 14 and Box 16, Harvard Law School Library, Harvard Library, Harvard University; Judge and Fred Allen quotes from Jonathan, Kaufman, “From Scollay Sq. tattoo parlors to Combat Zone porno films,” *DBG*, December 27, 1984, 25.

armed guards tasked with shooting carnivores who might escape the rotting cages. The few remaining attractions included “a senile tiger, a puma with rickets, and a semi-paralyzed baboon.” The Harlem Meer had become a particularly unsafe section with little oversight from the Park Department and police. One visitor claimed that “you couldn’t tell the difference between a park employee and the bums hanging out in the park.” Moses soon moved thousands of workers into the park, reconstituting the Shakespeare garden, creating the Great Lawn, constructing new playgrounds, evicting Jacob Wrey Mould’s inbred and deformed herd of sheep, destroying shantytowns, and killing hordes of rats (over 230,000 in one week alone). Moses hoped to beautify and revitalize Central Park, throwing out its less reputable denizens to restore its pastoral beauty.²¹³

But the war brought unexpected challenges to Moses’ efforts, as Central Park became a “beachhead” where New Yorkers encountered the “invasion” forces of joyous doughboys and gobs.” In the unlit “shaded lanes” soldiers and women could “promenade à deux...until the moon glows high and most civilians are in bed.” In hired rowboats and horse carriages, they slipped their arms “possessively around their dates.” But this lack of lighting also provided cover for a series of robberies, rapes, and murders committed by military men that hindered Moses’ reforms and gave Central Park a dangerous reputation. One woman was found strangled in the Harlem Meer section, while a 17 year-old was

²¹³ Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Roberts Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 334-335, 374.

rescued in the Ramble area from an attempted rape by a group of men including two British sailors. Park Department officials chided women to avoid visiting certain sections of the park “day or night.” But even women who stuck to Moses’ revitalized areas were not safe. One sailor abducted a 13-year-old girl from the Mall, took her to a number of bars, and then eventually transported her to Columbus, Ohio before she managed to escape while he was passed out. Young male civilians could likewise be targeted by servicemen. One 11-year-old boy who interrupted a sailor “wooing a girl” was thrown into Central Park Lake. Other men who attempted to intervene between servicemen and women could face more severe consequences. In a highly publicized case, three veterans were found guilty of murdering a woman’s escort—himself a former AAF man—and then raping her in the early hours of the morning. Throughout the war, Moses demanded larger details of police to manage the furloughed men who flagrantly disobeyed rules on drinking and sleeping in the park to no avail. At times, he took alternate—and somewhat petty—routes to excluding soldiers from his parks, such as when he barred them from free golf, claiming that the average G.I. “doesn’t know a divot from an Attic tomb inscription.”²¹⁴

Similar challenges hampered Moses when the war came to Coney Island.

A longtime refuge for working and middle class New Yorkers seeking respite

²¹⁴ “Central Park Beachhead,” *NYT*, July 16, 1944, SM16; “Dog Finds a Body in Central Park,” *NYT*, November 3, 1942, 25; “Policemen Rescue Girl,” *NYT*, August 15, 1943, 41; “Girl, 13, Vanishes: Met Sailor in Park,” *NYT*, November 2, 1943, 46; “3 Veterans Seized as Park Slayers,” *NYT*, June 21, 1946, 1; “Moses Bars Free Golf to Soldiers on Ground They Don’t Like Game,” *NYT*, April 22, 1944, 1.

from the crowds of Manhattan, the piers, beaches, and parks of West Brighton and Brighton Beach had always bordered seedy areas like the west end's "The Gut." But during the Progressive Era, Park entrepreneurs like George C. Tily had worked to cordon off these bawdier spots—such as the Pavilion of Fun—from the more respectable seaside resorts. By the 1930s, however, the arrival of subway lines, immigrants from Southern Europe, and the Great Depression drove the middle class away from the "Landscape of a Vomiting Multitude," as the poet Federico Garcia Lorca called it. Commissioner Moses despised the beaches polluted with peanut shells, shattered liquor bottles, and garbage that "jammed the beach so full on a Sunday that one could hardly see the sand." Coney's iconic mechanical amusements likewise, he thought, posed a threat to moral sobriety. Rather than "bemoaning the end of the Old Coney Island fabled in song and story," Moses envisioned "a new and very different resort" where respectable patrons could "come for exercise and healthy outdoor recreation" in the model of the suburban Jones Beach on Long Island. Taking control of zoning and regulations in 1937, he instituted bans on barkers advertising shows, phonographs, the sale of food on the shore, and "using newspapers as beach blankets" while planning "a strict enforcement of police, building, fire and health regulations."²¹⁵

²¹⁵ See Introduction of Louis J. Parascandola and John Parascandola, eds., *A Coney Island Reader: Through Dizzy Gates of Illusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Caro, *The Power Broker*, 335; Robert Moses, "Attachment to Letter to Mayor Fiorello La Guardia," 1937 in *A Coney Island Reader*.

Moses' remaking of Coney collapsed with the outbreak of war and the influx of servicemen desperate to experience the famous oceanfront. Even New York's most powerful unelected official could not stop a record 46 million visitors from coming to the amusement zone in 1943. Servicemen and gas-rationed New Yorkers flocked "down to the sea in subways" to drink, party, and pick up girls in the revitalized "nickel empire." Like Times Square, Coney became a "rollicking playground" where "every race and tongue has a representative" and every nation "has a delegate to this turbulent convention of pleasure seekers." It was "sordid, shoddy, thin as pasteboard. A Coney Island of the mind," the novelist Henry Miller revealed. Elderly middle class patrons attempting to enjoy Moses' vision of a middle class beach did not share Miller's glee. They found "little pleasure in being jostled every five strokes in the water" or in "the tremendous vitality of the mob" that left "them cold and a bit frightened." Driven away by crowds of military visitors, the respectable beach crowd longed for "the order and lebensraum of their old haunts." Park Department employees attempting to find the families of lost children were heckled by passing sailors who yelled, "I'm lost, too. Blow that whistle and find me a momma—a young one." Along the Boardwalk, men encountered a variety of attractions: the World's Fair's Parachute Jump, "tests of strength," "sideshow freaks," and caricatures of Axis leaders that could be smashed with baseballs. Passerby would hear the voices of loud, often inebriated soldiers singing "the refrains of sentimental ballads" in restaurants and bars or "periodic choruses of feminine shrieks." In the "old

carnival spirit” of the Bowery, men picked up girls on roller coasters or took them into “darkened tunnels streamlined for romance.” The enforced wartime dim out became one of Coney’s key appeals for servicemen. Murray Schumach of the *Times* wrote, “Faces are in shadow except when the flame of a match curls around a cigarette.” The darkness provided cover for illicit activities and a refuge from Moses’ attempts to convert Coney’s den of pleasure into “a more crowded Jones Beach.” Rather than undergoing Moses’ vision of urban renewal, soldiers drove away middle class reform. Coney was reborn as the “Shangri-la of Joe Doakes” where servicemen could find “a refuge that is free from taboos and repressions.” It was a place where “you enjoy risks, a little well-chosen danger.”²¹⁶

The military also formally annexed or temporarily commandeered civilian establishments like hotels, bolstering the unofficial military takeover of other urban locales. In Miami, military officials simply seized the cheap “dollar-a-night” hotels, as well the “\$35-a-night de luxe palaces” near the beach. In Atlantic City—another renowned amusement zone—hoteliers watched as some of the most profitable spots were “requisitioned by Uncle Sam’s land forces.” In addition to the Ambassador Hotel, the Army Air Forces snagged several other famous beachfront resorts, giving them control of most of the city’s largest

²¹⁶ Henry Miller, “Into the Nightlife” from *Black Spring* (Paris: Obelisk Press, 1936); Murray Schumach, “It’s the Old Coney—With War Overtones,” *NYT*, July 4, 1943, SM8; John Martin, “Shangri-La of Joe Doakes,” *NYT*, August 13, 1944, SM16; Frank Elkins, “Boom for the Beaches,” *NYT*, June 13, 1943, SR32.

establishments. The move, *Variety* reported, left “hundreds of employees out of work” and caused several orchestras and the Ice Capades to cancel their lucrative summer tours. By mid-way through the tourist season, the Army took nearly 30 more hotels and Atlantic City’s trade floundered. *Variety* concluded that the city was now a “militarized resort.” In Chicago, the military moved into some of the most expensive hotels near the beach and amidst the skyscrapers and downtown shopping districts all along the Loop. By September 1942, the *LA Times* proclaimed, “Uncle Sam turns innkeeper,” and the military’s expansion into urban centers made the federal government the largest hotelier in the country. This loss of property accompanied a loss of municipal tax revenue, as cities struggled to collect taxes from sailors and soldiers.²¹⁷

Accommodation and Cooperation

Civilians were not foolish or naïve about the kinds of disruptions that war and a major troop presence brought to their midst. Some civilian businesses saw great opportunity and profit in the hordes of men and their now plump wallets, but many more women, law enforcement figures, neighborhood associations, and religious organizations feared the crime and disorder that accompanied a military

²¹⁷ For Miami see William H. Clark, “Servicemen Have Given Miami a Strong Home Town Atmosphere,” *DBG*, March 14, 1943, C37; For first report on Atlantic City takeover see “3 More Hotels Taken Over By Army in A.C.,” *Variety*, July 8, 1942, 45; For subsequent Atlantic City reports see Allan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 123; For Chicago see “Senate Kills Dry Rider to 18 Year Draft: Ghost of Gang Era Haunts Chamber,” *CDT*, October 23, 1942, 1; For *LA Times* report see “Federal Government Now Largest Operator of Hotels,” *LAT*, September 25, 1942, 26; For loss of tax revenue see “Urge Vigilance in Collection of Local Taxes,” *CDT*, December 12, 1942, 26.

presence. Given the scale of mobilization and the stakes of the war, however, most civilians recognized little could be done to resist the accumulation of military power in American cities. In the face of government propaganda touting civilians' duty to be "war-minded" and the complimentary promotion of the combat soldier as an unassailable, almost reverential figure, few people could carve out a space for explicit public criticism of the military. Though some open protest against the disruptions caused by servicemen in liberty ports did occur, most civilians chose to either cooperate or accommodate these special visitors.²¹⁸

Civilian cooperation with the military took many forms, both passive and active. In some cases, civilians simply ignored or tolerated troop misbehavior and crime. They mocked the soldier's nemesis, the Shore Patrol, calling them "Stool Pigeons." At other times, they actively defended the apparent rights of servicemen to revel and drink while taking liberty. In multiple incidents, civilians joined troops fighting military or civilian police attempting to make arrests. The pattern was fairly simple. The police arrived after an incident or because of a complaint and moved to clear an establishment or arrest an offender. A fight would kick off, and civilians—often fellow patrons of a dance hall or tavern—

²¹⁸ Incoming war workers also created disruptions and challenges. For an examination of how war industry and the movement of new populations into urban areas changed wartime cities like Oakland, see Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Also see Johnson, "Urban Arsenals: War Housing and Social Change in Oakland and Richmond, California, 1941-1945," *Pacific History Review*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (August 1991), 283-308 and Johnson, "War as Watershed: The East Bay and World War II," *Pacific History Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (August 1994), 315-331; For "war-minded" and reverence towards troops see James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12-13;

might reject what they perceived as police encroachments on the right of servicemen to carouse, and then join the fray. Police brutality may have also sparked larger battles. In other cases, fights that started as civilian versus soldier could transform once the police arrived. In Vancouver, Washington—a liberty spot for troops in Portland—city police arrived at the river front district to break up a fist fight between a soldier and civilian. But after a policeman struck the soldier, sending him to the barracks hospital with a head injury, both the assembled crowd of 2000 troops and civilian bar patrons turned on the cops. Eventually the police broke out tear gas and riot guns, the fire department threatened to use fire hose to put down the riot, and the chief of police called in the state guard. Opposition to police action then, could unify civilians and soldier even if they had been initially fighting each other.²¹⁹

In contrast to civilians who defended the liberty privileges of servicemen, others cooperated with military authorities and the government by informing on AWOL troops and deserters. Military Police records are filled with reports from informers who despised men who “shirked duty.” In one letter, a “lawabiding citizen” from Brooklyn claimed it was his “duty” to notify the MPs about Mickey, a “lazy good for nothing” deserter whose family brazenly kept “the Service flag in

²¹⁹ “Stool Pigeon” quote from Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 66; For incidents where civilians defended troops see “Fight Over Girl Starts Dance Hall Riot: 15 Jailed, Scores Hurt in Cambridge,” *TCD*, August 15, 1942, 2, “Tavern Wrecked as 3 Policemen Battle Civilians, Sailors in Astoria,” *NYT*, April 9, 1945, 1. For the Vancouver, WA incident see “Riot is Started as Soldier and Civilian Fight,” *CDT*, August 6, 1943, 19. For a comprehensive overview of police tactics and police brutality—using the case study of NYC—see Marilyn S. Johnson, *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), particularly chapter 6.

their window.” “The nerve of them,” steamed the informer who had two sons of his own serving in the armed forces. He even suggested specific times when the MPs might catch him. Other civilians wrote in with similar complaints about AWOL men who were not “loyal to this country.” One informant claimed his AWOL son-in-law stated, “I would rather fight for anything but this country.” In this case, MPs suspected “a family quarrel may have been the basis of his allegation.” Citizens sometimes demanded furlough papers from men they suspected might be deserters and relayed their suspicions to military authorities. Occasionally, informants reported on suspected deserters because they were “continually drunk” or “the boisterous type,” or played their radios too loud “& wake every body up.” To incentivize informers, the Army issued films and posters targeted towards civilians imploring them to turn in deserters, while also publishing the names and addresses of AWOL soldiers in the absent man’s home newspaper.²²⁰

Some civilians were driven to excuse the excesses of troops because of Roosevelt’s idea that citizen and soldier had entered into a moral compact. Civilians would honor the potential sacrifice the soldier was making by

²²⁰ For first informer letter see “Informer letter: Frank Riley,” No Date; “Loyal to this country” and son-in-law complaint from “Informant letter: Mr. Parks,” No Date; For furlough paper inquiry and “continually drunk” see “Thomas A. Conroy statement on James Philip Nary,” No Date; For “boisterous type” and radio complaint see “Anonymous Communication,” May 27, 1944; For Army’s films, posters, and newspaper postings see “Brigadier General Archer L. Lerch memo on AWOL campaign,” May 1944 and “Suggestion Concerning Training Film 19-2034, ‘AWOL and Desertion,’” October 25, 1944, all in 251.2 General #1, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 251.2 Gen. to 251.2 H, box 66, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP. For an examination of the 50,000 Americans and 100,000 British soldiers that deserted see Charles Glass, *The Deserters: A Hidden History of World War II* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014). Glass mostly focuses on combat deserters.

committing to personally sacrificing at home. In his April 1942 fireside chat, Roosevelt declared “there is one front and one battle where everyone in the United States—every man, woman, and child—is in action, and will be privileged to remain in action throughout the war. That front is right here at home, in our daily lives, in our daily tasks.” Being a part of a war front, civilians would be expected to make sacrifices. This might mean not striking for better wages, buying war bonds, or tolerating a bit of carousing. War workers were also motivated to cooperate with troops and the military because of the economic boom created by the war. By 1943, unemployment had plummeted to 1.2% due in large part to the burgeoning defense plants surrounding liberty ports. In 1945, defense spending totaled 37% of GDP, helping to produce a substantial increase in the discretionary income of many civilians. Politicians, besides hoping to appear patriotic, also likely recognized that criticisms of soldiers would be an especially poor electoral strategy and tended to accommodate the military. Republicans and Democrats both courted the soldier vote and Roosevelt openly pandered to troops in his 1944 reelection campaign, suggesting that Republicans hurt morale with their campaign rhetoric. By the end of the war, some civilians even pressured the Armed Forces to be more lenient towards servicemen. Members of Congress, responding to constituent complaints, charged that

military justice had become “unduly severe,” leading the military’s general council to worry that congressional criticism would present “increasing difficulty.”²²¹

Civilian police mostly ceded control of handling servicemen to the Army and Navy, tolerating flagrant abuses of officers and an erosion of legal authority. Before the war began, police chiefs openly acknowledged that selective service would strip departments of experienced officers. At a meeting of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, one retired chief admitted “there are very few police departments that are up to snuff insofar as numbers are concerned, and so far as trained men are concerned.” The chief also served as a draft board member and warned that his district’s best officers would be classified as the most likely to be drafted “if I don’t have my way.” Across the country, chiefs

²²¹ For this idea of a moral compact between soldier and civilian and the Roosevelt quote see Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 168; For additional work on the idea of civilians sacrificing for the military, state, and troops see Robert Westbrook, *Why We Fought: Forging American Obligations in World War II* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 2004), Westbrook, “‘I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James’: American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II,” *American Quarterly*, 42. 4 (December 1990), Mark H. Leff, “The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (March 1991), 1296-1318; For an examination of how advertising and music was used as propaganda see John Bush Jones, *All-Out for Victory!: Magazine Advertising and the World War II Home Front* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2009) and *The Songs that Fought the War: Popular Music and the Homefront, 1939-1945* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006). Also see Holly Cowan Schulman, *The Voice of America: Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990). For economic numbers see Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 114-115; For discussion of soldier vote and Roosevelt’s charge see Ernest Lindley, George Gallup, “Vote of Soldiers Could Decide ’44 Election, Gallup Poll Finds,” *NYT*, December 5, 1943, 48, “Soldier Vote: Has Become Party Issue,” *TWP*, March 17, 1944, 9 and “Charges Assault on Morale of Soldiers and Families,” *TWP*, October 6, 1944, 1. For congressional criticism of military justice see “Minutes, Meeting of the General Council,” July, 1945, 337 General Council Meeting June 1945-, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 337 General Council Nov 1944 to Feb 1945, box 95, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; Some of this criticism, however, likely originated from the case of Private Joe McGee, who was convicted by a military court for striking German prisoners. For McGee case and military response see Cabell Phillips, “Army Explains Its System of Administering Justice,” *NYT*, July 8, 1945, 35.

worried they were facing a “very dangerous” situation that could might “cripple us.” The collected chiefs briefly considered agitating for exemptions for police officers, but then worried that this exemption might incentivize men to “join the cops and escape the draft.” Fearing a public and political backlash, they concluded that using their influence to prevent officers from being drafted would be “decidedly unwise...we don’t want any accusation directed toward the police.” Some departments pursued clever strategies. In Boston, Commissioner Timilty campaigned for a large servicemen’s recreation center at the junction of Tremont Street and Beacon, just a block away from Scollay Square. Timilty likely intended to capture the sailor traffic before it got to Scollay, but his strategy was scuttled when the Navy rejected the plans.²²²

Nationwide though, police departments suffered a dearth of experienced and well-trained officers that further fueled the decline of civilian legal authority. In prewar years, those who committed the unofficial crime of “contempt of cop”—essentially not behaving deferentially to police—faced arrest or a beating (and often both). Servicemen felt no compulsion to respect or generally even comply with civilian police directions. The Army’s head of policing occasionally lamented the recurring ineffectiveness of cops. In addition to “an apparent lack of discipline

²²² Quotes from International Association of Chiefs of Police from “Planning for Police Emergency and Disaster Mobilization and a General Discussion of National Defense Problems Affecting Police,” December 9, 1940, No Folder, National Headquarters General Correspondence, 1940-1942, 501 to 502, box 110, RG 171 Records of the Office of Civilian Defense, NACP. For Timilty’s planned recreation center and its failure see “Servicemen’s Center in Dutton Building Urged,” *DBG*, August 6, 1942, 22 and “Charge U.S.O. Fails in Recreation Denied,” *DBG*, August 11, 1942, 6.

in the Army as a whole,” the Provost Marshal General cited the “failure of civil police to treat military personnel for infractions of law, as the police would treat civilians.” But how could municipal cops expect to effectively police soldiers when the military had asserted that civil authorities lacked any real legal authority?²²³

Both official wartime regulations and unwritten agreements produced a legal regime that stripped old and undertrained cops of their power to project authority and to wield “command presence.” The Army generally relied on a patchwork of explicit wartime legal orders and verbal agreements with local leaders to supersede civilian jurisdiction. One official regulation stipulated that military officials would handle “civil violations perpetrated by military personnel” and that troops detained by cops would be immediately transferred to Military Police. Some cities surrendered sections of city halls for use by MPs. In other areas, military and civil leaders negotiated verbal agreements to the same effect but believed any written regulation “would be unwise.” Why some commanders resisted written agreements remains unclear, but perhaps they feared legal challenges might arise if this policing and legal regimen was made explicit. When local district attorneys attempted to try GIs in 1941, the Army contested the effort and even ordered MPs to never testify in civilian courts unless told to by the Provost Marshal. The military appeared to be more willing to surrender men when they had committed murder or rape against middle to upper class white

²²³ For Provost Marshal General’s quote see “Misconduct of Military Personnel Resulting from Drinking,” November 23, 1942, 250.1 General #1, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

civilians because these cases were more likely to garner press attention and negative publicity should Commanders deny civilians their justice.

Despite these exceptions, the War Department unambiguously stated that “a commanding officer is not required by Article of War 74 or by any other law to surrender a member of the military service, accused of a crime or offense, to the civil authorities for prosecution.” The armed forces jealously guarded this “paramount right of custody” and explained that “the war effort should not be impeded by unnecessary arrest and detention by civil authorities of members of the military service.” Even civilians recognized the disempowerment of the country’s police forces, and routinely mocked municipal cops at this time, with one man arguing “American police not only do not enjoy the confidence of the public, but are loathed by it as a body of moronic bullies.” He continued to guarantee that “no one above the grade of a cretin is going to take orders from a dumb cluck of a cop.” This disdain for cops may have arisen when officers, lacking the usual projection of power, increasingly relied on the billy club to solve disputes. Given the legal hurdles and manpower issues most civilian police departments faced, however, little could be done to check this growth of military power on the home front.²²⁴

²²⁴ For the written and unwritten legal measures used by the military see “Army Service Forces Domestic Situation Report,” November 1945, 319.1 Weekly Intell. Summary, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 78, 319.1 Weekly Intell. Summary to 320.2 Bolera Mission, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; “Arrest Procedure for Military Personnel” March 17, 1941, 370.093, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 370.093, box 111, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; “Clashes between Civil and Military Police in Tuskegee, Alabama,” June 24, 1942, 250.1 General #1, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified

The challenges of cracking down on wartime crime and a purported outbreak of juvenile delinquency left city politicians and police stretched thin. D.C. officials simply asked the Military Police to help “check the current wave of depraved and vicious crime.” Mayor La Guardia never explicitly criticized the troops, but he did attempt both nudges and shoves aimed at stopping crime and disorder, while simultaneously bolstering his own power. In early 1942, La Guardia implemented volunteer city patrols to stem the losses of his police force to the draft. Not content with this meager augmentation, La Guardia met with the American Legion and formed a volunteer auxiliary police brigade of 2500 Legionnaires, who would relieve regular patrolmen between 8 p.m. and midnight. The Legionnaires would ideally be armed with automatic pistols and clothed in their World War I Army uniforms. Other cities copied this arrangement as part of an Office of Civilian Defense initiative. This program faced opposition in Chicago after Mayor Edward J. Kelly announced the Legion would seek 7000 officers, with the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee writing that they saw “decided threats to democratic processes” and that the plan was “a dangerous extension of public

Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For civilians giving military city hall space see “Colonel Charles B. Elliott Memo,” September 10, 1941, 370.093, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 370.093, box 111, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For order preventing MPs from testifying in court see “W. W. Smith memo,” August 2, 1941, 370.093, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 370.093, box 111, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For War Department memo see “Coordination between Civil and Military Law Enforcement Agencies,” August 28, 1943, 250.4 Court Martials, Office Management Division: Decimal File, 1920-1945, 250.1 Morals & Conduct—Misc. to 291.1 Baptisms Vol. 1, box 195, RG 247 (Chief of Chaplains), NACP; For civilian criticism of cops see “Frank Merwin to Mr. James M. Landis,” May 8, 1942, Public Relations-4 Criticism-Complaints, Office of Civilian Defense, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C.: General Correspondence, 1941-May 1945, box 88, RG 171, NACP.

power to a private group.” If Chicago proceeded, the Committee argued, they would be endorsing a force “that smacks of the gestapo or storm troops.”

Chicago and other cities moved ahead with the plan anyways, seeking any path to reinforce department ranks.²²⁵

The pervasive accommodation afforded to troops by civilians, politicians, and police allowed the military to grow its sprawling legal oversight. Beyond essentially granting American troops immunity from many crimes, the military also asserted its power to police, arrest, and try American citizens. Using a legal justification taken from the “Digest of Opinion of the Judge Advocate General of the Army, 1912-1940,” commanders made civilian employees serving on transports and in ports of embarkation subject to military law and tribunals. Chief of Staff Marshall reiterated this policy in a memo declaring that all persons—including American civilians and foreign troops—“in the field” would be subject to military jurisdiction. Here, the term “in the field” referred to any place on land or sea where “military operations are being conducted.” “Military operations” were

²²⁵ When the military expanded the draft to include older men with families—known popularly as the “Father Draft”—La Guardia made more explicit criticisms, declaring that this expansion would exert “a crippling effect” on NYC’s police. “We just couldn’t cover the city. We can’t get men,” he explained. His commissioner concurred by citing the fact that the draft gutted their recruiting classes. For request of MP aid see “Randolph Asks Military Police Help for D.C.,” *TWP*, June 21, 1941, 14; For mention of volunteer city patrol see “Woman War Welder Fights Off Attacker,” *NYT*, January 20, 1945, 24; For La Guardia’s American Legion auxiliary police see “Patrol Corps Formed: First Company of Auxiliary Police Organized in Brooklyn,” March 8, 1942, 28 and “La Guardia, Legion Confer on Patrol,” *NYT*, February 27, 1942, 19; For Chicago conflict over Legion police see “Chicago Civil Liberties Committee Chairman John A. Lapp to Assistant Director Howard Evans,” January 29, 1942, 501.1 Auxiliary Police, National Headquarters General Correspondence, 1940-1942, 501 to 502, box 110, RG 171 Records of the Office of Civilian Defense, NACP; For La Guardia and commissioner’s criticism of the Father Draft see “Father Draft Held ‘Crippling’ Police,” *NYT*, September 22, 1943, 9.

defined incredibly broadly and effectively meant anywhere military men were stationed or where logistics operations occurred. Even outside of U.S. ports and bases, MPs claimed the authority to confine and arrest civilians to Army guardhouses. In one publicized case, a Shore Patrol officer arrested and then beat a civilian accused of stealing \$16. The municipal court judge overseeing the case censured the SP and declared that as “far as civilians are concerned, the military should leave them alone.” As Shore Patrol officers gradually took on “a complex that the whole world is out to trim sailors,” the judge reasoned, “they become too partisan and lack the detached viewpoint of civil authorities.” This censure, however, did nothing to change the military’s expanding legal power.²²⁶

Civilians could be blindsided by the extent of military jurisdiction. One merchant seaman, after striking the civilian master of his convoy en route to Casablanca, was surprised to learn that he was subject to military law because the ship was transporting soldiers and supplies. Initially sentenced to seven

²²⁶ A federal judge previously rejected the Army’s argument that civilians might be tried outside of areas under martial law, but the Army circumvented the ruling by defining bases, ports, and transports as “in the field.” For the military’s legal justification for putting civilians under military justice see “Jurisdiction of court-martial,” October 9, 1943 and “Prior Authorization of General Court-Martial Trail[sic] of Civilians,” February 15, 1944, both in 250.401 General, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For Marshall’s justification see “Authority of Commanders and Jurisdiction of the Military Tribunals of the United States with Respect to the Crews of Merchant Vessels,” October 9, 1942, General 250, General, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For Judge James Fee’s rejection of military legal authority see “DeWitt Denied Powers Over Citizens on Coast,” *LAT*, November 17, 1942, 15; For claim to confine civilians see “Confining Civilians in Post Guard House,” September 18, 1941, 370.093, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 370.093, box 111, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For SP beating civilian case see “Judge Censures Shore Patrol for Arrest, Beating of Civilian,” *DBG*, September 25, 1943, 3.

years of hard labor, the federal judge hearing his appeal agreed with the military's claim that the merchant seaman's presence near soldiers made him subject to military justice. The National Maritime Union angrily protested the ruling and sought an appeal "not only to determine the rights of its members but also all civilian workers who are engaged in the transportation and manufacture of supplies for the Army." To the Union, the case marked a flagrant and "unwarranted imposition of Army discipline on civilians." Their protests nevertheless failed to change the military's power to try and punish civilians.²²⁷

Outside the continental U.S., the armed forces exercised an even greater level of legal power. In Shanghai, for instance, the Army held three citizens without charging them for over four months, prompting a habeas corpus petition. But the greatest conflict occurred in Hawaii, where civilians were subject to martial law after Pearl Harbor. Hawaiian civilians accused provost court judges of being nothing more than "a soldier sitting on the bench with a gun on one side, a gas mask on the other, and big cigar in his mouth." Other civilians subjected to these courts claimed these soldier-judges forced them to purchase war-bonds. Territorial officials argued that "the Army had assumed control over the personal life of everyone in the islands—including his dog." After a civilian naval employee and a stockbroker appealed their convictions, a federal judge agreed to settle the legal conflict. The civilians' attorney charged that the Hawaiian military courts

²²⁷ For merchant seaman case see "Upholds Military on Convoy Seaman," *NYT*, February 10, 1944, 12.

produced extremely high conviction rates and defendants could be fined \$200-\$500 for drinking too much. The case eventually went to the Supreme Court where the justices retroactively struck down the territory's martial law in 1946 and agreed that the Army denied civilians their constitutional rights.²²⁸

Profiteering

The war's economic boom created a swell of soldier and defense worker dollars that bolstered businesses in liberty ports and stopover towns. With the amusement and vice trades flourishing, proprietors could reliably pull in significant profits with each arriving ship or train. Many tailored their businesses to the furloughed troop, the adventurous girl, and the war worker teeming with cash. Capturing these spoils of the war economy, however, came with constant risk. Business owners might see their property or establishment wrecked by the regular brawling and disorderly conduct with little chance of being compensated. Soldier establishments also attracted prostitutes, B-Girls, and con-women, which in turn drew the oversight of vice squads, MPs, SPs, and the Army-Navy Vice Board. These anti-vice forces zealously attacked sources of venereal disease and leveraged their power to declare problem businesses out of bounds for all military personnel. Thus the proprietors of bars, taverns, dance halls, and other businesses had to carefully find ways of drawing in servicemen and women,

²²⁸ For Shanghai case see "U.S. Army Holds 3 Americans for 133 Days," *CDT*, April 14, 1946, 2; For Hawaii case see "Charge Abuse of Civilians in Army Courts: Tell of Judges in Hawaii with Guns at Side," *CDT*, July 2, 1944, 1, "Army, Court Controversy in Hawaii at White Heat," *TWP*, August 27, 1943, 1, and "Tyranny in Hawaii Rebuked," *CDT*, February 27, 1946, 12. For more on the wartime situation in Hawaii see Beth L. Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1994).

while preventing too many fights and avoiding the scrutiny of the military's anti-VD taskforce.²²⁹

Military authorities routinely pressured trade groups like liquor associations to ensure that their members would self-police by keeping prostitutes out of their establishments. In November 1941, after a bit of prodding from the Army, the Chicago based Illinois Association of Breweries issued a warning to the bars and saloons that it represented. Acknowledging the growing number of soldiers and sailors stationed near cities, the association noted that “many of these young men have, or will undoubtedly patronize your place.” Maintaining a “high code of conduct” and ensuring that nothing might “endanger the welfare and well-being of our young service men” would be a critical duty of every proprietor, the letter advised. Retailers that failed to uphold a high standard and “wholesome conditions” by banning people “of questionable character” would face consequences. Businesses that allowed prostitutes or other unsavory characters might gain an “unpatriotic stigma” for failing to uphold “our country’s national defense program.” The association went on to spell out the real penalties of this thinly veiled threat, explaining that owners who did not maintain

²²⁹ For an overview of the duties of the Army-Navy Vice Boards see “Joint Army-Navy Release: Army-Navy Disciplinary Control Boards Established,” December 4, 1944, 000.7, Office Management Division: Decimal Files, 1920-45, box 8, RG 247 (Chief of Chaplains), NACP; For an overview of the anti VD taskforce see Marilyn Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes* (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 75-84.

a proper standards might have MPs stationed near their businesses, lose their licenses, or be declared out of bounds by military authorities.²³⁰

Avoiding an out of bounds designation became a consistent challenge for many businesses. Even if a business owner wished to comply with military and trade regulations, ejecting women from a soldier bar was no simple task. Troops could obviously resist such efforts, and even if successful, a bar with no women would likely mean no trade. Proprietors, though, would be held legally responsible if they failed to eject prostitutes from the premises. Military forces and the Justice Department invoked the May Act, a law aimed at undercutting prostitution near Army camps and bases, to make business owners complicit in any legal charges. Speaking to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, now Director of Civilian Defense Mayor La Guardia argued that any owners who ignored prostitution in their establishment were “as much responsible as the pimps who bring the girls to the place.”²³¹

If declared out of bounds, businesses lacked a clear path to redemption. After being placed off limits to sailors, the owner of Hollywood Tropics, a Los Angeles restaurant on the famed Vine Street, issued telegrams to both President Roosevelt and Rear Admiral R. S. Holmes pleading to have its out of bounds designation repealed: “We conduct a first class restaurant...and only your office

²³⁰ “Frank J. Wetzel, Illinois Association of Breweries letter,” November 25, 1941, 250.1 General #1, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

²³¹ For the May Act and La Guardia’s quote see “Mayor Bans Heavy Drinking as a Peril to Nation at War,” *NYT*, September 22, 1942, 1.

can prevent our closing the doors which would mean not only our entire financial loss and source of living cut off but the unemployment of forty or more people. A good many of whom have families to support.” In a rejection of this appeal, the district commandant noted that the restaurant was notorious for producing drunks and stragglers that “endangered the security of the Task Force.” The Hollywood Tropics was just one of sixty-two establishments in Los Angeles off limits for servicemen, and LA’s Shore Patrol uniquely appears to have diligently reported and policed the most troublesome spots. They even recruited sailors and soldiers to record which businesses were violating regulations or producing the rowdiest and most violent situations. Shore Patrol Commander Fogg publically exhorted LA barkeepers to “run your bars in a clean, orderly, and respectable manner. This is a patriotic duty.” Crackdowns on troublesome bars and taverns, however, did little to attack the source of the drunkenness and disorder. So when one saloon was shut-down, another gin-joint a block away was ready to snatch up the displaced dollars.²³²

Besides evading the attention of the military authorities, operators of military bars faced a higher risk of getting caught up in a physical altercation.

²³² Many protest letters and vice reports can be found in the Naval P8-5 files in Record Group 181. For Hollywood Tropics case see “Harry Arnheim Telegram,” August 10, 1942; For district commandant’s rejection of appeal see “‘The Tropics’, Hollywood, Calif. – Complaint of Mr. Harry Arnheim, Pres.; re: placing ‘out of bounds’.” September 7, 1942; For sailor and soldier special investigation of businesses see “Special Investigation report of T/4 Hugh Nelson and Pvt. Icl. John Bellinger,” July 17, 1942, all in P8-5 1940 [1/10], Eleventh Naval District, Office of the Commandant, Central Subject Files: 1924-1958, box 296, RG 181 Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments, NARA, Riverside; For Commander Fogg quote and SPs later admitting fault of servicemen in creating the problems see “Crime Against Military Personnel Flourishing Business: Shore Patrol Records Show Rise of Menace,” January 19, 1945, *LAT*, A1.

Because most managers and owners were male civilians attempting to manage often drunken servicemen, they could easily become targets. In one instance, a floor manager of the Honeymoon Lane dance hall in Midtown brawled with four GIs on Broadway after a dispute over a cab at 4:30 a.m. The manager recalled that the soldiers “had been drinking and were feeling a little tough.” After a 20-minute fistfight, witnesses claimed Colonel Elliott Roosevelt—FDR’s son—emerged from the crowd to break up the fracas, telling the soldiers “to scram.” Occasionally proprietors needed to step in and break up clashes between men. In Chicago, a tavern owner’s wife ended a knife fight between two sailors by smashing a beer bottle over the head of one of the combatants. In one Louisiana boom town several national guardsmen wrecked a saloon after the owner announced a price jack on beer, leading the owner to shoot one of the guardsmen. In another tavern, this one in Chicago, two sailors spent a night insulting and abusing the barman. One of the Bluejackets, roaring drunk, hit the bartender in the face with a loaf of bread and threatened to kill him. After the bartender returned with a pistol, the sailor rushed him. The bartender fired the automatic pistol hitting him 19 times, leaving the sailor dead on the floor, and the bartender in jail. Such armed conflicts between proprietor and patron occurred throughout the war.²³³

²³³ For midtown brawl see “Roosevelt Son Linked to G.I. Street Brawl,” November 22, 1944, *CDT*, 1; For tavern owner’s wife breaking up brawl see “Former Sailor Stabbed in Tavern Fight; One Held,” *CDT*, March 25, 1945, 8; For Louisiana brawl see “A Disturbing Picture,” *CDT*, September 15, 1941, 14; For North Kenwood (in Chicago) conflict see “Purdue Sailor, Short in Tavern Quarrel, Dies,” *CDT*, August 4, 1944, 11.

Some businesses decided the revenue that came with these risks was ultimately not worth the trouble. In D.C., an Army Lieutenant went on a rampage in the Hi-Hat cocktail lounge at the Ambassador Hotel, drunkenly swearing at guests, punching the civilian manager in the stomach, before kicking and breaking a glass door. The hotel feared that this behavior would drive off its civilian clientele. Other incidents produced publically humiliating incidents for the Navy and severe property damage. In New York, the district commandant worked with the glamorous Hotel Astor in Times Square to put on parties and dances for naval officers and enlisted men. The hotel gave the Navy the space for free and made up the difference by selling men drinks and refreshments. Commanders enjoyed the arrangement because it allowed a ship's crew to take liberty in Times Square, but under naval supervision. But one party in 1945 turned into what the hotel manager described as "a disastrous experience." Crewmen got smashed on the hotel's roof garden and became disorderly. The manager and assistants frantically attempted to clear the 350 sailors from the garden. Navymen jammed themselves into elevator cars above safe capacity, while the employees lobbied the "absolutely ineffectual" Shore Patrol officers to help. By the end of the affair, the manager and his assistants had been knocked down by the sailors and "very nearly kicked into unconsciousness." In his letter to New York's commandant, the hotel manager explained that the Hotel Astor would never again allow the Navy to use their premises. The luxury to refuse business in this way, however, proved

harder in areas with undiversified economies where servicemen's wages were such a central part of the local trade.²³⁴

The war also sparked rampant price-gouging and profiteering related to the liquor trade. Military investigators regularly scoped out establishments suspected of engaging in price-gouging, which could result in an out of bounds designation. Taverns and cafes pulled a number of tricks aimed at driving up prices like conveniently "running out" of draft beer just at 7:00 p.m. on weekend and pay nights, right as men began to stream into the establishment. The barman could then triple prices for bottled beers. Military Police dedicated whole units to investigating this profiteering and sought to shut down establishments that engaged in it. In one notable case, a group of soldiers sued a bar for overcharging and won a \$600 settlement. Even the military in Hawaii though, engaged in a kind of sanctioned price gouging by charging large fees for liquor permits. Taxi drivers, besides over-charging fares, sometimes worked with proprietors by picking up servicemen and then recommending the proprietor's

²³⁴ In Bermuda, for example, the Naval authorities implemented a 6 p.m. curfew aimed at quelling the "alleged misbehavior" and "criminal misconduct" of American sailors after a slew of complaints from the island's House Assembly. The legislators and naval authorities soon faced a minor rebellion launched on part of merchants "who missed the Americans' free spending." For Ambassador Hotel incident see "Delinquency Report and Witness Statements," May 3, 1945, 250.1 General #2, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For Hotel Astor incident see "Monroe Kelly to Commanding Officer, USS Augusta," December 13, 1945, "Robert D. Howard to Monroe Kelly, Rear Admiral USN," December 7, 1945, and "Monroe Kelly to Robert D. Howard," No date, all in P 13 #2 Misconduct and Discipline Restricted, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT)/(RED 7), Entry# P 110: Confidential and Restricted General Administrative Files, 1945-1945, container 178, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP; For Bermuda curfew debate see "Bermuda Changes Mind: Protests Curfew on U.S. Sailors as Business Declines," December 6, 1944, *NYT*, 6.

tavern. The driver received a kickback and the tavern got a customer. Other cabbies cut out the drinking establishments entirely by directly selling black market whiskey to their military fares. Barbers attempted their own rackets, giving soldiers a haircut before producing a comb with yellow flakes on it. The barber would then explain that the soldier suffered from yellow dandruff, “a contagious disease” that could only be solved by an expensive treatment the barber luckily had for sale.²³⁵

In addition to these rackets, civilians ran a number of scams that specifically targeted servicemen. Some scams were simple. Young boys would wait for soldiers to arrive on “short-stop” trains at stopover points like Omaha, Nebraska, and then offer to purchase meals and other items for them so they didn’t need to leave the train. After obtaining the cash, the boys never returned. Bases and camps attracted carnivals, road houses, and gambling joints, where B-girls enticed troops to drink and play crooked games. Troops frequenting downtown D.C. regularly encountered street photographers who would

²³⁵ For investigation of price-gouging see as an example “Minutes of the Meeting of Joint Army-Navy Disciplinary Control Board for Baltimore Area,” April 3, 1945, P 13 Misconduct and Discipline Restricted, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT)/(RED 7), Entry# P 110: Confidential and Restricted General Administrative Files, 1945-1945, container 178, RG 313 Naval Operating Forces, NACP; For soldier suit against overcharging bar see “Soldier Suit Fine is Paid,” *World Herald*, August 27, 1945; For military price gouging in Hawaii see “Fort Shafter to Chief of Staff US Army,” March 15, 1942, 370.8 General (Provost Marshalls), Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 117, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For running out of draft beer trick see “Leopold Gruener memo,” September 21, 1945; For taxi price gouging see “Alan J. Kennedy memo on ‘The Barn,’” March 16, 1944; For cabbies selling whiskey see “H. E. Erickson to Provost Marshal General,” October 5, 1945; For barber racket see “Statement of Charles C. Crooks,” No date, all in 250.1 General #1, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

encourage the men to pose, supposedly snap a picture, and then give the marks a numbered card. The soldier simply needed to mail the card and some cash to the listed address and soon they would receive a photographic memento of their time in the nation's capital. No photo ever arrived, of course. Similar photo scams existed in all the major port cities. Other scams became quite elaborate. Horace Lancaster, a particularly inventive con artist, befriended servicemen and convinced them that he was an acclaimed portrait painter. For under \$10, he would transform a man's photo into a large portrait. In reality, Lancaster periodically worked as a butler and handy man for a family of artists. When troops asked to see his work, he showed portraits painted by the family he worked for. Convinced of his ability, troops surrendered the fee and a photo with the promise of a portrait before too long. No painting ever arrived and Lancaster made thousands of dollars before being caught. Night club operators and bootleggers also scammed troops, selling watered down beer or dosing real beer with a chemical agent that made the men pass out. After the soldiers were helpless, the operator "rolled them for every penny."²³⁶

Corruption and graft boomed on the home front with both military and civilian authorities taking part. Civilian police occasionally worked with hotel detectives, engaging in a "shakedown" routine of traveling troops. The hotel

²³⁶ For Omaha boys' scam see "B. R. Buening memo," September 21, 1945; For gambling joints see "Frank W. Choate memo," September 22, 1945; For photo scam and Horace Lancaster see "John H. Rogaleskie Report," September 25, 1945, all in 250.1 General #1, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For night club operators and bootleggers see Meyer Berger, "Morale," *NYT*, May 25, 1941, SM10.

detective would claim that a visiting servicemen had been seen entering his room with a woman not registered to the hotel, a grave offense. Civilian police would then arrive, forcibly arrest the lone servicemen, and while in transit to the police station, suddenly declare that the man could be freed for \$15. Naval officers also abused their power to profit off the growing income of civilians. At worker recreation halls in Pearl Harbor, a group of ten naval officers ran “a little Tijuana gambling syndicate,” where civilian employees reportedly wagered \$50,000 to \$175,000 every night in poker and dice games. Each day, they pocketed thousands of dollars taken as protection money. Few, however, surpassed the brazen corruption of Provost Marshal Captain Guy Taylor. Taylor, as head of military policing in Tampa Bay, flagrantly abused his office throughout the war. He routinely accepted bribes from local bars and dance halls to avoid being placed on the out of bounds list. Establishments in his debt provided him with scotch, women, and a regular spot to hold parties. Taylor also asked a bar owner for \$250 to pay for abortions for two women with whom he had affairs. When the owner refused, Taylor began sending Military Police to harass the bar. GIs who wished to avoid being sent abroad also sometimes paid Taylor \$1000 to \$1200 and be kept as a rear echelon soldier. The Army made some attempts to stamp out scams likes these, but struggled with the formidable volume of wartime graft.²³⁷

²³⁷ For civilian police shakedown see “Aircraft—Delay of and seizure of confidential orders pertaining to by civilian authorities, Jackson, Mississippi,” February 5, 1945, 250.1 General #2, , Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65,

Protest

Before the riots, crime, corruption, and graft, civilian authorities anticipated that the war would likely bring a high level of lawbreaking and disorder to American cities. Shortly after Pearl Harbor, one of New York's District Attorneys announced that the city should expect a possible crime wave related to the onset of war. J. Edgar Hoover publically expressed concern when the first quarter of 1942 saw a 3.3% nationwide increase in the crime rate, with rape increasing by 8%. Early on, urban officials consistently looked to London as a potential model for what might happen in liberty ports. Los Angeles' district attorney John F. Dockweiler wrote to Mayor La Guardia in 1941, explaining that their cities would need to brace for the kind of crime wave that visited wartime London. He noted that war had brought a flood of criminality to London and other urban hubs, and that "our large cities cannot escape the same woeful conditions." Dockweiler established an anti-crime committee and proclaimed that "our task is not only to remove the rotten apple from the barrel, but to keep that one apple from becoming rotten."²³⁸

RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For Pearl Harbor gambling see "Navy Officers Face Gambling Courts Martial," *TWP*, 2; For Captain Taylor case see "Captain Taylor Report of Criminal Investigation," 333.5 (710TH M.P. Btn.) Gen, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 85, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP. ²³⁸ For NYC DA see "War Crime Wave Feared by Hogan," *NYT*, January 23, 1942, 21; For Hoover's concerns see "FBI Reports 3% Rise in Crime," *NYT*, May 13, 1942, 6; For Dockweiler to La Guardia see "John F. Dockweiler to Mayor Fiorello La Guardia," December 29, 1941, 000.5 Criminology-Crimes-Fraud, National Headquarters: General Correspondence, 1940-1942, RG 171 Records of the Office of Civilian Defense, box 3, NACP; For Dockweiler anti-crime committee and apple quote see "Anti-Crime Leader Named," *LAT*, June 10, 1941, A20.

In tackling the challenges and disruptions that thousands of troops might cause, urban officials usually chose to focus on the apparent threat of civilian juvenile delinquency, a concern that soon became coupled to the problem of troops in cities and boom towns. In Dockweiler's letter to La Guardia he suggests that available municipal resources be directed towards diverting "the misplaced energies of young offenders into useful channels." Citing headlines from London like "London Youth Crime Grows" and "London Swept by Crime Wave," Dockweiler lobbied La Guardia to use Office of Civilian Defense resources to prevent a similar fate on the American home front. Other civil authorities acknowledged that mobilization could spark a rise in criminality and affirmed in warlike tones that "now is the time to formulate the grand strategy for the campaign against wartime delinquency." With fathers and mothers leaving for military service or defense jobs, more and more youths would lack supervision and the fundamental steadying structure of the family, becoming increasingly likely to engage in "juvenile and sex delinquency." When New York proposed eliminating the police department's Juvenile Aid Bureau, the Women's City Club—originally a progressive suffragette organization—protested and cautioned that similar cuts had fueled "the wave of juvenile lawlessness" in Britain. The Department of Labor's Children's Bureau seemed to confirm the fears, claiming that juvenile delinquency cases spiked by 52% from 1940 to 1943 in large cities across the country. Did this reported rise in juvenile delinquency cases result from a true upswing in youth crime and misbehavior, or did the unfounded panic

over potential wartime disruptions simply cause police and courts to focus more resources on youth policing? Urban officials and groups like the Juvenile Protective Association believed that by failing to combat the supposed flood of juvenile delinquency, “the home front is losing its own war.” Sociologists and historians remain more circumspect, suggesting that a peripheral concern was exaggerated into a great moral panic.²³⁹

Though no official or politician directly criticized the Armed Forces for juvenile delinquency, the battle against the crime and misbehavior of girls and teenagers could be seen as a kind of proxy battle or indirect protest against the disruptions created by servicemen. Both experts and the youth themselves began citing the growing presence of soldiers in nearby towns and cities as a primary cause of youth crime and promiscuity. Reporters saw the unchecked growth of boom towns and the vice trade as factors in the rise of delinquency as

²³⁹ This concern over an epidemic of youthful criminals wreaking havoc in American cities was partially a racial panic, but many reports focused solely on white children, suggesting race was a minor factor. See for example, Dorothy Gordon, “As the Youngsters See Juvenile Delinquency,” *NYT*, August 6, 1944. For Dockweiler to La Guardia see “John F. Dockweiler to Mayor Fiorello La Guardia,” December 29, 1941, 000.5 Criminology-Crimes-Fraud, National Headquarters: General Correspondence, 1940-1942, RG 171 Records of the Office of Civilian Defense, box 3, NACP; For “now is the time...” and “juvenile and sex delinquency” quotes see “Urge Crime Fight by Defense Units: Jersey Officials Would Keep Present Organization After War for New Duties,” *NYT*, September 25, 1942, 42; For NYC Women’s City Club see “Letter to *The Times*: Preventing Juvenile Crime: Proposed Elimination of Aid Bureau Here is Viewed as Backward Step,” *NYT*, April 23, 1942, 22; For Department of Labor statistics see Robert Guy Spinney, *World War II in Nashville: Transformation of the Homefront* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 82; For “the home front is losing its own war,” see Dorothy Johnson, “Warns Nation is Losing War on Delinquency,” *CDT*, February 28, 1945, 17; For a summary of scholarly attitudes to the reality of juvenile delinquency see David B. Wolcott, *Cops and Kids: Policing Juvenile Delinquency in Urban America, 1890-1940* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), 194. A Senate subcommittee found little evidence to corroborate the hysteria over delinquency. See “Senate Group to Sift Facts on Juvenile Delinquency,” *TWP*, November 29, 1943, 11 and “For Agency to Cut Youth Delinquency: Pepper Committee Supports Proposal for a Federal Commission,” *NYT*, September 24, 1944, 48.

well. A Department of Labor report backed this assessment by blaming the growth of businesses targeted towards servicemen, explaining that “employment of younger boys and girls in places where liquor is sold, in dance halls, ‘honky tonks,’ ‘juke joints,’ on the streets, and so forth, often brings them into undesirable surroundings or into association with persons who contribute to their becoming delinquent.” When these teenagers left their jobs at night, the report noted that they would be “tired and unprotected” and would face difficulty refusing “temptations.”²⁴⁰

Capitalizing on concerns over delinquency and public morality, La Guardia cleverly used the press and public events to subtly push against unsavory military behavior. After the millionth servicemen entered the National Catholic Community Center in New York, La Guardia greeted the sailor with several prizes, cash, and a photography crew. In his speech at the event, he remarked that “recreation is not inconsistent with wholesomeness,” and sourly noted that

²⁴⁰ For reporters blaming boom-towns and vice see Sanford Bates, “Johnny—14 Years Old, and a Challenge: ‘Juvenile Delinquency,’” *NYT*, November 8, 1942, SM10; For Department of Labor report see “National Go-To-School Drive” Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor, Federal Security Agency, 1944. Page 17, Folder 5, Box 31, Defense Council Records, OSA; “A Community Program for Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency in Wartime” Report, U.S. Department of Labor, Sept. 1943. Page 5, Folder 1, Box 28, Defense Council Records, OSA., taken from <http://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/ww2/Pages/life-juveniles.aspx>. Troops certainly contributed to the possible growth in delinquency and changes in how it was policed. Early in the war, officials and reformers mostly called for delinquents to be educated and uplifted by superior schooling, recreation, and religious instruction. By war’s end, a harsher form of policing and punishment took hold as the dominant regimen. Reflecting on the emerging postwar society, Hoover put out sensational warnings that the country faced “a potential army of six million criminals,” while Newark’s police chief denounced the “mollycoddling” that allowed this threat to grow. For Hoover and Newark chief quotes see William Glover, “Some Cities Visit Sin of Child on Parents,” *TWP*, September 1, 1946, B1. For an overview of the gradual shift to harsher policing of delinquency see Wolcott, *Cops and Kids*, 193-197.

he had yet to convince enough people of that message. Even here though, La Guardia avoided direct condemnation of servicemen criminality and worked within wartime limitations on what could be condemned.²⁴¹

Direct and open protest of servicemen's criminal behavior remained a rare, but important action that politicians and civilian groups could use to pressure the military. As seen in previous chapters, some individual women and male civilians protested to military authorities or used major newspapers to condemn the unrestrained pleasure-seeking in cities. These civilians could use the anonymity of telegrams, letters to editor, or simply rely on the fact they were not public figures to avoid accusations of not being patriotic enough. City officials and organizations lacked those protections, and so any public criticism of the military would have to be carefully stated. Criticizing drinking and the corruption of "our boys" proved a somewhat acceptable method of denouncing the larger problems plaguing liberty ports and boom towns.

Prohibition groups and allied politicians employed this strategy in their fight to make all areas surrounding camps and bases "dry zones." This fight to prevent draftees from readily accessing liquor started in prewar Oklahoma. When Oklahoma became a state, it wrote prohibition into its state constitution and remained dry even in 1941. As the draft expanded and recruits began arriving at Fort Sill in the southwestern corner of the state, Army officers started shipping in

²⁴¹ For Catholic Community Center Event see "The Millionth Serviceman Welcomed at Canteen," *NYT*, October 2, 1944, 32.

liquor from wet states. Oklahoma's Governor Leon C. Phillips (D) demanded they immediately cease violating state laws, but Army officers replied that the Fort was actually "not a part of Oklahoma and, therefore, not subject to the State's prohibitory laws." The governor responded by threatening to use highway patrol officers to essentially blockade the Fort and confiscate any incoming contraband. Federal and state prosecutors conferred and with the assistance of the local Army commandant, agreed to cease any more shipments. A subsequent federal statute made importing alcohol a felony offense, though bootlegged drink could still be found.²⁴²

Oklahoma's Senator Joshua Lee (D) rekindled this conflict when he attempted to attach his "dry amendment" to a bill that extended the draft to 18 and 19-year-olds. The amendment would ban alcohol sales at camps, bases, and adjacent towns. Lee seized on the notion that "boys of 18 and 19" would require "some protection against liquor and vice." Prohibition groups had long campaigned for such a bill, and members of Congress claimed that they faced an unprecedented deluge of letters and telegrams supporting the measure. Civilian organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union mobilized in support of Lee's efforts, pointing out that men in uniform during World War I were barred from drinking. Groups opposed to prohibition made wild claims that the measure was the product of "the Goebbels secret prohibition propaganda."

²⁴² For an overview of the Fort Sill—Governor Phillips conflict see "Oklahoma Dry Since 1907: But Liquor Can Be Had at Two or Three Times the Price," *NYT*, October 23, 1942, 11.

Secretary of War Stimson denounced the measure, arguing it would incentivize bootlegging and “seriously undermine morale.” Illinois’ Senator Scott W. Lucas (D) pointed out that the Army and Navy already used large Chicago hotels near the Loop, making it effectively impossible to enforce the ban. Though the amendment failed to pass, military authorities took it as a serious threat—a potential portent of future criticism. When Chief of Staff Marshall learned of the growing problems of “soldier drinking” and the subsequent “mounting wave of criticism and resentment” on the part of civilians, he wrote that “this situation” could have resulted in the “the passage of the Lee amendment in the Senate.” Marshall demanded that something be done prevent any similar protests.²⁴³

Challenges to drinking, however, continued to surface throughout the war. Judges and prisoner advocacy groups both linked alcoholism to criminality, and attacking alcohol abuse became a somewhat acceptable way for civilians to criticize soldier behavior. Even so, most politicians wrapped any disapproval of troops in concern for their welfare. La Guardia toed this line when he denounced “debauchery and reckless drinking” spreading through the nation’s cities in 1942.

²⁴³ For Lee quote see “Lee Proposal Would Ban Liquor in Army Areas,” *TWP*, October 6, 1942, 6; For Congress receiving support for Lee Amendment see Arthur Hatchen, “Dry Zone Issue May Hold Up 18-19 Draft: Senator Lee Would Bar Sale of Drinks Near Military Centers,” *TWP*, October 19, 1942, 1; For WCTU support see “W.C.T.U. of State Would Bar Liquor Near Army Camps,” *DBG*, October 22, 1942, 9 and Elizabeth La Hines, “Seek Liquor Ban at Army Camps,” *NYT*, November 3, 1940; For Goebbels claim see “Lawlessness Depicted in Dry Oklahoma; Prohibition Disunity Held to Be Axis Aim,” *NYT*, October 23, 1942, 11; For Stimson quote see “Stimson Opposes Camp Prohibition as Bad for Morale,” *NYT*, October 22, 1942, 1; For Senator Lucas’ pragmatic concerns see William Strand, “Senate Kills Dry Rider to 18 Year Draft: Ghost of Gang Era Haunts Chamber,” *CDT*, October 23, 1942, 1; For Marshall on Lee Amendment see “G. C. Marshall to General Gullion,” November 17, 1942, 250.1 General #1, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

The *Times* reported that La Guardia suggested the booze and vice were “impairing the health of the men in the armed services and those on the home front were tending to increase crime.” In Los Angeles, “several hundred civic and religious leaders of Hollywood” barged into a Police Commission hearing to a launch a “barrage of complaints” against “amusement enterprises and night spots” that catered to the unwholesome desires of servicemen. In each of these cases, civilian leaders condemned the conditions that enabled poor troop behavior, effectively suggesting that men could not control their desires.²⁴⁴

Other civilian groups were far more direct and less willing to tolerate the actions of military men. The Los Angeles chapter of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) stands out for its forthright censure of military misbehavior. In a letter to the district commandant, the WCTU directly urged the military to honor their own policies and stop military men from frequenting “disorderly premises that are gathering places for prostitutes and sex-perverts.” Though certainly more direct in tone, this type of criticism was still within the bounds of protecting the welfare of “our boys.” The WCTU, however, proceeded to angrily protest that servicemen’s incessant drinking and harassment were turning Hill Street and Grand Central Market—located near Bunker Hill’s two-story Victorians and a middle-class shopping zone—into a “veritable ‘skid row.’”

²⁴⁴ For linking alcoholism to criminality see “Links Alcoholism to Major Crimes,” *NYT*, October 22, 1942, 44; For La Guardia comments see “Mayor Bars Heavy Drinking As a Peril to Nation at War,” *NYT*, September 22, 1942, 1; For LA Police Commission protest see “Hollywood Vice Charged,” *LAT*, A1.

Women claimed they were unable to move through the area without being annoyed, accosted, or insulted by a “horde of obnoxious drunken bums.” As the WCTU president Ida B. Wise Smith put it on another occasion, “a soldier plus alcohol plus sex equals trouble—and always will.”²⁴⁵

More rarely, civilian legal authorities took a stand against the military’s failure to properly police their men. In Olympia, Washington, both the local police chief and the district attorney assured commanders at nearby Fort Lewis that they would cooperate and turn over soldiers in the majority of legal situations. The district attorney politely explained, however, that “Mr. Huntamer, who is sheriff, feels differently about the matter.” Sheriff Huntamer originally cooperated with Army authorities, turning over GIs accused of crimes. But he soon noticed that the Army did nothing to these men, crime went unchecked, and no MPs policed the dances where soldiers congregated. So the sheriff started refusing to turn over troops and prosecuted them instead in state court, leading to a reduction in the crime rate. The district attorney hoped that “we may be able to change his mind and get him to turn these violators over to you,” but also noted the sheriff would only change his mind if “men will be properly disciplined.” Huntamer’s protest succeeded for one critical reason: Pearl Harbor had yet to occur, meaning the Army’s need for manpower was not as dire. The Army did not

²⁴⁵ For LA letter see “Woman’s Christian Temperance Union to Eleventh Naval District,” March 2, 1942, P 13 Misconduct 1942, Eleventh Naval District, Commandant’s Office, Central Subject Files, (RG 181) NARA, Riverside; For Smith’s address see “Army Vice-Control Policy Assailed by W.C.T.U. Head,” *LAT*, October 31, 1941, 11.

need to be as aggressive in asserting its legal privilege to uphold adequate troops levels, and could not yet utilize the wartime emergency situation to compel civilian cooperation.²⁴⁶

Communities also sometimes banded together to resist and protest the disruptions and dangers created by servicemen. In North Stelton, New Jersey, a small town south of Newark, women formed a committee to lobby their Senator, H. Alexander Smith (R), to intervene on their behalf after soldiers from nearby Camp Kilmer began to bother locals. In a telegram that Senator Smith forwarded to military authorities, the women of the North Stelton Committee described the grim situation: "North Stelton, adjoining Camp Kilmer, has been repeatedly terrorized by acts of violence including house-breaking, burglary, molestation of women and children, rape of seven year old girl in broad daylight, brutal rape of young mother by four soldiers after repeated demands to Camp and Local authorities for protection." The women believed their only recourse would be to "deputize the few men remaining in a Community consisting mainly of women and children." Their demands were simple: The Provost Marshal should immediately provide enough Military Police to control the situation, and then the Army should install "a manproof fence and floodlights for the boundaries between Camp Kilmer and North Stelton." The three women leading the committee bitterly concluded the telegram by stating, "An infuriated community demands prompt

²⁴⁶ "John S. Lynch Jr. to Captain Charles C. Carroll," November 5, 1941, 370.093 General, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, 370.093, box 111, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

action.” A military investigation denied initial suspicions that this complaint might be racially motivated, noting “the racial question was in no way involved in subject incidents.” Investigators, however, blamed the sexual assaults and other crimes on the history of the area, which they claimed was originally founded “as a Trotskyite settlement” that “practiced the theory of free love” and that the whole area suffered from low moral values. Nevertheless, the commanding officer agreed to declare the town out of bounds, build an iron mesh fence and floodlights, increase the number of MPs, and establish better checks on men slipping through the current fence. The Provost Marshal General wrote back to Senator Smith and promised to resolve the situation. The town though, still deputized ten residents as special patrolmen and remained on edge.²⁴⁷

The most consistent and fearless criticism came from a group of Americans who were both civilians and members of the military simultaneously: chaplains. Chaplains occupied a fascinating space within the military—they were part of a secular organization, but also religious figures. They lacked the authority of a commanding officer, but wielded the moral authority that came with their vestments. When a civilian wrote to Chief of Staff Marshall objecting to intoxication by soldiers on leave at night or on the weekends as well as the mistreatment of “young ladies” by “military men whom liquor has robbed of

²⁴⁷ “Telegram from North Stelton Committee, via Senator H. Alexander Smith,” No date; “Disorders Involving Soldiers Near Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, 2S-335605,” No date; “Area Declared Out of Bounds For Soldiers at Camp Kilmer,” *Daily Home News*, March 16, 1945; “Archer L. Lerch to Senator Smith,” March 31, 1945, all in 250.1 General #2, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

natural inhibitions,” the civilian was pointed to the chaplains as force that could combat these evils. As members of the military charged with shepherding the moral and religious lives of the Armed Services, they carved out a space for open and even fierce condemnation of sinful behavior. Some chaplains focused on the omnipresent issue of liquor and its effects on men, agitating for the military to better control alcohol abuse. Chief of Chaplains William R. Arnold contested the military’s lax policies on drunkenness and asserted that the armed forces were caving into the interests of the liquor trade, which, as one of his junior chaplains said, amounted to “sabotage to the American people and a disgrace to the US government.” Quoting Chief of Staff Marshall, one chaplain protested that “when the soldier leaves camp, our troubles begin.” Given the rampant “gambling, profanity, and sexual sins” even senior chaplains seemed to believe that “the world is imperiled today by sin. It is the supreme tragedy of the world. The whole earth is groaning under its curse.” Another chaplain with experience in the US and the UK noted that the most troubling behavior occurred when “our thoughtless soldiers” decided to “molest nice girls on the streets who are strangers and give the soldier no reason to get familiar with them.” The chaplain seethed that the MPs did nothing, even though “many of these incidents borders on ‘rape conduct.’” Though their protests achieved few changes, their moral

courage to openly challenge command remains noteworthy in a period defined by accommodation and cowardice to authority.²⁴⁸

All of these civilian groups and officials that engaged in direct and open protest of the military were scattered voices, lacking a central, coordinated movement. Few could sustain consistent criticism in a country that militarized both the city and civilian. By the end of the war though, some civilian leaders could no longer contain their acrimony or disgust with the failures of policing. City councilmen in Los Angeles passed a unanimous resolution calling for the War Department to immediately release the more than 400 policemen who had been drafted. Other cities asked for similar releases to bolster the depleted police department ranks. Council members bitterly complained that crime and unrest had been allowed to run rampant, with assaults against women going unchecked as the city became “infested with criminals.” Councilman Meade McClanahan remarked, “Something is radically wrong with the Police Department from the heads down.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ For Marshall’s response to civilians via Chief of Chaplains see “George A. Turner to Chief of Staff Marshall,” January 7, 1943 & “William R. Arnold to Turner,” January 21, 1943; For Arnold letter see “William R. Arnold to Director of Personnel, ASF,” March 20, 1945; For chaplain quoting Marshall, “gambling” quote, and “the world is imperiled” quote see “Paul McCullers to Office of the Chief of Chaplains,” March 5, 1945 all in 250 Discipline (General) to 250.1 Morals and Conduct, Office Management Division: Decimal File, 1920-1945, box 193, RG 247 (Chief of Chaplains), NACP; For complaint over rape conduct, see “Chaplain C. F. Frith to Chaplain William R. Arnold,” June 9, 1944, 250.1 Morals and Conduct, Office Management Division: Decimal File, 1920-1945, box 194, RG 247 (Chief of Chaplains), NACP.

²⁴⁹ For LA council criticism of police see “Crime Worries City Councilmen,” *LAT*, August 25, 1945, A3; For other cities’ proposals to bolster police numbers see Meyer Berger, “La Guardia Calls on Armed Forces to Free Policemen,” *NYT*, November 24, 1945, 1.

The most explosive and visible civil-military policing conflict occurred on Staten Island in 1945, where Richmond County's district attorney Farrell M. Kane railed against "a crime wave" caused by soldiers on the east shore. After months of robberies, thefts, and assaults, he threatened to usurp the military's legal authority in the district: "It is primarily a military matter and I wish to give the military authorities the opportunity to handle it. However, if they fail to correct the condition, steps will be taken by civil authorities." Kane's proclamation was a remarkable challenge to wartime governance and law enforcement norms, but it was prompted by what citizens claimed was a wave of "stick-ups, muggings, assaults, store robberies, and the molesting of women and young girls, committed by uniformed soldiers." Tensions deepened after a civilian was set upon and stabbed by six GIs, while a policeman attempting a rescue was shot at with his own pistol. DA Kane demanded the Army put "an end to the reign of terror" and local businesses suggested they might begin closing before dusk. Civilian complaints to city and federal officials—as well as petitions to Secretary Stimson and New York Governor Thomas Dewey to close the local cantonment that housed over 3000 soldiers—led to an armed guard, 200 men strong patrolling the area throughout the night. Robberies and assaults persisted though, and few women dared to walk in the dark. La Guardia requested greater cooperation from the Army, but admitted "the situation has not been good for several days." A grand jury investigated the disturbances and pinpointed the "breakdown in military discipline and morale" as the key cause, recommending

better security, an end to “Army laxity” in policing, and improved recreational facilities.²⁵⁰

Why did Kane and the citizens of Staten Island become so willing to denounce soldiers and the Army when other communities experiencing similar incidents remained mostly silent? While wartime dictates prevented most city officials from openly criticizing the military or its men, the factor of race compromised this stricture. Indeed, the local GIs on Staten Island were predominantly black troops working as stevedores and longshoremen. Given their race, black troops lacked the same legal privileges bestowed on white troops, and so their crimes, real, exaggerated, or fabricated, became acceptable targets of civilian protest. It is ultimately impossible to determine whether the black troops on Staten Island committed these crimes, or whether their crime rates significantly differed from white servicemen. The descriptions of the crimes are remarkably similar to accounts of crimes committed by white troops. At the same time, inconsistencies in eyewitness testimonies and the fact of rampant racism undercut the reliability of the evidence. The *Chicago Defender* considered the whole affair a “wide-spread smear campaign against Negroes” that predictably culminated with “the charge of rape lodged by a white woman.” They

²⁵⁰ For Kane’s proclamation see “Kane Asks Army Aid in Soldier Crime Rise,” *NYT*, February 25, 1945, 13; For “stick ups” quote see “Jurors Again Sift Staten Island Crime,” *NYT*, March 24, 1945, 32; For stabbing incident see “6 Soldiers Assault Civilian, Policeman,” *NYT*, March 4, 1945, 29; For armed patrol see “Soldiers Beat, Rob Staten Island Man,” *NYT*, March 13, 1945, 15; For women refusing to walk the streets and La Guardia quote see “Staten Island Acts to End Crime Wave,” *NYT*, March 15, 1945, 1; For grand jury investigation see “Crime in Richmond Put on Army Laxity,” *NYT*, April 4, 1945, 23.

blamed the *Times* and the *New York Post* for provoking a “rape hysteria” with little basis in fact. Whether a genuine crime wave or a mostly imagined racial panic, military authorities responded by transferring 1,000 black soldiers to other parts of the country, rendering a rare victory for civilian officials and local citizens.²⁵¹

The military rarely assented to civilian attempts to regulate their men, but when War Mobilization Director James F. Byrnes issued a midnight curfew for all major American cities in February 1945, military authorities agreed to enforce the order. Byrnes sold his order as a move to reduce coal consumption amongst night clubs, bars, and other places of entertainment, though he admitted “it will also be helpful in the fields of transportation, manpower, and in other ways.” Congress launched an inquiry to determine the true motives for the curfew, asking whether Byrnes and the military intended the order as a check on vice. One congressman described Byrnes as “power drunk” and suggested the curfew was an act of “dictatorship,” dismissing the “alleged coal saving.” No smoking gun exists, but the Byrnes order appears to have been intended to curtail drinking and disorder in liberty ports. The order notably allowed some establishments to stay open past midnight if they stopped serving alcohol, undercutting Byrnes’ ostensible desire to cut back on coal usage. The military also chose to enforce the order, suggesting they hoped it might quell some of the

²⁵¹ For additional background on the case see “Staten Island Acts to End Crime Wave,” *NYT*, March 15, 1945; For *Defender’s* criticism of the coverage and transfer of troops see Earl Conrad, “Army Moves Negro GIs in N.Y. Rape Hysteria,” *TCD*, March 24, 1945, 10.

outstanding issues created by men on leave. Though La Guardia attempted to overrule Byrnes and set New York's curfew at 1 a.m., both the Army and Navy sent squads of MPs and SPs charging into midtown bars in New York to eject troops violating the midnight order. Commanders cleared Scollay Square at midnight, as well, a rare show of determined military policing. Earlier in the war, the Army imposed an ordinance preventing liquor sales after midnight in San Francisco, and so the Byrnes order functioned as an extension of that rule. Though some entertainers and supper clubs believed the order would shutter their businesses, other establishments agreed that speakeasies would replace the closed spots and that most clubs would simply open an hour earlier to cover the loss of late-night revenue. Nevertheless, the military's compliance with the order signals that High Command may have begun to think that concessions should be made to better control the roiling situation in stateside ports.²⁵²

Other protests occurred in everyday civil-military clashes, especially on trains where civilians and soldiers were brought into close proximity with booze and boredom. Because the military required a significant amount of railcars for troop and freight transportation, civilians faced chronic delays. Given the endlessly interrupted service, overcrowded cars, and number of trains

²⁵² For Byrnes' ostensible reasons for issuing the order and exemptions to order see Ben W. Gilbert, "Midnight Closing Edict Effective February 26," *TWP*, February 20, 1945, 1; For Congressional inquiry see "What's Behind Curfew Edict? House Asked," *CDT*, March 6, 1945, 1; For NYC enforcement and La Guardia's competing ordinance see "La Guardia's Impeachment Talked in N.Y.," *CDT*, March 21, 1945, 13; For Scollay enforcement see George McKinnon, "Edict Ends Hub's All-Night Movie," *DBG*, February 22, 1945, 17; For earlier San Francisco order see Alexander Feinberg, "La Guardia Eases Curfew to 1 A.M.; Byrnes is Silent," *NYT*, March 19, 1945, 1.

transporting both civilians and servicemen simultaneously, conflict proved inevitable. In one example, a MP and a civilian began hurling insults over a delay, with each side soon reaching for their hips and drawing pistols before cooler heads prevailed. Delays frequently provoked similar incidents as antsy soldiers on interminable train journeys got increasingly drunk. Train bathrooms were regularly ruined when intoxicated men vomited in the sink and toilet, leaving the facilities unusable for the remaining journey. Other civilians complained about the singing, loud banter, and the Chief of the Military Police Security and Intel Division argued that officers on trains commonly failed “to exercise proper control,” leading to “misconduct and other incidents in civilian communities which reflect unfavorably on the military establishment.” He also reiterated that troops should not detrain, unless “under proper supervision.” Riots occurred when the Army attempted to send too many men through on overstuffed, boiling hot trains, causing further delays with the whole railroad system threatening to buckle. Civilians resented the preferential boarding given to soldiers, often finding no available seats. Trains thus became another place where civilians were exposed to the risks and hardships that came with mobilization.²⁵³

²⁵³ For conflict between MPs and civilian see “Statement of Fred L. Witt,” November 3, 1944; For Chief of the MP Sec and Intel Division see “McDonald Rigdon to The Provost Marshal General’s Office,” January 24, 1945, both in 250.1 General #2, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For report on train bathrooms and civilian complaints see “Inspection Report,” August 10, 1945, 333 General #2, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 254, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For riots see “Routine Trip Report of Military Police Inspector,” August 3, 1943 and “Inspection Report on Phoenix, Arizona,” July 30, 1943, both in 250.1 General #1, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 65, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For civilian resentment of preferential loading see “Memorandum for the Chief of Transportation,” July 30,

Young, male civilians classified as 4-Fs—essentially a registrant who cannot be accepted for military service due to physical, mental, or moral limitations—suffered the ridicule of both society and military men, though also engaged in their own protests. 4-Fs generally suffered from a physical ailment that would prevent service, but lamented that they were given “the same rating as imbeciles and criminals.” Seen as cowardly, effeminate, and worthless, many experienced the war as an endless succession of humiliations where civilians suspiciously questioned why they were not in uniform, or soldiers mocked their inability to serve. GIs particularly targeted 4-Fs to demonstrate their own masculinity and confront obvious sexual rivals, leading one factory owner who relied on these essential war workers to plead for the Army to recognize their value. “Four-effer” became its own epithet, wielded by military men, but also by “young girls who make a boast that they wouldn’t date a ‘Four-effer.’” In Schiff’s *Scollay Square*, male civilians are mocked for being “jealous because the girls won’t give you a tumble without a uniform.” Radio programs piled on, routinely making 4-Fs the butt of jokes. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* admonished readers that though many 4-Fs may be young and lack “the appearance of a cripple,” many had legitimate medical reasons for rejection and that “most of them would mortgage their lives for the privilege of wearing a United States battle uniform.”

1945, 510 General, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 128, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

Emily Post offered a similar reprimand, telling soldiers to stop shouting “slacker” at 4-Fs.²⁵⁴

Occasionally, civilian men confronted the soldiers that tormented them, with one notable 4-F beating up four soldiers who had taunted him. “I’ve been taking that kind of guff from soldiers too long,” he said. 4-Fs were also seen as men who “hate uniforms” and pick fights with them. Others protested by appropriating the coveted military uniform, leading to civil-military conflict. One 4-F in LA posed as an Army captain, before being caught by suspicious MPs. Conflicts over who was allowed to wear a uniform could become violent. In a night club, MPs confronted a male civilian wearing a military jacket. The civilian explained it was a purchased “reject” jacket and an argument ensued. A brawl between the MPs and the jacketed civilian and his friends soon turned into a shootout, wounding the participants and bystanders.²⁵⁵

When victory arrived, civilians celebrated, but also dreaded what would happen when troops fully returned to their communities. During the war, fears proliferated that “when GI Joes lay down their guns for Uncle Sam, many will pick

²⁵⁴ For “imbeciles and criminals” quote see “Letter to the Editor: Willing 4-F,” *DBG*, February 14, 1944, 8; For factory owner plea see “Plea for the 4-F,” *CDT*, October 12, 1943, 16; For “Four-effer” see “Letter to the Editor: Work or Fight,” *TWP*, January 9, 1945, 6; For Schiff quote see Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 44; For radio programs mocking 4-Fs see “The 4-F Club,” *CDT*, October 28, 1943, 12; For *CDT* defense of 4-Fs see “The 4-F Club,” *CDT*, October 22, 1943, 12; For Emily Post’s defense see “If He’s in Civvies...,” *LAT*, April 2, 1944, F21.

²⁵⁵ For 4-F beating up taunting soldiers see “4-F Civilian is A-1 Fighter,” *TWP*, February 10, 1944, 2; For 4-F hating uniforms and picking fights see Schiff, *Scollay Square*, 70; For 4-F in LA posing as captain see “4-F Nabbed For Posing as Captain,” *TCD*, October 2, 1943, 2; For night club shootout over jacket see “Disturbance at Black Eagle, Montana, December 26, 1942,” January 28, 1943, 319.1 (M.I.D.) General, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 73, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP.

up new ones and run amuck.” The prominent businessman Harvey S. Firestone Jr. predicted an unparalleled postwar crime wave brought on by “soldiers, schooled in the use of lethal weapons and accustomed to living intimately with death.” Criminologists at the Harvard Law School joined this chorus of warnings, arguing that both delinquency and criminality would rise due to the “wartime experiences of soldiers and civilians.” Hoover admitted similar concerns, suggesting that troops might fall into “protest and perhaps violence.” Some of these fears derived from the memory of World War I’s returning veterans, some of whom had been implicated in highly publicized, shocking crimes. Reports of American troops looting and committing rape in contemporary Europe, along with firsthand experience with troop disorder in stateside hubs in the immediate preceding years, exacerbated these concerns. To quell the growing apprehension over demobilization, commanders routinely issued statements to the papers, assuring the public that there was no cause for worry, because the military had instilled a rigorous self-discipline in each man, which would curtail any surge in criminal behavior. Still, lurid stories made the front-pages, reinforcing civilian anxieties. In one report, the separated wife of a GI told a New York court how her husband promised to “put a knife in you and twist it. The Army taught me that.”²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ For Firestone Jr. comments see “Pictures Post-War Crime Wave,” *NYT*, April 11, 1943, 40; For “when GI Joes” quote and legacy of WWI see Lewis E. Lawes, “Will There Be a Crime Wave?,” *NYT*, November 5, 1944, SM16; For criminologists see “Increased Delinquency and Crime After War Predicted by Gluecks,” *DBG*, June 14, 1945, 20; For Hoover’s concerns see “F.B.I. Chief Admits Crime Wave Fears,” *LAT*, August 12, 1945, 16; For General Betts’ comments and European incidents see Drew Middleton, “Veterans Called Law-Abiding Men,” *NYT*, October

Military authorities certainly believed that the misbehavior of returning servicemen might endanger the image of the Armed Forces, as well as their efforts to institutionalize universal military service in postwar America. This became a particularly strong concern as soldiers began to grumble about the extremely slow rate at which they were discharged. As boredom and leave time increased, chaplains reported that morale plummeted and misbehavior flourished. Even before the end of the war, the Provost Marshal General had been preparing for the potential disruptions that might visit postwar America. He suspected that the effort to police returning GIs would prove as difficult as it had been in wartime, and that it was also “probable that serious criticism of the War Department will arise as a result of the conduct of many of these servicemen.” Civilians, he thought, would particularly object to soldiers using their uniforms to obtain “tacit exemption from minor ordinances applicable to civilians.” If the War Department permitted the uniform to be “debased” by unchecked misconduct, he admonished, civilians would react by rejecting postwar universal military training.²⁵⁷

14, 1945, 19; For knife quote and Hoover op-ed see J. Edgar Hoover, “Is the Army Breeding Criminals?,” *LAT*, March 11, 1945, F4.

²⁵⁷ For Provost Marshal General’s 1944 memo on postwar crime see “Archer L. Lerch on Proposals to Improve the Conduct and Appearance, While in Uniform, of Personnel Being Discharged or Released From Active Service,” July 19, 1944, 332.31 General, Administrative Division: Mail and Records Branch, Classified Decimal File, 1941-1945, box 84, RG 389 (Provost Marshal General), NACP; For chaplain reports on growing discontent see “Luther D. Miller to Commanding General,” September 6, 1945 and “Unsatisfactory State of Morale,” August 10, 1945, both in 330.11 Morale and Welfare of Army Personnel, Office Management Division: Decimal File, 1920-1945, box 245, RG 247 (Chief of Chaplains), NACP.

As the nation returned to peace, the military consolidated its accumulated power. Some scattered voices rejected the militarization of the city, civilian, and nation. Writing in January 1946, *Boston Globe* writer Charles A. Merrill argued that Americans were loath to “continue in our wartime roles as puppets of the state.” Wartime necessarily induced “the military and naval establishments, even in a democracy like ours” to be “invested with vast authority” and “be tempted to usurp and perpetuate their powers.” Merrill suggested that no American “be compelled to serve in the Army” moving forward and that the military reduce its growing footprint. Abroad, and also at home though, the augmentation of military power continued. Civilians had been made part of a “warfare state” through the use of extensive propaganda, economic contributions, and personal sacrifice. But the militarization of American life also took place in the daily interactions and conflicts between civilians and servicemen in urban centers. In the postwar era, the military maintained its imprint on American cities, continuing to influence lives of the civilians in liberty ports.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ For Merrill column see Charles A. Merrill, “Why Hysteria Sweeps Nation: Servicemen, Management, Labor—All of Us—Are Reluctant to Continue in Wartime Roles as Puppets of the State,” *DBG*, January 20, 1946, C2; For “warfare state” concept see Sparrow, *Warfare State*.

Epilogue: Postwar Invasions and Occupations

After the chronic misbehavior, absenteeism, and insubordination that had plagued the U.S. military during World War II, generals and other top brass became determined to remake the postwar Army as a disciplined, technologically adept, and professional fighting force. They offered an array of incentives for skilled technicians, engineers, and craftsmen to enlist including half-pay for life following two decades of service. The Army would become more mobile, efficient, and intelligent. The infantryman was to be “tomorrow’s armored Pegasus”—a warrior ready to fly into battle with “pilotless aircraft, guided missiles, with atomic warheads, [and] super-sonic planes.” Talk of abandoning traditional fronts abounded, with planners imagining highly trained soldiers launching airborne assaults even 1,000 miles into an enemy’s territory. The Army expanded its elite Ranger program—which specialized in commando tactics—especially after their early successes in Korea. One Lieutenant General argued that a better training system might eliminate the military’s caste system, heralding an end to “Chickenshit” while bringing in enthusiastic, talented young men.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ For Army efforts to recruit a more technical, skilled force see Brian McAllister Linn, *Elvis’s Army: Cold War GIs and the Atomic Battlefield* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 32-33. For some of the effects of demobilization on the military and veterans see Laura McEnaney, “War’s Policy Aftermath: World War II’s Demobilization and the Politics of Veterans’ Welfare,” a symposium on Militarization, Health and Society, in *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics*, 39 (Spring 2011): 41-47. For the later transition to an all-volunteer force (AVF) see Beth Bailey, *America’s Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2009). For an examination of how mobilization and demobilization affected labor in cities see Marilyn S. Johnson, “Mobilizing the Homefront: Labor and Politics in Oakland, California, 1943-1951,” in Daniel Cornford, ed., *Working People of California: Towards a New Social History of the Golden State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). McEnaney’s study of demobilization in Chicago presents another view of the “harsh trade-offs and taxing adaptations for city dwellers.” See McEnaney, “Nightmares on Elm Street: Demobilizing in Chicago, 1945-1953,” *The Journal of*

Command also understood that the regular, uncontrolled weekend benders had only worsened the prewar view of the Army as a place for Navy and Marine rejects. The force's poor image was further cemented when GIs across the globe rioted and mutinied against the laborious and sluggish pace of demobilization. Widespread boozing and epidemics of venereal disease even after 1945 also seemed to confirm the Army's perpetual lack of discipline. Major Louis Altshuler, Chief of the VD control division, argued, "one of the greatest criticisms of the Army by the parents is that the Army encourages and condones immorality, drinking, and gambling....If we are to get the skilled technicians required in a modern Army, we must show that the Army is a character building organization and not one that breeds immorality." Command took small steps to disincentivize misbehavior on liberty like urging NCOs to get married and bring their families to live near base.²⁶⁰

Remaking the Old Army with its tradition, discipline, and unabashed love of a military world cordoned off from and starkly contrasted to civilian life would be impossible in a new international order that required permanent and sizeable

American History, Vol. 92, No. 4 (Mar., 2006), 1265-1291. For the continued militarization of civilian life see McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Also see Gretchen Heefner, *The Missile Next Door: The Minuteman in the American Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). For "tomorrow's armored Pegasus," "pilotless..." and airborne assaults see John Thompson, "When Whole Armies Take to the Air!," *CDT*, November 30, 1947, E7; For Rangers see John G. Norris, "Army Forms 'Ranger' Units to Perform Commando Duties," *TWP*, October 11, 1950, 1; For end to caste system "Urges Military Training to End Caste in Army," *CDT*, June 11, 1946, 12.

²⁶⁰ For postwar riots/mutinies see McAllister Linn, *Elvis's Army*, 17-18; Altshuler quoted in McAllister Linn, *Elvis's Army*, 34. See MAJ Louis N. Altshuler, Sub: The War Department Venereal Disease Program, 1947, Box 2, E12, RG 334, NACP; For urging NCOs to marry see McAllister Linn, *Elvis's Army*, 33.

Armed Forces. Planners therefore envisioned a new training program that might bring in more skilled recruits while also abandoning the rough, aggressive barracks culture that defined wartime training. This new GI would be skilled and morally sober. Training would utilize more carrots than sticks, and focus on technical education as much as hikes and target practice.²⁶¹

The “Umtees” (short for UMT Demonstration Unit) epitomized the new approach. In 1947, the Army brought a battalion of 17 year-old recruits to Fort Knox and showcased them as a potential model for the postwar Army. Abandoning the old model of “beat ‘em down, cuss ‘em out, and keep ‘em squirming,” these trainees received demerits instead of a “dressing down.” Liquor was strictly prohibited, officers organized educational trips to sites like Mammoth Cave and Lincoln’s birthplace, and the Fort offered courses on subjects like rocket launching. Barracks were now built up and practically luxurious by WWII standards. Boys were even given their own lockers, plugs for radios, a reading area, and an entire room devoted to listening to classical music. Dances were offered several times a week, with local female chaperones in charge, no MPs required. The Army highlighted its coordination with a board of prominent citizens in Louisville to “foster better relations between the civilian community and the Army” so that “the boys feel at home on liberty hours.” The *Times* promised that the Army would keep each “beardless wonder” out of trouble by “hovering over

²⁶¹ For new training paradigm see Gilbert P. Bailey, “‘Umtees’—First Soldiers of the ‘New Army,’” *NYT*, February 23, 1947, SM11.

him like an anxious parent.” The commanding general even pledged to cut back on swearing, a key element of the World War II GI’s vernacular. “We don’t intend to stop anyone from using a healthy ‘damn,’” he explained, “but this stream of obscene, vulgar stuff, it’s too much.” The Umtees were given the power to run court-martials for each other, delegating legal responsibility to peers rather than commanders and the legal branch. The officer corps even solicited the Umtees for advice and feedback on their training.²⁶²

After several months, the Army pronounced the pilot program a success, specifically citing the low levels of drunkenness, VD, and AWOL, as well as the higher rates of church attendance as evidence of more skilled, well-adjusted recruits ready to form the core of the modern Army. The service, at least publically, seemed to be on its way towards a more effective and better behaved force.²⁶³

Old Army regulars remained more skeptical. They saw the Umtee boys as the “Lace Pantie Brigade,” “senior boy scouts,” or “male Wacs,” arguing that their unit was little more than a cute experiment or publicity stunt for Congress. One veteran sergeant cautioned, “In the old days the Army either made men or broke them; this way doesn’t do either.” The still poor education levels among many of the Army recruits only added to the misgivings of the regulars. The young recruits of 1946 and 1947, often labeled GI Joe Jr., offered little cause for optimism for

²⁶² For “Umtees” see Gilbert P. Bailey, “‘Umtees’—First Soldiers of the ‘New Army,’” *NYT*, February 23, 1947, SM11.

²⁶³ Hanson W. Baldwin, “Army’s Youth Unit Called a Success,” *NYT*, May 18, 1947, 50.

Army planners gunning for technically skilled and tactically sharp units. The average man entering training recorded lower scores on the Army's general aptitude test compared to recruits in World War II, and few brought a university education or trade or engineering skills. Many could not read, remained undisciplined, or engaged in misbehavior. Studies of camps and forts revealed that instructors also lacked education and ability, leaving most men to struggle through training described in an Army investigation as "poorly planned, insufficiently executed, and hopelessly obsolete."²⁶⁴

The Army's first forays in Korea revealed that the training reforms failed to produce a more effective combat soldier. The grandiose plans for bright, morally upright GIs floundered when the brass chose to slash the training period from seventeen weeks to eight to solve yet another manpower shortage. Troops arrived not knowing to use their rifles, mortars, or artillery. Most dangerously, very few understood how to use their radios, leaving units cut off and uncoordinated. One veteran officer explained to the *Times* that the U.S. was fielding "a cream-puff Army, not an Army of soldiers." The main problem, he argued, was that the Umtee system of more democratic and less harsh training had resulted in "damned coddling and babying of troops." "Let the Army make soldiers," he implored, "We've got to teach 'em how to fight, get rid of the

²⁶⁴ For results of Umtees and reaction of Old Army regulars see Hanson W. Baldwin, "Army's Youth Unit Called a Success," *NYT*, May 18, 1947, 50 and Gilbert P. Bailey, "'Umtees'—First Soldiers of the 'New Army,'" *NYT*, February 23, 1947, SM11; For education levels see Gilbert P. Bailey, "Portrait of GI Joe Jr.," *NYT*, June 2, 1946, SM7; For poor training see McAllister Linn, *Elvis's Army*, 42 and Jacob Devers, Sub: Report of Activities of Army Field Forces, 1945-1949, September 30, 1949, 319.1 File, Box 41, E32B, RG 337, NACP.

nonessentials, and get down to tough, hard bed-rock training.” Mean, tough GIs would be needed to “meet successfully the hordes of Asia or armies of barbarians.” General Mark Clark, Commander of Army Field Forces, already made the move to turn away from producing the “G.I. gentleman” in favor of what Major General Lewis B. Hershey called “young ‘killers’ ready for grim war.” The virile, aggressive soldier was quickly back, as was the rough approach to basic training that so often spilled over into violent carousing on liberty.²⁶⁵

Ending or limiting the effects of a hyper-aggressive, martial masculinity proved impossible for the military. For civilian and cities, too, the war’s legacy loomed large, and in the postwar United States the culture of wolfish carousing both lingered and evolved in subtle ways.

Invasions

Before making their assault on the building, they made plans. They waited for the cover of night, and while the sun set, the leaders of a 250 man “Army” drew up coordinated lines of attack. A little before 12:45 a.m., the leaders ordered four “squads” of scouts to move ahead and enter the building via a heating plant tunnel. There they found a power switch and quickly cut the main telephone cable and lights. With the building now darkened and no access to external communication, a spearhead force donned masks and moved to their

²⁶⁵ For cut in training period and other training problems see McAllister Linn, *Elvis’s Army*, 42-43; For “cream-puff” comments see Hanson W. Baldwin, “‘Cream Puff Army’ Presents Problem: Korea Shows Need for Tougher Men, High Officers Tell Baldwin,” *LAT*, November 17, 1950, 4; For Clark and Hershey see “Rougher Training Planned by Army,” *NYT*, August 21, 1950, 11.

designated attack points. The scouts crept through the tunnels leading into building and silently unlocked the front door, “admitting the main assault force.” Quickly and quietly, the men charged through the doors and began their raid.²⁶⁶

Though acting like an organized military unit—and consistently described in those terms by newspapers—this was no Army assault on a hostile encampment. This was the first panty raid, a hallmark of postwar campuses beginning with this incident in 1949. Before entering the women’s dormitory, the male undergraduates of Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois dispatched a sortie to lock the housemother in her room. The “masked prowlers” then ran through the unlit hallways, barging into each woman’s room. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that “pajama clad girls were tossed to the floor as beds were tipped over.” The invaders splashed sleeping girls with water and threw others into the showers. For ten minutes, “feminine screams came from all quarters of the building.” The “night prowling squadron” targeted dresser drawers, emptying or breaking furniture in pursuit of women’s panties, bras, and other lingerie. The women later told *The Washington Post* that the men had “wrecked the place,” leaving some struggling to find more clothing. The police soon arrived, prompting “a leader of the raiders” to sound “retreat on a trumpet,” causing the men to scatter into the night. Given that the police report recorded that the station had been notified of the raid six minutes before it began, a rumor flourished that “there had been a ‘leak’ in the invading forces.” The reaction of the women to the

²⁶⁶ “Students Don Masks; Raid Co-Eds’ Dorm,” *CDT*, February 26, 1949, 1.

raid was mixed. Some responded by grabbing whatever makeshift weapons they could, with one co-ed smashing one of the men on the head with a chair and others wildly swinging their fists at interlopers. The women also grabbed water buckets, waiting to drench the invaders, while those who heard the commotion attempted to lock their doors and hold out for the cops. Others though could be heard yelling, "Help! Police! Isn't this wonderful?" One senior woman claimed "it was really more fun than anything else" and then coyly said that "we had an inkling they were coming." Once the cops had ejected the men, the women began picking up their clothing and restoring their rooms. The dormitory remained abuzz throughout the night, with some girls reported to be "hysterical." The college's president later disputed much of the reporting, noted that the men had apologized, and downplayed the raid as little more than a "thoughtless, 10 minute aberration" and a "serenade."²⁶⁷

Throughout the fifties and sixties, panty raids marked some of the first stirrings of teenage rebellion, sexual experimentation, and a rejection of authority. In one sense, these volatile campus disturbances stand as a harbinger of more revolutionary changes to come in the late sixties. But in many ways, they were a connection not to the future, but to the past. Indeed, pantry raids mimicked much of the behavior seen in liberty ports and boom towns during the

²⁶⁷ For description of raid see "Students Don Masks; Raid Co-Eds' Dorm," *CDT*, February 26, 1949, 1 and "Students Dump Coeds Out of Bed at Illinois College," *TWP*, February 26, 1949, B2; Senior woman quoted in "Coeds Battle Males With Water, Fists in Illinois Raid," *DBG*, February 26, 1949, 2; College president quoted in "Men Apologize for Invasion of Co-Eds' Dorm," *CDT*, March 2, 1949, 21.

war. College men moved, acted, and explained their exploits in the same terms as GIs had. Their planning and execution of these raids, and their ultimate prize of a co-ed or her underwear, matched the rough, coercive heterosexuality that soldiers performed in wartime. Like troops, undergrads resisted and fought with police attempting to contain or stop these incidents. And the women who were the subject of these invasions often mirrored the mixed reactions that wartime women exhibited to the advances of servicemen. Pantry raids, then, raise questions about how the World War II culture of carousing on liberty may have directly influenced postwar youth sexuality and masculinity.²⁶⁸

Similar incidents preceded Augustana's raid, for example when Harvard men charged into Radcliffe dorms in 1947, where "they grabbed protesting, kicking, squealing girls" and then "heaved them ungently into the waiting and expectant arms of Harvard men." A year later, Colorado's Women's College banned the men of the School of Mines after 300 "invaded" the dorms "garbed only in towel loincloths and hairy chests," and then absconded with several women. Following the 1949 incident at Augustana College, however, these invasions became more violent, organized, and focused on capturing undergarments. These panty raids were explicitly identified as military-like operations conducted by draft-age men and some veterans on the GI Bill. In 1950, for example, 2,000 Harvard men took advantage of a blackout in

²⁶⁸ For the connection between panty raids and the later campus/sexual revolution see Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 45-48.

Cambridge. Assembling outside their dorms, the men, “armed with flashlights,” exclaimed, “On to Radcliffe,” and began a march that created a traffic jam seizing Harvard Square. The *Globe* maintained that “the imminent threat of an invasion by the Harvards did not throw fear into the hearts of the Radcliffe girls who quickly mustered their forces.” As the Harvard men surged through the doors and windows of Cabot and Moor halls, overturning furniture, the women threw water bombs in an attempt to repel the attackers. Police and the fire brigade soon arrived to help expel “the hordes of Attila.” Several officers reported getting into scuffles with the students who ran or resisted arrest. Reports routinely utilized military language to understand these raids. Papers referred to “surprise sorties” or “undie sorties,” and described women’s dormitories as “under siege.” Besides mimicking small unit tactics, Army command structures, and the press’ explicit use of martial descriptions, the undergrads invoked other symbols of military service. Bugle calls, for example, drove men to besiege the women’s dorms at the University of Wisconsin. Rioters sometimes attached panties or skirts to sticks, creating makeshift battle flags just as riotous troops had done on V-J Day. And as the Korean War became mired in stalemate in 1952, these mock invasions spread throughout the country.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ “Playful Tech, Harvard Men Invade Wellesley, Radcliff,” *DBG*, May 9, 1947, 1; “Girls’ College Black-lists Mines Students for Raid,” *LAT*, April 14, 1948, 1; For “surprise sorties” see “Thousands of College Men Invade Coeds’ Dormitories: Lingerie Grabbing Spreads,” *LAT*, March 20, 1952, 1; For “undie sorties” see “Hurl Rocks, Eggs,” *CDT*, May 23, 1952, A13; For “under siege” see “Police Block Raid on Women Dorm at U. of I.,” *CDT*, May 7, 1952, 3; For Harvard-Radcliffe 1950 raid see “Harvard Students Raid Radcliffe During Darkness,” *DBG*, November 20, 1950, 1; For bugle calls see Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 45.

Raids reached a fever pitch during the first half of the 1950s, both in terms of frequency and levels of violence against women and police forces. At UC Berkeley, 3000 men invaded a dozen or so sorority houses as part of a “panty raiding party.” *The Daily Californian*, the student newspaper, described how the female undergrads had been “knocked around, assaulted, carried outside in pajamas or nude.” At the University of Missouri, over 2,500 male students raided several dorms and sororities, stealing cash, jewelry, and lingerie. The riotous group formed after the leaders left notices on bulletin boards urging men to assemble at 10 p.m. They began by marching on Stephens College, which housed girls aged 14 to 19. Reports indicated “they stormed into several of these dormitories, splintering doors, and roamed thru corridors, forcing their way into girls’ bedrooms.” There they sought panties, dresses, hose, or any other trophy. A *Columbia Tribune* reporter luridly described “a screaming girl stripped of her panties.” Similar assaults occurred at the University of Kansas where six male students ripped robes from three women. Women also fought back, with co-eds biting an assailant who attempted to grab them from their hiding spot. One female University of Missouri employee held off several raiders with a blackjack. The Governor eventually mobilized a field artillery company in an effort to put down the riot after police failed to disperse the men who resisted the officers.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ For UC Berkley raid see “3000 Take Part in California ‘Panty Raid’ Riot,” *TWP*, May 18, 1956, 3; For Missouri see “Panty Rioters Pillage Dorms at Missouri U.: Damage Near \$50,000; 3,000 Join Raids,” *CDT*, May 21, 1952, 6; For KU assault see “Six Students Jailed in Kansas Panty Raid,” *LAT*, May 23, 1956, 40.

Like the furloughed GI taking over a liberty port, raiding undergraduate men often took to the streets to carouse, riot, and directly challenge the authority of police. Just as troops on liberty seemed to almost parade in their uniforms—preferably with a girl at their side—undergraduates displayed captured panties as a token of their virility. With “sexy souvenirs” in hand, men routinely tore out into the street, the raiders turned rioters, smashing police cruisers, ripping up street signs and parking meters, and flooding streets after cracking open fire hydrants. Not wishing to harm what was generally a white, middle to upper class population, police typically followed an incremental response, starting with calls to disperse or attempts to block entrances to the threatened dorms. When those tactics failed officers sometimes engaged the panty raiders directly. Resulting melees lasted hours and involved hundreds of police and students. Sometimes riot squads were even dispatched. Battling against a hail of rocks thrown by the undergrads, they resorted to tear gas or water hoses to drive away the mob.²⁷¹

As the raids continued, however, police forces increasingly favored passive responses, allowing the raiders to have at it. One police sergeant explained that “officers have been instructed to stand by. The great number of them are afraid to make any arrests for fear of starting a riot.” This may have been a prudent tactic in some circumstances given the disparity in numbers

²⁷¹ “Sexy souvenirs” from “Panty Raiders Storm Dorms, Find Some Coeds Play Rough,” *TWP*, May 21, 1952, 1; For street destruction see “Panty Raiders Invade Dorms at E. Lansing,” *CDT*, May 12, 1953, 11; For police blockade of dorms see “Police Block Raid on Women Dorm at U. of I.,” *CDT*, May 7, 1952, 3; For melee example see “U. of I. Suspends 6 Men in Raid on Girls’ Dorm: Police in 3 Hour Melee; 2 Students Fined,” *CDT*, May 8, 1952, B2; For rocks, tear gas, and water hose see “Hurl Rocks, Eggs,” *CDT*, May 23, 1952, A13.

between local police units and the multitude of undergrads. In one instance, an officer who attempted to block a surge of invaders was knocked over and stripped of his clothes. At Northwestern University, a co-ed remembered party raiders simply picking up a sergeant and carrying him into the dorm where “they stole just about every piece of underwear in sight.” The *Globe* tersely explained that “police were powerless.” At other times though, policemen’s passive response gave male students free reign to pillage women’s dormitories. Cops responding to the University of Kansas raid advised women “to leave the doors open and not to resist.” They also argued that officers should avoid the scene because the raiders’ aggression would only be inflamed by the sight of the police. Cops regularly stood by and watched as students broke windows, set up ladders to make second floor forays, and even used huge battering rams to break down locked doors. Though the police were more willing and able to arrest party raiders compared to soldiers, cops still regularly adopted the attitude of letting the boys have their fun at the expense of women’s welfare.²⁷²

Like women in wartime port cities, female undergrads engaged in active resistance to these assaults on their residences, property, and bodies. At almost every raid, women rained water bombs and eggs down on the approaching attackers, though this could be a sign of both genuine resistance and

²⁷² Police sergeant quote from “Thousands of College Men Invade Coeds’ Dormitories: Lingerie Grabbing Spreads,” *LAT*, MAY 20, 1952, 1; For officer stripped of clothes see “Cop Unclothed in Madison Raid on Co-ed Dorms,” *CDT*, May 20, 1952, 3; For Northwestern raid see “1000 Northwestern Students Raid Dorms, Take Police Along,” *DBG*, May 20, 1952, 7; For KU cops advising women not to resist see Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 45; For cops standing by and watching see “3 Co-eds Hurt in Panty Riot at S. Illinois U.,” *CDT*, A13, May 23, 1952.

playfulness. When men managed to break into the dormitories, women grabbed fire hoses and turned them on the raiders. Others favored baseball bats and makeshift blunt weapons as an often necessary defense against men who physically attacked and sexually assaulted women.²⁷³

But even at raids where women were assaulted, reporters consistently found female conspirators who encouraged and abetted the invaders. Tulane's raid captured this complex dynamic when some women at one dorm conspired to let a raiding group in, while others desperately locked their doors. Co-eds regularly taunted the men assembled outside their buildings, shouting, "come on in fellows." Whether to entice or placate the approaching invaders, some decided to simply toss lingerie out the window to howling men below. Women also regularly rejected the aid of police and university officials, booing them, calling them "party poopers," or demanding the cops step aside and "let 'em in!" In rarer instances, female students attacked police officers who had arrested particularly belligerent raiders. At Missouri's violent raid where women were assaulted and forcibly stripped, a group of co-eds nevertheless fought with a policeman who had arrested three men, eventually freeing them. Some raiders found themselves actually cornered by women, who tore the man's trousers off. Co-eds even began undertaking "reverse panty-raids," storming into the men's dorms while

²⁷³ For an example of water bombs see "Tufts Men Go Bra-Hunting, but Get Wetting Instead," *DBG*, May 20, 1952, 1; For use of fire hoses see "Panty Raiders Invade Dorms at E. Lansing," *CDT*, May 12, 1943, 11; For baseball bats see "3 Co-eds Hurt in Panty Riot at S. Illinois U.," *CDT*, A13, May 23, 1952.

chanting “we want short shorts” and ransacking dressers for the men’s underwear. In these instances, women seemed to be accepting, even mimicking, the forceful, wolfish masculinity that had flourished during World War II.²⁷⁴

Panty raids appear to have reached their zenith just as the Korean War ground to a deadlock, with the war at times seeming more like the trench warfare of Verdun and Ypres than the mobile tactics that defined the Battle of the Bulge or the German advance through the Ardennes. Though college men seemed to be aping military tactics and the rough, aggressive behavior that defined liberty in wartime cities, GIs stuck in rat-infested trenches had little sympathy for the raiders. After *Stars and Stripes* published an article about the “spring fever” spreading throughout campuses, a soldier wrote in to the civilian papers with utter disdain. Angrily attacking college men who appeared to “have nothing else to do besides going around collecting panties and bras,” one “Disgusted G.I.” suggested they be drafted immediately. Representing the men at the Central Front, he bitterly explained that “we, too, have ‘spring fever,’ but our kind is a little different than theirs. It makes me boil inside when I read about such trash going on.” A civilian concurred asking why these young men were allowed to avoid service only to end up “swiping girls’ underwear.” Senators demanded the boys

²⁷⁴ For Tulane raid and tossing lingerie out preemptively see “Panty Raid at Tulane Reaches Riot Proportions,” *LAT*, October 19, 1954, 17; For taunts see “Students Raid Iowa Dorms for Co-ed Panties,” *CDT*, May 15, 1952, 12; For “party poopers” see “U. of I. Suspend 6 Men in Raid on Girls’ Dorm,” *CDT*, May 8, 1952, B2; For “let em’ in!” see “3 Co-eds Hurt in Panty Riot at S. Illinois U.,” *CDT*, A13, May 23, 1952; For women cornering man see “Panty Raiders Invade Dorms at E. Lansing,” *CDT*, May 12, 1953, 11; For reverse panty raid see “100 Coeds Stage ‘Shorts’ Raid on Mens’ Dorm,” *TCD*, May 21, 1958, 4.

be drafted, while one judge argued the undergrads were sabotaging morale in Korea.²⁷⁵

To soldiers in Korea, the pantry raiders likely seemed little more than boys playing soldier. Their obsession with taking underwear—and not the women the lingerie belonged to—suggested an almost adolescent and undeveloped sexuality, rather than the swaggering masculinity of a GI, leatherneck, or sailor. It seems probable that criticism of the college men was partially driven by jealousy and antipathy towards civilians. Stuck in a dirty trench, alternating between freezing conditions and sunburn, and lacking any clear objective, soldiers understandably despised the civilian boys who seemed to be getting the girls while shirking duty. Others likely objected to the undergraduates who seemed to be claiming the markers of military identity and the spoils of war without any of the sacrifices. Nevertheless, a militarized sexuality took hold at America's universities, even while the actual troops toiled away in "The Forgotten War."

Occupations

The legacy of liberty in wartime also endured in the geography of vice imprinted onto postwar cities. Though never reaching the same levels of debauchery and danger, postwar hubs retained and expanded the militarized districts that had catered to the man passing through port, or to the shiploads of sailors arriving for fleet week. The war made fun zones like Scollay Square a

²⁷⁵ For GI complaint see Disgusted G.I., "Panty Raid Reaction," *LAT*, June 1, 1952; For civilian complaint see John W. Burks, "Pantry Raid Reaction," *LAT*, June 1, 1952; For complaints of senators and judge see "Panty Raiders Under Fire in Courts, Senate," *DBG*, May 28, 1952, 9.

more menacing, sordid area less welcoming to civilians. In the postwar era, Scollay's reputation continued to decline, even as the military man's nostalgia for the block grew. Scollay's now infamous reputation as "Boston's Barbary Coast" drew the attention of concerned civilians and politicians looking to revitalize Boston's downtown. The Square had become so notorious for wartime excesses that an ultimately failed movement commenced in 1945 to rename the district "Eisenhower Square." In 1951, a Boston Judge claimed that the military was still failing to control its personnel in downtown Boston, demanding that certain areas "be classified as a combat zone" and out of bounds. When the Old Howard Theater closed down in 1953 due to the resurgent efforts of vice squads, the last vestiges of the old Scollay Square seemed to go with it. Boston's upper class increasingly hoped the Square might be "purified." Just as Robert Moses seized his chance to tear up Coney Island's parks in the late 40s and 50s, the Brahmins and urban renewal proponents sought an end to what the papers called Scollay's "honky-tonk reputation for evil."²⁷⁶

In 1962, Old Boston got its wish when the city declared that Scollay would be destroyed to make way for Government Center, an area positively sterile in both name and appearance. "Proper Boston is standing death watch over an

²⁷⁶ For Barbary Coast, Eisenhower Square, "slightly notorious" see Richard O'Donnell, "Scollays (of Square) Have Left Hub," *DBG*, June 30, 1963, A5; For Judge's comments see "Jurist Describes Essex St. Area as 'Combat Zone,'" *DBG*, April 28, 1951, 18; For closing of the Old Howard see "Three Stripteasers Barely Break the Law, Old Howard Theatre in Boston is Padlocked," *Wilmington Sunday Star*, December 6, 1953, 24; For "purified" see "Colonel Scollay's Square," *DBG*, October 31, 1961, 22; For "Honky-tonk" see "Improper Bostonians," *CDT*, December 1, 1961, 14.

aged and roguish black sheep relative,” declared the *Chicago Tribune*, “Brazen Scollay Square, long the stamping ground of millions of seamen and service men is breathing its last raspy breaths as a rowdy oasis in the midst of Puritan virtue.” As if Boston’s officials hoped to build the direct opposite of Scollay’s sleazy, hodgepodge mix of burlesque, sailor bars, hot-dog stands, fleshpots, and tattoo parlors, they chose a massive, brutalist City Hall and stark plaza defined by the coldness, uniformity, and order of brick and concrete. With offices soon to populate the area, the *Globe* predicted that “only the ghosts of the crews ashore for a night on the town will loiter.” Crews and trucks soon arrived, ejecting the Square’s denizens and carrying the old buildings—and the dodgy reputation, officials hoped—away from the center of Boston. With the Square razed, Boston might move beyond the vice and mayhem that had accompanied men when they hit port. Like Army Command, urban officials hoped the vestiges of the war might be erased in a modern, technocratic redesign.²⁷⁷

Boston’s elite could destroy Scollay, but they could not prevent what caused the Square to become what it was. Robert Levey—eventually the *Globe*’s restaurant critic—understood this when he explained that the city had merely displaced the desires and suppliers of militarized vice. “Scollay Square was called a bad thing by lots of people,” Levey wrote, “but like television, it was as it

²⁷⁷ For *Chicago Tribune* quote “Rowdy Ways of Scollay Sq. Soon Will Go,” *CDT*, March 11, 1962, B8; For “only the ghosts” see “Remember Scollay Square?,” *DBG*, November 2, 1963, 4; For “mayhem” quote see Robert L. Levey, “Scollay Square—Same Animal in New Lair,” *DBG*, November 8, 1966, 23.

was because there were many people who wanted it to be that way.” For the moment though, urban renewal evangelists and proper Bostonians hailed the end of Scollay and its worldwide reputation as the “place where a sailor, weary of the sea, could catch up on shore sins in jig time.” For Navy ensigns and other troops passing through, Boston remained a key liberty destination. With the destruction of Scollay they simply sought out new hangouts, and they did not need to look far.²⁷⁸

The reconstituted military zone for carousing became appropriately known as “The Combat Zone,” demonstrating the degree to which liberty in World War II changed cities for decades to come. Spread over four blocks along Washington, Stuart, Boylston, and Tremont streets, the reestablished center for sin featured some of Scollay’s key hallmarks—sailor bars, hot dog stands, movie houses, strip clubs—but it ditched the old-style burlesque and charm for a hard-edged jungle of prostitution, pornography, and crime. The Combat Zone built upon the sinister and dangerous turn Scollay took during the war, embracing a vision of vice that conjured *Taxi Driver’s* Times Square. In contrast to the broad boulevard of Scollay, the Combat Zone featured tighter, darker streets packed with wandering sailors, streetwalkers, and a jarring mix of curious interlopers, drunks, and social outcasts. Darkness defined the zone—only the flickering neon afforded a brief, hazy glimpse. The area similarly existed in a kind of legal

²⁷⁸ Robert L. Levey, “Scollay Square—Same Animal in New Lair,” *DBG*, November 8, 1966, 23; Paul Kneeland and Gregory Friedberg, “The Combat Zone,” *DBG*, July 31, 1966, D6.

darkness. City cops and the police vice squad with their paddy wagons lingered on the outskirts. But once inside the heart of the Combat Zone, sailors were largely left to “blow off steam.” The *Globe* acknowledged that most police took the view that visitors were committing only crimes against themselves. “If he wants to be a chicken,” some officials thought, “he will be plucked.” The BPD opted to merely contain the crime to the zone, forming a perimeter to keep the drinking, fighting, and vice separated from Boston’s respectable neighborhoods and businesses. Officials admitted that even attempting to enforce the law would require a hugely expanded police force working around the clock for months just to make the arrests. And as they learned with Scollay, shutting down a red-light district only pushed servicemen to seek out their desires elsewhere.²⁷⁹

The Combat Zone exemplified the dirty, dangerous hubs of vice and delight often found in American cities that attracted troops, such as Times Square and Hollywood Boulevard. The sensory experience and rhythms of The Combat Zone capture the degree to which these hubs were born out of the militarization of red-light districts during World War II. Like Scollay, The Combat Zone seemed almost abandoned and decaying in daylight. Without the chiaroscuro effect of neon light, the crumbling exteriors of buildings became readily apparent. The billboards promising strip dancers fared worse in

²⁷⁹ For much of the description of The Combat Zone see Paul Kneeland and Gregory Friedberg, “The Combat Zone,” *DBG*, July 31, 1966, D6. For map of the Combat Zone’s main area see John Kifner, “Boston ‘Combat Zone’ Becomes Target of Police Crackdown,” *NYT*, December 4, 1976, 10.

brightness: “Half plucked fowls, with thigh fat,” wrote one journalist. Bookshops peddled price-jacked nudie magazines tightly wrapped in cellophane to prevent casual peeks from the punters. Others pushed expensive books wrapped in brown paper, suggesting its contents were not fit to be seen publically. Quite often though, the purchaser soon discovered they had just bought an edition of *The Great Gatsby*. The B-girl also survived World War II, continuing to ply her trade in the sailor bars that dominated Washington Street. The smells remained the same too. Vomit, piss, smoke, and rye whiskey suffused the area, making the whole area seem sticky and permanently filthy. “White Hunters,” men cruising the area for pickups, blocked up the streets and made easy marks for muggers and con-women. Young male civilians and troops frequently brawled, with groups of roaming Bluejackets clashing with civilian motorcycle gangs. “The usual fights are between men who feel their masculinity is in question, over a girl,” the *Globe* explained, “and between girls, one of whose professional standing is in question.” With its heady mix of boozing, whoring, and fighting, The Combat Zone continued the traditions of wartime Scollay and really all liberty ports. “Yeah, this is the Combat Zone all right,” explained a bartender, “When they tore down Scollay Square, everybody moved down here. The joints, the sailors, the hustlers, everybody. It even smells the same.”²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Paul Kneeland and Gregory Friedberg, “The Combat Zone,” *DBG*, July 31, 1966, D6; Jeremiah V. Murphy, “Boredom Fills the Barrooms in Boston’s ‘Combat Zone,’” *DBG*, November 11, 1968, 8A.

Admitting defeat, Boston chose to make The Combat Zone an official “adult entertainment district” in 1974. Attempting to contain the misbehavior and crime of the furloughed sailor proved simpler than directly challenging it. It was the same conclusion military authorities and politicians had come to during World War II.²⁸¹

It's easy to understand why Americans remain hesitant to imagine “the greatest generation” leaving a legacy of sexual coercion, drunken violence, and seedy vice districts. Few periods of American history still offer the kind of “victory culture” that that this moment continues to evoke. The standard story of World War II tells a tale of triumph, justice, and the ascension of American power, all of it built on the actions and sacrifices of soldiers and sailors fighting outside the United States. The move from the tragedy of Pearl Harbor to the hard won victories at Normandy and Iwo Jima creates a satisfying narrative arc even for those who only use “the good war” idea ironically. But rethinking the history of the American “home front,” recovering the central role of troops to that story, reveals a strange and unsettling world where military goals prevailed over the welfare and security of American civilians just as it had over foreign populations. Witnessing the transformations of cities and civilian life captures the precise ways that growing federal and military power impacted American society. The stories of people who populated American liberty ports are worth recovering,

²⁸¹ John Kifner, “Boston ‘Combat Zone’ Becomes Target of Police Crackdown,” *NYT*, December 4, 1976, 10.

from the lives of women running the GI gauntlet to troops snatching hard-earned excitement, all the while wondering if it might be their very last youthful foray.²⁸²

²⁸² For “victory culture” and an examination of its legacy see Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

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