

WORLD WAR II

[OCTOBER 1942]

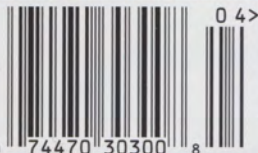
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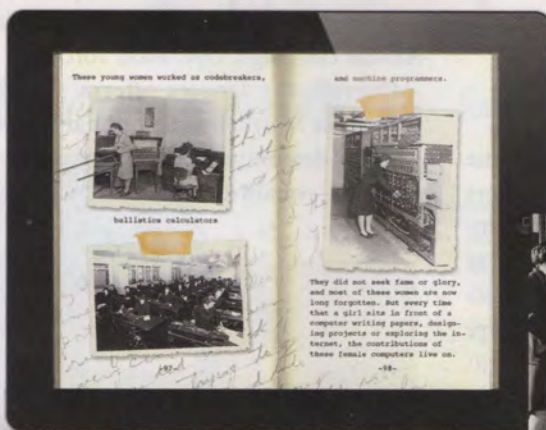
**How Afrika Korps Impostors
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THE COMPUTER WORE HEELS

By LeAnn Erickson. iTunes, \$2.99.

World War II threw women into the workforce, but not just in factories and industrial warehouses. Filmmaker LeAnn Erickson illuminated a lesser-known facet of their war effort in her 2010 documentary *Top Secret Rosies*. The film documents women's wartime contributions to state-of-the-art computer technology. The subjects of the film—selected by their high school teachers as highly skilled in mathematics—qualified for the government job of “Junior Computer.” They were schooled in advanced math and data entry and worked on machines that used formulas to calculate trajectories for high-altitude bombing. Making her own steps into innovative



The app is rich in photos, like the image below of women operating a number-crunching computer.



technology, Erickson has turned her documentary into an interactive iPad book app, *The Computer Wore Heels*.

The e-book follows two women on their journey into “human computing.”

The app evokes a notebook or diary, with yellowed pages covered in scrawled notes and documents “clipped” to pages—even the typewriter-style font is effective. Almost every page is interactive: expandable newspaper clips illuminate key events, yearbook photos of the main characters and snapshots of the machines they operated are clear and expandable, and sound effects like clacking train wheels and 1940s music provide background and context. Erickson’s team also produced newsreels that mimic period design and provide extra information with black-and-white reenactments and historical images. Especially noteworthy are original schematics of the cutting-edge Electronic Numerical Integrator And Computer (ENIAC) the girls operated near the end of the war and their hand-lettered math equations. Though the computers made these large-scale calculations possible, the women’s skill, accuracy, and speed were absolutely crucial, as their findings went straight to B-17 bombing squads flying over Germany.

The design is intuitive and easy to use and the story is told plainly and an easy read; when paired with the interactive elements it excels as a snapshot of this indispensable home front duty. —Bridgett Henwood is the associate editor of *World War II* magazine.

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