“Indiana Girls Take Over”

Because of world conditions it has become necessary for women to give up their avocations and devote more time to aid in alleviating the shortage of manpower. Every day women are given positions of greater responsibilities and importance than ever before in history. *Indiana Penn*

“What is so rare as a day in June? A man on Indiana’s campus. With a 20 to 1 ratio, we have practically become a female seminary where the old rules are outdated. *Indiana Penn* July 20, 1943
Introduction

Between 1939 and 1945, women students and faculty at ISTC joined the rest of the nation in preparing for and participating in the Second World War. The war transformed the campus necessitating an adapted and accelerated curriculum, flight training, and Red Cross Nutrition and first aid classes and leading concerned authorities to hold air raids and blackouts and train students for air craft spotting. Female students joined their male peers in joining the forces and working in local munitions plants, or using their radio programs to perform patriotic songs or teach wartime thrift and coping.

In February of 1943 when a large group of male students marched off to war, it left the campus with a 20-1 ratio of women to men. In the absence of male students, as the Penn article suggested, the Indiana girls took over.

Coming of the War

Funded by New Deal dollars, in the late 1930s badly needed new building projects resulted in the construction of buildings such as the Fischer Auditorium and the new training school eased the overcrowding that had plagued the campus. Even as the campus was expanding to accommodate an increasing student population, the war in Europe was spreading across the globe, pulling more and more male and female students to war industries and the war front.

All through the 1930s local and national speakers brought in by the International Relations Club or other campus organizations had spoken of the threat posed by belligerent European dictators and the conflicts their activities were brewing. While early lectures had called for peace at any cost, speakers towards the end of the decade were most likely to conclude that peace was not an option and preparedness was the only choice.
The voices of those who chose pacifism over bellicosity were not welcome. Mary Flegal, who had headed the Art department since Jean McElhaney was forced to retire, submitted her resignation in December of 1941 because of her outspoken pacifist views. In a letter to LeRoy King, she wrote:

“My pride forces me to submit my resignation before I leave for this vacation—a relief to you I know. My critics mistake for radicalism my flair for debunking of sham and hypocrisy. I am really a very simple tame person with a sense of humor that has been the cause of much of my trouble.

In a rather obscure way, I try to put the Golden rule into actual practice. My neighbors are the whole-wide world, particularly, those who are not of the privileged class, regardless of race, nationality, or degree of culture.

Furthermore, I do not believe that slaughtering the cream of manhood ever has or ever will settle disputes or injustices, either economic or political. “

**War Preparedness on Campus**

Support for the war effort was translated into action on the ISTC campus. Before America entered the war, efforts were made to send support to war stricken Europe. In September of 1940, Jimmy Stewart, who had attended the ISNS Model School and given performances during WWI to raise money for the war effort, joined his old friends Bill Neff and Dutch Campbell to put on a show to raise money for war relief at ISTC called “Magic, Music, and Moviedom.”

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, followed shortly by a US declaration of war, Velda McHenry remembered that the reaction on campus was almost universally patriotic and “everybody wanted to join”
the forces. So began the wartime long decline in the number of male students on campus. Those who remained behind began to mobilize for the war. Beginning in June of 1940, flight training classes were offered on campus. Helen Terchila, pictured at left and in the image that begins this chapter, was the only female member of the class of 1941 to participate in flight training. Her interest in the mechanics of automobiles led her to flight training. When she earned her wings, while male fellow classmates flew their caps up the flag pole, the personal item she chose was her silk slip. Jean Liddicoat Hall, Home Economics major, the other woman “ready to go,” also took the training. As shown here, women also served as instructors in the program.