

FTCN Replay: Military Women's Memorial Honors the Legacy of the Millions Who Served

In the latest episode of "From the Crow's Nest," host and AOC's Director of Advocacy and Outreach Ken Miller spoke with Phyllis Wilson, President of the [Military Women's Memorial](#). Their conversation highlighted the memorial's mission to document, preserve, and share the stories of the more than 3 million women who have served in the U.S. military since the Revolutionary War.

A Career of Service

Wilson brings substantial credibility to her role, having served 37 years in the Army as a signals intelligence specialist. She joined in 1981 with modest goals – to earn money for college and see the world. Like many service members, what began as a short-term commitment evolved into a lifelong career.

"I was going to sign up for four years, hopefully get to see parts of the world I'd never seen before, use the college money and move on to my next chapter," Wilson explained. "But once I got in there and just really I think like a lot of people ... fell in love with the mission and the camaraderie and that's why we stay."

The Memorial's Mission

Located at the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery, the Military Women's Memorial was approved by Congress in 1986 and dedicated in 1997. Though many visitors mistake it for simply the cemetery entrance, behind its curved wall lies a 33,000-square-foot education center dedicated to telling the stories of America's servicewomen.

The memorial chronicles women's military service from the Revolutionary War to present day, from those who disguised themselves as men to serve when it was illegal for women to join the military, to the women currently serving in combat roles once restricted to men.

"We start with the early women of the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, where they disguised themselves as men because it was illegal until 1901 for women to be any part of the military," Wilson noted.

Untold Stories

Throughout the interview, Wilson highlighted lesser-known contributions of military women, including the "Hello Girls" of World War I who operated telephone switchboards in France. These 220 women wore Signal Corps insignia and provided critical communications support that "turned the tide on what our war looked like in World War I."

Despite their service, they weren't recognized as veterans until nearly 60 years after the war ended. "They fought like the little demons they were until 1977 ... to finally get veteran status and now to get Congressional Gold Medal," Wilson said.

She also described the 1.5 million young women who joined the Women's Farm Army during World War II, stepping in to maintain America's agricultural production when men were called to combat.

"These girls showed up 16 and older, picking apples out of orchards, running tractors, getting corn out of the field, because not only was it needed here stateside, it had to be shipped over to feed our soldiers around the globe," Wilson explained.

Preserving Stories for Future Generations

A central part of the memorial's mission is its registry, which currently contains over 325,000 individual stories of women who served. Wilson emphasized that every woman's story deserves to be told, whether they served decades ago or are currently in uniform.

"Our goal is to have every single story of every single woman in there. So we're a little over 10% of the stories. That means nine out of 10 women, past and present, either they don't even know there's a national Military Women's Memorial that wants their story, or they do, and they don't believe that somehow their story is precious enough to be found here," Wilson said.

Wilson encouraged active-duty servicewomen to register their stories now rather than waiting until retirement, noting that the process is simple and can be updated throughout one's career.

"You can do it now. And it's so much easier to just add a little update, tick mark along the way," she said. "We have some people, they'll start it when they're lieutenants or specialists ... And you'll watch the migration of the photos as they get their promotions."

The memorial's work ensures that the contributions of military women – past, present, and future – remain a visible part of American history.

VISIT THE MILITARY WOMEN'S MEMORIAL

The Military Women's Memorial is located at the ceremonial entrance to Arlington National Cemetery and is open seven days a week with free admission. Can't visit in person? Explore the memorial through its [360° virtual tour](#) and register yourself or a servicewoman you know at womensmemorial.org. The website

allows visitors to search existing stories and contribute new ones to help document the legacy of America's military women.