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James H. Madison. *Slinging Doughnuts for the Boys: An American Woman in World War II.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. xviii + 300 pp. $24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-35047-3.

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Red Cross Women Kept Up Troop Morale Overseas

Often, authors, let alone historians, do not share why or how they come to write on a particular subject. In this case, James H. Madison, a professor at Indiana University, discovered the subject of his book when he came across Elizabeth A. Richardson's grave in the Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial in France. He had been searching for the graves of World War II casualties from Indiana, in an attempt "to make the overwhelming numbers more real and believable" (p. ix). When he discovered Richardson's gravestone, all it told him was "American Red Cross, Indiana, July 25, 1945," but it was enough to spark his interest.

Madison returned home and located Richardson's brother, who gave him access to her letters and diary. These sources, along with other letters and interviews with her friends and family members, form the basis of his sources on her. Richardson, or Liz as she was known to friends, was born in Ohio in 1918, and obtained a degree in English and art at Milwaukee-Downer College Wisconsin. During the first years of World War II, she worked at creating signs and advertisements for Schuster's, a Milwaukee department store, along with volunteering at the local United Service Organizations (USO) club.

In early 1944, Liz signed up with the American Red Cross (ARC). In explaining her choice, Madison mentions the gender issues of the era and the prevailing attitude of many that women should not be in the military. He maintains that women's participation in and their wearing of the Red Cross uniform did not challenge the era's definitions of femininity as much as the uniforms and service of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) or Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services (WAVES) did. Although he mentions, in his notes, the "Slander Campaign" that was waged, starting in 1943 against WAC, he apparently never inquired of her brother or friends if this had been a factor in her experience. Instead, he believes that her selection of ARC was purely logical; she wanted to go overseas and work closely with the troops.

In 1940, the number of paid ARC employees was 935. This increased to 24,300 by 1945. The War Department had authorized ARC as the only civilian service agency chosen for work abroad with military service personnel. ARC had higher standards for its members than the military branches did for theirs. ARC women needed a college degree and the minimum age was twenty-five. Reference letters and a personal interview were required. Less than 20 percent of applicants were accepted.

In mid-May 1944, Liz left for what was originally a six-week training course now condensed to two weeks by the time she joined because of an increased need for overseas workers. She studied the history, procedures, and policies of ARC as well as the military. Like the military, ARC women had strict clothing requirements and a ten-page manual instructing them on such. When women were sent overseas, they received a more practical uniform that included trousers and a Dwight D. Eisenhower type battle jacket.

At the end of the first week of training, the women were interviewed. Since a major part of their work would be conversing with men, the women had to be sociable and entertaining. In a letter, Liz explained that a woman could be ugly but "'still be Miss Popularity. The main thing is that you're female and speak English"' (p. xii). Liz was one of two out of their class of fifty-eight who advanced to an additional five weeks of training. This training included learning management skills, group dynamics, and program planning, plus a variety of card and board games and recreational activities. These skills and her personality led to Liz being one of about six hundred ARC women who went to London in 1944.

By the time Liz arrived in London, American men outnumbered American women, military and ARC, by

one hundred to one. She felt "'sort of like a museum piece"' (p. xii). ARC officials, all of whom were males, referred to their "girls" as "'represent[ing] everything the boys admire in American womanhood"' (p. 28). ARC women were not overtly sexy, especially not those assigned to the Clubmobiles; often they had muddy combat boots and smelled of doughnut grease. The Clubmobiles were established to serve those troops who could not reach the eight Red Cross clubs in London. Usually, Clubmobiles were single-decker buses, with a British driver, that featured a lounge plus "coffee and donut-making equipment, gum, cigarettes, magazines, newspapers, postcards, a phonograph and records" (p. 25). These vehicles, with three ARC women in each, traveled to the outlying camps (see www.clubmobile.org for photos).

In early August, Liz and two others were assigned to the Clubmobile *Kansas City*, which was initially stationed in the county of Leicestershire, north of London. The women shared a house with a landlady and went out daily to meet the troops. Besides being gregarious and charming, the "Doughnut Dollies," as they were nicknamed, worked hard. It was "long and irregular hours of heaving heavy coffee urns, mixing dough, moving supplies, washing coffee cups, and scrubbing out the greasy doughnut machine as well as the Clubmobile" (p. 43). Except for endnotes, Madison makes few comments on gender and sexuality. In one comment, he states that ARC women "did not consider themselves feminists and did not willfully seek change in traditional gender roles. They could be dependent and allow men to protect them when necessary or convenient. Men often felt obliged to help them, even if it only meant carrying heavy coffee urns" (p. 30). Some women were aware that their advanced degrees were out of proportion to their duties, as one commented, "'Who ever thought my M.A. degree would prepare me for this!"' (p. 30).

In addition to the demanding days, some twelve to eighteen hours at a time, ARC women on many evenings were expected to attend dances for enlisted men and separate ones for officers. This obligation led Liz to write, "'Our social life is a little too active for my taste"' (p. 55). Throughout the book, Liz's letters and diary reveal the challenges she faced daily as well as her homesickness and pleas for articles of clothing, toiletries, and magazines not available overseas. The weather was often cold, wet, and dreary in Britain and Liz suffered from long-lasting colds. Yet, in a letter to a close college friend, in which she referred to herself as "Auntie," she wrote, "'Damn glad I have a [college] degree–it helps so much in making doughnuts. However, I wouldn't trade this for anything else and it offered more satisfaction in doing than anything Auntie has ever done"' (p. xii).

Her correspondence was not always lighthearted and her diary, especially, noted the cost of war. Like many ARC women overseas, she heard about war firsthand. She commented to her parents, "'I'm used to the men going over every minute on the line"' (p. 221). On another occasion, she wrote, "'If you only knew what combat does to these boys–not in the physical sense, although that's bad enough–but mentally"' (p. xi). Often, she learned of the deaths of men she had known personally. She vented her frustration with many Americans, who, in polls after the D-Day invasion, thought the worst was over. Later, her experiences in France would give her additional perspectives. In February 1945, Liz, now a captain, and her crew, were assigned to Le Havre. The destruction of towns in France was different from that in England. Artillery shells and house-to-house fighting had been the norm. The French had mixed feelings about the Allies who bombed their cities in order to liberate them. As she noted in her diary, "'The civilians of Le Havre don't like us and they hate the British"' (p. 167).

On a personal basis, Liz and her crew had improved living conditions in France, although their schedule was still demanding. They worked mostly at the docks or train stations. Having to serve fifteen thousand arriving or departing troops on little notice was not unusual. When not at the docks, they traveled to the army units posted around the hills and to the "cigarette camps" (e.g., Camp Lucky Strike), so named after popular American brands. An example of how important to morale ARC women and their doughnuts were became evident in late spring 1945, when the War Department suggested a 50 percent cutback in supplies, including coffee, to the Red Cross. Army officers strongly protested that the coffee and doughnuts were essential and prevented the cutbacks.

By mid-April, Liz noted in her diary the arrival of Allied survivors of German prison camps. Camp Lucky Strike became the main processing area for thousands of these Recovered Allied Military Personnel (RAMPs). She was shocked by their deplorable physical condition and in a letter wrote, "'I can work up quite a white hate against our Kraut friends"' (p. 197). On another note, occasionally she mentioned the African American troops and the prejudice they faced from white Americans. Like the military, ARC maintained segregation in their facilities and it was not until the summer of 1945 that a Red Cross club opened for black troops in Le Havre. Toward the end of April, some of Liz's coworkers moved forward, but she was stuck behind. Even with the official end of

the war in Europe, her work continued; she noted that they served four hundred gallons of coffee on May 9, 1945.

The remainder of the book follows Liz through her last months in France, including her ongoing romance with Lieutenant Frank Policastro, and a mention of their breakup on July 21. On July 25, she was killed in a small plane crash on the way to Paris, where she had a meeting. Her friends were devastated and the letters of sympathy sent to her parents, along with a description of her funeral, are included in the text. What makes this all so moving is that Madison, in 2003, was able to interview some of Liz's coworkers and a close college friend. Decades had passed, but the women's recollections of their dear friend were still poignant. Madison wraps up his book by mentioning that ARC women formed the Clubmobile Association after the war and attended reunions.

In looking at this account, it has been noted that Madison does not dwell on gender and sexuality issues very much except in a few comments and notes. His greatest strengths lie, however, in not only presenting Richardson's story but also in giving the reader a fuller understanding of the challenges that ARC women faced in the European theater. His use of quotes from memoirs, the papers of other ARC women, and interviews adds to the richness of this account. Then again, because Madison focused solely on Richardson, he only hints at the challenges faced by the ARC women who preceded her and worked closer to the front lines.

That said, his account is a welcomed addition to the history of the American Red Cross. Previous books have been mostly short autobiographical accounts with little or no context and few outside sources. Two histories of ARC involvement (George Korson's *At His Side: The American Red Cross Overseas in World War II* [1945] and Foster Rhea Dulles's *The American Red Cross: A History* [1950]) were published shortly after the war and neither includes as much detail on day-to-day duties and challenges as Madison's does. Photos and some of Richardson's sketches are included and a watercolor of hers adorns the jacket adding to this superb study. All in all, this account makes for informative and enjoyable reading for the scholar, undergraduate, or anyone interested in women's participation in the war, and in particular the American Red Cross Clubmobiles.

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