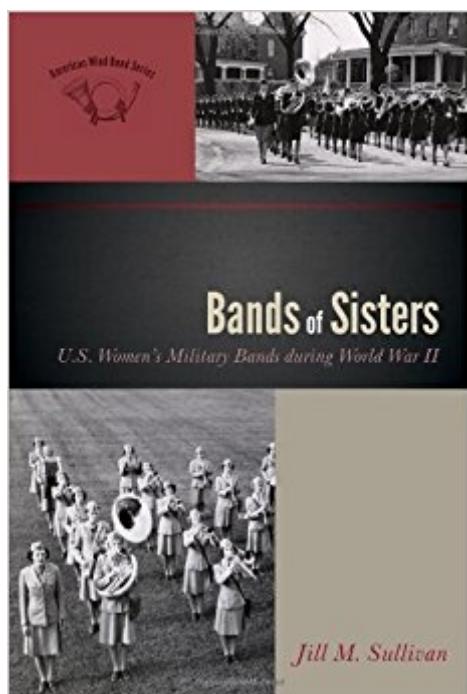


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# **Bands Of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands During World War II (The American Wind Band)**



## Synopsis

On Saturday, November 14, 1944, radio listeners heard an enthusiastic broadcast announcer describe something they had never heard before: Women singing the "Marines' Hymn" instead of the traditional all-male United States Marine Band. The singers were actually members of its sister organization, The Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Today, few remember these all-female military bands because only a small number of their performances were broadcast or pressed to vinyl. But, as Jill Sullivan argues in *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands during World War II*, these gaps in the historical record can hardly be treated as the measure of their success. The novelty of these bands "initially employed by the U.S. military to support bond drives" drew enough spectators for the bands to be placed on tour, raising money for the war and boosting morale. The women, once discharged at the war's end, refused to fade into post-war domesticity. Instead, the strong bond fostered by youthful enthusiasm and the rare opportunity to serve in the military while making professional caliber music would come to last some 60 years. Based on interviews with over 70 surviving band members, *Bands of Sisters* tells the tale of this remarkable period in the history of American women. Sullivan covers the history of these ensembles, tracing accounts such as the female music teachers who would leave their positions to become professional musicians "no easy matter for female instrumentalists of the pre-war era. Sullivan further traces how some band members would later be among the first post-war music therapists based on their experience working with medical personnel in hospitals to treat injured soldiers. The opportunities presented by military service inevitably promoted new perspectives on what women could accomplish outside of the home, resulting in a lifetime of lasting relationships that would inspire future generations of musicians.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Appearing in the "American Wind Band Series," ed. by Raoul Camus, this book considers all eight of the known women's bands and several drum and bugle corps in four branches of the military during WW II. With this project Sullivan (music education, Arizona State Univ.) synthesizes and helps preserve a substantial body of primary sources, some of which might otherwise have been lost, including military documents and personal diaries. She conducted 79 interviews with former band members, gaining not only insight about their participation in the military bands, but also information about their musical backgrounds and postwar careers. Initially organized to support units of women enlistees and to free men for combat-oriented tasks, the women's bands ultimately played more important roles by promoting patriotism at home, raising millions of dollars performing at bond drives, engaging with wounded and returning soldiers, and recruiting women for the military. For many band members, the years of service to the nation marked a highpoint in their lives--boosting self-esteem and elevating professional skills. Many interviewees identified performances in hospitals as their most important accomplishment--one perhaps linked with the subsequent development of music therapy. Summing Up: Recommended. Lower- and upper-division undergraduates; general readers. (CHOICE)The opportunities presented by military service inevitably promoted new perspectives on what women could accomplish outside of the home, resulting in a lifetime of lasting relationships that would inspire future generations of musicians. Today, few remember these all-female military bands because only a small number of their performances were broadcast or pressed to vinyl. At the close of the war, these bands were dissolved and the women released from service. Based on interviews with over seventy surviving band members, *Bands of Sisters* tells the tale of this remarkable period in the history of American women. (International Women's Brass Conference Newsletter)*Bands of Sisters* is an exciting account of women's military bands in the United States during World War II. Traditional accounts of the history of music education have under-represented the contributions of women musicians. Historians have especially neglected the stories of female band musicians even though women performed in town bands, school bands, and professional touring bands in the nineteenth century and gained valuable experience during the school band movement of the 1920s....The chapter on

âœMusic for the Injured Soldierâ™ will be especially interesting for music therapists. Near the end of the war, WAC band members were reassigned to military bases on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts to welcome home injured men, and bands from several military branches performed in hospitals.

The musicians entertained the men and encouraged them to participate in music activities. . . .

Bands of Sisters will be of interest to anyone who has played in a band, directors of instrumental ensembles, and the general reader who is interested in the contributions of women to music education. (Music Educators Journal)Sullivan's research reveals the existence of at least seven World War II era permanent-duty women's military bands, a recreational concert band, and several collateral-duty drum and bugle corps. . . While Sullivan's research includes the use of a diverse collection of primary documents, her most interesting sources are interviews conducted with seventy-nine women, military musicians now in their eighties and nineties. (On

Point: The Journal of Army History)Jill Sullivan's Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands during World War II is a âmust readâ™ for every music educator. Sullivan chronicled an important piece of American history that is not only informative but at times personal, emotional, and revelatory. I cheered, I chuckled, and I cried as I read it. The passion, excitement, and pain of the women in these bands touched both my head and my heart. Clearly, this is a powerful story and, just as clearly, Sullivan told it masterfully. (Journal of Historical Research in Music Education)This book discusses armed forces and their bands and the type of training used for their musicians.

Many photos give a good image of the various activities of the bands and their instrumental occupation. This is an interesting piece of history, certainly recommended. (Defilâ©)Bands of Sisters presents a wonderfully informative look at the long-overlooked contributions of women's military bands during World War II. Jill Sullivan's careful and exhaustive research provides both a great read and an invaluable addition to our wind band legacy. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and recommend it to all who are interested in the history of bands and band music in America.

(Paula A. Crider, president, The American Bandmasters Association, Professor Emerita, The University of Texas)Dr. Sullivan has written an intriguing, thoroughly documented account of the largely neglected role of women in military bands during World War II. Using numerous oral interviews, primary and secondary written accounts, and photographs, this meticulously prepared narrative reinforces the important role that these all-female groups played in boosting morale, raising money through bond drives and even performing for injured soldiers returning home for recuperation. This is a must read for anyone interested in the history of bands in America. (William Davis Ph.D, Professor, Music Therapy, Colorado State University)Dr. Jill Sullivan gives voice to a significant part of history that has up to this point remained untold. Not only is this an important

completion of the historical picture of the American wind band, but, and perhaps more importantly, these stories empower young female musicians who will now know they are part of a strong lineage of accomplished women musicians. As a woman band conductor myself, I plan to recommend this book to any young woman who wishes to pursue a career as a conductor, performer, or teacher, and anyone interested in a more complete knowledge of the history of the wind band. (Dr. Diana M. Hollinger, Project Coordinator, California Music Project, San Jose) Jill Sullivan's diligent research brings to light a previously undocumented and unique contribution to the war effort. Her Bands of Sisters is a fascinating read which finally credits the efforts of thousands of women military musicians during World War II. (Colonel John R. Bourgeois, Director Emeritus, The United States Marine Band, "The President's Own")

Jill M. Sullivan is associate professor of Music Education at Arizona State University.

I bought this book for my wife, a retired military musician and she really loved it. So do I!

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