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Augustana College: Thriving Through Change

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Augustana College: Thriving through Change

September 16, 1940 is a date few Americans would associate with any historical importance, yet it may be one of the most important dates in United States history. Nazi Germany was rapidly advancing across Europe using Blitzkrieg warfare, or the rapid attack of an enemy, to overwhelm all that opposed them.¹ With the United States allies being overrun in Europe, the U.S. implemented the country's first ever peacetime draft, otherwise known as The Selective Service and Training Act, passed into law on September 16, 1940.² This moment in history signifies the United States' transition into a warring nation even though they had not officially declared war. At this point in time America was recovering from the Great Depression. The war in Europe aided in this recovery with its desperate need for U.S. manufacturing. High demand from European markets resulted in a large increase in production. Corporations producing these goods needed the manpower to produce it, which in turn created much needed jobs throughout the United States.

Despite all of this, however, the overall sentiment in the U.S. was to avoid this war at all cost.³ The fact that this country began selecting people for the armed forces before it ever got involved did not sit well with everyone. This sentiment changed on December 7th, 1941 when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. The U.S. experienced an outcry of support for the war across the country and the mindset of the United States drastically changed in one day.⁴ The government underwent this change over a year prior to the attack with the implementation of the draft. Despite the fact that most people would not be on board with the war for another year, the

¹ Limbach, Raymond, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Blitzkrieg." Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc, 4 April 2015.

² Ray, Michael. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Selective Service Acts." Encyclopedia Britannica, inc, 2015.

³ Ann Boaden, *Light and Leaven: Women Who Shaped Augustana's First Century* (Rock Island: Augustana Historical Society, 2011), 140.

⁴ Ibid.

government of the United States of America sent a clear message to the rest of the world- they were willing to fight for the protection of the rest of the free world.

The change that came with the onset of World War II impacted every aspect of life for Americans. College campuses developed into a hotbed of this change because college aged students were the ones eligible for the draft. Men leaving for war created many new opportunities on campus for the group of people that remained, particularly the women. Charles Dorn discusses in his article "A Woman's World: The University of California, Berkeley, during the Second World War" some of the changes in gender roles that accompanied the war. Dorn argues that women were not just place holders while men were at war, but that the war allowed them to move into new and powerful roles on campus and in society.⁵ His article specifically looks at this change at the University of California Berkeley, but his findings can be seen on campuses across the country. Ann Boaden discovers a virtually identical change in gender roles at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois in her book *Light and Leaven: Women Who Shaped Augustana's First Century*.⁶ Just as Dorn found women moving into leadership positions at Berkeley, Boaden identifies women making the same moves at Augustana. The president of Augustana College, Conrad Bergendoff emerges as the leader of this transition, using a unique balance that allows for Augustana to thrive during the war. World War II introduced many new challenges that forced President Bergendoff and the Augustana community to adapt to both the needs of the war and the needs of the school. As men left for war, women had to step in and fill the vacated social and academic roles caused by the draft. To combat this change, Bergendoff set Augustana down a path led by the school's traditional values. The Augustana community used these conservative beliefs to facilitate a liberal gender transformation on campus,

⁵ Dorn, Charles. "'A Woman's World': The University of California, Berkeley, during the Second World War." *History of Education Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2008): 534.

⁶ Ann Boaden, *Light and Leaven: Women Who Shaped Augustana's First Century* (Rock Island: Augustana Historical Society, 2011).

expediting the success of the college during the war and leaving the school in a better position for similar successes in the future.

Sitting at his desk in the late Rock Island summer of 1940, President Bergendoff was determined to assist the war effort in any way he could. However, becoming the ideal patriot meant sacrifices both for Bergendoff on a personal level and for the entire college. Augustana College was and still is a business. It needs money to operate and it generates this money through the student population which pays for the liberal arts education that Augustana offers. With the draft threatening to take away much of the school's source of income, President Bergendoff faced the problem of maintaining an operational school while still assisting in the war effort. Bergendoff chose to follow a path that allowed the college to actively support the war effort and retain its status as a productive institution. Over three years later, consequences from Bergendoff's decision became evident in a statement in the school's student handbook from 1943-1944 which reflected the mission of the school. In it he reminded the Augustana community that "College in 1943-1944 will be different." He continued to explain the changes that war would bring to Augustana by saying,

We cannot afford to lose sight of eternal truths even in the confusion and crisis of the urgent present. On the girls will fall the task of continuing the traditions of Augustana and keeping its spirit bright- the kind of a school to which our boys will want to come back. War destroys. But the stress of war also develops fine things in human character. Amid the ruins of today the Christian college continues to stand as a conserver of the best things of the past and as an Alma Mater nourishing the best graces of humanity.⁷

Bergendoff demonstrated the necessity of upholding the school's values and introduced the change of gender roles that needed to occur to make this happen. He knew that women

⁷ Student handbook, 1943-1944, in Augustana College Student Handbook, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

were the perfect group to take over the men's roles in the classroom and on campus as they left for war. In this statement Bergendoff continued to guide the school down a path that enabled it to continue its success throughout the course of the war, embracing the changes that needed to occur to ensure this success. As a whole Augustana would change drastically over the course of the war and Bergendoff knew this change would be inevitable.

The war hit Augustana hard and the challenges Bergendoff faced only became more difficult as it progressed. Back in 1940, Bergendoff knew the draft would impact the school's population, but no one knew to what extent the damage would reach, putting even more pressure on Bergendoff to lead the Augustana community in upholding the school's values. On November 11th, 1942 the United States Congress made an amendment to the Selective Service and Training Act, lowering the age of draft eligible white men in the United States to eighteen and expanding it upwards to thirty-seven.⁸ The impact of this amendment was felt in the student body and can be shown looking at the enrollment numbers of the years 1940, 1942, and 1944. In 1940, approximately 370 students attended Augustana⁹ while in 1942 this number grew to 531¹⁰, an increase of approximately 160 students. However, in 1944 enrollment dropped down to about 290 students, resulting in a loss of 240 students.¹¹ Augustana was not alone in experiencing these tremendous losses. A similar trend can be seen in a study of the student population of Furman University in South Carolina. Furman's population dipped from 1940-1942, going from 1074 in 1940 to 978 in 1942 - a 98 student drop in population. However, this does not compare to the loss experienced between 1942 and 1944. Furman went from a population of 978 students down to 725 students, which is 253 students less than the two years

⁸ Glass, Andrew "Congress Changes Draft Age , Nov 11, 1942." *Politico*, Politico LLC, November 11, 2014. Accessed on January 23, 2017. Web.

<http://www.politico.com/story/2014/11/this-day-in-politics-congress-draft-november-11-1942-112752>

⁹ *Rockety-I (Rock Island, IL)*, 1940. Accessed on 23 January 2017.

¹⁰ *Rockety-I (Rock Island, IL)*, 1942. Accessed on 23 January 2017.

¹¹ *Rockety-I (Rock Island, IL)*, 1944. Accessed on 23 January 2017.

prior.¹² For Furman this resulted in nearly a 26% reduction in enrollment, a huge hit to the campus' population. Even this does not compare to the 45% reduction experienced at Augustana during the same time period of 1942-1944. The lowering of the draft age requirement greatly expanded the number of draft eligible students on campuses across the country, eventually taking a significant toll on Augustana's enrollment.

Even in 1942 Bergendoff knew that the school was not going to be able to maintain those enrollment numbers throughout the course of the war. To maintain the productivity of the school he had to find a way to combat the draft's impact. On November 25th 1942, in a letter to Dr. P.O. Bersell, the President of the of the Augustana synod as well as a member of the school's Board of Directors, Bergendoff wrote about why he had sent a list of names to Bersell, saying "The reason is that with the lowering of the draft age, it seems to me that the point of the Selective Service Directive No. 11 is really lost, for if all freshmen and sophomores are drained off, there will be none to recommend for deferment."¹³ President Bergendoff believed the draft was taking advantage of the institution's patriotism and support for the war. Since the government had lowered the draft age to eighteen, Bergendoff argued that he will no longer have anyone to defer to the draft because all his students would have already been drafted into military service- a sentiment that was reflected by the school's enrollment numbers after November of 1942. He mentioned his letters to the draft boards, doing what he could to keep students and learning at Augie. Nonetheless, the draft tested the development of the finer human characteristics supposedly caused by war- as Bergendoff himself said in his statement from the student handbook, "War destroys."¹⁴

¹² "Student Demographics," *Special Collections and Archives at James B. Duke Library, Furman University*.

¹³ Letter to Dr. P. O. Borsell, 25 November 1942, Box 40a, Folder 2, In MSS 5 Conrad Bergendoff Papers 1935-1962 World War II. Draft and Deferments 1941-1944 College Students, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

¹⁴ Student handbook, 1943-1944, in Augustana College Student Handbook, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

Trials from the beginning of the war eventually gave way to the path that Bergendoff cleared for the school. Bergendoff, in a letter to a pastor of the school just a few months prior to Pearl Harbor, said, "Augustana must serve the nation in war-time no less than in peacetime. We are trying to do this without sacrificing in the least the basic principles on which Augustana is founded."¹⁵ President Bergendoff did everything in his power to support the war, but being the president of the college meant there were other responsibilities and tasks that must be completed in order to ensure the success of the school. The basic principles Bergendoff referred to most likely applied to both the enrollment situation he knew would be coming with the change of the draft age as well as the actual values Augustana was built on. Selective Service Directive No. 11. forced him to strike an incredibly difficult balance between supplying troops and services for the war, while keeping as many students on campus for as long as he could. Even with the lowering of the draft age to eighteen, President Bergendoff managed to strike a balance between service to one's country and service to one's college. Bergendoff found the inner aspect of this balance in his religious faith, which helped him guide Augustana down the path where it would remain as a productive institution throughout the war.

The religious faith of President Bergendoff and Augustana developed into a crucial aspect of its war contributions. Since Augustana is a Lutheran affiliated school, the faculty and students must have originally felt a great deal of conflict in their response to the war, not knowing whether to support the fight for freedom or to side against the violence and destruction that a war creates. The Lutheran World Action provided guidance for the Lutheran community. This program, created in 1940, was established by the National Lutheran Council to fight the

¹⁵ Letter to Minister, 26 August 1941, Box 40a, Folder 2, In MSS 5 Conrad Bergendoff Papers 1935-1962 World War II. Draft and Deferments 1941-1944 College Students, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois

mass destruction of life and values caused by the war in Europe.¹⁶ It hammered home the message that support for the war was critical despite the hardships and sacrifices that may come with it.¹⁷ They saw it as their own duty, as Christian people, to assist and relieve as much of the suffering and distress as they could throughout the war. Bergendoff echoed this message to his Augustana family whenever he could, just as he did in the Student Handbook of 1943, committing Augustana to service while remaining a tight knit community, easing the hardships of war for each other.

The religious faith of Augustana turned into a way for the campus to deal with the events happening all around them in the world. Their predominantly conservative religious beliefs pointed them in a patriotic direction, emphasizing the importance of God and to aid those suffering because of the war. These beliefs were challenged when the war reached home, leading to sufferings and sacrifices that a vast majority of the population had just overcome in the wake of the Great Depression. In January of 1942, Augustana hosted a *Religious Emphasis Week* in which the students were expected to attend events that seemed meaningful to them in order to reestablish their connection with God and their Christian values. The timing of this week could not have been a coincidence. It almost immediately follows the traumatic events at Pearl Harbor which took place just one month prior, in December of 1941. The Augustana Observer released an article entitled *The Week of the Year* in which the author of the article makes the mission of the religious emphasis week clear by saying “Augustana will remember more clearly the power of the will of God in the world of men.”¹⁸ This rather strong reminder to the Augustana student body told them that despite the shows of power by nations across the world, God was

¹⁶ Social Network and Archival Context. “Lutheran World Action.” Accessed on February 5, 2017. <http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/ark:/99166/w6qk41c2>

¹⁷ “Lutheran World Action: At a Time Like This..,” January 1942, in MSS 99: United States, Box 5, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

¹⁸ “The Week of the Year,” *Augustana Observer (Rock Island, IL)*, January 29, 1942. Accessed December 4, 2016.

still in charge. For many, this message provided a needed boost in morale. The country had just been attacked and they took this time to gather themselves and reaffirm their values for the long war they knew awaited them. In August of 1941, President Bergendoff sent a letter to a pastor on campus urging him to support students' positive sentiments towards the war, but to encourage them to stay on campus attending classes within their small religious community.¹⁹ As what the point of *Religious Emphasis Week*, Bergendoff wanted the pastor to help the students take a moment to think about their situation. It is possible that he was trying to protect the students from leaving campus to sign up for service in an emotional flurry that they could possibly regret. It is also possible Bergendoff had a political goal in his religious appeal, which would have been to keep students on campus as long as possible. Either way, for Augustana and President Bergendoff the best way to aid the war effort was to think objectively and critically about the situation at hand while being the best Lutheran's they could be, further preserving the values of Augustana.

As religion made up the inner aspect of Bergendoff's, balance the outer half had three very important aspects. The first of the three aspects became Augustana's main contribution to the war effort. Bergendoff saw it as Augie's duty to perform whatever service it could to assist in the war. The United States Government provided the perfect opportunity for Bergendoff and Augustana in the form of an aviation program. After complying with everything that the government requested from him, Bergendoff turned Augustana into an institution of Higher Education and National Defense based on the criteria provided to him by the American Council on Education; in Augustana's case this was training pilots under the direction of the Civil

¹⁹ Letter to Minister, 26 August 1941, Box 40a, Folder 2, In MSS 5 Conrad Bergendoff Papers 1935-1962 World War II. Draft and Deferments 1941-1944 College Students, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois

Aeronautics Authority.²⁰ Bergendoff wanted to prove that he and Augustana were willing to go above and beyond in service to their country.²¹ The military had a need for pilots and with the close proximity of Moline Airport, a pilot school only made sense for Bergendoff and the C.A.A. By taking this step, President Bergendoff ensured that Augustana would make its contributions to the war and continue down a productive path by preparing pilots for military service.

The second aspect of the outer balance can be seen as a very calculated move by President Bergendoff as a means of retaining at least some of the students that might otherwise have been drafted into the war. Students drafted into service could be deferred until the end of the academic year, but after that year they would be forced into service.²² As Albert Blum notes in his article "The Army and Student Deferments During the Second World War", Local Board Memorandum 115, Part VIII changed student deferments greatly for college administrators like President Bergendoff. The pilot program fit the needed criteria for Local Board Memorandum of training or preparing necessary men for service later in the war.²³ Blum went on to specify the requirements of being a "necessary man" saying "in order to be classified as a necessary man, the registrant had to be in training for a "critical occupation" necessary to the war effort in which there was a shortage of personnel both trained and in training; and he had to be sufficiently advanced in his work."²⁴ For President Bergendoff this was an opportunity. Training pilots allowed for Augustana to contribute to the production of necessary men needed for the war effort while getting to keep these students on campus longer, potentially even for their entire collegiate careers. Students needed to have completed at least two years of studies to be

²⁰ "Ten Students Enroll in Spring Semester C.A.A Course.", *Augustana Observer (Rock Island, IL)*, February 27, 1941. Accessed on 17 January 2017.

²¹ Higher Education and National Defense by the American Council on Education Bulletin Number 23, 28 August 1942, MSS 99 Collection on World War II, United States, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

²² Blum, Albert A. "The Army and Student Deferments During the Second World War." *The Journal of Higher Education* 31, no. 1 (1960): 42.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

considered “advanced”, but even with this restriction in the memorandum, the ability to keep students on campus was not something Bergendoff could afford to pass up. Blum identified the motivations of administrators for enacting such a program on campus that went past just the draft. He discussed the idea of a post-war world without college trained people, or the fate of higher education, or an even more pressing issue such as where would all the college trained professionals needed for a war, like doctors or engineers, be if they were all removed from school early to serve.²⁵ The draft exposed many fears in college administrators, while turning a school into an institution of Higher Education and National Defense offered many solutions to those fears, allowing schools like Augustana to protect their best interests while serving the nation in a time of need.

Regardless, with a majority of college students falling within the age range of 18-22, President Bergendoff knew that the draft would eventually take a toll on the numbers of the student body at Augustana. Although this troubled him, Bergendoff continued to express his support and pride in those students. Bergendoff must have felt a great sense of honor in receiving letters from Augie students in service. In 1942 Norman Dahlgren wrote from the military airport in Corpus Christi Texas, saying “It’s great to know that Augie still remembers the boys in service” and “I want you to know they were all impressed with your encouraging message.”²⁶ A former Augustana student who was then studying at MIT wrote to President Bergendoff in search of a letter of recommendation for a Navy Commission he was applying for in December of 1942, mentioning that “Had it not been for your kindly assistance we would be without [pilot’s] licenses today.”²⁷ Bergendoff knew his role as a leader on campus and he did

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Dear Prexy”, 1942, Box 40a, Folder 2, In MSS 5 Conrad Bergendoff Papers 1935-1962 World War II. Draft and Deferments 1941-1944 College Students, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

²⁷ “MIT”, 2 December 1942, Box 40a, Folder 2, In MSS 5 Conrad Bergendoff Papers 1935-1962 World War II. Draft and Deferments 1941-1944 College Students, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

anything he could do to help students and in return these letters gave him the satisfaction of knowing that he was making a difference to both his students and to the war effort. Not only did these letters speak to the leadership of President Bergendoff during the days of the World War II, but they spoke to the overall experience of students at Augustana. Both of these students recalled fond memories of attending Augustana and wished to continue their affiliation with the school despite the war. For students in service, Augustana symbolized home; a place they could turn to for support or to reminisce on the memorable moments they had cultivated before deployment.

However, for many students Augustana was still their home. The third aspect of Bergendoff's outer balance came from an entire group on campus that was exempt from the draft, a group that the college could build itself around while the war continued to rage on. He found that the women on campus were the perfect people to maintain the productivity and educational status that Augustana experienced before the war. Bergendoff knew the women on campus were familiar with the school's daily practices, enabling them to slide right into the needed roles. Women upheld the traditional values of the campus while making a progressive leap in gender roles on campus. Ann Boaden identifies this in her book *Light and Leaven*, arguing that women preserved Augustana's education system during the war. She quoted a statement from President Bergendoff that sums up the idea very well when he said "We shall have to rely on the women to conserve the liberal arts tradition..."²⁸ Bergendoff knew that someone needed to fill the place of the departing men and the women quickly proved that they could do just that. Boaden notes that "as we've seen, women assumed leadership positions vacated by the men. They edited the *Observer* and the *Rockety-I*, sometimes as the first women to do so, often on short notice, when men who'd been assigned those positions received their

²⁸ Ann Boaden, *Light and Leaven: Women Who Shaped Augustana's First Century* (Rock Island: Augustana Historical Society, 2011), 147.

call-ups."²⁹ The women of Augustana stepped into the roles, took charge, and enabled Augustana to preserve its values and status. Boaden knew, just as Bergendoff did, that this would not have been possible without the adaptability and willingness from the women to take on the immense challenge of upholding Augustana.

As Boaden identifies, women stepped up in numerous ways throughout the war on Augustana's campus, but filling in the leadership roles left vacant by men allows us to see the impact of some specific individuals on campus. The inroads that opened up following the men's departure were roads that had never been traveled at Augustana or many other places across the nation. Charles Dorn confirms Boaden's findings when he discusses the developing role of women during the war in his journal article entitled "A Woman's World". Dorn makes the point that "Women also effectively opposed gendered restrictions on extracurricular participation, filling for the first time campus leadership positions as the Presidency of Berkeley's student government and editorship of the university's newspaper."³⁰ Women were making similar moves at Augustana. In October of 1941 a letter written by a soldier only referred to as Willie, to protect him from the military in the case he leaked any unwanted information about its operations (they go as far as stating his location as "somewhere in the woods of Louisiana"), hints at the patriarchal tradition felt on campuses all over the country. He congratulates his friend and new editor of the *Augustana Observer*, Dorothy Holmstrom, by saying " I want to congratulate you upon being the first female editor of said newspaper. Realizing that it wasn't the draft that elevated you to such high estate, I still wonder what serious inroads will be made in the Augustana males' domination of school politics and policies by our country's magnificent

²⁹ Ibid., 152.

³⁰ Dorn, Charles. "'A Woman's World': The University of California, Berkeley, during the Second World War." *History of Education Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2008): 534.

defense program.”³¹ Willie knew the deep roots of gender inequality in American culture but also saw the hiring of his friend as some bit of progress. It is important to note that this article was written on October 2nd, 1941, before the lowering of the draft age and before the drastic decline in the student population. Even while the college was growing in size, it managed to start down these some of these roads, confronting gender inequalities at Augustana.

Women made progress in other areas of campus as well. Of the ten students selected into the first aviation class at Augustana, one of those happened to be a woman- Betty Platner.³² This becomes an incredibly interesting aspect in the developing roles of women during World War II because it came just prior to the formation of the Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs. This group was established in 1942, when the United States Air Force desperately needed pilots to fight overseas. The women did not fight, but they did ferry soldiers and equipment as well as assisted in training other military forces in air defense, freeing up male soldiers to be deployed overseas.³³ Platner’s early entrance into the pilot program, accompanied with the fact that she got into the program at all, shows the seemingly progressive gender relations at Augustana College in the early 1940’s. However, it required more than her admittance to the program to overcome the gender barriers that had been established for centuries.

World War II opened many doors for women and their social lives, but the constraints of tradition still had a hold on certain areas of campus. Returning to Ann Boaden’s argument in *Light and Leaven*, she identifies an area of life that made little progress during the war.³⁴ In her

³¹ Willie, “Something About a Soldier,” *Augustana Observer (Rock Island, IL)*, October 2, 1941. Accessed December 4, 2016.

³² “Ten Augustana Students Selected For C.A.A. Pilot Training Course.”, *Augustana Observer (Rock Island, IL)*, September 16, 1940. Accessed on 23 January 2017.

³³ National WASP World War II Museum, Inc. “A History of the Women Airforce Service Pilots.” Accessed on January 27, 2017. <http://waspmuseum.org/>

³⁴ Ann Boaden, *Light and Leaven: Women Who Shaped Augustana’s First Century* (Rock Island: Augustana Historical Society, 2011), 153.

analysis of the gender gaps between men and women during the war she looks specifically at the student handbook given to all students on campus. She uses Olive Johnson Schwiebert, who was the Dean of Women from 1945-1948, to provide evidence of the gender gap with her expansive knowledge of the student handbook that she had to enforce. Schwiebert described the rules to Boaden in a very simple manner: "girls had to behave; boys didn't."³⁵ Boaden builds on this claim by listing differences in the student handbook between male and female students at Augustana such as "three pages of rules for conduct in Women's Dormitories, as opposed to one page for Men's Dormitories", strict curfews, no male visitors inside private rooms, and a five minute limit on telephone calls.³⁶ Though there were many areas of life that did change drastically for women during the war, the dorms were one area identified by Boaden that did not see the same transition. Gender stereotypes and restrictions showed themselves in other areas of campus as well, showing that Augustana did feel the pull back of tradition even during the progressive social environment created by the war.

Betty Platner found her fair share of obstacles in being the first female admitted into the pilot program. The opposition to a female in the program was undoubtedly expressed in small private interactions between members of campus, but it reared its head in the public sphere as well. In an article in the *Observer* entitled "Flying is like Riding a Bicycle' But Boys are Thrilled" the author of the article, Ted Nelson, made the statement "Air regulations require left turns from the field upon taking off. Betty Platner, like most women, has trouble understanding traffic rules and prefers to turn right."³⁷ In a generally positive article written about the aviation program at Augustana, he took the time to blatantly attack a fellow student just because she was a woman. Platner was not alone in her experience of facing gender stereotypes. Just before the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 153-154.

³⁷ "Flying is like Riding a Bicycle' But Boys are Thrilled," *Augustana Observer (Rock Island, IL)*, October 31, 1940. Accessed December 4, 2016.

disbanding of the WASP's, *Time Magazine* released a piece saying "Home is where most WASP's will land according to Miss Hazel Taylor, their public relations officer, who predicted: 'Their careers will be marriage.'"³⁸ This statement, coming from a woman and member of the military herself, shows how widely these stereotypes were accepted at this time in the United States. It is possible she was forced to say this for the safety of her job, but either way the statement still expresses the state of gender relationships in the country. The criticism against Betty Platner, at least reported in the *Observer*, did not compete with the opposition against the WASPs, but it does show a changing gender dynamic on campus and a response to this change.

Nelson's article in the *Observer* peels back another layer to the gender situation at Augustana. His article was published in the paper as is instead of being edited. At the time of this publication, the editor of the *Observer* was a male student like it had always been. An interesting consideration would have been to see if this article was published the same way if it had been written a year later when a woman resided in the editor's position. Though it is just speculation, the fact that only a year later the first ever woman became editor of the Augustana *Observer* further hints at the progress of gender equality at Augustana College. Richard Polenberg, in his article "The Good War? A Reappraisal of How World War II Affected American Society" points to the public opinion polls during the war, finding that the "Public opinion polls revealed a startling decline, from 80 to 13 percent, in the number of people who thought married women should not work outside the home, a decline to be expected when 3 of every 4 new women workers were married."³⁹ The criticism of Betty Platner was written prior to U.S. entrance into the war, also prior to the need for men to serve and women to fill in their now vacant roles.

³⁸ "Army and Navy - Home by Christmas." *Time* (16 October 1944), quoted in MacKenzie McDonald, *Jacqueline Cochran*.

³⁹ Polenberg, Richard. "The Good War? A Reappraisal of How World War II Affected American Society." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 100, no. 3 (1992): 295.

Though Platner does not fit directly into this statistic because she was unmarried, it clearly shows the progression of the United States expressed in the microcosm of Augustana's campus.

The changing gender roles were not always taken on individually by figures like Betty Platner or Dorothy Holmstrom, but groups stood together to ensure that their presence on campus was known. Membership in the Women's League was a requirement for women at Augustana, forcing them to accomplish things on campus using the power of numbers.⁴⁰ The Women's League was founded well before the World War II in 1917 in correlation with the U.S. entrance into World War I. By the start of the second world war the group had developed into a substantial organization that could exercise its powers across campus.⁴¹ They did many things that may fit into stereotypical gender roles of women such as knitting for the soldiers during World War II, or sponsoring a tea to support Swedish refugees, or even making kits filled with necessities for children in Europe to help them in their time of need.⁴² Even though these charitable actions may appear feminine, particularly in the 1940's when they were done, The Women's League uniting as a group to stand up for a cause is telling of their willingness and motivation to get a job done while simultaneously making up a part of President Bergendoff's balance.

In the 40's, the Women's League made a major transition into a more political sphere. They created Women's Week on campus which quickly became the "biggest event of the year" where they "organized symposia on national and international events, and staged mock political conventions."⁴³ Women taking over campus for an entire week was a big step forward and

⁴⁰ Scrapbook, 1944-1945 to 1957-1958, Box 1, in MSS 226: Augustana College Women's League Records, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.

⁴¹ Ann Boaden, *Light and Leaven: Women Who Shaped Augustana's First Century* (Rock Island: Augustana Historical Society, 2011), 216.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 216-218.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 217.

furthered the evolution of gender roles at Augustana. Discussing major political issues of the day and leading the community helped to cement women's roles on campus. Donna Mae Anderson discussed the feeling of Women's Week in her *Observer* article "Women's Week Takes Serious Turn in Russian, United Nations Discussions," written in March of 1947. This article takes place after the war, but shows that Women's Week and women's leadership roles on campus did not disappear after the war. Anderson summed up the atmosphere when she says "During this week women 'reign supreme' on campus, negotiating their own dates and showing the men a whirl of social life by paying bills."⁴⁴ With the leadership of the Women's League, women completely abandoned their traditional gender roles during this week. Just a single week a year of switching these roles may have been a way for the entire community to become accustomed to a more equal social life and thus leading to an easier transition of change in the future. The fact that Donna Anderson took the time to mention this aspect of Women's Week in a discussion of Russia and the United Nations shows the actual impact the Women's League and the week in particular had on campus. Women taking this opportunity to show they belonged in the political sphere, to show they could ask men on dates, to show they could pay the bills all, demonstrates their ability to combat traditional gender stereotypes on campus. This leadership perfectly fit the path that Bergendoff had established for Augustana during the war. Women were essential in preserving the values of the institution without missing a beat in the daily operations of the school.

World War II offered the unprecedented opportunity for women to take on the roles of a man. The war required each and every citizen of the United States to step up and do more than they had ever been asked before. This began even before the U.S. entrance into the war with the implementation of the Selective Service and Training Act. Schools like Augustana needed to

⁴⁴ Anderson Donna, "Women's Week Takes Serious Turn in Russian, United Nations Discussions" *Augustana Observer (Rock Island, IL)*, March 6, 1947. Accessed on February 4, 2017.

face the challenge just as the individuals did in society. Conrad Bergendoff led this effort for Augustana, creating a mutually productive campus that could supply soldiers and well trained pilots to the military while the aviation program allowed for Augustana to continue its own mission of Higher Education. The aviation program, coupled with the influx of women on campus, kept a high enough student population for Augustana to grow and develop during the war. Traditional notions of gender were experienced on campus the same way they were felt throughout the nation, but the women found that the lack of men on campus cleared a path, leaving new and important roles on campus open for the taking. Betty Platner found her niche in the pilot program, becoming one of its first ten members, predating her WASP counterparts by almost two years. Dorothy Holmstrom seized her chance and became the first female editor of the *Augustana Observer* despite the still growing student population. These individual successes reflect the accomplishments of the Women's League at Augustana that continued to challenge and change gender roles at Augustana well after the war. Women came together as a unit to both aid the war effort and fill in the shoes that needed to be filled as the men went off to fight.

Augustana did more than its due diligence during World War II. Led by President Bergendoff, the entire campus community ensured that Augustana went above and beyond the call of duty while staying true to its values and growing as an institution. The war had its hardships on campus, but the support and dedication of the school allowed for its persistent chase in achieving new goals. War gave Augustana the chance to struggle and the chance to succeed, forcing Augustana to strike a balance between its own needs and the needs of the country. It opened up the door for it to make the social and institutional progresses needed to overcome each diverse problem thrown its way. Augustana College grew to represent what an

institution of Higher Education and National Defense should be because of the communities faith and dedication to preserving the integrity of the school and the nation.

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