



Colonel Frances Weir

Colonel Frances Weir was born on December 14, 1927 in Winchester, Virginia. After graduating from Madison College in 1949, she enlisted in the Women's Army Corps. She majored in business and worked to pay for her education, an experience that shaped her philanthropy for the rest of her life.

She enlisted in the Women's Army Corps on August 1, 1949 and after eight weeks of basic training, she attended the six month long WAC Officer Candidate School Class # 3 at Camp Lee, Virginia. She was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant upon graduation from OCS on April 11, 1950.

As a new WAC officer, she received "The Package" - a short workshop on how to do makeup, style hair and wear the feminine WAC uniform properly.

After promotion to captain, and then major a few years later on February 21, 1962, Weir attended Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth. At the time, the course was open to only four WAC officers per year. In 1966, Weir was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

Colonel Weir was assigned to the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development in 1968 and recommended for an important assignment in a combat zone: the Republic of Vietnam. In January 1969, Weir arrived in Saigon to oversee personnel, transportation and logistics in the U.S. Army Support Command.

In 1970, Weir returned to the Pentagon as a program analyst for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The Chief of Staff selected Colonel Weir to be President of the Army's Conscientious Objector Board, which reviewed the cases of those who opposed the Vietnam draft on moral or religious grounds.

From August 1972 to December 1974, she was stationed at the Sixth Army Headquarters at the Presidio of San Francisco, California, as Staff Advisor to the WAC Director on all aspects of WAC personnel for one of the Army's largest theater commands.

Colonel Weir was the first WAC to head a major unit at Fort Jackson as commander of Headquarters Support Command, a mixed Battalion of 2,000 men and 200 women. So novel was the concept of women commanding men that mention of Weir's assignment in Fort Jackson made its way into the 1974 *TIME* magazine article, "The Sexes: Skirts and Stripes."

She assumed duty as Secretary of the U.S. Army Transportation School in 1976 and was soon appointed Deputy Assistant Commandant of the school. At the time, Weir was one of about a dozen female colonels in the Army at the time (not including nurses).

She retired in 1977, one year before the WAC was dissolved and women were integrated into the Army. Weir retired to San Antonio, Texas, in 1978.

Colonel Weir's military awards include: the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal and Vietnam Service Medal.

Weir made a series of wise investments in retirement and regularly supported charities.

She donated \$240,000 to JMU to establish her scholarship endowment. Upon her passing in September of 2023, she donated the university's largest cash gift and largest gift solely for scholarships. At more than \$6 million, the Frances Weir ('49) Endowed Scholarship enables the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships to award approximately \$240K annually in scholarship funds in perpetuity. Her endowment supports students who demonstrate financial need and who maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher with scholarships that are renewable for three years.

Colonel Weir died on September 14, 2023.