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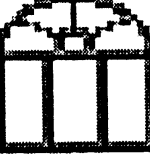
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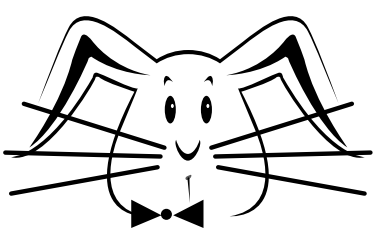

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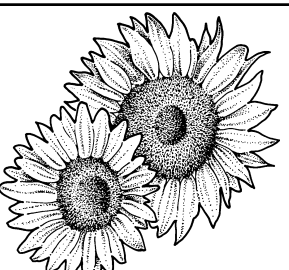
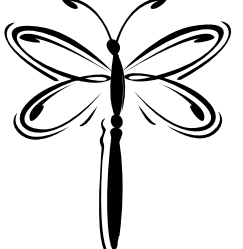
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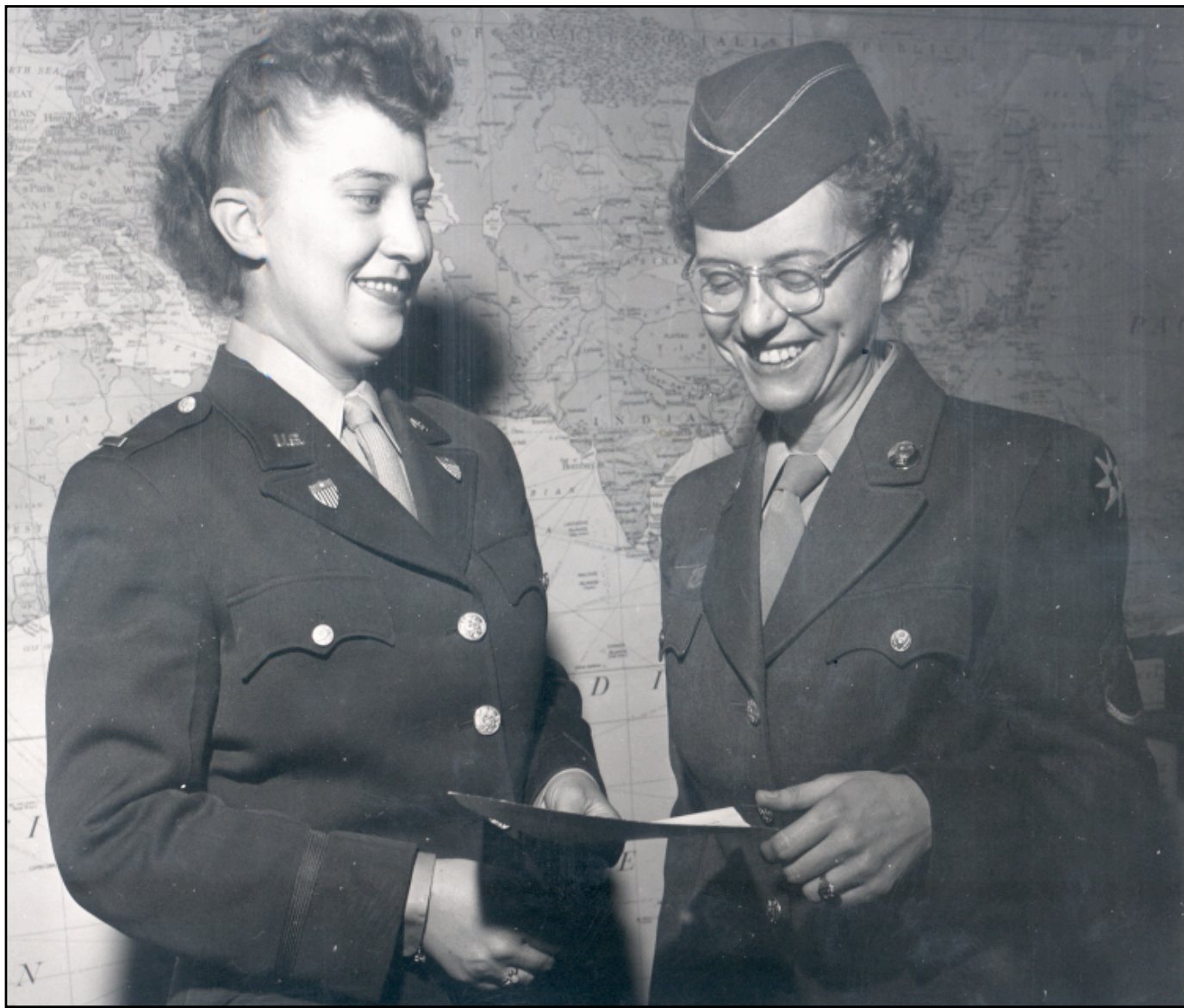




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Doing her part as a member of the "Greatest Generation"



Staff Sgt. Mazie Sutton (left) was handed her discharge by her supervisor, 1st Lt. Helen Dingler, in January 1946. Sutton, a 1936 graduate of Sherman Community High School, joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in August 1943 and spent her entire time in uniform at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.

Soldier spends entire service in Iowa

By Greg Stover
The Goodland Star-News

Among the veterans honored each Memorial Day are those of "The Greatest Generation," who lived through the Great Depression, defended the country during World War II and helped transform America into the greatest nation in the world.

Goodland's Mazie Sutton was a member of that generation who answered Uncle Sam's call. She gave up her teaching job in Limon, Colo., in the summer of 1943 after the end of the school year and joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

The WAAC was established in May 1942 as part of the country's effort to free up some of America's manpower for combat. Oveta Hobby, who worked in the public relations bureau of the War Department, was appointed as the Corps' director.

"It was a time when everybody was doing what they could for the war effort," Sutton recalled, "and I felt my part was to join the Army."

Early in July 1943, Sutton arrived at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, for recruit training little did she know she would spend her entire military career there. During her initial training, she learned military courtesies and customs, drill and ceremonies and map reading and took part in "plenty" of physical training.

After training, she became a clerk-typist at the base's regimental training office. A short time later, Sutton joined the majority of other members of the WAAC in making the transition to the Women's Army Corps, becoming a regular part of the U.S. Army.

Hobby, now a colonel, came to Fort Des Moines and held a mass swearing in ceremony for those choosing to remain. Overall, about 75 percent of the women in the WAAC stayed in uniform.

Sutton said she and the women assigned to the training office did all they could in helping train WAC officers and enlisted soldiers in a variety of skills. A lot of high-ranking officers visited the base, she said, and the visits usually included a march in review.



Mazie Sutton



Women's Army Corps Service Medal

Most of the time, Sutton said, she was a member of the color guard, including a time when a senior officer from General Eisenhower's staff made a visit. On one occasion, she remembers vividly, it was a very windy day and she almost fell over while carrying the American flag.

Sutton remembers one of Col. Hobby's visits in particular.

"Colonel Hobby came to the post looking for volunteers to join General Eisenhower's headquarters in North Africa," she said, "and after everybody there stepped forward to volunteer, she cried, which was probably the most non-military-like thing I ever saw her do."

Sutton said an entire company was formed from the personnel at Fort Des Moines for the assignment.

She said she spent most of her time as an administration noncommissioned officer, moving up the ranks to staff sergeant. Near the end of the war, the focus of her work went from training soldiers to processing them for separation.

Although she was assigned to the same organization during her time at Fort Des Moines, Sutton remembers having to move nine times during her 30 months.

During her time in uniform, Sutton said, she was able to visit a friend in Washington. She borrowed a car and got to see all the sights, including the Smithsonian Institution.

"I just loved it," she said. Sutton was discharged in January 1946 and a year later finished her bachelor's de-

gree at Greeley State Teachers College, now the University of Northern Colorado, using the G.I. Bill to help pay for that final year.

Her decorations include the Good Conduct Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the American Campaign Medal and the Women's Army Corps Service Medal. Shortly after her discharge, Sutton received a letter in the mail awarding her the Army Commendation Ribbon.

She carries one of her original "dog tags" on her key chain as a constant reminder of her days as a soldier.

After finishing her degree at Greeley, Sutton returned to teaching, spending the next 29 years in Wyoming. She taught at nearly every level between first grade through college. She also found time to earn her master's degree in elementary education from the University of Wyoming. In 1976, she moved to Kansas to help care for her mother while teaching in Kanorado before retiring in 1983.

Until last fall, Sutton continued to stay active in the school system mostly as a volunteer at Central Elementary School. Sutton joined the American Legion in 1946 and last year, along with two other members of the Goodland post, got a certificate commemorating 60 years of continuous service.

She is a past commander of the Goodland post and now serves as its historian. For many years she "ran the show" for placement of the flags on Memorial Day at Goodland's cemetery, but a few months ago she passed the job on to other Legionnaires.

Sutton said her time in the Army was one of the best experiences of her life. She kept in touch with some of the friends she made then for many years afterwards.

For a time, her uniform was on display at the High Plains Museum along with a photo of her in it and a brief summary of her service.

Last Sept. 20 was proclaimed "Mazie Sutton Day" last fall by the Goodland School District, honoring her for long-time contributions as an educator, her volunteer work in the school, and her service and dedication to her country.



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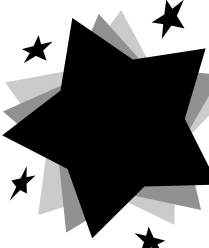


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