

## DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS REGIMENT



**CORPORAL BARBARA  
PODOSKI**

Inducted 29 May 2015



Corporal Barbara Lauwers Podoski joined the Women's Army Corps in 1943 and was assigned to the Office of Strategic Services Morale Operations.

Working from a base in Italy, then-Cpl. Lauwers, originally from the Balkans, was a linguist fluent in five languages. She conceived some of the most creative propaganda of World War II. Her first creation was toilet paper printed with images of Hitler and admonishments to stop fighting for the Fascists. Her most significant contribution came in July 1944. She is credited as one of the architects of Operation Sauerkraut. Cpl. Lauwers designed a complete campaign in which former disgruntled Nazi prisoners of war were turned into successful OSS agents.

Responsible for interrogation of German prisoners, she also prepared the assessments of recruits. Since she was a woman, the prisoners, feeling she would better understand, would drop their guard and pour out how homesick they were for their loved ones — especially girlfriends and wives — and how apprehensive they were that these same women would not wait for them. She promptly translated what she heard into a complementary propaganda campaign to Operation Sauerkraut, calling it the Lonely Hearts Club. Along with misinformation and rumors of an imminent German surrender, the newly minted OSS agents carried leaflets and calling cards from the Lonely Hearts Club. The leaflets, convincingly penned by Cpl. Lauwers, were invitations of a sort written by German women (including mothers, girlfriends and wives) to the collective German Army, leading the German soldiers at the front to believe that the women back home were willing to have casual relations in an effort to support the war effort and boost morale. Soldiers were directed to look for cards printed with hearts that were left at cafes, bars and in home windows.

Another of her deceptions, for which she received the Bronze Star Medal for Meritorious Service, was implemented toward the end of the war. Through her efforts, more than 600 Czech fighters were convinced to lay down their arms and return home.

After Cpl. Lauwers returned to the United States, she joined the Voice of America, adding her talents to their efforts to inform and influence audiences entrapped behind the Iron Curtain. She later worked at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. before joining the Library of Congress as a research analyst. She retired in 1968. Returning to Austria with her second husband on a short trip, Joseph Junosza Podoski, the couple decided to remain for an extended period. They worked in an international refugee organization for nine years before returning to America.

Barbara Lauwers Podoski died on Aug. 16, 2009 at the age of 95.