

From 1933 until 1944, the American public had the honor of spending thirty of their evenings, post dinner, listening to Franklin D. Roosevelt. These radio broadcasts, referred to as fireside chats, were used by FDR as a means of direct communication with the American public. Many of these talks aimed to not only reassure the American people in the face of adversity but to also instill confidence throughout the nation. One such fireside chat, held on February 23, 1942, reported that World War II was not going well for the Allies. Although FDR described the war's progress, he made sure to commend America on her strength and due diligence throughout the ongoing conflict. Additionally, FDR challenged his fellow Americans to continue their sacrifices, for the betterment of their nation.

Throughout World War II, the "Greatest Generation" continuously rose to the challenge of President Roosevelt's words. Young able-bodied men showed their commitment by trading the comfort of their homes, families and communities for bunks, barracks, trenches, and planes beginning on December 8, 1941- the day the United States entered the war. In the November preceding Pearl Harbor, only 51,000 men were enlisted in the Army Air Corps. In comparison, the Navy and Army reported no statistics; only that they were severely undermanned. Therefore, the attack on Pearl Harbor was the catalyst that filled our armed forces beyond capacity. In the first few hours after the attack, Birmingham Alabama had nearly 600 men volunteer for the upcoming fight. Likewise, Boston MA reported lines comprised of hundreds of young men who waited hours to enlist. On December 10, the *New York Times* reported that in three days' time the recruiting records of the nation's armed forces were shattered as thousands of men attempted to enlist for combat duty in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. Although they feared what could happen abroad, these men still sacrificed their pleasures, goods, relationships and lives for the freedom of this great nation and the world.

Widespread male enlistment following Pearl Harbor required women to take an increased role in US workforce, economic engine and war machine. This after-effect allowed women to become more involved in an ever-changing economy and workforce. By 1945, the number of females in the workforce had increased from 27% to 37% with one fourth of married women working outside their homes by 1945. These strong-willed, independent women worked as nurses, factory employees, ship and airplane

builders, air-raid wardens, fire officers, and drivers of engines, trains, and trams. As the war surged on, America also experienced a severe shortage of pilots beginning in 1942. To compensate for the shortage, 1,100 civilian women volunteered for military aircraft training thereby allowing male pilots to engage in combat overseas. The female pilots, called the Women's Airforce Service Pilots, had a variety of crucial non-combat assignments such as flying military aircraft from factories to military bases, testing newly overhauled planes, and towing targets during air gunner training. As Roosevelt requested, these women stepped out of their comfort zone with hopes that their dedication to the United States would aid in destroying the tyrannical governments that threatened our soil.

Although World War II ended over seventy years ago, Roosevelt's words, along with the actions of the "Greatest Generation", have continued to inspire this nation and its people. Currently, the United States Armed Forces employs 1,281,900 active personnel and 811,000 reserve personnel. These personnel are still willing to make the ultimate sacrifice when called upon to protect, defend and serve not only these United States but also provide support to the innocent across the globe. Compared to the world, our active personnel numbers rank third, behind China and India which both have significantly higher populations compared to us. The American people have continued to show support for their military through the establishment and support of organizations and programs benefiting our armed forces. For example, the VHA is currently comprised of 152 hospitals, 800 community-based outpatient clinics, 126 nursing home care units and 35 domiciliaries. Charities such as the Wounded Warrior Project, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society continue to raise funds and awareness for employed, disabled, and retired militia and their families. Additionally, programs supporting those with mental illness and PTSD post-military deployment continue to grow as awareness regarding these conditions increases. Although the social climate across this globe continues to change there is one thing that never will, the commitment of US Armed Forces and the American people to protect the US and freedom beyond our borders.