



### **Colonel Mary L. Milligan Rasmuson**

Colonel Mary L. Milligan Rasmuson was born on April 11, 1911 in East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in education from Women's College at Carnegie Mellon University and went on to obtain a master's degree in school administration from the University of Pittsburgh. She worked as a secretary, teacher, school administrator.

When the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) was organized, the Army received over 30,000 applications for officer training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. The women chosen were amongst the best of the best: college educated, unmarried, capable, strong and willing to serve their country. Mary Rasmuson enlisted in the WAAC in July 1942 and was one of the 440 applicants selected for the first class of the WAAC Officer Candidate School and was commissioned on August 29, 1942.

She was recognized as an outstanding graduate of her class and was sent to the Adjutant General's School, Fort Washington, Maryland. By October she was the WAC Training Center Director at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.

From 1946-1947 she was a Staff Officer, General Staff, Department of Army in Washington, D.C. and from 1947 to 1952 she served as Deputy Director, Women's Army Corps. She worked on legislation to make the WAC, the Army Nurses Corps and the Women's Medical Specialist Corp part of the regular army.

Colonel Rasmuson served from 1952-1956 as WAC Staff Advisor to Commanding General, United States Army, Europe and a member of the Continental Army Command Staff. In 1957,

President Eisenhower appointed her as the fifth Director of the WAC, and she was reappointed in 1961 by President Kennedy.

As Director of the WAC, military historians credit her with major achievements including increasing the WAC's strength, insisting on effectiveness in command, working with Congress to amend laws that deprived women of service credit and benefits, and expanding the range of military opportunities open to women.

She retired from the military in July of 1962 and moved to Anchorage, Alaska, with her new husband, Elmer Rasmuson. In Alaska, she and her husband championed philanthropy and community wellness. She served as head of the Municipality of Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Commission and later as Chair of the Anchorage Museum Foundation. She gave 45 years of service on the board of the Rasmuson Foundation, to direct more than \$200 million in grants to Alaska nonprofit organizations. Rasmuson served as honorary chair and patron of the Veterans Memorial Project and was a member of the U.S. Army Alaska Citizen's Advisory Committee, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and a lifetime member of the Association of the U.S. Army and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Colonel Rasmuson's military awards include: the Legion of Merit with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Women's Army Corps Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal and the National Defense Service Medal.