Part Two: 1941-1966
5. Coeds Prevail during World War II

Trustee Harry Morrison's construction company began laying down airstrips in Alaska, on small, low-lying Pacific atolls such as Wake, and erecting Camp Roberts and Fort Ord in California before "the date which will live in infamy," Franklin Roosevelt's label for December 7, 1941. However, prior to Pearl Harbor most Americans did not expect a Pacific war or direct involvement in the European conflict despite England's precarious situation after the fall of France. Meanwhile the Japanese, called the "Yellow Peril" for at least a generation, had been ignored. Their Land of the Rising Sun was so far away few people considered them a direct threat to American security. Secretary of State Cordell Hull's unsatisfactory deliberations with the Japanese were largely disregarded, hence the successful strike on Pearl Harbor came as a complete surprise.

Washington had hesitantly adopted preparedness measures before Hitler swept around the obsolete French Maginot Line. The Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) was created in June, 1938, and Boise Junior College was one of the schools selected for pilot training. Initiated during the fall of 1939, the program was historically appropriate for land-locked Boise, where flying conditions were generally favorable, since a portion of the campus had been used by Varney Airlines, contractor for one of the early airmail routes.

While young men and several women were learning to fly, faculty and students registered when Selective Service, America's first peacetime compulsory military draft, was instituted in the fall of 1940. Some of the C.A.A.'s trainees had joined the Army Air Corps by this time and many of them enlisted thereafter. Virgil Olson chose the Royal Air Force. John Driscoll was killed in September, 1941, when his flight-trainer crashed near Chico, California, and a dormitory memorialized his name ten years later. The less tragic military experiences of other students were mentioned by Chaffee in "War Years," chapter ten of his book.1

A COLLEGE OR AN AIRPORT?

Radio students became proficient while serving their country, as did language, pre-medical and engineering majors. Answering the young man's letter several weeks before the Japanese captured Wake Island where he was working, Chaffee told Myron Curtis in November, 1941, he realized there was "quite a group of Junior College people over there," and some were on other islands. Chaffee said he was anxious to see Harry and Ann Morrison, who days earlier had flown from Wake to
Honolulu aboard a Pan American China Clipper. The Japanese would (soon after bombing Pearl Harbor) kill fourteen of Morrison’s employees on Wake and capture his 1,000-plus work force. The ninety-eight journeymen held on the island were executed hours before it was retaken in 1943. But when Morrison returned to Boise in November, 1941, he confidently told a reporter Wake’s Marines were preparing for all eventualities and the Navy was on the alert for any possible attack. Returning after their liberation three years later from China and Japan, alumni related their prison camp experiences.

Writing to a former student working on Palmyra, southwest of Hawaii, one day before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Chaffee predicted the Axis powers would eventually collapse under the economic weight they were carrying and the attempt to hold so many unwilling subjects under their domination. Meanwhile, the military depleted the student body, and Chaffee along with eleven members of the faculty experienced several years of service. Douglas Cruickshank, responsible for the Civilian Pilot Training Program, was called into the Army in August, 1940, leaving Calvin Emerson in charge of the thirty trainees until he was transferred by the Civil Aeronautics Authority. Electronics instructor Harold Reed took his place. For a while flight training was located at Gowen Field, but the C.A.A. was ousted when the field was expanded for the Army Air Force, and civilians then used the eastern end of campus now called “College Field.”

Idaho’s licensed pilots increased from slightly over one hundred before the C.A.A. program reached the state in 1939, to over seven hundred by January, 1942, and many of them were trained in Boise. Nationwide over 400,000 students, some
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women as well as men, completed flight training during the program's five years. But Boise was one of the few places where budding pilots received both classroom and flight instruction on a college campus. This distinction might have been exploited to bring attention to the small school. However, the arrangement had some objectionable features, Conan Mathews told Lynn Driscoll in 1944, especially the noise created by planes taking off during classes and the danger to the Union Building near the west end of the runway.

Writing to Chaffee, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Boise Junior College District, Clyde Potter, said Mathews had told him during a lengthy telephone conversation that airport operations were still giving him headaches. It seemed to Potter that "everybody" was plunging into the airplane business. "It looks like we will eventually have a showdown as to whether there is to be a college or an airport on the Junior College campus," Potter exclaimed. The Board was bowing its back but the confrontation with the flyers was not long standing, for the C.A.A. program was discontinued some months later, and Bradley Field several miles west of the campus (in Garden City) became the civilian pilot's mecca.

WARTIME ADMINISTRATION

About two-thirds of the student body was male before Selective Service began the draft during the fall, 1940, semester. The ratio soon changed. Some of the women joined military auxiliaries formed by all the branches, but during the war women outnumbered males by a wide margin. Nine teachers donned uniforms in addition to the two pilot trainers. Chaffee joined the Navy, while five instructors were deferred or passed over for one reason or another. One of them, Francis Haines (formerly at Gonzaga University in Spokane), a veteran of the previous World War with a University of California doctorate, who had been at BJC since 1939, was named Acting President in June, 1942.

A rather prolific writer and "a fool-proof history professor," said the 1941 Les Bois, Haines was also Dean of Men. He was outstanding in both positions the editors believed, while faculty rated his administrative abilities much lower. Author of Nez Perce Indian history, and several more books after his transfer in January, 1942, to Lewiston Normal School, Haines became discouraged as the student body declined. Traditional athletic contests were terminated for the duration, and certain courses that rarely attracted women were dropped. Writing to Chaffee, Haines said he was afraid the college might not survive and the dusty and darkened hallways would be "chalked up to his failure." Junior colleges were closing across the land as enrollment dropped during the war. BJC survived, but Haines would not be the one to pull it through.

A trustee advisory committee assumed administrative duties for a couple of months after Haines resigned, and this group asked art instructor Conan Mathews to provide leadership. Acceptable to the faculty, Dean Mathews (as he was now called) kept the college on an even keel during the war years despite the death of the board's President and Vice President, Haga and Chapman, in 1943. When Driscoll
succeeded Haga, financial matters were sound because revenues from property taxes and liquor sales were more than enough for operating expenses and reduced programs.

Mathews, with the faculty since the fall of 1939, had been recommended by J.W. Condie, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who was acquainted with his work at Caldwell's College of Idaho. "One of the best college art instructors in the state," Mathews had limited administrative experience, yet his low-key style was appreciated as he presided at faculty meetings. Receiving $1,800 before assuming leadership, Mathew's salary was nearly doubled.

Realizing his position was temporary, Mathews kept in touch with Chaffee, who returned both for Haga's funeral in April, 1943, and in June to deliver the commencement address. Corresponding several weeks after Lieutenant Commander Chaffee returned to the Naval Air Station at Pasco, Washington, Mathews told him the state vocational education people coveted the brick machine shop built by the now liquidated National Youth Administration. Replying promptly, Chaffee claimed the NYA had acknowledged college ownership, thus no one should tamper with it. "As you know," he warned Mathews, "Vocational Education is the proverbial camel that once he gets his head into the tent, he gets the whole occupancy thereof." The building was retained and when Chaffee returned, he made Mathews academic dean.4

**FACULTY 1941-1945**

Twelve full and part-time instructors had been added in the fall of 1939, when the student body doubled, and there were thirty-nine teachers on hand when classes began the following September on the airport campus. The administrative staff numbered seven, and there were thirty-seven instructors (title and rank had not yet been adopted) during the 1941-1942 school year. Only twenty-three were needed the fall of 1944, the size of the faculty when Chaffee relieved Mathews in September, 1945.

Curious about the religious preference of instructors and staff, the prober found ten denominations represented. Unlike eastern Idaho institutions where many teachers were Mormons, there were just three at BJC who adhered to Mathew's faith. Seven teachers were of Chaffee's religious preference, Presbyterian, two were Catholic, eight said they were Methodist, while the same number adhered to the Congressional faith, and seven were Episcopalians. There was one Lutheran, Baptist, and Brethren at the college, and two Nazarenes. Four instructors admitted no religious preference. This unusual survey illustrated that diversities in personal lives, as well as academic preparation, were found among the faculty.

Acceptable when junior colleges were an innovation, the bachelor's degree was no longer considered adequate for instructors teaching students who would hold a baccalaureate themselves in three or four years. However, many small colleges necessarily retained faculty without advanced studies while attempting to attract masters and doctorates. There were eleven teachers at BJC with bachelor degrees when the war began, while seventeen held masters and six had earned their doctorates. Chaffee, who found himself too busy to complete his, was awarded honorary degrees by both the College of Idaho in 1940, and the university at Moscow in 1964. The percentage of terminal degree faculty did not change very much until the college became a four-year school. Compared with the forty-eight
junior colleges Leonard Koos examined in the October, 1947 Junior College Journal, Boise had a higher percentage of doctorates, fewer masters and more baccalaureate pedagogues.

Chaffee and Mathews, both thirty-five when war came, were among about twenty faculty near that age; fifteen were younger and nine were in their forties. Music's A.C. Lanphere and librarian Mary Bedford were older, while geology's Edward Rhodenbaugh had reached sixty. Senior was engineering's dignified, crew-cut A.F. Ingalls, who was rounding out his career at age seventy-nine. Four were in their twenties, the library's Ruth McBirney, Robert Latimore in forestry, psychology's William Cooley and engineer Robert Baird.

When Chaffee returned from the Navy, Baird was on active duty at Fort Lewis, Washington. Needing him for popular radio classes, Chaffee appealed to Senators Glen Taylor and Charles Gossett, but the red tape was stronger than the scissors and Baird finally returned fall semester, 1946, one year after Chaffee began to seek his discharge. After coach Harry Jacoby went to war, his successor George Allison resigned when so many football and basketball players enlisted or were called up by the local draft board.

John Glasby was appointed coach and Air Corps personnel stationed at Gowen Field, where Glasby had been employed, began using the school's hangar gymnasium as did enlisted men housed at Boise Barracks. Helen Lewis came to Boise from Central Washington College to replace Dale Whittemore in women's physical education, and Joseph Spulnik, with a chemistry doctorate earned at Oregon State College replaced Calvin Emerson. Spulnik eventually became a dean and completed his career after the college became a university in the 1970s. Donald Obee, a University of Kansas biologist, also joined the faculty when sagebrush covered the west end of campus, over the abandoned city dump where mushrooms were gathered in the spring.

When committees were formed in January, 1942, George Allison led the first aid group, and Joseph Spulnik was named Chairman of the Committee on Deferment and Enlistment. Air raid precaution volunteers were responsible for an “Aerial Bombardment Protection” class, and the Disaster Committee was aided by one concerned with messenger service. Red Cross projects such as the rolling of bandages involved both students and faculty associated with the Lifelines, who donated blood while selling war bonds and defense stamps. The coeds entertained servicemen at Campus Canteens where chaperoned dancing, games and refreshments were enjoyed. The girls also hosted the canteen overlooking the city in the Union Pacific’s mission-style depot not far from campus.

Administration and classroom building.
Boise State University Archives
The biennial report of the State Board of Education for 1943-1944 revealed that the student body decreased from an all-time high of 625 in 1941, to about one-third of this number. There was an increase of twenty-six percent in 1944, and the up-swing accelerated when veterans began inundating campuses. That Mathews, faculty and student leaders were able to keep BJC stimulated during the war, considering the departure of students enrolled in the Army Enlisted Reserve, the men and women who voluntarily joined various military services, and the young men who were drafted, was commendable.

Some courses such as forestry had to be dropped, but among the several added in order to "meet the demands of war" were personnel management, cost accounting, map drafting, surveying of a military nature, and in 1943, one called "Peace Problems and Aims." Important for future curricula development were the medical technology course and classes for nurses in training at the two hospitals, the beginning of what would eventually lead to the formation of a school of health sciences. Without counting the nurses, the percentage of females increased during World War II, when women generally outnumbered men at most colleges. About fifty-six percent of the nation's students were men in 1941. By 1944, sixty-five
percent were women, and this figure was a bit higher for full-time students at Boise Junior College. The percentage would have been larger had so many girls not taken jobs at home or at the nearest defense plant instead of attending college.7

Constantly seeking to increase enrollment while Henry J. Kaiser's Pacific Coast shipyards and his Fontana, California, steel mill were offering high-paying jobs, junior college presidents decided to open their doors to the upper half of high school senior classes. Conan Mathews, who headed the Northwest Association's committee that investigated this plan, found that eleven of twelve junior colleges favored admitting high school scholars, but their principals were wary. Dipping into high schools was not a suitable solution to this wartime enrollment problem, the principals told the presidents. Nonetheless, Boise Junior College admission requirements were altered to admit high school seniors due to graduate in June, 1943. Those students continuing their studies successfully were able to complete the associate degree in eighteen months. Providing these people with a junior college diploma before they entered military service or left the area to work in defense plants was a valuable contribution to the war effort, local officials believed. BJC would one day develop an honors program for bright high school seniors, and in 1982 President John Keiser presented a brilliant twelve-year-old, higher education's youngest graduate, his baccalaureate certificate.

Many young people of Japanese ancestry were denied a college education during World War II, even though they were graduates of accredited high schools. Although American citizens, they were incarcerated in one of ten concentration camps along with their parents and grandparents, some of whom were not citizens. One of the needless barbed wire camps was placed out on the desert east of Boise near Jerome, despite the protests of parents of Wake Island captives who feared retaliatory punishment. Their anxiety eased when regulations were finally relaxed and Japanese-Americans enrolled at BJC and other colleges.

Walter Eells, editor of the Junior College Journal, contacted Conan Mathews when the War Relocation Authority released the names of several hundred students of Japanese parentage. Among the approximately one hundred enrolled in eighteen junior colleges, there was one girl at Boise whom Eells wanted identified. Actually there were two: Midori Nishizaki, a home economics major popular among her classmates who was living with a local family where she earned her room and board, and Yoneki Tajitsu enrolled in the general physics course. The only girl in her class, she excelled and registrar Mary Hershey hoped she would return. BJC welcomed all students who could qualify, Hershey told the Journal, a policy which pleased the parents of prisoners held in Japan such as Joseph Crowe, the former President of the School Board.

After Joseph Crowe's son Frank and other prisoners were released, some of them joining the veterans on campus, Harry Morrison suggested that Chaffee, who was struggling with bulging classrooms, "send all the girls to Vassar, or someplace where the contact with approachable young men can be established on an efficient basis." Morrison had asked several coeds whether they enrolled for an education or to find a husband and the usual answer had been, "Both, but I will settle for the man." If this was the reason girls were in college, Morrison wondered if facilities should be duplicated and multiplied in order to "take care of all of the girls that go there just to get married."8

Actually, the women were largely serious students, who had organized several clubs that served the local civilian war effort. Their Paul Revere chapter of the Minute Maids active by fall semester, 1942, promoted the sale of war bonds and sold
defense stamps Saturday evenings in Boise theater lobbies. With Minute Maids from other schools, the coeds were frequently hostesses at the air base officers’ club at Gowen Field and later in Mountain Home, about fifty miles east of Boise. Doffing their popular Sloppy Joe sweaters, the girls wore dark dresses with shoulder-length white collars, and caps marked with a white “V” for victory. Stamp books were toted in a pouch marked “MM” attached to a colorful belt. Their idealistic motto, “Duty before Dates,” was a burden for some girls.

The Associated Women, the original campus club now led by President June Coffin, also sold defense stamps; making Wednesdays their day to persuade students, faculty and visitors encountered in the hallways to invest in their country’s security. This group also sponsored campus canteens for enlisted personnel as well as officers from Gowen Field during the 1943-1944 school year. They danced, played party games, and enjoyed refreshments with about fifty junior college girls during each canteen.

Zoology instructor Dale Arvey advised the twenty-one young men in the Future Officers Club, who had joined one of the military reserve programs. Thirty youths expecting to become naval aviation cadets were also housed and fed on campus. After their departure in April, 1943, for further training, Les Bois proudly recorded the contribution the college had made while serving as a center for the Civil Aeronautics Authority War Training Service. Meanwhile, the Home Economics girls hosted dinners for students who were entering the armed forces. Most of the young men remaining joined the Golden Plume chapter of the Intercollegiate Knights. There were so few males, anyone who wanted to could pledge himself to “service, sacrifice, and loyalty” with the Knights.

The C.A.A.’s civilian pilot trainees formed their own club, and there was another one that promoted an interest in aviation, the Pegasus (Greek winged steed) Club. Photographers also organized, as did students interested in theater, music and foreign languages. There were more women than men in most organizations. The seventeen boys who posed with advisor Joseph Spulnik for the 1944 Les Bois photograph of the Associated Men were also members of the Intercollegiate Knights. Below them appeared the names of over one hundred former freshmen who might have been in the sophomore class had they not entered the armed forces.
WHY WAS FOOTBALL STOPPED?

It was possible, although not always negotiable, for some students enrolled in technical fields to remain in school. Selective Service was somewhat gentle with learners preparing for critical occupations. The State Director, former psychology instructor Colonel Norman Adkinson, tried to honor deferment petitions submitted by the college. Had enough of the young men allowed to remain been basketball players Coach John Glasby would have continued intercollegiate competition beyond the 1943 season, but this was not the case. Football (on that level) had been discontinued at the close of the previous season.

The 1942 Les Bois, reviewing the last football season, led by Coach George “Stub” Allison after Harry Jacoby was called into the Army, also highlighted the other sports programs. The pigskin Broncos had defeated Albion Normal, Gowen Field and eastern Utah’s Carbon Junior College during Allison’s last season, while losing to Eastern Oregon, Carroll College at Helena, Montana, Lewiston Normal, and Southern Branch in Pocatello. Intramural sports included boxing and baseball, while tennis, along with golf, archery, badminton and swimming were enjoyed by both men and women. Football was conspicuously missing from the thin 1944 Les Bois, that obviously suffered from the paper shortage, as did The Roundup, now reduced to a monthly without a sports section.
The Junior High School's Rex Engelking coached basketball and baseball. Tennis and flying excited students the spring after Florence Adams' basketball team split about even for the season. Carl Warner was less successful in football. He found himself apologizing in the half-size, four-page *Roundup*, because he had closed the season early. Students were asking, "Why was football stopped?" The answer was easy, Warner explained. Eleven players came out for practice on the ragged field when the season started, but only five had appeared for the next scrimmage. Uncertain a team could be fielded, Warner scheduled just one game, which discouraged the handful of players. So the 1945 football season was a flop, but the next one was exciting as veterans swamped colleges and universities all over the country.

James Strachan, BJC's music man since 1932, urged Student Body President Richard Parker to sponsor a Lyceum that might fill in for the shrunken athletic program. A committee grabbed the idea, four speakers and entertainers were scheduled, and the Lyceum was continued in 1946, with five programs enjoyed by townspeople as well as students and faculty. Otherwise the audience would not have been very large. While there were forty-five sophomore men and forty-eight women in the fall of 1942, there were just sixteen males and forty-seven females when classes began in September, 1945. Over one hundred freshman boys enrolled in 1942, and eighty-four in 1945, but about one-third of each class entered the Army or Navy before completing the school year.

Now on a quarter rather than a semester system, BJC enrolled thirty veterans in the fall of 1945, while six times as many registered for the winter quarter, and over two hundred the following spring. By the fall of 1946, the student body was largely male once again, and a majority of them were GI's, veterans with overseas or stateside experience who brought cigarettes, slang expressions, casual dress and serious academic aspirations with them. Eager to learn, but without much money other than their small monthly government check, the GI's needed low-cost housing. Colleges, anxious to serve more students after three or four quiet years, did their best to accommodate them, moving onto campus war-surplus buildings remodeled for classrooms and apartments.