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Women in WWII - Keelersburg Woman Helps Train Fighter Pilots

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, J. Gleim, Museum Curator)



PMM Collection - Photo, Louise Baldauski Coleman.

Louise Ann Baldauski Coleman of Keelersburg, PA graduated from Penn State in 1943 as a Hospital Dietitian. Shortly thereafter, she relocated to San Francisco to marry fellow Penn State alum, Al Baldauski. Three months later they both decided to enlist in the Navy hoping to, as Ms. Coleman stated in a letter, “get this war over so that our children will never have to go to war!”.



PMM Collection - Medals, Louise Baldauski Coleman.

Louise became a member of the U.S. Navy W.A.V.E.S. (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). When the US entered WWII the only women in the US Navy were members of the Navy Nurse Corps. In 1942, the Navy began enlisting women for the WAVES. WAVES were stationed at bases in the US and abroad. Louise trained at Hunter College “boot school” – the women’s equivalent of boot camp. Following her training, she went to Naval Air Station Atlanta (Georgia), where learned to become a Link Instrument Trainer. The Link Trainer program was one of the W.A.V.E.S. most rigorous assignments.



*Photo example of WWII “Link Trainer” - Women of WWII.*

A “Link Trainer” was an early type of flight simulator used to teach fighter pilots to fly by instrument, rather than sight, and during World War II nearly all Link Trainer teachers were women. These women helped to ensure the male pilots had the training they need to safely and successfully complete the missions vital to achieving victory in the war. Louise held this position in Atlanta, and later in Groton, Connecticut, where she joined her husband who was station as a meteorologist. Louise was discharged in May 1945 with the rank of Petty Officer, Second Class.



PMM Collection - Photo, Louise Baldauski Coleman.

Following the war, the Baldauskis settled in Pennsylvania’s Wyoming Valley and raised four children. Al Baldauski died in 1983. Louise later married fellow veteran Joseph Coleman. She remained active in veteran’s groups and wore her W.A.V.E.S. uniform for the last time in 2002 at a Memorial Day celebration in River Edge, New Jersey (photo at right). Louise Coleman died in 2011, at the age of 89.