

# Women, Weather, and World War II

by Susan Schott Karr



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Amplify Atlas™

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In 1941, the United States was at war. Many men left their jobs to go off and fight, while women took on the jobs the men left behind. Many women worked in offices, but some worked in factories and shipyards, where they built airplanes and ships. Near the end of World War II, some women worked at weather stations.

One of these women, Irene Gehrt Brodie, worked as a **meteorologist**, or weather scientist. She trained for several weeks in Kansas City, Kansas, before going to a weather station in Wyoming. Several other women also joined the work force as meteorologists and began studying weather at a deeper level. They worked hard to improve the ways in which weather was being studied.



Irene Gehrt Brodie is about to release a balloon that will help her collect weather information.

## Amplify Atlas™

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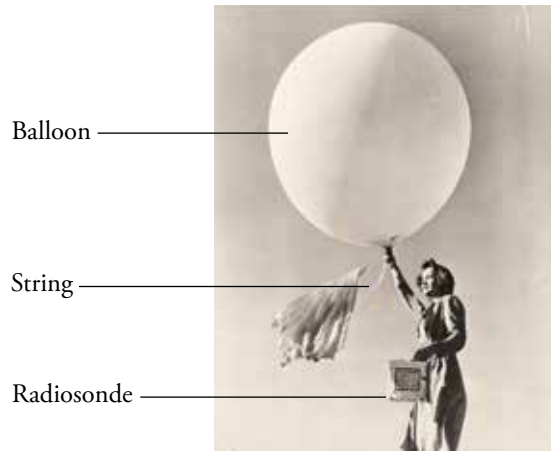
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## A Pilot Balloon



A pilot balloon is a kind of weather balloon that tracks the flow of air high in the atmosphere.

Before the war, meteorologists used kites and airplanes to gather weather information high up in the **atmosphere**. Atmosphere is the layers of air that wrap around Earth. Later, the weather scientists hung simple radios from balloons. The radios sent weather information back to the ground, where scientists could study it.

By the 1930s, scientists had a better radio, called a **radiosonde** [RAY-dee-oh-sawnd]. The radiosonde is still used today. It is a package that carries special weather tools. The package rises as the weather balloon on which it hangs floats upward. Along the way to the upper atmosphere, the radiosonde sends weather information back to earth for study.

During World War II, there was a special need to know what the weather was like high in the atmosphere. Because there were no computers at that time, the work of understanding and predicting weather was much harder. Teams of two or three people studied the information. They put it into charts and maps. Because weather is always changing, women worked around the clock.

These women used weather information to make weather maps that described the air in the upper atmosphere.



By 1945, more than 900 women were working as weather scientists. They made careful observations, studied measurements, and gave live radio reports. They also spoke with airplane pilots to explain the weather and to **forecast**, or predict, new weather. These women scientists helped leaders plan where and when to move soldiers, ships, and aircraft. They helped win the war.



During the war, women sent weather information over telegraph lines.

## Glossary

**atmosphere (n.):** the layers of air that wrap around Earth

**forecast (v.):** to use information to predict the weather

**meteorologist (n.):** a scientist who studies the weather

**radiosonde (n.):** a package of weather tools

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