Lt. Commander Elmira B. Davis, officer in charge of Waves at Bainbridge is former N.J. teacher.

"Equality of opportunity" at its BEST

U. S. NAVAL TRAINING CENTER

Bainbridge, Md.

Capt. Frederick Wolsieffer, commander of the post's recruit training is a decorated World War II veteran.

By
JAMES L. HICKS

BAINBRIDGE, Maryland — The Navy's fair, firm policy of equality of opportunity without regard to race or creed at Bainbridge, Maryland, is giving hundreds of colored girls and women the opportunity to serve their country in the highest traditions of Americanism, while at the same time equipping them with academic knowledge and technical skills that will lead to fruitful careers when they return to civilian life.

A study of the Naval Training Center at Bainbridge, where rotating classes of 1,200 women are being trained daily as Waves to relieve sailors for combat duty, shows that the goal of the training here is teamwork and the theme of the team is that every teammate is equal to, and should be treated as, any other teammate.

Firm Policy

With colored women serving in every company of the blue-coated women's ranks that march daily across the parade grounds at Bainbridge, there is a firm policy of equality of opportunity in everything here. The policy is soundly backed by the authorities in charge.

Actually, to anyone visiting Bainbridge, it would appear incorrect to say that its policy toward integration is "firm," for nothing is to be found here that would suggest force or coercion in making the personnel live and train together in an integrated society.

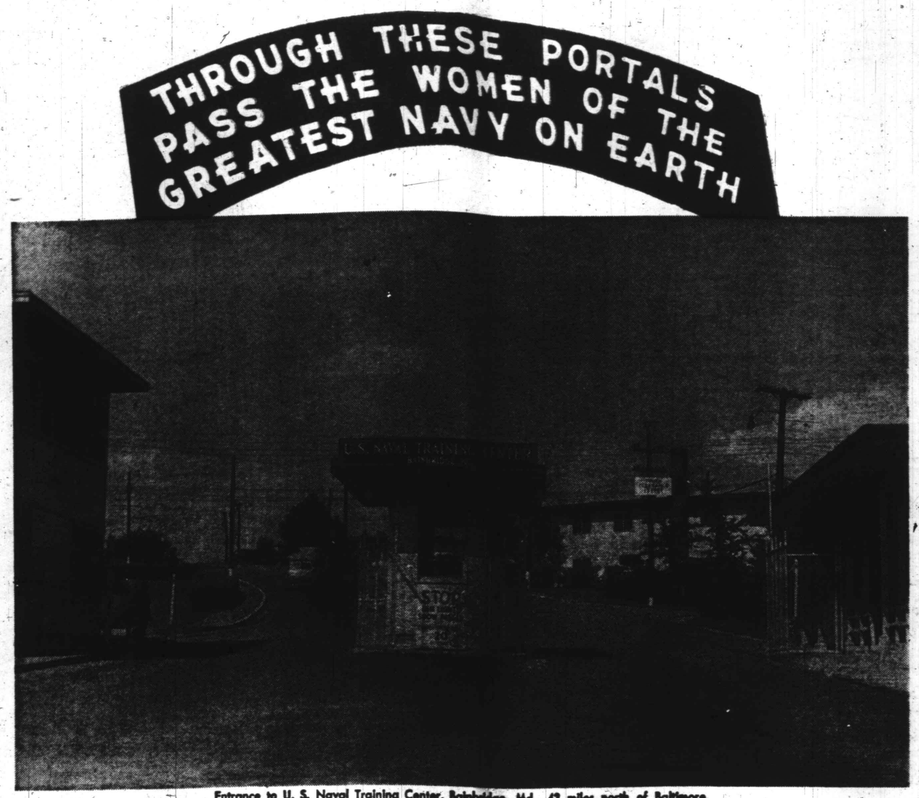
On the contrary, a visitor here gets the feeling that this is how it should be all over America and this is how the Americans at Bainbridge feel about it.

But the very lack of force in evidence at Bainbridge actually proves how forceful the policy of integration really is. You get the idea that it would be as difficult to move Bainbridge off its policy of integration as it would be to move a mountain — and one is not tempted to try to move a mountain. No one tries to change the policy at Bainbridge.

President's Idea

The result is that the Bainbridge Naval Training Center, more than any other military base this writer has visited, represents the type of military service President Truman must have had in mind when he issued his now famous directive to all the Armed Services directing them to provide "equality of opportunity" to raise the efficiency of our striking arms and help conserve the nation's manpower.

Bainbridge is the goal the President was seeking. Here is the ultimate in Democracy. This is the pattern. Here lies the American Ideal, on 1,100 rolling acres along the Susquehanna River in Maryland, 43 miles from historic old Baltimore.



Entrance to U. S. Naval Training Center, Bainbridge, Md., 43 miles north of Baltimore.

What are the results on the personnel when they are able to begin their training under the American Ideal.

Shirley Wilkinson

The answer can be found in the thrilling way, pert, petite, youthful Shirley Wilkinson clapped her hands together in glee and sighed "gee, it's perfect" when she was asked by the writer to tell how she felt about her military life at Bainbridge.

One thrills to the thrill which he knows that Shirley is experiencing at the unlimited opportunity to serve her country in a patriotic way uninhibited by race, creed or color.

The answer can also be found in the proud way Shirley wears her uniform; the way she so proudly carries her company's flag as she marches on dress parade.

It's found in the way recruit Wave Wilhelmina Grant of New York proudly and carefully scrubs the floor of her barracks — carefully because she is a member of the team — and proudly because the task came to her not on the basis of her race, but because of where her name fell on an alphabetical roster from which all will eventually be called.

Capt. Clifford A. Fines, commands this ideal Naval center. He's also a decorated World War II vet.

Let's look at a Wave at Bainbridge. Shirley Wilkinson is just barely five feet tall. Shirley is young, she's pretty, she's a Wave —and that means Shirley has a future.

Graduate Of Dunbar

In June of 1952, Shirley walked across the stage at the Dunbar High school in Washington and received her high school diploma. She was interested in a career but she was not particularly interested in going to college to get one. One of her brothers was in the Air Force, two were in the Army, two were discharged veterans a younger brother was at home and a sister was married, living in Washington.

Shirley wanted a dash of excitement but she did not wish to waste her time while getting it. She also wanted that career. She decided to join the Waves.

Her mother, Mrs. Hazel Wilkinson of 124 Bates street, nw Washington, D.C. did not object. Shirley came to Bainbridge.

Last week, after eight and a half weeks of intensive, but exciting training, Shirley was preparing for graduation from Bainbridge and an assignment as a Seamen Apprentice in the Navy at San Diego, California. 3,000 miles from home.

Instead of being worried about being sent so far from home, Shirley was thrilling to the excitement of far away places with strange sounding names. She was unafraid because those nine weeks of training at Bainbridge had given her a confidence Shirley never dreamed she could have.

She had learned how to walk, how to drill, how to swim; administration, technical skills, things about ships and aircraft, Naval history and organization, and a thousand other things which will make her a more valuable American citizen, both in and out of the service.

Four pretty young Waves team up to lift heavy medicine ball during physical education drill. Left to right, Eloise Washington, Seattle; Marian Stephens, Florida; Bessie Gray, Bellaire, Ohio; and Rosalie Graves, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Team Work

Probably the most valuable thing Shirley learned at Bainbridge was something which she least noticed. This was living and working together in harmony with all types of Americans with no other thought than that they were members of the team.

The barracks, the dances, the swimming pools, the showers, the galley (KP) duty, the drills, the joys, the little sorrows, the "sweating it out"— she had shared them all with every kind of race which goes to make up America. And there had been nothing to make her feel that either she, or anyone else was different from other members of the team. It's simply the Bainbridge way.

Joan Campbell

Shirley is by no means an exception at Bainbridge. Joan Campbell, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Campbell of 235 N. Ashland Avenue, Chicago, is a member of her class.

Joan attended the University of Illinois and Herzel Jr. College and then joined the Waves. "It's a long story" she said. "It sounds almost silly, but Bernita Green, a friend of mine was in school one day and we just made up our minds to join the Navy.

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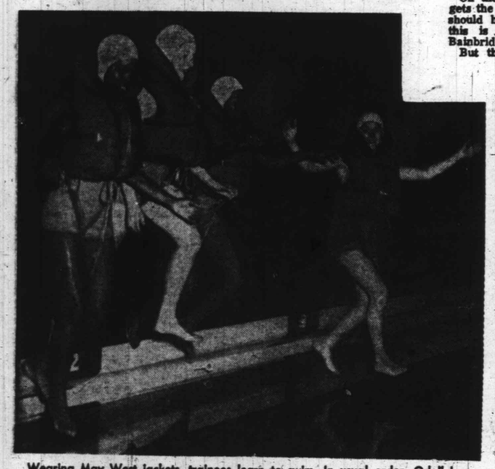

Wearing May West jackets, trainees learn to swim. In usual order, Odell Lang, Indianapolis; Beverly Thoren, NYC; Althea Nesbit, Ely, Minn.; Elaine Visseau, Orchard Park, N. Y.

Shirley Wilkinson, 124 Bates st., nw, Washington, flag bearer, stands at head of her company. She completed eight weeks of intensive training last month, is now seaman apprentice in San Diego, Calif.

Shirley Woods, Pittsburgh, models the Waves' smart uniform. She's one of 1200.

View of a first aid classroom at the Wave training center. Seated left front, Ruth E. Barnes, Louisville, Ky. The Navy has stepped up training of women to relieve sailors for combat duty.

Chow wins approval of these Waves. Left to right, Alma Barrett, Ft. Worth, Tex.; Alzelia Waldon, daughter of Mrs. Ethel Harris, Huntington, W.Va., and Shirley Nicoll, Ballard Vale, Mass.—(U.S. Navy Photos)