

Eight of us gathered at Dee's today for lunch and discussion of *Valient Women*. We started with an appetizer of Spam heated with fruit. It was surprisingly delicious and a good reminder of what the service members ate during WWII. Dee served us a delicious lunch (which did not include Spam) which included a wonderful chicken soup/stew, veggies and dip, and homemade bread. The dessert was a delightful raspberry-lemon pound cake.

Our discussion started with some background info on the author, Lena Andrews. She is a professor at the University of Maryland. She has also worked for the CIA and RAND (a defense contractor). Lena who is known as a military analyst was surprised to learn that she knew nothing about the role of women in WWII. This discovery of her lack of knowledge led to her researching and ultimately writing this excellent story of the 350,000 American women who served during WWII. We were all amazed that this military expert was so young!

American women have served humbly in all American wars, but culture has largely ignored their contributions. WWII required the service of even more women than in any previous war because of the unprecedented need for manpower. Women leaders from many colleges in the US became some of the women leaders during the war. The increased number of women not only relieved many men from doing administrative work (so they could be sent to the front lines), but the service women did every job imaginable and in every location. They were codebreakers, spies, pilots, nurses, translators, mechanics, etc. The military divisions placed various limits on the women's authority and rank, but through perseverance, confidence and commitment, they overcame these limitations and served valiantly. As Charity Adams (the major in charge of the 6888 Central Postal Directory) said when confronted by a male superior, "Over my dead body!"

We also enjoyed hearing about some of our members' relatives and the contributions they made to the war effort. We are grateful to all service members and their families (past and present). We all found the book to be well written and superbly researched and were inspired by this non-novel choice for our book club.

The following books/movies were also recommended: *The Six Triple Eight*; *Code Breakers*; *Hidden Figures*; *Conclave*.

We will meet next on Thursday, February 20th at Laura's to discuss *James* by Percival Everett.

*Laura*