

ELIZABETH VIRGINIA GOODPASTURE

1921 – 2012, WORLD WAR II

U.S. NAVY, LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE

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Elizabeth Virginia Goodpasture (née Goddard) was born in Dallas, Texas, on October 22, 1921. “Ginny,” as her family and friends knew her, grew up with four siblings—Carlyle Austin, Barbara, Lewis, and Robert—in the care of their mother Elva. Her father, Carlyle Johnson Goddard, worked in the marble industry, and moved the family a number of times throughout her early life. The Goddards moved from Dallas, Texas, to Proctor, Vermont, in 1924, then to Joliet, Illinois, and finally settled in Fountain City, Tennessee.

Fountain City was an upper crust suburb of Knoxville. Ginny earned a place in the junior and senior honor societies at Knoxville Central High School and joined several clubs, including Home Economics and Glee. As her yearbook quote, she referenced “Ode on St. Cecilia’s Day” by Alexander Pope—a poem that signified the importance of music for Ginny, who enjoyed playing piano in her free time.

After graduation in 1939, she enrolled at Tusculum College in Greenville, Tennessee. The ambitious student pursued a dual-major, earning degrees in English and music. Her studies honed her analytical and pattern-recognition abilities, skills that would make important contributions to her future military career.

In fact, Ginny was often a featured pianist at Tusculum, both as a soloist and as an accompanist. On May 18, 1943, the young musician presented

her graduate piano recital at the Tusculum chapel, complete with pieces by Bach, Scarlatti, Chopin, and Mendelssohn. Her hometown paper advertised the performance with a notice of her future plans “to join the WAVES.” Ginny’s excitement about her future career is evident in the pages of the 1943 Tusculana yearbook, where her classmates and professors felicitated, “Best Wishes in the WAVES!”

The WAVES, or Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, became an important component of the Navy after the United States was dragged into World War II by the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Early in the war, Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers introduced legislation to form a Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), to provide women more formal channels to work in the Army. The Navy followed suit in 1942 with a proposal for the WAVES. Ginny easily met the WAVES’ original enlistment standards for age and academic qualifications.

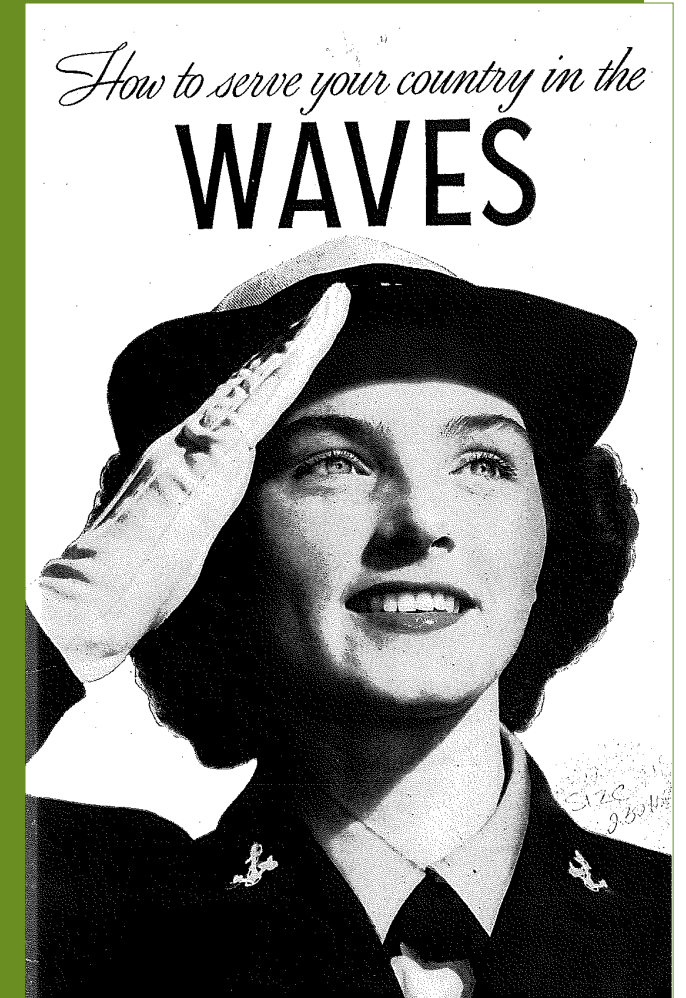
Ginny was not the only Goddard who served in the military. Her father Carlyle enlisted with the 74th Infantry during World War I, and her older brother Austin joined the Coast Guard in 1939. Ginny’s younger brother, Lewis, enlisted in the Army Signal Corps as a reservist, and coincidentally was called up right as Ginny was starting her own military journey. In July 1943, Lewis was ordered to Camp Crowder, Missouri, and Ginny entered active service with the WAVES. Lewis went on to serve as a commando for the Office of Strategic Services



Lt. Goodpasture’s service portrait bore a strong resemblance to WAVES recruiting posters.

ABOVE: Goodpasture Family collection

RIGHT: Naval History & Heritage Command



(OSS) and would eventually lose his life during a mission in France in 1944.

Ginny received her commission on September 21, 1943. The exact progression of Ginny’s World War II service is difficult to outline with certainty, but she first attended eight weeks of indoctrination training—the WAVES equivalent of “boot camp”—at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. This was followed by seven weeks of “special military communications” training at Mount Holyoke College, not far away in South Hadley, where the WAVES took over Rockefeller Hall and nicknamed it the SS *Rocky*.

Ensign Goddard was now ready for service as a “Code Girl.” As historian Liza Mundy has noted, “a first-rate code-breaking operation was needed to

crack enemy message systems.” The selection of candidates for code-breaking work focused on specific skill sets that were integral to recognizing patterns, such as languages and mathematics. “Music majors were wanted; musical talent, which involves the ability to follow patterns, is an indicator of code-breaking prowess, so that piano practicing that girls did paid off.” Ginny’s Tusculum music studies were indeed proving to be of great value for her—and for the United States government.

The fresh-faced ensign’s services were first needed in New Orleans, where she joined the headquarters of the 8th Naval District. New Orleans was the largest Allied port on the Gulf of Mexico, and its naval district now contained five Navy hospitals and dozens of bases large and small. Ginny was

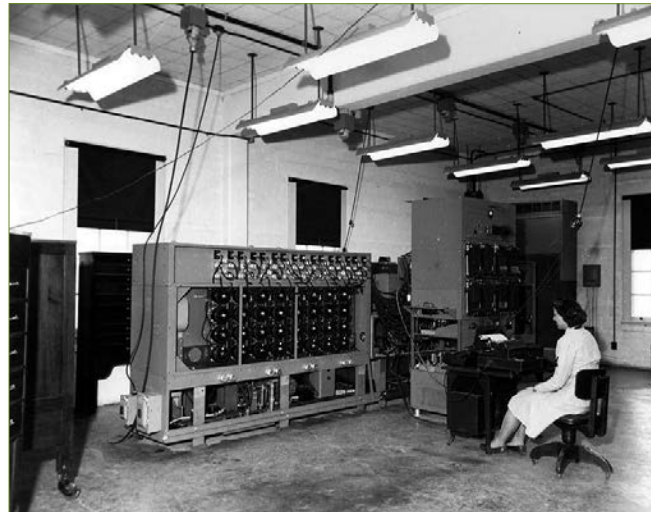
probably among the earliest of WAVES to serve with the district, as a “Director of Women’s Reserve” had arrived to set up a WAVES presence only about two months before the new ensign’s arrival.

Over 82,000 women eventually served as WAVES, managing tasks ranging from ordinary clerical work to air traffic control. Communications officers like Ginny, according to historian Susan Godson, were distributed to key stations around the U.S. by the Chief of Naval Operations:

This highly secret duty, often tedious and monotonous, included long hours of sending and receiving coded radio messages. They checked dispatches and operated teletype machines. An unusual means of communication fell to a few Wave seamen [sic]. After learning to handle homing pigeons, these women served at lighter-than-air stations along the coasts. Used in naval blimps on antisubmarine patrol, the trained pigeons carried messages to their handlers at air bases during periods of radio silence. Another select group of Waves, chosen for academic excellence and language aptitude, attended the 14-month Japanese language course at Boulder, Colorado, and eventually monitored Japanese radio broadcasts.

It is unclear how long Ginny served in New Orleans, or exactly in what communications capacity. Military documentation of women during World War II is generally more sparse. Evidently her work impressed her superiors enough for them to send her back up the communications chain directly to the source: the office of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) in Washington, D.C.

The CNO had been one of only three Navy departments to advocate early in the war for the inclusion of women in naval service. Ginny was therefore in plenty of good company when she arrived in Washington—over 50 percent of the naval personnel in the city were women at this point. As an experienced communications



One of OP-20-G’s “bombe” decoding machines.
U.S. Naval Cryptologic Veterans Association

officer, she was also complemented by some 3,000-5,000 WAVES assigned to the new Naval Communications Annex (OP-20-G) at 3801 Nebraska Avenue, the former site of Mount Vernon Seminary which the government had recently purchased and converted into a top-secret codebreaking hub. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security:

WAVES [at the Naval Communications Annex, OP-20-G] were sworn to secrecy and told that discussion of their work outside of approved channels could mean facing the death penalty for treason. Inside the bombe [slang for a codebreaking machine] decks, WAVES worked long hot hours and never knew how their individual work fit into the cryptanalysis process. Due in part to the efforts of the personnel at the Naval Communications Annex, the Allies broke the German Enigma code in 1944. By May of that year, the German submarine fleet was crippled as Allied intelligence was able to decipher their communication.

The incredible wall of secrecy erected around OP-20-G makes it difficult to determine which WAVES with communications backgrounds did or did not work there during the war. True to their oaths of



Ginny and Jim shortly after the war.
Goodpasture Family collection

secrecy, many never revealed the nature of their work to their families, then or later in life. Only recently have a number of books and other media begun celebrating the essential role played by the “Code Girls.”

Officially, Ginny Goddard’s posting on her discharge is listed as CNO-OP-9, the office of the Vice Chief of Naval Operations (VCNO). The VNCO, Vice Admiral Frederick J. Horne, was the first to officially hold this position, and worked directly under CNO and Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King. Horne’s VCNO rank was responsible for the herculean task of handling all of the Navy’s logistics at its most crucial historical moment. The pressure of working in this elevated office, with access to some of the most sensitive communications of the war, would have been immense.

Ginny nonetheless excelled and was promoted to lieutenant junior grade on January 1, 1945. She served honorably until nearly a year after the war, departing the Navy on June 5, 1946. As such, she would have seen momentous change in the VCNO’s office, including the retirement of Admiral Horne, and the replacement in late 1945 of CNO King with the famous Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, one of the heroes of the Pacific.

Her service in the Navy, coupled with her academic success prior to the war, inspired Ginny to launch straight into a new career path. She began studies at the Philadelphia School of Occupational Therapy, pursuing the preference for post-service work she expressed on her Notice of Separation.

While in Philadelphia, she was introduced at a party to a young Army veteran named James “Jim” Slocum Goodpasture. Jim was a Pennsylvania

- RIGHT: The new Mr. and Mrs. Goodpasture, 1948.
- OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM:
- (1) Goodpasture family Christmas card with all four children.
- (2) Nancy and Stuart Goodpasture (right) visit Morgantown High School, March 2025. From left are Mrs. Meghan Dunn, Alex Galusky, and Harper Bishop.
- (3) The dedicated couple in later years.



native who served as an enlisted technician in the 78th Infantry Division in Europe from 1943 to 1946. Jim was immediately smitten and tried his best to secure a date with the ambitious student. Ginny, intent on her career, advised the eager Army vet that her schedule was entirely too full for frivolous dating. If he really wanted a chance, she declared, Jim could find her at Sunday church service.

Jim became a faithful churchgoer. The couple married in August 1948, and continued to call Philadelphia home, since Jim had begun a lifelong career with the Sears Roebuck Company. Ginny taught occupational therapy classes at Widener Memorial School in Philadelphia.

Ginny and Jim had four children, Karen, Jessie, Stuart, and Nancy, and she became a stay-at-home mom as her children grew older. The Goodpasture family moved often as Jim's career purchasing merchandise for Sears advanced. One of the biggest adventures for the family was a move from Georgia to Mexico when the children were in elementary school. In Mexico, the children attended a conventional Mexican school, but their church was largely American. Their social and

cultural immersion was so complete that Nancy, the youngest, convinced herself she was Mexican by birth.

The family enjoyed many adventures in Mexico. Attending bullfights was a favorite. Ginny loved camping, and her perpetually prepared mind ensured that the family always had snakebite and scorpion venom protection before they headed out into the wild. Despite the demands of raising a quartet of children, Ginny continued to play the piano for her church in Mexico, and encouraged her children to find joy in music as well. Nancy accompanied her on the cello during church services, Stuart took up the violin and piano, Jessie went for singing lessons, and Jim found his musical ear as well.

When the Goodpasture family returned to the United States in 1963, they moved to Glencoe, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago and the homebase of the Sears Roebuck Company. Proximity to Chicago increased the cultural opportunities for the family. During the construction of Sears Tower (now the Willis Tower), amateur photographer Jim was allowed to snap his exposures from the top—beyond the safety barriers.



Young Nancy and Stuart worked as ushers for the Chicago Cubs. Nancy remembers saving up to buy tickets for her and Ginny to see “The Nutcracker” at a theater in Chicago. Jim, ever the adventurous prankster, once arranged for Stuart to be involved with a performance of Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture at a large music hall, then brought seven shotguns with blanks and sneaked onto the theater balcony. When the production’s “cannon fire” arrived, father and son fired off the shotguns to the surprise of the entire audience.

Ginny and Jim moved to Sun City, Arizona, several years after his retirement. Their son Stuart lived nearby, and they were excited to become grandparents for the first time. Later, when Ginny and Jim fell ill, all four of their children met with them in Phoenix to discuss options for long-term care. The couple decided to move to West Virginia, nearer to the youngest daughter Nancy. They placed Jim at St. Barbara’s Care Home in Mannington, Marion County, where there were two pianos he could play. In 2009, Jim passed away lovingly holding Ginny’s hand.

Ginny lived the remainder of her life at the Veterans Administration Nursing Home in Clarksburg. Ginny was able to move and walk until the end, but pneumonia took its toll on her body. In her final days, both Nancy and Stuart sat long hours beside their mother, playing Beethoven piano sonatas until she passed away peacefully.

Music and religion were so important to Ginny and Jim that it shaped their burials in the West Virginia National Cemetery in Pruntytown. At the bottom of their markers is a pair of inscriptions. “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know,” Jim’s states, echoing his favorite hymn. To his right, taking up the verse and celebrating her love of scripture, Ginny’s says, “For the Bible Tells Me So.”



PLACE OF INTERMENT:
West Virginia National Cemetery
SECTION C3
SITE 174

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The West Virginia National Cemeteries Project is a program of the West Virginia Humanities Council, funded in part by the Veterans Legacy Grant Program of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and initiated in 2021. Biographies produced as part of this program are composed by West Virginia high school students and West Virginia University graduate students and PhD candidates, who conduct original research on veterans interred at the Grafton National Cemetery or the West Virginia National Cemetery, both of which are located in Grafton, Taylor County, West Virginia.

As home to one of the nation’s first national cemeteries—founded shortly after the Civil War—the community of Grafton has longstanding traditions of honoring America’s veterans, including the longest continuously celebrated Memorial Day parade in the United States. The Grafton National Cemetery, located in the heart of the city and founded in 1867, is typically the endpoint of each year’s parade. Since the Grafton National Cemetery began to run short of space during the 1960s, the West Virginia National Cemetery was dedicated in 1987, just a few miles outside of Grafton.

The West Virginia Humanities Council is proud to thank the following organizations for their participation in the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project: West Virginia Archives and History, the West Virginia University history department, Taylor County Historical and Genealogical Society, Taylor County Public Library, Grafton High School, and University High School, among many others.

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For readability, bibliographies have been omitted from this publication. Student research for these biographies relies heavily on primary sources—census records, city directories, draft cards, muster rolls, and more—made available digitally through Ancestry and Fold3. Yearbook repositories and the digitized collections of many universities and archives have been invaluable resources. Most newspaper research was conducted digitally via Newspapers.com, NewspaperArchives, and the Library of Congress’s *Chronicling America* database.

Servicemembers’ Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) and Individual Deceased Personnel Files (IDPFs) are another essential part of project research, provided free of charge in most cases by the National Archives through standard records requests.

As the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project has grown and matured, the team has found that new sources sometimes surface for veterans researched in prior project years. To better maintain a “living bibliography” of all its veterans, a single master document is kept up on the project’s webpage under the “Programs” tab at www.wvhumanities.org.

Views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Archives of the United States, or any other federal agency. For more information about the Veterans Legacy Memorial and the Veterans Legacy Grant Program, visit www.vlm cem.va.gov.

