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U.S. Coast Guard History Program

SPAR Olivia Hooker: First African American Woman in the Coast Guard



In February 1945, Olivia Hooker was sworn in by a Coast Guard officer, becoming the first African-American female admitted into the United States Coast Guard. Hooker joined the service to become a SPAR (Semper Paratus Always Ready), the acronym used for female service personnel during World War II. A survivor of the infamous 1921 Tulsa Race Riots, Hooker's family moved to Columbus, Ohio, where she earned a degree at Ohio State. During World War II, Hooker tried to join the WAVES, but was rejected due to her ethnicity. She applied to the Coast Guard, where she was received cordially, and completed her basic training in March of 1945. She attended yeoman school for next nine weeks

and spent the rest of her service time in Boston. She remained in the Coast Guard until the war-time SPARs were disbanded by mid-1946. Dr. Hooker later earned a doctorate in psychology and had a long and distinguished career as a professor in New York, retiring at the age of eighty-seven.

William H. Thiesen
Atlantic Area Historian
