

## From the Regimental Historian & Archivist

**Our history:** Phyllis L. Propp-Fowle was truly a trail blazer in our Regiment: the *first* female Judge Advocate; *first* female Post Judge Advocate; *first* female Judge Advocate to earn a combat patch and overseas combat stripes; and the *only* female Judge Advocate to serve overseas in World War II. No one---male or female---is likely to have so many "firsts" again!



A display case at TJAGLCS displays COL Propp-Fowle's uniform, photographs, and some personal items.

Born in Jasper County, Iowa on March 8, 1908, Propp-Fowle obtained her law degree from the University of Iowa in 1933. She was the only woman in her graduating class.

After America entered World War II, Propp-Fowle was one of the first 1,000 women to join the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1942. When Congress gave the WAAC military status as part of the Army and renamed it the Women's Army Corps in September 1943, Propp-Fowle became one of its first members.

Given her legal training, Propp-Fowle began requesting a transfer from the WAAC / WAC to the JAG Department in mid-1942. After two

years, her transfer was finally approved and, on May 4, 1944, now CPT Propp-Fowle became the first woman to wear JA insignia on her collar. She immediately requested to attend The Judge Advocate General's School at the University of Michigan—only to be refused because the school did not accept women. Consequently, she was assigned as the Post Judge Advocate at Ft. Des Moines, Iowa. This made sense, given that the WAC headquarters was located there.

CPT Propp-Fowle deployed to Europe in January 1945, becoming the first and only female Judge Advocate to serve overseas in World War II. She was assigned to the Judge Advocate Section, Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, in Paris. As a result, she earned both a right sleeve shoulder patch and three overseas service bars (reflecting a total of 18 months service in a combat theater).

In early 1947, now MAJ Propp-Fowle was still on active duty with the JAG Dept., where she worked as the Chief, Legal Affairs, Judge Advocate Division, U.S. Forces in Europe. At this time, however, the Army decided to discharge all women, and Propp-Fowle was released from active duty in July 1947. She was, however, immediately rehired as a civilian attorney in the U.S. European Command in Heidelberg, Germany. Propp-Fowle subsequently worked in the Military Affairs Branch, where she prepared legal opinions, examined contracts for legal sufficiency, and supervised the legal assistance program for the entire command.

Propp-Fowle remained in Heidelberg until 1951, when she married Mr. Farnsworth Fowle, a newspaper reporter for the New York Times, and returned to the U.S. She subsequently practiced law in New York City. Propp-Fowle remained in the Army Reserve and retired as a LTC in 1968.

In 1999, Propp-Fowle was inducted as a "Distinguished Member of the Regiment." She died on June

12, 2000, aged 92 years. A suite of rooms at TJAGLCS has been dedicated to her memory in grateful recognition of her many contributions to the United States Army and the JAG Corps.

The Regimental Historical Collection at the LCS has Propp-Fowle's Class A service uniform in its possession, as well as other memorabilia relating to her superlative service in our Corps.

**By Mr. Fred Borch, Regimental Historian**



LTC Phyllis L. Propp-Fowle, Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, US Army Europe, Heidelberg, Germany (about 1946).

*Send me your history: If you have an interesting piece of JAG Corps history, including photographs, please send it to me at...*

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