Fort Gregg-Adams Writing and Art Contest

-Information Packet-

February 2024

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LTG (R) Gregg Information:

Sources:

1. Army Establishes Awards To Honor Lt. Gen. (R) Arthur Gregg, Maj. Gen. Harold Greene | Article | The United States Army
2. MOAA - Logistics Officer Rose Through the Ranks During 36-Year Career
3. Lt. Gen. Arthur Gregg :: U.S. Army Garrison Fort Gregg-Adams
4. DVIDS - Video - Interview With Ltg (ret.) Arthur J. Gregg (dvidshub.net)

Books:

1. The following books are displayed at the Army Sustainment University Library, 3rd floor.
    a. Gregg, Charlene S. Fort Lee in Transition, 1940s-1970s: Black Quartermaster Officers' Families at Fort Lee, Virginia. Woodbridge, VA: Sankofa Publications, 2005. UB418.A47 G74 2005
    b. Hampton, Isaac. The Black Officer Corps: A History of Black Military Advancement from Integration through Vietnam. New York: Routledge, 2013. UB418. A47 H36 2013

LTC Adams Information:

Sources:

1. Charity Adams Earley Biography (womenshistory.org)
2. One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the Wac - Charity Adams Earley - Google Books
3. 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion | U.S. Army Center of Military History

Books:

1. The following books are displayed at the Army Sustainment University Library, 3rd floor.
    a. *African American Military Heroes* by Jim Haskins "Lieutenant Colonel Charity Adams Earley" pgs. 110-114 Call No: E181 .H35 1998
    b. Earley, Charity Adams. One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC. 1st ed. of Texas a & M University Military History Series, 12. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1989. D811. E23 1989
    c. Moore, Brenda L. To Serve My Country, to Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACS Stationed Overseas during World War II. New York: New York University Press, 1996. UB418. A47 M66 1996

2. The following books are displayed at Morale, Welfare & Recreation (MWR) Library, located on the 2nd floor of Army Sustainment University.
    a. Conkling, Winifred, and Julia Kuo. Heroism Begins with Her: Inspiring Stories of Bold, Brave, and Gutsy Women in the U.s. Military. New York, NY: HarperCollins Children's Books, An Imprint of HarperCollins, 2019. pg. 85-88. Call NO: J.355.009 CONKLI
    b. Farrell, Mary Cronk. Standing Up against Hate: How Black Women in the Army Helped Change the Course of World War II. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2019.Call No: YA940.54 FARREL.
    c. McCallum, Ann. Women Heroes of the Us Army: Remarkable Soldiers from the American Revolution to Today (version First edition.). INSERT-MISSING-SERVICE-NAME. Chicago, Illinois: Chicago Review Press Incorporated, 2019. pg.72-86. Call NO: YA355.009 MCCALL.

U.S. ARMY

FORT GREGG-ADAMS REDESIGNATION

COMMUNICATION REFERENCE GUIDE

TOPLINE MESSAGES

1. We are proud to honor these American heroes who inspire hope and whose courage, dignity, patriotism and service exemplify the very best of the U.S. military and instill tremendous pride in sustainment professionals everywhere.
2. The Naming Commission's goal was "to inspire service members and military communities with names or values that have meaning" and that "underpin the core responsibility of the military, to defend the Constitution of the United States." Redesignating the post in honor of LTG Gregg and LTC Adams accomplishes this.
3. The selection of the name "Fort Gregg-Adams" was driven by deliberate, months-long local engagement between stakeholders, including the Naming Commission, Fort Lee Soldiers and leaders, and the surrounding community.
4. Redesignation events scheduled for April 27, 2023 are the third in a process that will take several months or more to complete. This is a team effort between the Army and surrounding communities with far-reaching adjustments and changes, and we are unified in our efforts to accomplish this historically significant event.

FOR INTERNAL AUDIENCES: The installation redesignation is the most important activity CASCOM and the Fort Lee Garrison will accomplish this year. It is imperative we get it right.

THEMES

Celebrate the legacies of LTG Gregg and LTC Adams.

Highlight and recognize the work and accomplishments at our installation since its establishment in 1917.

Recognize the strength and value of our local communities.

About LTG Arthur J. Gregg

- Born May 11, 1928 near Florence, SC. Graduated from high school in Newport News, VA.
- Enlisted 1946 and deployed to Germany, eventually serving as a unit supply sergeant.
- Went to OCS in 1949, commissioned in 1950.
- Attended QM Advance Course at Fort Lee.
- Became first Black officer to attain general officer rank in the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps in 1972.
- Served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics for U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army on the front lines of the Cold War in the 1970s.
- Nominated by President Jimmy Carter in 1977 as Director of Logistics for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- Culminated his career as U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff of Logistics before retiring as the highest-ranking Black U.S. military officer in 1981.

About LTC Charity Adams

- Born Dec. 5, 1918, Kittrell, NC.
- Graduated with the first Women's Army Auxiliary Corps* (WAAC) OCS class in 1942, became first Black woman to earn a WAAC commission.
- Commanded the only predominately Black, all-women unit deployed overseas in WWII: the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion *(subject of forthcoming Tyler Perry film "Six Triple Eight")*.
- Was the top-ranked Black female officer in the WWII European Theater of Operations.
- Supported Army Sustainment operations so effectively that it took three battalions of men to duplicate the work of the 6888th's mail operations.
- Discharged in 1946.
- Earned master's degree from Ohio State University.
- Died Jan. 13, 2002.

** Redesignated as the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in 1943.*

For more redesignation information, visit https://home.army.mil/lee/index.php/greggadams

ARMY MESSAGES

1. The Army is proud to honor the courage, sacrifice, and diversity of distinguished Soldiers and civilians.
2. The installations where Soldiers work, train, and live should reflect Army values. The selected names represent the heroism and sacrifices of our Soldiers, civilian employees, and families.
3. We are proud to highlight the contributions and legacies of honorees like LTG Arthur Gregg and LTC Charity Adams for future Army generations.
4. Our planning team is working closely with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the other military services, and our commands to implement the Naming Commission's recommendations.

When does the post become Fort Gregg-Adams?
The Fort Gregg-Adams redesignation ceremony is scheduled for April 27, 2023. While direct attendance is by invitation only, the ceremony will be live-streamed at www.facebook.com/ArmyFortLee.

Who selected the new name for the post and what was the process?
The Naming Commission recommended the name "Fort Gregg-Adams" following deliberate, months-long local engagement with our Soldiers, leaders, family members, veterans, representatives from surrounding communities and other stakeholders, including in-person and virtual listening sessions in 2021 and 2022.

Why is the Army trying to erase history?
History is not erased with the redesignation of our installations or streets — it is made. Reexamining the people and stories we choose to emulate at the highest levels of our Army provides an opportunity to educate future generations about other heroes and lesser-known contributors to our Army's greatness. We're proud to highlight heroes and leaders like LTG Arthur Gregg and LTC Charity Adams.

How is the Army implementing directed changes?
The Army established a planning team with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the other military services, and our commands to implement these changes. The Army submitted a plan to DoD in November 2022 and has conducted regular planning meetings. In February 2023, the Secretary of the Army began approving individual installation redesignation ceremony and implementation plans.

How much will this cost the Army?
The initial estimate redesignate the nine Army bases and to implement all other recommended changes was $39 million; Fort Lee's portion was estimated at $2.4 million. Overall cost estimates will continue to be assessed as we implement changes.

What will happen to Army assets that are removed?
We are developing a plan to legally and appropriately address the disposition of removed assets.

Were the selected names the top choices of the local communities?
Not in all cases, but community and public input did play a role in the selection process. We look forward to honoring the American value of liberty and the legacies of the men and women for whom these installations are being redesignated. *(Refer additional questions on community reaction to local community leaders.)*

Was the selected name your post's top choice?
The Naming Commission's report is publicly available and addresses their selection process. We stand ready to honor LTG Gregg and LTC Adams.

Is it unusual for an Army base to be named after someone who is still living?
Yes. While not completely unprecedented, this is the first time in modern American history an Army installation will be named in honor of a living person.

I live/work on post. When should I start using "Fort Gregg-Adams" in the official address?
While the U.S. Postal Service already has the new name of the installation associated with zip code 23801, it should not be used until after the official redesignation on April 27, 2023. However, mail addressed using either post name will still reach recipients. No change of address requests should be sent to USPS, as the required updates have already been made within their systems.

What other assets are being redesignated on post?
The Post Theater, Lee Club and more than a dozen streets will also be redesignated with new names. Details for redesignation of these assets will be announced upon final approval by the appropriate authorities for each.

LTG Arthur J. Gregg

Seventeen years old, frustrated by segregation, and inspired by the service of Black Soldiers in World War II, Arthur J. Gregg enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1946 and deployed soon after to support supply operations in occupied Germany.

As he helped the Army establish and rebuild the devastated region, Gregg excelled in the work and envisioned his rise within it. He went to Officer Candidate School in 1949, one year after President Truman ordered the desegregation of the armed forces. As a result, it fell to Soldiers and officers like Gregg to put this policy into practice by changing the culture in their commands and desegregating the Army from the ground up.

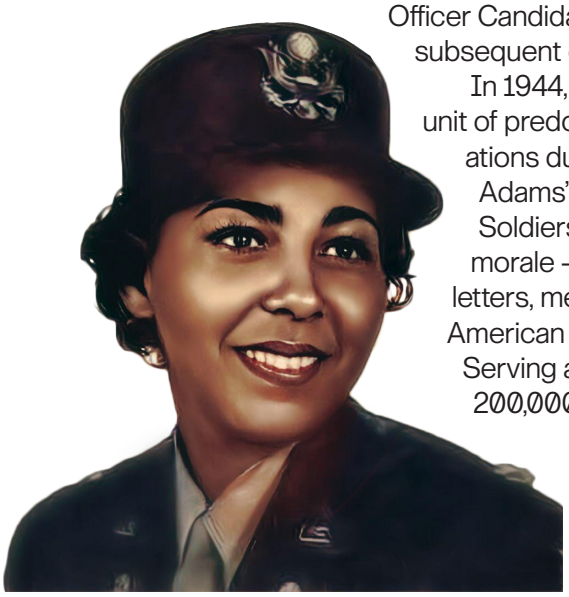
Gregg did so with great skill, leading by example and embarking on a career of excellence from the moment he graduated OCS, beginning with his first assignment as an officer at Camp Lee in 1950, which was redesignated as Fort Lee later that year. He went on to run a supply depot in Japan, command a supply and support battalion in Vietnam, serve in several assignments in Germany throughout the Cold War, and lead the Army and Air Force Exchange System. At the peak of his career, Gregg was the logistics director for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and then Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics for the Army.

In addition to his extensive service around the world, Gregg also promoted equality and excellence at home. As a young officer at Fort Lee in the early 1950s, he experienced first-hand – and never forgot – the challenges of desegregating facilities across the post. He later became the first Black officer promoted to general officer in the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps and, upon his retirement in 1981, was the highest-ranking Black officer in the U.S. military.

Throughout his career, Gregg mentored numerous younger Soldiers and when the Army established an award for logistics innovation and excellence in 2016, its namesake – and first recipient – was LTG Arthur J. Gregg.

LTC Charity Adams

Like many Americans in the 1940s, Charity Adams started her service in response to the attack on America and the threats caused by global war. Born and raised in a segregated society, by the time the war began, the 22-year-old Adams had already graduated high school as class valedictorian, completed a bachelor's degree, and started a career as a teacher. In the middle of pursuing a master's degree in psychology in 1942, Adams paused her education to serve her nation in the newly created Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.



Recognized for her scholarly skills and abilities in leadership, Adams was assigned to Officer Candidate School. Upon her commissioning, she stayed at the OCS to train subsequent classes of leaders.

In 1944, at the age of 25, Adams was selected to command the first and only unit of predominately Black women deployed to the European Theater of Operations during WWII. Leading the 6888th Central Postal Directory in England, Adams' unit was tasked with delivering mail to and from nearly seven million Soldiers fighting in Europe. Adams' unit was effectively the lifeline for Soldier morale – processing, sorting and sending along the tens of millions of love letters, messages from family, and news from home that sustained the spirits of American Soldiers fighting on the front lines.

Serving at the peak of the American war in Europe, Adams' unit handled nearly 200,000 letters per day and close to six million pieces of mail each month.

Gender discrimination limited her promotion to lieutenant colonel, the highest rank attainable during the war by any woman other than the lone colonel serving as the Women's Army Corps director. But her effectiveness was made clear when it took three units of men to replace her battalion after they disbanded.

Celebrating the career of retired Lt. Gen. Arthur J. Gregg

By T. Anthony Bell, USAG Fort Lee Public Affairs Office February 14, 2023

[https://api.army.mil/e2/c/images/2023/02/09/65d40928/original.jpg]

SHOW CAPTION + 1 / 2

FORT LEE, Va. — As a young African American growing up in the South during the Depression, Arthur J. Gregg was not oblivious to the inequity and injustice he witnessed under segregation.

Yet, it never drove him to stages of discontent, disillusionment or disengagement. Whenever doors were slammed in his face, Gregg circumvented or summoned the powers of an unshakeable ambition to seek out options.

“I always believed there were opportunities,” said the now 94-year-old Gregg, “and even though you realized they were limited by race to a large degree, they were still there. Frankly, I tended to dwell on the possibilities and did not become bitter.”

This from a man who lost his mother at age 11; who survived the Jim Crow South and joined a segregated Army; and who, despite it all, rose to become a three-star general, earning the respect and admiration of many. A friend of 40 years said Gregg’s ascension can be attributed to his sense of honor, humility and a gripping commitment to duty.

"He's what I call a man's man in that he takes responsibility for his actions and holds himself accountable, just like he does everyone else," said retired Maj. Gen. Hawthorne L. Proctor, the first African American Quartermaster General. "When he wakes up in the morning, he is expecting to perform to the best of his ability."

Childhood in South Carolina

Perhaps Gregg's work ethic arose from his upbringing in rural Florence County, South Carolina. He was born a year before the Great Depression, the youngest of nine children born to Robert and Ethel Gregg.

The family subsisted on a roughly 100-acre farm where they grew cotton and tobacco for market and raised cattle, chickens and hogs.

"It was a reasonably good life," recalled Gregg. "I felt I was loved and supported, but economically, it was a very challenging time."

Even in the backdrop of The Great Depression, Mr. and Mrs. Gregg were firm in teaching their children the importance of education, proper conduct and personal responsibility.

"With both of my parents, they were very responsible, very caring and set high standards for all of the children," said Gregg, "and since they were very loving, they were no-nonsense about us living up to the standards they had set for us."

Amid those standards, Gregg said he and his siblings were expected to help with the farm and attend school. He remembered feeding hogs, chickens and cows before walking three miles to classes taking place in a wooden, three-room structure.

"The white children had a consolidated, very modern brick school and were provided with bus transportation from their homes," remembered Gregg. "It was a different situation based on race at that time."

In Gregg's final year of grade school, his mother became ill with cancer and underwent surgery.

"[She] survived the operation, came home and we cheered her on for about six months before she passed," Gregg recalled. "I can tell you those six months were very challenging for her physically."

The Gregg household at the time of Ethel's death consisted of Arthur, older brother Edward, older sister Cora and their father. Arthur, being the youngest, may have been most vulnerable to his mother's absence, but it was only notional. Gregg said his family members lovingly filled the gaps.

"While I missed my mother, there was not a period in my life where I ever felt abandoned or neglected," he said.

A year after Ethel's passing, Arthur and Edward were permitted to live with an older brother and his family at their Newport News, Virginia, home. The brother was one of three who migrated north looking for opportunities that did not exist in Florence County. Upon his arrival, Gregg found a vibrant city with modern conveniences he was not accustomed to.

Opportunities in Newport News

"Newport News was a different experience for me," said Gregg, who moved to the city in 1941. "Most of it was positive. First of all, it was the first time in my life I lived in a home with indoor plumbing, electrical power, telephone, and paved streets and sidewalks. … It was a great change for me."

While living in Newport News, Gregg worked two jobs while attending the segregated Huntington High School. During Sunday afternoon drives to nearby Fort Monroe with his family, he took note of the varied uniformed personnel moving about the city heavily contributing to the nation's defense during World War II.

"It had a powerful impression on me," said Gregg, noting most of the military troops he saw were Black. "Two things I noticed: first, the young men were well-dressed — their uniforms fitted properly and were properly maintained — and second, their personal conduct was very responsible. You just had to admire them."

Gregg's young eyes also observed rare sightings of Black officers belonging to a military separated along color lines.

"They were only lieutenants, but you just had to [be] very proud of them — the fact they were officers and the way they conducted themselves," he said.

While developing and growing in his new environment, Gregg needed to face the prospects of his future. He was interested in college, but costs were an obstacle, leaving vocational opportunities as a consideration. He received guidance from the parents of best friend Ivan B. "Sandy" McEachin Jr., who he met in his sophomore year at Huntington. McEachin's mother Esther was especially influential.

"She was a housewife but a well-educated one, and she encouraged me to attend the Chicago College of Medical Technology (as a laboratory technician)," said Gregg.

CCMT offered a program in which students could take daytime and evening classes and earn a certificate in six months. The 17-year-old Gregg enrolled, studied hard and graduated in December 1945.

"It was my plan to get a certificate and open a clinical laboratory, serving my community with various services," remembered Gregg.

To realize his dream, Gregg had to contend with discrimination even in The Windy City.

"I applied for and was employed by Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago," he said. "During my first week there, I was called in by the head of the division, and he made it very clear to me that my work would be confined to the laboratory and bedside of Black patients. I was not allowed to visit the whites [receiving care]. I felt it was limiting, felt it was demeaning and promptly submitted my resignation."

Enlisting in the Army

Returning to Newport News with some measure of disappointment, Gregg reconnected with his friend, McEachin, then a student at Howard University. Their friendship was still strong, despite its unlikeliness.

"He and I couldn't have been more different," Gregg said of McEachin, who retired as a chief warrant officer 2 and who he remained friends until his death in 2011. "He came from a very economically privileged family (his father was a physician), and I was a farm boy from South Carolina, so we were very different."

The two shared high levels of ambitiousness, however. Despite their career aspirations, they knew their individual plans would be secondary to the military draft. They were required to register following their 18th birthdays. To better control their destinies, the pair received parental permission and enlisted as Soldiers in 1946.

Gregg, specifically, held hopes of landing a laboratory technician position after receiving orders for West Germany.

“Once I arrived, I was told there were no medical facilities operated by the U.S. Army staffed with Black Soldiers. So, I could not get a job as a medical laboratory technician in Germany.”

President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981 integrating the military in 1948. In practice, however, it took time and effort. The Army did not become fully integrated until 1954.

While Jim Crow had once again wedged itself between Gregg and opportunity, others emerged at the same West German location. One came in the form of the 3511th Quartermaster Transportation Truck Company, a Black unit to which he was assigned in lieu of losing the lab tech position and one with “outstanding leaders.”

“They supported me becoming supply sergeant of that unit,” said Gregg, remembering he was “comfortable and proud” as a member of the company and the Quartermaster Corps.

The truck company assignment — which some might view as a consolation — became the anchor for a stellar career in logistics. Gregg went on to attain the rank of staff sergeant at the age of 18 — and after returning to the states in 1949 — completed officer candidate school when he was 22.

A career as an officer

A year later, Gregg became an instructor at Fort Lee’s Quartermaster Leadership School, forerunner of today’s noncommissioned officer academy. In 1966, he commanded one of the largest battalions in Vietnam and earned the Meritorious Unit Citation as a result.

Gregg reached the general officer ranks in 1972 and earned a second star in 1976. Pinning his third star in 1977, Gregg was subsequently named director of logistics, Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was the first African American to reach lieutenant general in the U.S. Army.

Gregg finished his career as chief, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Department of the Army. He was the branch’s highest-ranking minority at the time of his retirement in 1981.

Ironically, Gregg’s retirement ceremony took place at the Fort Lee officers’ club, a facility that was still off limits to he and other African Americans when he became an officer in 1950.

Of his many career accomplishments, Gregg said he is most proud of his deployment to Vietnam where he commanded the 96th Quartermaster Direct Support Battalion as a newly promoted lieutenant colonel.

“It was a great assignment, and I felt we were doing a great job for the United States of America and for the world,” he said in a heighted tone of voice.

When Gregg took command in late 1965, the battalion lacked personnel and equipment, and thus, was not deployment ready. Through much work, it readied itself in a few months, deployed on time and conducted its mission accordingly.

“We became a battalion of 18 companies, eight detachments, 3,600 officers and men,” he said, earlier noting the unit acquired several other elements. “It was four-times the normal battalion size, and I’ll tell you, those young people worked their fannies off to build a logistical base and provide logistical support to our forces in Vietnam. I was so proud of them.”

Gregg’s success in Vietnam propelled him down a path to further advancement and eventually the Army War College, a qualifier for promotion to general officer.

“I’ve had big jobs, but I still look upon the command of that battalion in Vietnam as the most significant point in my career,” he said.

A legacy of "People First" leadership

In 2016, Gregg’s military legacy was cemented. That year the Army created the Lt. Gen. Arthur J. Gregg Sustainment Leadership Award and honored its namesake as the first recipient.

While his skills as a logistician were lauded, Gregg espoused a “People First” philosophy long before its contemporary application, said Proctor.

“He treated Soldiers with dignity and respect, provided them with responsibilities commensurate with their rank, held them accountable, and expected them to perform,” he said.

Gregg also can be described as a “quiet warrior,” added Proctor, someone who is unfailingly persistent with an ability to motivate and inspire without any hints of aggression.

“I’ve been around general officers and others who would pound the table or use different types of language,” said Proctor, chuckling with incredulity, “but I have never in 40 years seen Gen. Gregg raise his voice.”

Retired Col. Chris Stevens, who attended the Command and General Staff College with Gregg in 1964, said it is Gregg’s humility and compassion that places him above so many others.

“He gets along well with people and goes out of his way to help,” he said. “When anyone gets in trouble, they call him.”

Deflective about his record of achievement, Gregg said his work represents his parents, his late wife Charlene S. Gregg and their two children, the late Sandra R. Gregg and Alicia Collier, and the efforts of thousands of military personnel who put the country before themselves.

Lastly, Gregg said he is thankful the Army provided a platform that allowed him to “dwell on the possibilities” and realize all that he is.

“I always enjoy doing jobs to the best of my ability,” he said, “but I also felt the Army was always watching my back and helping me along the way.”

This from a man who has never lost faith in the institution, even when it did not have his best interests at heart.

Editor's note: Retired Lt. Gen. Arthur J. Gregg is a resident of the Northern Virginia area. When he is not supporting the Army Logistics Corps or the activities of the Quartermaster Foundation here, Gregg spends his time reading, walking and staying in touch with family.

Army Lt. Col. Adams: a pioneer worthy of commemoration

By T. Anthony Bell, USAG Fort Lee Public Affairs Office February 21, 2023

[https://api.army.mil/e2/c/images/2023/02/16/55f5f74a/original.jpg]

FORT LEE, Va. – In the vintage black and white photo, she is shown walking through the ranks, inspecting and addressing Soldiers attired in dress uniforms and standing at the position of attention.

Captured in mid-step, the officer looms over her charges, her torso erect, head craned slightly forward and eyes peering and probing for discrepancies.

The image itself is unremarkable, as inspections are a part of military routine. When context is added, however – who the subjects were, where they stood in place and time, and what they represented – the depiction becomes emblematic; a powerful expression of hope and aspiration still resonating today.

Even more compelling is the leader whose commanding posture is not only the picture's focal point but whose very presence at that time as an officer in command of troops was the antithesis of accepted norms concerning race and gender.

The officer in the photograph is Maj. Charity E. Adams, performing military duties on one hand but literally hoisting much heavier burdens on another. Her troops are members of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, a Women's Army Corps unit that became the only predominately Black women's battalion stationed in the European Theater of Operations during World War II.

The "Six Triple Eight," as it was called, was deployed during the war to England and later France, cumulatively processing more than 17 million pieces of mostly backlogged mail for U.S. military personnel. As its commander, Adams was innovative, progressive, determined and not least, protective of her troops. The unit's success earned her the admiration of many and a promotion near the end of the war. Adams became the highest-ranking black woman in the Army at 27 years of age with little more than three years of service.

Tracy Bradford, curator of the Army Women's Museum, said Adams stands out in the annals of military history because she volunteered for service; was the first black woman to graduate her officer candidate school class at Fort Des Moines, Iowa; fought for civil rights in uniform; and led Black WACs to high levels of performance amid policies of institutional segregation.

"Charity Adams' service was inspirational in several ways," she said. "She was a courageous leader who refused to be restricted by gender and racial stereotypes of the time, an innovative thinker who developed an efficient and effective mail sorting system that enabled a mountain of backlogged mail to be delivered to Soldiers in Europe, and she was a trailblazer whose legacy opened the door for generations of Army women to follow."

Born in Kittrell, N.C., and raised in Columbia, S.C., Adams was the oldest of four children belonging to Eugene and Charity Adams, minister and schoolteacher, respectively. She tested as a gifted child, moved up in grades and became valedictorian of Columbia's Booker T. Washington High School at age 16. Adams attended Wilberforce University on a scholarship, majoring in math, physics and Latin. She graduated in 1938. While teaching junior high school and taking graduate courses after college, Adams was urged to join an Army supporting a nation at war.

Retired Army Col. Edna W. Cummings supported successful efforts to memorialize Adams and the 6888th CPD Bn. She noted how the iconic officer was equally as ambitious as she was smart.

[https://api.army.mil/e2/c/images/2023/02/21/821b5985/original.jpg]

“She just had something inside of her saying, ‘I’m going to do all I can,’” Cummings said. “It was in her DNA. She had the ability.”

Her innate fortitude is arguably what compelled her to upend a promising career as an educator and trade relative safety for the uncertainty of military service. Why else aside from strength of character would a Black woman consider joining an Army known for its well-cultivated, predominantly male culture and well-documented racial discrimination?

Danna Oronoz, an AWM volunteer archivist and researcher, said Adams’ desire to explore the world outside of her own was greater than the circumstances connected to her skin color.

"In her 1990 oral history interview, Adams expressed a desire to do something different with her life," said Oronoz. "In her autobiography, 'One Woman's Army,' she wrote 'although it (her civilian career) was pleasant, it was not challenging.'"

Adams was one of more than 6,000 Black women who joined the Army during the war. She was one of 440 women accepted into the first Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later the Women's Army Corps) OCS class in 1942, 39 of whom were Black, according to records in the National Archives. She graduated as a third lieutenant (a WAAC rank) on Aug. 29, 1942, and was one of two kept on as cadre members.

Adams' first job at Fort Des Moines was commander, 3d Company, 3d Training Regiment. She also was a station control officer and staff training officer, a position similar to a drill sergeant or tactical officer.

Stanley A. Earley III – the son born to Adams (later known as Adams-Earley) and her husband, Stanley Earley Jr., after her Army service – said his mother's thoughts relating to racial discrimination were spoken loudest through her actions and the challenges she accepted.

"There's a line in the musical 'Oklahoma' where the character says, 'I don't say I'm no better than anybody else, but I'll be damned if I ain't just as good,'" Earley III said. "That was her view … that given the same training and opportunity as anyone else, she could do as well or better than anyone else."

As an officer, however, Adams was shielded no more than others from prejudicial attitudes. In her memoir, "One Woman's Army," she wrote, "For most of the (U.S.) military personnel we encountered (in England), accepting any Negro officer in the U.S. Army was hard enough, but accepting Negro women officers was a real burden."

Master Sgt. Elizabeth A. Helm-Frazier, a supporter of various efforts to recognize the Six Triple Eight, said Adams detailed many episodes of discrimination and prejudice in her memoir. One interaction with a young white Soldier stood out for her.

"She's a captain at the time, in uniform and walking somewhere when a female Soldier walks by without saluting her," Helm-Frazier said. "She didn't puff up and make scene; she simply stopped the Soldier and said, 'Weren't you taught to salute an officer?' The young lady replied, 'Yes, ma'am.' 'So, why didn't you salute me?' said Adams. The Soldier said, 'Well, I didn't think you were an officer because you are Black.' So, she corrects this young lady; the young lady salutes her, says 'Yes, ma'am,' then moves out."

Adams would need such temperament to deal with challenges associated with becoming commander of the 6888th CPD Bn. She became its leader in December 1944. The unit's mission was to process letters and packages by the millions in Birmingham, England. It operated 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week in segregated facilities with little heat while white Soldiers stayed in nearby houses, according to the U.S. Army Center for Military History [https://history.army.mil/html/topics/afam/6888thPBn].

During the tour, Adams dealt with doses of discrimination like what she experienced in the South. One involved a general officer who made unrealistic demands to stage an all-members parade during his visit. Doing so would have disrupted mail operations. Adams pushed back, and he threatened to install new leadership. She resisted again, according to her memoir, and he eventually backed down.

In another case, Adams confronted the Red Cross as it worked to establish a segregated hotel for her unit's Soldiers when afforded rest and relaxation time in London. According to the Center for Military History, the hotel was meant to keep women of the Six Triple Eight from socializing with white troops and civilians. Defiantly, Adams encouraged her Soldiers to become familiar with their surroundings and learn about the people they were supporting, and not to use the Red Cross facility. They abided and used available integrated hotels.

[https://api.army.mil/e2/c/images/2023/02/16/007720a8/original.jpg]

In her memoir, Adams said her refusal to support the Red Cross was a small protest that produced a highly desirable and meaningful result.

"What we had was a large group of adult Negro women who had been victimized, in one way or another, by racial bias," she wrote. "This was one opportunity to stand together for a common cause."

After three months in Birmingham, the Six Triple Eight had completed its mission. Adams' unit had been given six months to finish the job and achieved success where others had failed. The unit went on to complete similar missions in Rouen and Paris, France. When unit members returned home in 1945, however, there was no grand welcome. Adams was promoted to lieutenant colonel, nevertheless, and summoned to the Pentagon for duty. She departed the ranks in 1946.

After the Army, Adams earned a master's degree in psychology from Ohio State University, worked several jobs in academia, married Stanley Earley Jr. in 1949, raised two children – Stanley III and Judith – and dedicated her life to civil rights and equal justice causes.

She died in 2002 at the age of 83.

Adams and the Six Triple Eight were honored with a memorial at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 2018 and awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2022, both more significant than the grand welcome denied to them upon returning home

from war decades earlier.

Earley III said he is proud of his mother's legacy, especially the impact she made in the lives of young women. Contacts from children learning about her in schools serve as a reminder that his mother's accomplishments were larger than life.

"I've gotten calls over the last few years from students – mostly young girls ... one from Hawaii doing a film about my mother's work and another from Washington state who did an essay that won various awards ... it's been wonderful how inspiring this has been for so many, particularly young people," he said.

That includes those wearing uniforms. Helm-Frazier was a young Soldier when she first saw the then-unknown and rare-for-its-time image of a Black commander proudly standing before Black troops.

"I was inspired by that photo of Adams inspecting the troops ... I wanted to be in that unit because those women looked like me," she said.

The women in that image moved Helm-Frazier to make greater contributions in uniform and help promote the Six Triple Eight legacy.

Today, women who look like her – and those of every other shade – can pursue opportunities far beyond those available to Adams, whose example helped erase racial and gender stereotypes, and whose work over an abbreviated career remains a powerful expression of hope and aspiration.