



**Colonel Mary J. D. Roberts**

Colonel Mary J. D. Roberts was born in Port Arthur, Texas on April 7, 1913. She graduated from Texas Woman's University in 1933 and served as a home demonstration agent of the Texas agricultural extension services. When her husband was called to active duty with the Navy in World War II, she followed him into military service.

She enlisted on 12 July 1942 and was a member of the first WAAC OCS Class at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. She was commissioned upon graduation on August 29, 1942. The intense training she experienced was a completely new world. It was hot and physically demanding and she recalled, "for a woman to see another woman faint and fall out with glassy eyes, march and step over her and not even stop to help, that was a complete change."

Colonel Roberts stayed at Fort Des Moines upon graduation and was assigned to the "cooks" and "Bakers" school as an understudy to the Director of Training. In December 1942, she was assigned to the cadre of the second WAC training center that opened in Daytona Beach, Florida. In February 1943 she attended the Adjutant General School at Fort Washington and upon graduation she was assigned to a newly opened administration training school at a teacher's college in Alpine, Texas. The school had thirty-five officers and she served in a variety of assignments - Director of Training, Battalion Commander, Fire Marshall and Intelligence Officer. She served as Personnel Director at the Army Redistribution Center, Miami, Florida and later was in charge of awards and decorations at the Pentagon.

She left the Army in 1946 and began full-time work on Johnsons staff in 1953. Her experience and knowledge as a home demonstration agent soon came in handy. She helped with his diet compilation after a heart attack in 1955 and kept him on a low-calorie diet.

Colonel Roberts worked for Lyndon B. Johnson from 1953 to 1969, serving as his chief personal secretary during his time as both Vice President and President of the United States. She went into the US Army Reserves in 1956 when the Congressional Command and Operations Group was formed in Washington. Her duties as secretary to Mr. Johnson while he was Vice President took her to foreign lands and to places of royalty and heads of state.

In December 1962, she made an active duty tour overseas as a Lieutenant Colonel and the senior senator on the tour wrote a letter to President Johnson praising her performance. Johnson, serving as Vice President at the time realized he was entitled to military help on his staff, so he asked to have her begin an extended active duty Tour in 1963.

When she was promoted to Colonel on June 7, 1965, it was the first time that the Army had two WAC colonels on active duty. She culminated her Army career as Special Assistant on National Security Affairs in the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

After retiring from government service, she was instrumental in organizing the Johnson Presidential Library at the University of Texas, where she also served on the board of directors.

She is sometimes more formally known as Colonel Mary Juanita Duggan Roberts.

She died on May 26, 1983.